

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

RECREATIONAL FISHING — FEES

Motion

Resumed from 12 August on the following motion moved by Mr E.S. Ripper (Leader of the Opposition) —

That the house condemns the Barnett government's unjustified attack on recreational fishing and calls upon the government to withdraw the huge fees it is imposing on ordinary Western Australian families.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough) [4.02 pm]: To continue from where I left off last week, I had been talking about the member for Cockburn's comment that the closure of the fishery from September to December would achieve a 40 per cent reduction in the catch. This is based on creel survey data. He fails to note that closures and reduced bag limits are part of the fisheries management package proposed by Minister Moore. There needs to be an overall coordinated strategy backed by constant data collection and better research into the fishery. The fishery cannot be managed with this ambiguity about people accessing the fishery. Perhaps there are more than 500 000 recreational fishers out there. I believe there are substantially fewer. But anecdotal evidence does not cut it, and that is what we have been relying on for too long. We need a cheap and effective way to monitor recreational fishing participation, and I have yet to hear from members opposite how this information can be gathered without a licensing scheme.

The Leader of the Opposition asserts that our government does not have credibility on protecting fish stocks. I point out to members that in 2001-02, when the Department of Fisheries was begging for more money and once again suggested a recreational fishing licence, the previous government rejected the suggestion. On the rejection of the suggestion—a very practical way for users of the fishery to pay for the research into the fishery—did the previous government give the Department of Fisheries and funding required to conduct research? No, it did nothing. The department did not get the boost it needed to improve its information. The previous government did not have the stomach for the correct but politically unpopular introduction of a recreational fishing licence and presided over a drastic issue about the sustainability of the west coast demersal fin fishery.

When we talk about the credibility of the Liberal government on fisheries management, I remind members that on a Liberal government's watch, under Hon Monty House, the reviews of recreational fishing finally started. Monty House instigated portfolio reviews and introduced benchmark dates for commercial wetline fishing reviews in 1997. These benchmarks were put out there to put the commercial fishery on notice that its historical catch rates were to be reviewed and reduced to address sustainability issues in the fishery. Monty House took the tough but unpopular step of closing down the Shark Bay snapper fishery; just in the nick of time, it seems. At that time, both commercial and recreational fishers denied that there was any problem with the fishery. The fishery was on the brink of collapse, but thanks to Hon Monty House it was closed, and it has now recovered to the extent that there may be a limited season for that fishery in the near future.

When the Labor Party took government there was data indicating declining stocks and question marks over the commercial catch, but no commitment to quality data collection. The Minister for Fisheries, Hon Kim Chance, presided over a do-nothing period of fisheries management. There was a slim chance of anything happening there. After Hon Kim Chance, the fishery was managed during the watch of Hon Jon Ford. His proposals—we have heard much about them in this place—were all but adopted by Hon Norman Moore, who conducted an independent review of the research data to address the concerns of the recreational fishing sector regarding the integrity of the data.

Minister Moore did not follow through with three of the previous minister's proposals; quite sensibly, I might add. One of the proposals was to reduce the bag limit for people looking to take their fish while diving on compressed air. It seemed like a token gesture to everybody who was involved in the fishery to try to make the people diving on compressed air bear some of the pain. I do not know what percentage of the fish they would be taking—nobody knows; we do not have any licence scheme—but it seemed like a very tokenistic gesture. Minister Moore also refused to follow through with the ban on electric fishing reels. People who fish with electric fishing reels are either elderly or disabled, or fishing a fishery that is far offshore. It is not a pleasant experience from my own point of view, and it is not a fishery that is presently under threat. There was no need for it.

The other aspect of Hon Jon Ford's proposals that Hon Norman Moore reviewed was the proposed closure of the fishery for four months of the year over the peak season. Minister Moore instead undertook an independent review of the data. The data on which the decisions were based was derived from creel surveys. For the information of members, creel surveys involve interviewing people at all the boat ramps around the state over a 12-month period. Between 14 000 and 15 000 people were interviewed, and most of the interviews were done over weekends. The way the creel surveys are conducted is that fisheries officers count the numbers of boat

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

trailers parked at boat ramps, the number of boats coming in and going out, the catch on board all the boats, and the number of people on the boats coming in. The problem with creel survey data is that it does not include marinas, the surveys are not undertaken at night, and they do not count the number of people who come in after 5.00 pm. People who go fishing in summer do not come in until the sun goes down, which is well after 5.00 pm. The scientific data review is more indicative of this being an underestimate of the recreational fishing take rather than an overestimate, but here we are again, back at data collection.

As a passionate recreational angler, I am happy to pay a modest fee for my preferred recreational activity. For my family, access to the fishery will cost us \$240 over the entire year, which is the equivalent of two visits to the movies. We get to fish all year for some species of fish for \$240 a year. Recreational fishing is a social pastime, and fishers need to pay their way. It is not up to consolidated revenue to fund research and management initiatives into a recreational pursuit. I do not expect taxpayers to fund research into the four-wheel-drive industry, and I do not expect taxpayers to fund research into golfing and other forms of recreational activity. It is just a nonsense. It should be user pays. People using the fishery should be paying for the compliance and the management. The member for Albany asserted that it would cost \$30 each time a person goes out fishing, but that is utter nonsense. It is \$30 for the entire year. It is the cheapest club membership for any recreational sporting pursuit.

There has been much conjecture in this place about what will happen with the money collected. The money will go into compliance, education, research and enhancement. For the benefit of members who are not as involved in this fishery as I am, enhancement means aquaculture, restocking efforts and finding ways to fix the damage that we have done to the fishery by overfishing. The overfishing is a result of long-term mismanagement due to lack of information. To return to the topic of aquaculture, I was astonished to find out that there are only two finfish aquaculture licences in Western Australia—one for mullocky and one for barramundi. Aquaculture is so tied up in red tape and drawn-out approvals processes that it is not a viable pursuit. I do not understand why we are not farming our fish. Fish are farmed in Thailand; why can we not farm fish in Western Australia? We have 12 500 kilometres of coastline, yet after \$12 million to \$16 million has been sunk into aquaculture research by the Department of Fisheries, we still do not have a broadscale finfish aquaculture facility.

Many members opposite, including the member for Mandurah, have talked about being inundated by constituents. What has been their reaction? It has been to create a beat-up about a modest \$30 access fee for a fishery that is under threat. No alternatives for information gathering have been offered; there has been only political rhetoric and contributions to a beat-up. Where fisheries are concerned, we have had it pretty good in this state; in fact, some would say that it has almost been open slather. We need to stop talking about sustainability, put our money where our mouths are, and start taking responsibility for fisheries management.

The member for Mandurah also quoted a constituent who was concerned about the effects of this fishing licence on boat-selling businesses, chandlery businesses, bait-and-tackle businesses, local town tourism and fish and chip shops. For goodness sake—what effect would the seasonal closure proposed by Hon Jon Ford have had on these businesses? I also fail to see how a recreational fishing licence will have an adverse impact on fish and chip shops. If anything, if people are not going out to catch their own fish, surely there would be an improvement in the turnover of fish and chip shops as people seek other places to get a feed of fish. Perhaps the member was referring to anecdotal evidence of recreational fishers selling their catch illegally to fish and chip shops; I do not know.

The member for Collie-Preston asserted that it will become too expensive to go fishing, and that families will instead go to amusement parks and spend \$20 a child. That defies logic; if children can buy a recreational fishing licence for \$15 each, they would still have \$5 left over to buy enough bait for two weekends of fishing. Let us get serious about the impact this modest fee will have on family recreational activities.

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I agree; it would be a cheap amusement park!

The member for Collie-Preston said that not enough money is being spent on research, yet he did not offer any practical solutions on how to fund research into management of fisheries that are not uniformly accessed, despite the assertions of many members.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Not every Western Australian goes fishing; if they did, my husband and I would be far wealthier than we are! Comparative costings with other states have been made in this place. The cost of the recreational fishing licence in Western Australia has been compared with those of New South Wales,

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Queensland and other jurisdictions. I do not believe that an accurate comparison can be made between Western Australian fisheries and those of other states. We have 12 500 kilometres of coastline and fewer people living here. It costs more to monitor and manage our larger areas; that is just a fact of life. Regardless of that, \$30 is not an excessive fee.

