

METROPOLITAN RECREATIONAL ABALONE FISHERY AMENDMENT ORDER 2000 (NO. 10)

Motion for Disallowance

Pursuant to Standing Order No 152(b), the following motion by Hon Giz Watson was moved pro forma on 24 November -

That the Metropolitan Recreational Abalone Fishery Order 2000 (No. 10) published in the *Gazette* on 3 November 2000 and tabled in the Legislative Council on 7 November 2000 under the Fish Resources Management Act 1994, be and is hereby disallowed.

HON GIZ WATSON (North Metropolitan) [3.15 am]: This disallowance relates to an amendment to the Metropolitan Recreational Abalone Fisheries Notice 1993. I raise this disallowance because this amendment allows the taking of abalone from within 100 metres of the high-water mark at Penguin Island. Members will be aware that it is within the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park. When this amendment was tabled, it raised my concern because I am aware that the taking of abalone on the reefs adjacent to Penguin Island has been prohibited for the past three years for good reason. The access to those reefs for taking abalone is primarily across the island. Again, members would be aware that it is an A-class nature reserve. It is a significant reserve that provides reef sites for a number of migratory birds and is within the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park. People who access that abalone resource are coming through the island at this time of the year when the seabirds are roosting. They are causing much disruption and potentially severely impacting on the birds' population. If the birds are disturbed when they roost, their mortality rate is high.

I am also concerned about the impact the taking of abalone has on the marine park. Anyone who has taken abalone knows that apart from the taking of the abalone stock and the impact that has on an ecosystem, there is also an associated impact from people tramping over the reef and prising other shellfish and animals from the reef. Members would have seen the pictures on the front page of the newspapers recently of hundreds of people taking to the reefs around the metropolitan area for the short season when abalone can be taken; the impact of that is unacceptable. The associated impact of taking abalone on the metropolitan reefs is substantial. I know that Fisheries WA measures the impact of whether the abalone resource can be taken in a sustainable way, but it does not look at what is done to the diversity of the reef's ecosystem. I will not go on at length about this issue but I ask members to support this disallowance motion because the final management plan for the Shoalwater Islands Marine Park is imminent. An important aspect of managing those systems is the safeguarding of those reefs from heavy human impact. I am sure people do not intentionally disrupt roosting sites or trample across Penguin Island, which also suffers a heavy physical impact. However, they are the consequences of opening up the reefs to people to take abalone. I understand that on the first weekend of the abalone season about 50 or 60 people trekked across that end of the island, which is a substantial number of people. The islands are very fragile limestone sand systems and, therefore, vulnerable to the effects of trampling and erosion.

When this amendment to the Metropolitan Recreational Abalone Fishery Notice was tabled in this place, I moved to disallow it the next day. However, when I checked with the Fisheries Department, I found that it had allowed the taking of abalone to occur the previous weekend. It makes a mockery of the disallowance of amendments under the Act if they are enacted before we have a chance to deal with them in this place. I understand that occurred with this amendment. The fishery was opened, and the following Tuesday the amendment was tabled in this place. It is of concern that this House is unable to examine matters before they are enacted. I seek members' support for this disallowance to ensure we protect that area of reef within the A-class reserve and within the marine park of Penguin Island.

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural) [3.22 am]: Again, the Australian Labor Party will not support this disallowance motion. I came to that view after receiving assurances on the nature of the fish stock from the Fisheries Department. Sadly, I did not have the opportunity to hear Hon Giz Watson's argument before, and I had somewhat misunderstood the impact on the island. However, I had already given a commitment that we would not support the disallowance motion.

The issue of that part of the Cockburn area generally and the comments made by Hon Giz Watson about it have been taken to heart. It is an exceptionally vulnerable and a very rare and beautiful area. However, unfortunately its accessibility to very large population growth in that region and increased traffic from the metropolitan area have created a significant environmental hazard there.

I was unaware of the issues involved in the island and with the seabirds. It is a matter we must discuss at greater length some time after the election. There is a pressing need for greater preservation of the landforms in that area as well as the marine environment. However, the Labor Party opposes the motion.

HON M.J. CRIDDLE (Agricultural - Minister for Transport) [3.25 am]: The Government will be opposing this disallowance. Penguin Island was closed to recreational abalone fishing in 1996 following concerns over the

status of the abalone stocks on the reef platform and signs of localised depletion of mature abalone. The closure of the abalone fishery on the reef top within 100 metres applied only to recreational fishers, as the commercial fishers are not permitted to take abalone on the reef top areas. Monitoring abalone stocks around Penguin Island over the last four years has shown the abundance of mature abalone has improved significantly, and fishing on the stocks in the area is now sustainable. It is just a nine-hour fishery. The Government opposes the disallowance.

Question put and negatived.