

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bill Johnston; Deputy Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mark McGowan

FISHING LICENCE FEES

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr G.A. Woodhams): Members, today I received within the prescribed time a letter from the Leader of the Opposition in the following terms —

Dear Mr Speaker,

Matter of Public Interest

I wish to raise the following as a matter of public interest today, Tuesday September 8th, 2009.

“That the House does not support general boat fishing licence fees which are revenue raising measures that will not preserve fish stocks and calls on the Government to bring forward a credible plan to sustainably manage threatened fish stocks.”

Yours sincerely,

ERIC RIPPER MLA

**LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION; SHADOW MINISTER FOR PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT;
NATIVE TITLE**

The matter appears to me to be in order. If at least five members will stand in support of the matter being discussed—and I note that there are—the matter can proceed.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont — Leader of the Opposition) [3.21 pm]: I move —

That the house does not support general boat fishing licence fees which are revenue-raising measures that will not preserve fish stocks and calls on the government to bring forward a credible plan to sustainably manage threatened fish stocks.

Mr Speaker, government members know that they are in trouble on this issue. Every government backbencher, talking to anybody in the fishing community, will know that the government has not got this right from the point of view of recreational fishers. Government members are in trouble and they know that they are in trouble.

I went to the boat show in Perth and I saw people lining up at desks to sign petitions against this new fishing tax. I went to Bunbury where I met with recreational fishers. I found the same reaction; namely, opposition to the new fishing tax and amazement that the government had not engaged in adequate consultation on this issue. The response was the same in Karratha when I took Labor's “Axe the Tax” campaign to that town; that is, strong support for Labor's campaign and strong opposition to the government's proposals. We took the “Axe the Tax” campaign to Carnarvon, and again, at a meeting, there was strong opposition to the government's proposals. Government members know that the government will have to give ground on this issue. The question is: how much, when and by what mechanism will that ground be given?

I must say that if I were a government backbencher, I would be concerned about the way the Premier has locked himself in to the government's new fishing tax with two different answers during two question times. If I were a National Party member, I would be concerned about the way in which the Leader of the National Party has declared that it is National Party policy to support this new tax. I would also be concerned when I looked at the minister responsible and noted that he is one of the most inflexible ministers in the Barnett cabinet. I think the government backbenchers have a problem: they have a Premier who has nailed his colours to the mast; a Leader of the National Party who has said it is National Party policy to support this tax; and they have the minister Hon Norman Moore, who is being asked to compromise—not something that he is very comfortable with!

Our motion says that this is a revenue-raising measure. We say that very deliberately because we note that there were budget cuts for the Department of Fisheries; in fact, the equivalent of 70 days of patrolling capacity or compliance activity was stripped from the Department of Fisheries' budget. The government has cut the Department of Fisheries' budget and then backfilled the black hole that it has created by asking Western Australian families for more money if they want to engage in the traditional pastime of fishing.

Having cut the budget of the Department of Fisheries, the government is trying to make up the difference by taxing Western Australian families. Western Australian families are already paying a high price for this government's budget mismanagement. The government, of course, will blame the global financial crisis, but the government allowed expense growth of 13 per cent and more in 2008-09. The government is budgeting on expense growth of 6.6 per cent for this financial year. I am certain that the government will not be able to deliver that 6.6 per cent of expense growth. We will be looking at approximately 20 to 25 per cent growth in expenses

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since this government took office. The government's spending decisions and the many announcements it has made that are not catered for in the budget are causing this pressure to raise household fees and charges. That is starting to bite in the community. The electricity bills are now rolling in, and those bills now fully reflect the government's decision to have a better than 26 per cent increase in electricity prices this year.

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The public will know exactly where to put the responsibility. It was the government's decision. It could have done as Labor chose to do—that is, to protect Western Australian families during a transitional period. This government has deliberately chosen not to protect those people. The government made a series of decisions in the last budget that will cause many families to be \$1 000 worse off through lost government support and increased government fees and charges. The outcome will be that many families will be \$1 000 a year worse off, and there is more of that to come; there is worse to come. There are new fees and charges coming. The fishing tax and the landfill levy are coming, and we will debate both those issues this week.

The government also has a very serious budget problem. Our financial projections review, which was coordinated by the member for Victoria Park, the shadow Treasurer, is a document that the Treasurer has not been able to lay a glove on. One would have thought that the Treasurer would have come into this place and used his powers of scorn and derision to undermine the credibility of and calculations in that document. He did not even try to do that. If he could have done that, he would have, but he could not. We think that that financial projections review is a much more honest reflection of the state of the budget than the government's own budget introduced in May. That financial projections review shows that debt is heading towards \$23.5 billion and that the Treasurer needs to undertake corrective measures to preserve the state's AAA credit rating, amounting to about \$4 billion over the forward estimates. If the Treasurer wants to get back to budget debt levels, he will have to reduce it from \$23.5 billion to \$19 billion. That is a huge task of corrective measures. When a government behaves in a financially irresponsible way, Western Australian families pay the price. Western Australian families are paying the price now as a result of the last budget, and they will pay the price budget after budget as a result of this government's financial mismanagement. The bills will come home as they pay their electricity and water accounts, as they pay for all the other state government services that they wish to enjoy, and as they look for the government assistance that is not there as a result of budget mismanagement by this government.

The government's rationale for this decision is conservation—we need to conserve fish stocks. Of course we do. Labor agrees that fish stocks need to be conserved. Fishing people agree that fish stocks need to be conserved. There is an issue. Population growth, increases in wealth and new technology have improved our capacity as a society to catch fish. There is a lot more fishing effort.

