



Speech by

Mr L. SPRINGBORG

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard 30 April 2003

MORETON BAY MARINE PARK

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.59 p.m.): I move—

That this Parliament commits itself to promoting a pristine environment for the Moreton Bay Marine Park and rejects any fish farm development proposed for the park.

As all government members—ministers and backbenchers alike—profess highly accomplished environmental credentials, I expect this motion will be fully and totally supported without amendment. To not lend support to this motion would be to deny future generations the opportunity to enjoy the magnificent and majestic Moreton Bay. It would also deny our generation the opportunity to put in place strategies which clean up the waters of the bay so that future generations can enjoy this natural wonderland in a pristine condition. Tonight the task for this parliament is simple: this parliament must decide whether it wants to leave an environmentally sound and pristine legacy to our children and grandchildren or leave a natural treasure struggling with copious quantities of waste and nutrient.

At this juncture I must point out that the opposition is not denigrating the aquaculture industry. To the contrary, the National and Liberal parties recognise the potential of an aquaculture industry in this state. We know that Australian aquaculture production for 1999-2000 was valued at some \$630 million and is projected to grow to \$2.5 billion by the year 2010. Whilst the industry has experienced growth of 10 per cent per annum over the last 10 years, its growth has been restricted in the main to the shellfish culture. Demand for seafood domestically as well as internationally is increasing and the successful farming of marine fin fish is a proven method of meeting demand without increasing the exploitation of wild native stocks.

It is not the industry with whom the opposition has difficulty, but it is the location in this instance. Various studies have shown that the waters of Moreton Bay are under stress. Why should this government proceed with an industry that will add to the bay's woes? The National and Liberal parties in coalition under the Borbidge-Sheldon government unveiled several initiatives across three government departments which were designed to preserve our natural environmental heritage for the next generation of Queenslanders. Initiatives announced during the 1998 election included the establishment of an institute of applied conservation research, the development of a coordinated body to oversee water quality in Moreton Bay and the rivers feeding into it, and the progress of a 10-year plan to upgrade the state's national parks, including marine parks. Had the then coalition won office again, it is clear that Moreton Bay would have been protected with the community and the government working together to protect the conservation interests of the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Sun Aqua Pty Ltd proposes the sea cage farming of snapper and yellowtail kingfish on the eastern side of Moreton Bay in the vicinity of Tangalooma Point. The location is approximately eight kilometres south of the point and approximately three kilometres from the western shore of Moreton Island. I understand that the site was chosen by the company after consultation and on-site inspection with officers from the Department of Primary Industries. So once again the company cannot be solely blamed for site selection. The Beattie government has been at the forefront with its eagerness and assistance. Sun Aqua's total production is estimated to be approximately 2,400 tonnes per annum by the third year of production. Hatchery technology exists for both species and it is likely that the fingerlings for stocking the sea cages will be purchased from the Department of Primary Industries through its Bribie Island aquaculture facility. How helpful the Department of Primary Industries has been on this occasion! It is good to see, particularly as we have been told time and time again about the

depletion of services once provided by the Department of Primary Industries across other industries. But I do detect a conflict of interest here.

In an article in the *Courier-Mail* on Thursday, 6 March we learnt also that senior State Development departmental officials pushed to have the fish farm assessed by their department because they were afraid it would be knocked back by the Environmental Protection Agency. The article outlined that—

... the bureaucrats were desperate for the Sun Aqua development to proceed to kick-start a sea cage aquaculture industry.

Consequently, State Development bureaucrats decided to avoid EPA opposition by having the project declared 'a significant project' for which an environmental impact statement is required pursuant to the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971. What does that actually mean in layman's language? The Coordinator-General, who is also the director-general of State Development, will evaluate the EIS. That is a clever quick-step. The project will be assessed internally.

Incidentally, whilst I have no bones whatsoever to pick with the company or the industry, it is interesting to note that the head of Sun Aqua is Dr Julian Amos, a former long-serving minister—in fact, a former energy minister—in successive Tasmanian Labor governments. I have no doubt that Dr Amos was appalled at the proposal to dam the mighty Franklin River. Consequently, I have to question why Dr Amos and his company would want to develop a facility on our doorstep which has the potential of polluting our natural treasure, Moreton Bay.

I say again that that is declared a marine park. Risk of environmental degradation and marine life diseases are among many issues which need to be thoroughly examined in an environmental impact statement. But as the government chose to have Caesar judging Caesar, the integrity of the EIS assessment has been put in jeopardy. Tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money is being spent now to reduce Moreton Bay's nutrient levels to protect the bay. It is imperative that the state government through its actions does not contradict existing strategies designed to protect and enhance Moreton Bay. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Councillor Jim Soorley, has been particularly vocal in his opposition to the proposed fish farm in Moreton Bay, and I understand that opposition is consistent throughout the 18 south-east Queensland councils. Consequently, the intent of this motion this evening is to ensure that Moreton Bay will be protected and that its pristine condition becomes a priority of this parliament and the state's executive government.

Further, I want to expand on the fact that over the last few years there has been a lot of effort put in to regenerate and protect Moreton Bay from a significant nutrient level which has built up as a consequence of treated effluent going into the bay. That is why we have always very strongly supported the proposed Luggage Point-Lockyer Valley-Darling Downs effluent pipeline as a way of getting that nutrient load out of Moreton Bay. It is interesting to note also that, as I understand it, the nutrient load on Moreton Bay which would come about from the size of the original proposal of Sun Aqua is equivalent to that of 20,000 pigs. It seems to me to be very strange that on the one hand we are attempting to remove the nutrient load from Moreton Bay from treated effluent yet on the other hand we are turning around and saying that it is okay to inject back into Moreton Bay a significant amount of nitrates and phosphates which would accrue as a consequence of this.

I also want to expand on the fact that we as a coalition have no problems with intensive aquaculture, but what we do want around Queensland are designated areas—not in marine parks—where these proposals can be established and where these proponents can be actively encouraged, not this process of the moment where on the one hand there are the competing interests of the EPA and State Development with the consequence that a marine park may in fact be affected. There are areas and places which should be designated and these proponents should not have to go through the circumstance of coming in and jumping through all of these hoops and one day actually get approval to locate such a venture in Moreton Bay which is, I think, the wrong decision. We need a clearer designated place for them to be able to do it. What is our history on this? In 1997 under the then Borbidge government the EPA told Lucinda Bay Aquaculture that its proposed site in pristine waters off Shark Spit on Moreton Island was inappropriate because of its potential to harm the Moreton Bay Marine Park. That was for a fish farm proposal. That fish farm proposal was much smaller than the current fish farm proposal and was only two kilometres away from the current proposed site.

Time expired.