



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard Wednesday, 18 August 2010

MOTION: RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL FISHING

Dr ROBINSON (Cleveland—LNP) (6.18 pm): I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Recreational and commercial fishing and its associated industries are worth a great deal to Queensland and Queenslanders. Hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of dollars of investment and thousands of jobs exist in the industry and allied industries. Fishing is an important industry that in Queensland has continued to flourish in contrast to the problem of overfishing that exists in other parts of the world. Fishing is an important industry and leisure activity in my electorate of Cleveland, as it is in many other parts of coastal Queensland.

Many bayside residents on the mainland and on the islands of Moreton Bay own boats and fish. Many of those boaties and fishers in recent years have become disturbed by the trend under Labor governments to close off areas from fishing without the demonstrated need to take such harsh measures. This Saturday, Queensland boaties and fishers will be faced with the stark choice: to vote for a federal Labor-Greens alliance that has a plan to close at least 30 per cent of Australian waters to fishing or for the LNP and sensible fisheries management.

Since entering this House I have consistently spoken out about the dangers posed by the Greens-Labor alliance upon recreational and commercial fishing in Moreton Bay. Whether it is the overall failure of state Labor's approach to the Moreton Bay Marine Park plan, the joke of the government's approach to artificial reefs, the sending of the *Tiwi Pearl*—aka the *SS Minnow*—into a storm and losing control of its resting place, the incomplete rollout of the boundary markers for the Moreton Bay zoning plan, or the banning of inverted crab dillies based on one turtle death in five years, I have consistently pointed out that the Labor-Greens alliance has lost its way when it comes to fisheries management. It sends shivers down the spines of boaties and fishers to think that, should Julia Gillard win the election on Saturday, a similar approach to Labor's failed formula for Moreton Bay is going to be rolled out across Australia by a federal Labor-Greens alliance.

I am deeply concerned about the Labor-Greens 30 per cent closure plan for several reasons. I am extremely concerned about the secrecy surrounding the decision. Instead of putting a detailed plan out to the public, Minister Garrett has kept the details secret until after the election. It can mean only one thing: that there is a lot of devil in that detail. They cannot be trusted. Secondly, I am concerned that Labor, under the influence of the extreme Greens, have created an imaginary problem—that overfishing is rife in Queensland waters—and then devised desperate measures to protect the last few remaining fish when, in fact, the recent Queensland fish stock status report states that only one of 64 species in Queensland, snapper, is at risk of overfishing. But Labor governments, dependent on green preferences to remain in power, have blown out of all proportion the level of risk to our fisheries. Whatever happened to the old adage 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'?

I studied marine science at James Cook University and since that time I have noted that two kinds of marine science exists. There is the approach that believed that Australian fisheries were broken and needed fixing. Back in the eighties, some of those false prophets of doom predicted that many Australian fishes would not exist by the year 2000. They were clearly wrong. Then there were those who based their views on hard fisheries data and held the informed view that fish stocks regularly come under pressure but,

if fisheries are well managed, commercial and recreational fishing does not pose a high level of risk to their viability.

It is clear today that federal and state Labor governments have been listening exclusively to the prophets of doom. Like the clucky luckys of this world, they are always thinking that the sky is falling in. They continue to falsely believe that the fish stocks are in such decline that the only solution is to close off huge areas of fishable ocean. This is clearly misinformed and wrong.

Thirdly, gone are the days when Labor had men who were prepared to stand up for the right to fish. Men such as Tom Burns are well and truly gone from this place. Tom Burns was once seen by anglers as a political patron saint, even calling his boat the *Electorate*. He had his finger on the pulse of fishing. How things have changed since the green algal bloom has beset Labor.

I am also concerned that common sense has gone by the wayside in such Labor governments. One of the best examples of crazy extreme green science was the banning of inverted crab dillies based on one turtle death, as regrettable as one turtle death is. What a ridiculous decision. The Greens have espoused different positions—three of them. Which one will Bob Brown push on to Garrett this weekend? In conclusion, the answer to the Labor-Greens fishing dilemma is a vote for the federal coalition and for a sound fisheries management strategy.