

MARINE PARKS

Mr PENGILLY (Finniss) (11:49): I move:

That this house calls on the Minister for Environment and Conservation to place an immediate moratorium on the imposition of the draft sanctuary zones contained within the marine parks' outer boundaries for South Australia.

This is a critical issue, and let me say that this process has been going on now since 2002. We have had four ministers deal with it, and the current minister has been handed—I do not know what you would call it, but he has been handed it. The reality is that the Liberal Party, myself and many others support the marine parks concept. It has never been in doubt. We also support sanctuary zones.

What we do not support is this nonsense being perpetrated at the moment by the department for environment. The minister, minister Caica, is a decent fellow. He is actually a fisherman as well, I think, but what I see is a totally orchestrated campaign of misinformation and devious and dangerous philosophical bents and untruths being perpetrated by his department. In fact, I think it is actually voodoo politics that is coming out of the department for environment.

The minister has been misinformed and misled by senior bureaucrats, and he has had to go out and try to defend an impossible situation. He has had to put forward a contrary view to comments made by me, other members, many recreational and professional fishermen and many members of the community. The line he has been given by the department makes me feel sorry for him because I think he has been set up—absolutely, totally and completely set up.

These sanctuary zones should never have been instigated in the manner in which they have been instigated. It has been a joke. In my view, heads should roll in the department for environment for what has happened. It should not be allowed to go on. The suggested marine park areas, the outer boundaries, we can all live with those. Just remember again that there are no marine protected areas off the metropolitan coast. The sanctuaries were a joke.

Let me put on the record again that the department for environment went out two or three years ago and asked fishermen where they fished, and then they put them into the draft sanctuary zones that have come out. So, do you think that the community is wild? You had better believe it. I held nine meetings across my electorate, four on Kangaroo Island and five on the Fleurieu—530 people. Senior officers of the department have chosen to try to put me down on that in the media. I can live with that; I am member of parliament. It does not worry me, but it is a nonsense.

I can tell you quite clearly in the house that at those five meetings on the Fleurieu the community lifted themselves from the floor and opposed the draft sanctuary zones in their entirety. It did not come from me. I made it quite clear at those meetings that I did not think they were right, but it was their call on it; likewise, on the island motions were put by the community to oppose the draft sanctuary zones.

Absolutely no scientific data has been put together with the draft sanctuary zones to go to the community, and shortly I will read into *Hansard* a letter I received from a gentleman on Kangaroo Island after the meeting over there. What I do not support are acts of environmental bastardry being coordinated by extremist elements of the environment movement, both within and outside the environment department. It is absolutely improper, and it is not what we are about. I have sat there while smug and self-interested bureaucrats at these meetings have put down the public from both inside the meeting and from the periphery of the meeting around the hall. It is absolutely outrageous.

We need sanctuaries. We have had aquatic sanctuaries in South Australia since the 1970s under the fisheries act. They have worked particularly well, and the community owns them and the community very much supports them; they always have and I believe they always will. Only earlier this week, in a briefing in the Balcony Room with the minister for primary industries, from people from his department—and a senior officer was there from the department for environment—it became blatantly clear from the body language in that room, when the subject of marine parks and draft sanctuary zones came up, that the PIRSA officers had not been consulted.

They had not been consulted, to the extent that the minister for primary industries said that he was aware of the concerns and that he was calling in industry groups—recreational, profession, whatever—to speak to them.

They are being usurped by the Department for Environment, and I think it is absolutely outrageous. It needs an inquiry, whether it is a committee inquiry or a select committee in the other house. This whole thing is a whole stinking carcass of a Department for Environment marine parks program. It stinks—it absolutely stinks—and it is not proper.

What is happening with these draft sanctuary zones is an alien culture for the people of South Australia. We are a free state, and we do not need to have some sort of bureaucratic dictatorship (where the poor old minister is the fall guy) running around telling South Australians what they may or

may not do and trying to impose large areas of no-take zones without any apparent sense. They went around to these meetings in the last couple of weeks at Victor Harbor and Kingscote, which I attended. They put maps up on the wall, and they attempted to get some sort of semblance of common sense back into it.

Let me also put on the record also that I believe that Mr Phil Hollow from the department has acted appropriately and honestly right throughout this. I do not believe that all of his fellow officers have, and it appals me. Let me just read a letter from Mr Ray Louth, which he wrote on 19 February. The letter states:

Hi Michael

I was disgusted with yesterday's meeting and the orchestrated manner in which National Parks took over and drove their own agenda.