In closing, I would like to assure the member for Mindarie—he is not in the house, but I am sure he can look this up later in *Hansard*—that the customers of Bluewater Tackle World come from a wide range of socioeconomic groups, and our customers understand the sustainability issues of the fishery and want better fisheries management. They begrudgingly accept the need for a recreational fishing licence, and are unanimous in their view that the fishery was mismanaged under the watch of the previous government. The time for strong, decisive action is now, and I for one support the minister's proposals, and commend him for having the intestinal fortitude to introduce the politically unpopular but ultimately correct decision to introduce a recreational fishing licence.

We need to implement all these measures and look at the review process in 12 months. We may be looking, further down the track, at seasonal closures and all sorts of other measures. I am informed, anecdotally—once again, I do not have the information to back this up—that the fisheries in Karratha are under serious threat. My colleagues in Karratha tell me that they now need to travel 40 kilometres offshore to catch fish. The mining boom has made a significant impact on the fishery across the state. Many of the fly in, fly out workers and people on the various barges and rigs spend a lot of their spare time fishing. The fly in, fly out workers spend a lot of their time travelling to and from places such as Carnarvon, Exmouth and Shark Bay, and they exert significant pressure on those fisheries when they fish for two weeks solid. We do not know who those people are because we do not have a recreational fishing licence system in place, so we do not have a data-collection mechanism. How can we possibly manage those fisheries and take the action that we need to take to protect those fish stocks without that?

As I said, the time for strong, decisive action is now. If we do not take this action, I might be deprived of the opportunity to go fishing with my kids and my grandchildren in the future. My interest in all this is in making sure that we have a well-managed, sustainable fishery. I fully support the minister's recommendations; in fact, I commend him for taking a stand that should have been taken way back in 1989, when recreational fishing licences were first mooted by the Department of Fisheries. Had they been adopted then, I do not believe our fisheries would now be on the brink of collapse, and there would be more equitable sharing of fisheries between the commercial sector and the recreational sector under the integrated fisheries management scheme. I thank you for your time, Madam Acting Speaker.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.16 pm]: I will not take up a great deal of the chamber's time; I simply want to make a contribution to this debate on behalf of the people of Kwinana.

I have very fond and formative memories of fishing with my uncle Jack in Cockburn Sound as a young boy and young man. Those sorts of experiences in undertaking a range of recreational activities are important for the development of family relationships and for people's life experiences. I should say that I no longer fish from a boat; I get seasick simply sitting in the bath nowadays! Nevertheless, I want to make a forceful case on behalf of the people who fish from boats, particularly young families in Cockburn Sound who want to engage in a family outing that is useful, strengthens the family unit and is essentially a way of Australian life.

From time to time it is the melancholy duty of governments to raise taxes for a range of things, whether for general revenue, fees and charges or specific activities. It is also the case that, from time to time, governments raise taxes to change behaviour and to make sure that behaviour is undertaken in a particular way. For instance, the argument might be made for taxes on cigarettes or alcohol, to militate against excessive consumption of those products.

This tax, however, will neither protect the environment nor change fishing activity to the extent that it will assist in the protection of the environment. There is no argument that fishing stocks need to be protected or that we need to have policies in place to protect our fish stocks. That is an argument which has been accepted by the community and which requires action by government to enforce those protections. The minister had his opportunity when he first became Minister for Fisheries, but I believe that it was some months before he took action in this area, despite the fact that he had advice from the Department of Fisheries that many fish stocks were under severe stress.

I want to talk about the nature of this fishing fee. As I said, it will not change behaviour. A number of members on this side of the chamber have spoken about people's attitudes to the fishing fee. We have received a lot of feedback. A comment made by one fisher particularly underscores one of the impacts of this fee. This fisher stated via email —

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

If I have to pay this fee I will make sure I bring home all the dhuiies I used to release.

There is an attitude amongst some fishers that this will change the culture of fishing. I think that over the past 10 years or so we have had an emerging culture inside the recreational fishing sector that we need to undertake our activities in a way that embraces conservation and continues to preserve fish stocks so that people can continue to fish tomorrow, like the member for Scarborough wanted. However, if we are going to change this relationship that recreational fishers have from a system of voluntary compliance and assistance in what is essentially a culture of fishing to one whereby people have an almost user-pays system, it will counteract and work against that attitude.

It is very simple: this fee is an attack on families. This is an attack on families who on an irregular basis undertake fishing trips with their family members. Quite frankly, with all the distractions—including the distractions that the member for Murray-Wellington has to take his family to recreational parks—that people have to not undertake great activities like fishing, they do not need the extra disincentives of a fee and further red tape for what is a great Australian pastime. Some of the correspondents who have contacted members of Parliament have spoken of the 90-10 rule; that is, 90 per cent of the recreational fish take is taken by 10 per cent of the fishers. They are the really serious recreational fishers who for their own purposes invest heavily in their fishing equipment. I am sure they enjoy the investment; they have powerful boats with significant equipment to assist them in what is for them a very serious pastime. The licence fee will not dampen these serious recreational fishers' consumption of the fish take. For them, it will be a very simple process to absorb that cost into the already large costs that they voluntarily undertake and they will continue to fish in the way that they always have. This licence fee will impact on only one group amongst recreational fishers; namely, occasional fishing families who simply undertake the odd fishing trip in their tinnies like I did as a kid, whether it be during school holidays or at times when kids nag their uncles or parents to the extent that they give in and take them out fishing. Therefore, this fee is an attack on families and an attack on lifestyle, and that is why it is such an unpopular measure.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: Member, will you take an interjection?

Mr R.H. COOK: I would love to, member, but I will not, simply because time is of the essence.

I will quote very briefly from some of these people to provide the chamber with a sense of the sort of impact that this fee will have. One correspondent states —

This is outrageous, what happened to the simple things in life are free, what happen to teaching our kids to fish and bond with others keeping them off the streets, yes i do agree having restriction so our stocks increase for all our future, how can you ask your mate on the spur of the moment to go fishing when you cant obtain a lic first thing in the morning and so on, this is just a big money grab...

I accept that it is not a big money grab and that there is some legitimate need to continue to have resources to draw on to undertake research. However, this is a bad fee. It may in some way offset the costs of research, but its overwhelming effect will be to undermine the lives of recreational fishers. To finish off, I will quote another correspondent, who states —

My wife and I, brought up two boys together. When they were young kids, we spent many memorable hours fishing together as a family during most weekends. Fishing had, and still is, our main recreation and it strengthens our family ties and bonds. There are many other ways of raising funds and taxes to cover the cost of such services; introducing recreation fishing licence fees is definitely not one. The Government should reconsider and weigh the social benefits and costs prior to such legislation.

I wonder whether the government thought carefully about this legislation. If the government had equipped itself with some of this public feedback, would it have been so quick to launch a licence of this nature? The licence may go some way to increasing the available funds for research and providing some capacity to monitor fish stocks, although I noticed that the minister has cut back the number of fishing inspectors, so I am not quite sure how that will assist in the global program. However, I do know one thing: this is an attack on families. It is an attack on families who like to undertake the simple Australian pleasure of fishing. It is not necessarily a fatal blow, but it is another obstacle that we are placing in the way of maintaining family activities. The government should be condemned for its across-the-board, clumsy attack on occasional recreational fishers. The government should actually assert its intellectual capability and find some other way to protect our fish stocks, rather than impose this simplistic fee that will undermine people's capacity to spend time with their families and to go out in the tinnie to catch a feed of fish.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham) [4.26 pm]: I, too, rise to condemn this imposition of fees on ordinary folk who wish to go fishing. I come to this debate, I suppose, from two backgrounds. One is that as a committed conservationist I want to see the preservation of fish stocks in not only Western Australia, but also the oceans

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

and inland waterways generally. I think it is incredibly important that we maintain biodiversity in the oceans that we have some capacity to control at least, and more broadly in the oceans of the world. I think that the overfishing and pollution of the world's oceans is an international tragedy. The fact is that through human activity, coral reefs around the world are now in danger and many fish species are threatened with extinction. The oceans of the world are a marvel and a jewel and need to be preserved and protected. That is the core point from which I look at fishing and other human interaction with the ocean; we need to preserve what is there for the long term and we need to ensure that the world's oceans and the life within them—not just the iconic whales and dolphins and so forth, but also the other species—are protected. I also represent an electorate, Rockingham, in which there is a high level of boat ownership and a large number of people who like to go fishing. My electorate is, funnily enough, virtually surrounded by ocean on three sides; it is like a peninsula that juts into the Indian Ocean. There is a preponderance of people with small inexpensive boats—not the large boats that we might find in some of the more affluent parts of Perth, but the so-called tinnies—and people who are occasional fishing participants who go out every now and then for a bit of enjoyment. I understand those people's pastimes and indeed, rarely but on occasion, I have gone out fishing myself. I am keener on snorkelling, to be honest with members, and it is something that I try to fit in a few times every summer. I like to go snorkelling and look at the fish life. But I have been out fishing on occasion—not as often as most of my constituents, but I have fished on occasion.

