

NINGALOO MARINE PARK (ALTERATION OF BOUNDARIES) ORDER 2004 - DISALLOWANCE

Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [4.34 pm]: I comment on this motion because it is obviously about an area that is very dear to my heart. I was brought up on a major part of the area to which this extension goes and I know it very well. I feel sorry for the people of Carnarvon and Exmouth. In my maiden speech last evening I alluded to incentives for people to live in the area. This legislation is about the erosion of incentives for people to live there permanently because the proposed sanctuary zones will be where people catch fish, crayfish and so on. The possession limit in the Ningaloo Marine Park has increased in the past couple of years. It was previously 17 kilograms of fillets and it is now 20 kilograms. This limit was brought in to provide some form of uniformity. However, I argue that it is far too high. However, if members are worried that fish stocks are being taken in too high a number, perhaps the limit should be reduced. I believe this whole area should be reconsidered.

I will talk about the proposed extension of 60 kilometres south from Amherst Point to Red Bluff. I believe this extension of the marine park actually goes beyond the area where the Ningaloo Reef ends. The Ningaloo Reef ends at Gnarraloo Bay. Gnarraloo Bay is some 90 kilometres north of Carnarvon and is one of only two spots at which people from Carnarvon can launch a boat for recreational purposes. The only other place is the blowholes. It is used by the locals who live in the region whom I talked about and who have grandchildren living there as well.

We certainly need to protect this area from the pressures on it. I totally sympathise with the view that we must look after this area, as it is a magnificent area. However, I believe we can do that in other ways than by this legislation. We can do it by turning the sanctuary zone into a wilderness zone, to which people can take their kids and families and, while there, camp in the wilderness and eat some fish but take none out. That, I believe, is an experience of Australia that is fading. We continue locking up land and denying the next generation experiences that we took for granted as something very special. For instance, there is nothing better than sitting by a campfire and looking into the flames. That is a magical experience that will now be taken away. If members go further north in the Ningaloo Marine Park and visit any of the Department of Conservation and Land Management sites, they will see that fires are no longer allowed, only gas barbeques. They are very clinical and very clean, and I hate to say it but I would not bother camping there.

I may be a little cynical, but those of us who live in that area do become cynics after a number of years. There are three commercial sites in the extension of the Ningaloo Marine Park proposal; that is from Gnarraloo Bay south. One of those sites is Red Bluff, a top surfing spot. I am not a surfer, although I tried to surf many years ago. I am sure I just carried a board then so that it attracted the other gender! However, I believe it is the only surf beach that has a left-hand curl. The sign there that says "Red Bluff" is constantly taken away, as the surfers want to protect it from anyone else in the world. Three Mile Camp is another world-renowned windsurfing spot. It also has a camp at present commercially run, and very well run I might add. It allows only some 200 campers, and in September it is totally full of people who come from all over the world to windsurf. Gnarraloo Bay, as I said, is the only other spot where people who live in Carnarvon can launch a boat for recreational purposes. That also has a chalet-style camp. Nobody is allowed to camp in the bay; they actually camp at the Gnarraloo homestead. I believe CALM wants this area for its own commercial gain and empire building. Members may call me a cynic. I also say a little more cynically that perhaps it is intended that this encroachment join up with the Shark Bay area to create a marine park all the way. Perhaps it is an encroachment to increase the amount that is needed for World Heritage listing. Maybe I am being a little over-cynical. However, I find that this is an erosion of people's rights.

I refer also to the 34 per cent sanctuary zones and the suggestion that people can now fish in 50 per cent of those areas. The Ningaloo Marine Park was extended by 60 kilometres. The area from the Gnarraloo homestead virtually right through to Warroora station, which is not very far from Coral Bay, for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the area, is inaccessible. There is no road there. It is totally wrong to say that this is an area that is open for fishing. It is wrong to say that 50 per cent of the area is accessible. It is a lot less than that. I ask everyone in this chamber to please consider that we need to review this for the better management of the area and for the future of our children.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [4.40 pm]: I thank members who have taken part in the debate on this motion. I guess the Greens were predictable. If they had their way, the whole marine park would be a sanctuary zone or no-go zone for everybody. For some reason or other, human beings simply cannot look after anything, and it is best to just keep them away from anything that needs to be looked after.

I appreciated the Minister for Fisheries' response. However, without being disrespectful in any way, I must say that I am not quite sure what he meant. He talked about a pragmatic approach but said that he supports the government's position on the Ningaloo Marine Park. I put the argument that the approach of the government to the Ningaloo Marine Park was not a pragmatic approach but a green approach, and that, had the former Minister for Fisheries been in charge, we would have got a more pragmatic result than the result we finished up with of the sanctuary zone comprising 34 per cent of the area. I hope that in future the government will take into account not just the scientific evidence of the Department of Fisheries, but also the recreational needs of a vast number of Western Australians and the economic needs of people who live in that part of the world and in other parts of Western Australia where the government may decide to create marine parks. Marine parks can be used by all sorts of people and be conserved at the same time if the right balance is achieved. That is not hard to do. However, if Labor is aiming for a green vote, and that is its overriding concern, it will get a result such as that in the Ningaloo Marine Park. If it takes a commonsense, middle-of-the-road approach - a pragmatic approach, as the minister said - it might get a result that everybody is happy with. I ask the government to give serious thought to that with the Ningaloo Marine Park and, indeed, with any other marine parks that the government might create in the future, to ensure that people who want to use them can do so, but obviously at the same time ensuring that the environmental aspects of those areas are preserved. That can be done and should be done. Even though the opposition will lose this vote, I say again to the government that it should take this opportunity now, early in its term, to revisit the Ningaloo Marine Park issue and find out whether there is some way in which it can modify what it has decided. Hon Ken Baston raised the notion of wilderness areas. We had given some thought to that, from a policy perspective, before the election, but the policy was not finalised. However, some very good ideas have come from the deliberations of our side of politics on this matter. I will refer them to the Minister for Fisheries to see whether he can find any merit in them. I think he might find that this is the way to go, as opposed to the no-go, blanket banning of people from particular parts of a marine park.

I commend the motion to the house. Although I can count, we hope that commonsense will prevail, at least within the government ranks.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (16)

Hon Ken Baston	Hon Anthony Fels	Hon Robyn McSweeney	Hon Margaret Rowe
Hon George Cash	Hon Nigel Hallett	Hon Norman Moore	Hon Barbara Scott
Hon Peter Collier	Hon Ray Halligan	Hon Helen Morton	Hon Donna Taylor
Hon Murray Criddle (Teller)	Hon Barry House	Hon Simon O'Brien	Hon Bruce Donaldson

Noes (16)

Hon Shelley Archer	Hon Kate Doust	Hon Graham Giffard	Hon Sally Talbot
Hon Matthew Benson-Lidholm	Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Sheila Mills	Hon Ken Travers
Hon Vincent Catania	Hon Adele Farina	Hon Louise Pratt	Hon Giz Watson
Hon Kim Chance	Hon Jon Ford	Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich	Hon Ed Dermer (Teller)

The PRESIDENT: Honourable members, this is one of those unusual situations in which the votes are tied. In those circumstances, the President has a casting vote, and in exercising a casting vote the President may, if he so desires, give a reason or reasons for the way in which he votes. I vote with the noes to maintain the status quo.

Question thus negatived.