Mr T.R. Buswell: Do you ever go fishing?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I must say that I am no threat to fish stocks on the basis of my lack of success as a fishing person, but as a society we have become much more efficient at catching fish.

The government has dressed up a tax grab as a conservation exercise. However, it is being hypocritical. The government was in receipt of the same advice as the previous Labor government with regard to the vulnerability of demersal fish in the west coast bioregion. The government was advised of the serious threat, for example, to the dhufish population. What was one of this government's first actions? Upon coming to government one of its first actions was to cancel the fishing restrictions imposed by the previous government. We had a year without those fishing controls. I would like the government to give us a guarantee that it has not permanently destroyed the dhufish fishery as a result of that crass and irresponsible decision. One of the first decisions the Barnett government took was to abandon altogether the season closures that the former Labor government had put in place. We had a whole summer when those vulnerable species were fished and when those controls, or a modification of those controls, were not in place. That was irresponsible. This government had the same advice that was available to the previous Labor government. It knew that it was running a huge risk and now it is saying that Labor is not conservationist and does not care about fish stocks. The government took that stupid, irresponsible decision to back up the commercial activities of the member for Scarborough, rather than to —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That cheap comment was a sleight on the member for Scarborough. It was intended to impugn her reputation and her husband's business reputation. I ask that he withdraw it.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Premier is misdirected. A proper reading of the words of the Leader of the Opposition will show that he was reflecting on the capabilities and actions of the government and not on the member for Scarborough.

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Mr C.J. Barnett: That is not what he said.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is exactly what he said. If the Premier had listened instead of sitting there and behaving like a petulant child, he would know that—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no debate on the withdrawal of remark. The Leader of the Opposition will continue.

Debate Resumed

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I thank you for your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker.

As one of the government's first decisions upon coming to power, it has dressed up a tax grab as a conservation measure, having behaved extremely irresponsibly with regard to the conservation of demersal fish species in the west coast bioregion. I ask the government and government backbenchers how a new fee will actually conserve fish stocks. What is the mechanism by which this new fee will conserve fish stocks? I ask that question in particular because there is no requirement for people taking out a fishing licence to provide a logbook to record their fishing activities or for data to be provided. How does this new fee actually do anything to protect fish? It does nothing.

Mr P. Abetz: It is funding for research.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: If it is to be used to fund research, it is just replacing money that the government took out in the budget. The government has a responsibility to maintain its effort in this area. It cannot tell recreational fishers that the government has cut its effort in fish research but will ask the fishers to make up the difference. That approach is not constructed to win their cooperation. This is just a revenue grab and it will be defeated. It needs to be defeated because there are so many recreational fishers, that compliance activity and law enforcement alone cannot control their fishing effort. Society needs the cooperation of recreational fishers. The only way we will reduce the recreational fishing effort is in consultation and cooperation with recreational fishers. When the government imposes a new tax on them without consultation, it will be met with resistance, and that is what the government is getting. It will not get the cooperation that is required to make a real impact on fish stocks. The government's proposal is probably perverse in its impact. I know what will happen—people will pay these licence fees but they will resent it. They will go out fishing and say, "I will get value for money. I have paid this money so I will catch enough fish to justify having paid this fee." Instead of reducing the fishing effort, the government will perversely, in some cases, encourage people to fish more. I say to the government that it should drop this and start again.

When the regulations come before Parliament, we will move a disallowance motion. We will keep campaigning on this issue. We are campaigning in every community and in all members' electorates, and we are getting substantial support. We will keep going on this issue and we will move a disallowance motion. We believe that we have a reasonable chance of winning the disallowance motion. Why do government members not start now by sending a message to Norman Moore that this is not on, that it is not going to fly and that it will not work? Members opposite should support this matter of public interest. They should send a message to cabinet that it has got it wrong and that recreational fishers will not tolerate this. There will be a rebellion, and that rebellion will not help the conservation of fish stocks. Government members will have more and more trouble on this issue. The community will make sure of that and we will give them a little encouragement. The government should cut it off, bring it to an end and tell Norman Moore to back off. Vote for this MPI motion today because that will bring the issue to an end. Once this motion is carried by the house, Norman Moore will have to back off. He can start the process again. He might be able to work out a better conservation approach with the recreational fishers, but members opposite should make him start again because what he is doing is wrong. It is angering people and it will not produce the cooperation that is required to help conserve the fish stocks that are threatened by the new intensity of fishing effort that our population, our wealth and our technology have given us.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [3.37 pm]: I am very pleased to support this motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition regarding the fishing tax. All Western Australians, particularly those who have been engaged in fishing—many of whom have been engaged in fishing for many, many years—are letting members of Parliament know all too clearly what they think of this stinking tax. It is a stinking tax that they see as simply a tax grab by the Liberal-National government. It has not been thought through and analysed and it will not deliver the outcomes that all of us want, which is sustainable fishing for future generations. It is very interesting that there is no greater issue than this that has ignited public attention and a public response. It does not matter where one goes in Western Australia, one can see a very strong groundswell of opposition to this tax. The people in my electorate of Mandurah and of Peel, and the people of the south west and the mid-west all see this for what it is dressed up to be. They see through the veil that has been presented by the government as simply a mechanism to deal with the issue at hand. They see through it very clearly. It is simply seen as a tax on people who want to go

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 8 September 2009]

p6471d-6483a

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about, and have been going about, what they consider to be something that is important to the lifestyle of Western Australians. It is clear that all sectors in Western Australia are united against this fishing tax. It does not matter whether it is a small business person in the Peel region, whether it is the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Peel region, whether it is a grandfather or grandmother who take their grandchildren fishing once or twice a year in their boat, whether it is a young family that holidays in various parts of Western Australia, whether it is a person who occasionally fishes once or twice a year, or whether it is an active recreational fisher who fishes nearly every weekend in his boat, and nor does it matter what a person's background or age is; this is simply a tax on something that people believe is their right and that the government wants to see absolutely destroyed.