My difficulty with these fees comes from the view of wanting to protect the ocean's fish stocks, particularly those that we can control off the coast of Western Australia, to preserve them not only for future fishing, although that is important, but also for their own sake because of the innate beauty of what is in our oceans. My difficulty with the licence fee proposed is that I do not think it does anything towards preserving fish stocks. It is a cash grab. There are other ways in which we can preserve fish stocks. There are things that the government can do. There are things that we did and tried to do when we were in office that were criticised by our political opponents. One measure in particular was the establishment of Ningaloo Marine Park and the massive, certainly by historical standards, sanctuary zones we put in place at Ningaloo. The measures we implemented at Ningaloo were attacked and criticised by the Liberal Party when we were in office. The Liberal Party attempted to make them into a significant political issue to defeat us. Fortunately, we stuck behind the measures we were proposing to implement. We implemented them and preserved in sanctuary zones large areas of iconic reefs in the area of Exmouth. I am very pleased that we did that, because I believe that was a significant move towards conservation in our time in office.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): I ask members to please conduct their conversations quietly or outside the chamber.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As environment minister in 2006 I wanted to go further than that. I wanted to expand a number of marine parks around Western Australia with comprehensive sanctuary zones beyond the measures that were put in place at Ningaloo. I started a significant process towards doing that, particularly in the capes region of the south west. I wanted to go further in the north west as well and indeed along parts of the metropolitan coastline. I had produced some proposals that were being taken forward to achieve that outcome. It was a very difficult thing to do and there were a lot of obstacles in my way to achieve that outcome. However, that was the direction I wanted to move in; I am not afraid to say it. I believe that sanctuary zones, as a mechanism of preserving marine life and the diversity of species in the ocean, is the way we must go to preserve fish stocks in Western Australia. As I said, it is not just because we want to eat those fish but also because of their innate beauty and the innate beauty of a biodiverse ocean. That is the direction in which we must go. We must preserve more of our oceans. Some people will not like it. From the feedback I have had, most people see the logic of setting aside areas like national parks in the ocean for the preservation of biodiversity, fish stocks and everything else that goes with it—crustaceans and other forms of marine life. Most people see the logic and sense in that. That is the way we can preserve fish stocks in the ocean.

Another way to preserve fish stocks, of which we did quite a bit in office, is to put restrictions on which types of fish people can catch and where they can catch them. They are the two best techniques for preserving fish stocks. They require political courage, but I would endorse any government that did that. The vast majority of people, whether or not they fish, would endorse that view. People who fish might get a bit upset that they cannot go to some places to catch fish, but they would understand that if the fish are breeding there, somewhere else down the track there will be more fish for them to catch in the future outside that zone. People understand that if they are restricted to a certain time for catching fish, down the track there will be more fish to catch for them, their children, their grandchildren and so forth. They are the two main techniques that we should be using.

A simple charge of \$30 for an average person to go fishing from a tinnie is not the way to go. As I said, I fish rarely but I probably will not do it at all now because I would not be bothered buying a licence for me, my three children and my wife to go fishing. I would not go out a bit deeper and catch something a bit bigger for a \$150

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

fee. However, I am not the problem because I go fishing very rarely. It is not me that is the problem in terms of fish stocks. However, it means that people like me and my children will miss out on the pleasure of the occasional fishing trip in my friend's or father-in-law's tinnie. That is what it will mean. It will impact on the culture of people who do fish. People will want to get their money's worth now. People will be of the view that they are paying for it now; therefore, they need to get their money's worth. I say that, on the basis of the natural human reaction, people who are paying for something want to get what they pay for. I believe there is a strong motivation now for people to take more from the ocean because of this fee. There is a strong motivation for people who fish rarely and take very little to not go out fishing. This fee, therefore, will remove the pleasure for a lot of people and it will impose a cost on some people who will have difficulty affording it. It will mean also that people will go out and try to get their money's worth. That is the message that is being sent by these charges. My constituents in Rockingham would have accepted greater restrictions and more marine parks and sanctuary zones along the coastline. They understand those sorts of restrictions. People do not understand the logic of a fee for fishing, no matter how much or how often they take fish. What it will do is encourage them to change their fishing culture. Most people who go fishing these days understand the conservation ethos. However, this fee says to them that they are now paying for it, the government has got their money and they are free to take more fish to get their money's worth. That is the problem with this initiative.

The second argument that the government runs is that this fee is required for research. I have had some involvement with the Department of Fisheries staff; they are very professional people. They understand that fish stocks need to be preserved for the future. They have extraordinarily large amounts of research, which they have built up over a long period. In fact they claim that theirs is one of the best fisheries managing agencies in Australia, if not the world. That claim was made regularly. If that is the case and they have that level of expertise and knowledge built up over many decades, why do they need more money? They know and we all know what has been going on in the oceans off Western Australia. We all know what needs to happen and they know what needs to happen. This grab out of the wallets of people in Rockingham to fund research that the department already has seems to me to be just a venal grab for cash and will not achieve the outcome the government claims it is seeking. If the staff members of the department are professional, they have either been misleading us over all these years—which I do not believe they have been doing—or they have the knowledge and they know what we need to do. I have outlined what they need to do and I have outlined the two courses of action to preserve fish stocks in Western Australia. They would be better conservation initiatives than this initiative, which will merely impact on ordinary folk in my electorate of Rockingham who go fishing every now and then. People like me, people like my in-laws, people like my children and people the length and breadth of my electorate will be unhappy with this fee that the government is imposing on them, as it will not do anything to preserve fish stocks; it will just rip money off people for no good reason.

MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park) [4.37 pm]: I do not intend to speak for long. I will quickly endorse the comments made by the member for Rockingham on this motion. I speak in support of the Leader of the Opposition's motion —

That the house condemns the Barnett government's unjustified attack on recreational fishing and calls upon the government to withdraw the huge fees it is imposing on ordinary Western Australian families.

I represent the electorate of Victoria Park, obviously an inner city electorate. It does not have a coastal boundary, although it has a boundary with the Swan River. I have been contacted by a number of constituents about this fishing tax that the government has chosen to introduce and that the member for Rockingham described quite accurately as a venal grab for cash in a way that will not do what the minister says it is intended to do. It is not linked to the fish people catch and it is not linked to how much fish they catch. To describe the fishing fee—this tax—as a conservation strategy is misleading to those people who will have to find the resources to pay to fish or to those who will simply not fish at all because of it. The number of constituents that have contacted me is not huge. However, they have made the point that they do not fish to catch their bag limit; they fish simply for the enjoyment of fishing and to take a few fish home to eat. They very rarely go out to catch the bag limit of the fish they are chasing. They have made the point that this extra expense imposed by the government will mean that they can now no longer participate in a pastime that everybody in this chamber has at some point or other undertaken. Although I have fished over the years, I am more of a very keen diver. As the member for Rockingham has pointed out, conservation for its own sake is, indeed, a worthy cause. It is not just so that we can continue to fish, but so that when I am dead in the ground, future divers and, as in the member for Rockingham's case, snorkellers can observe what we observe today off our coast. The Western Australian coast is indeed something worth preserving. However, if the government will bring in these sorts of revenue-raising devices, it should at the very least be honest about what it is doing. Such measures will in no way result in increased conservation strategies, regardless of what the minister says this fishing tax will do. This tax is, as the member for Rockingham has said, a venal grab for cash. Certainly, for the people of my electorate, this tax takes

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

something that has otherwise been a relatively cheap pastime and makes it something in which they will no longer be able to participate.