I feel Islanders were not represented by the...[local advisory group] and were not given any respect as being an important part of the process, especially given the National Parks people had a pre prepared agenda (not the written agenda provided) and when they got started they took advantage of a depressed lack lustre LAG group who just seemed overpowered by their pushiness. The gallery was hounded down by one LAG member who actually questioned the right for members of the gallery to be heard. I don't think this was to silence the gallery but rather to try to get a direct grasp on the process unfolding because the National Parks—

that really should read 'environment department'

were just directing traffic and getting nods to their own agenda. It was as if some member of the...[local advisory group] did not care what they were saying because everything...[the department] was saying was the way things would be.

My four-page submission, which was handed to a LAG member prior to the meeting, was not even tabled or mentioned, yet decisions were made at that meeting that were contrary to any consideration of my proposal. What can I say, the National Parks people have orchestrated a process, and it appears our own LAG do not feel strong enough to even speak out or forward information on our behalf. Not just my submission but also the North Coast submission, it never even got to LAG members till just a short time before the meeting—

despite the fact that it was sent in on time—

and its contents was not mentioned or discussed. The word transparency was raised and we were told that one line public responses without any explanation, were considered and brought into the process. None of the origins of these statements were identified and this gives real rise to the real level of the National Park sham in this pretentious process.

...Let's make a move so that only the public responses that count are those where the originator is willing to be identified for what they say so that we can confirm the validity of the public comment. I cannot believe the level of push for different options for large areas of Sanctuary zones...The professional representation in the gallery alone all had overwhelming knowledge of the area and its value to the community and pro fishing, and they could not believe all these so called...Sanctuary zones should come from our community. I wonder how many even know the importance of the area—

this is I&G—

Without ownership and responsibility being taken for what is lodged, and obviously no control on the way...[the department] accepts information by those who make recommendations, anything can be said by anyone and it appears this has happened. I believe we are being manipulated into a commitment to meet the...[the department]/government wishes, and our responses seem to hold no value... Another very dangerous manipulation at the meeting was positioning. It was like the three dominant conductors at the front—

and this is the meeting the department conducted—

(All...[from the department], a scientist (again...[the department]) at the back in the gallery behind the...[group], and...[department's] support and a diver (supposedly an underwater expert) also positioned up the front, thus splitting the LAG's direction of concentration and firing information and questions to them from front and back. The words from the scientists at the back in the gallery, after being introduced and asked to speak by the...[department's] speaker at the front, were to this affect 'that if you don't make sanctuaries big enough they may be of no benefit at all.' This challenged the LAG from behind, they were being actively solicited for a response from the front and rear and it's this scissor action and negative power play—

this is from a public member—

the likes of which you would never see in a court of law or any fair play forum, that overtook the meeting.

No one is going to ostracize an islander for having their say, but we...cannot be adequately represented by a LAG who are overpowered and directed by an over zealous group from [the department] who appear hell bent on driving their own agenda and subsequently position themselves to do so. [National Parks] people are paid public servants...The balance of power is all for the government. Even some members of the LAG are questioning the probity of the Marine Park process because what was said to [Kangaroo Island] Council by [the department] was not in line with things said to the LAG at previous meetings. One LAG member told me outright 'they are liars'. One line statements from people who cannot be identified, and the acceptance and adoption of this by [National Parks] to reinforce their own agenda makes the whole process a sham and an embarrassment that should be exposed.

It goes on, but in light of the limited time that I have, I will go back to the second reading speech by minister Hill, who, at that time, was representing the then minister for environment in the other place. In that speech he referred to the fact that the definition of the bill addresses the issues of maintaining the economic, social and physical wellbeing of our communities and the functioning of our natural and

physical resources, and that the government is committed to a transparent marine park process based on sound scientific advice and thorough community and stakeholder engagement.

There has been no scientific advice brought out. There has been no economic impact statement. The environmental, social and economic impact statements are not there at all. They say, 'Ah, but we'll do them now.' There is not much point when the community is in uproar in trying to reinvent the wheel. The department of environment has totally, completely and utterly destroyed this process by its actions. I repeat: heads should roll and it should go back.

I repeat also: the Minister for Environment and Conservation is a decent fellow and I believe that he has been used in this process. There are 236,000 recreational fishermen in South Australia (and remember that this was never meant to be about fishing), plus a large, important and well-managed—under the department of fisheries and the fisheries act—professional fishing sector. We have an absolute dog's breakfast taking place. As I said the other day, if the minister for primary industries is going to have discussions with the Minister for Environment and Conservation, he could well do to get in the Minister for Correctional Services because he is going to have another 236,000 prisoners to put in South Australian prisons. That is how serious it is.

