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A WORLD-FIRST AS STATE SANCTUARIES OF THE DEEP OPEN

Author: Melissa Fyfe, Environment Reporter Date: 16/11/2002 Words: 548 Publication: The Age Section: News Page: 11

Today Victoria gets 13 new national parks and 11 sanctuaries, but not one wombat, small marsupial or brush-tailed anything will raise a paw in thanks. The state's world-first system of representative marine national parks and sanctuaries will be proclaimed today, and hundreds of hectares of ocean bed, kelp forests, coral reef and mangrove will be protected from fishing.

It also entails a new breed of rangers, whose watery domain is a new concept for Parks Victoria.

But the 12 marine park rangers will not be spending their time sitting in a scuba suit on the ocean floor waiting to show divers or snorkellers around their park. Most duties will be land-based and include education, helping maintain the fishing bans and helping with research.

Ranger Thierry Rolland, 37, will help manage three marine national parks in Western Port Bay. Previously a coast-care facilitator for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Mr Rolland confesses a passion for anything that "floats, swims or lives in the water".

"It is a completely new adventure. It is a world first and I enjoy telling people about the amazing things we have in our parks."

The marine rangers will be based at Parks Victoria offices along the coast. At Foster, Jonathon Stevenson, 35, will look after three parks - at Corner Inlet, which has a rare seagrass habitat, Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park and the Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park. It is his dream job.

"I have been poking around in rock pools as a hobby since I was a kid," the former environmental planner said.

Today's proclamation follows a decade-long fight by community groups and environmentalists to establish the park system. The legislation had a particularly difficult passage through parliament and faced much opposition from fishing interests.

The Victorian coordinator of the Marine and Coastal Community Network, Tim Allen, said today was a "defining moment for nature conservation in Victoria". He nominated the "awe-inspiring" canyons at the Twelve Apostles Marine National Park as a highlight of the park systems.

The new marine emblem has also been unveiled. The weedy seadragon won a contest for an undersea creature to sit beside the Leadbeater's possum, the helmeted honeyeater and the pink heath. The shy creature won 25 per cent of the vote, ahead of the western blue devilfish.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Victoria's 13 marine national parks and 11 sanctuaries are the world's first representative system of marine parks.
- Most parks will be off-limits to fishing. The following parks, however, will be no-take zones from April, 2004: Discovery Bay, Twelve Apostles, Corner Inlet, Cape Howe, Point Cooke (except in the area of the former fisheries reserve)

- The parks will be marked by on-site signs and maps at key access points and in-water navigational aids and triangular yellow shore markers. Information is available on the Parks Victoria website.
- There are no penalties for having a fishing boat or fishing equipment within protected waters, provided they are not used within the protected area.

VICTORIA'S NEW MARINE EMBLEM UNVEILED

Friday 8 November, 2002

Media Release from the Bracks Government

The Minister for Conservation and Environment Sherryl Garbutt today announced that a very special, but rather shy Victorian has been chosen to represent the State on official business, following an overwhelming show of support from the public.

The Weedy Seadragon (*Phyllopteryx taeniolatus*) came out on top in public nominations for the prestigious position of Marine Faunal Emblem for the State of Victoria, and will now join Leadbeater's Possum, the Helmeted Honeyeater and the Pink Heath as official State Emblems.

It is the first time in 31 years that Victoria has had a new official State Emblem.

"About 90 per cent of the State's marine plants and animals are found only in Australia's southern waters," Ms Garbutt said. "As our marine emblem, the Weedy Seadragon represents the delicate and beautiful world found beneath the waters of Victoria," she said.

Ms Garbutt said the marine emblem would become a valuable tool for introducing school children to the State's unique and precious marine environment.

"This State has some of the most spectacular underwater environments in the world. We want all Victorians to learn more about what's on their doorstep and to realise that they don't have to go to the Great Barrier Reef to see an underwater wonderland."

"The establishment of Marine National Parks, which come into effect later this month, will ensure these treasures are protected for future generations."

She explained the Weedy Seadragon was the stand-out candidate to be Victoria's marine emblem.

"The Weedy Seadragon is one of the most unusual, distinctive and attractive creatures found in our waters," she said. "It topped the public voting, with 25% of 24,018 nominations received over a six-week period, and received the recommendation from an expert panel of local marine scientists and educators, led by Victoria's Chief Scientist, Sir Gustav Nossal."

"Others to fare well in the public nominations included the Western Blue Devilfish (18.9%), Southern Pot-Bellied Seahorse (13.7%) and Vermillion Seastar (11.5%)."

"I hope the emblem can be used to inspire people to get involved and experience the life, colour and incredible diversity of our coastal regions," Ms Garbutt said.

VIC- MARINE PARKS A STEP CLOSER

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/05/08/1019441521332.html>

By Richard Baker May 9 2002

Victoria's marine parks are a step closer to being established this year, with Premier Steve Bracks and Opposition Leader Denis Naphine expected to meet today to try to agree on the proposals. Sources said last night that the government and the opposition were close to a compromise on the plan to protect some of the state's most significant marine areas from fishing, water-skiing and other activities. The government is believed to be considering requests to alter the boundaries of some parks and sanctuaries, possibly including those in the electorates of Dr Naphine and independent Susan Davies. It is also believed the government may devise an adjustment package to help coastal communities reliant on commercial fishing to cope with changes brought about by creating 13 marine parks and 11 sanctuaries. If an agreement is reached and the legislation, which is expected to be before parliament within weeks, is passed, most marine parks will come into being in November. However, several parks will not become no-take areas until April, 2004. The Age believes Liberal MPs agreed to support the government's proposed legislation subject to some non-negotiable conditions. The government withdrew its initial marine parks legislation last year after failing to secure support from the Liberals and National Party because of concerns about compensation.

Today's meeting comes after Mr Bracks last month delivered an ultimatum to Dr Naphine, saying it was time for the Liberal Party to "put up or shut up" about the marine parks proposal. Neither Mr Bracks' office nor a spokesman for Environment Minister Sherryl Garbutt would confirm today's expected meeting.

Opposition environment spokesman Victor Perton also would not confirm the meeting, but did say the government and opposition were "working hard to achieve a win-win outcome". News of the meeting comes after the state's commercial fishing body, Seafood Industry Victoria, expressed concern over the government forecasting in Tuesday's budget that it would have to pay little more than \$3 million to compensate fishermen. On Tuesday, the government allocated an extra \$3.2 million for the marine parks over the next three years. But the government confirmed yesterday that much of the money would be used for compensation.

