

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

RECREATIONAL FISHING — FEES

Motion

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont — Leader of the Opposition) [4.10 pm]: I move —

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.

Madam Acting Speaker, let us be really clear at the outset about what we are really seeing here. We are seeing a new tax on Western Australian families. We are seeing a new impost on Western Australian families. We are seeing it in the context of huge increases in household fees and charges imposed by the government in the last budget. We are seeing it in the context of future huge increases in household fees and charges to be imposed in subsequent budgets by the Barnett government. We are seeing it in the context of a government having serious budgetary and financial difficulties, about which it has not been honest, and serious debt problems, which it is underestimating. The outcome of those serious budgetary and debt problems will be yet more attacks on family living standards in Western Australia and more taxes by this Barnett government. That is what will happen. This is the cost of the government's financial management. This is the cost of the deal with the National Party. Now, as a result of the deal with the National Party, all people in the south west of Western Australia who want to go fishing will face these new fishing fees.

The government has, of course, dressed it all up as a way of dealing with the pressure on fish resources in Western Australia. If the government had an absolutely perfect and credible record on preserving fish stocks, there might be some preparedness to listen to such an argument. If the government's measures in imposing fees could be linked in some way to an actual reduction in fishing pressure, people might be prepared to listen to the government on this issue. But neither of those facts apply. The government came into office at a time when the previous government, through the then fisheries minister, Hon Jon Ford, had imposed a series of fishing restrictions to protect some of the most vulnerable and some of the most iconic fish species that this state enjoys. Yet the government junked those restrictions. That was one of the first decisions of the new government. We took the matter up because we thought there was inappropriate influence from the member for Scarborough on the fishing minister with regard to that matter. One of the very first decisions of the government was to irresponsibly drop those fishing restrictions that had been introduced by Jon Ford.

Less than a year later, the government has been forced to come back with its own set of restrictions. If the government had adopted and maintained the restrictions imposed by Jon Ford, the government would have more credibility on this issue. The government was irresponsible. The government put those species at risk. We do not know how much damage was done in that period when the restrictions should have applied but did not. The government's restrictions are slightly less strong than those instituted by Jon Ford. What damage will occur in the future? This government has no credibility when it comes to protecting fish stocks.

The government now seeks to impose a fee. How does the imposition of a \$30 fee on everyone who goes out on a boat at any time in a year to fish help preserve fish stocks? How does that deal with the small percentage of fishers who take the bulk of the stock caught—particularly the stock caught of iconic and vulnerable species? The fishing fees do not actually do the job—they have been introduced by a government that does not have credibility on protecting fish stocks, and the mechanism does not do the job.

I sat on the previous government's Expenditure Review Committee. I know the aspirations of the Department of Fisheries for additional finance. I was in receipt of the same sorts of submissions from the Department of Fisheries to impose a fishing licence. The department came to us in, I think, 2001 or 2002 with a proposal; namely, it wanted money for its budget and, if the then government would not give it the money from the consolidated fund, it wanted us to give approval for a recreational fishing licence. The department said that it could raise the money with a recreational fishing licence, thereby easing the impact on the budget. We said no. We said, "Go away. We are not going to impose a recreational fishing licence on the tens and tens of thousands of people who recreationally fish in Western Australia." We were not going to charge children to go out with their parents and fish. We were not going to charge a boat owner's guests to go out to fish from a boat. We were not going to charge adults \$30 and children \$15 to fish. We rejected the proposal.

This goes to an argument that I made in the matter of public interest debate earlier this week; namely, it is when we see a government's financial decisions that we see the true character of the government. Is it a government that protects families? Is it a government that protects people who want to engage in the pastime of fishing? Or is it a government that says it will solve its financial difficulties by making yet another grab from the family budget? This government is apparently going to be that type of government. It is going to be a government that whenever there is any financial issue, families and Western Australian households will have to watch out. There

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

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Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

will be tax cuts for business. I quite like tax cuts for business—I did a lot of that myself. However, I know that the principal job of any government is first of all to protect Western Australian families; that is, to protect Western Australian households. However, we have a government that talks tax cuts while it taxes ordinary people; that is, it puts up fees and charges on ordinary people. If the government does not think that there is resistance to this, it is very, very wrong indeed. Our members are receiving dozens and dozens, tens and tens, hundreds and hundreds of emails and letters. Lots of people are signing petitions. There is going to be a big campaign on this issue and Labor will be right with those fishing people campaigning to have the fees axed. We will be campaigning to have these fees axed and we will be telling people that the very same proposal came to us when we were in government and we rejected that proposal. We protected families; this government did not. This government took the opposite choice. That is a point of difference between the two parties.

Of course, there is a need to protect fish resources. We have to reduce fishing effort otherwise there will not be fishing opportunities for our children and our grandchildren. This is a regrettable outcome of environmental changes, increases in population and improvements in technology. Another factor is increasing wealth. The greater number of people owning boats means that there is also more pressure on fish stocks. Of course we need to reduce fishing pressure; however, it is not done by charging \$30 to every adult who goes out on a boat to fish anytime during a year. It is not done by charging minors \$15. It is not done by having special licences to fish for vulnerable species. Arguably, the special licences for the vulnerable demersal species will not deter the very people who are having the biggest impact on those species. Those people own the big boats and have a big interest in it. They will be prepared to pay the \$150 annual fee and they will not reduce their fishing effort. Ordinary people with small boats and dinghies, who do a little bit of fishing, will also have to pay, but that will have no impact on the fish stocks. The bigger fishers and the richer people will pay the \$150 annual fee, which will be a fraction of their fuel bill for a day's outing. It probably will be a fraction of their bait bill for a day's fishing. They will continue to add pressure on the fish resources. We will not get the outcome that we are looking for. Instead, we will get an additional tax. There is a real possibility that the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation will recommend to Parliament that the regulations providing for these fees be disallowed. I do not know about the deliberations of that committee but I do know that one of the jobs of the committee is to determine the difference between a fee and a tax. An over-recovery of the administration costs of issuing a licence is not a fee-for-service arrangement but a taxation arrangement, which requires separate legislation. If the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation does its job, it will recommend the disallowance of the regulation for the fee. I believe it is the case that the administration of the licensed scheme will result in an over-recovery of the cost required to administer the scheme. Why do I think that? It is because the government itself has said that the money will be used for research into recreational fishing. By definition, the government has already admitted that this is not just a licence fee; it is a new tax. The government has said it would not introduce any new taxes or increase existing taxes. Apparently that is a message for the business community only. It is not a message for Western Australian families and individuals. The message for Western Australian families and individuals is that they can face huge increases in existing fees and new fees, and that the government does not believe that that is taxation. That is the government's doublespeak between businesses and households.

I know that government members must have been receiving many of the same emails that we have been receiving. Opposition members will go to the marginal seats and talk to people about this issue. We will be campaigning with a vengeance. The member for Ocean Reef should not think that his electorate will escape. I am sure that there are a lot of boat owners in the member for Riverton's electorate. We will be talking to the people in his electorate and campaigning on this issue. We will tell the constituents of those members who do not vote with us on this motion that their member has not stood up for them on the issue of fishing fees. We will tell their constituents that their members believe that the government's taxation promises apply only to businesses and not to Western Australian families and households.

A letter written by Mr Darren Hemming states —

I respectfully request you support disallowance of amendments to the *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995* associated with the introduction of a Recreational Boat Fishing Licence.

Recreational fishing from a boat is a social pastime; it is common for a boat owning family to share their boating outings with other families and friends during the course of a year. For most boat owners sharing their boat with others for a few hours is a major aspect of pleasure from owning a boat. Sometimes fishing is the prime reason for a boating outing, but often it is secondary to the pleasure of being on the water or accessing a beach or island. There are more than 70,000 recreational boats in WA, and with an estimated 250,000 persons using the boats the Recreational Boat Fishing Licence could be

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required by more than 100,000 persons. To require more than 100,000 persons to hold a Recreational Boat Fishing Licence where in most instances they may only fish for a few hours a year for fish that are not endangered (eg trevally, squid, mackerel, crabs) and not subject to special limitations, is unfair and irrational.

That is the sort of correspondence that we have been receiving over and over again. He says more, and we will be saying it too —

There are important issues associated with a Recreational Boat Fishing Licence; including cost and inconvenience for families in WA, disincentive to actively recreate outdoors, disincentive to occasionally hire a boat/dinghy or day fish on a charter boat, disincentive to holiday in WA causing a negative impact on regional WA, inconsistency with non-boat fishing and extension of unnecessary government 'red tape'. It is vital the Parliament debate these issues, and proper scrutiny should lead to disallowance of the misconceived regulations.

They are all powerful arguments. I repeat that the opposition supports the conservation of fish. We support arrangements that will lead to the better protection of those vulnerable and iconic fish species in Western Australia.

Mr M.J. Cowper: What will they be?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: We introduced a package when we were in government that closed the season for a time. The member knows very well about the regulations that Hon Jon Ford introduced regarding recreational fishing and the member knows very well what Hon Jon Ford and the Labor government did to reduce the commercial fishing pressure on those resources that are so desired by recreational fishers in Western Australia. The previous Labor government did not attack Western Australian families. We did not impose an unnecessary additional tax on them. We did not say that we do not want people to participate in this type of activity if they are not very wealthy.

Mr W.R. Marmion: You did.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: We did not. Look at what the government has done. The government has closed the season for a shorter time—not a very much shorter time—and it has whacked on these huge additional fees. We will campaign to have these fees disallowed and to see the end of them. We will campaign in every electorate of the state, including the marginal electorates of members opposite. We will be joined by tens of thousands of people. This is a big issue, and the government will lose.

MR P.B. WATSON (Albany) [4.28 pm]: I have been a member of Parliament for eight years and this is probably the issue on which I have received the most feedback from all parts of my community. One of the best things that can be done on a Saturday or Sunday is to go to Emu Point or Middleton Beach and watch the granddads and mums and dads fishing from their boats in the harbour, catching a few whiting or herring. The kids have big smiles on their faces and the seniors are exercising while they do it. What will happen now? They will not be able to afford to do it. This government is uncaring and it is dishonest because it did not go to the election and tell the people that it would impose these fishing fees. We should be looking after the fish stocks. I must applaud Hon Jon Ford, the previous Minister for Fisheries, for the tremendous job he did. I used to go crook at him because some people in my electorate said that they were upset because they were not allowed to fish in some areas and were only allowed to take a certain amount of fish. However, when we sat with them and rationally explained why that was the case, most people were happy. If I have to pay \$30 each time I go out on a boat, I know that I will not catch any fish because I never catch any fish. There are other people who go out in boats and do catch fish.

A point that was brought up by one of my constituents was that, as with most other pursuits in life, the 90-10 rule applies to the world of recreational fishers. I am in the minus 10 per cent of that. Successful anglers are the product of learning, experience, thought and lots of hard work. These make up only 10 per cent of recreational fishers but they would account for 90 per cent of the recreational catch.

What do we do? We penalise everyone. I like to go out in a boat to Emu Point. Sometimes my mates and I get in a charter boat. It is now going to cost us an extra \$30, or it might be more, to go out on a charter boat. Albany is a tourist-operated town. We probably have three or four fishing charters. Every time someone goes out, an extra cost passes on to them. A fisherperson has to consider where he would like to fish. Should he go up north or down south to the great southern or the south west? He may say, "What is this here? I've got to pay 30 bucks here and X amount here." We are trying to encourage people to come to the great southern and to Albany. We are trying to encourage our seniors to get out of the house. We in the Labor Party want to create a family

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environment for people to go out and be with their families on weekends. We have a government that says, "We'll give a fuel card to those in the country; 500 bucks for the seniors." Then we start taking off bills to Western Power, water, all these charges, and now this one, coming in by stealth. We start to see the real picture of this government. It is not a "giver" government; it is a "taker" government. It will give a couple of little flash things that it says it is going to give, but then it comes up with these points here where we have to pay just to go out and enjoy ourselves.

It is not going to make any difference to the fish stocks. My paying 30 bucks when I go out in a boat is not going to change the fish stocks. People are still going to go out every weekend because they want to fish, but they are going to have to pay that extra money. No-one has said to me, "The money we get from this, we're going to do this, this and this." All the government has said is that it will put it into a fund. That is a bit like the royalties for regions fund. Anyone can do what they want with it—they will shift it here and they will shift it there. The government has not come to me and my constituents and said, "We're going to look after salmon fishing in your electorate. We'll put more fishing inspectors on." There is nothing in here to say that there are going to be more fishing inspectors. I know the ones in Albany do very well. I know some around the member for Collie-Preston's area that do very well apprehending crustacean offenders.

Mr M.J. Cowper: If I had said that, he would have gone crook!

Mr P.B. WATSON: We are room mates, and I love the legal crayfish that my room mate provides me with! I cannot see any sense to this new arrangement at all. It imposes licences on people fishing from boats but not those fishing from shore. They are both targeting the same resource. A person fishing in the channel at Emu Point, if he or she is lucky enough, can get the fish coming through that the blokes fishing out in the boats are going to get. A person can fish off the shore at Cable Beach or the Gap, anywhere out there. A person can fish there off the rocks—which I would not recommend. Unfortunately, we probably lose two or three people a year who try to do it. This is discrimination against those people. They can go down and fish, get a couple of dozen fish or whatever the limit is—and a lot of people go over the limit. They are not getting charged at all. It does not matter to me whether I am on the boat or on the land—I am a very good fish conservationist! I feed them all the time and I do not take any home!

