

**MARINE PARKS — PLANNING AND CONSULTATION**

*Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** informed the Assembly that she was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.08 pm]: I certainly move —

That this house condemns the short-sighted and reckless approach to the formation of marine parks through poor planning and the lack of consultation, attacking our sustainable fishing industry.

We saw today what I would almost call the disdain for our regional communities and the disdain for the consultation process. The Minister for Environment just reeled off the names of all these overseas companies. Fancy bringing up the Australian Red Cross. Seriously! The people of Esperance, Bremer Bay and Hopetoun are worried because this consultation process for the south coast marine park has been a disgrace. We are trying to alert Parliament to it, and it is a total mess. The minister was here today. He is proud of Pew Charitable Trusts' involvement. I will be giving him a bit of a history lesson today about its involvement right from the start, from May 2020, when Pew Charitable Trusts was involved.

Every regional member of the Labor Party needs to have a good hard look at themselves because this government has launched a relentless attack on the people of regional WA, especially over the last four years. It is an absolute disgrace. I feel sorry for anyone representing regional WA, because they obviously have not had any cut-through with their cabinet because cabinet continues to roll out marine parks and attacks on fishing and forestry; we have seen the attack on the forestry industry and on families of the south west. There is no support for live export or the families and people in the sheep producers supply chain, with 3 500 people involved in the industry, and an attack on electoral reform, reducing regional representation. The Attorney General is very proud of his electoral reform and the cuts that he has made to regional representation. He stood up in this place and said that he could not write that legislation out fast enough. He started working on it on the night of the election. He is proud of that, and this government is proud of the way that it has cut regional representation and services to the regions. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021 was another demonstration. Today, we had the minister saying that we are on the wrong side of history. We have heard it before from the Premier. He told us that we are on the wrong side of history. He also told us that we are dogs returning to our own vomit. It is not good enough. The people of regional WA stood up to be counted. They have no support from this government and, quite frankly, they should not have to rally every few months to try to overturn something that affects part of their life. Those families, whether they are fishing or forestry families, have been there running their own industries for tens of dozens of years, and this government has come in and attacked them relentlessly.

I go back to 2016, when Hon Mark McGowan in opposition said that his government would have rolled-gold transparency when it came in. I can assure members that nothing was further from the truth. Over two and a half years, the debacle of the consultation process of the south coast marine park has deteriorated.

**Mr C.J. Tallentire** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member!

**Mr C.J. Tallentire** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Thornlie!

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The member for Roe is trying to make his contribution and explain the motion. He has half an hour, and this member can make a contribution in the government's half an hour. I ask that he cease to interject, please.

**Mr C.J. Tallentire** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Thornlie! There is it no point of order. Carry on.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Paul Murray in *The West Australian* on 18 November, 2023 said — Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** — "It's a fully-fledged scandal." I agree with him.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members of the government side, you will get the opportunity to respond. You may not like what he is saying, but he has the opportunity to put his point forward. I would like to remind the member

that the predominant feature of this motion is the sustainable fishing industry and marine parks. I appreciate that the member is painting a picture of something, but please stick to the main thrust of the topic.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thank you, I will focus.

Firstly, I want to thank Hon Colin de Grussa in the other place for his perseverance in holding this government to account on the issue of the south coast marine park. In May 2021, he asked his first question regarding the draft community engagement strategy. On nearly forty occasions in the Legislative Council he has asked questions, highlighted evidence of misgivings and tabled statements relating to the south coast marine park. Ministers opposite seem to think it is some sort of joke. The people of Esperance are worried. They come into my office, sit around the table and talk to me and Hon Colin de Grussa about what they are worried about. Ministers opposite do not seem to understand that. We get the odd fly-in visit, telling us about the diversity of sea life and so forth, but the community is worried about their occupations. They have every right to put the case, talk about their livelihoods and talk about the worries that they have. I want to give the minister a bit of a history lesson. Hon Colin de Grussa states —

Ultimately, when things are done in a way that is non-genuine, one of the first things that happens is it erodes transparency and openness. Rather than trying to provide a clear overview of the policy or decision, a selective approach will be taken and government will cherry-pick the things it talks about with a preferred narrative to try to gloss over essentially what is really happening. That leaves people in the dark. It creates uncertainty, and when questions cannot be answered, it obviously leads to further issues.