GARBUTT SAYS LIBS FORCED BOUNDARY CHANGES ON MARINE PLAN

Friday May 10

<http://www.theage.com.au/breaking/2002/05/10/FFXJFYGK2QC.htm>

Melbourne, May 10 AAPPublished:., 10:40 AM

Victorian Environment Minister Sherryl Garbutt said today the Liberal Party had forced a number of changes to marine park boundaries as part of their deal to support the parks legislation. But she would not reveal the extent of the boundary changes and other amendments, saying full details would be announced on Monday. Premier Steve Bracks and Opposition leader Denis Naphthine yesterday shook hands on an in-principle agreement to secure Liberal Party support for marine parks legislation. The deal is understood to have included minor compensation changes and a number of changes to marine park boundaries in Liberal electorates - including the Discovery Bay park in Dr Naphthine's own electorate of Portland, on the state's south-west coast. Dr Naphthine was under intense pressure locally to amend the legislation, amid fears of an electoral backlash. Ms Garbutt said the government would have preferred not to have changed any boundaries, but agreed to do so in order to get the bill through parliament. "I have to say that the Liberal Party had a different view than us on the boundaries, so we've made some changes there and agreed," she told ABC radio today. "But we've had to coax them through very carefully on these changes and on this bill." The legislation will be introduced into parliament next week and is expected to be passed this session. Commercial and recreational fishing will be banned in 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries covering about five per cent of Victorian coastal waters. The deal yesterday came 12 months after the government first announced its marine parks plan. The opposition had previously refused to support the legislation in the upper house of parliament, where it holds an absolute majority.

LIBS STRIKE DEAL OVER MARINE PARKS BILL

May 10 2002

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/05/09/1020914030466.htm>

By Richard Baker

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks and Opposition Leader Denis Naphthine last night reached an agreement in principle on marine parks under which the legislation will have a safe passage through parliament. A spokeswoman for Mr Bracks said last night the Premier was pleased the opposition was prepared to support the thrust of the government's proposals and was hopeful the legislation would proceed unhindered when it was introduced in parliament next week. Opposition Environment spokesman Victor Perton said the Liberal Party was prepared to support in principle the proposals to create 13 marine parks and 11 marine sanctuaries along the state's coastline. But Mr Perton said the opposition would not offer full support until it saw the final legislation. "The Premier and Dr Naphthine have shaken hands on the principles applied in the legislation," he said. The government needs the Liberal Party's support to establish the system of marine parks, which will shut off 5 per cent of the state's coastline from fishing and other activities when they come into force later this year. A few parks will not have a ban on fishing until 2004. It is believed the government has agreed to make small boundary changes in parks and sanctuaries in the electorates of some Liberal MPs, including Dr Naphthine, who is the member for Portland.

BRACKS AND NAPHTHINE COMPROMISE ON MARINE PARK AGREEMENT

Thu, 9 May 2002

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/australia/vic/metvic-9may2002-10.htm>

19:47 AEST Marine parks are finally set to be established in Victoria with Premier Steve Bracks and the Opposition leader, Denis Naphthine, reaching a compromise tonight. The Government has redrafted the Marine Parks Bill after withdrawing it last year when the Opposition refused to support the compensation package for commercial fisherman. The Government will not comment on the detail of the agreement but the Opposition says there have been minor boundary changes to some parks and sanctuaries and compensation for charter boat operators and associated businesses. The revamped bill will be introduced to Parliament next week. The Shadow Conservation and Environment Minister, Victor Perton,

says it is a win for the environment and the fishing industry. "I think what is important is the shaking of hands between the two leaders of the parties will deliver the world's best system of marine national parks and sanctuaries, improve conditions for the environment for fishermen and the whole community," Mr Perton said.

VIC GOVT, OPPOSITION AGREE ON MARINE PARK LEGISLATION CHANGES

Friday, May 10, 2002.

<http://abc.net.au/news/newsitems/s552727.htm>

Posted: 13:14:03 (AEDT The Opposition and the Victorian Government have agreed to key changes to the marine park legislation in order to get it through Parliament. The party has been negotiating with the Government on the proposed changes to the legislation, which will come before Parliament next week. The Member for Gippsland Province, Philip Davis, proposed three changes affecting proposed marine parks along the Gippsland coast. He says the most important is a change of boundaries at Corner Inlet, which will be acceptable to the local fishing industry. "Point Hicks, we intend to ensure that boats can anchor there because it's the only effective safe anchorage between Corner Inlet and Eden," he said. "Of course, we need to recognise the value to the abalone industry of the Iron Prince reef, which is one of the most productive abalone reefs in east Gippsland."

NATS PREDICT CROSS-BENCH DEAL WILL HURT FISHING INDUSTRY

htm Friday, May 10, 2002

<http://abc.net.au/news/newsitems/s552786.htm>

Posted: 13:34:32 (AEDT The National Party claims a deal between the Victorian Premier and Opposition leader on marine parks has sold out the State's fishing communities. The Government is expected to introduce legislation to establish marine parks to Parliament next week and the bill is likely to be passed this session. The Government will not reveal the details of its Marine Parks Bill until Monday but the Opposition leader, Denis Napthine, says the agreement with the Premier includes an acceptable compensation scheme for the fishing industry, as well as changes to boundaries in some parks and sanctuaries. "We have got the best compromise possible," Mr Napthine said. "We believe we've got a win-win outcome, although we believe it is not absolutely perfect as we would like it." But the National Party leader, Peter Ryan, claims fishing communities have been sold out and says he doubts the compensation be will adequate. "We offered a prospect in this instance of getting a win-win and by the sounds of it, without having seen it, it's not going to be delivered in anything like the sort of way that we would like."