Mr B.S. Wyatt: That is not what I hear; that the member returns them to the water!

Mr P.B. WATSON: I kiss them and put them back in the water.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I was very upset that the member for Mandurah had not interjected. I have been going for six minutes now. I am very concerned that we have members on the other side who are in electorates where people fish. I suppose every electorate would be the same. Just because you live in the inner city or some of these other areas does not mean there are no fishermen there.

Mr P. Papalia: We would have to be worried about the member for Ocean Reef!

Mr P.B. WATSON: If I were the member for Ocean Reef; if I were the member for Riverton —

Several members interjected.

Mr P.B. WATSON: The Minister for Health has got a lot of things going against him at the moment because he has got the member for Mandurah after him about royalties for regions. He is going to have the fishermen after him. Do not underestimate these fishermen—they have very, very organised groups. We will be out there with them in these marginal seats.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Is the member going to support the federal environment minister in putting bans all along the coast?

Mr P.B. WATSON: What was that? I cannot understand the member.

Dr M.D. Nahan: Is the member going to support the Rudd government's proposal to ban fishing along the coast?

Mr P.B. WATSON: The member obviously wants to get off the subject, but all we are talking about today is the government imposing a tax. It is a tax on pensioners, on young children and on middle-aged people. We do not just have one little group that fish. Everybody in Western Australia goes fishing. I have been in this job eight years and I have had more input from constituents on this subject than any other. We have had pretty controversial things in Albany with the waterfront development and everything like that —

Mr M.J. Cowper: More than daylight saving?

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Mr P.B. WATSON: No. They just did not want it down there, so that was good! When I walk down the street people come up to me to talk about this. It is a huge issue. We are trying to encourage people to exercise, we are trying to encourage people to be with their families, but these fees are a rip-off by this government that will only discourage activity. This is a government that is dishonest and uncaring. It is up to the backbenchers. We will see how strong the backbenchers are. They have come into this Parliament. I went through some copies of maiden speeches last night, when we were sitting late. I think some members should go back and read what they said about standing up for their constituents. They said they will believe in their beliefs and everything like that. As we saw yesterday with Redress WA, they just toed the party line. I know they have got a dictator as a leader who just tells them what to do, but do not ever tell me and do not ever shout across the chamber that the Labor Party follows the line—that is all they are doing over there.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [4.38 pm]: This is a very important issue that I am very keen to speak on, not only because of the impact this new fishing tax will have on people who wish to carry out a pastime that is a tradition of many families in Western Australia, but also it has particular implications for the region which I represent, the Peel, and in particular of course my electorate of Mandurah. I am very interested today to hear, if possible, from the member for Dawesville and the member for Murray-Wellington because I will ask them to join with me in opposing these regulations and support the Labor Party's push to disallow them. I will be very interested to hear if they make any comment.

Like many members, I have also been inundated by members of my community and fishermen and women from other parts of Western Australia over the past month or so since the decision was made—without consultation with many recreational fishers and many boat owners—by the Minister for Fisheries, Hon Norman Moore. It is very important that we understand in this place that Western Australia has a very large number of recreational boat owners and recreational fishermen and women. It has one of the highest rates per capita of any state in the nation. Right along the coastline of Western Australia, from the metropolitan area down to the south west and the great southern, the participation in fishing is very, very strong and is very much a part of the lifestyle of many people, whether they live on the coast, or whether they live in the metropolitan area and travel to coastal areas to partake in fishing. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the very high number of boat owners in Western Australia. The Peel region has one of the highest—from memory, it is either the second highest or the highest—rates per capita of boat ownership in the state.

Mr M.J. Cowper: Karratha.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It has the second highest.

If members were to go into the backyards of many houses in the Peel region—including, of course, the Shire of Murray, and Waroona, and down towards the member for Collie-Preston's electorate, and well and truly within the electorates of the members for Murray-Wellington and Dawesville—they would find that a boat is quite likely one of the assets that those people have. These boats range from the dinghy and small tinnie through to the more elaborate boats that people own. Most of the bigger boats in Mandurah are usually moored at Mary Street Lagoon, Mandurah Ocean Marina, the marina near Mandurah Quay, or across at Bouvard. However, irrespective of that, the Peel region has a massive number of families who are boat owners and are, therefore, active participants in recreational fishing and in getting out on the water throughout the year to partake in that pursuit. Many of them are pensioners and retirees who are on a low or limited income and therefore do not have a lot of money, but part of their lifestyle and part of the reason that they have settled into and enjoy the Peel region is because of the access to the waterway and recreational fishing. Behind that, many businesses in the City of Mandurah and the Shire of Murray, and in the other coastal locations towards Bunbury, rely on these people for their economic well-being and for the continuation of their business, which is derived from boating, fishing et cetera.

I would have thought that a minister who is going to introduce a new tax on fishing would have at least first consulted people about the best way to address the issue of fish stocks into the future. But it appears that the minister has sorely lapsed in his capacity to do that consultation. I would have thought that the minister would have gone even further, because of the political nature of fishing—it is a political issue, let us not deny that—and at least consulted some of his government members who will be targeted by this decision. That may include my two colleagues in the electorates adjacent to mine—the member for Murray-Wellington and the member for Dawesville. These businesses that rely on boating and fishing will be affected. I have not simply sat back and waited for these businesses to come to me. I have, as I have said, had numerous emails and phone contacts. I have met people, as the member for Albany has said, in the street who have said, “Hey, what's this fishing rubbish that they're going to try to introduce? They've already put up the price of electricity and are going to increase the price of water, we're already getting laden with extra costs and government charges, and now

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they're going to go and tax us again on something that we've enjoyed doing for many, many years." So I started to ring a lot of the people who have contacted me and written to me. I want to mention some of them, because they have given me permission to do that. Some of these people are very important businesspeople in the community that I represent. They told me to go ahead, because this must be said and an action must be mounted against this fishing tax. Not all of them are in my electorate. A lot of them live in the electorates of the Deputy Premier, the member for Murray-Wellington, the member for Kingsley and the member for Ocean Reef, to name just a few. What are the sorts of things that these people are saying? Mr Ryan Arnup is the manager-owner of the Mandurah Marine Centre on Park Road in Mandurah. What did he say to me? I wrote down what he said and told him that I would be repeating it in Parliament tonight. Mr Arnup said that he wants to know how the government came to the conclusion in the first place that this new tax would actually address the very reason for which the government says it is doing this—that is, to protect fish stocks. Why target just one group of people? The problem with targeting one group of people, boat owners in particular, is that, in his view, it will simply shift the emphasis to shore-based fishers and defeat the very reason for which the government is actually introducing this fishing tax in the first place. He said the sorts of clients who come in to get their boat motor fixed, or who might get a bit of a check up on the motor for the tinnie every couple of years, are retired people. Some of them go crabbing only a couple of times a year, for example. Some of them might go fishing only 100 or 200 yards off the coast, and some of them might fish only a couple of times a year. Do members know what they do a lot of the time? If they are older men and women, they go fishing with their grandchildren. The grandchildren come down to Mandurah for a holiday, and one of the great things the kids do with their grandparents is when Grandad says, "Okay, we're going out fishing this weekend. We'll go out and try to catch a few fish in the boat." What has happened? The fishing tax that this government is now imposing on these people in my electorate and in other parts of Western Australia means that Grandad will now have to find \$20 for each person who might be fishing from his boat. What will he do?

A government member interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It has hurt government members, has it not? They know it! They all know it! Government members know this is wrong, but they will not cross the floor. I guarantee that not one government member—not the member for Geraldton who piped up last night—

Mr I.C. Blayney: What would you do instead?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Geraldton pipes up every now and then and does not know what he is talking about.

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member will do nothing. Will he cross the floor when he sees something that is really wrong? No, he is a coward like everyone else on that side of this place! He is a coward and he always has been! An absolute coward! Talking of one, here is one standing now!

Several members interjected.

Withdrawal of Remark

Dr K.D. HAMES: The member referred to all of us as cowards, which is unparliamentary, and he even referred to me as a coward, which is even more unparliamentary.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): The member should withdraw.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I withdraw, Madam Acting Speaker.

Debate Resumed

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We have hit a raw nerve!

What really worried me when I spoke to Ryan earlier today is that he said, "What I'm really scared about, David, is that my business may not be here next year." That is an honest quote from Mr Ryan Arnup, whom I asked if I could quote him tonight. I am not making this up. This is not made up! This is not made up, member for Nedlands, who sits in his plush little place in Nedlands with all of his little plush areas. The member does not worry about the pensioners who have their tinnies and who will now have to pay extra money for their grandchildren to go fishing with them. The member does not care! He will not cross the floor and come over to this side when these regulations are put forward to be disallowed—he will not!

Several members interjected.

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[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

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Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Government members will not stand up for the pensioners and boat owners in their communities because they do not care. They will toe the party line. Good old Uncle Norman came down and said, "This is what we're going to do and you will follow us." Like sheep—government members are all sheep! I hope that is not unparliamentary. I suppose it probably is. I hope it is not. I could attribute a couple of fish characteristics to some members opposite, but I will not.

However, Ryan Arnup told me, and he was very specific, that he honestly—his views are not in isolation—is really worried about whether his business will be here next year. But he is just one person. Another business in Mandurah is Blue Manna Boat Hire—a great business. There are a couple of businesses like it, and the houseboat hires are another example. They hire their boats to people to enjoy the Peel region waterways, and part of what they do is fish. They are on a boat, so these regulations snap them up as well. Mark Swain, the manager of Blue Manna Boat Hire, told me that this is a really serious issue for people in Peel, because one of the jewels of the Peel region is its waterways, and one of the most important things marketed to visitors is activity on the waterways. We must do this responsibly, of course. There is no argument about making sure that we fish for the future, but the way the government is approaching this is in question. The government has decided to use an ill-targeted tax that will not actually achieve what the minister pretends he wants to achieve. Mark Swain covers the same issues. What does he say to people who want to hire a boat for the day, or for a few nights if they are hiring a houseboat? There is an additional cost. Then there are the intricacies and inconsistencies in these regulations that cause confusion. Apparently, from my understanding, a person will not have to pay the fee for fishing from a jetty. However, if I am zooming along in my boat and park my boat at a jetty to go fishing, I have to pay.

Mr W.R. Marmion: No, you don't.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, I do. The parliamentary secretary should read the regulations, because I think he will find that that is what will happen. Does this package include a massive increase in the number of fishing inspectors, which is what we really should be doing to make sure that people are complying with the regulations? No; that is not part of it. The government is going to lumber us with a \$30 tax, and then a \$400 tax for each boat. People will then find themselves questioning whether they are able to go boating at all. I spoke to another businessperson today, Scott Mounsey of Mandurah Motor and Marine Brokers, in Park Road, Mandurah. One of the concerns he has, based on the feedback he is getting from his regular customers, is why bother to have a boat? People are starting to ask what the point is of having a boat. There will be a few more boats listed in the *Quokka*.

Dr K.D. Hames: Are you helping him sort out his issues with the council?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will come back to the Deputy Premier in a minute. I want to hear from him, about what he will do about his constituents. I bet he will say that he supports these regulations, and he will do absolutely zilch.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Will the Deputy Premier cross the floor? He is in government, and he forgets that.

Dr K.D. Hames: I bet you don't know he has a problem with the local council.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Who cares if he has a problem with the council?

Dr K.D. Hames: He lives in your electorate, and who does he come to? Me.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What does that have to do with it? This is about fishing. The Deputy Premier can talk about the council all day if he likes. He is embarrassed that he has to toe the government line here, because a huge number of electors in his electorate own boats and are saying to him that he is hopeless. He will toe the government line. He will not cross the floor or speak up and vote against these ridiculous regulations. He will not support the disallowance motion.

I will take the interjection of the member for Murray-Wellington, because I like him, although that depends on what he has to say.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.J. Cowper: Have you written to the minister detailing how your constituents would like to see the commercial fishery protected?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am in the process of writing to the minister about a whole range of issues that have been raised with me by recreational and professional fisher-people. I have already written to the minister about

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the crayfishing industry, because a number of crayfishermen and their families have met with me, and I have passed on their concerns. I am very interested in the comments of the member for Murray-Wellington, because he has also been inundated with complaints. An article appeared in the *Mandurah Coastal Times* on Wednesday, 29 July, headed “MLA inundated with fishing fee complaints”. It reads —

Murray Wellington MLA Murray Cowper says he has been inundated with complaints and queries about the State Government’s fishing fees, which he claims could act as an impost for hundreds of recreational fishers in his electorate.

Earlier this month, the State Government announced new rules to protect WA’s most popular recreational fisheries, including new licences and further restrictions.

...

Fisheries Minister Norman Moore said revenue raised from the new licensing system would only be spent on recreational fishing.

