



Media Release

Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc

PO Box 630 Narrabeen NSW 2101
aag@sponge.org

Media Release: 23rd October 2006.

For immediate release: **Concerns over political expediency of marine parks**

In answer to a question from independent Pittwater MP Alex McTaggart, Environment Minister Bob Debus stated that "the Government has no plans at all to create a marine park in the Hawkesbury bioregion" (Hansard 28/09/2006, p48). Mr. Phil Ingram, AAG President, responded "Although there are no such plans in the term of the current Government, will Mr Debus make the same statement if Labor returns to Government following the elections due in March 2007?" Mr Ingram goes on to say: "There are currently six marine parks along the NSW coastline, yet one has to wonder why marine parks are not being setup in the Hawkesbury and Twofold Bay bioregions, and why Bateman's Bay received two marine parks? Of these 6 marine parks the only Labor seat affected is Pt Stephens, with the rest being in Coalition held electorates."

Minister Debus claims for the Hawkesbury bioregion "there is already a high degree of conservation of the marine environment" with the existing 27 marine reserves. AAG wonders if it also has to do with the 5 Labor held seats between the Shoalhaven and Cronulla and concerns of voter backlash. Mr Ingram asks "If the aquatic and marine reserves already present in the Hawkesbury bioshelf provide a high degree of conservation of the marine environment, then why not use a similar model along the NSW coast rather than the controversial sanctuary zones which are based on an extreme implementation of the precautionary principal rather than any scientific data?"

Likewise, in Twofold Bay, Labor unexpectedly won the seat of Monaro in the 2002 elections, and Liberal won the normally Labor held seat of South Coast. Concerns of voter backlash if a marine park was sited in the Twofold Bay bioregion? Surely Labor would like to hold Monaro and win back South Coast in the 2007 election?

The Coalition needs to gain 16 seats to win Government, but a more likely result is Labor losing about 8 seats giving Independents the balance of power. Couple this with a previous report in the national press by Sharri Markson that confidential Labor party notes show the NSW Greens negotiating preference deals with the ALP over policy issues that include marine parks, AAG has concerns that the creation, siting and zoning of marine parks are based more on political expediency rather than the protection of the marine environment.

Ends