VIC - PARKS DEAL MAKES HISTORY, AND WAVES

May 11 2002

<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/05/10/1021002390525.htm>

By Richard Baker, Geoff Strong

Several Victorian Liberal MPs, including Opposition Leader Denis Napthine, will win significant concessions on the size and shape of proposed marine parks in their coastal electorates in a deal to be announced by the State Government on Monday. The deal secures bipartisan support for the government's controversial marine parks legislation. As part of it, shoreline rock formations popular with fishermen in Dr Napthine's Portland electorate will be excluded from the Discovery Bay marine park, allowing rock fishing to continue. Dr Napthine has been under strong local pressure to win a better deal for fishermen if marine parks are introduced. Other demands put to the government include dividing the Corner Inlet park in Liberal MP Phil Davis' Gippsland electorate into two parks. It is believed they will be up to a third smaller than the original park recommended last year by the Environment Conservation Council. The Age believes that boundary changes and an improved compensation package were two non-negotiable conditions Dr Napthine put to Premier Steve Bracks on Thursday if the Liberals were to offer support for the legislation, due in parliament next week. The boundaries in question were outlined last year by the council, which recommended the creation of 13 marine parks and 11 marine sanctuaries, protecting 5 per cent of the state's coastline from fishing. But the agreement has prompted calls from the National Party that

coastal Victorians have been "sold out" by the Liberals. "We are very disappointed that the Liberals have agreed to a deal to see these marine parks created and have no doubt that fishers right across the state will also be angry," the party's environment spokesman Peter Hall said yesterday. In Beaumaris yesterday, fisherman Cyril Mitchell could barely contain his anger when asked about the new marine sanctuary to be established in what is effectively his waterfront back yard. "I don't know what they are trying to protect," he said. "Maybe 10 years ago there would be something to save. There is nothing there any more, just introduced pests: North Pacific seastar, sabella worm and undaria, the Japanese seaweed." Mr Mitchell was yesterday helping out his friend Wayne Wright who runs the Southern Sportsfishing tackle and bait shop, a Black Rock institution for 50 years. Mr Wright thought the sanctuary, which will block access to some popular fishing spots, would reduce his business by about 10 per cent. "A lot of people who come through here put their boats in at Half Moon Bay and would want to fish down there," he said. Other changes expected to be announced include the exclusion of a popular deep-water reef from the Twelve Apostles marine park, which is in the electorate of lower house Liberal MP John Vogels and falls in the new electorate of Great South West, to be contested by Dr Napthine at the next state election. A major abalone reef in the Cape Howe park in the electorate of Gippsland East independent MP Craig Ingram is also tipped to be excluded from the final legislation - as is a shipping lane in the Port Phillip Heads marine park, in the electorate of Liberal MP Garry Spry. Opposition environment spokesman Victor Perton yesterday said the government was expected to announce a broader compensation package after the parks were established. Environment Minister Sherryl Garbutt confirmed the opposition had forced the government to make boundary changes, but would not elaborate on them. The legislation is likely to be passed this parliamentary session, meaning marine parks will be established in November. However, fishing in some parks will not be banned until 2004. Back at Beaumaris, not everyone was sceptical. Ian Jones, president of the Game Fishing Association of Victoria, said he had been involved in consultations on the sanctuary, which will extend 1.5 kilometres along the bay from Quiet Corner at Black Rock to south of Table Rock and roughly a kilometre out to sea. "The parks were going to happen whether we liked them or not. The idea is about protecting biodiversity and I think they will probably do that. I think we can live with it."

LIBERALS FEEL ANGLER ANGER OVER FISHING BAN

Sunday May 12 2002

<http://www.theage.com.au/breaking/2002/05/12/FFXJFYGK2QC.html>

Vic MELBOURNE, May 12 AAPPublished: 2, 1:50 PM

Recreational anglers today turned their anger on the Liberal Party for supporting a fishing ban in Victoria's proposed marine parks. The fishers are furious at the state government's plan to introduce 13 marine parks and 11 sanctuaries where fishing will be banned. Last week the Liberal Party gave in-principle support to the marine parks legislation after the government agreed to change the boundaries of some of the parks. Representatives of the Australian Anglers Association, Victorian Fishing Charter Association and the Boating Industry Association today gave Liberal upper house MP Ken Smith a crate of 13,000 protest postcards from disgruntled fishers. Mr Smith will take the postcards to next Tuesday's Liberal Party meeting before passing them onto the state government. Australian Anglers Association spokesman Rob Harrison said the more than 5,000 fishers it represented had been sold out by state opposition leader Denis Napthine. "The Liberal Party's Dr Napthine has betrayed all Victorian recreational anglers by making a deal with the Brack's government to get himself re-elected to parliament," he said. Mr Harrison also predicted an electoral backlash against the Bracks government, warning a million voting anglers would never forgive the government for introducing the world's first across-the-board marine park fishing ban. Victorian Fishing Charter Association president Steve Johnston (Johnston) said the "world's worst practice" marine parks would put at least 18 charter boats out of business. The Boating Industry Association, meanwhile, said proposed bans at the southern end of Port Phillip Bay would force hundreds of small craft into the dangerous waters of Bass Strait or into shipping lanes. Its president, Lindsay Grenfell, said unlike commercial fishermen, marine dealers, tourism operators and charter boat tourism businesses affected by the ban had not been offered any compensation. "No other country or state in the world, including Canada and the USA, which have marine parks has ever banned

across the board recreational fishing," he said. Opposition environment spokesman Victor Perton said the proposed marine parks struck a balance between the expectations of environmentalists, commercial fishermen and recreational anglers. "The result of the agreement on Thursday is that only 15 out of the 329 identified favourite fishing spots in Victoria will be included in the marine parks and sanctuaries," Mr Perton told AAP. By Barbara Adam

VIC- MARINE PARKS AND SANCTUARIES SET TO BE ESTABLISHED

<http://abc.net.au/news/australia/vic/archive/metvic--14.htm>

Fri, 10 May 2002 18:02 AEST The Victoria Premier, Steve Bracks is confident the Marine Parks legislation will get through this session of Parliament, after striking a deal with the Opposition leader yesterday. Marine parks and sanctuaries are finally set to be established along Victoria's coast. The Government will not reveal the details of the agreement until Monday, but the Opposition says it includes compensation for affected communities and businesses, and changes to boundaries in some parks and sanctuaries. Mr Bracks hopes marine parks will become a reality during this session of Parliament. "I had a hand shake with the Opposition leader yesterday which indicated that in principle he agreed with this going ahead and going into Parliament next week," Mr Bracks said. He says it is a good deal for recreational anglers, and the compensation scheme for commercial fishermen is fair. But Ross McGowan from the Seafood Industry Association is reserving his judgment. "Certainly the principle is one we agree with but whether it is adequate and will adequately compensate fishers remains to be seen," Mr McGowan said.

MARINE SCIENTISTS' GROUP WELCOMES NATIONAL PARKS AGREEMENT

15th May 2002

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/australia/vic/westvic/reghor-14may2002-2.htm>

The Australian Marine Scientists Association has welcomed an agreement between the Victorian Government and Opposition on marine national parks. The agreement includes changes to compensation measures and some alterations in the boundaries of the parks. The association's John Sherwood, from Warrnambool in the state's west, says one of the important things about the parks is that they protect a full range of marine habitats in each region. Dr Sherwood says he wants to see the maps of the boundary changes for the parks near Port Campbell and Portland to make sure they still protect the full diversity of ecological systems. "With the Discovery Bay Park I was hoping, I guess, that there's still some basalt coast line protected in the park areas - there's an excision to benefit the commercial and recreational fishing interests in that area, but I hope that's not to the exclusion of all of the basalt coastline, for example," he said.

