



Dr Christopher Back
Liberal Senator for Western Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 3 August 2010.

Greens bid for vast fishing bans makes ALP/Greens' threat to W.A. coast worse

The announcement by Bob Brown that the Greens would seek massive fishing closures around the Western Australian coastline has compounded the already major threat to commercial and recreational fishers posed by existing Labor policy, WA Senator Chris Back said today.

Senator Back said the Greens want closures covering of up to 30% of Australia's marine reserves. Under their policy, they will demand the States commit to the same process in waters under State control.

With the Greens attempting to guarantee control of the Senate after a recent preference deal with Labor, Senator Back said big fishing closures now seemed a certainty – if Labor wins the August 21 election.

“Labor's Environment Minister Peter Garrett went fishing for Green preferences using fishers and tourism operators as bait, showing a clear green bias in his handling of Labor's plan for marine parks,” Senator Back said.

“That earned massive distrust of his motives and intent, compounded by his failure to properly consult with the community.”

“Now Labor has got the Green support it was chasing, Bob Brown will be able to name his price, and this, as far as fishermen and tourism operators are concerned, will obviously be very high indeed.”

Senator Back said locking away 30% of marine parks as “no catch” zones, with no reference to scientific validation or compensation for displaced operators, would decimate Australia's professional fishing industry and massively reduce opportunities for recreational fishers and offshore tourism.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott launched the Coalition's Marine Protected Areas policy in Mackay last week.

He promised an immediate halt to Labor's marine park planning pending restructuring of the consultation process to ensure a greater say for fishers.

Senator Back said the Liberals support marine park planning but not through this process. It was the Coalition Government which introduced the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, setting the benchmark in this area.

"A vote for Labor is a vote for the Labor/Green alliance, and a vote for vast fishing closures," he said. "It will devastate two important WA industries for no gain."

"A vote for the Coalition is a vote to bring some sanity and fairness back into the whole question."

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