

ROCK LOBSTER INDUSTRY, SOUTH WEST EXCLUSION ZONE

**1026. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:**

Since I asked the minister a question last Friday relating to professional rock lobster fishing exclusion zones, there have been at least two developments of which I am aware. First, the minister has received a submission from the Margaret River board-riders club and, second, earlier today I tabled a petition with the signatures of 139 residents - I am aware that most of them are south west surfers - objecting to the planned exclusion zones around surf breaks.

- (1) Has the minister made the final decision on the exclusion zones yet?
- (2) If not, is the minister prepared to meet the south west surfing fraternity this weekend to hear the surfers' views at first hand? I indicate that I will be very pleased to convene a meeting if the minister wishes.

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes.

I think I need to provide a little more than the simple no answer to the first part of the question. Since Hon Barry House asked the question on this matter, a number of developments have occurred. The principal development has been that the agreement, which I was led to believe had been formed between the surfers and the rock lobster industry, was in fact overwhelmingly, I am told, rejected by three meetings that were held with the cape-to-cape surfing fraternity. That leaves the situation in a somewhat state of flux, because the alternative that has been put to me is that there should be an exclusion zone along the totality of the cape-to-cape coast of somewhere between one kilometre and three kilometres. That would effectively wipe out the commercial rock lobster industry. Although I am prepared to meet with the concerned surfers, and I am happy to meet them over the weekend, I am not prepared to introduce a ban of that nature, which would cover huge regions that are not used by surfers at all. However, I am pleased to offer them the opportunity to explain to me why they would want such extensive coverage, given that we have fairly carefully identified those areas that the surfers use. The state of play at the moment is the status quo as it existed at the end of last season. At this stage the only exclusion zones relate to those that are gazetted under a section 43 order for public safety reasons. The question of resource sharing, which we sought to resolve between the surfers and the rock lobster fishers, is at this stage unresolved. I hope that we can resolve it, but that resolution will need to include defined areas. The prospect of the Government endorsing an exclusion of the industry in the whole cape-to-cape region is not a conceivable proposition, given that surfers use only a small proportion of that area.