But Mr Cowper last week questioned the new fees and agreed with residents who labelled them as an additional tax.

I thank the member for that. Good on him! But will he come over here? That is the big question. I know he is upset with some of the members on his side, and he does not like some of the ministers because they are not listening to him. I know he is a very strong member, but I still do not know whether he will have enough gumption to come over here when the vote is taken to disallow these regulations. I hope he will do what he is quoted as saying in this article—that is, agree that the new fees are an additional tax. I quote again —

But Mr Cowper last week questioned the new fees and agreed with residents who labelled them as an additional tax.

Mr Cowper said a similar increase in driving licences applications would be more warranted.

The member has suggested another way there. The article continues —

“If we are going to charge people more to catch fish and crabs why don’t we do the same with driving licences?” he said.

“To me, it’s a bit of skewed logic.”

I agree absolutely. The member should come over here and vote these regulations down when they are presented to this Parliament. He will be a hero in his electorate. He will be applauded by the many hundreds of his constituents who are boat owners and go fishing. Just as he fought on the Logue Brook dam issue, he should be able to stand up proud and cross the floor to support the disallowance motion for these regulations. I will not miss the day when that vote comes on. I will be here come rain or shine; I will not miss it. I want to see what my two colleagues from the opposite side, whose electorates are adjacent to mine, will do when the big question comes. I think heavy boy, big Norman, will put his hand on their shoulder, and the Premier will probably do the same, and they will say, “Settle down fellows; you can’t do this. You’ve got to toe the line.” They will be judged for that, if they choose to do it.

I will refer to another email that I think sums up the feelings of many of my constituents. This is from a resident of the Deputy Premier’s electorate of Dawesville named Sam Trimbell. He told me he was very happy for me to quote from his email. He lives in Halls Head and works locally in the Fire and Rescue Service of Western Australia. He is married with three children aged 15, 12 and 10. He wrote to me to express his concerns about the new arrangements, in the hope that I and my parliamentary colleagues—including, I hope, his own member—would do something about this new tax. He highlights that the current economic climate is having an effect on families. The member for Albany mentioned that. The cost of entertaining a family can be steep. He estimates that in holiday time, to take his family out to Hungry Jack’s for lunch and then go to a movie can cost up to \$140. That is just for one day’s activity. He then highlights what the proposed costs will be, and discusses how the imposition of this tax would affect his family, if he wanted to take his kids out fishing four to seven times a year. He goes on about the confusion and the problems with even obtaining a \$20 day licence if he wants to take some people out on his boat. Mr Trimbell asks how he can obtain a licence and what happens if he does not have home internet access. What would happen if he woke up on a beautiful Saturday morning, with the sun shining and the water brilliant for going out with a boat? He would have to go and get a licence.

Dr K.D. Hames: He could go to Russell’s Totally Wild Fishing and Camping, and he would be able to do it.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is for those who know.

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Dr K.D. Hames: He could get some bait there and keep Russell in business.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The minister is making excuses for this decision because he knows it is wrong. He knows that the people in his electorate hate it, but he will defend it. I find that absolutely ludicrous. At least the member for Murray-Wellington has the gumption to put out a press release and say quite clearly that he reckons it is bad.

Mr M.J. Cowper: I did not.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He did; he said he agreed that it is a tax. He said last week when questioned about the new fees that he agreed with residents who labelled it as an additional tax. Did they get it wrong?

Mr M.J. Cowper: I did not do it.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will ask them for the press release of the member for Murray-Wellington of Wednesday, 29 July. I have a lot of time for the member for Murray-Wellington, so I will not put him on the spot. I have so much more to offer. David Trimbell goes on to write —

HOW WILL LICENSED PARTICIPANTS ON BOARD A BOAT BE POLICED?

— This is a joke. How in the hell will you know if everyone on board is actually fishing at any one time? Especially if the boat is 20, 30 or 40 kms. offshore. The bloke out with his wife and 16 and 17 year old kids should be an easy target just offshore if he hasn't paid the \$120 for licenses and \$80 for the day and the policing officers have been watching them through binoculars for a few hours.

That is a good point. He then asks —

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT TYPE OF FISH HAS BEEN HOOKED BEFORE IT IS BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE

— My own experience in catching demersal type fish is very limited. (One Snapper and Dhufish in 6 yrs. of boat fishing)

People might hook a fish but the chances of that fish surviving when they return it to the water is negligible because there is an almost 90 per cent mortality rate. He then writes —

These are just a few of the problems I can see with the new regulations and that is without even mentioning the impact on :—

- Boat Selling Businesses
- Boat Chandlery Businesses
- Small Bait and Tackle Businesses
- Local Town Tourism (eg. Mandurah, Dunsborough, Lancelin, Geraldton, Bunbury, Busselton)
- Fish and Chip Shops ...

David makes some very good points. He puts in bold this big warning, and the member for Dawesville, the Deputy Premier, should take note because I reckon this is the sort of feeling that is out there in his electorate. He might hold his seat with a reasonable margin at the moment, but when members anger fishermen, margins can be peeled away pretty quickly. David writes —

SURELY, AN IMMEDIATE 12 MONTH BAN FOLLOWED BY BANS WHICH ARE LONGER THAN TOKEN BANS TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOR 2 OR 3 YEARS FOLLOWING WOULD HAVE A SIMILAR IMPACT.

I FOR ONE WOULD BE PREPARED TO PAY A \$50 / YEAR ONE OFF FISHING LICENCE AS WOULD A LOT OF PEOPLE I HAVE SPOKEN TO ON THESE ISSUES. AS THEY SAY — SOMETHING IS BETTER THAN NOTHING — AND THAT IS WHAT YOU WILL GET FROM ME AND THOSE PEOPLE I HAVE SPOKEN TO.

This is the big clincher —

WHATEVER POLITICAL PARTY PUSHES THESE REGULATIONS — THEY HAD BETTER ENJOY THEIR TIME IN POWER.

I agree with David Trimbell. I have not met him and I do not know him, but I have spoken to him once on the phone. He is a passionate bloke who took the time to write that letter because this will affect his family. We are not talking simply about people in big flashy boats, such as the member for South Perth's friends. He is not here and I should not talk ill of him when he is not here. He is a good friend of mine. We are not talking about those people but the average, family person, such as a grandfather and grandmother who have the kids down for the weekend. They may be grandparents who see the kids only once or twice a year. One of the things they do,

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particularly in my electorate, is to pull the old tinny out, pack up the esky and head out to try to catch a few crabs and maybe a few whiting just offshore. We should not forget that those people are as important as anybody else who might want to catch a few fish off the coast.

I had hoped that the member for Kingsley would be here tonight. I am sure that she received Bob Grant's email. Bob lives at 1 Ibis Court, Kingsley. He is obviously a very experienced angler. In his email he included a whole lot of issues. He has determined the sorts of anglers there are. He has put a very strong argument for why this will not work. I will conclude with his comments. He writes —

I appeal to you, as an elected representative to the Western Australian parliament, to resist and to do your utmost to oppose —

He then refers to the introduction of these licences that will clearly not achieve a significant reduction in the take of vulnerable species. He continues —

I would also ask that you promote the following —

- The introduction of a more appropriate and sensible *West Coast Demersal Scalefish Licence* that does not deter the majority of recreational anglers from fishing from a boat; is more easily administered and policed; and is a component of an integrated approach to management rather than a cornerstone.
- Advocate for the introduction of *large scale permanent sanctuary (no take) zones in the West Coast Bio Region ...*

Mr M.J. Cowper: What do you think about that one?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, of course.

Mr M.J. Cowper: What about closing seasons?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I think we should be considering all these things, but we should do it in consultation. I think one of the problems is that the minister made these decisions. The main point that people make to me is that no-one consulted them. Most of those people understand the pressure that fish stocks are under in Western Australia. No-one has denied it. Mr Grant has mentioned it. David Trimbell mentioned it in his email. The gentleman whom I mentioned in my presentation this evening mentioned it. He is a businessman in Mandurah. They all understand it. However, this is a tax of no return. The member for Murray-Wellington has unfortunately been put in a position where he will have to support it even though he came out very strongly and said that he thought it was a tax and agreed with the people who had contacted him that it was a tax. He is now unfortunately in a position where he might have to defy government, and I think he should, because I think he will be lauded for doing it. I hope that he does. I will put out a press release saying "Good on you". I put out one the other day for the Minister for Education, because she did a great job for education when she came down to Mandurah. I wrote a press release and I said that her visit was great and absolutely brilliant.

Mr M.J. Cowper: Did you get to Meadow Springs?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: She is working on it. I reckon she will come to the party. The member for Murray-Wellington knows how important it is. I will not go into that because I have one minute to go.

I appeal to the Deputy Premier, the member for Dawesville, and to the member for Murray-Wellington, as hard-working members of our neighbouring electorates, to seriously consider the ramifications of this new fishing tax and, if necessary, support the disallowance motion when it comes before this house. They would be doing a great service to fishers in the Mandurah-Peel region, but they would also be doing great service to those businesses that rely on fishing being a viable activity that is promoted in our region as well.

I am very pleased to make this contribution to this very important debate on behalf of what I believe are thousands of people in the Peel region who see fishing as an important part of their lifestyle.

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn) [5.08 pm]: I will make a short contribution to this debate. In question time today, in the Treasurer's apoplectic response to some interjections, he started screaming and yelling about his being a Treasurer who would cut through red tape. He has said it on numerous occasions in this house. When speaking on the impact of these new fishing taxes on families and the issue of red tape, let us take the example of a family of mum and dad and a couple of children who decide that they will buy a boat because they want to fish for snapper, groper and some deep-sea fish. This is what they have to pay to get a line in the water. First of all, they have to get a licence to operate the boat.

Mr M.J. Cowper: A skipper's ticket.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

p5829c-5857a

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

Mr F.M. LOGAN: A skipper's ticket; I thank the member for Murray-Wellington. After this year's adjustments to the fees, the total cost for the skipper's ticket, including the registration book, is \$272.90.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It does not matter who brought it in. I ask the member for Riverton whether he thinks that the ability to operate a boat safely is a good thing.

Dr M.D. Nahan: I have one.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: He has one, so he clearly thinks it is a good thing!

That is the first part of the example I am providing.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We will have a chat later on, member for Dawesville, after I go through this example.

The second thing they will have to do once they have their boat is to register the boat, which will cost \$40.10. They then need a boat licence, which costs \$76.10. They now also need a licence to fish from a boat, which is \$30. Anybody who goes out fishing for demersal fish, regardless of their age, will also have to pay \$30. They may not go out every weekend, but they might go four or five times over the year, so they get an annual licence, which costs \$150 a person.

I will summarise. It is a pity that you are in the chair, Madam Acting Speaker (Mrs L.M. Harvey), because I know that, with your close association with the fishing tackle industry, you would love to contribute to this debate.

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I will say nothing, Madam Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I will have my turn later!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, exactly. I am sure, Madam Acting Speaker, that if you were not in the chair, you would probably love to vote on our side of the chamber.

I will go back through this again. I am talking about an average family with a couple of kids that just wants to go out and fish four or five times a year from their boat. It will cost them \$272.90 to get a skipper's ticket, \$40.10 for the initial registration fee, \$76.10 for the boat licence, a further \$30 for a fishing boat licence for every person in the boat, and \$150 per person to go out fishing for—

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We will not get into the cost of tackle, member for Murray-Wellington! I am talking about red tape; I am not talking about the equipment. There is now also a fee payable for a licence to fish for demersal fish, which is \$150 per person. That is five separate charges before there is even a line in the water! Five separate charges by a government that wants to cut red tape. Government members sit there asking, "What's the problem?" They will find out what the problem is very shortly, when those recreational fishermen come banging on their doors. The member for Murray-Wellington knows that they are already up in arms. They will be banging on doors, going off their heads, talking about the same issues I am talking about now—red tape and the cost of going out to fish for a few fish.

This is not about sustainability. Nobody in this house would disagree that we have to be absolutely on our guard to ensure that the future of fishing is safeguarded for all generations in Western Australia. Everyone understands that commercial fishers have hit fish stocks pretty hard over the years and that catches have been reduced significantly by various fisheries ministers over various governments, particularly over the past eight years. No significant evidence has yet been provided by the Department of Fisheries about the total take of the recreational catch. There are no specific figures; it is thought to be somewhere between 300 tonnes and 500 tonnes a year. It is not really known. Nevertheless, this tax is being introduced to hit all families in the belief that somehow the take by recreational fishers will be reduced. There is no evidence to back that up at all, and no scientific evidence whatsoever that the fish take will be reduced as a result of the introduction of these new licences and the costs imposed by their introduction.

The Department of Fisheries admits that there is no clear relationship between the introduction and cost of these new licences and the overall reduction of the take by recreational fishermen. As members know—I am sure there are members who personally know fishermen who do this—there are fishermen who go out regularly, every weekend, to fish. Those types of fishermen will continue to go fishing. They have boats, tackle and equipment

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the scale of which justifies their type of sport, which is going after deep-sea demersal fish. They will pay \$150 and target those fish anyway. Given the fact that they now have to pay a boat licence fee to fish from a boat plus \$150, they will probably go after them pretty heavily.