That sums it up perfectly. It was quite disturbing when I tried to raise that scenario today about Pew Charitable Trusts. I want to give the minister a history lesson, because on Friday, 15 May 2020, the initial meeting to discuss south coast marine park consultation was held at the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions headquarters. Attendees included Recfishwest, Pew and the Australian Maritime Conservation Society, which is funded by Pew. The article states —

“At the meeting, DBCA was advised that the attendees supported ‘the creation of a larger, rather than smaller, marine park’. And that they have ‘aligned to prepare a series of principles for a new way of approaching marine park planning and management’, none of which is based on science.”

...

Minutes of the November 18 meeting, involving six of the most senior officers of DBCA and —

Funnily enough —

representatives of Pew and two of the environmental lobby groups it funds ...

This is what I am talking about. We have the public service, which the minister is representing, forming its policies with Pew Charitable Trusts and other organisations that it funds. As far as I am concerned, foreign-funded lobby groups were allowed inside the highly politicised process that affects families and community on the south coast. That is a warning sign if I have ever seen it. I am sorry; the minister may not like it, he might want to quote the Australian Red Cross and various other organisations, but that is the reality. As far as I am concerned, I agree with the comments of Paul Murray, who said —

Pew has become the tail wagging the Labor dog on environmental issues, —

I could not put it more appropriately —

particularly the establishment of marine parks replete with no-fishing sanctuary zones ...

I think there is a real concern here. The minister might like to deny it. I noticed that Pew Charitable Trusts put out another nice op-ed during the week talking about the white beaches and the sands of Esperance and so on and so forth, but there is a reality here. We are talking about families and their livelihoods.

The other issue I raised today with the Minister for Fisheries is internal documents and a freedom of information request from Hon Colin de Grussa. The article states —

Noting inadequate time was provided for DPIRD to properly analyse and provide well-considered feedback on a marine park of such size and complexity, this rushed approach poses serious risks to the planning and outcomes of the South Coast Marine Park.

...

Based on the draft zoning scheme it does not appear that DBCA have adopted a pragmatic approach to the zoning of the proposed South Coast Marine Park ...

...

The current draft zoning scheme will likely result in the loss of several South Coast fisheries and impact on the livelihood of numerous fishers.

That is the minister's own department telling another minister's own department that it is not doing a good job. It is not on.

I want to finish with a couple of other comments. From my perspective, as I said, Hon Colin de Grussa and I are at the coalface. The other week I was at the community of Bremer Bay. We talked to people in Hopetoun and Esperance. They are worried. Quite concerning, of course, was the initial process whereby contact was made with fishers to see where they catch the majority of fish and then some of those areas were targeted as sanctuary zones. That has really upset some of the fishers. But as far as I am concerned, this is an example of a government that does not have the capacity to deal with an issue such as this. It outsources its difficult decisions. It hides its decisions by silencing departments and it makes policy on the run. The people of Esperance, Bremer Bay, Hopetoun and other places deserve more. It is not good enough.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [3.21 pm]: I rise to speak on this very important motion moved by the member for Roe. I thank him for bringing this important matter to the Assembly.

The preservation of our beautiful coastline and our waters around Western Australia is in the best interests of all Western Australians. It should be protected to ensure that the next generation of Western Australians is able to enjoy it as we do today. Not one person here would disagree with accepting the importance of the marine parks as a tool to conserve representative habitats and the biodiversity within. The same goes for the Marmion Marine Park extension plans. Although we agree in principle with the extension and its importance in protecting the waters in the northern suburbs, we absolutely have concerns regarding the government's approach in the planning and consultation process.

It is becoming all too commonplace to hear from peak bodies, industry representatives or Western Australians with lived experience that this government is ignoring expert concerns. We are now hearing alarm bells from peak fishing bodies such as the Western Rock Lobster Council, Recfishwest and the WA Fishing Industry Council about the government's plan for the extension of Marmion Marine Park. These bodies represent a significant number of stakeholders who access, utilise, derive value and enjoy Marmion Marine Park and the areas identified in the expanded borders. It is their responsibility and mission to understand the needs of Western Australians who access these waters daily and in many cases, just like the generations that preceded them. When seeking to make changes in the way these waters are utilised, the government's first port of call should be to properly consult with these bodies. But these bodies are very concerned and here is how they feel. I quote from a letter that all three bodies sent to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions —

It is therefore disappointing that we all feel misrepresented, disrespected and completely ignored in DBCA's Marmion Marine Park Expansion planning process to date.

