

PROHIBITION ON FISHING (GREENS POOL) ORDER 2018 — DISALLOWANCE

Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural) [5.02 pm]: I rise on behalf of the National Party to speak briefly on this disallowance motion. I know that a number of other members want to speak so I will make my remarks brief. I indicate from the outset that the National Party will not be supporting this disallowance.

When we first became aware of the Minister for Fisheries' intention to prohibit fishing in the Greens Pool area, my colleague in the other place and the member in that area, the member for Warren–Blackwood, consulted with stakeholders and received a number of representations from interested parties on the matter. I have to say that our concerns primarily revolved around the potential for this area to be expanded or to become quite large and have a significant intersection with the local recreational fishing industry.

Subsequent to a discussion that the member had with the minister, the member wrote to the minister seeking his assurance that the prohibited area would not be expanded beyond the quite small area near the shore, which would have minimal impact on recreational fishing. The letter to the minister stated, in part —

The local fishing fraternity highlight that previous attempts to ban fishing at William Bay included significant areas either side of Green's Pool. These previous plans were strongly opposed by local fishers; however, recent discussions suggest they would be less concerned if there was a guarantee the current fishing ban remains limited to the main swimming area

In reply to the member for Warren–Blackwood, the Minister for Fisheries' letter quite clearly states, in part —

Please be assured that I will not increase the area of water prohibited to fishing in the William Bay region.

I seek leave to table a copy of the minister's letter.

Leave granted. [See paper 2672.]

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Subsequent to the reply from the minister, the member for Warren–Blackwood had discussions with a number of people, including the president of the Denmark Boating and Angling Club, who indicated that he was comfortable with that assurance. We believe that the approach adopted here by the minister is a pragmatic one. It maintains a safe and accessible swimming area for locals and tourists, whilst not excluding fishers from nearby locations. Just to be crystal clear on this, and contrary to what Hon Rick Mazza asserted earlier on, this decision has absolutely nothing to do with leftism or pressure from a minister; it is the result of an excellent local member doing exactly what he should do and consulting with the community to understand the issue from a local perspective. On that note, I will once again reiterate that the Nationals WA will not be supporting the disallowance.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development) [5.05 pm]: I rise to represent the Minister for Fisheries and our government. I am very pleased to see the strong support in this place for this fishing ban on Greens Pool. Both Minister Dawson and I are celebrating the fact that in today's budget we saw the announcement of \$2.5 million for the development of visitor facilities at the Greens Pool–Elephant Rocks precinct. As a number of members have said today, this is an enormously significant spot for Western Australians. It is a very beautiful swimming spot that is very popular. Although I understand Hon Rick Mazza's position, it is fairly clear that the balance of views across the political divide is that this makes a lot of sense. Hon Rick Mazza talked a lot about consultation. Most members will be aware that this has been a very contentious issue for a number of years. It has been discussed at least since 2011. In 2013 there was a master plan for the long-term management of William Bay National Park. It was produced by the previous government and highlighted the need to resolve these issues at Greens Pool. They have now been resolved in the right way. I have been pleased to see how local members have engaged on this issue. I also acknowledge the work of Hon Dr Sally Talbot, who has no doubt been working with Hon Terry Redman to develop a community consensus on this issue. There has been a lot of consultation and ultimately a decision needed to be made. This issue had been kicked into the long grass for a number of years and a decision needed to be made. In July 2018, Minister Kelly raised this issue directly with the CEO of Recfishwest. The letter written in August 2018 that the member referenced was a response to that issue that had been raised by the minister. We accept that at that point Recfishwest did not accept that. Nevertheless, we had a range of opinions to consider.

Hon Colin de Grussa rightly pointed out that an important part of this initiative is that it involves a very confined space. The closure represents around 200 metres of coastline. There are many good fishing spots right near Greens Pool at not just Elephant Rocks, Hon Rick Mazza, but also Waterfall Beach and Madfish Bay. As Hon Colin de Grussa said, the Denmark angling people are prepared to accept this, provided there is a clear undertaking that we are not seeking to expand the area.

Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Rick Mazza

I want to quickly add some interesting statistics about this beach. The petition that was sent to the minister calling for the prohibition of fishing was signed by 977 people. In 2018, this beach was ranked by TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards as one of Australia's top 15 beaches, which is a pretty strong accolade. WA tourism records indicate that more than 350 000 interstate visitors and international tourists visit the Denmark area each year, with most taking time to visit the William Bay National Park and Greens Pool. There is no doubt that given the increasing popularity of Greens Pool among both the community and tourists, we need to make some very clear decisions that address, as Hon Dr Steve Thomas has said, an issue that has been thought about now for probably a couple of decades, and say that this area cannot be co-used. We will undertake to provide an absolutely fantastic swimming and snorkelling area, but at the same time not expand the fishing prohibition area beyond its boundaries.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [5.10 pm]: We have seen today exactly why this house needs a crossbench. It is quite clear that this motion has been completely misunderstood. Hon Rick Mazza had no option. He could not put forward an amendment to a ridiculous ban on fishing in the Greens Pool area. It is just crazy. He could only oppose the ban. If the Minister for Fisheries had consulted properly, it would have been clear to him and to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development that most people in the Denmark area want a seasonal ban. All those wonderful figures that members of the government and the Greens' member quoted are fine. They are great—in the summer, and maybe in spring and maybe even in autumn. But in the dead of winter there is no-one except for a few fishermen at Greens Pool. Now it looks as though this disallowance motion will be defeated and the lives of those fishermen will be at risk. If fishermen choose to fish down there—because there will be no-one there to fine them if they break the law—they will be risking their lives, because the only safe place they can fish in that area is at Greens Pool.