Those people will understand that members in the government sphere understand the impact that this will have in their communities. There are some very nervous members on the government side. Why are they nervous? They are nervous because, like me, they have received hundreds of emails and phone calls to their offices, and people have been stopping them in the streets and asking: "Why is the government doing this? The government has already added costs to the average family and to the pensioners of Western Australia, and now, Col, you are adding another tax on us. Why are you doing it?" It is not because of what the government has dressed up as a pathetic excuse to veil what is simply a money grab, a tax grab by this government. Government members are nervous. The electorates of the Deputy Premier and the member for Murray-Wellington adjoin my seat and those members know that this is hurting the government, and them as members of the government. They are not the only ones whom this is hurting. The member for Ocean Reef knows this will hurt him. One of the biggest fishing clubs in Western Australia is located in the electorate of Ocean Reef. That member knows that this will hurt him. He knows because it is wrong and his constituents know it is wrong. Government members understand clearly that this was an ill-thought-out effort by the government to address a very serious issue.

Government members now have to try to protect the red-faced Premier and Minister for Fisheries. Members opposite should let them hang, as they have been hoist with their own petard! They should say to their communities, just as the member for Murray-Wellington did in July this year when he said that he had been inundated with complaints and queries about the government's new fishing fees, "To me, it's a bit of skewed logic." He said that he was concerned about the impact that this would have on the community that he represented. The member for Dawesville knows very well that the people of Dawesville, particularly those hundreds of people in the Peel region who own boats, are appalled by this. He knows that the people who own and operate businesses in Mandurah, whether in the boating and chandlery area, or those who hire boats in the Peel waterways that are explored by so many people, or whether it is the tackle people, all of the people who are involved in a range of businesses are and will be directly impacted by this tax on fishing. The member for Dawesville knows that they are against it. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Peel, which has broadbrush representation of businesses right throughout the Peel region, is mounting a campaign, and has written to the minister outlining the impact that this will have on tourism and businesses in the Peel region. The chamber, the Shire of Murray and indeed the City of Mandurah have highlighted to the minister that this has been ill thought out and there has been no strategic thinking about the impact on the economies of coastal and regional areas throughout Western Australia. All of them say that they want to protect fish for the future. There is no argument against that, but this proposal by the government and the Minister for Fisheries clearly taxes people and does not and will not deliver the outcome that we all want, which is sustainable fishing for the future.

As the Leader of the Opposition said in this place a few minutes ago, it is time for the government to go back to the drawing board. The minister must change his pompous attitude to this issue. I am sure that the minister is listening to his backbenchers, but those backbenchers need to show some gumption. They cannot just go to the press and say that they do not like this or support it. They have to show some gumption when this disallowance motion comes before this house and if there are no changes to this legislation. The people of the Peel region and the people of regional Western Australia, and of the other areas that are impacted by this fishing tax, will look very closely at the member for Murray-Wellington, the Deputy Premier—the member for Dawesville—the members for Ocean Reef, Scarborough and Geraldton to see how they vote, and at the other government members in this place who purport to represent their communities, to see how they vote. I suspect that they will not support the disallowance motion and they will fall in behind the pompous Premier of this state and his red-faced minister and oppose the disallowance motion. Be it on their heads! Because if this government brings in this tax, right up to 2013 the Labor Party will be going to every electorate and asking them not to forget that their member did not support the disallowance motion and their Liberal-National government member supported taxing something that people in Western Australia see as very important to their lifestyle.

I am going to finish with a simple letter from a Mr John Long of Greenfields in Mandurah —

Dear Sir,

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bill Johnston; Deputy Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mark McGowan

I write to you in the hope that you as our representative for us in parliament will go in to bat regarding the stupid changes intended for all to require a fishing license and licensed to fish from a boat, this is unaustralian and a right for us to take our kids and grandkids, friends and visitors for a fish, fish for the future is here to stay and thats great, if it is patrolled and worked at with bag limits its workable without these ridicules changes its just a moneygrab.

Please look at this with attention as it is of community concern.

I can tell members that is what I will do! But I do not think members opposite will, because they will fall in behind their pompous Premier and red-faced minister.

MR A.P. O'GORMAN (Joondalup) [3.47 pm]: I also rise to support this motion. It is one of those motions that has generated a great deal of emotion in the community. In the past few years people have been concerned about proposals on daylight saving and retail trading hours, which have brought people out of the woodwork. This is one of those proposals that has also brought people out of the woodwork. People who do not normally contact politicians' offices are all of a sudden emailing, ringing and wanting to come in and talk to us because this is an attack on their way of life. They are saying that this is not about protecting our fish stock and if we really wanted to protect our fish stock we would look at many other ways of doing that and not just imposing taxes. I am told by many recreational fishermen that the sport has gone out of fishing because people have GPS fish finders and all of this high technology. Are we looking at regulating high technology so that they cannot go back to the dhufish feeding grounds where they are pulling in these fish?