These bodies are rightfully concerned that this government is not serious about the repercussions of these marine parks on recreational or commercial fishers if consultation is not conducted appropriately and stakeholders' stated interests are not respected. We share an interest in ensuring that a scientific approach is taken and proper consultation takes place. It cannot be a mere box-ticking exercise that works towards delivering a predetermined outcome, which is the fear for many of these stakeholders. It is not consultation if it is done after the fact. We saw that with the government's decision regarding shifting the women's and babies' hospital.

If DBCA were genuinely interested in a collaborative approach and planning an outcome through a community consultation process, it would have undertaken cultural heritage mapping, biodiversity mapping and appropriate habitat mapping. None of this due diligence that should have informed the planning process has been produced even to this day, with Marmion Marine Park's expanded boundaries and the locations of the sanctuary zones of significant concern. There is a real concern that this will have a serious impact on the activities of recreational and commercial fishers in the area. Despite DBCA stating there is no predetermined targets for total sanctuary zone areas within the marine park, stakeholder participants in both the south coast marine park and the Marmion park extension area have stated they have witnessed DBCA repeatedly refer to international conservation targets of 30 per cent. Such was the implied objective by DBCA throughout this process that it has proposed sanctuary zone areas of around 30 per cent. This is despite the fact that there has been no due diligence done through biodiversity mapping and habitat mapping, as I have stated, to inform the planning, and no evidence or justification given for where these zones would be located. I understand that the reason given for one particular zone of this park was that it was aligned with a Bush Forever site on land.

The world's first Marine Stewardship Council-certified sustainable commercial lobster fishers have fished the entire marine park extension area for generations and have harvested some of the lobsters that are in abundance in the area without impacting on the pristine environment. Sanctuary zones will unnecessarily and unfairly remove access to these commercial fishers, who will then be required to source their catch elsewhere. That usually concentrates operators, which leads to conflict and compounding issues of overfishing in other areas. There is also growing community concern that the extensive use of sanctuary zones could cover large swathes of prime crayfishing ground on or inside Three Mile Reef.

WA is home to 53 000 licensed recreational rock lobster licence holders, a significant portion of which operates outside the metropolitan region. Once the whites run is happening, we can go to any boat ramp in the north of the state at 5.00 am and see—it is certainly quite a sight—how many cars are bumper to bumper trying to get to the water to catch some crays before work. If sanctuary zones impede on these areas, the annual highlight for many Western Australians will be impacted and potentially wiped out. In a year when recreational fishers have already been hit hard by the government due to the six-month ban on demersal scalefish throughout the west coast bioregion, these sanctuary zones go above and beyond what is required and with an unfair and unnecessary cost.

As I stated, there are very real concerns about the lack of due diligence on this issue. The Western Rock Lobster Council, Recfishwest and the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council have repeatedly asked the government for science-based evidence and justification on how the government is determining these sanctuary zones. So far, they have just received obfuscations. Both the environment minister and the fisheries minister claimed that the planning process would be based on evidence-based justification. How is that possible when there has been no marine biodiversity mapping, no cultural heritage mapping, and inadequate habitat and commercial fishing effort mapping. It is fair to say that we will be paying close attention to the plans once they are released.

I also hope that the DBCA and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development are working closely together to ensure that the first round of plans achieve that important balance between minimal disruption for fishers and the public and the protection of our waters. After all, the draft plan will require concurrence from the Minister for Fisheries, as outlined by the Minister for Environment back in 2020, before being released for public comment. I hope that his department is supportive of the plan and the process undertaken to achieve it before the Minister for Fisheries signs off on it. I commend this motion to the house.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition)** [3.31 pm]: Thank you, Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to add to the excellent motion moved by the member for Roe. As we know, marine parks can be supported by communities. I was the shire president of the Shire of Dandaragan. Jurien Bay Marine Park pretty well encompassed the entirety of the coastline of the Shire of Dandaragan, plus a little bit into the Shire of Coorow, and Green Head. That does not mean it is not fraught with some issues from time to time. I remember trying to consider some planning matters or decisions around the Jurien Bay marina, which were complicated by the fact that it sat within a marine park area. Overall, there are benefits to it. I know that tourists are attracted to areas such as Ningaloo, Shark Bay and other protected areas. We are virtually trying to protect the entire south coast in one park. When I say “protect”, I ask: protect from what? Are we protecting it from fisheries, which are sustainably managed, as we know; that is the job of the department for which the Minister for Fisheries is the minister—to ensure that they are sustainably managed. I do not see a herd of people attacking the area down there. I am a little bemused by the language being used, as if there is some sort of imminent threat to the south coast, the fish stocks, the species down there and the animals and diversity that the minister spoke about. I do not see a huge amount of pressure on that industry. Its only users are a few recreational fishers, sightseers, snorkellers and the like and professional fishers, who are responsibly managed by the Minister for Fisheries.

