



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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MOTION: RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL FISHING

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.43 pm): I move—

That this House recognises the importance of recreational and commercial fishing and associated industries to Queensland and opposes the secrecy of the deal between the Greens and the federal Labor Party that will close off a minimum of 30 per cent of Australian waters to fishing.

This Saturday when we vote in the federal election we will not just be voting for representatives and a government way down south in Canberra. In this election, there are a lot of issues that will fundamentally affect Queensland and the lifestyle we enjoy. We all know about the Rudd-Gillard super mining tax in the last couple of months and how it would have destroyed, and may possibly still destroy, jobs and communities in Queensland and how it cost Kevin Rudd his job. Since then Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister, has done her best to keep her backroom deal with the big miners quiet. Of course, there are still questions to be answered by the Premier, who failed to come out and stand up for Queensland jobs even though we were asking about what projections had been done.

There is no doubt that this Rudd super tax would have cost many jobs and hit Queensland hard. We saw companies withdrawing their investments. Until there was a backflip by the three big companies after negotiating with the government, there was clearly disquiet throughout the economy and in Queensland, which along with Western Australia are the biggest two mining states.

But there is another very important issue that will also cost jobs and affect the lifestyle of tens of thousands of Queenslanders—that is, the deal to lock up vast areas of sea right along the Queensland coast that are now open to limited commercial fishing and to the public for recreational fishing. It is the sneaky preference deal that Bob Brown and the Greens have done with the ALP to get Julia Gillard and Labor over the line. This is the deal they have done that is just like the sneaky preference deal the Bligh Labor government did with the Greens on the eve of the last state election that has locked up vast areas of the cape and denied local Indigenous communities their right to self-determine and set their economic future.

I have spoken in this place before about having been in Mapoon where the Wenlock River has been subject to a recent declaration by the minister. Those communities are concerned about jobs and job opportunities for their children that have now been taken away from them due to the changes that have been made in the declaration by the Minister for Natural Resources. This deal will lock up 30 per cent of the areas along our coastline and Peter Garrett, the federal minister, has been out there spruiking it. This will destroy commercial fishing and unfairly restrict what is an essential part of Queensland's way of life—recreational fishing, a healthy and enjoyable activity for generations.

The Greens like to make out that humans are not a part of the world's environment, that they are actually intruding on it. That is wrong because we are a part of the world's environment. They think we should be excluded from it. They prey on the worst fears of our children—and that is about the future, the future for our children. I am very confident in the future for our children, but the Greens like to demonise development and demonise many of the things that have made this country a great one.

There is no doubt that earlier generations—and even mine; I am a typical member of the post baby boomers generation—have taken the environment for granted without a lot of thought for managing our natural assets for future generations, but my children and others have taught me to appreciate that we need to protect our environment and manage our resources and our fishing areas sustainably. We do that but not everybody in the world does it.

Our fisheries are recognised internationally as amongst the best managed in the world. They are sustainably managed so that healthy, locally caught seafood can be enjoyed by Queenslanders and so that recreational fishing can be enjoyed by generations to come. This is done through common-sense bag limits and seasonal closures that I know are respected and observed by the overwhelming majority. In fact, the shadow minister for primary industries, the member for Condamine, and I regularly meet with primary industries groups who tell me about the standards that they have to uphold that are not upheld in other countries, and this is a classic example in fishing whether it is farm fishing or natural fishing.

Let us be clear about what is at stake here through Labor's deal with the Greens, because if Green preferences get Julia Gillard and Labor across the line on Saturday Queenslanders need to be aware of all of the consequences not just for our economy or our jobs or for increased taxes and higher cost of living expenses, but also for our way of life. If Labor wins through Green support on Saturday, vast tracts of sea off the Tweed, the Gold Coast, the Fraser Coast and further north in the Coral Sea and the gulf will become out of bounds for commercial and recreational fishing. The effects will be devastating. The effects of this Labor-Greens deal will not just be felt on the cape like the wild rivers deal; they will be felt right the way along the coast. In my own area, I know of the cost to commercial fishing families. I know of the effect on the supply of fresh, locally caught, healthy seafood. I also know of the damage being done right along the coast and particularly up north.