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: The Deputy Premier represents the people of Dawesville so he knows the problems. His constituents must be coming through his door at a far greater rate than they are mine. These are suggestions from my constituents. I am not a fisherman. I have said in this place before that I do not fish, but this is what people are coming in and saying to me. There is no sport in GPS fish finders that are bringing people back to the same spot: The fish do not have a chance! In the last week, on two separate occasions tourists coming off tour boats have offered me fish that they caught because they had paid their \$80, \$100 or \$120, or whatever it was, to go out. If we bring in this tax, it will cost them another \$30 a day. They tell me that they are going to get their money's worth and they are going to fish as hard as they can and bring those fish back.

Dr K.D. Hames: Fishermen always fish as hard as they can!

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: They do, but the good ones recognise that there must be a conservation effort and they will throw back fish they do not need. They may catch them, but, if they reach their bag limit, they chuck them back.

Dr K.D. Hames: A lot do not survive when they are brought up from the depths.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I am sorry. The minister keeps interjecting, and I keep trying to listen to him. This is an attack on people who go for holidays and things like that. We have to encourage people to be out in the deep blue sea of our country, people who are on their boats fishing and doing things like that. We should not be persecuting them for doing that. That is what this tax does. These people are telling me that this tax will put a lot of them off from going out there at the drop of a hat. As I said previously in this place, I go up and down the coast in my caravan. In caravan parks, it is a regular thing for somebody who has a boat to invite one or two others out on their boat.

This tax is an attack on family life. It is an attack on the way of life of many Western Australians. There are many other ways in which we can improve our fish stocks. The introduction of this licence is not one of them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Which member is on now? The member for Collie-Preston.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Point of Order

Dr K.D. HAMES: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier.

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is true. I am the next speaker from our side, but I have not sought the call. I note, Mr Deputy Speaker, that you gave the member for Collie-Preston the call. Is that correct?

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 8 September 2009]

p6471d-6483a

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Does the member for Collie-Preston wish to speak?

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The Deputy Speaker gave the member for Collie-Preston the call, and he jumped to his feet when he should not have.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Who is seeking the call? The Deputy Premier.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I will do it, to save the member for Cockburn and to save the member for Collie-Preston, who stuffed up in trying to get the call. They leapt to their feet when they were told not to! See! They are being told off now! They should not leap to their feet when they are told not to! That is the issue.

Debate Resumed

DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Deputy Premier) [3.51 pm]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this motion.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr K.D. HAMES: I could not get a word in! Members opposite are such a mob of hypocrites, especially the member for Mandurah —

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I would ask that the Deputy Premier withdraw that phrase because it is unparliamentary.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Dr K.D. HAMES: Members opposite are taking a totally hypocritical stance on this issue. I am allowed to say that. It is true. It is particularly true of the member for Mandurah—methinks he doth protest too much!

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Can I remind the member that he is on two calls already —

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr K.D. HAMES: Can I remind the member for Mandurah of what the Labor Party was going to do when in government. I have got the dates —

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: They do not want the member for Mandurah to be kicked out, because he is the Whip, and, if he is not here, he cannot give them time off if they need it, so they should stay quiet!

The Labor Party is not telling anyone what it had proposed to do when in government and what that would have done to the fishing industry in Western Australia. We all recognise the need to preserve demersal scalefish stocks. I am a regular fisher—or I used to be, when I had more time—and I used to go out in the ocean to fish. I have to tell members that scalefish are not easy to catch. Most fishers do not catch a lot of fish. As the member for Joondalup has said, those fishers who have a GPS are able to go to the same site over and over. The skilled and experienced fishers are the ones who catch most of these stocks, because they know exactly where to go, and they have the time to get there. What had the Labor Party proposed? The Labor Party had proposed a closure for last summer from 15 October to 25 December, and, for this summer, from 15 October to 31 January. What does the member for Mandurah think would have happened to people like Bert Denboer at Estuary Marine, or Russell McCarthy at Totally Wild Fishing and Camping, if the fishery had suddenly been closed for three and a half months? What would that have done to their businesses and their ability to make a living?

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I will tell the member what I am going to do.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Mandurah!

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is a totally hypocritical stance.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The member has already been told to keep quiet.

Mr D.A. Templeman interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mandurah is drowning out the speaker on his feet. The member has had his chance. Let the Deputy Premier have his chance.

Mrs C.A. Martin interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kimberley, do not interject, please. The Deputy Premier.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I know the member for Kimberley wishes to defend the member for Mandurah. The member for Kimberley may recall that the member for Mandurah somewhat attacked me as well, so I am just giving him a little bit back. The member for Mandurah has taken a totally hypocritical stance. I did not hear the member come out once and say to the people of Mandurah, "This is what our government is going to do. We're going to shut you down for three and a half months over the summer period, when all the tourists come to Mandurah, and when all the kids want to go fishing, and you, Bert, will go broke, and you, Russell, will go broke." It is a totally hypocritical stance.

The reality is that there have been some issues with the proposals to protect this fishery. This government had to find an alternative to the closure that the Labor Party had proposed.

Mr E.S. Ripper interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It was not three and a half months to start off with. It was two and a half months.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You cancelled it!