Those people who regularly fish are the ones who contribute to the overall recreational fishing take, and they are not going to change their patterns of behaviour; they will pay it, and as the member for Eyre just said, they probably will not get value for money. The introduction of licences and the attendant fee increases will hit everybody else in the fishing community—the occasional fishermen; people like me! Not only am I an occasional fisherman, I am a bad occasional fisherman! The very fact that I will have to pay \$150 for the pleasure of not catching anything is really going to hurt me. Obviously there are tens of thousands of people just like me who occasionally go fishing.

Mr W.R. Marmion interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is nice when the catch is a little bigger than whiting, member for Nedlands! This will hit people like me, and many families out there will be caught up in this. That is why the opposition argues that this is a tax. It is not the introduction of a scientific method that will lead to a reduction in the recreational fish take.

Woodman Point boat ramp is in my electorate. Members who know anything about fishing in Western Australia will know that that is the busiest boat ramp in Western Australia, according to figures provided by the Department of Planning. Everyone uses it to get into Cockburn Sound or beyond the islands into the deep-sea fishing areas. I can assure the government that I will be targeting Woodman Point boat ramp to bring this tax to the attention of all the people who use that boat ramp. I will ensure that they are aware of what the government is doing to them and their families through the introduction of this tax. It is not only the people of Cockburn who use that boat ramp; but also people from the member for Riverton's area, the member for Jandakot's area, and from the southern suburbs generally. Some also come from the northern suburbs, because it is the closest point to get a boat into the water along the west coast metropolitan area. As a result of that, I and some of my colleagues will be targeting the users of that boat ramp to highlight to those fishermen and fishing people that the government in this silly move by the Minister for Fisheries is introducing another tax on families.

We can see what has happened here. There are other options. The member for Murray-Wellington asked which other options were available. He actually indicated one himself. Large no-fish-take zones can be established. They have been thought about and talked about in Western Australia for many years. They could be established around the coast.

Mr M.J. Cowper: What if you've got a tackle shop or a caravan park or chalets, let's say, at Horrocks?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, that came up before.

Mr M.J. Cowper: That's what your government was going to do.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Of course. However, the government must negotiate through those issues. If the government intends to establish a large no-fish-take zone, somebody will be affected unless it is established somewhere like the Montebello Islands. That is another option for a no-fish-take zone: establish one where there are no people and no commercial activities. Obviously it would be very difficult to negotiate with people living very close to a no-fish-take zone, but it is not impossible. It has been done elsewhere in the world, for example in New Zealand.

Another way of doing it is with fishing closures. For example, a fishing closure between October and December could possibly result in a 15 per cent reduction in the fish take of demersal fish during that off-season. There is a suggestion that a fishing closure for four months between September and December could result in a 40 per cent reduction.

Mr M.J. Cowper: Do you know when the breeding season is for dhufish?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is the reason it is being put forward as an option.

Mr M.J. Cowper: That is why we need the research.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is the reason it is being put forward. I am not going to get into a debate with the member for Murray-Wellington about the breeding habits of fish.

Mr M.J. Cowper: It is important and relevant.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Of course it is important. However, the suggestion is that those closures would result in an increase in existing fish stocks and, of course, reductions in the overall fish catch. Were those options looked at by the minister? We do not know. Were they options put forward by the Department of Fisheries? We do not know.

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Mr M.J. Cowper: That is what your government was going to do.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Perhaps they are the sorts of questions that as a backbencher the member for Murray-Wellington should be asking of his ministers.

Mr M.J. Cowper: I have.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If that is the case, the member for Murray-Wellington should stand in this place and tell everybody what he has found out.

Mr M.J. Cowper: I will.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We do know that even if those options were before the minister, he dismissed them, took the easy option and said, "Let's slug people for more money. That'll do. If we charge people more, maybe they won't go fishing." That is exactly what the minister has done, and it was an option that was put up by the Department of Fisheries. If the Minister for Fisheries was a thorough, thoughtful minister, he would have challenged the Department of Fisheries about that option, he would have argued with the Department of Fisheries about that option, and he may well have rejected the Department of Fisheries' recommendation. However, as a lazy minister he said, "Oh well, people can just pay more." He just copped the departmental recommendation because it was the easy and lazy option, and said, "Let's just slug people more and we'll cross our fingers and hope they won't go fishing." That is what has happened. We have seen ministers do it in the past.

Mr P.T. Miles: Isn't that what you did?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We will continue to campaign in support of recreational fishing against this tax that has been introduced on recreational fishing.

I point out before I conclude my speech that other increases have occurred in other areas of fishing. The new licence fees for normal activities in rock lobster, abalone, marron, south west freshwater and net fishing have all jumped significantly from the current fees. A rock lobster licence, for example, was \$38 and is now \$45. All the other licences, which ranged in cost down to \$26 for a marron licence, are now \$45. Therefore, the fee for the same fishing licence like the one I have in my pocket for the full range of fishing activities, which was previously between \$90 and \$100, will now cost people \$180. I use my licence probably five or six times a year.

I put it to you, Madam Acting Speaker (Mrs L.M. Harvey), that there are many people in Western Australia in the same position as I am: they are occasional fisherpersons who want a licence to ensure they comply with the Department of Fisheries' regulations. They also want to do the right thing so that if they get an opportunity to go marroning, put in a rock lobster pot or take abalone, they have a licence to take those species. Now they will have to pay \$180 a year for that privilege. It is a silly, silly proposition put forward by the Minister for Fisheries and one that will lead to a significant backlash against the government. I ask members of the backbench to think very carefully about what their position will be when the disallowance motion comes before this house for debate. If they go along with the minister's recommendation and support the increase in these fees, it will come back to bite them. I can assure members that it will come back to bite them.

Mr M.J. Cowper interjected.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I can assure members that we will be supporting those recreational fishermen in the community and we will ensure that support for the minister's recommendation bites government members really hard.

MS A.R. MITCHELL (Kingsley) [5.26 pm]: I am very pleased that there is such a great recreational fishing capacity in Western Australia. We are very fortunate in that regard. Members know that I am a firm believer in sport and recreation pastimes that are sustainable and that will last into the future. I must also declare that I do not fish, but I do appreciate that many people do and that there is a reason we must look after the recreational fishing sector. It is our responsibility to make sure that not only our generation, but also future generations can fish in a recreational way. It is important that we achieve that through the best possible means. That is what we are talking about in this place today.

I will be honest. After the initial inquiry about what we were doing introducing an increase in recreational fishing licence fees, not many people have come to me complaining about them. After a bit of discussion on the subject, most sensible people understand that we have a resource that we must look after carefully. I have had more discussions on the west coast demersal fisher licence; there are good parts to that as well.

Let us go back to the recreational fishing sector. There is some feeling—a perception more than anything—that it should be free. In many ways not too many pastimes nowadays are free. Another aspect that is more important is that people do not understand the sector. Just as we do with any other sport and recreational activity, we

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should be informing people about the fishing sector so that they understand what their industry is about, who their industry is and what the future of their industry is, and asking them whether they are planning for their industry. Those sorts of understandings are absolutely essential if we are to preserve the ability to fish recreationally for future generations.

A few people have said that they will not be able to take their grandson or someone else out fishing. Of course they can. This is not about preventing people from fishing, but about making sure that we manage fishing appropriately and know what is going on. People can certainly take other people out fishing. People do not need to get their grandson a fishing licence to go fishing once; they just need to fit in with the compliance procedures on bag limits. Let us not go into those sorts of arguments; they are just furrphies. We can always work around those things. Let us face it: most people have things organised and plan when they go fishing. They do not decide suddenly at four o'clock in the morning that they will go fishing but they do not have a licence. However, if they do, they can go onto the website and get a licence anyway. I do not think that we need to spend too much time on those sorts of arguments. However, I believe that we need to focus on planning for the future. We need to ensure that we understand the problem so that we can fish in the future. This is not about a tax. This is not about those sorts of things. This is about the demographics. Not everything is free nowadays. I encourage and support —

Mr D.A. Templeman: Do you have Mr Grant's email—from your electorate?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: I certainly do have the email from Mr Grant and I spoke with him on Sunday morning. We had a lovely conversation.

Mr D.A. Templeman: And what did you say to his suggestions?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: We had a lovely conversation. I am talking about the recreational fishing takes here; I referred earlier to the fact that I was not talking about the west coast demersal scalefish.

Mr D.A. Templeman: And what did you say about his suggestion?

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: Thank you; I have said that I am talking about the recreational fee.

Several members interjected.

Ms A.R. MITCHELL: As I have said, I see these fees as a proactive measure. They are not about getting more fishing inspectors. That is the negative aspect; that is, getting more fishing inspectors to deal with things that are a problem. Let us get proactive. Let us use these fees so that we can get a better understanding, and let us remember that not too many sport and recreation pastimes are free now. I am not saying that they should all be, but there is not a problem here. This is about understanding the industry.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Preston) [5.31 pm]: Having been in the amateur fishing game for many, many years, I understand the many tricks that are played in the game.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Some would say that you were a rank amateur!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I certainly expected a bit of the catcalling that is going on!

I fondly remember my early fishing trips. When I was about four or five years old, we fished off the bridge at Duranillin in fresh water when the rivers were fresh enough to fish. I caught many perch with my father. We used to throw rocks into the water and see the fish swim up to our hooks. It was good enough to pull out half a dozen perch before going home. Dad always said half a dozen was enough; however, at one time or another, that advice must have slipped my memory!

Over the years, I have certainly been a keen fisherman, diver and general boater enjoying the rivers. To have to pay a \$30 tax just to use the water is, I think, very, very unfair. Over the years, I have seen many families go down to the water's edge with the old tinnie and a motor that gets pulled out of the shed once a year. They have spent money to service the engine so the family can putter up the river or the estuary for a day out. Even if families just want to wet a line over the side, not really sure what they are going to catch, that day out is now going to be an expensive option. Another part of the family unit will be broken down. We have fly in, fly out workers and 12-hour shifts, and we are talking about longer retail hours, resulting in mums spending more time away from their families. Now we are not going to have any way for them to spend time with their families on the weekend because, when families can have a special day together, it will be too expensive to go fishing. What will they do instead? They will go to the fun park down on the corner and tell the kids that they can have 20 bucks worth of fun on the amusements. When that fun is finished, they go home. They will get no exercise and there will be no family bonding because families will just not go tenting or camping.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

p5829c-5857a

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

If families chose to lay out for a full licence, it will cost them \$405; it is very expensive. I know that that would have been too hard for my family to afford in the early years when my four children just popped out one after the other. Even then, going camping required a bit of a decision about fees and buying another bit for the tent. Today, families have to spend \$400 on top of all that. I do not think this is the way to go. I honestly believe that these fees have come about not because of the Minister for Fisheries' concern about the ocean fish stocks, but because of his concern about the poor report he received from the Auditor General. That report said there was no compliance and the minister is wondering how he will get the money needed to resource Fisheries. The money supply has tightened—we all know that happens at times. But this is not the way to go about it. If the minister wants better compliance, he should put a better case to the Treasurer for more money. He should argue for the money to come out of general revenue. The price of a licence for a boat trailer has been put up. Perhaps the overall licence fee could be increased by a small amount. I think that I paid \$95, or around that mark, for the total licence in the last round, and that fee is going up to \$405—plus the \$30 that I have to pay for my boat licence and the \$30 for anyone else who goes fishing with me. Many different scenarios could be played out. People could choose to get a day licence. What happens if they choose a day licence and there is a storm and they cannot go fishing? Some people will take a risk and go anyway. That is a real concern of mine, having lost two friends over the time that I have been fishing—both of whom drowned. It comes back to people taking risks when risks really do not have to be taken. This fee is going to force people to say, “Well, it is not really that rough. We have paid a couple of hundred bucks to go, so we are going to go.” What will be the cost of that decision to sea search and rescue? It is said to be about saving fish stocks; we might save it by drowning recreational fishers. There will certainly be an option for people to choose to go fishing when they should not. I know that some of my mates in their earlier days—they do not go out so much now; we are getting a bit long in the tooth—went out many times when they should not have. I know that if they have to pay this fee, they will go out when perhaps they should not. I know younger people who may be a bit blasé about the sea and the ocean conditions and will just say, “Oh, the weather front is forecast to come through later today” and go out and be blasted off the water. People will get hurt. People will drown. This fee will really make the decision difficult. Will the people who have paid for a one-day fishing licence get a refund if a storm comes through and they are unable to go fishing? I do not think they will. As other people have asked, will people be able to source a licence if their mates drop in on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon and decide to fishing? I do not think they will. If that is the way that we are thinking about conservation, we are going about it in totally the wrong way.

