

Marine Parks (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Amendment Bill

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (17:40): There might be some in this chamber who think that the contribution of the member for Finnis was somewhat extreme, but I recognise the fact that he has actually held concerns for a long time. In the 4½ years that I have been a member of this parliament, the member for Finnis was the first person that I can recollect within our party room who really started to raise the alarm bells. I think it initially related to the fact that when the first marine park boundary was provisionally declared it related to an area that he represents and there was some duplication involved in that and a lot of concern from that local community. So, his contribution today contained concerns that he has held for a long time, and I respect that enormously.

I also recognise that governments of all persuasions need to ensure they put regulations in place to ensure that there will be a fishing industry existing, be it for recreational or professional people, going into the future. That is why there is a variety of regulations in force to control seasons and to ensure that the catch effort is controlled so that there is actually going to be stock out there in the long term.

I come from Goyder, and I am very proud to represent that area. It has something like 800 kilometres of coastline. For me, fishing is a very important industry, not only for the charter operators and the long-term effort that has been done on professional fishing in that area but also for recreational fishing and the tourism industry that it has brought. Thousands and thousands of people would travel to Yorke Peninsula every week to visit that area, to go out to some of the great fishing spots, to use one of probably 20 per cent of the state's boat ramps that exist in that area, because it is nice and close to a metropolitan area where the majority of fishers are, and it is accessible, they are upgrading the ramps, and there is a reasonable chance that you are going to have a decent catch.

I understand also that the recreational fishing lobby is a fairly strong one, having I think—and the minister might correct me on this—approximately 250,000 recreational fishers in the state and 75,000 or 78,000 boats that are registered. Something like that.

The Hon. P. Caica: Lots.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Yes, that is close enough, I think. It is an enormous amount. Any debate that we contribute in here is based upon the concerns of people that have spoken to us and the need to ensure that we get it right. So, yes, the local advisory committees—and I have three that operate within my area, I think—have been given a very difficult role to ensure that they are able to consult with the local community, the visitors to the area and the professional fishers to get the boundaries right and to feed back the information through to the minister and the committee who will work on this.

It is appropriate that the parliament actually have some opportunity to regulate this, and that is why the bill is appropriate. My understanding is that it meets a commitment given by the government as part of the election process to do so. This is a step forward, but it recognises that the past effort has been very concerning. My recollection of the debate that occurred in this chamber on the original marine parks bill is that compensation is available to professional fishers who are displaced. My understanding also is that no fund has been created from a levy attached to any recreational or professional fisher to fund that compensatory payment. However, how do you actually make compensation to recreational fishers who have that loss of fishing effort?

The minister understands as much as I do that recreational and professional fishers are very protective of their spots, and that is just it. You have to be a very good friend of somebody to get an identification of where a spot is that has any chance of getting a fish off it, and if these spots are in areas that are identified where a fishing effort is to be removed, how is that to be managed without putting such an impost upon those people that they will just scream out loud? They will come to your office, they will come to my office, they will come to the member for Finnis's office, and they will continually complain about what they see as another government regulation making it impossible for them to do what they love.

There is no doubt we all love fishing. I, sadly, only get to make the effort about four or five days per year. I know the minister barely does it a fraction of what he would like to do also, but we need to ensure that we have an opportunity there, because fishing has been a strong part of South Australia's history. The fishmonger was a person that I used to visit as a young lad. I remember going down to Edithburgh and you would visit the local fish shop and buy whiting, tommyes, snook and even leather jackets, which are quite nice when fresh.

The Hon. P. Caica: They are beautiful.

Mr GRIFFITHS: Exactly. So we need to ensure that effort is available to people, so I urge the minister to do all he can to ensure that the process is one that meets the expectations of the South Australian community. He is an honest and intelligent man. I know he will do his best, but it is important that we on this side of the chamber have the opportunity to express some of the frustrations of constituents as part of any debate opportunity. The member for Finniss expresses it very well when he relays the stories he has been told in his area, and I respect that enormously because it is the responsibility of all of us, equally, to stand up and talk about what is important to our people.