Dr K.D. HAMES: Yes, we did cancel it. That is because we were not convinced. We thought that a closure for even two and a half months over the summer period in my electorate and in the member for Mandurah's electorate would send the bait and tackle businesses and the boat businesses broke. That is what we thought it would do, and that is why we cancelled it. But we had to come up with an alternative proposal. There was a range of alternative proposals. One proposal was to close off a large area of the available fishing space. It is about a one-hour boat ride to get south west of the Cut to where the good dhuie spots are. It is possible to catch dhuies at Five Fathom Bank, but that is pretty rare. The downside of that proposal was that we would need to increase the number of fisheries inspectors to police it. People would also need to have a GPS to know exactly where the boundaries of the area were, because it is not possible to draw a line in the water. So that was a very difficult option. The second option was to make a significant reduction in the bag limits. The third option was to impose a significantly higher fee for those who wanted to catch dhufish. Those were the options that we looked at. The option that was put forward by the Minister for Fisheries was a \$150 licence fee to catch demersal species.

The member for Joondalup talked about how the good fishers recognise that there is a problem and put the fish back into the ocean. That is true. A lot of fishers let the fish go. However, the difficulty with blue bone and dhufish in particular is that if they are pulled up from the depths, their bladders inflate and they die. Many times when we let those fish go they just die and float away and the seagulls then come along and pick their eyes out. So that is not a good way to get a 50 per cent reduction in the catch. We then reviewed the science. We had two scientists go through and review the science. That showed that the need for a 50 per cent cut as proposed by the Labor minister was accurate. The science is accurate.

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is because we did not want to send everyone broke! That is why we had to find an alternative mechanism to achieve that 50 per cent reduction that would not send all our tackle and fishing businesses broke. We therefore put forward the proposal for a \$150 fee. I have to say, as someone who fishes regularly, that I cannot go out for a day's fishing without spending at least \$100 on juice. The \$150 fee for those who fish for dhufish is about the same as the cost of a tank and a half of juice, or one and a half fishing trips a year. That is what it is. This licence fee will provide additional funds to allow the Department of Fisheries to set up a database so that it will know which boat owners are using their boats for fishing and which boat owners are using their boats only for recreational purposes. The department will be able to get hard data on the number of people who go fishing, because those people will be required to pay that fee. That will create a significant advantage by enabling us to look at the science and see which fish are being caught. We need also to look at

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things such as ways that bag limits can be used to reduce the catch. It is not a simple matter of just one method suddenly providing this 50 per cent reduction.

Everyone has been complaining about the 30 per cent tax —

Mr D.A. Templeman: Even you're calling it a tax.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The 30 per cent licence fee.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Dr K.D. HAMES: We must remember that pensioners will receive a 50 per cent discount so pensioners will pay a \$15 licence fee.

We have to look at what happens in other states. In Victoria there is a general angling fee for everyone, whether or not people own a boat. The same applies in New South Wales, boat or not. When people register their boats in Queensland, they pay an \$18 fee for a fishing licence. Three of the major states in Australia already charge a licence fee. It is true; rumours have got out that I did not agree with some aspects of this total fishing licence fee. Some people suggested the licence fee be imposed on not just those who fish from a boat, but also people who fish from the shore. I did not agree with that; nor was that finally proposed. People who fish from jetties and from the shore and elderly people who fish from the Dawesville Cut in my electorate would have had to pay a fee. The Minister for Fisheries, Hon Norman Moore, is looking at the total package and talking to Recfishwest and other people who are providing advice in the fishing industry to see whether we can modify the proposal to make it one that is more acceptable to the community, yet one that still achieves the 50 per cent catch reduction. We are investigating those options. The final determination has not been made by this government, and we will work very closely with the fishing industry and with those in our electorates who are providing advice on what they think we should do to make sure we get it right and implement something that will do what is necessary; that is, preserve the fishing stocks in this state while not doing what members opposite were going to do, which was to send the recreational fishing tackle industry broke. We want to make sure we do it in a way that fits in well with the needs of our community.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough) [4.05 pm]: Mr Deputy Speaker —

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I thank the member for Albany; I am quite proud to declare an interest in this debate. It is well known that I am the owner of a recreational fishing tackle shop. I stand here flabbergasted at the reaction of members on the member for Albany's side in response to Minister Moore's package to protect our fishery. Here they are whingeing and moaning about a \$30 recreational fishing permit, and what are they doing in response when they go into their electorates?

Mr E.S. Ripper: I bet if we put petition forms in your shop, a lot of those customers would sign them.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Would the Leader of the Opposition tell them that Labor's plan was to shut down the fishery for four months?

Mr E.S. Ripper: I am telling you that if we put them in your shop, your customers would sign them.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Scarborough.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The previous government's proposal was to shut down the fishery for four months. That is the easy answer to managing a fishery: lock it up, throw away the key and do not allow access. Did members opposite bother doing any kind of impact assessment on the recreational fishing industry, the tourism industry or the charter industry?

Several members interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: They did nothing.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Cannington.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will take interjections in a minute. Let me ask brain box over there a question. What was his plan to manage the number of recreational fishers; what was he suggesting be done to measure the impact of overfishing? Here is one.

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bill Johnston; Deputy Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mark McGowan

An opposition member interjected.

Mr W.J. Johnston: I was not here.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: There is no plan from those opposite.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Cannington! Member for Scarborough, address your comments to the Chair and do not get sidetracked and ask people questions.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It will give me no greater pleasure than to ignore the member for Cannington.