As has been said, we should be looking at breeding cycles. Not enough studies have been done on breeding cycles—there is still a lot of guesswork, but dhufish spawn from late December through to February. We have seen a very good recovery program put in at Cockburn Sound where snapper fish had been fished nearly to extinction. The same has been done at Shark Bay. We worked on the problem. We put bag and size limits on the catch. The fish have come back. Both Cockburn Sound and Shark Bay fish stocks have recovered. Why could we not work this out in the same way? I am sure that any reasonable fishers would agree not to fish during spawning season if we gave them technical evidence—based on water temperature changes and visible fish bunting and the like—and not guesswork about the spawning season. There will always be exceptions because of water currents, but in the main breeding areas we should be able to tell fishers that we are shutting the waterways from 2 January to 1 February each year. That would allow those fish to spawn. I know very well that when the fish are spawning, the professional fishermen sit over the top of them and start fishing as soon as spawning has finished. Those fish do not survive. They get pulled out of the water by the professionals. There are no rules to stop the professionals doing that. However, I am sure that if we imposed a spawning exemption time, the professionals would work with the whole industry—as much for their own sake as that of the recreational fishers. There are many different places along the coast where we can observe fish, such as in marine parks and in no-take areas—for example, under the Exmouth jetty. Believe me, the water beneath that jetty was a spear fisherman's paradise. They could shoot what they liked up there. Then that water was closed. Now it is one of the most pristine fish-viewing dives in the world. It works. It is not overcrowded with fish. The divers can swim through because the fish move off to other reefs as they get bigger. These are good conservation measures. I know that some of the green groups are working hard on these issues. There is a lot of work to be done about where those conservation areas will be, but down on the south coast, in areas such as Walpole, that work is starting to gel together.

However, there are other problems. We have imposed fishing licences between Exmouth and Augusta. We have not imposed no-take zones between Augusta and Albany. Where will the keen fishermen go? They will move into areas where there are no limitations. Fishermen are already talking about moving to Windy Harbour, Walpole and other such places. The guys who I know to be really keen fishers will say, “Stuff the limits. We have paid the money; we may as well go down there and catch a few fish, but we will go where there are no restrictions.” It will be far easier for them to go there. Then we will have another problem in another area. How do we work it out? It has not been very well thought out at all. The marine park issue has been used in many

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other parts of the world. I am certainly proud to say that on the crayfishing side of things, one of my recommendations many years ago was that females over a certain size should be returned to the water because they have the biggest tails for spawning. Someone can say, "You're a rapist, you have taken whatever is there". It is not true. Many people underneath have the will to conserve for the future; for their kids. We have heard that many times today.

Many of my spearfishing mates do not come out and knock over the big, old groper that is about 75 pounds. They let that go past because they are quite rank to eat. They are a beautiful looking fish and, many times, very friendly. A lot of the contest now is who can pat one; not who can shoot one. Seventeen and 18-year-olds get a bit pumped up and away they go and try to bowl one over, like we have all done. These people are being taught to look after the breeders at a younger and younger age. The message is return fish to the water. Not every fish that Rex Hunt kissed would have survived, I am sure of that, after he had kissed them! He was one of the first to come out and say "return fish to the water". That has been working.

We talk about barotrauma for the dhufish, which is certainly a problem, but even in my boat, if someone has got a small fish on, they are told not to wind the line up very quickly. By winding up slowly, the fish can adjust to a certain degree and get away. That is another teaching issue that should go in. If there is a small dhufish on the line—one generally knows by the way they wriggle—wind it up slowly and then let it go. Sometimes the fish will survive. At the moment, because of size limits, they cannot stay on the boat so they are thrown over the side. They float away and the birds pick their eyes out. I do not see much sense in that either.

The others that will really suffer are the industries surrounding that. The member for Mandurah has already received complaints. I have certainly had emails from people worried about their business. One fibreglass business owner is now thinking about shutting down because he believes that people are turning to aluminium boats a bit more than before. He said that the new fishing limits will probably be the end of his business in Bunbury. There are those sorts of people who are concerned because it is not sustainable. It is a money grab. There is no real science in it at all. There are many inconsistencies. It is \$45 for a marron licence and it is \$45 for a redfin perch freshwater licence—and they are called vermin. Fishers are encouraged to catch them and throw them onto the bank but the government is going to charge \$45 for that! My same kids can go and fish off the Busselton jetty for nothing, yet they cannot fish off the bank of the Collie River. That is an anomaly that has been there for some years and should be fixed up. Why should 14, 15 and 16-year-old kids have to pay \$45—I think it is half price for kids—to go to the local river and maybe catch one or two redfin perch that are classified as vermin? It is just unfair. I do not think I have seen a crabbing licence in there. There is a crayfish licence. I wonder why? I wonder who has a big electorate running around the side of the estuary? I do not think there is a crabbing licence in there.

Dr K.D. Hames: Yes, there is.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I stand to be corrected.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Member, this is where it is strange. Fishers can actually go crabbing in a boat and be liable for a fee, but if a fisher is actually crabbing with a scoop net, he is not. However, if a fisher is in a boat and he has a scoop net, and he actually moors the boat or just puts the anchor out and gets out and wades for crabs, he will be contravening the regulations if he does not have a fishing licence for crabs. This is where the confusion comes from.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Thanks for that. The anomalies in there are very silly because who is checking on who is where? Those sorts of things confuse people. People will be wrongly convicted. I can only go by what I have read on this, but 75 per cent of the people who eat fish buy it. We have got 25 per cent of recreational fishermen catching their own fish. There is no tax on the people who buy those fish. If we are going to be right across the board, should there not be a fishing licence for —

Dr K.D. Hames: The member wants to introduce a tax on buying fish!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: We might be able to put a levy, like a GST, on the back of a bit of fried fish! But we would not know whether it came from Vietnam or wherever. That is another anomaly. Why should the 75 per cent who eat fish not pay a fee for it?

Mr I.C. Blayney interjected.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: They have a licence, yes. Then a fisher has to pay a water licence of \$30 for everyone who goes in the boat. Instead of taking the little boat, it drives blokes to go shares in bigger boats and fish harder. They will share fish—they do it now. A person can buy a half share in a boat but instead of having a 16 or 18-footer, in boat terms, he will go and buy a 30-footer that can go out through the swells, get out behind the breaks

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and fish deep, and overnight, if possible. The government is changing the fishing culture again to fish harder, because we have paid for it. That is the rule—"I've paid \$400 this year; I'm going to get my share." I do not mind paying the \$100 over the other levy but when it gets to the \$400, if we take our mates out they will say, "Have we got our money's worth?" It is not about conservation, and that is the problem. It is about people who will fish hard, and harder than they have ever done before, including going overnight. When fishers trade in the little boats for bigger ones, is that going to reduce the fishing effort? No; it is not going to do that. The government is not winning overall. Get back to proper research, get back to education and get back to more people policing the areas, whether they be volunteers or not.

Think about this: in the Shark Bay region the Department of Environment and Conservation had 130 people working in that area. Do members know how many fisheries officers work in that area? Two. That is a disgrace! They have got to sleep some time! People know where the inspectors are.

Mr P.B. Watson: That is when you go out!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: No way; I do not! But it shows the anomaly that is there—100-odd DEC people there against two fisheries officers. That is just stupid.

Dr K.D. Hames: We need more. In order to pay for them, we need more money.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: This is all about money to cover the Auditor General's compliance request. It is not about conservation.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I am all for conservation in any way, shape or form. I certainly practise that. We talk about 75 per cent of people eating fish that are caught professionally, but why are we not working harder on the aquaculture side? We are \$200 million a year in returns behind Queensland, which is a comparable state. Three or four reports have been done, and some are still being done, on the issue of aquaculture. Why are we not working harder in that area where we can take some of the pressures off the sea fish? We have acres of land here where we can do it, under pristine conditions.

I was recently in Vietnam and saw a toilet block over the top of a fish pond, which was not too nice, but the fish did not taste too bad anyway! People do not want to see that sort of thing. Much research is being done. They have been hampered by red tape. They need help. Let's get some of that money out of general revenue and give them help. Change the red tape and get them on stream straightaway. Some areas are moving slowly, but in the main a lot of them have gone broke over the years because they are trying to comply with red tape and should be moving on.

I have been given a list from a petition that has 581 names. I have selected a few examples. It is a petition that allows a person to make a comment. I will start with the top one —

This is the worst attack on our life style i have seen in over 50 years.

The next one states —

i usually dont do much fishing. On the odd occasion i will be invited along on a boat on short notice. Would be great if i could just throw in a line without all the hassles.

The next comment is: "complete rip off!" Rob Miezis, a person I do know, commented —

The \$30 dollar licence is revenue raising. How can you charge people to catch a few herring, whiting or crabs maybe once or twice a year. "RECREATIONAL FISHING"????

I will not read the next comment; it is not too nice—there are a few of those. A comment from a Mr Tony Moore at Offshore Marine states —

Very short sided way of handling things. Yes we need to maintain fish stocks but lets try and educate the fisherman of today and tomorrow to be responsible for the resource we have. I have no problem with a licence but maybe you should have a look at a system that has worked in say NSW. Why try to re-invent the wheel.

The next comment is —

mr. moore please explain why one of the supermarket—

I think this is a fair comment, too —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

p5829c-5857a

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

chains is selling what is clearly undersized snapper coming from carnarvon @ \$9.99 a kilo hope your decision stands the test of time come the next elections

The next comment is —

very silly i think, how can a family now go out and enjoy themselves doing something they love, and used to be realistically affordable.

The next comment is from Peter Evans —

Typical short sighted cash grab by a govt, I am a swinging voter and I think labor are looking good. This govt has cost me, power water gas boat rego and now fishing.

So, it is starting to bite. Another comment is —

Why not have a red day! If the unfair licence fees are not removed for those not targeting the endangered fish species, The week before the fees are set to begin, we paint every liberal Mps office with the Nazi cymbal off repression of the people, I am pretty sure that will get global media coverage?

A Gary McCormick commented —

YES! Minister Norman Moore has got it very wrong again. No matter which portfolio he has he gets it upside down. Gee get it right. I will still pay the price to catch fish—even though it is a money grab by the Government and I will still catch fish. No winners here.

That is some of the story that I have been telling. A comment from Shane Malycha is —

This is so wrong. PLEASE take views from actual fisherpersons and bring in overall fishing licence and voluntary logbooks to get a real picture of what is being caught.

The drift of these comments is that people are not against conservation; they welcome that. However, they do not see running out and having to spend \$400-plus is the right way to go about it. Some have put it in very good terms, I suppose, but I will dodge them. This is a comment from a Tim Froome —

Being the owner of two boats and a family of 4 fishers, it looks like fishing will become another activity killed off by beaurocratic stupidity. The lack of insight and understanding of the strenght of the recreational boat fishers market has been overlooked as we spend \$1000.00s & \$1000.00s on fuel, repairs, bait, tackle, literature, accomadation moorings ect let alone the purchase of our boats surely we have paid our dues already. These fees will be felt by all the above retailers as they see sales decrease from these actions. COME ON NORMAN THINK AGAIN

The next comment is —

Financial discrimination wont save dhuies. people will just make sure they get there monies worth.

That is something I also spoke about. It just goes on. I will read out a couple more comments because I have a few minutes left. Here is a comment from Tracey McKenzie —

Unbelievable....will the fisheries offices be open so that if we decide to go fishing on a weekend when friends drop by and we decide to go fishing on the spur of the moment, as we have done many times, we can get them licenses??? One of the many inconveniences, besides the cost, that have crossed my mind!!!

The next comment is from Paul Kerry —

I agree in principal that something has to be done to preserve the stocks however, the fee is too high. This has to be the most over taxed society in the world. Car and trailer rego, fuel, insurance, skippers ticket, bait, Epirb, flares, maintenance, pfd-1—

Which are lifejackets —

VHF radio ticket the list goes on. Fishing has always been a sport for the common man, now it appears only the rich will be able to afford such luxuries.

I simply cannot say enough about what these people are saying—it is just so true. This is a comment from Ian Hall —

Apply time bans on species and restricted areas. Applying a fee indicates it is a revenue raising project not interested in the actual purpose.

To top it off, one comment is —

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O’Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

Soon we will have to pay to sit on the beach!

I just hope that they do not have a smoke on the beach, as that will cost them as well! Another comment is —

I would agree with reducing the bag limit per day, but how about putting more fisheries officers on to police this matter rather than penalising the honest people!

I think that has been a very common comment as well. To finish off, one more comment is —

I am in favour of preserving fish stocks however, the proposal appears to be a gratuitous attempt to raise revenue. A longer ban would be more appropriate.

There are another 500 comments that I could read, but I will not. My personal view is that the government has certainly stepped down the wrong path. I remember going into Scarborough and seeing a big sign, a huge sign, on a fish shop criticising the Labor government about its views —

Mr R.H. Cook: Good Lord, no!

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I do not know who has that sign. I have just seen that big sign—I liked it so much I would even pay for one that big! However, there was a big sign on the side of the wall. I will not mention names, but I just hope that the sign is changed to reflect the current situation in the near future or that someone does some very, very hard work within the party room so that the sign does not need to be changed. I simply hope that that sort of work is done.

But all things aside, I think fishing is one of Australia’s great pursuits. To make the fees too high for family groups to go fishing—which I do not think is going to result in any improvement in the fish stocks, because the science is not there—is the wrong thing to do. To go out and simply chase revenue by doing that is also wrong. Let us think about it again; let the minister have the gumption to come back and say, “Righto, I might have got it wrong.” Let us have the Liberal party room be strong enough to roll its minister and for Liberal members to say that the government has got it wrong, as many have indicated, including a few who are sitting in this place tonight. Let us have another look at it. Let us keep this family tradition so that we can go camping and fishing at an affordable cost—I am not saying at no cost but at an affordable cost for families.

