

House of Assembly, Tuesday 22 February 2011

MARINE PARKS

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (16:26): We have heard a lot of serious and very emotional words today, and also some rather frivolous words, I think, from both sides. I want to talk about something serious, and it is marine parks.

Many members on the opposition bench have voiced their concerns about the implementation of the marine parks, and I wish to add my support to that—not particularly about the principle behind marine parks; there is general support for that. Everyone wants to see them in place, but there is a great level of concern about sanctuary zones, and it is the sanctuary zones, in particular, that I want to update the house about as they relate to marine parks 11, 12, 13 and 14, which surround much of the coastal waters around Yorke Peninsula, which account for some 21 per cent of the marine park area that has been declared and about which the people who live on and who visit Yorke Peninsula have grave concerns.

One thing that truly amazes me is that the minister goes to the effort of appointing the local advisory groups who are to assist with marine park implementation, but then, amazingly, when the draft proposals come out for sanctuary zones we learn that there was no consultation with these local advisory groups about where in fact these boundaries should be drawn.

It seems to me that these people nominated for these roles have a wealth of experience and skills. They understand the waters and they wanted to be involved in the process. Instead, they are told about it at the end. Their role then is to go out to the community with their chairs (who are also all good people) to try to defend the process, to try to engage with the community and to try to get some alternative suggestions.

I do respect that there must be some lines on some maps to start with. I understand that. But there must be some scientific basis behind these lines, and it is this complete lack of scientific basis that is causing the concern for the people of Yorke Peninsula. There are 19 parks and they include some 44 per cent of the coastal waters. Our understanding is that the sanctuary zone declarations within those waters will amount to some 10 per cent of the marine waters around South Australia. However, to achieve that you have to declare 25 per cent (or one quarter) of all these marine parks to be 'no fishing', 'no take' or 'sanctuary zones', and, until we get it right, there is going to be a high level of community anxiety.

It has certainly consumed the airwaves. There have been television reports and constant feedback into talkback radio about this, with every person expressing a position of complete frustration about the way it has been carried out; and, indeed, their frustration that this is another example of a government making a decision and then defending it instead of actually engaging with the community first to get some level of agreed outcome, and that is what needs to happen.

I have been to public meetings on Yorke Peninsula. People stand up and talk passionately about the fact that, yes, they support the principle of the marine parks. They understand the reason for them. They know that it comes from an international agreement. They understand that it is rolling around all the states of Australia, but they just want to make sure that we get this right because, if we do not, there will be some serious issues.

The greatest one that I am concerned about is the economic impact upon those coastal communities, communities like Port Victoria, small in number and permanent residents. Certainly in the holiday periods it grows exponentially. Many people own holiday homes there. They come there to go fishing in the great waters around Wardang Island, but the declaration of the draft sanctuary zones has prevented access to probably two thirds of the waters around Wardang Island. It is not good enough.

That community now is rallying together. They have held a couple of public meetings, had over 150 people there, and people are jumping up and emotional. They are upset about it; they want to get it right. They are working diligently and putting some alternative positions into the local advisory group at the meetings that are occurring this week. I know that the chairs of those groups are having discussions with the minister to try to make him understand, but there has to be a better process.

There are good people from the Department for Environment and Heritage who are out there trying to convince the community of this. They are fighting a losing battle, though, because of the way that the process has started, because of the way that there was no science behind the provisional draft

sanctuary zones, and the way that local opinion has not been listened to in the way that it should be. Unless we get it right, the communities are going to continue to rally against this.

It is another example—and a crazy one in my eyes—where recreational fishers make up 300,000 people in the state. They represent an enormous voting block, they are people who invest in their recreational opportunity, and they are very fearful that that opportunity is going to be taken away from them because of a government that puts in place a law that allows a sanctuary zone to be declared, which is going to take away from them the chance to go fishing, and that is what these people want to do. It is the rec fishers, the pro fishers.

There is a level of compensation available for pro fishers for any loss of effort greater than 5 per cent; but, how do you measure that and how do you measure the loss of economic opportunity for the professional fisher, for the people who support their industry? Is there any compensation for them? No. This is going to be an issue that continues to come before the government. I know that the minister has received many comments. He has to change it now.