Mr W.J. Johnston: She asked a question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have dealt with that, member for Cannington. Member for Scarborough.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have yet to hear from members opposite what their plan is. Nobody can tell me the number of recreational fishers who are impacting on the fishery—not one person. We are proposing a very small \$30 fee that will provide an access permit to the fishery. By the time the 2013 election comes around, we may know how many people are fishing recreationally. We may well know how many fish they catch. We might know from their global positioning systems —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: From using the money that is going into the recreational fishing trust and accessing the database, which does not presently exist, we may learn how many people are going fishing and how many fish they are catching. They may be able to tell us from their GPS coordinates where they are catching the fish. They will be able to tell us the time they are catching the fish and the size of them. All this data is not available at present to anyone because there are no recreational fishing permits.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): Order!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The previous minister agrees that we require at least a 50 per cent reduction in recreational fishing effort in order to manage the fishery. In fact, the previous minister Hon Jon Ford is on record as saying that he believes we need more than a 50 per cent reduction.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Wanneroo!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: One way to manage this is to have a seasonal closure, and a seasonal closure is part of this management plan. One of the ways to assist in managing the fishery is to try to ascertain the number of people who are actually using the fishery. How do we fund a way of collating that information? We need \$4.5 million to gather that information. Do we take \$4.5 million from a school in an electorate somewhere? Do we take \$4.5 million from the education department?

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Albany!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In the current financial environment, there is no bottomless pit of money to throw at a recreational pursuit that is enjoyed by 100 000, 500 000 or maybe 600 000 people—who knows? We do not have the information required to manage the fishery. A recreational fishing permit is what will enable us to gather that information. It is part of a broader strategy. The minister has been in consultation with the industry. As part of the industry I get to speak to lots of people who fish recreationally every week.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, member for Albany!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Members opposite are missing the point. There is an entire package at play here and they are irresponsibly homing in on one aspect of the package; namely, the part of the package that will enable us to gather data on who is using the fishery. The remainder of the package may involve reduced bag limits, seasonal closures and the introduction of a recreational fishing trust fund that will provide funding for further research.

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bill Johnston; Deputy Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mark McGowan

Perhaps by the time 2013 comes around we might have narrowed down the actual breeding season for some of the species of fish that are at threat.

When asked what was the peak spawning period for each species such as dhufish, baldchin groper et cetera, Hon Jon Ford responded, to the best of his ability, as follows —

Within the west coast bioregion, pink snapper spawn mainly between July and October in the northern zone—approximately Lancelin to Kalbarri—between October and January in Cockburn Sound, and between December and January in the southern zone, which spans from Perth to Augusta. Dhufish spawn from November to March/April, and breaksea cod spawn from November to April on the west coast. The peak spawning of baldchin groper in the Abrolhos Islands is from September to December. There is little information on red snapper on the west coast.

This is the information that is available. We do not even know the accurate spawning season for one of the most threatened species of fish in Western Australia. I find that appalling.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Albany!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I cannot see why there is such objection to charging people for an access permit that allows them to fish recreationally and then using that money to fund research so we can get some quantifiable data about the species that are under threat.

Members may be interested to know that 1 367 submissions were lodged in response to the previous government's proposals on the recreational fishing industry. Interestingly, of those responses, 1 195 people referred to the seasonal closure. Seventy-five per cent of those people disagreed with it. That means that 75 per cent of people disagreed with the previous government's plan to close the fishery for four months over the peak season. Why did they disagree? They knew that it would have an impact on jobs, tourism in towns and employment in tackle stores.

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): Member for Albany, I have called your name about six times to draw your attention to the fact that you are interjecting far too much. You are skating on thin ice. I want to hear what the member is saying. I am genuinely interested in what the member is saying, but I cannot hear because of your interjections.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The respondents to the survey gave considered submissions on the previous government's proposals. They opposed the four-month extended closure over the summer peak season during the school holidays because they knew that it would impact on regional tourism and regional employment, it would impact on employment in tackle stores and it would shut down the charter boat industry. People did not want that. Seventy-five per cent of respondents disagreed with that aspect of the plan. We are taking a cautious approach. We are trialling a two-month closure period, amongst a collection of other initiatives, including reduced bag limits for dhufish, and we are also trying to gather better information on the fishery.

Members may be interested to know that in the same submission period, 902 people referred to the recreational fishing trust fund. Eighty-two per cent of those people agreed that it was a good idea. That means that 82 per cent of people who lodged submissions on whether a recreational fishing trust fund should be established agreed that it was a good idea. We have support for our proposal. When people have all the information at hand, they support the minister's recommendations for the preservation of our fish stocks. It is a good initiative and it is about time somebody made a decision and took decisive action to protect our fish stocks.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Parliamentary Secretary) [4.13 pm]: When I found out that this matter of public interest was being brought on, I took the opportunity to talk to the minister. He was disappointed that the opposition had not brought it on in the other house.

Mr E.S. Ripper: The reason is that it doesn't get brought to a vote in the other house. You can move an urgency motion but it doesn't come to a vote.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that advice. I spoke on this same topic during the last sitting week. I wonder why it has just come up in this house. I am delighted to add my learned advice on fishing to this debate.

I remind the house that on Tuesday, 24 June, when introducing the Labor government's policy on managing the recreational catch of demersal scalefish in the west coast bioregion, which does not include Carnarvon and Karratha, only the coastal region south of Kalbarri, the former Minister for Fisheries stated —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 8 September 2009]

p6471d-6483a

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bill Johnston; Deputy Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mark McGowan

The consultation process, which resulted in more than 1 350 submissions, demonstrated that there is overwhelming support in the recreational fishing community for management changes to ensure the long-term sustainability of our iconic fish species.

That is what the Minister for Fisheries, Hon Norman Moore, is doing. He is implementing a strategy to protect our iconic fish species. The former minister went on to state —

I will now outline the details of the new package for recreational fishing.