People will not take note of this nonsense. This is not emotive nonsense but the reality. Last year, after taking a thumping in the state election, the Premier said that the Labor Party needed to get out and reconnect with the community. They have not done that. In this particular case, this has been driven without any decent consultation until this current round of meetings, which, even then, leaves a lot to be desired. They are simply not up to the task. They are going to destroy livelihoods. Remember, it was never meant to be about fishing. When they are taken to task, they get extremely defensive and do not want to listen.

An abalone diver who was at one of the meetings that I attended was absolutely heartbroken over the way he was treated. This is not going to go away. The media, in particular, are right on it. We have heard it on radio and seen it in print. I am fed up to the back teeth with the nonsense being perpetrated. People can abuse me all they like, and if the local extreme conservationists want to have a crack, that's fine. However, the reality is loud and clear that the vast majority of decent South Australians in this case want something better than what is happening. The wheels are falling off it interstate—in New South Wales, Queensland and other places—and they will fall off here.

Finally, Tony Burke, the federal minister, has said there is absolutely no compulsion for the state government to follow along with this nonsense. There is no agreement in place which requires the state government to go down this path. I say, 'Go back to the drawing board and start this all over again.'

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (12:05): I wish to commend the member for Finniss for bringing this debate before the house, because it is an important one. There will be accusations made that political games are being played here. I can assure you that is not the case.

I base my comments on the meetings that I have attended on the Yorke Peninsula. The overwhelming number of community people who have contacted me via the telephone, emails, letters and people to whom I have spoken on the street since basically the last week in November is unheard of in my electoral office. A continuous stream of people are coming to this side of the chamber, because we represent those people who are doing a lot of recreational fishing, and they are enormously upset. It is impossible for me to make you understand without putting to you some of their concerns.

I have been to public meetings where people are really fearful about the future of their communities as a result of this. They understand and support the principle of marine parks, they understand the history about the fact that both sides of the chamber support the principle of marine parks, they can appreciate the fact that there needs to be some declaration of no-take zones, but they are very concerned about the impact this is going to have, because they believe they have been misled. They are the words they used to me; they believe they have been misled on this matter.

Those people who put in what I think are termed SAMPIT reports in the middle of last year, which indicated their fishing locations, did so on the basis that they believed that, by doing so, they were providing accurate information to the Department for Environment and Heritage which would be used to avoid those areas. So, yes, the marine environment was protected in locations amongst the 19 marine parks, but the impact upon recreational and professional fishing opportunities would be minimal.

Overwhelmingly, the people I am talking to about this are complaining to me about how it appears as though every report that has gone in has been used to actually identify where the no-take zones or the sanctuary zones should be declared. There will be those who will stand up and say, 'Okay, science has justified this. The minister has appointed local advisory groups who are there to advise'—and all that sort of thing—'and to ensure that the process within communities is a smooth one.' That could not be further from the truth.

Local advisory groups, as I understand it, were not consulted on the location of the draft sanctuary zones. They were told at a meeting in either late November or early December, 'This is where the lines on the maps are going to be and you have to go out and try to defend it in the community.' Obviously, the first question to them would have been, 'Where is the science behind it? Where is the science that justifies the declaration of these sanctuary zones?' That is not available, either.

I started to get calls in the very first week that this started to become evident—and it is people from both sides of the political spectrum. One chap in Port Victoria, who is a very strong supporter of the Labor Party—his son has previously run as a candidate—is ballistic about this. He has been in constant contact with the minister's office. I have received many emails and have had a number of discussions with this chap; he wants to make sure the right process occurs.

I will just focus on Port Victoria, even though Marion Bay, Edithburgh, Port Moorowie, Stansbury, Balgowan, Chinaman Wells, Port Clinton, Price, Port Wakefield are all communities that are part of marine parks 11, 12, 13 and 14, which impact upon the Goyder electorate. They are coming to me and saying, 'What the hell is the parliament doing here? What sort of impost is it trying to put upon us, which is going to prevent us from having a recreational fishing future? What is it going to do to our town that supports recreational fishing opportunities?'

I go back to the Yorke Peninsula, and particularly Port Victoria, because people have been most insistent about this: they are really concerned about the future of their town. There are about 400 permanent residents. They have seen the opportunity for the population to grow based around people who like recreational fishing. People come over, they bring their boats the first time, then they come back and stay bit longer. They look at an opportunity to rent a holiday shack or they will buy their own holiday home and, eventually, they move there. That is how the cycle actually occurs.

