



Speech by

Michael Choi

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard Wednesday, 1 November 2006

MARINE PARKS (GREAT SANDY) ZONING PLAN: DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

Mr CHOI (Capalaba—ALP) (8.24 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan 2006. In doing so, I object to the disallowance motion moved by the honourable member for Toowoomba South.

The Great Sandy Marine Park covers some 6,000 square kilometres of tidal waters and land, stretching from Double Island Point in the south to Baffle Creek in the north. It includes some of the world's most beautiful ocean areas, including the heritage listed Fraser Island, and it incorporates areas of the former Woongarra and Hervey Bay marine parks.

The purpose of the Great Sandy Marine Park is to protect and conserve marine species, ecosystems, habitats, populations and genetic biodiversity, including internationally recognised wetlands and threatened species. It also provides opportunities for access to ecologically sustainable use of the area—I emphasise ecologically sustainable use of the area—including recreational, commercial, research and traditional activities.

The park has five different zones and nine designated areas classified according to the natural values of each area with regulations covering recreational and commercial use. The zoning plan identifies different zones within the marine park, states the objectives very clearly for each zone and identifies the level of protection for the zone. The zoning plan lists the activities that can occur as of right, those for which a permit is required and those that are prohibited.

There are five different zones: the marine national park zones, the buffer zone, the conservation park zone, the habitat protection zone and the general use zone. The marine national park zones afford the greatest level of protection and are used to protect areas of high natural and ecological value. They are easily identifiable and are referred to as the 'green zones'. The conservation park zone protects significant marine habitats. Commercial netting, trawling and harvest fishing are prohibited. Some activities are allowed. The general use zone is that area of the marine park not identified as marine national park, buffer, conservation or habitat protection zones. The general use zone aims to provide for conservation while providing opportunities for reasonable use. Most activities are permitted in this area.

In my opinion, the marine park provides users with greater protection and better clarity as they will know exactly what they can do in the park. It provides protection for the entire region, while maintaining special management practices for turtles and whales in the area covered by previous marine parks.

I believe in the importance of recreational fishing in the area. Ninety-six per cent of the area is open to recreational fishermen and that is a big win for them. The conservation movement asked for 33 per cent of the marine park to be excluded. At the moment, the government is only proposing that four per cent of the park be excluded. Recreational fishermen should be extremely pleased with that outcome.

The marine park is also important to commercial fishermen, and I understand that. The zoning plan recognises the importance of commercial fishing to the region. Commercial line fishing and netting is

permitted to continue in the general use area, as well as the habitat protection zone and the Great Sandy designated areas.

What does the marine park mean for other significant parts of the Queensland economy such as tourism? Evidence from experiences throughout Australia and overseas indicate that well-managed marine parks attract visitors. The Great Sandy Marine Park incorporates and complements the significant tourism drawcards in the region, including Fraser Island and Hervey Bay whale-watching operations and also another conservation park near Bundaberg.

The economic benefits of this zone extend far beyond tourism. The Hervey Bay and Great Sandy region is the site of some exciting new developments in sustainable aquaculture, including new marine enterprises such as scallop ranching and sea cucumber ranching. There are hatchery operations, new soft-shell crab facilities and a new aquaculture precinct being developed by the Hervey Bay City Council, I am informed, which will be home to some high-tech recirculating—which means there is no discharge—land based aquaculture operations. In fact, DPI and Fisheries recognises other plans for this region; however none of these deal specifically with aquaculture. The government has defined allowable aquaculture development types in the Great Sandy Marine Park as rack and line and sea ranching, including sea scalloping.

As I indicated previously, the economic perspective of the Great Sandy Marine Park is extremely important. Firstly, it creates a new marine park to allow the region to showcase its world-class tourism assets. In particular, with direct flights now to the Fraser Coast from Sydney, international backpacker and domestic tourism has been booming for a decade and the whale-watching Fraser and Great Sandy strait drawcard must be protected. Secondly, it has enshrined within the marine park legitimate use of the regional's significant \$70 million commercial fishing industry, including thousands of fish, scallop, crab and prawn harvesting, processing and marketing jobs. It is over 90 per cent of the marine park. The region produces world-class seafood for the export market as well as for the local and domestic markets. This very viable activity will be protected by the plan and in very large measure has been supported by industry.

Thirdly, the zoning of the park will allow the sustainable expansion of the lucrative aquaculture industry. Sea cage aquaculture would not be allowed. I will never support sea cage aquaculture in the marine park environment. Other aquaculture industry with less impact will be supported and this will ensure that the economic benefit to Queensland continues.

The combination of zones and designated areas allow for the clear definition and development of opportunities of the aquaculture industry within the Great Sandy region. Based on preliminary planning, forecasted growth of up to 1,200 jobs may be generated if opportunities for marine aquaculture like sea ranching and rack and line are maximised. Clearly this Marine Parks (Great Sandy) Zoning Plan is of great benefit to Queensland. It gives surety to commercial and recreational fishing. It is also of tremendous economic benefit to Queensland, and I support this plan.