



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (7.45 pm): I congratulate the shadow primary industries minister for moving this disallowance motion before the House. It shows that he is a level-headed politician who will listen to the people, and I have great pleasure in seconding the motion.

Why does this Labor government hate the recreational and commercial fishing industry? The government has flogged the recreational and commercial fishing industry for the last eight years, and the pain and hurt does not seem to stop. The current zoning plan for the Great Sandy Strait Marine Park is a comprehensively flawed document and has upset many local residents and businesspeople whose views have not been properly considered by the Beattie Labor government.

As mentioned by the shadow primary industries minister, Labor scrapped a working group in June 2004 which involved recreational and commercial fishing representatives, tourism representatives and council representatives, to name just a few, and then imposed a plan on the local community that does not seem to have the support of anyone. It does not have that vital ingredient—community ownership. As a result, a range of excessive, irrational decisions have been made, such as the closure of two great recreational fishing places—Barolin Rock and Burkitt's Reef—and we may as well add Hoffman's Rocks to that as well. They are 100 per cent closed thanks to Labor.

I have had a number of discussions with keen local fishers who are obviously upset by these closures, including Don Robinson, an important and influential spokesperson for recreational fishers in the Burnett and Bundaberg areas. He is the owner and operator of a local fishing shop. Don was on the advisory body which was supposed to help the Labor government devise its fish or no-fish zones. The government ignored the advice of that body and structured the process so that decisions were made on ideology rather than science. This is a common theme for this government; it is a government driven by ideology rather than level-headed science.

Don was shocked to learn that the question being asked of the scientists consulted by the government was: 'We are going to close down this area to fishing. How do we go about it?' It was a very presumptive question, one would think. Instead, the questions should have been: 'What effect does fishing have on the environment? Is recreational and commercial fishing sustainable in this particular area? Why are we thinking of closing this area to fishing? What effect will fishing have on the biodiversity of fish species?'

One of Don's comments that stood out for me was that once a location was identified as being a good fishing spot it was closed down. That was the one that was closed down. The policy of fishing closures worked out by this government is best described as willy-nilly. This policy of willy-nilly fishing closures by Labor has caused a devastating impact on the local tourism market and also the local businesses from the small bakehouse owner through to the local takeaway tackle shop. Don believes that the boat ramp at Bargara, which is a beautiful area to visit, may as well be closed down because there is nowhere good to fish.

In a recent letter to the editor in the Bundaberg *NewsMail* on 30 August 2006 Don Robinson expressed his disappointment about the proposed closures in the Bundaberg region and made comment to the then Labor candidate for Bundaberg, who stated that more than 1,000 submissions had been made on the proposed fishing bans. Don pointed out that the candidate did not state that they were all totally ignored and there were virtually no changes to the original proposals before those 1,000 submissions were made. Don went on to make further comment that at the public meeting held on 22 August, which I attended, not one of the 109 concerned anglers present at the meeting said that they had been consulted and only three had made submissions. It really makes one wonder where those 1,000 submissions allegedly came from. Don speculated that probably 95 per cent or more came from one or two extreme organisations that helped draft the original proposal. Don also pointed out that, although there has been comment made by Labor that only four per cent had been locked away, which does not sound like much at all, if that four per cent is totally directed to the best and safest fishing areas with none to the non-fishing areas, it is probably locking away 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the fishing.

Don's final message to the Labor Party is that many people live in and retire in this area because of the lifestyle which includes easily accessible fishing in safe areas. If a grandfather wanted to take his grandchild rock fishing along our coastline, there is no safe place for them to go. Our rocky coastlines make it almost impossible to fish safely anywhere except at Barolin Rocks and Hoffman's Rocks. Our only inshore reef is Burkitts Reef. All three of these areas have been closed. So in reality Don is saying that it is not four per cent of the safe fishing spots that have been closed; it is 100 per cent. The coalition has agreed that the bans on these fishing spots will be scrapped if we return to power. I call on the Labor Party tonight to agree to make sensible changes to this legislation and to vote for this disallowance motion.

Peter Nowland, one of the many keen recreational fishers in the Bundaberg-Burnett region, expressed his disappointment in the Bundaberg *NewsMail* recently that he will no longer be able to take his young grandson fishing off Burkitts Reef due to the Great Sandy Marine Park fishing area rezoning. Mr Nowland states—

The government is closing off the reef. We will have to venture further afield. There will not be many fishing areas left for Bargara people because a lot cannot get out to the artificial reef. If the government closed these areas down for a period of, say, a couple of years and then opened them up it would be okay, but they are closing them down permanently.

Another man to comment on the zones in the Bundaberg *NewsMail* is Bargara Beach Dive Centre operator Kelton Green, who commented that no fishing zones were a good idea but thought that the state government had pushed the barrow too far with the Great Sandy Marine Park bans. He said, 'The green zones are a good idea but I think they may have gone just a little too far too quick.'

The Bundaberg *NewsMail*, I might add, has quite extensively reported on these closures. I congratulate it on this coverage and the opportunity it has given many local fishing enthusiasts and professionals to speak out against these closures.

A Queensland coalition government would have scrapped Labor's flawed Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan and developed a new plan that would have broad community support and community ownership. The coalition knows just how vital it is that all different stakeholders get together to develop a plan that provides an appropriate balance between protecting the environment and ensuring this wonderful marine park can still be used and enjoyed by locals in the future. A new working group of local representatives needs to be established. It would be tasked with the development of a new Great Sandy Marine Park zoning plan that has broad community support. We do not need any of these sham consultations. The current plan needs to be revised in close consultation with the working group and a new zoning plan that has community ownership must be introduced.

Tonight I call upon the government to reverse the beach fishing ban in Bargara because it is not a decision based on science, the government did not meaningfully consult with the community and it does not recognise the devastation and impact that this will have on tourism, families and also children's health.