It is also worth noting that in question time today, the Treasurer took great delight in expressing his views on extending trading hours to 9.00 pm and the impact of that extension on the price of groceries for Western Australians. However, he did not mention the general increases in household fees and charges that he has inflicted on Western Australians—that he and his government have made a conscious decision to impose on Western Australians. Those fees and charges far outweigh any possible gains to which he referred in his answer in question time today. It is worth remembering that I pointed out in the question I put to the Treasurer today that the representative household under this government will this year see a rise of nearly 10 per cent in household fees and charges and that the consumer price index this financial year will be 2.5 per cent. The It Pays to Learn allowance—gone; the liquefied petroleum gas subsidy—gone; the Waterwise consumer rebate—gone. It is not simply a matter of a fishing tax in isolation. Earlier we discussed the landfill levy, which is another impost on Western Australians. The member for West Swan made the point that it is a further tax on Western Australians to fund the ongoing operation of the Department of Environment and Conservation. This is just one of many different things that this government has chosen to do that will increase the average cost of living; that will increase the average cost of being a Western Australian. This has nothing to do with conserving our fish stocks. If indeed the government was honest and genuine in seeking to conserve our fish stocks, I would be one of the very first here to support such an initiative because everybody in this place has understood for a long time that fish stocks in Western Australian waters, those waters over which we have some vague control, are not increasing and need to be preserved. However, it is important to note—I rose briefly, member for Gosnells, to make this point—that this fishing tax is just one of a large range of taxes and imposts that this government has brought in since its election nearly a year ago. The Treasurer has described these imposts as backdoor taxes. That is how he has described them in the past and that is certainly how I intend to describe them now. On top of the removal of the It Pays to Learn allowance, there is the removal of the LPG subsidy and the Waterwise rebate. The government is funding its unsustainable election commitments and the commitments that it is now making above and beyond the budget process through secretive backdoor taxes of which, dare I say, this fishing tax is just one of many more to come.

This government continues to increase the cost of being a Western Australian. On behalf of my Victoria Park constituents who have contacted me, I strongly support the Leader of the Opposition's motion and look forward to hearing the government's explanation about how exactly this impost, this fishing tax, will in any way at all preserve the fish stocks of Western Australia.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [4.45 pm]: I also rise to add my opposition to this fish tax. I welcome much of the content, or tone, of this debate, which is essentially about conservation. The problem is the method to be used to achieve that conservation objective. Many of the comments from members on both sides of the house reflect the understanding that fish stocks are under severe pressure, especially in the area close to the Perth metropolitan area, the population centre of the state. The members for Rockingham and Victoria Park have both expressed their delight in a pastime that I certainly delight in—namely, snorkelling and seeing fish rather than pulling them out of the water. There was a time when people could swim or snorkel around Rottneet Island and see quite large blue groper. They can no longer do that. Unfortunately, we barely have the chance of seeing a small blue groper. The issue of how we manage our fish stocks has been touched on by other members. Perhaps the most useful method, the one that can really make a big difference to fish stocks, is the greater rollout of no-take areas. It has already been mentioned that 34 per cent of the Ningaloo Marine Park is a designated no-take area. That is one of the best mechanisms by which to ensure the preservation of the marine environment, including the fish that live in that marine environment.

To explain the reasons that I believe this fish tax will not work, I refer members to the value of a dhufish. A dhufish fillet costs about \$90 a kilo. That provides people with the opportunity to recoup the cost of their licence very quickly, thereby limiting the incentive not to fish. As mentioned by other members, for those people who do the most damage to our fish stocks, the cost of this licence is probably quite trivial. However, for families and young people who fish—as I recall enjoying fishing for skipjack in the Blackwood River at Augusta with my brothers, the hope of catching a fish is what kept us going—this sort of fish tax will be an impediment to that very natural recreational pursuit. It is a real concern that, in seeking to protect fish stocks, the government is seeking to use a mechanism that will be an attack on the less wealthy in society. This will have little impact on those who own the big boats with global positioning systems and fish-finders. It will not work at all. Given the costs associated with mooring a big boat—these stink boats and the like—obviously this \$30-a-head tax will not make any difference.

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Also, we need to bear in mind that the ethos of conservation is becoming an increasing part of who we are as Western Australians. In the early 1990s and, indeed, into the early part of this decade, the debate was about the protection of old-growth forests. Now we debate the protection of marine areas and the creation of marine protected areas. I think that we can draw a parallel between the idea of licensing people to catch fish—that is, taxing them in this way—and taxing people for walking in forested areas. It will not be effective and it is not a mechanism that is in keeping with what we are really about.

I support the Leader of the Opposition's motion and his condemnation of the Barnett government's unjustified attack on recreational fishing. I believe that we need to bring about the urgent introduction of far more effective mechanisms to protect our marine environments.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro) [4.50 pm]: Members will be relieved to know that I will be speaking very briefly to the motion —

That the house condemns the Barnett government's unjustified attack on recreational fishing and calls upon the government to withdraw the huge fees it is imposing on ordinary Western Australian families.

I am entirely supportive of any moves to conserve our fish stocks. Shortly after I was elected to this place, I spoke in response to the action of our Minister for Fisheries to restrict commercial fishing licences. I spoke at that time on behalf of the environment. I also spoke because of my experience in South East Asia when I was in the military. My experience confirmed that not only South East Asia, but many places in the world, such as the Mediterranean, have been almost completely fished out as a result of giving people unrestricted access to fishing. Therefore, I support a restriction on fishing, in a measured way, to achieve sustainability. However, I also at that time spoke in favour of professional fisher people, whose families in many cases have been in the industry for generations, and I supported the concept of compensation in the event that the government were to restrict those people from accessing their means of livelihood.

On this occasion, I join with opposition members in condemning the Barnett government for seeking to impose this recreational fishing tax. The government is not seeking to impose this tax to achieve the sustainability of fish stocks. It is doing this to raise revenue. We will not be gaining any additional information or intelligence by imposing this tax. We will not be learning what types of fish people are fishing for. We will not be learning what people are catching and where they are fishing. All we will be doing is imposing a tax on people who want to engage in this recreational activity with their family. People often engage in recreational fishing to teach the younger members of their family how to enjoy, and also respect and appreciate, the environment. We will be restricting that. I must say also that I fear that the impact of this licence fee will be the reverse of what the government is intending. That is because if we impose this burden on people by compelling them to pay an amount of money that they previously did not have to pay for the privilege of going out in their boat to fish, we can guarantee that they will take every opportunity to go out in their boat to fish. It is like saying to members of the Eagles Football Club that now that they have paid their membership fees, we want them to reduce the number of times they go to Subiaco Oval for home games, because that will be better for the environment. People are not going to do that. People are going to make sure that if they cannot get to a home game themselves, they give someone else their ticket so that they do not waste their membership fee. It will be the same with these fishing licences. In the past, people might not have felt inclined to go fishing, but now that they are being compelled to make this investment in their entitlement to go fishing, they will go fishing at every opportunity.

I want to record the fact that I do not see this as an environmental measure. I see this as a punitive addition to a round of taxation measures that this government has engaged in since it took office. The government has cut support to working families across the state. It has cut support to young people who are trying to gain an education and seek employment through the It Pays to Learn allowance. The government has cut the income of families and the ability of families to support their children by imposing steep increases in the cost of power and water. The government has also increased the landfill levy, as we have heard about today. Local governments have had to increase rates because of this massive increase in the landfill levy. This increase in the landfill levy will not result in a better outcome for the environment. However, it will have a negative impact on families. This recreational fishing tax will do exactly the same thing. Therefore, I join with opposition members in condemning the Barnett government for introducing this tax, and I call on the government to reconsider this very bad decision.