VIC MARINE PARKS PLAN BACK ON TRACK

17th May 2002

<http://www.acfonline.org.au/asp/pages/document.asp?ldDoc=699>

The effort to establish a comprehensive group of marine national parks and reserves along Victoria's coast is back on, with an agreement between the Victorian government and Liberal Party opposition.

While there have been sacrifices and compromises during the political negotiations, the core objective has been reached - a comprehensive system of marine protected areas has survived.

The Park declarations should create legacies for the people of Victoria for generations, returning ecological, social and economic rewards for years to come. The unsung heroes in the effort to turn the tide against the doomsayers have been the community and conservationists who never gave up, maintaining the pressure in the face of influential lobby groups and personalities.

It remains a great disappointment that there will be no specific legal prohibition against all mineral exploration in the Parks. For as long as

the possibility to allow seismic testing within Park boundaries exists, ACF will remain concerned. The total impact of seismic testing on marine biodiversity remains inconclusive but anecdotal evidence suggests that it may cause significant harm.

This matters, as rare and endangered species including blue whales and weedy seadragons, will be relying on the Parks for protection.

VIC- PORT CAMPBELL BID TO BLOCK MARINE NATIONAL PARK

15 April 2002

<http://abc.net.au/news/australia/vic/westvic/reghor->

Fishermen at Port Campbell have met with state Opposition members in their bid to halt the creation of a marine national park at the 12 Apostles. Member for Warrnambool John Vogels says the fishermen are angry their worries about compensation are not being considered. Mr Vogels says fishermen are being left out of the Government's decision-making process.

"They're not listening. They don't understand. They stand on cliff tops, look down over the ocean, and think they know what's happening. We see in the regional forest agreements, where you can actually go out and count trees, they can't even get that right. The area here, which is underwater, the fishermen know it perfectly, they've fished there for generations but no-one'll listen to them."

WORLD CLASS MARINE NATIONAL PARKS PACKAGE

Victoria State budget 2001, FROM THE Minister For Environment & Conservation
Tuesday, May 15, 2001

The Bracks Government today announced a package of \$39 million over four years for a world class system of marine national parks to complement the State's internationally-renowned terrestrial park system.

The funding forms part of the Government's response to the final report of the Environment Conservation Council's (ECC) Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation.

The Minister for Environment and Conservation, Sherryl Garbutt, and the Minister for Energy and Resources and Ports, Candy Broad, said the Government has accepted the broad thrust of the ECC report, which recommended the establishment of a system of marine national parks and marine sanctuaries.

Funding of \$10.3 million per year has been provided in 2001-02 and 2002-03; \$9.7 million in 2003-04; and \$8.6 million ongoing, commencing in 2004-05, to implement the marine national parks package.

The Ministers said the funding would result in:

- * over 30 new park management and fisheries enforcement positions at coastal locations throughout regional Victoria;

- * three new strategically-located Regional Investigation Officers to plan coordinated major intelligence-based, joint agency, enforcement operations;

- * expansion of Fisheries Victoria's Special Investigations Group (SIG) to include additional intelligence analysis and investigators to concentrate on illegal harvesting;

- * a new vessel to provide for ocean-going enforcement capacity; and ongoing performance assessment and monitoring of marine national parks and sanctuaries.

Ms Garbutt said the Government's full response to the ECC's recommendations and a Bill to establish the parks would be introduced into Parliament later this week.

"Today's announcement demonstrates that the Bracks Government is prepared to support its election commitment to introduce a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of highly-protected marine national parks including a Port Phillips Heads marine national park," Ms Garbutt said. After almost a decade of consultation, the ECC recommended the creation of a system of marine national parks. Ms Broad said a central feature of the Bracks Government's response to the ECC's report was the additional \$14.1 million over four years to boost fisheries enforcement - a massive 75 per cent increase in recurrent funding.

"This additional funding will significantly increase the level of enforcement for the fishing industry along the whole Victorian coast," Ms Broad said.

"Enhanced enforcement will serve both to protect the new marine national parks system and reduce the current level of poaching of valuable Victorian fisheries resources."

Ms Broad said the package also included:

- * transitional assistance for individual commercial fishers in the fin fish and rock lobster sectors who can demonstrate a loss of income directly related to reduced catch as a result of the introduction of marine national parks and sanctuaries;

- * scientific and technical support to the abalone fishery to identify and survey areas of currently under-utilised resource; and
- * \$1.1 million over four years for the establishment of new marine aquaculture zones estimated to create approximately 500 additional employment opportunities in regional Victoria.

Ms Garbutt said the funding for marine national parks was insurance against over-fishing and reflected the Bracks Government's commitment to protecting Victoria's natural environment.

"The creation of marine national parks will also ensure that our children, and generations to follow, will be able to enjoy the rich diversity of marine plants and animals found in Victorian waters," Ms Garbutt said.

TIDE RUNNING OUT FOR A FISHING DYNASTY AS MARINE PARK LOOMS

By Gary Tippet Wednesday 21 March 2001

Fishing is in the blood down Port Franklin way. And more often than not that blood is Cripps blood. That bloke putting out 650 metres of seine net, he's a Cripps; the one further east bagging up a catch of garfish, he's one too; and there's Justin Cripps and Gary and Brett. Even those children on the wharf, dropping a line in after school: five of the halfdozen are Cripps. Six of the 12 professional fishermen working out of Port Franklin are from the family: brothers, cousins and secondcousins. And, as best they can figure, there have been Cripps fishing Corner Inlet, that expanse of channels, islands and mud flats east from Wilsons Promontory to Ninety Mile Beach, for 115 years. But they fear it won't be for much longer. Under a proposal before the State Government, a 4150-hectare patch of the inlet will be put off-limits to professionals and amateur anglers as a marine national park. One of 24 parks and sanctuaries covering 6 per cent of Victorian waters recommended by the Environment Conservation Council, it will be a strict nocatch zone. The Corner Inlet fishermen concede that based on size alone, the zone is only a small section of the inlet. The problem is that it is placed squarely over what they say is by far the best fishing ground in the area. "The ECC is saying it's only a small portion of the inlet in relative terms," says Wayne Cripps. "But that's not right. In terms of productive area they're probably taking 40 or 50 per cent. It's the best seagrass, best habitat, and therefore best fishing bank in the area." What that means, he says, is that the 19 professionals licensed to fish the inlet will be squeezed into a smaller, tighter, more peripheral area. "Human nature tells you that it's not going to be viable. Some of us, a lot of us, are going to fall over." Wayne, 41, is nicknamed Secret for his reluctance to reveal much, especially about his fishing plans. But he has had to become vocal, leading the opposition to the proposal with faxes and invitations to state politicians to come fishing before the government's decision in June. So far, only a few have taken up the offer.