It is quite apparent in this whole process that there is not really a cooperative view between DPIRD and the minister responsible for the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The member for Roe referred to Hon Colin de Grussa, who has done a tremendous amount of work in this area. He has requested documents under freedom of information and, as the member mentioned, he has asked 40 questions on numerous occasions. He identified that DPIRD levelled extraordinary criticism at DBCA about its management of the planning processes for the marine park. He put out a news release on 15 November after receiving that information, which states —

... the comments made by DPIRD almost exactly mirror the concerns continually expressed by key stakeholder groups and members of the Community Reference Group, which have been so casually dismissed by the Environment Minister ...

The revelations also place the Fisheries Minister in an untenable position, as he has to sign off on the draft sanctuary zones for the marine park plan before it is released for public comment, in circumstances where his own department has explicitly stated such things as:

“Noting inadequate time was provided for DPIRD to properly analyse and provide well-considered feedback on a marine park of such size and complexity, this rushed approach poses serious risks to the planning and outcomes of the South Coast Marine Park”

“Based on the draft zoning scheme it does not appear that DBCA has adopted a pragmatic approach to the zoning of the proposed SCMP —

South coast marine park —

“The current draft zoning scheme will likely result in the loss of several South Coast fisheries and impact on the livelihoods of numerous fishers”

“It is DPIRD’s view that these impacts are not in the community’s best interests and that the impacts can be largely avoided or minimised if DBCA are genuinely serious about doing that in designing the zoning scheme for the SCMP”

“Despite overwhelming feedback and agreement on recommendations to specific areas across numerous stakeholder groups their recommendations have not been taken on board and changes made to candidate areas.”

That really puts the Minister for Fisheries’ department at odds with the Minister for Environment. Who will win the struggle? We know that one side is supported by this foreign organisation. All sorts of people have been saying that the Salvation Army was started in a foreign place. Yes, Pew Charitable Trusts does have a long history of working with members of this government. I note that the Minister for Housing worked for that organisation for nearly five years. We know that there is a strong relationship between this government and Pew Charitable Trusts. We do not know how strong the relationship is between the professional fishers and the communities of the south coast and the communities of the Perth metropolitan area with the Minister for Environment because we see that they are not being taken as seriously as this foreign organisation. That is seriously concerning.

We know that there is a push to increase the size of the marine park area. Yet we know that the department continually fails to meet targets to review the management of the areas that it already has under its control. I think there is a 10-year review for each park. I understand that none of those reviews have been completed on time. The minister can refute that if he wishes, and that is fine.

I also note that the industry that we are talking about that is most affected is of course the fishing industry. What does the fishing industry provide? In the main, it provides a food source for Western Australian families. We know that most fish in Western Australia are imported. We also know that communities and families rely on fishing for their livelihood. I understand that the Minister for Fisheries seems to have a different view from the department about the effect on the industry. I read out the department’s news release that it thinks some fisheries will be brought to an end because of the changes that are happening. Yet the Minister for Fisheries says he does not really see any need for compensation for those industries as the sanctuary areas were designed in such a way that compensation will not be required. Is that true, minister? Does he really think no compensation will be required for fishers on the south coast as a result of those changes? I ask him to answer that when he has the opportunity to speak in a few minutes. I also understand that fishers in other areas—I think in Ngari Capes Marine Park that was developed in 2018—who have already been affected by the development of marine parks are still waiting for compensation. A number of fishers have not been compensated, even to this day.

We know that the compensation issue will loom large over those families that are facing the end of their livelihood as a result of the actions of the minister. He is the minister who is supposed to be speaking on their behalf. Apparently, his department has not been heard by the Minister for Environment’s department. I am wondering who will win the contest. We know that we have this giant eco trust that runs around the world demanding that people in other countries do things, although it does not seem to have the same level of concern about what goes on in the United States, or at least the ambitions are not as broad as they are in compliant countries far away from the US where it can spread its influence amongst members of the government through a process that appears to put it in front of the local community and the local fishers in determining outcomes.

