



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:  
TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS**

**Fisheries**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 12 September 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Wednesday, 12 September 2012</p> <p><b>Page</b> 51</p> <p><b>Questioner</b></p> <p><b>Speaker</b> Urquhart, Sen Anne</p>	<p><b>Source</b> Senate</p> <p><b>Proof</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Responder</b></p> <p><b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Senator URQUHART** (Tasmania) (15:20): I rise to take note of answers from Minister Ludwig, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, to questions on the government's decision to seek to extend the legal powers of the environment minister over the supertrawler FV *Abel Tasman*, formerly the FV *Mar giris*, fishing in Australian waters. This action demonstrates that this government is a government that listens to community concerns and is respectful of science. There has been immense public interest in this. People have seen the dangers if something goes wrong, whether they be people with environmental concerns or the huge recreational fishing community that wants to make sure their fish stocks remain in place. There has not been a strong public campaign from the proponents of the supertrawler or from other members of the fishing industry who are now saying that they support the supertrawler.

Throughout this whole debate I have been firm in my stance that we need to focus on the facts. We need to try and move beyond comments based solely on emotion. The proposed delay of up to two years will allow for further scientific research to be undertaken. With my Tasmanian Labor colleagues, I took the concerns of recreational fishing and environmental groups to the responsible ministers. I am a strong supporter of both our commercial fishers and our recreational fishers and the contribution they make to our communities. These changes are needed to ensure continued confidence in the supplementary environmental protections that work with the strict fisheries controls. While our fisheries regulator is world leading, it is important that the community has confidence in the environmental controls which regulate it. This comprehensive review of the fisheries management system will ensure it is in line with community expectations, socioeconomic concerns and environmental measures. We need to remove the emotion and concentrate on the facts. Our world-leading fisheries management system was established under the Hawke government in 1991 and is a proud Labor legacy. However, times change and after 20 years it is due for a refresh. We need to be certain about the system, and after 20 years, we need a fresh look. This will give our system and our fishers the confidence they need to continue to be some of the most productive, profitable and sustainable in the world. It will also lead to increased

community confidence in Australia's world-leading fisheries management system.

There have been strong legitimate community concerns about the potential operation of the vessel, particularly relating to its local impacts. That is why Mr Sid Sidebottom, the member for Braddon, organised and convened a forum of environmental and recreational fishing representatives to air these concerns directly with Seafish Tasmania. I congratulate Mr Sidebottom on this initiative, which got everyone together to logically work through people's legitimate concerns. Unfortunately, the conversations between the recreational fishing, environmental groups and Seafish Tasmania were unsuccessful in achieving an agreed resolution. Therefore the government has decided to take action to delay fishing by supertrawlers.

The amendments proposed by Minister Burke will incorporate a new chapter into the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to allow the environment minister to prohibit a declared fishing activity while an independent expert panel undertakes an assessment of the potential environmental, social or economic impacts of the activity. The provisions would only be activated if the environment minister and the fisheries minister agree that there is uncertainty about the environmental, social or economic impacts of the identified fishing activity, and that further assessment is required. A final declaration would provide for prohibition of the fishing activity for no more than 24 months. Prior to making a final declaration, the environment minister would be required to consult with fishing concession holders who may be detrimentally affected by the prohibition of the declared fishing activity over an extended period. An interim declaration will prohibit the activity for no more than 60 days while the environment minister undertakes this consultation. This ensures procedural fairness for affected fishing operators.

The expert panel would need to undertake the assessment against terms of reference, and their report, once made available to the environment minister, would have to be tabled in the parliament. This amendment to the act is important because it will restore confidence in our fisheries management system. We have one of the best managed fisheries in

the world and we will continue to have that. There have been many countries around the world that wanted to take a highly precautionary approach to this particular vessel. Australia is not alone in this. The government has recently established that we were not able to be as cautious under current law as we wanted to be. We need to remove the emotion and concentrate on the facts.  
*(Time expired)*