On Wednesday, just north of the planned park, he and deck hand Terry Need, 19, pull in a healthy catch of garfish, squid and the odd King George whiting running off the bank in a retreating tide. He says it is an indication of how well four generations have maintained the fishing ground, despite claims of overfishing. "Overfishing? How have they arrived at that fact?" he asks. "115 years on and we're still here and we're still pumping. Where's their proof? I've got mine, which is catch returns. You've only got to go to Queenscliff (marine research centre) and check the monthly log. Stand in the fish market and see the fish that come out of here and anyone can see it's not a bugged game." He shows a chart tracking catches of major species in the inlet over the decade 1989 to 1999. In the first year the take was 318 tonnes and in the last, despite a 50 per cent reduction in licences, it was 319. The annual average was 307 tonnes. The reason, says Wayne, is that the professionals "farm" the area. By agreement they introduced a code of conduct limiting each fisherman to two "shots" - drops of the net - per day. He says they move around, working one shot area and resting others. "So you're not raping and pillaging the one area, you're spreading it out. You might fish two shots here and farm 10 shots ... you keep moving around, you don't go in and rip the guts out of one zone." "And why would we anyway? It's our life, has been since 1885, and we'd hoped it it always would be."

But no one has much confidence. In recent years, the zone boundary has been pulled back three times until it now ends at the mouth of the inlet; a two-fish quota has been imposed on gummy shark; and, worse, after spending \$13,000 on a counter-proposal to the ECC, the fishermen saw the park increased by 1660 hectares. "My fear is it's just the beginning," says Wayne's wife Linda. "This is just another step and they'll take more and more off us. It's going to hit at tourism, all the businesses in the small towns around here thrive on tourism that circles around fishing. And it's going to make a big difference to our kids' whole family history." Of Wayne and Linda's four boys, at least one, 11-year-old Jake, says he wants to follow his great grandfather. Wayne, who left school at 15 to

chase shark in Bass Strait and took up his inlet licence at 18, says it's up to the boys. "But it's been a good life for the the Cripps. Hasn't made any of us millionaires, but we've made a good living. "And me, I've got a little bit of fishing left yet. The average bloke here fishes until he's 65 or 70, maybe even up to 80. So I'm only halfway through. I've got a bloody long way to go yet, if I'm left the chance."

CORNER INLET MARINE NATIONAL PARK NO THREAT TO FISHERS

MEDIA RELEASE

28 March 2001

Attention Chiefs of staff

Corner Inlet Marine National Park will not jeopardise the livelihoods of Corner Inlet fishers, according to one of Victoria's leading nature conservation groups, the Victorian National Parks Association.

The fishers' claims are outlined in a documentary *The Money Fish* to be aired on ABC Television's 'The Big Picture' tomorrow night.

Mr Chris Smyth, VNPA's Marine Campaign Officer, said that commercial fishers have been making exaggerated claims about the economic impact of a marine national park that will occupy about 8% of the Corner Inlet-Nooramunga region, east of Wilsons Promontory.

'The Corner Inlet fishers have neglected to tell the public of the money that has flowed into their community as a result of the recently completed buyout, 10 of the 30 commercial fishers in Corner Inlet were each paid \$80,000 to leave the fishery', said Mr Smyth.

'Simple arithmetic suggests that jobs won't be lost. The Bay and Inlet Buy back scheme and the marine national park proposal will together improve the long-term environmental and economic sustainability of the Corner Inlet fishery', said Mr Smyth.

'The ten fishers who have left the fishery were hauling in 10% of the total Fisheries Victoria Catch and ("). This will now be shared each year among the remaining 20 fishers. The waters within the proposed Corner Inlet Marine National Park account for an annual catch valued at only \$100,000', said Mr Smyth. (Based on commercial fisher returns to the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute and included in the Environment Conservation Council's final report.)

'The fishing effort of ten people has been removed, and the proposed marine national park occupies only about 8% of Corner Inlet. There is still more than 90% of the Inlet available for commercial fishing, including sheltered areas during easterly winds, so the park proposal will not threaten the sustainability of the fishery.'

'We agree with fishers who are concerned about catchment impacts on our marine world, but marine national parks can be declared while dealing with issues such as shoreline habitat protection and land-based pollution sources', said Mr Smyth. It's not a case of either/or, we need both.

Corner Inlet holds the most significant stands of broadleaf (*Posidonia*) seagrass in Victoria,' said Mr Smyth. 'We are concerned about the impact that dragging nets across seagrass beds has on marine invertebrate communities. One of the many benefits of Corner Inlet Marine National Park will be as a reference area that can be used to confirm or eliminate netting as a factor in seagrass dieback.'

'Among their many advantages, marine national parks are insurance against overfishing, give protection to juvenile fish and provide many opportunities for sustainable regional development including marine interpretation, research and ecotourism.

'Despite claims to the contrary', said Mr Smyth, 'Corner Inlet is of international scientific significance. This is supported by its National Estate and Ramsar listing, and surveys undertaken by Museum Victoria. It is clearly worth giving full protection to a small part of it in the Corner Inlet Marine National Park'.

For further comment: Chris Smyth, VNPA Marine Campaign Officer: 9650 8296

OVER 100 OF AUSTRALIA'S LEADING MARINE SCIENTISTS BACK VICTORIA'S PROPOSALS FOR MARINE NATIONAL PARKS

Australian Marine Sciences Association (Victoria) Media Release - Thursday 29 March 2001

Over 100 of Australia's leading marine scientists have backed proposals for marine national parks in Victoria's coastal waters, stating that there is compelling scientific evidence that the fully protected areas will conserve marine plant and animal species, fish populations, and could help replenish marine life in coastal waters.

The State Government's decision on the proposals for 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries is imminent. If implemented, these proposals would protect 6 per cent of the State's coastal waters.

The Victorian Branch of Australia's largest professional association for marine scientists, the Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA), today released a list of 117 supporting marine scientists - 13 professors, 11 associate professors and 93 PhD marine scientists. Signatories include marine biologists, fishery scientists, and marine resource managers.

Speaking on behalf of the signatories, the Victorian President of AMSA, Associate Professor John Sherwood said, "The overwhelming consensus of the marine science community is that fully protected marine national parks work. They will conserve marine life for future generations to enjoy.