MR A.P. JACOB (Ocean Reef) [4.55 pm]: I thank members for this opportunity to speak on this motion.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Did you go to the AGM?

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Mr A.P. JACOB: I absolutely did go to that annual general meeting. I think that was the busiest AGM of that particular group that I have been to in years. A lot of people did come up to me at that AGM. It was a huge one. The member for Joondalup is also a member of that group.

Mr D.A. Templeman: How long did it take for them to get their hooks into you?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will get to that. I will start by saying that this is not an easy issue for me to speak on. As the member can imagine, this issue is causing some angst in the seat of Ocean Reef. Most of the seat of Ocean Reef comprises 11 kilometres along the state's northern metropolitan coastline. There is a boat launching facility smack bang in the middle of my electorate, and there is a popular boat harbour at the south end, and there are more popular ones at the north end, at Hillarys and Mindarie. Therefore, this issue rings very true for me. I want to mention also that, although my quote in *The West Australian* when this issue first came up was true at the time I gave that quote, it was not true at the time it was printed.

Mr D.A. Templeman: That's not what you told me! You told me something different in the corridor!

Mr A.P. JACOB: By the time *The West Australian* printed that I had not received any comments, I had actually received at least 10 comments. So I did actually qualify my comments when *The West* called me, and I said that the Ocean Reef Sea Sports Club, which is the biggest fishing club in my electorate, would be holding its annual ball the following Saturday —

Mr B.S. Wyatt: Were you invited?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I was invited, and my comment was that I suspected the reason it was not emailing me was that it knew that people would be able to see me there in person and bale me up about it. We had some fantastic discussions at that ball. What I am very encouraged about on this issue is that absolutely everybody agrees that we need to do something about it. That is the feedback that I am getting from all the recreational fisher people in my electorate. Anyone who takes this issue seriously —

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Putting all the fun aside, this is a very serious issue. I too have been fishing in Perth all my life. It is getting harder and harder to find fish. The fishermen understand that, even without seeing the science of it, and they are very concerned about it. Many people have come to see me about this issue. One of the first things I always say to constituents when they come to see me is, "Don't just come with a problem. Please also mention what you would see as a possible solution." The interesting side to that is that every one of my constituents who has come to see me about this issue has a different solution—all of which may be equally as valid as the solution that we are looking at today. I know full well that this measure will not be universally popular. However, I believe it is a responsible decision. We need to take decisive action in this area.

These recreational fishing fees will be introduced for only a 12-month trial at this stage. As with any new system, ways in which it may be improved will become apparent as it comes into practice. I do not think anyone is suggesting that this is a final solution. However, it will give our fish stocks some breathing space. The best thing about the \$30 recreational licence—I think most people will understand this—is that it will give us the opportunity to collect better data about how many recreational fishermen are out there.

Mr A.P. O'Gorman interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I still have some time to speak, but, towards the end, please feel free to interject with questions.

Mr A.P. O'Gorman: Do you honestly think that if a licence is brought in for a 12-month trial, it will ever be taken away?

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is not what I am saying. There may be ways in which this can be done better. I support the principle of a recreational fishing licence. The fee structure and how it is implemented can always be discussed. However, I believe that the recreational fishing industry, particularly in the southern region, has reached a critical mass. We need to find some way of keeping tabs on it. One of the issues has been recreational versus commercial fishing and who is taking the biggest catch. For commercial fishing, that is very easy to measure; however, for recreational fishing, it is not. This licence will give us a mechanism by which we can get some solid data.

Mr P. Papalia: It will not.

Mr A.P. JACOB: It will. The member for Warnbro is free to have his opinion, and he has just spoken on this matter. I will get to those points a bit later.

Mr D.A. Templeman: This is exciting! I am very excited! I have never seen so many spades being used to dig so many holes!

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is about getting better data so that future Western Australians will be able to enjoy the lifestyle that we have all been taking for granted. I do have some concerns about this matter. I have raised those concerns with the minister, and I will raise a few of them today. I also want to take this opportunity to raise a few of the concerns that some of my constituents have come to see me about directly. I first want to pick up on a comment from the member for Murray-Wellington about the dangers of barotrauma with dhufish. I noted an earlier comment from the member for Kwinana on barotrauma. He said that with the \$150 licence, people fishing for dhufish would bring home all the dhufish they pulled up rather put them back. That is a good thing because the barotrauma issue with dhufish is quite a serious issue. The bag catch limit is one dhufish, so we want them to grab the first dhufish they are pulling up! There is some possible merit in what the member for Murray-Wellington said about revisiting the size limits for dhufish because catch and release does not work with them, unless one knows the scientifically correct method to do that.

Ms J.M. Freeman: Why not?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Because dhufish are brought up very quickly from a high pressure area; and dhufish do not give a lot of fight when they are on the line, so they do not have as much time to acclimatise as they are coming up.

I had a really good conversation with Mr Maurice Ramsay, who is a very active member of the local sea sports fishing club—the member for Scarborough will know him; he is a fantastic guy. I have written to the minister raising some of his concerns. I will raise one of the points that Maurice brought up with me. Maurice wants to ensure that Fisheries officers can gain access to penned boats. He is concerned that people are coming off their penned boats without being checked. He made a very good point, which I have passed on to the minister, but I would like to record that in *Hansard*.

He also raised the issue of internet payment. A lot of people have called me and told me about their frustration at waking up on Saturday morning and deciding to go fishing, but realising they do not have a licence. I have pointed out that they can pop straight on the internet, put in their details, get their \$30 licence and go straight out with the number. Generally, they are a lot happier when they find out they have that option. Mr Maurice Ramsay raised his concerns for those people who do not have internet access. I think it would be fantastic if the department could look into a phone payment option for licences, in the same way that people pay their bills over the phone and are given a receipt number and receive the licence in a few days. That would be a quick and easy way to accommodate people. Similarly, the department should consider issuing a five-year licence in the future, which would be a very good thing. It would be similar to obtaining one's driver's licence, which has the option of a 12-month licence or a five-year licence.

Mr F.M. Logan: They have already got a driver's licence; they have had to pay for that as well!

Mr A.P. JACOB: My point is that a five-year licence option would be good thing. I hope that the department considers that at the end of the first year's trial. I have personally raised that with the department in discussions. The department has said it is very keen to consider it. I too have written to the department.

Mr F.M. Logan: Do you think it is fair that they should have five separate licences before they go fishing?

Mr A.P. JACOB: They do not; it depends on what they are fishing for. The licences target specific species. I will stick to my notes, and I may respond to members when I get through my points.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): I hope you are not reading your notes, member for Ocean Reef.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am not reading my notes, Mr Acting Speaker; I am referring to them so I can stick to a chronological order.

It is very important that any extra funds that go to the department from this program directly benefit the recreational fishing industry. A lot of the community's angst, particularly about the \$150 demersal licence, will be alleviated if we can show fishers how we are using the money to benefit the recreational fishing industry into the future. We could do that in many ways. The member for Murray-Wellington raised an issue that I am keen to see happen. I think the member for Scarborough raised the same point, which is to have more breeding programs and expand aquaculture. Maybe we can do catch-and-release programs down the road. Once again, that is in the hands of the department. However I would like to put on record today in *Hansard* that it is important that the department communicate with the recreational fishing industry what that money will be used for. It is not the most important issue, but it is being raised and it is important for people to see that the money is being directed to constructive programs that will ensure they can continue to enjoy recreational fishing well into the future, particularly for the demersal species.

As I said before, until I ran for office, fishing was a major hobby of mine. My family have always been keen fishers, and my older brother in particular would give Hal Harvey a run for his money. He is obsessed with

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

fishing and maybe WA's most mad-keen fisherman! I spoke with my brother and his fishing buddy only yesterday. I did not realise that this debate would be coming on today, but it is opportune that it did. I asked them for their opinion. They said they were not happy with it, but they agreed with it. That surprised me. As I told another member whom I was speaking to in the corridor earlier, the angriest emails and phone calls I have received are from people whom I know personally. They are generally the people who do not feel they have to hold back and they give me their most honest opinion on a range of issues. They give it to me with both barrels if they think the government is wrong. On this issue, from the two most mad-keen fishermen I know, I was very surprised by their response.