...

A seasonal restriction will prohibit the take, landing and possession of the vulnerable five species; namely, dhufish, pink snapper, baldchin groper, breaksea cod and red snapper. The seasonal restriction will ... run from 15 October to 25 December in 2008 and from 15 October to 31 January in subsequent years.

This coming summer the fishing industry would have been closed down for three and a half months, dramatically impacting recreational fishing in coastal towns. It would have been an economic and social disaster for some towns. What did the minister do? What did our government do? When we came into power, the minister decided to review the plan. Two reports were prepared. The first was a scientific report undertaken by Mr Michael O’Neill. From the information that he had at hand—which, unfortunately, was not too precise—he said that it was important to reduce the recreational catch by between 50 and 100 per cent. In his report Mr O’Neill recommended that further scientific information be gathered. Unfortunately, I do not have time to read out any of his points. He came up with eight areas of scientific review that need to be carried out. These areas require a lot of time, money and research. The Department of Fisheries needs to gather more information on eight important areas so that we have more data on which to decide whether we go to a 50 per cent reduction or, in a worst case scenario, a 100 per cent reduction in recreational fishing stocks.

I have only five minutes left but I have 30 minutes of data in front of me. I will cut to the chase. All members would have received comments from their constituents. Some people are not happy with the current strategy. The minister is listening to those people. He met with Recfishwest last week. It came forward with some proposals. The minister has listened to those proposals. Apparently, those proposals were not only from Recfishwest but also from a number of interested parties. The proposals that were put forward to the minister are being looked at by the Department of Fisheries. It will report back to the minister. The minister has advised me that he will take these proposals into consideration. If there are some genuine and useful alternatives, the minister will look at those.

MR M.J. COWPER (Murray-Wellington — Parliamentary Secretary) [4.20 pm]: This motion relates to a number of issues. The first issue is around management and I do not think any member in this place would disagree that there is a real concern for the demersal fishery. There is no question that some management plans must be put in place for that fishery. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition alluded to that and some of what he said was commonsense. However, I take exception to the stance of members opposite because they have been a little slow in the uptake of this issue. The Minister for Fisheries made the announcement a few weeks ago and the opposition’s reaction has been like a slow moving train crash. Finally, it realised what was happening.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition has been to Australind and was tackled by Ben White, who rang me to ask me what was happening about this issue. I asked him whether he was aware of what the former government was going to do about this matter—that is, to close the fisheries for four months. Poor old Ben White nearly had kittens. He said, “Murray, what can we do about it?” I told him that a range of things need to happen and that he was right in saying that we must arrive at a decision that will result in a sustainable plan for recreational fishing.

I am confident that the Minister for Fisheries will come forward with a very good plan. Members on this side of the house have done a lot of work with the minister and I am very confident that there will be, through a management plan, a successful resolution to this issue.

Amendment to Motion

Mr M.J. COWPER: I move —

To delete all words after “house” with a view to inserting the following words —

acknowledges that the government will bring forward a credible plan to sustainably manage threatened fish stocks.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 8 September 2009]

p6471d-6483a

Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bill Johnston; Deputy Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mark McGowan

In representing the people of my constituency I have put forward a number of very good recommendations to the minister. I wonder how many members on the opposition side of this house have done something on behalf of their constituents other than whinge, moan and carry on. They should put forward suggestions to the minister so that he can make an informed decision. Members opposite are meant to be representing their constituents in this place, but they fail to do that. All they want to do is play a game of backwards and forwards to try to find loopholes in this issue.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [4.22 pm]: I oppose the amendment moved by the member for Murray. The amendment seeks to close the debate on this issue. Once again the government is trying to gag the debate of their backbenchers who are opposed to this tax. It is trying to gag the debate on the opposition's motion, which reflects the views of the thousands and thousands of fisher people in this state who are opposed to this tax.

In the three days of the boat show, the people who are opposed to this tax and who are organising the campaign at the grassroots level collected 11 000 signatures against this tax. I repeat: in three days. Of course, that is the reason that the minister is now desperately scrambling to resolve this situation. He has raised the issue of the tax. He knows that it is unfair. He knows that it is unworkable. He knows that to be so despite the comments— weasel words—of the member for Murray and the member for Scarborough to try to justify this tax as a basis for trying to collect information on the data of recreational fishing. They are weasel words. Members know that what they said is not true. The Department of Fisheries knows it is not true.

The department had its own scientific method of collecting data on the fish catch when it closed the Freycinet Estuary at Shark Bay and imposed bans on taking snapper out of that fishery. What did the department do when it allowed people to fish for snapper in Freycinet Estuary? It made them use tags, one of which I have in my hand. The tags told the department who was going fishing and how many fish they were collecting.

I oppose this amendment because the people of Western Australia who oppose this tax should have their voices heard in this house.

Point of Order

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Acting Speaker (Mr J.M. Francis), I draw your attention to standing order 129. This amendment moved by the member for Murray is a negative of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this afternoon. The wording of the Leader of the Opposition's motion indicates that the house should not support the proposal put forward by the government. This amendment moved by the member for Murray is a negative of that in that it says that a credible plan will be brought forward. The motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition is that the government should bring forward a plan.

I also make the point that the amendment moved by the member for Murray indicates that the government will bring forward a credible plan, which implies that the existing plan is not credible. I seek your ruling on whether this is a direct negative of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr J.M. Francis): I have been given advice on this matter. Whilst I appreciate the member for Rockingham's sentiment, my ruling, on the advice given to me, is that it is not a direct negative and is within the required terms. That being said, I will put the question.