Marine national parks protect marine ecosystems, benefit exploited populations of marine life, improve scientific understanding of the marine environment, and increase opportunities for research, education and tourism. They are a vital addition to fisheries management and other conservation efforts that we employ in the sea."

The support for Victoria's proposals follows similar calls this month by over 150 marine scientists in the United States for fully protected marine reserves. This follows the release of a three-year study from the University of California into the benefits that have flowed from fully protected marine areas around the world. Amongst the findings:

- Population densities of marine life were on average 91% higher inside marine national parks;
- The average organism size was 31% higher within marine national parks;
- The diversity of species was 23% higher within marine national parks.

The study also found that networks of marine national parks are much more likely to achieve the full array of benefits than the current tendency to establish single isolated reserves.

"The Victorian community will be well served by a system of fully protected marine national parks along the coast", Associate Professor Sherwood said. "The long -term benefits of these areas far outweigh any short-term costs associated with their declaration".

The support of the marine science community for the proposals follows support from Victoria's conservation groups, the tourism industry, and the majority of local councils. The Government is expected to make an announcement within weeks.

ANGER AT SCUTTLED FISHING BILL

http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5478,2115681%255E2862,00.html

By Regina Titelius and Fay Burstin 14jun01

ANGER swept through fishing and conservation groups yesterday over the State Government's decision to withdraw its controversial marine parks Bill. Recreational and commercial fishers stood alongside conservationists yesterday in calling for MPs not to abandon the proposed legislation to set up marine parks. The Government withdrew the Bill after refusing to cave in to demands by the Opposition to remove restrictions on commercial fishers to seek compensation. Commercial fishers claim they stand to lose millions of dollars from not being able to fish in the no-take zones. Not even 11th-hour intervention by rock star-conservationist Peter Garrett could save the Bill - lauded as this year's most important conservation initiative in the world. Garrett made several phone calls to Government and Opposition MPs yesterday. But the issue is far from dead. Conservation Minister Sherryl Garbutt said the Government would "go back to the drawing board". Ms Garbutt said the Government would consider alternatives such as reducing the number of parks from the proposed 12 marine parks and 10 sanctuaries, covering 5.2 per cent of the coast.

Fishing groups and conservationists said the 10-year process of developing a marine parks strategy to protect sensitive marine habitats could not be abandoned. While various commercial fishing groups are still pushing the compensation issue, abalone fishers said the Government had ignored the industry's alternative marine park proposals which would have avoided compensation claims.

Portland abalone fisherman Vincent Gannon said: "There were alternatives which would have minimised the impact on us but kept the integrity of the parks. . . but they (the Government) has gone off and done their own thing." Victoria's peak recreational fishing group, VRFish, said there was no justification for commercial fishers seeking compensation. Seafood Industry Victoria chairman Len McCall said adequate compensation needed to be addressed in any Bill.

COMPO ISSUE SINKS MARINE PARKS PLAN

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/state/2001/06/14/FFXXY4PRWNC.html>

By Adrian Rollins, Thursday 14 June 2001

The proposal to establish marine parks in Victoria has been sunk by a bitter impasse between the State Government and the opposition over compensation for fishermen. The government withdrew its bill late yesterday after a heated debate in parliament in which neither side was prepared to back down. The government is now considering other options for establishing a network of 12 marine parks, including the possibility of introducing individual legislation for each park and sanctuary.

The withdrawal is a major setback for the government, following its forced retreat on the introduction of supervised drug injecting rooms and the failure of its push for reform of the upper house. Premier Steve Bracks said the bill's withdrawal represented "a sad day for the environment". Environment Minister Sherryl Garbutt said the government remained committed to marine parks, but was not confident alternative proposals could be prepared by the time parliament returns from its winter recess in mid-August.

Ms Garbutt accused the Liberal Party of using the compensation issue to disguise the fact that the opposition was bitterly divided on marine parks. "They are deeply divided over this," she said. "They could not make a decision on individual parks so they decided to pick on the compensation issue."

It was a claim rejected by Opposition Leader Denis Napthine, who said the proposal had received the unanimous support of the Liberal party room at a meeting on Tuesday. Dr Napthine said it was "tragedy, a missed opportunity", that the bill had been withdrawn. He condemned the government's actions as a "childish fit of pique".

The government and the opposition hit an impasse over compensation. The bill included provisions preventing fishermen whose livelihood was affected by the marine parks from seeking compensation through the Supreme Court. Ms Garbutt said that without the provisions taxpayers would have been exposed to the possibility of compensation claims worth millions of dollars: "We didn't want this to be a lawyers' picnic." The government has instead offered \$1.2 million in transitional assistance to affected fishermen.

GOVT CALLED ON TO DE-POLITICISE MARINE PARKS DEBATE

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/regionals/westvic/reghor-13jun2001-4.htm>

Western Victoria

The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) is appealing to the State Government and opposition to take the politics out of the Marine National Parks debate. The Marine Parks bill looks like it will be withdrawn by the Government today because of a stalemate over fishing bans and compensation provisions. Both sides are accusing the other of using the issue for political gain. VNPA director Amanda Martin says the 22 proposed parks and no fishing zones along Victoria's coast must go ahead.

"If we don't get to that point, then it really is a tragic day for the environment," she said. "We will look back, we will not be remembered by future generations for this political barney, we will be remembered for a world class system of Marine National Parks and I hope what politicians today remember." Meanwhile, the Liberal Opposition says the Government is in disarray on how to handle the

legislative process for the introduction of the proposed Marine National Parks. Shadow Minister for Natural Resources, Philip Davis, says his party is not opposed to the Marine Parks in principle.

But he says it remains opposed to the present legislation, while fails to address the issue of compensation for those affected by the establishment of the parks. "The Government has had plenty of time to come through with proposals that would deal with the essential concern that has been raised by fishermen throughout, which is that there needs to be some equity in this, and the Government has not provided for it," he said.

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VIC GOVT SHELVES MARINE NATIONAL PARKS PLAN

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/state/vic/metvic-13jun2001-17.htm>

Victoria

The creation of marine national parks in Victoria is off the agenda for the time being. The State Government has followed through with its threat to withdraw its marine parks bill. The Government gave the Liberal Party until midday AEST to support the bill unamended. But the Opposition would not drop its proposed changes to allow fishers to seek compensation through the courts. Rather than accept the amendment, the Government has shelved the bill - Premier Steve Bracks not wanting to expose taxpayers to potential multi-million dollar compensation claims. The Opposition has accused the Government of having disregard for the environment, but Mr Bracks insists he remains committed to marine national parks. "But we will take advice on what form that can take, whether we look at case by case...certain areas in discussion with the recreational and commercial fishing industries and the environmental groups in this state," he said.