Mr F.M. Logan: But they do not like it?

Mr A.P. JACOB: No, they do not like it. As I said at the beginning, there must be something to replace it with. It is not good enough just to say they do not like it. I said that I am not surprised that they do not like it, and that is what I had expected. Generally, when I sit down with people to discuss issues, I can accept they may not like my viewpoint. However, I cannot go in and just say that it is no good—the opposition clearly can do it but I cannot do that—I have to be able to go to the department with a constructive alternative.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.P. JACOB: There are two elements to a discussion. It is not good enough to just criticise something wholeheartedly.

Mr F.M. Logan: Come on, the member can tell us what he really thinks.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am telling the member for Cockburn what I really think. Members opposite have to say what they are going to replace it with. As I said right at the beginning, we all agree that we need to do something about this issue. My experience at the AGM the other week was exactly that. The club members were not happy, but I made a point of talking to the key fishermen and asking for their views. I asked them to make the time to sit down and chat about it. In a few weeks, when they all get together, I will speak to the group. I have asked them to go away for a couple of weeks and think about alternatives that will address the problem. I was surprised that the very first person to see me about this issue, who came straight into my office to discuss this with me—the member for Scarborough will know this person, but I will not say the name—came back a few weeks later, after giving it some thought, and agreed that the best approach was pretty close to what the government is doing. I am yet to have my final meeting with that group, and no doubt when this legislation comes before Parliament I will be speaking on the bill, but we will see how that goes.

I will very briefly address some of the comments made by the opposition in this debate. I will start with the opposition leader, who made a strong point that the ALP will be leading the community charge to remove this licence. Once again, I ask, with what? The opposition has to put forward an alternative, because the four-month fishing closure is fresh in people's minds. That was not too long ago!

I made some notes on the debate, including the extra cost of the four-month closure. The member for Mandurah made a very strong point about the potential for closing down local businesses. Imagine the effect on those businesses if we closed down fishing altogether for four months over summer.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Those businesses are telling you that this will destroy them.

Mr A.P. JACOB: A four-month closure would absolutely destroy them, member for Mandurah. That is one-third of their trading year gone!

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am sure that the member for Victoria Park will not talk when he is out of his chair.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Similarly, I refer to opposition comments about campaigning in our seats and telling all of our constituents how government members voted on this bill. I learnt quite quickly in the election campaign that members opposite will say what they want regardless of what I think. I am really determined on this issue for the government to get it right. I am passionate about this issue.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Did you tell people in your electorate that you would bring this fee in when you ran for office?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for Cannington for his interjection. It was probably the name of the member for Cannington that was on most of the pieces distributed in my electorate during the last campaign.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It is a simple question.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will go quickly to my point. This issue was not on the horizon at the time, but I will not run and hide.

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Mr W.J. Johnston: The government is going to charge the constituents of the member for Ocean Reef \$1 000 to take their family fishing.

Mr A.P. JACOB: On that point, member for Cannington, nobody is charging \$1 000.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ocean Reef is on his feet. Everyone has had an opportunity to speak and I would like to hear what he has to say.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Is the member for Cannington saying that as the government did not go with this as an election platform, we should never make a decision that was not in our party policy platform? It was not even a burning issue when I was running for the campaign.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Are you saying that it was not a burning issue?

Mr A.P. JACOB: It was not a burning issue. If the member looks through my election material and the election material of his party's candidate for Ocean Reef, he will not find a single reference to fishing. It was not one of the burning issues. In the four-week snap election campaign that we had, it did not come up.

Mr W.J. Johnston: That is not right.

Mr A.P. JACOB: That is true. The member can go back and check, because I know that he will find that it was not one of the burning issues.

The member for Cockburn made the point that there is no data on a link between this licence and the reduction in catch. There is no data anywhere, which is exactly the argument for the recreational fishing licence. It will provide a mechanism whereby the government can —

Mr F.M. Logan: Who told you that?

Mr A.P. JACOB: A \$30 recreational licence—\$15 for seniors and kids—with a five-year option will give an accurate figure of the number of people who are out there fishing. It is the first step. As it proceeds, if more is needed, we can move on further.

Mr F.M. Logan: It will be like a car licence. It will tell you who is out there fishing.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Is that not a good start? Currently we do not know that.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: It will tell us who is out there fishing. We do not know who they are, and that is the point.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Member for Scarborough. I gave the member for Ocean Reef the opportunity to make his speech and then he invited interjections, and this is what we get. I suggest to the member that he continue by referring to his notes.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will answer the last interjection. The second part of what we are introducing here will reduce the catch on the demersal species, which are the threatened species. I repeat that that will be the second part of the program.

The member for Collie-Preston made the point that we might be discouraging people from fishing. I found that amusing. How can proper research be done without a licensing system? From where will we get the figures?

Comments were made about how other states have not gone down this track and it was suggested that we consider what they do. The member made a strong reference to New South Wales. He held up that state as an example of what we should be doing. I quickly researched what New South Wales does. New South Wales actually has a \$30 recreational licence fee. In that state people can get a three-year licence fee for \$75, with which I absolutely agree. I said previously that I have written to the minister about the three-year licence fee.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have already touched on what the member for Kwinana said about dhufish; that is, people would take them home instead of putting them back. The member for Gosnells mentioned that the cost of dhufish is around something like \$90 a fillet. Does that mean that we should be charging more for a demersal fishing licence?

Mr C.J. Tallentire: It will not dissuade them from catching dhufish.

Mr A.P. JACOB: That attracts the \$150 licence fee. Was the member for Gosnells' argument that we should be charging more for a demersal licence? That is what I understood him to say.

Mr C.J. Tallentire: No, my argument was that it will not work.

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Mr A.P. JACOB: I repeat that that is what I understood him to say.

One final point I will touch on is the reference that was made to Ningaloo Marine Park and the approach that has been made to make it a sanctuary zone. That is probably a very good illustration of how the different parties approach this issue. We are poles apart. At the time, the Labor Party's approach was to completely shut it down, whereas the Liberal Party's approach was to allow very well regulated and restricted access to it so that people could continue to enjoy this area. I was speaking to the member for Scarborough after the debate on that issue and I was led to believe that that was a very good example of the difference between us and the Labor Party. We want to make sure that absolutely everybody across the board has the opportunity to enjoy recreational fishing. However, we are also trying to discourage excessive use of recreational fishing. I will leave my comments at that point.

MR W.R. MARMION (Nedlands — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.14 pm]: I am delighted as the new parliamentary secretary to Minister Norman Moore to be invited to speak on this topic of fisheries. Before I talk to the motion, which I do not support, I should point out that, like almost every member except for the members for Ocean Reef and Scarborough, I am not a fisherman. I was a fisherman when I was a young lad. I did a bit of line fishing from the shore and I was very unsuccessful. I went fishing nearly every Saturday afternoon with my friend. The best catch I had was about two whiting. I was a lot better at crabbing. I was quite good at crabbing. My best skill was to use a gidgee from the shore. I remember catching quite a number of cobblers in my day by using a gidgee. As I got older I noticed that the fish stocks were dwindling.

That brings me to why we are here today. The issue before the house is the preservation of our fish stocks so that young people have the opportunity to enjoy the recreational pursuits of fishing, as I did as a young person, whether it be from the shore or in a boat and whether it be fishing, crabbing or, as I did, catching cobblers with a gidgee.

The Leader of the Opposition has brought on this motion, which I will regurgitate —

That the house condemns the Barnett government's unjustified attack on recreational fishing and calls upon the government to withdraw the huge fees it is imposing on ordinary Western Australian families.

Like other members in this house I too had the odd email and letter from my constituents and I will quote from one email —

Dear Bill

I ... am a constituent of yours. I own a number of boats, have a wife and ... children and (probably like most people who own boats) only very occasionally have the pleasure of actually "dropping a line" with my family to try and catch a fish or two for our own consumption.