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldvis — Minister for Environment)** [3.39 pm]: I have been looking forward to this debate for some time, and, quite frankly, I am disappointed. It was a bit of a whimper coming from the three members opposite. I was waiting for the killer blow, and the best they could come up with was to quote one of their own members.

**Mr R.S. Love:** Who has been doing a ton of research.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I will get to Hon Colin de Grussa in a moment. Let us have a look at what is at stake here. There is a great southern reef that runs from Kalbarri all the way across the bottom of the continent up across the east coast to the New South Wales–Queensland border. It is one of the most significant reef systems in the world, and the jewel in the crown is the reef system along the south coast of Western Australia. It bears repeating that some of the rarest marine creatures can be found there. There are species still being discovered. It is a unique and valuable place. It is an important breeding ground for important species, with locations with some of the rarest and most unique biodiversity on the planet. It is worth preserving. The history of marine parks in Western Australia demonstrates overwhelmingly that people support the preservation of these unique biodiversity areas.

I will mention the values of the area. Earlier in question time, I mentioned the process. Again, I repeat that it is above and beyond what is statutorily required. I make the point that we are not through the completion of the process. There is opportunity for public comment and input. Members opposite have not seen the information that will go to the community. I have pointed out that we have already made changes based on input from commercial fishers about their concerns. This is an ongoing process that will have four months of public comment, going into next year. We will certainly consider all input.

We have heard this story before. The unfortunate thing about members opposite is that they like to, first of all, throw around information that is scarcely related to facts and evidence. They love fearmongering and stirring up concern. I know there is a political excuse for this. I know it is to the opposition's advantage to create crisis and uncertainty, but it comes at a cost to the local community and to the communities of members. We have heard this before. In 2004, when the government of the day under Premier Gallop was proposing to set up the Ningaloo Marine Park, it was going to be the end of the world for the community there according to some quarters. I am sure that we would have heard the same comments from the same types of members opposite about Ningaloo as the representations we have heard about the south coast marine park. Some of the fearmongering including comments such as, "This will be the end of the Coral Bay holiday", or "This will be the death of Exmouth." Indeed, some people said, "This is aquatic apartheid." The sky was going to fall. It was going to be the end of life as we know it in Exmouth. What happened? Deloitte did a study in 2018 and 2019 that found that tourism in Ningaloo was worth \$100 million. It found that the economic value of the area was in excess of \$1 billion. In 2020, there was a survey of anglers from across Western Australia, and they were asked about the importance of sanctuary zones in marine parks. Remember, taking fish or engaging in commercial operations is not prohibited in all of a marine park. That is related to sanctuary zones. The results of the survey showed that 83 per cent of anglers said that sanctuary zones were a good idea. Anglers coming back from a day out were surveyed at the Ningaloo boat ramp about sanctuary zones, and the zoning was supported or strongly supported by a big majority of 93 per cent. A total of 93 per cent of anglers out for a day at Ningaloo Marine Park supported sanctuary zones. We see that the creation of marine parks does not spell the death of industry or putting a line in and having a fish.

Members opposite have quoted Hon Colin de Grussa at length, and I will quote him as well. He has made a number of comments, and every time they are barely related to evidence or the truth. He put out a press release on 13 October talking about the tourism component of the process not being heard. It was the scare campaign that only one organisation was being listened to. He said —

"It beggars belief that an industry so important to local regional economies on the south coast would have been effectively excluded from providing input into the marine park planning process ...

He was referring to the tourism sector, saying that it got no say whatsoever. Here I have a table of the south coast marine park sectoral advisory groups. There are 11 of them and the first on the list is tourism, which attended all but one of the six community reference committee meetings. It provided a written submission on the park boundaries to the CRC. It also had an additional meeting with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Compared with many other SAGs, it had more involvement and engagement, so it is simply wrong, misleading information—just wrong. Colin de Grussa also calls into question this government's handling of marine park processes.

*Point of Order*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I point to the title of the member that the minister is referring to.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** It is Hon Colin de Grussa.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** If I dropped "honourable" that time, I am sorry.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** In a media statement on 5 September this year Hon Colin de Grussa talked about how, with the gazettal of the marine park in the Buccaneer Archipelago in the Kimberley, we were, again, apparently, having an impact on the amount of commercial fishing and the ability for fishers to do their jobs. He attacked the government. He said it was taking too long to gazette the final boundaries. He said because we had not yet gazetted the boundaries of the new marine park, it was having a huge impact on fishers in the area. He said we had taken all of 12 months. He said it had been 12 months since announcing the gazettal of the boundaries of the marine park, but nothing had been done, so commercial fishers in the area were left disadvantaged. Gazettal is an important part of a zoning scheme. There are 600 000 hectares of state waters at Buccaneer Archipelago. It involves mapping in remote areas. There are difficult watermark boundaries to excise from certain lands. It is a lot of effort and work, and we are doing it as quickly as we can.