A couple of months ago, I was in Cairns at a public housing development that the local community did not necessarily want. I spoke about this at length with a local resident and commercial fisherman, Bill Izard of Trinity Park, when I was at the Trinity Park development that the Cairns community does not want foisted on them. Bill Izard is the last trawler operator between Cairns and Port Douglas. He has been in the industry for 30 years. He operates a small, 30-foot boat. It is a pity that Bob Brown and the ALP do not bother to take the time to listen to local people in the industry and listen to what is really going on because they would then hear the truth about how bad their policies really are. They are not interested in how their policies will affect the people who are affected by them; they are only interested in how it will play into inner urban areas where people love the idea of voting Green as opposed to the major parties.

The lock-up of the Coral Sea is irrational. What the Greens and the ALP will do is lock up what is a deep water fishery that is currently fished sustainably by just four boats out of Cairns. They fish for deeper water pelagic fish. Let us be very clear about this: we are not talking about trawling the Coral Reef and taking reef fish viewed by tourists in glass-bottom boats and by snorkellers; we are talking about deeper water fish away from the reefs. Just four boats operate in the Coral Sea, as I have mentioned. They catch pelagic species on lines, not with nets. The species they catch include the migratory yellowfin, the bluefin and particularly the bigeye tuna, a valuable food and recreational game fish. This key point is being ignored, perhaps deliberately, by the Greens and Labor.

Just four boats using lines, not nets, take these fish in the Coral Sea off Queensland. Another key point is that these species are migratory—that is, they swim up and down the coast. They swim north, and once they move through the highly protected Australian waters of the Coral Sea they move on to New Guinea, where its government has sold licences to foreign fleet operators including big operators from the United States. These fleets are big and they use nets. Huge numbers are netted by these fleets and then taken to Thailand for processing, and we then buy tuna back from Thailand. What the Greens and Labor want to do is illogical. It has nothing to do with protecting our environment and saving our fish species.

Australia has the largest economic fishing zone per capita of any nation on earth. Our fisheries are already among the best, if not the best, managed of all fisheries in the world. Surely, if we are to be honest, if we are to be genuine about protecting the environment, we must also be genuine about protecting our ability to sustainably produce food in Australia and in Queensland. Where is the sense in the Greens and the ALP whipping up fear and hysteria and locking up 30 per cent of our oceans and, in so doing, destroying what is left of our commercial fishing industry and forcing our population to eat imported seafood, seafood that is increasingly being sourced from regions where there are few, if any, controls and the big trawls are anything but sustainable? People in the fishing industry tell me that places like Vietnam and other countries of Asia where they do this type of fishing have completely different standards from ours.

After all the shutdowns and lockouts that have already occurred, there are now probably fewer than 150 fishing boats still operating on the Queensland coast. Labor and the Greens want to shut these down further and force us to eat more imported seafood. That is not healthy, that is not sustainable and that is not caring for the environment.

On Saturday, I urge all Queenslanders to ignore the hysteria, ignore the untruths and reject Labor and the Greens, who will destroy our commercial fishing industry and further restrict Queenslanders from catching a few fish and enjoying a fresh, healthy meal with their mates and their families. What the Greens and Labor want to do is unfair. It flies in the face of the facts.

As I say, I do not believe that the people of Queensland and our children are not part of this environment. People need to look more at what the Greens are proposing. They want to reduce tax breaks; they want to remove capital gains tax concessions; they want to introduce an estate tax with provisions to protect the family farm, the family home and small business with a threshold of \$5 million; and they want to abolish the private health insurance rebate. That is what members will not hear about the Greens. They are a danger to all modern-day Australians.

(Time expired)