I am most upset with regard to the proposed new Fishing Licence system with serious concerns with the costs involved and I doubt the effectiveness of the licence system in having any real impact on the preservation of our fish stocks in Western Australia. The government is targeting and penalising the wrong group of people with the current form of the proposed Fishing Licence. It appears to me to be nothing more than a gratuitous "money grabbing" exercise by the state government.

I would appreciate if you could inform me by return email, letter or telephone whether you either support or oppose the implementation of the proposed Fishing Licence system.

Thank you in anticipation of your prompt reply to my question.

I support the Minister for Fisheries and got back to the one or two residents who wrote to me about their concern at not being able to participate in occasional recreational fishing.

When I first became a member of Parliament, an old boss of mine sent me a book titled *Cod*. I confess that it was only last week when I knew that this motion would be brought on for debate that I took it out and skim-read it. My old boss gave me this book and although it talks about fish and the demise of the cod industry in Canada —

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: I bet I know the person who gave it to you.

Mr W.R. MARMION: The member probably does. She should have a guess.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: It was Albert Tognolini.

Mr W.R. MARMION: The member is correct. Now we know who it was and I do not think he will mind that his name has been mentioned in Parliament. Albert Tognolini gave me this book.

Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan: He gave me a copy of it, complete with recipes.

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Mr W.R. MARMION: Yes, there are recipes in the book. The reason that he gave me the book was not to indicate to me that it is specifically the obligation of members of Parliament to make hard decisions to preserve fish, but to demonstrate the general principle; that is, as members of Parliament we sometimes have to make unpopular decisions that our constituents may not like. It is ironic that the book that the former Commissioner of Main Roads, Mr Albert Tognolini, gave me reinforces that principle. He stressed that I read the book from cover to cover. It was the first piece of information that I put in my pending tray to read when I became a member of Parliament. I had to pull it out from the bottom of that tray when this motion was introduced. It is ironic that the book he gave me is about fish, and here we are talking about preservation of the fishing industry, and the recreational fishing industry as well, and that Hon Norman Moore has made the tough decision. He could have sat back and made no decision, and then there would be a problem with our fishing stocks.

Mr F.M. Logan: He could have gone back to the department and said “Come back with something else.”

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will get on to that.

Hon Norman Moore went to the department and asked for a review of the solution that the Labor Party had decided to implement. The Labor Party’s solution to the preservation of our demersal fishing stocks, as I have been advised by the minister, was to shut down the industry for four months over the peak season of December, January and February, when everyone goes fishing. That is when the recreational fishers want to fish and that is when coastal communities rely on tourism for their livelihoods—people who take their tinnies up to Kalbarri and Horrocks and down south to Augusta for fishing. Hon Norman Moore asked for a review of the policy, and a number of reports were prepared. I am happy to table these three original reports for the rest of today’s sitting, for anyone who is interested.

[The papers were tabled for the information of members.]

Mr W.R. MARMION: The first report is by Mr Michael O’Neill, and is entitled “Scientific Review of the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Fishery, Western Australia”. I will quote a couple of key sentences from the summary —

Western Australian scientists have done considerable work collecting and maintaining the annual time-series of frequencies of fish-at-age and utilised this to estimate fishing mortality ... Specifically research indicates that both dhufish and pink snapper are being overfished throughout their geographic range on the west coast and that baldchin groper are being overfished at the Abrolhos Islands.

...

From the available data, updated estimates of fishing mortality (Fairclough, 2009, Draft only), following the triggers of reference points ... and decision rules, it is not possible to recommend a more accurate reduction in fishing effort than the 50%-100% range. With the available information, the current management goal to reduce fishing effort by 50% with a view to reviewing this as necessary when scientific evidence allows is appropriate.

According to this review, at a minimum we must reduce our fishing effort by 50 per cent, and possibly by 100 per cent. It is that serious. The minister made the initial decision to go for a 50 per cent reduction. There has already been a 50 per cent reduction in the commercial catch. A second report was produced by Mr Peter Neville, and is entitled “A Review of Management Arrangements for the Recreational Fishery for Demersal Scalefish in the West Coast Bioregion”. I will quote from the summary and conclusions of this report —

From this, it is concluded that the appropriate *Management Objectives* for the fishery should be:

1. foremost, to take action, in a precautionary manner, to ensure the long term sustainability and viability of the fishery;
2. to meet the general community expectations of a sustainable fishery based on sound ecological management, whilst allowing appropriate economic and social benefits and returns to the community;
3. to change the “culture” of recreational fishers throughout the community from one based on a belief that the fishery is robust, highly productive and able to absorb ever increasing fishing pressure, to one based on the knowledge that the fishery is fragile, dependant on critical biological and environmental factors and capable of over-exploitation.

Mr Neville came up with two alternative fisheries management strategies. Members will recall that the Labor Party option was to close down the fishery for four months. Mr Neville’s first option contained five points —

- (i) Continue the current monitoring and targeted research programs, including proposed new research projects.

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

- (ii) Implement a general individual recreational fishing licence;
 - with endorsements for the current recreational licences and a new endorsement for the demersal scalefish fishery,
 - with a requirement for compulsory logbooks (submitted electronically as the preferred means),
 - with appropriate exemptions as per current arrangements for licences.
- (iii) Implement a seasonal recreational fishing closure, which avoids the key holiday period, but results in a decrease in fishing effort of approximately 15%.
- (iv) Design a program to implement large permanent area closures (fishing sanctuaries) to all demersal scalefish fishing.
- (v) Implement a voluntary commercial fishing licence buy-back scheme for commercial operators in the demersal scalefish fishery.

That was the first strategy, which has been the basis of the minister's response. The alternative strategy reads —

- (i) Construct a 'representative' sample of recreational fishers and through the use of electronic surveys progressively monitor catch/effort during the year with a start date in Spring. This will give an indication of catch/effort for the whole fishery as the season progresses;
- (ii) Establish a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the recreational fishery for the year and progressively announce progress towards this TAC, with the intention of closing the fishery for the balance of the year when the TAC is reached.

They were the two options recommended by Mr Neville. The problem with the second option is that the TAC would encourage people to go berserk and catch as many fish as they could, knowing that there is a possibility of the season closing, so that they could get their fishing in for the year before the season closed. This would have had disastrous consequences for the economic prosperity of many towns along the coast, possibly including Albany. The member for Ocean Reef would suffer, and the business of the member for Scarborough would probably be under pressure. Armed with that information, the minister implemented his plan. Some people have mentioned the fees. The biggest issue raised by the people I have spoken to and by members opposite is not the problem with conserving the fish. I think everybody in this house is in agreement that we need to conserve the fish stocks. There is no doubt about that.

Mr M.P. Whitely: This just ain't going to do it.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will get to that point. One thing I also picked up is that I have not come across anybody opposed to the fee for the demersal fishing licence.

Mr F.M. Logan: Haven't you?

Mr W.R. MARMION: No, I have not. The most controversial one I have found is the boat licence fee.

Mr F.M. Logan: Can I just make a suggestion?

Mr W.R. MARMION: No, the member cannot. He can have his say in a minute.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): Members, I am sure that the member for Nedlands would like to be heard. The member for Mandurah can tackle someone else!

Mr W.R. MARMION: The minister has given me some notes on this topic. It is very important to point out that this government made an election commitment to complete an independent review. The reports I have tabled fulfil the Liberal Party's election commitment.

According to the notes I have received from the minister, the four-month closure proposed by the previous Labor government would have had an adverse impact on industries reliant upon recreational fishing such as tackle stores, tourism, accommodation and the charter sector. The Boating Industry Association of Western Australia, the Fish For Life Alliance, key members of the tackle industry and prominent fishing journalists have all opposed the four-month closure. That was one of the reasons the minister took a more holistic view and looked at the triple bottom line, so to speak—the economic side, the social side and the environmental side—and came up with a package. One could argue that there are risks associated with the package, but it will actually make the right impact.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

Mr W.R. MARMION: There is certainly a risk that the minister's conservative package may not meet its goals, but it will be reviewed in 12 months. Hopefully it will be successful and the measures that we put in place will go as far as we have to go.