MR A.P. O’GORMAN (Joondalup) [5.58 pm]: I have a few words to say on this fishing tax that is being introduced in this state. I say at the outset that I am not a fisher by any measure of the imagination. The last time I fished was about 15 years ago when I visited my father in Ireland and he took me to the west coast. We pulled in 96 mackerel in an hour and a half and that was enough fishing for me.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Ninety-six!

Mr A.P. O’GORMAN: They protect their fish stocks and they are there all the time; they do not have licences. They still manage to protect their fish stocks on a huge coastline with many, many fishers right around the coastline. The thing that struck me about this tax being introduced is that not only did the minister not consult with the industry, which is quite apparent, he actually did not even consult his own backbenchers; he did not consult his own party room. I would like to know whether he actually took the matter to cabinet or whether he just went out and put it in the media and then cabinet had to support it. We had the member for Murray-Wellington saying that \$180 a year is a ridiculous amount. An article from *The West Australian* of Monday, 20 July this year, states —

Fisheries Minister Norman Moore faces a backlash from Liberal backbenchers fielding complaints over plans to charge anyone who fishes from a boat a fee of up to \$180 a year.

Murray-Wellington MP Murray Cowper said he outlined his concerns over the policy to Mr Moore after being inundated with complaints from constituents. He had offered his contacts within the industry but was not consulted before the announcement.

He goes on quite a bit about it and then the article quotes the member for Wanneroo —

Wanneroo MP Paul Miles said he had had only one complaint from a constituent but was aware of the backlash some colleagues faced. He agreed with the policy but said backbenchers should have had more information.

Quite clearly, the minister did not consult the backbench. There are many fishers in the electorate of the member for Wanneroo, and many of them will be knocking on his door in the next few months when they have to start paying this fee. The article further states —

Ocean Reef MP Albert Jacob said he expected uproar within his electorate —

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

I expect it, too, because he is right along the coast. I represented most of his electorate at one point in time. There are huge numbers of boats, and a very large fishing community. There is a very large sea sports club out there, and it is holding its annual general meeting tomorrow night. I expect that some motions will be moved at that meeting condemning the Liberal government for the extortionate tax it has just introduced.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Is the local member going along?

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I doubt that the local member will be there. In fact, I think the local member is elsewhere.

Mr D.A. Templeman: I will give him a pair if he goes.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: He will not need a pair, member for Mandurah. The newspaper article quotes the member for Ocean Reef as saying that he had not received a single phone call about the fee. The reason he has not is because they are ringing me very hard and strong.

Mr A.P. Jacob: That was the week before. Since the article was printed, I have had many phone calls.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: He has had many phone calls; okay.

I would like to place on record some comments from a number of my constituents and a number of people around the state who have emailed me or contacted my office in one way or another. This is the first one I picked up the other day. It reads —

As a resident of Craigie I would like to voice my disapproval at the potential new fishing regulations.

This grabs the essence of what the industry is about. Most people in the industry accept that we have to protect our fish stocks. They do not agree with the way it is being done because they were not consulted. The minister was very arrogant to not only the community but also his own backbench, by not even consulting them or giving them the opportunity to have their say in the party room before he announced this. The email continues —

I am happy to accept a seasonal closure for the Demersal Scale fish Fishery in fact I think it must be done. Better still, give it a years closure before seasonal closures start and reduce bag limits on top of that, but to charge people for a fishing licence for fishing from a boat is over the top.

Even a small fee is too much. I regularly take out friends or family in my small dinghy but they would come out only once a year. To expect them to purchase a licence is ridiculous. I strongly believe in preserving fish stocks and we only ever catch what we eat immediately

I have had a number of emails in that vein. As I said before, I do not fish but I do go caravanning up and down the state, right along the coast. Every time I go to a caravan park, from Exmouth to Esperance, I notice that families in caravan parks all talk to each other. They talk around the barbecue at night, and they make friends. Some people have caravans and others camp. They have boats, and they invite each other out in the boats. This fishing licence will prevent that, because it will not be possible to invite somebody else out in the boat who does not have a licence and is not prepared to pay \$30 for a day. This will impinge on the fabric of our community and how people interact with each other. It is a really ill-thought-out licence that shows the minister's complete arrogance. I cannot stop saying that. It shows absolute arrogance to people around the state and to the government backbench members that he did not even discuss the licence with before he brought it in. I will go on and read from some of the other letters and emails that I have received. I emphasise that people involved in recreational fishing understand that we must conserve. They understand that there may be a fee, and that the government has to put fisheries officers out there and declare no-take zones. This letter was sent to my office. It is quite a long letter but I will read only certain parts of it. It reads —

Excessive and unfair

The proposed cost of licences is \$30 per annum per person fishing from a boat, plus a further \$150 per annum per person fishing for demersal fish. The combined licence cost is \$180 per annum per person, discounted to \$90 for pensioners and children under 16.

I would like you to note the following: —

- (a) the cost of the equivalent licence in Victoria is \$24.50;
- (b) the cost of the equivalent licence in New South Wales is \$30;
- (c) neither Queensland, nor South Australia, nor Tasmania nor the Northern Territory has an equivalent licence;

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- (d) under the proposed arrangements, Western Australia would be the only state or territory in Australia where children under 18 will be charged to fish;

That is pretty outrageous. That is just one part of the letter that was sent to me. A further part of the letter is headed "Alternative strategies". We have heard members opposite asking what we would do to protect fish stocks. In a moment I will read the words of a long-term recreational fisherman who says that this licence will not help at all because 90 per cent of the catch is taken by 10 per cent of recreational fishers. I will read his comments shortly.

Dr M.D. Nahan: That is pure hypothesis. There is no evidence to support it.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: The government also does not have any data to support bringing in a licence the way it has. It has not had the decency to consult. I am quoting from a letter.

Dr M.D. Nahan interjected.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: The member for Riverton comes in here and mouths off all time, and he quite often does not have any facts either. I am quoting from letters that have been sent to me by constituents who felt they should have been consulted. If the member is quite happy for his minister to come in here and whitewash him, belt him around the ears and say, "Accept what I'm telling you", that is his prerogative, but people in this state will not do that. I will shortly read some more of the comments from the electronic petition that was sent in. The government will soon realise that people will not put up with its arrogance. The letter reads —

Alternative strategies

In their readily available publications, the Department of Fisheries concedes that there are alternative management strategies for recreational fishing, —

We know that they are already there, because the department has told us —

but for some unknown reason are reluctant to pursue measures that are guaranteed of success. One current proposition is to close the demersal fishery from October 15 to December 15, a period of two months, with an expected catch reduction of 15%. These sorts of measures work and are understood and accepted by the public, in the same way that the Western Rock Lobster season is effective and accepted.

There are other strategies. Earlier on I was hearing members opposite saying, "What would you do?" All they could suggest was to hit the electors of this state with another fee. Let us hit them in the hip pocket again. We have hit them for electricity and water charges, so why not hit them with fishing fees? What is coming next? What is the next tax this Liberal government is going to bring in? Why is it having to bring in all these extra taxes? I think it is probably to pay for royalties for regions, because that has never been budgeted for properly. It is just a cash cow for the National Party to go out and pork-barrel in the regions. The electors out there know that, and I will read one of the comments on this electronic petition that says that. I will first refer to some of the comments that have been sent to me by Bob Grant. He is talking about the 90-10 rule. He writes —

As with most other pursuits in life, the 90/10 rule applies to the world of recreational fishers. Successful anglers are the product of learning, experience, thought and lots of hard work.

I would agree with that. As I said right at the start, last time I went fishing was 15 years ago, with my father. We pulled in 96 mackerel. The funny thing about that was that we were about 50 metres up a cliff.

Mr P.T. Miles: No wonder there are none left.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: The member for Wanneroo has only ever lived in Australia; he has never got out and broadened his mind. In Ireland they actually do it quite well. There are still plenty of fish in Ireland, and I can prove that if the member likes.

Mr M.J. Cowper: Let's go!

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: We might have a bit of a problem with the member for Murray-Wellington over there!

Success comes with actually knowing how to fish, where to fish, what types of line to use and what types of bait to use. That is done by experience built up over a long time. The funny thing about it when I was fishing with my dad was that the guy fishing about 50 metres along the cliff from us could not get a bite, while we were reeling them in. We were worn out from reeling them in.

Mr R.H. Cook: I would have been that other bloke.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: Mostly it was my dad, and not me, because I would have been the other bloke as well. In his email, this gentleman, Bob Grant, reckons the 90-10 rule applies. He states —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

p5829c-5857a

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

They fish very frequently, have invested in expensive boats; have the latest technology and over many years of experience have accumulated a detailed knowledge of fish habitats. These 10% of anglers will not be deterred by a \$150 per annum licence—they spend considerably more than just on bait each year—and would average over \$150 worth of fish every time they go fishing.

The *West Coast Demersal Scalefish Licence* will not affect the 90% of demersal species accounted for by this group. Indeed, it is very possible this licence could have the opposite result with some experienced recreational anglers fishing even harder to justify the additional outlay for the licence.

This is already getting into the psyche of these fishers if they have to pay excessive amounts for a licence. They all agree they should pay a licence fee, and most are happy to pay for a licence but agree that it should be a nominal amount. Most fishers agree there should be a way of closing the fishery so that we can allow the fish stocks to regenerate.

I will be quick as I know some of my colleagues want to speak in the debate. I refer members to the electronic petition that has come in. I will edit this, because it contains quite a lot of four letter words, and I know that Mr Speaker will sit me down if I dare to utter them.

The SPEAKER: Fish is one four letter word.

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: I should say inappropriate four letter words. Comments in the petition read —

its a money grab to pay for the nation party deal barnett coned all the fools who voted for his...no money for this no money for that no money for average poples need or plesures its all for barnie rich mates —

And I will not read the last bit —

this is wrong. you are trying to kill off a healthy outdoor activity. would you rather have the kids sit in front of a playstation/tv all day?? shame on you!

no comment needed—this is obviously another rediculous political money grab.

This is what people are saying in the community. To continue —

Can you honestly expect us to believe this is the best way for you to preserve our fish stocks? You all need another round of think-tankering.

this is an absolute rort. i will find myself doing illegal things to pay for this license.

That is one comment that really concerns me. To continue —

An absolute joke!!! This is just a money grab. No way I am voting Liberal in the next election!!!

The petition contains numerous comments like that; and I have underlined numerous comments, but I will not go through all of them because I know a number of my colleagues want to speak. Realistically, members opposite need to grab their ministers and give them a big shake. Once the community becomes aware of this type of arrogance from the government, they do not forget. They will vote against the government at the next election. Many times when we sat on the government side we were jeered by the Liberal opposition on this side. We used to read in the newspaper how Liberal Party and National Party members could vote freely in this place according to their conscience. This is the first opportunity for members opposite to prove to us that they can vote freely.

All members of the Labor Party admit freely that we sign a pledge to vote with our party, and we stick with our party. We often took the opportunity in our party room to argue with our ministers, and now our leadership. We have done it many times, but we are a united front. What I can say about our leadership and our ministers is that when the back bench spoke about issues in the caucus room, and made their points strongly, they listened. The legislation that came to this Parliament was changed in order that every person in that room could vote without worrying his or her conscience. That is the most important thing for me in this place. If I have to vote on something and it is not feeling right in my gut and is playing on my conscience, then I have to fight it in the caucus room; and fight it I do. I ask each and every government member to do that as well. All government back benchers should have Hon Norman Moore, the Minister for Fisheries, over a barrel in their party room, because clearly he did not consult with them or with the general public.

Dr M.D. Nahan: How would you know?

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: A colleague of the member for Riverton said it. The member obviously has a problem with his hearing. Does he want me to read it out again? I will read it again! This is a quote from *The West Australian* —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

p5829c-5857a

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

Wanneroo MP Paul Miles said he had only one complaint from a constituent but was aware of the backlash some colleagues faced. He agreed with the policy but said backbenchers should have had more information.

Members opposite have not been consulted.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr A.P. O'GORMAN: The member for Riverton is running out; he knows he is wrong. He did not stand up for this policy in his party room and he is not going to stand up for it in this place. Every person who owns a boat in the electorate of Riverton will come out and vote against the member. The member for Riverton is typical of Liberal Party MPs. He is typical of the lily-livered people on the other side who will not stand up for their electorate. Members opposite will not stand up for their electorate when they are pushed to it. In opposition they kept having a go at us, but we can all stand and put our hand on our heart and say that we have had the argument in our party room, and by the time we get to this chamber we all know that we can vote the right way without having pain in our gut or a guilty conscience.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Mindarie) [6.15 pm]: I shall not take long because I know that other members wish to speak. The electorate of Mindarie has a very active fishing community, and before I was the member for Mindarie I was the member for Innaloo. And when I had hair, which goes back about 30 years or more, I used to be on the committee of the Marmion Angling and Aquatic Club. I have received a lot of submissions from such clubs, and recently received one from the Quinns Rocks Fishing Club. I would like to tell members a little story that relates to the lead-up to the election that was called last year, when I attended at the Quinns Sportsmans Club—a very active club of over 800 people. When I went into the bar and started to hand out my card—I know them all up there: the RSL members, bowlers and down in the north-east corner of the premises, the Quinns Rocks Fishing Club—I got a roasting because of the limitations that the former government was going to put on catches. We were all having a few beers and as a laugh they took my membership card off me, put it up on the dart board and started throwing darts at it. One has to take these things in good humour on the campaign trail! They said to me that I was reducing the Australian right to fish and they would not support me because of what the Carpenter government was doing to protect the fish stocks. Without being vain or boastful —

Mr R.F. Johnson: You do not know how to be!