In the wake of that criticism that we have taken 12 months, I wondered whether the former government had introduced marine parks and how long it had taken to gazette them. I looked back at the former Liberal–National government, which announced the Kimberley's Camden Sound Marine Park in 2013. I thought if Hon Colin de Grussa is criticising us for taking 12 months for gazettal, surely the Liberal–National government did it faster than we did, maybe in six months. Was the Kimberley's Camden Sound Marine Park gazetted in six months? Was that the time period? No, it was not. Was it 12 months? No, it was not. Did take the former government two years to gazette that marine park? No, it did not. Did it take three years for the government, which was criticising us for taking 12 months, to gazette that marine park? No, it did not. Did it take four years for the former Liberal–National government to gazette that marine park? No, it did not take four years. Did the former government ever get around to it? No, it did not. By the time of the 2017 election, it had still not managed to gazette that marine park. Hon Colin de Grussa whacked out a press release criticising us for taking 12 months, when his former government could not do it at all. It

took this government to gazette that marine park. Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park, created in 2014, is another great example. The former government did not create a lot of marine or national parks, but it did these. How long did it take to get the Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park gazetted? We are being criticised for taking 12 months. Did the former government do it in 2015? Did it take a year? No. Did it do it in 2016? No. Did it do it in 2017? No. Again, it took the election of the Labor government to finish the job and get it done. The opposition can throw criticism around and attack us for the process, but we are undertaking one of the largest programs of terrestrial and marine park processes to create new marine and national parks in the history of this state. We are very proud of the process. We adopted a collaborative process with traditional owners, who have been forgotten in this process. Their contribution and insight into the creation of these marine parks is vital and very important. They come on the journey as well and they have input.

As I quoted earlier, the polling shows overwhelmingly that when marine parks are finally established, they are accepted and supported by the community. I was interested to hear the member for Vasse raise some criticisms about the process, given that I gather that in the south west—her very electorate—there are people who actually value and welcome marine parks. I think of Ngari Capes Marine Park. I also note that Western Australians are happy to go to Rottnest to dive and catch fish. That area is part of a marine park, and parts of it have sanctuary zones. I also mentioned Shark Bay and, of course, the Kimberley coast. When marine parks are introduced, there is a level of concern in the initial stages. In this case, it is made far worse by bad faith actors who stir things up to score political points and who listen to one very small part of the community, seeking headlines and ignoring the rest of the community.

I mention businesses on the south coast that are interested in a marine park. This advertisement appeared in *The West Australian* a number of weeks ago. It was put together and jointly supported by the dive sector business community and the adventure and tourism business sector, which all support the establishment of a marine park with sanctuary zones on our south coast. These businesses understand the economic benefit and premium that comes from marine parks being recognised and becoming famous the world over. This is also about securing jobs and being able to dive, and looking at and seeing the amazing biodiversity existing off the south coast. It is not just one sector; there is a whole group of interests here.

This is the job of governments. It has a responsible and adult role. Our job is to strike the right balance. Our job is difficult, but within government, passionate agencies bring their expertise and experience. That is what good government looks like. Hon Colin de Grussa did an FOI and—shock, horror—agencies actually debate these issues by bringing in their expertise and knowledge and comparing that information to hammer out a good, effective outcome. News to Hon Colin de Grussa: that is how good government works.

I expect people in the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to bring their passion and expertise to this issue. The Minister for Fisheries expects the same of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development; however, those offices do not make the final decision. I, as minister, in cooperation with the fisheries minister and eventually the cabinet, will make the decision. It is an executive government decision. We will take the input and advice and make the right decision that will result in the best outcome for everyone. It is about striking the right balance, not pandering to one single group. It is about considering the input of everyone, including traditional owners, commercial fishers, recreational fishers, business and tourism operators and members of the local community. Yes, we can listen to members who are passionate about the environment too. They make a valid contribution that is a part of all our considerations. When we get to the end of this process, the people of Western Australia can be assured that a very thorough deliberative process has extended beyond the bounds of statutory requirements, everyone has had a say and a decision will be made in the best interests of the entire community. That is the end point. It does not suit the opposition's purposes because it wants chaos and uncertainty, and for people to be anxious. I note the member for Roe commented earlier that this process is dragging out. He was critical of the time taken. He wants an early settlement of this.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** I didn't say that.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** No; he was criticising the time it has taken and the delays. The point is that we will get this right. We will take the time to get it right, consider all points of view and get that right balance. It is something that we would never see come from the opposition.

**MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Fisheries)** [3.56 pm]: I acknowledge and thank all the people who participated in the process to date, including community members, people with a conservation interest, recreational fishers and commercial fishers. They attended numerous meetings and participated in good faith. I thank the fishers I met in Esperance on multiple occasions and the fishers I met regarding Marmion. They all talked to me about the importance and values they ascribe to the fishery. They all provided valuable input into identifying the best way to find a balance between various interests in our marine environment. It is a fundamental question. This government does not back away from taking on these difficult challenges and acting on them. They do provoke anxiety and can lead to uncertainty while we work through the process. It is important that people have the opportunity to participate, and the Minister for Environment has clearly set out what that has been to date.

Much has been said about the FOIs released in the period from around February to March 2023. They show robust debate between agencies. I encourage that; it is good. We have robust debate in this place. It is how we can critique and generate new ways of thinking and new ideas. Remember, in the previous government, when there was debate and the Nationals WA did not like the debate, what did it do? It walked out of cabinet! It could not be bothered engaging in the debate to get better ideas. It threw the toys out of the pram and walked out. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development do not walk out; they have a robust conversation. What happened when the member for North West Central dumped the National Party? She sent the Leader of the Opposition a text. I do not think there was much conversation. In fact, I remember calls went unanswered. That is the level of debate and engagement that the National Party gets into. It criticises government agencies for having a debate and tries to use those differences of view to exploit uncertainty associated with change processes. That is what the National Party is doing. I will come to the reasons why I think it is doing that shortly.

I find it particularly galling that members of the opposition would preach to me about fishing sustainability when we know that back in 2010, they unwound the very principles that would have provided a lot more certainty around our west coast demersal scalefish resource. They do not like to make tough decisions; they like to go for a populist vote. I had to fix that mess up some years later. When I came in here to talk about the changes that I needed to make to provide certainty for that fishery, all I got was a push for short-term profit against long-term sustainability. That is what the opposition did when it rolled in various players from the tackle industry et cetera who built an industry around a fish that is in recovery. The opposition had scant regard for sustainability.

I was very pleased when the Leader of the Opposition made a comment about the Minister for Fisheries. I will try to quote it. I look forward to receiving *Hansard*. He said that fisheries are “responsibly managed by the Minister for Fisheries”. I was glad to hear him say that because that is the decision-making behind the demersal scalefish resource.

On 31 August, back on my birthday, the Leader of the Opposition, in a preamble to a question, said that the Premier was attacking our primary industries and that restrictions on the fishing sectors were unwarranted. There you go. As the Minister for Environment has said, the Leader of the Opposition likes to run with the hares and the hounds and try to have five bob each way. Either the Leader of the Opposition stands for marine parks, sensible planning and management or he does not. He should come out and say which one he stands for. If he stood for sensible planning and management, he would work with us to find the pathway forward in what is a complex and difficult issue with multiple interests—the Minister for Environment mentioned traditional owners—in the marine environment. However, I have found from the Leader of the Opposition’s scaremongering and the misuse of information in putting two and two together to get five, six or seven and not critically thinking through what we are dealing with in the interest of the communities that we represent, particularly regional communities.

With the exception of the Marmion Marine Park, most of the marine parks are in regional Western Australia. We did something with the Buccaneer Archipelago marine parks that the Leader of the Opposition never did when looking at marine parks. Aside from the issue of gazetting them, we looked at an industry adjustment package in total and the impact of opportunities that arose from the marine parks and how we could reinforce them. It was not about simple compensation, which is where the Leader of the Opposition’s thinking is at. It was about looking at the opportunity that a marine park generates and finding a way to reinforce that through our commitment to regional development and the commitment from every one of our regional members to get good outcomes for regional Western Australia. The south coast marine park is about that.

The Leader of the Opposition should withhold his judgement about how terrible this process is until he sees the outcomes. He should then participate in the consultation process to provide sensible and constructive feedback. I somehow doubt that we will get that, as I think he will look for a missed comma or something that is not dotted to try to exploit that and say that the world will fall in.