Given the time, it is probably appropriate that I talk about the issue I raised with the minister. My biggest concern was about the recreational boat fishing licence, especially after I spoke to my father over the weekend. He lives on the canals in Mandurah, he has a boat and we go out on it quite often. We do not fish, and that is another point that has not been well made. One might have a boat, but simply enjoy going out on it and having a drink.

Mr P. Papalia: Boating and alcohol don't mix, member!

Mr W.R. MARMION: I am not the driver of the boat—I do not have a skipper's certificate, as I think the member knows!

Mr M.P. Whitely: He doesn't have a skipper's certificate, he hasn't got a fishing licence!

Mr W.R. MARMION: That is right; I am a passenger. We often moor the boat, have a glass of wine and then go home.

I acknowledge that some people in the area where my parents live like to take people out fishing. Members have copies of the letter about someone from Broome or the eastern states who comes down to Mandurah on Boxing Day to go fishing and does not want to pay \$150, if there are five people on the boat, and \$20 for a licence. That is a valid point.

Mr F.M. Logan: Member, you made a point earlier about opposition to seasonal closures and no-take zones, and you specified particular groups—journalists, fishing tackle shops and others. It was interesting to speak to those very same people at the boat show on the weekend. They would rather have those than this current tax. They understand and they agree, because they put up opposition to the other measures, but they did not think that this would come about instead. They said that they would rather go back and accept the no-take zones and fish closures.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will take the member's interjection on notice, because I am only regurgitating information as the very knowledgeable Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Fisheries! I am actually relying on notes that have been provided by the minister, who is a better fisherman than I am!

I asked the minister to tell me the purpose of bringing in the recreational fishing licence, and he provided me with some information that I would like to read into *Hansard*. According to the minister, the benefits of the statewide recreational boat fishing licence are as follows —

Currently, the only way to accurately estimate the level of recreational fishing catch and participation in WA is by expensive on the ground surveys of recreational fishers. These surveys are usually conducted at boat ramps over a 12 month period. The surveys cost up to \$1 million for a survey in the West Coast area. Unless there is a special allocation of funding from Government or external sources these surveys do not generally occur. Historically there has been, in some areas, up to ten years between surveys. As a result, there is limited information on recreational fishing participation and catch. This lack of data is a serious shortcoming in effectively managing recreational fisheries in Western Australia.

A State-wide Recreational Boat Fishing Licence provides a database of recreational fishers that researchers can use to select fishers for surveying. These surveys can be conducted remotely by telephone or in combination with a diary. So instead of expensive on-the-ground surveys occurring very infrequently through out the State, a Recreational Boat Fishing Licence will make it possible to estimate recreational participation and catch across the State annually. This provides a much more cost-effective way of collecting recreational fishing information, and significantly increases the information available to managers of recreational fisheries in WA. Importantly, better information on recreational fishing will enable the Department of Fisheries to adopt a more holistic management approach by taking into account the catch of all sectors (commercial and recreational). It will also increase community confidence in management decisions and allow measures to be more targeted.

Another important purpose of the Recreational Boat Fishing Licence is to obtain additional revenue for management of recreational fisheries i.e. to fund compliance, education and research programs and recreational fishing enhancement programs. Although the take up of Recreational Boat Fishing Licences will only be known after introduction, it could be as high as 100,000 people. If this proves to be the case at \$30 per license, an additional \$2.7million —

Which includes 20 per cent discounts for children —

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

will be available to manage recreational fisheries. These funds represent the majority of the estimated additional revenue of over \$4 million that may be raised from the increase in fees, and is the most important component of the fee increases.

The minister also provided me with a bit of information on the other licence—the west coast demersal scalefish licence. This is probably a good way to conclude. The minister explains how the 50 per cent reduction is to be achieved. This is not scientific for the reason that we do not have the data to actually quantify what is going to happen. The contribution that each element of the package introduced by the government will make towards meeting the management objective of reducing the catch is as follows. There will hopefully be a 10 per cent reduction in catch due to the bag, boat and size limits put in place in January 2009, and the closure period between 15 October and 15 December will result in a catch reduction of 15 per cent. Adding those together, we have a 25 per cent reduction. We are halfway there; we have 25 per cent and we are after 50 per cent. The actual licence itself will bring in a proposed—I see heads shaking already—25 per cent reduction. Therefore, the aim is —

Mr M.P. Whitely: It has gone the other way.

Mr W.R. MARMION: That is the aim; that is the information that has been provided to me by the minister; that is the information that has been provided by the department. That is our aim. The money that we will obtain from that licence, again, will go towards a database of recreational fish, but obviously targeted towards the demersal scalefish in the west coast region. It will, as I explained before, provide a cost-effective way of collecting recreational catch information, which will help to better manage our fishery. The department believes the cost structure will dissuade many fishers from targeting west coast demersal scalefish—that is the aim. There will be people who will say that they will not go fishing for dhufish.

Mr M.P. Whitely: The minister thinks it, but do you think it?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I am the parliamentary secretary for fisheries and this is the information that I have been provided with. I am not an expert in fisheries and I have to rely on the expertise of the department. There are some very learned scientists in the Department of Fisheries. Given the lack of information that we have at the moment, we have to take their advice.

Mr M.P. Whitely: You have a background in economics and business, haven't you? Would logic say that once people pay for something and there is no extra charge in extracting more of it, they are just going to take as much as they possibly can?

Mr W.R. MARMION: The supply and demand curve indicates that if we put a price on something, it goes up and the demand might drop off. That is simple economics.

Mr M.P. Whitely: But there is no price!

Mr W.R. MARMION: There is a price on the licence.

Mr M.P. Whitely: There is a price on the licence, but once people have paid their entry cost there is no marginal cost to take the extra fish, so they may as well take as many as possible.

Mr W.R. MARMION: We shall see.

Mr M.P. Whitely: The rational approach is to take as much as one possibly can.

Mr W.R. MARMION: One would hope that it works. In 12 months' time we will be reviewing it, and if we find that it is not working, unfortunately, more severe measures may be introduced. However, I think the government has taken a very well balanced and very constructive position and has looked at the economics of not only the fishing industry, but also the tourism industry and business. The government has also looked at the social side, which is very important because some communities rely entirely on the fishing industry and tourism during the fishing season. I know it is not in the west coast region, but Shark Bay is one such town where everyone has a tinnie and many people come up from the south. Therefore, the government has looked at the social side, the economic side and the environmental side to preserve the fish.

Adjournment of Debate

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Leader of the House) [5.42 pm]: I move —

That the debate be adjourned.

The reason I have done that is that the government has listened to a lot of the comments that members opposite have made and would like to consider them to see whether —

Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Paul Papalia;
Mr Albert Jacob; Acting Speaker; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr Rob Johnson; Mr David Templeman

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P.B. Watson): The member cannot debate this.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I was just saying it was for their benefit, but the motion is that the debate be adjourned.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr R.F. Johnson: If we do not do that, we will amend the motion. Does the opposition really want us to do that? We are genuine about this; we are taking the opposition seriously.

Points of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am interested in knowing the reasoning behind the government seeking to adjourn the debate, because knowing that may actually determine how the opposition will respond to this motion.

Mr R.F. Johnson: I have just tried to explain there were some comments —

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I want to speak to the adjournment of this —

Mr R.F. Johnson: You can't. That is why I couldn't really talk to it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will take a point of order. I think it is quite unprecedented —

Mr C.J. Barnett: No, it is not.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is. We actually wanted to —

The ACTING SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Debate Resumed

The ACTING SPEAKER: The question is that the debate be adjourned.

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (30)

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

Noes (26)

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	Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan	Mr E.S. Ripper	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms J.M. Freeman	Mrs C.A. Martin	Ms R. Saffioti	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr A.P. O'Gorman	Mr T.G. Stephens	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire	

Pair

Mr G.M. Castrilli

Mr M.P. Murray

Question thus passed.

Debate adjourned.