This disallowance motion was moved because there had been poor consultation. I have seen the minister's form on many occasions. I have seen it with water issues in the south west and the rock lobster industry. This is another case of that form. Members can quote all those figures they like, but in the three months of winter no-one goes to Greens Pool except for a few fishermen. Certain people on this side of the chamber were thinking about supporting this disallowance motion but their minds have been changed. This matter has turned into a political football. That is why the crossbench is here. It does not back down from the tough issues. This is a tough issue. If the minister had consulted well, he would have learnt that people are in favour of a seasonal ban and we would not be debating this disallowance motion now.

I also went to that beach in April and spoke to people swimming there—there were quite a few because it was a nice, warm sunny day. Everyone I spoke to was in favour of a seasonal ban. They know that there is no-one down there in the depths of winter. They want fishermen to be safe as well. I say to the Greens' member who spoke on this motion that young people who fish need to be safe as well. We heard about young people swimming—well, young people who fish need to be safe as well. But it is a moot point because this order cannot be amended. Hon Rick Mazza had only one option, and that was to move this disallowance motion. I and my fellow Pauline Hanson's One Nation members will be fully supporting this disallowance motion.

HON AARON STONEHOUSE (South Metropolitan) [5.14 pm]: I want to make a brief contribution to this debate and signal my support for the disallowance motion. Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of spending some time at Greens Pool and Elephant Rocks. I even got to Waterfall Beach. That is a beautiful part of the state. When I was at Greens Pool, it was interesting to see the almost laissez-faire approach to recreation there. While I was swimming around, I noticed that a couple were perched on a rock, enjoying a few ciders. It was fantastic.

Recreational fishing may pose a risk to some people who want to swim, sure. It seems that a lot of people enjoy that spot for swimming. But they do not have sole ownership over that area. No matter how many signatures they may have on a petition, that does not represent the views of 100 per cent of the community. There are still some people who like to fish at Greens Pool. A more commonsense approach would be a seasonal ban. By supporting this disallowance motion, all we are doing is saying to the minister, "Okay; come back with something else that is more reasonable." Let us engage in some consultation with Recfishwest, for a start. That is not an unreasonable request. Just because we knock back this regulation does not mean that spearfishing needs to be returned to Greens Pool. We need to take a more commonsense approach and find some kind of compromise. A little more engagement with Recfishwest is not an unreasonable request in this instance. As we heard from Hon Dr Steve Thomas, it sounds as though people do not fish at Greens Pool nowadays anyway. Therefore, the need for a blanket ban is rather unnecessary. Surely we can take a more commonsense approach, with a seasonal ban, that will keep everybody—or at least most parties—happy. That is why I will be supporting the disallowance motion.

HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural) [5.16 pm] — in reply: Madam President, do I have a right of reply in this debate?

The PRESIDENT: Yes, you do.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Thank you, Madam President. If I could make a brief reply, just for a couple of minutes, I would appreciate it.

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Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Alannah MacTiernan; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Rick Mazza

I would like to thank all members who made a contribution today on this disallowance motion. A lot has been said about consultation with certain groups and people around the Denmark area. I accept that. My major point is that the premier representative of recreational fishing in this state, Recfishwest, is very, very unhappy with the way in which this consultation process has played out. I think that to dismiss Recfishwest as not being a stakeholder, and to not provide an avenue for Recfishwest and other interested parties to play a part in how any ban or restrictions in this area are shaped, is very disappointing. I appreciate members' contributions, and we will put it to the vote, I suppose.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (5)

Hon Robin Scott
Hon Charles Smith

Hon Aaron Stonehouse
Hon Colin Tincknell

Hon Rick Mazza (*Teller*)

Noes (24)

Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Jacqui Boyde
Hon Robin Chapple
Hon Tim Clifford
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Peter Collier

Hon Stephen Dawson
Hon Colin de Grussa
Hon Sue Ellery
Hon Diane Evers
Hon Donna Faragher
Hon Adele Farina

Hon Nick Goiran
Hon Laurie Graham
Hon Alannah MacTiernan
Hon Kyle McGinn
Hon Michael Mischin
Hon Simon O'Brien

Hon Martin Pritchard
Hon Tjorn Sibma
Hon Dr Steve Thomas
Hon Alison Xamon
Hon Pierre Yang
Hon Ken Baston (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.