I know that it is not just me talking about scaremongering. I recently read the *Esperance Weekender*, a very good paper. There we have it: Hon Colin de Grussa was fearmongering in the *Esperance Weekender* on 24 November. Do members know what is really interesting? The photo was supplied by Colin de Grussa. Hon Colin de Grussa has had plenty of opportunities to get a briefing. I have offered on multiple occasions in this place for him to come and get a briefing on fishery sustainability issues. Have I heard from him? All I get is questions in the upper house, which we answer diligently. We provide the information. Do I get anything from Hon Colin de Grussa? I do not. I have offered to speak with him. Mind you; I did meet him at a couple of events. He is very quick to find the sausage rolls, I might add! Does he want to have a conversation about fisheries to understand what they are about? No, he does not.

I know what the game is. I know why the Leader of the Opposition has come in here with this matter of public interest and these veiled comments about what could happen, what he thinks is happening and what the role of one organisation over another is. It is because he is scared of taking a reasonable set of policies to the next election. All he is trying to do is scare people and create fear and angst. The *Esperance Weekender* is onto it. It knows what is happening. All Hon Colin de Grussa is doing is trying to find ways to save his own skin. If he came out with a decent



Speaker; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Mr Reece Whitby; Mr Donald Punch

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policy, talked to the community, reflected an opportunity for the future and had a positive vision, maybe he would save himself, but I do not think that is going to happen.

We need sensible discussion and leadership. Sensible leadership is found in the Cook government. I do not find it in the opposition. The Leader of the Liberal Party is here. I am glad the member for Vasse has come back to have a listen. We need sensible leadership because this is an area in which we have to take the community with us, which is what this consultation process has been about. I am very confident that there will be a variety of views when the final results come out. Some people will think that there could be more here or less there. That is something the Minister for Environment has alluded to. It is a difficult job being in government because you have to make decisions. You cannot just sit there and throw innuendo out. You have to be accountable for making decisions and getting the balance right. That is what all the work to date has been about.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Just listen for once, Leader of the Opposition! Talk about bottom feeders!

I am saying that leadership is needed to take people through a complex issue and come up with outcomes that reflect the best balance of community aspirations. We have unique coastlines and geography in Western Australia. The Minister for Environment is working hard to protect it for future generations. Protecting it does not mean that we do not use it, relate to it or participate in it. There can be a variety of uses, but with growing pressure, we need to plan for that into the future, and that is what this is about.

The member for Roe did talk more broadly, so I will digress a little about this government's incredibly strong commitment to regional Western Australia. We are building a foundation for the future by investing in infrastructure right around the state and by diversifying regional economies to ensure that they are not boom–bust economies. We are looking at how to increase livability right across regional Western Australia. Every one of our members from regional Western Australia live and work hard for their electorate. When I go into regional Western Australia, our members are known in their local communities. People come up to them and talk to them. I met with the Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia this morning, and it was a very positive and constructive meeting. It wants to talk strategy; it does not want to whinge and moan and create division like the opposition. For goodness sake, grab some leadership, become sensible and create a vision for the regions that embraces conservation, industry and community. Do not just look to the next election to try to grab a few populist votes to save skin.

#### *Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr D.A.E. Scaife) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

#### Ayes (5)

Ms M. Beard	Ms L. Mettam	Ms M.J. Davies ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr R.S. Love	Mr P.J. Rundle	

#### Noes (44)

Mr S.N. Aubrey	Ms M.J. Hammat	Mrs M.R. Marshall	Ms R. Saffioti
Mr G. Baker	Ms J.L. Hanns	Ms S.F. McGurk	Ms A. Sanderson
Ms L.L. Baker	Mr T.J. Healy	Mr D.R. Michael	Mr D.A.E. Scaife
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr M. Hughes	Mr S.A. Millman	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Dr K. Stratton
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Mr H.T. Jones	Ms L.A. Munday	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Ms C.M. Collins	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Mr P.C. Tinley
Mr R.H. Cook	Ms E.J. Kelsbie	Mr P. Papalia	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Ms D.G. D'Anna	Ms A.E. Kent	Mr S.J. Price	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mr M.J. Folkard	Dr J. Krishnan	Mr D.T. Punch	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mr P. Lilburne	Mr J.R. Quigley	Ms C.M. Rowe ( <i>Teller</i> )

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#### Pair

Dr D.J. Honey	Ms H.M. Beazley
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Question thus negatived.