Debate Resumed

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (28)

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mr P. Abetz | Dr E. Constable | Dr G.G. Jacobs | Mr C.C. Porter |
| Mr C.J. Barnett | Mr M.J. Cowper | Mr R.F. Johnson | Mr D.T. Redman |
| Mr I.C. Blayney | Mr J.H.D. Day | Mr A. Krsticevic | Mr A.J. Simpson |
| Mr I.M. Britza | Mr J.M. Francis | Mr W.R. Marmion | Mr M.W. Sutherland |
| Mr T.R. Buswell | Dr K.D. Hames | Mr P.T. Miles | Mr T.K. Waldron |
| Ms A.S. Carles | Mrs L.M. Harvey | Ms A.R. Mitchell | Dr J.M. Woollard |
| Mr G.M. Castrilli | Mr A.P. Jacob | Dr M.D. Nahan | Mr J.E. McGrath (<i>Teller</i>) |

Extract from Hansard
[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 8 September 2009]
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Speaker; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bill Johnston; Deputy Speaker; Mr David Templeman; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Dr Kim Hames; Mrs Liza Harvey; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mark McGowan

Noes (25)

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ms L.L. Baker | Mr J.C. Kobelke | Mr J.R. Quigley | Mr A.J. Waddell |
| Mr J.J.M. Bowler | Mr F.M. Logan | Ms M.M. Quirk | Mr P.B. Watson |
| Mr A.J. Carpenter | Mr M. McGowan | Mr E.S. Ripper | Mr M.P. Whitely |
| Mr R.H. Cook | Mrs C.A. Martin | Mrs M.H. Roberts | Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Ms J.M. Freeman | Mr M.P. Murray | Ms R. Saffioti | |
| Mr J.N. Hyde | Mr A.P. O’Gorman | Mr T.G. Stephens | |
| Mr W.J. Johnston | Mr P. Papalia | Mr C.J. Tallentire | |

Amendment thus passed.

Amendment (insertion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (28)

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mr P. Abetz | Dr E. Constable | Dr G.G. Jacobs | Mr C.C. Porter |
| Mr C.J. Barnett | Mr M.J. Cowper | Mr R.F. Johnson | Mr D.T. Redman |
| Mr I.C. Blayney | Mr J.H.D. Day | Mr A. Krsticevic | Mr A.J. Simpson |
| Mr I.M. Britza | Mr J.M. Francis | Mr W.R. Marmion | Mr M.W. Sutherland |
| Mr T.R. Buswell | Dr K.D. Hames | Mr P.T. Miles | Mr T.K. Waldron |
| Ms A.S. Carles | Mrs L.M. Harvey | Ms A.R. Mitchell | Dr J.M. Woollard |
| Mr G.M. Castrilli | Mr A.P. Jacob | Dr M.D. Nahan | Mr J.E. McGrath (<i>Teller</i>) |

Noes (25)

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ms L.L. Baker | Mr J.C. Kobelke | Mr J.R. Quigley | Mr A.J. Waddell |
| Mr J.J.M. Bowler | Mr F.M. Logan | Ms M.M. Quirk | Mr P.B. Watson |
| Mr A.J. Carpenter | Mr M. McGowan | Mr E.S. Ripper | Mr M.P. Whitely |
| Mr R.H. Cook | Mrs C.A. Martin | Mrs M.H. Roberts | Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Ms J.M. Freeman | Mr M.P. Murray | Ms R. Saffioti | |
| Mr J.N. Hyde | Mr A.P. O’Gorman | Mr T.G. Stephens | |
| Mr W.J. Johnston | Mr P. Papalia | Mr C.J. Tallentire | |

Amendment thus passed.

Motion, as Amended

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (28)

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mr P. Abetz | Dr E. Constable | Dr G.G. Jacobs | Mr C.C. Porter |
| Mr C.J. Barnett | Mr M.J. Cowper | Mr R.F. Johnson | Mr D.T. Redman |
| Mr I.C. Blayney | Mr J.H.D. Day | Mr A. Krsticevic | Mr A.J. Simpson |
| Mr I.M. Britza | Mr J.M. Francis | Mr W.R. Marmion | Mr M.W. Sutherland |
| Mr T.R. Buswell | Dr K.D. Hames | Mr P.T. Miles | Mr T.K. Waldron |
| Ms A.S. Carles | Mrs L.M. Harvey | Ms A.R. Mitchell | Dr J.M. Woollard |
| Mr G.M. Castrilli | Mr A.P. Jacob | Dr M.D. Nahan | Mr J.E. McGrath (<i>Teller</i>) |

Noes (25)

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ms L.L. Baker | Mr J.C. Kobelke | Mr J.R. Quigley | Mr A.J. Waddell |
| Mr J.J.M. Bowler | Mr F.M. Logan | Ms M.M. Quirk | Mr P.B. Watson |
| Mr A.J. Carpenter | Mr M. McGowan | Mr E.S. Ripper | Mr M.P. Whitely |
| Mr R.H. Cook | Mrs C.A. Martin | Mrs M.H. Roberts | Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>) |
| Ms J.M. Freeman | Mr M.P. Murray | Ms R. Saffioti | |
| Mr J.N. Hyde | Mr A.P. O’Gorman | Mr T.G. Stephens | |
| Mr W.J. Johnston | Mr P. Papalia | Mr C.J. Tallentire | |

Question (motion, as amended) thus passed.