Already there are people who are saying, 'If the proposed sanctuary zone around Wardang Island—which takes up probably two-thirds of the water surrounding that island—goes ahead, we are going to sell our properties and move away.' That is the sort of anger that exists out in the community. It is not just in my electorate; it is in the member for Finnis's electorate, I am sure it is in the member for Stuart's electorate, it is in the member for Hammond's electorate—it is everywhere. These people are coming to their members of parliament and saying, 'This situation has to be fixed. We cannot allow this to occur.'

These people are not just complaining; they are actually galvanising together as one. They are doing a lot of work. They are using scientific evidence to justify the recommendations that they are making to their local advisory group. There has been a series of meetings in the last week within the Goyder electorate where the LAG groups have met, and they have had submissions presented by these various communities, and it has taken some work to make that happen.

It is obvious that there is never going to be a completely uniform agreement about where the sanctuary zones may be. There is a variety of differences in opinion, but they have consulted with the recreational fishers, pro fishers, business operators and Indigenous communities to determine in that area—Balgowan, Chinaman Wells and Port Victoria—where they believe their recommendations should be.

I understand that they had a good hearing in a meeting held this week with the LAG group, and they hope that flows through, via that LAG group, to its chairman and then through to the minister, who I understand has some regular meetings with the 19 chairs of the marine parks; admittedly, there are only 18 chairs, as one person is chair of two groups because of a reasonably common boundary. These people just want to see a situation where they have a complete lack of confidence in the process reversed and indeed South Australia able to move forward, because it will affect regional communities.

The member for Finnis has highlighted the fact that there are 236,000 recreational fishers in South Australia. As a group, they are an enormous voting bloc. They are also a group of people who are prepared to expend funds to enjoy their opportunity to go fishing. Luckily, in many areas that results in a lot of visitation and a lot of economic growth that has occurred in the region. In my own area, having some 20 per cent of the state's boat ramps, recreational fishing opportunity has always been recognised as one of the key economic drivers in the area. If we get this wrong, it will be to the detriment of the regions, and it cannot be allowed to happen.

Every time a member of the opposition has spoken about this, it has not been to play political games. It has been to make the people of South Australia, the parliament and the members on the other side aware of the fact that this is a serious issue. Communities are continually bringing it towards us, and they want to ensure that there is some confidence in the process, because at the moment it has been entirely lost. There is a complete lack of faith out there, and the Minister for Environment and Heritage has an enormous job to try to recover some level of faith in this process, otherwise it will disappear forever.

They come to me with comments like, 'For a long time, we have had bag limits, we have had size limits in place, we have had closed seasons for various different species of fish.' Indeed, those people who do not want the marine parks say, 'Why don't you just use existing tools to actually preserve the fish species?'

As part of the meetings that have been held in communities on Yorke Peninsula we had Mr David Pearce from the Department of Environment and Heritage turn up. He is a chap who puts the case and listens to the arguments that are coming from the community and tries to inject that into decisions the LAG groups are making and the recommendations they will put to the ministers.

The chairs of the LAG groups are also good people—and I have known a couple of them for quite a long period of time—and they are committed to the process because they want to ensure that a good result eventuates from it, but there has to be a real fear now there has been a total con job played here. People came into it believing that there was going to be a positive outcome and that it was part of a national and international agreement.

We know now that Victoria, for instance, has some 6 per cent of its marine waters declared as a sanctuary or no-take zone. The target in South Australia appears to be 10 per cent. The fact that only 44 per cent of our waters have been declared marine parks and their outer boundaries means that, within each of those 19 parks, they are trying to identify up to 26 per cent to become sanctuary zones. It is going to kill the regional areas. It has to be reviewed.

The member for Finnis brings this to the parliament not to score political points but indeed to make the parliament, and primarily the minister, aware that this is an issue that will not go away. If it takes the fact that we have to have a rally on the steps of Parliament House involving thousands of recreational fishers taking their tinnies past Parliament House to actually make people understand, honking all their horns and blocking off North Terrace to make all South Australians aware of it, it will happen.

There is continuous feedback to talkback radio every day, and I commend Leon Byner for this, as he is taking up the issue very passionately. There is a continuous stream of calls coming in from people who have lost faith in them. They want that faith to be returned, but at the moment it has gone completely. Unless we get some really significant change very soon, there will be a lot more discussion taking place in the chamber about the fact that you are going to lose it.

I wrote the minister a letter on 1 December asking him seven questions. The first one was: have you done an economic impact statement to determine what the impact will be? The reply I got back four weeks later said, 'No, that's not going to happen until the draft management plans come out from the marine parks, probably expected to be September/October.' By then it is going to be too late, because the people of South Australia who like their recreational fishing opportunity and, indeed, the pro-fishing lobby groups are going to rise as one beforehand to hold this government to account.