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VIC GOVT MOVES MOTION TO WITHDRAW MARINE PARKS BILL

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/state/vic/metvic-13jun2001-15.htm>

Victoria

The Victorian Government has followed through with its threat to withdraw its Marine national parks bill. Environment and Conservation Minister Sherryl Garbutt has moved a motion in Parliament to scrap the legislation. The Government said it would rather shelve the legislation than accept changes proposed by the Liberal Party to allow fishers to seek compensation through the courts. Both sides have accused each other of hypocrisy and disregard for the environment, while National Party leader Peter Ryan says fishers have been left in limbo. "Commercial fishers in Victoria are left in the unfortunate circumstance of probably having to face up to this in time to come, similarly with recreational fishers, and it is a most unfortunate state of affairs produced entirely by this Government," he said.

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MARINE PARKS SPARK PROTEST

http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5478,2047024%255E2862,00.html

VICTORIA

By REGINA TITELIUS, environment reporter **28may01**

MORE than 5000 commercial and recreational fishers are expected to protest at Parliament House tomorrow against the establishment of marine parks.

Victoria's 700 licensed commercial fishers and thousands of recreational fishers are outraged the Bill to set up 12 marine parks will create no-fishing zones, locking them out of vital areas. Rally organisers say there has been a groundswell of dissent in communities where no-take parks will cause hardship.

One of the rally organisers, John McDougall, said the Marine Park Bill was political window dressing and was not addressing the real threats to habitats. Mr McDougall, a recreational fisher from the Phillip Island region, said fishers supported 10 sanctuaries as outlined in the Bill. But he said setting up 12 no-take parks was taking it too far and was not backed by sufficient scientific studies.

There also was anger over the Bill's inclusion of a Section 85 provision that effectively blocked rights to compensation. He said there should be a moratorium to determine the real economic impact and environmental value of parks. "We respect the global trend towards biodiversity and if, after a moratorium, it's shown that there is justification for closing these areas, we'll support that," he said.

Mr McDougall said while the parks accounted for only 5.2 per cent of coastline,

94.8 per cent of coast was not open to fishing. "Because much of the coast is inaccessible or not viable, we have access or use of only 20 to 30 per cent of it," he said. Seafood Industry Victoria executive director Ross Hodge said the park areas accounted for very productive fishing areas, particularly for abalone and crayfish. "The percentage of park area is not equal to the percentage loss of fish stock . . . we're losing a lot more,"

Mr Hodge said. He said the parks would cost the industry \$14 million a year in direct loss of

resources and \$60 million in lost capital investment. He said the offer of \$1.2 million for industry assistance was insulting. Mr McDougall said the report, on which the Government's Bill was based, said multiple use would lead to essentially similar outcomes to the system of no-take

parks. "If they have the same outcome, why put commercial fishers through this trauma?" he said. "We're not against marine parks, we're conservationists, but these parks should allow multiple use."

Mr McDougall, said there were many other concerns for marine health including infestations of exotic marine pests such as the Northern Pacific sea star, Japanese kelp and giant sea worm. There also were major threats from sewage outlets and land degradation causing phosphates to wash into oceans. "It's these issues that are destroying our marine environment," he said. "Fishing practices don't impact on sustainability. "We could lock up the entire length of the coast but if we don't address these issues, then it's all for nothing."

SEAFOOD BODY CALLS PROTEST OVER PARKS

<http://www.theage.com.au/business/2001/05/28/FFXHUWZO7NC.html>

Victoria

By JOHN ROUW, Monday 28 May 2001

The State Government's move to reserve 5 per cent of Victoria's coast as "no-take" marine parks has led a peak fisheries body to call for the industry to take to the Melbourne streets tomorrow in protest.

With the front pages and editorials of a number of country newspapers expressing regional anger at the parks decision, fishing industry body Seafood Industry Victoria has called on communities from around Victoria they say will be affected by the decision to march on Parliament. The parks would be "a crippling seachange that will lead to job losses and regional community decay", said SIV executive director Ross Hodge.

SIV has said it is not against the concept of marine parks, but - describing some of the protected areas as "some of Victoria's best fishing grounds" - has claimed "the loss of productive and sustainable resource is exorbitant". The minister responsible for the decision, Sherryl Garbutt, has argued the seafood industry "may well become the parks' biggest beneficiaries" as they would underpin the sustainability of Victoria's fisheries by protecting breeding areas - an argument dismissed as "outrageous" by SIV.

Responding late last week as public campaigns against the parks gathered momentum, Ms Garbutt said the parks plan and associated industry assistance constituted "a fair and balanced outcome for commercial fishers while offering a high level of protection to Victoria's precious marine environment". Groups such as SIV and the Western Abalone Divers Association have expressed concern that the government has moved to stop parties feeling aggrieved by the parks decision seeking compensation in Victorian courts. Ms Garbutt has addressed the so-called section 85 block, in part by saying the government had made major concessions to industry by abandoning the Cape Howe park, by reducing the size of the Corner Inlet and Twelve Apostles parks, and allowing fishing to continue at Discovery Bay, the Twelve Apostles, Corner Inlet and Point Cook until July 1, 2003.

The government has said there will also be increased enforcement to stop the poaching the industry claims will be rife, and technical assistance for industry realignment.

"In view of the assistance measures to the fishing industry and the concessions made on the park boundaries, the government considers there will be no further compensation through legal processes," the minister declared in a statement.

OUR POLITICIANS ALL AT SEA

http://www.theage.com.au/education/home/in_the_news/2001/06/15/FFXW96EUYNC.html

By PETER GARRETT, Friday 15 June, 2001

In the wake of the State Government's failure to muster bipartisan support for Victoria's world-class marine parks plan, it seems our politicians are in mourning. They are not alone.

Premier Steve Bracks has described the failure as "a sad day for the environment", while Opposition Leader Denis Napthine has called it "a tragedy" and "a missed opportunity".

The reality, of course, is that the tears being shed today are as much from frustration as they are for the environment and, in the case of the opposition, are a sign of gratitude for an opportunity to score political points in parliament.

Although the government must take responsibility for inadequately preparing the ground for the Marine Park Bill, its withdrawal owes much to the grandstanding of the opposition.

The real tragedy, of course, is that our politicians have placed a piece of political theatre and point-scoring ahead of the health and longevity of Victoria's fishing grounds and its unique marine habitats.