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Have I ever been vain or boastful in this chamber? Thank you, members. In sincere humility, I remind the house that I still pulled a four and a half per cent swing towards me in an election that went the other way for the then Labor government, and I did that in spite of the opposition of the Quinns Rocks Fishing Club. Recently, members of the Quinns Rocks Fishing Club were beating a path to my door to apologise. They were led by the president, Mr Bert Straw. Bert came in to say, "We are sorry. We did not believe you when you said that the Liberals' policies would be worse if they ever got into government. You were right, John!" Bert said, "I have got grandchildren, and we like to take them out fishing, but we do not like to take all of the grandies at once. We take one one day and one another day, and when we go out we have to buy them these exorbitant demersal licences —

Several members interjected.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Under 16? Those kids are not 12. They are his grand kids; they are young adults. When he takes them out, he has to buy them fishing licences. If he takes another grand kid out, he has to buy another fishing licence to do what families have been doing in Western Australia forever. I am not much of a fisherman, so fish are fairly safe around me. However, I have watched fishermen with good tricks.

Mr R.F. Johnson: How old are Burt's grandchildren?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: They are over 16. He told me.

Mr R.F. Johnson: Are they over 18?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have not got their birth certificates here. The member can come with me to Quinns Rocks Fishing Club on Friday night and explain the government's position. He should be careful of the darts, however, because they are now aimed at the Liberal Party and not the Labor member for Mindarie. People see this as an out and out tax. They justifiably explain it to me as an out and out tax because the fees are in excess of the administration costs. The fees create a surplus of funds at a time when the government is withdrawing patrol days for fisheries officers. These new tax measures will not protect the species. When I look at the boats parked on the lawns throughout my electorate I wonder where the money has come from. They probably belong to all the miners who have benefited from the boom. There are far more trailer craft in Mindarie than there were in my former electorate of Innaloo, now Scarborough. There are a lot of families in my electorate. The young guys like

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

to buy their boats, come back from the mines and go out fishing. They are not the ones who will be deterred, slowed down or stopped by more tax. The new west coast demersal fishing licence will cost \$20 for one day, \$60 for a fortnight or \$150 for a year. This will not save fish. As the member for Scarborough will tell us, a spool of braid line would cost about \$150.

Mrs L.M. Harvey: It would depend on the quality.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: At the member's shop I know it would cost a couple of hundred dollars, but I was talking about Amart All Sports where we could get it for \$150. I know that at Harvey's Tackle in Scarborough it would be a couple of hundred dollars and it would cost more than a licence. People could get through a spool of line in an afternoon by snagging it. This tax will not protect demersal fish. The price that Harvey's Tackle in Scarborough is charging for the gear would do more to protect demersal fish.

Mr M.J. Cowper: It is now Bluewater Tackle World. I would not shop anywhere else.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have nothing against Bluewater Tackle World. It is a nice business in a lovely area, with very helpful staff.

Mr M.J. Cowper: They also have shops at Willagee and other places.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I do not know about that; I am a north coast man. Our preferred shop on the north coast is Bluewater Tackle World. When we look at the price of gear to fish and the outlay that people are prepared to pay for tackle, \$150 will not slow down the wealthy.

Mr R.H. Cook: Bluewater Tackle World is under no threat, I take it.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: None whatsoever. Bluewater Tackle World is a thriving, successful and well-known business, which is not under any threat by these licences. The sorts of customers who buy at Bluewater Tackle World can afford these licence fees.

Mr Speaker, that is the second time in a day that my phone has rung. You will be calling me to order unless I get rid of its battery. Then I will be out of the chamber before I have made my comments. I do apologise to all members for that oversight.

The working class mums and dads who have to do it on the cheap, who go to Target to buy gear in this economic climate, and who cannot afford whale oil and good burley so they go to the kitchen cupboard to get custard powder to bring the bottom feeders up, will find these sorts of extra taxes the straw that breaks the camel's back. They will not be able to participate in fishing as a family. As the member for Collie-Preston pointed out, people can buy a scoop net, drive to Mandurah and park near Dawesville Cut. Members will know the shallow, yellow estuary there just north of Dawesville Cut and on the western side.

Mr M.J. Cowper: It is Wannanup.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I thank the member. We go there only for the raids: one slab, a baby bath on a bit of cord behind us and a scoop net. We can do a walk and put the catch over a shoulder and into the baby bath. That is not captured by this of course and there is no fee involved, because it involves not a boat but a baby bath. If we were to go across to the other side of the estuary in a dinghy to get to the shallow water there —

Mr M.J. Cowper: It is Boggy Bay.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I do not know all the names, but if we went over by boat and got out with a baby bath and a scoop net, we would be caught. It does not make sense. This is a straight out and out tax. A tax slows down or stops only those people who cannot afford to pay the tax. It will not stop anyone who can afford to pay the tax. The same applies to smoking and beer; in fact, the alcopops tax is a classic example. The last figures that came out showed that everyone is back drinking alcopops. People forget about a tax or get cheesed off with the government for imposing it.

Dr K.D. Hames: Are you having a go at the commonwealth government?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I am just referring to the reality of tax through the years. The Deputy Premier might ask if I am having a go at the Deputy Prime Minister and the Prime Minister and the alcopops tax, but have we stopped buying and selling investment properties because of the introduction of capital gains tax? The answer is no. People got brassed off and then paid the tax and hated it. This proposal has nothing to do with enterprise, capital growth or capitalism, where everyone ultimately accepted that if people are generating wealth through capital appreciation, there should be a tax attached, even though they were brassed off about it. This is about the most popular family pastime in Australia. Would the member for Scarborough agree?

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

Mrs L.M. Harvey: We do not know because we do not have the data.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: It is the most popular family sport. There would not be a sport that has the participation of fishing.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I took all those interjections without getting named. I am very happy with myself.

Dr K.D. Hames: When you get out in the water you might see five or 10 boats in the vicinity but that is about all you'd see.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is right. It is not like a footy field, the ocean field is enormous; people are located even 20 miles away from each other. It is not like a bowling rink.

Dr K.D. Hames: You can tell when you go to the boat ramp. To get the boat out you have to have a boat trailer so you go to where the trailer is parked and see how many boats are out there.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: If the member came to my electorate —

Dr K.D. Hames: There are not as many boats as there are kids at a soccer game.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: There would not be as many cars in the boat ramp as there would be kids at a soccer ground.

Dr K.D. Hames: That is one ground.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Each boat would have about three people in it.

Dr K.D. Hames: Yes, but there are lots of soccer and netball grounds. What do you think?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: With your leave, Mr Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have given you a lot of leave.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Can I withdraw my unjustifiable assertion that recreational fishing is the most popular sport and say that it is a very popular sport. I will take out the pejorative, "the most" and say that it is very popular.

Dr K.D. Hames: It's very popular with me, I'll tell you.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Thank you! We do not say that, because the Gumblossom Reserve pumps out a lot of water onto the oval to allow kids to participate in their sport of soccer, we must tax all the kids who play soccer. What I think I might do is gauge opinion at the boat show this weekend from all those boat owners who go along to the boat show to look at all the \$50 000 to \$60 000 craft there. They are not owned by the people who buy their tackle at Target.

Dr K.D. Hames: \$60 000 and the rest.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes, and the rest. They will all be cashed-up Liberal voters.

Mr R.H. Cook: See what they have to say.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I want to go down there on the weekend and see what they have to say about the Liberal proposals.

Dr K.D. Hames: What are you worried about then? If they are all Liberal voters I am surprised that you are even talking about it.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I get elected on the back of the Liberal vote in Mindarie. I am concerned about the Minister for Health's constituency just as I am concerned about families in Mindarie. I am concerned about everyone in this chamber and what adverse effect the licence fee may have on my friend from Scarborough and her tackle shop. I am concerned for the Minister for Health, although I understand that, given his ministerial salary, he will not even break into a gallop as he clears the hurdle of \$150. That tax is just a little speed hump to the minister because he has the wherewithal and economic resources to pay for it.

To Bert Straw and to that rowdy, boisterous, loveable, fun and entertaining north-east corner of the Quinns Rocks Sport Club where drink the Quinns Rocks Fishing Club, I say to all of them—Liberals one and all—that I will stand with them hip to hip and shoulder to shoulder to rail against the Liberal government's decision to tax fishing in this way for no sensible purpose. I will see Bert there for a beer on Friday night.

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

MS A.S. CARLES (Fremantle) [6.34 pm]: I, too, have been lobbied by what the member for Albany referred to as the organised groups. Of course I have, because I am from Fremantle. However, rather than being populist and being pressured by them, I have had to seriously consider this issue, and I am concerned by the big picture at stake here, which is that our fish stocks are in crisis. Many constituents in Fremantle are very concerned about the state of our natural environment. They are concerned about the dire state of our fish stocks. This debate is not as simple as saying "support the fisherman or be damned". Previous fisheries minister Hon Jon Ford moved to reduce the recreational catch by 50 per cent to prevent the collapse of the fish stocks. After an initial delay, the current minister has accepted the overwhelming scientific evidence from the Department of Fisheries and agreed in July this year to somewhat weakened restrictions. Recreational fishing is one of the last activities in Western Australia to which the user-pays principle is to be applied. The Greens support the new licence fee. I do not believe the fees are prohibitive, as we have heard from members opposite. It is \$30 a year for a recreational fishing licence and \$15 for a child or pensioner. A family cannot even go to the movies for that. This is an annual fee; a fee that sends a message that this is not an infinite, free resource.

Mr M.P. Whitely: Occasional fishers such as me might fish once every five years. If I am going to pay a \$30 licence fee I will want to make sure I get value for my money. Do you not think the fee will be counterproductive?

Ms A.S. CARLES: No, I do not.

Mr M.P. Whitely: It will encourage people. It is not an ad valorem tax; it is a one-off payment. Don't you think it will encourage people to go out and fish to get value for money?

Ms A.S. CARLES: No; because I think that fishermen will understand that if they do that, the stocks will deplete even further and, in several years, they will not be able to go fishing. Commonsense will have to kick in.

Mr M.P. Whitely: That will be the net effect of this tax. If people pay a fee —

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fremantle took the member for Bassendean's objection. He should allow her to respond now.

Mr M.P. Whitely interjected.

Ms A.S. CARLES: I listened to what the member said and I have responded. I just do not agree with his point of view.

I notice that these arrangements will be reviewed in 12 months, and I will be very interested to see the report of that review.

The Greens support the measures imposed by the Minister for Fisheries to protect the five finfish populations in the west coast bio region that have been identified as being vulnerable to eminent stock collapse. There is an urgent need to implement adequate no-take reserves. Species such as pink snapper, dhufish and groper are slow growing and long lived and, therefore, particularly vulnerable to overfishing. Not that long ago these particular fish used to be relatively abundant. They are highly targeted in the west coast fishery adjacent to the most popular parts of the WA coast. The increasing number of recreational fishers, combined with the use of sophisticated electronic equipment such as sonar and global positioning systems, have put the population of these species at risk of collapse. These species are also relatively sedentary, making them particularly vulnerable to fishers using a GPS. Existing management tools have proven inadequate with the Department of Fisheries recording a rapid decrease in the size and age of the catch of these key species over the past few years.

This argument is a bit like the peak-oil demand dilemma we face. Oil reserves are depleting, so we need to reduce our oil use and acknowledge that oil prices are going to skyrocket in the future. We are dealing with a finite resource here and we are overusing it to the detriment of future generations. We urge the government as a matter of urgency to implement adequate no-take areas in the west coast bio region and elsewhere on the WA coastline to achieve a representative marine reserve system. The multiple benefits of no-take areas, including maintenance of fish stocks as well as biodiverse conservation, are now well researched and understood. Successive governments have failed to implement no-take areas and we are now seeing the consequences of ignoring this important management tool.

