



Speech by

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (2.44 pm): At estimates the Minister for Fisheries was asked about the scientific basis for green zones, whether the government intends to continue rolling out fish enclosures, sustainability issues and underfunding of the fisheries department. The minister's answers reveal major shortcomings in the way that Labor in Queensland handles fisheries, boaties and recreational fishers.

Firstly, the minister's unwillingness to answer some questions about fishing and to instead palm them off to his boss, the sustainability minister, shows the structural problems that Labor has when dealing with fisheries and fishing matters. The problem is exacerbated when the sustainability minister flick passes questions back to the fisheries minister. This took place with the questions on notice. The confusion of departments continues to be a source of concern.

Secondly, Labor's attitude that ignores good fisheries research in favour of pseudoscience from biased and extreme sources came through the estimates hearing. The minister's statement that green zoning is not about fisheries management defies all logic. One of the best examples of the crazy green magic science that goes on in both state and federal Labor was the banning of inverted crab dillies. The ban was based on one turtle death in five years—and one turtle death is regrettable. As revealed from questions on notice, the hard data available to both ministers would lead to the conclusion that a complete ban was not needed. If anything, some design changes could have resolved the matter. But the extreme green magic science prevailed and a popular fishing tool was banned.

Thirdly, we saw the confused use of fish stock statistics. The basis for the government's rollout of green zones is that our fish stocks are in danger. Yet the minister restated in the 2010 estimates that Queensland's fish stocks are in a relatively healthy position. This is reflected in the fish stock report released last week outlining that only one of Queensland's 64 assessed stocks is classified as overfished—that is, snapper. The minister said a similar thing in the 2008 estimates in relation to Moreton Bay when he said—

My department has no major concerns about the sustainability of fish stocks in the Moreton Bay Marine Park.

The minister confirms that Queensland's fish stocks continue to be, as they have been for many years, in a relatively healthy position. The minister's admission shows that the government's policy of green zones in Moreton Bay was not based on any demonstrated need. Further it shows that there is no demonstrated need for dramatic new protection measures in Queensland that a federal Labor-Green alliance would bring in. It is not the fisheries data informing Labor governments but Bob Brown, the PEW Foundation and other skewed sources. A vote for Labor or the Greens at this federal election will continue the rollout of no fishing zones and other antifishing policies all masquerading as marine protection measures.

Fourthly, insufficient funding to operate the fisheries department properly was observed. This problem is highlighted in the way that the SAP buyback scheme, which was insufficiently funded to start

with, has had a devastating impact on small scale, family operated fishing businesses. In the example of aquarium fishermen in Moreton Bay, there are still outstanding cases of fisherman who will be bankrupted if the extremely low offers made to them for their businesses are not significantly increased. I call on the minister to review these remaining Moreton Bay aquarium fishing licences and to pay them what they are truly worth.

Fifthly, this process demonstrated the need for the federal coalition's approach to fisheries management. The minister rightly said that, as a policy direction, the bioregions were something that was established under the Howard government. He rightly gives credit to the previous coalition government that commenced the process of establishing marine protected areas around Australia's coastline. It is a pity that Labor did not continue Prime Minister Howard's approach with bioregions, instead opting for the Green party's version.

The coalition under Tony Abbott will bring in sound fisheries management policy again. I wish to also commend Andrew Laming, the federal member for Bowman in bayside Brisbane, for his good work for sustainable fishing and for calling for more science to be done in Moreton Bay. I particularly want to commend the federal coalition for its recently released marine protection areas policy and I commend it to all, especially those Queenslanders who are interested in boating and fishing.

Specifically, the coalition will immediately put on hold Labor's failed marine bioregional planning process and restructure it; second, provide a fair and balanced displaced effort policy; three, base marine protected areas on science; and, four, establish sensible and balanced marine park boundaries. Labor governments have demonstrated that they cannot be trusted to get the balance right.