The Australian Conservation Foundation has supported the Victorian National Parks Association's marathon efforts to establish "no take" marine national parks in Victoria because they are integral to the protection of the state's magnificent and unique marine life.

There is no doubt marine national parks are also vital to the long-term survival of our coastal communities. The benefits of these parks cannot be underestimated. Protecting our natural assets makes areas more attractive to visitors and improves the quality and quantity of commercially exploited marine species.

The spin-offs are clear - more fish, more tourists and genuinely sustainable communities. The bill's withdrawal was a direct blow to these communities.

Due to the isolation of this region for more than 65 million years, Victoria's marine environment is considered one of the most important in the world. Many marine plants and animals, including 85 per cent of southern Australian fish species, are found nowhere else on earth. Despite their uniqueness and beauty, less than 0.05 per cent of Victoria's coastal waters have so far been given full protection.

Recently, no less than 150 of the world's leading marine scientists concluded that there was compelling scientific evidence that marine parks and sanctuaries conserved biodiversity, fish and fisheries.

Across the world, in all climatic zones, "no take" marine parks exist. In the vast majority of cases, their introduction was initially opposed by commercial and recreational fishers and local communities. The same marine parks eventually received overwhelming local support after being allowed to work their magic on fish stocks and tourist numbers.

On October 24 last year, the final report of the Environment Conservation Council (ECC) was tabled in State

Parliament. Established by the Kennett government in 1997 to replace the Land Conservation Council, the ECC was asked to advise the Bracks Government on the preferred approach and priorities for the establishment of a representative system of marine parks in Victoria.

After exhaustive and painstaking consultation and research, the report recommended 13 marine national parks and 11 marine sanctuaries for Victoria's coastal waters.

The proposed parks cover 62,245 hectares, about 6.2 per cent of coastal waters. The sanctuaries cover 891 hectares, with an additional 18 special management areas of 6958 hectares.

After Wednesday's events in parliament, this hugely important initiative is in limbo. What is needed to end the political impasse and to achieve the marine park system our politicians seemingly support is an urgent compromise on the transition arrangements for fishers allegedly harmed by the creation of the new parks.

If the ECC and State Government are right, then the money already allocated for this transition should be adequate. But to show good faith, the government should give a commitment to provide additional funding if necessary.

As former premier Jeff Kennett did for the scallop fishers of Port Phillip in 1996, an independent taskforce should be established where fishers can argue a case to substantiate their losses.

The opposition, without prevarication, should endorse this process.

If the opposition support for marine national parks is genuine, it will negotiate in good faith with the government, mindful that parliament has already received the clearest recommendations possible from the ECC to support marine national parks.

This week our state politicians had an opportunity to become world leaders in marine conservation. They failed. The community and the environment deserve better.

By the time parliament resumes for the August session, Victorians have a right to expect genuine leadership that puts the broader interests of the community and its natural environment first.

Peter Garrett is president of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

MARINE NATIONAL PARKS ARE GOOD FOR ALL - LETTER TO EDITOR GEELONG ADVERTISER 9-2-01

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the letter from Geoff Wilson titled "Poachers Target Marine Parks" in which he makes a number of observations regarding my letter of the previous week.(GA 25/10). I remain disappointed that Geoff, with all of his knowledge about fishing cannot appreciate why Marine National Parks are good for everyone, including fishers, and be working for their establishment. I would like to consider each of the arguments he presented in turn.

Geoff argues that Marine National Parks will be come a magnet for poachers and because of this we should not support them. This is a nonsense. Geoff believes that if fishers are not present in the proposed Marine National Parks then the areas will be stripped of marine life. Does Geoff also think we should abandon speed laws on country roads because no police are likely to be around? How many poachers have been caught recently by recreational fishers in boats? Are our land based National Parks rife with poachers?

Most of the community are responsible with regards to fishing and use of the coast. If more efforts were directed at creating greater awareness of the importance of looking after the whole system, and valuing what they have, the community could provide its own forms of protection against poaching, something that I am sure Geoff would support.

Geoff questions that "Fish Need Homes Too" arguing that most species important to recreational fishers are highly migratory, while those that remain he described as of little value to recreational fishers. While this may be true for adult fish, many sought after fish species have an absolute requirement for the right habitat as juveniles. One of the species he lists , King George Whiting, has been proven to have a dependence on seagrass habitat in the first two years of life - no seagrass - no homes - no whiting. Marine National Parks can provide for higher recruitment of juvenile fish, and, when they move out of the Parks, increased catches for fishers. With regard to migratory adult species, what is the problem with having some protected areas if the fish sought move through and out of these areas?

Geoff also puts a lot of effort into suggestions that Marine National Parks are anti-fishing - garbage!! Argument for the creation of Marine Parks for Victoria as proposed by the ECC is not about stopping recreational fishing. I also dangle the odd line and would be most concerned if the issue was about stopping recreational fishing. FACT: The current proposals for Marine National Parks will result in 94% of the Victorian coast open to recreational fishers. Most fishers would recognise that that is nearly the whole lot and could perhaps wonder if the proposed protected areas should be greater .

Why is fishing (hunting fish) any different to using any other natural resource? We have National Parks on land in which we don't cut trees for timber - because these areas are important in their role in protecting whole communities of plants and animals. We value their integrity.

As fish are part of our "commons", that is something that as a resource belongs to the whole community, the opportunity to collect them is most certainly a privilage because it is not something that all can enjoy. Access to a boat and the right gear, and of course a license, are the

things that allow us this privilege. As fishers we are privileged users of the commons and should be first to respect the integrity of the systems that we are using and allow some parts of it to remain whole.

In the marine environment this includes establishing some no take areas. With the establishment of a number of areas along the coast which would have levels of protection equivalent to those of National Parks on the land, all Victorians, including recreational and commercial fishers, and the environment stand to benefit. These proposed areas which would take the area of Victoria's coast fully protected from the absurd 0.05% as it is at present (compared to 15% of our land environments) to about 6%. Our future generations have a right to inherit the some diversity of our unique marine life as we enjoy it. Marine National Parks provide a lot more than homes for fish species. Marine National Parks are insurance for the future.

The Environment Conservation Council (ECC) are to be congratulated in their proposals to establish Marine National Parks. Readers are encouraged to make a submission to the ECC by the 26th February to make their views on the proposed Parks known. If you care at all about the coast, enjoy the opportunities it has to offer for recreational and commercial activities such as fishing, and value some small form of insurance then please write in support of the current proposals.

Mark Rodrigue
President, Marine Education Society of Australasia
Geelong