MR J.J.M. BOWLER (Kalgoorlie) [6.38 pm]: Whilst I generally vote with the government, and that is my default position, I must say that I support this motion that condemns these fishing boat licences and licences for fishermen to use. I am in one way surprised and in one way not surprised. I am not surprised that departmental people have proposed a licence that will see them gather more power, more money and the capacity to increase their staffing levels to administer this licence. That is the way of the bureaucracy. I am not being derogatory of our public service. That is just the way they generally work. I am surprised that the Minister for Fisheries, Hon Norman Moore, has agreed to this, particularly as I was part of an industry working group that today released in

Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

Parliament a review of approval processes in Western Australia. Basically, it was a review of the red and green tape that the mining industry has been inundated with in recent years. When we become ministers, the public servants who serve us come up with very good ideas for various projects or reasons that we need another approval slip of paper or another licence, and, as ministers, it is very easy to just say yes. Sometimes a minister has to step back and ask, "Is this really necessary? How much money will this raise? What is the good of it?" I do not think these licences will achieve what they are intended to achieve on any one of those counts. They will just increase red tape. The Acting Speaker who vacated the chair before you, Mr Speaker—Mrs L.M. Harvey—is part of another government inquiry into red tape across government processes. Here is a government that is very keen to reduce red tape, but in these areas I believe all that it is doing is producing more red tape. As the member for Fremantle said, these are very small amounts of money. The cost of the increased bureaucracy that will be needed to administer it will probably be double the small amount of money that will come in, so why have it? All we will do is make criminals of Western Australians who do not hold this licence, and it will create no real net financial gain for the Department of Fisheries. It will make criminals of people who may be ignorant of this law or who will try to avoid it.

I am philosophically opposed to any new licence per se. I am particularly opposed to these licences. I would like it if, for example, driver's licences never needed to be renewed. In other words, when people apply for a driver's licence, the initial price should be increased, and it should be a licence for life. The driver's licence renewal process in Western Australia results in many Western Australians breaking the law. In my electorate such people, particularly the Indigenous population, end up in jail for driving a vehicle while under suspension.

I am not saying that people who break this law will end up in jail, but if people forget to renew their licence and are caught fishing a year later, they will find out that they are breaking the law and it will be just bad luck. Once again, there will be no net gain for the Department of Fisheries, and I do not think it will result in fewer fish being caught. There are other ways to do this, as demonstrated by the previous government, through having no-fishing zones or by imposing catch limits on species of fish that need protection. That is what should be done; the government should police that to ensure that it is done better.

People may say that I am the member for Kalgoorlie and ask what I have to do with fishing.

Ms J.M. Freeman: They go to Esperance.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Exactly. People in my electorate go to Esperance or Perth to fish. Once again, that presents a problem, because they usually go there just for one trip a year. They may be there for only a weekend and be totally unaware of this. They will take their tinnies and go out to the ocean, and they will be breaking the law. Even if they do not break the law and they pay for their licences, it will be a damned expensive couple of fish that they catch. I am opposed to this, and, if it is put to the vote, I will vote with the opposition. I believe this is departmentally driven. I believe the minister is in this case acting against all his normal instincts, because in all the dealings I have had with Hon Norman Moore, he has always tried to reduce red tape and improve government efficiency, and this goes against that 100 per cent. There are other ways to achieve what he is trying to achieve, and I call on the government to scrap these laws in next year's budget and look at other ways of achieving the same result.

MR M.J. COWPER (Murray-Wellington — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.44 pm]: In order to allow other members to speak in the limited time we have, I will try to make this speech as quick as possible.

I like fishing. I remember catching my first fish at Walpole when I was a young lad. It was a herring. Since then I have been fishing up and down the coast, including in the Kimberley, chasing barramundi. I got into fishing to such an extent that I became involved in international game fishing, and in 1991 my team won a master's competition. Prior to that, I also worked on crayfish boats. I have a master 5 skipper's ticket and a bit of an understanding of the commercial industry. However, my real love of fishing revolves around being with my family and friends. Without being too much of a brag, I am very keen to pass on to my son what I have learnt about fishing. I have here a picture of the first dhufish he ever caught, a couple of years ago. Spending time with my family fishing is something that is very near and dear to me. I think that that is what fishing is about; it is about spending time with friends and family. I am very fortunate that I have a little 14-foot tinny—it can be seen in the background of this photograph. It is only a little Quintrex 15-footer, with a 30-horsepower outboard motor. We have a nice little spot we go to; I am not about to divulge its location, because I am very protective of my fishing spot!

At one time I had a big 20-something-foot Westerberg boat, and I did a lot of game fishing out of Broome and Dampier when I lived in those places. I got right into sports fishing. At that time the big target was pelagic fish, particularly sailfish and black marlin. I recall that after one of the fishing tournaments held out of Dampier called the Dampier Classic, I went to the rubbish tip and saw all these beautiful sailfish that had been caught, weighed

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Wednesday, 12 August 2009]

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Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Peter Watson; Mr David Templeman; Dr Kim Hames; Acting Speaker; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Andrea Mitchell; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Tony O'Gorman; Mr John Quigley; Ms Adele Carles; Mr John Bowler; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey

and thrown away. To me, that was disgraceful. These are beautiful animals; the fastest fish in the ocean. In consultation with a group of like-minded people, I strove to protect this particular fishery because I knew that this type of fishing was not a sustainable thing to do. We looked at ways in which we could influence others, and we came up with a tag-and-release system. We used fisheries tags, and when we caught a sailfish we would tag it, release it and enter its information onto a data form. The data would then be sent to a central database in Newcastle, and information was therefore gathered about the health of that particular fishery.

I am very pleased to report to members that the days of killing fish in that manner are pretty much gone. The types of tournaments that are now run in Western Australia revolve around the tag-and-release system, of which I am very proud to have been one of the pioneers.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Do you have a fish finder?

Mr M.J. COWPER: I have an echo sounder in the boat, but the battery does not work. I have one, but I am pretty familiar with the area where I go fishing!

I used to spend a fortune at Bluewater Tackle, and the rods that I still have were custom made by the member for Scarborough's husband. They cost me a great deal of money, but they are very near and dear to me. I have put them away in a safe place so that at some time in the near future, I will be able to pass my knowledge on to my son and perhaps go back and do a bit of game fishing in the north coastal regions. I will be able to pass on to him the knowledge of how to tie a Bimini twist, an Albright knot or a Homer Rhodes loop knot or, for that matter, even do a bit of fly fishing. I enjoy doing a bit of saltwater fly fishing, in particular for sailfish.

All in all, if we are to have a fishing industry in the future, it is the recreational fishermen who need to understand that they need to protect our fisheries. I would hate to have been the Minister for Fisheries, either former minister Hon Jon Ford or the current Minister for Fisheries, because they have had some very difficult decisions to make. I have heard the debate about how terrible this tax is. It is a tax; I do not retreat from that. There will have to be an appropriation bill brought to this place, and this debate will obviously take place at some time in the future. I have some difficulties with this, which I have raised with the minister. I have spoken to him in person, I have written to him and I have spoken to him on the phone about this. I am not convinced that the way that this money is raised will save the fishery. That is exactly the concern I have. I have the documents on which the minister based his decision. Anyone who wishes to access them can grab them if they are interested.

The fact remains that we have a declining fishery. Everyone agrees that something must be done but no-one likes the outcome that has occurred. I have received numerous calls from constituents and from people across the fishing industry about the closing of the season, but I was getting those before we formed government. I know what the previous government promised, and the member for Mindarie touched on what that might have been. He said that he had received some negative comments. If we are to have a licensed fee arrangement, I want to know that that money will be used to save the demersal fishery by being spent on establishing a breeding program or on better education or better research. That would sit more comfortably with me. Although this matter is partly about raising revenue, it is primarily about trying to reduce by 50 per cent the number of fishermen who catch our demersal fish. Some members have said that 10 per cent of the fishermen catch 90 per cent of the fish. That is not quite right. At the briefing on this matter, I asked the research officer what the figure was and he told me that 30 per cent of the fishermen catch 70 per cent of the fish. Reducing the number of fishermen by 50 per cent will not reduce the number of fish that are caught by 50 per cent. I believe that what the new member for Fremantle has said will happen will eventually happen, although I am not convinced that that is necessarily the way to go either. Certain things can be done. We could prohibit fishing in particular regions, limit the season, introduce licences or reduce the number of fish that people are allowed to take. Currently a person can take only two demersal fish, but that number could be reduced to one. We could also introduce a breeding program and look at the issue of barotrauma. We must revisit whether we can get rid of size limits. For the uninitiated, when an undersized fish is brought to the surface from 40 metres underwater, it is released back into the environment, but inevitably it will die. Someone could catch two, three or four of undersized fish before catching one that is the right size. Potentially, four breeding fish would not reach full maturity and help replace the fishery stocks. We must examine a range of issues.

The minister must engage more on this matter. I am happy to help the minister in any way, shape or form. Like many other people in Western Australia, I like to go fishing with my mates or with my son to pass on those traditions. I am concerned that the current licensing arrangement will not achieve what it is meant to achieve. I believe that in fewer than 12 months we will continue to be faced with the massive problem of a disappearing fishery and that further action will be required. I would like to think that we could take a step backwards and

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examine a holistic approach to the problem and attack it from there. This is a short-sighted remedy to a problem that will not go away. It is in all of our interests to do what we can to save the fishery.

I understand that the opposition has moved this motion to beat us around the ears. I suspect that if we were on the other side of the chamber when Hon Jon Ford introduced his regime, we would have moved a similar motion. However, at the end of the day we are just arguing semantics. All members are here to represent their constituents so that in the future they can enjoy fishing with their families. The one-upmanship and who did what is irrelevant because that will not save the fishery that we all like to enjoy.

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough) [6.55 pm]: I am very fond of recreational fishing. Looking at the time, I realise that there is far too little time for me to address every aspect of the proposed changes. I am probably different from other members because my husband and I have a significant financial interest in the recreational fishing sector. Indeed, I have derived my income from the recreational fishing sector for the past 16 years. Some members might be surprised, therefore, to learn that I am a great supporter of recreational fishing licences. My support comes from a number of different angles. I support the member for Kalgoorlie's stance on deregulation and believe that it is probably good to apply for a driver's licence only once. However, upon obtaining a driver's licence, a person does not hit the road and drive non-stop for three months to get value out of the \$50 or whatever was spent getting the licence. The suggestion that someone will act similarly because they have paid \$30 for a recreational boat licence is utter nonsense.

My support for recreational fishing licences comes from cruising the Department of Fisheries website and looking at the available data on the "State of the Fisheries" reports. I invite other members to do that because it is quite illuminating. The "State of the Fisheries Report 1998-99" asserts —

Western Australia's recreational fisheries are a major community asset, and contribute in excess of \$500 million a year to the State's economy.

Since 1987 the participation in recreational fishing of all kinds has more than doubled from 284,000 people to between 500,000 and 600,000 people a year ...

How much are 100 000 fishers worth to a fishery each year? This is the kind of data that we have about recreational fishing. I went through all the "State of the Fisheries" reports thinking that surely the data has improved over time. I read the "State of the Fisheries Report 2004-05", which is the same report as the 1998-99 report. The same figures are quoted. There is no improvement in the data or in the statistics. I believe that another creel survey was conducted over a 12-month period by 2005-06, which has helped to contribute to a little more information. Two surveys were done 10 years apart yet still there has been no improvement in our knowledge of the people who are accessing the recreational fishery.

I have heard some wild accusations in here, including the assertion that 90 per cent of the fishing catch is caught by 10 per cent of the fishers. Prove it. Where is the data? There is no supporting empirical evidence to show that that is a fact. Saying it over and over again does not make it true. It is the same for the assertion that 30 per cent of fishers catch 70 per cent of the catch. There is no data or statistics to support that. The only way that we can get a true picture of who is accessing the recreational fishery is to have a licensing system. We need to introduce a licensing system so that people must declare it if they access the fishery.

Mr M.J. Cowper: And a logbook.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Talk about regulation, member! Whether it is a voluntary logbook or a compulsory logbook, personally, I do not want to go out on a boat with my husband and two kids and watch them with their life vests on while at the same time I am filling in a logbook for every fish they pull up. Talk about regulation and red tape. That would not help either. A voluntary logbook is like a voluntary gym membership. I pay through the nose for that but I do not get to use it every week either. We are relying too much on people's ability to shake themselves out of their apathy to contribute to the science.

Clearly, we can no longer rely on the "State of the Fisheries" reports. Since 1998, we have not found any more evidence or put in place any better mechanisms than before and therefore we still do not know who is using our fishery. If I sound passionate and upset about this, it is because I am. I have been making my living out of this industry for 16 years. Still there is no better data than there was in 1998 and no-one can tell me how many people use the fishery.

Other options are available. The minister has said time and again that a licensing system is one of the mechanisms that will be used to help manage the fishery. The other things we must look at are reduced bag limits and seasonal closures. We are introducing a seasonal closure. The reason that I was so vehement about the previous minister's proposal is that we were looking at a shutdown of the fishery for the four most lucrative

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months of the year. A shutdown of that industry would have killed our four businesses, the charter boat industry and everyone else in the industry from the north of Kalbarri to the tip of Augusta. That would have been the end of the industry—game over. That is not a viable solution. Perhaps in 12 months that is where we will be at. Let us find out who is accessing the fishery and how much they are catching. Let us put their names into a database. We must find out the names of the 10 per cent of people who go fishing every week and ask them what they catch and where they catch it. We might then have some relevant data that we can use to make decisions instead of relying on conjecture and rhetoric. I do not like excessive regulation. The member for Cockburn admitted that we do not know what the take is because there is no scientific evidence to support it.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
