



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**REGULATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS**

**Small Pelagic Fishery Total Allowable  
Catch (Quota Species) Determination 2012**

**Disallowance**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 22 August 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 22 August 2012  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Brown, Sen Carol

**Source** Senate  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Senator CAROL BROWN** (Tasmania—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (18:14): A few months ago Seafish Tasmania announced that they would be bringing the super trawler *FV Margiris* into Australian waters and the super trawler would seek to fish there. The super trawler is proposed to be based out of Devonport in Tasmania and has caused deep community concern throughout our state.

We have never had a factory ship super trawler fish in Australian waters before. Tasmanians are concerned about the environmental impact that the *Margiris* will have on our fish stocks now and for generations to come. The super trawler, as I understand it, is unlike anything that has ever operated in Australian waters. The *Margiris* is a 142-metre midwater trawler and weighs nearly 10,000 tonnes. It can process over 250 tonnes of fish a day. It has a cargo capacity of 6,200 tonnes. It is being brought here by Seafish Tasmania, which has secured an 18,000-tonne quota for jack mackerel, blue mackerel and redbait—key prey fish which help to sustain populations of the larger animals like southern bluefin tuna, fur seals, dolphins and other marine animals and birds. The *Margiris* will tow a 300-metre-long net through the waters above the bottom of the ocean. The catch will be frozen whole and most, as I understand it, will then be exported to West Africa.

So what has happened? In response to community concern the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Ludwig, established a working group, inviting ENGOs, recreational fishing groups and Seafish Tasmania to be part of a group to try to reach an agreement on the super trawler. Of course, the ENGOs did not participate in the working group. The minister established the working group as a means of bringing the company and the community together on a set of additional voluntary measures regarding the operation of the *FV Margiris*. No outcome was reached and, on exiting the working group process, TARFish CEO Mark Nikolai issued a media statement. I will read some of that:

Reviewing the Small Pelagic Fishery science has heightened our concerns and raised more questions without answers.

Mr Nikolai went on to say:

Recreational fishers call on Minister Ludwig to not allow industrial scale fishing operations to occur in the Small Pelagic Fishery and address the significant public concerns surrounding the risks of local area depletion on fish stocks.

I attended a number of rallies in Hobart in July and August with Senator Lin Thorp which were organised by Tyson Clements, Martin Haley and Neil Clark. Rallies were held around the state. At the rallies we attended we heard the concerns of the recreational fishers and the local community. Many of the main issues were centred around spatial management, the science and, indeed, the science as it relates to the vessel—the size of the trawler and the impact this will have on the local ecosystem. Recreational fishers, game fishers, tuna fishers, tourism operators and conservation groups have been very active and vocal in calling for sound spatial management to ensure that our fishing stocks are a resource that is not just for ourselves but also for our children and our children's children.

We also need to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on our local ecosystems. Indeed, there are concerns regarding the science and how it relates if the volumes are being taken by one large vessel. This super trawler is a size we have never seen before and it throws up a number of questions that I believe were not thought of when the science was last done. It is also worth noting that, due to the important place small fish such as redbait and jack mackerel have in the food chain, there are concerns about the impact on local ecosystems that could occur through overfishing of these species.

At the rally in Hobart Senator Lin Thorp and I accepted a petition on behalf of Julie Collins, the member for Franklin. We also raised the concerns. After that meeting and at the rally we indicated quite clearly to the people who attended the rally that we would go back to Minister Ludwig—indeed, to the Prime Minister's office—and raise the concerns that were given to us at those rallies and at meetings that we held privately with TARFish and other fishing groups.

Last week I was among a group of parliamentarians—Senator Whish-Wilson was there as well—on the Parliament House lawns to view a petition of 35,000 signatures. It was a massive petition. This petition

was later presented to Minister Ludwig and has been tabled in the Senate. The size of this petition again highlights the enormous community concern about the FV *Margiris* across Australia. Minister Julie Collins, the member for Franklin, Lin Thorp and I have also asked the federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Mr Tony Burke, to intervene on the super trawler on environmental grounds. Minister Burke has himself stated his concerns regarding the FV *Margiris* and highlighted that super trawlers pose new issues for fishery management.

I believe we must see this issue resolved quickly. I am unconvinced of the safeguards that are in place to ensure our local ecosystems are not impacted by the super trawler. Consequently, I am of the view that the FV *Margiris* should not be here. Senator Whish-Wilson, I know, has genuine concerns about the long-term future of the Tasmanian fisheries. What we—Minister Collins, Senator Thorp and other members of the caucus—have been doing is using avenues available to us to address the valid concerns of our community that we share to deal with the super trawler now and, I hope, into the future.

So, while a disallowance motion is one tactic that can be used, I believe this motion is really nothing more than a gesture, but an empty gesture because it will not succeed and does nothing to address the issues we are facing. It does not address the issues in the long term that we are currently facing. Senator Whish-Wilson even talked in his own motion about the quota being reissued and the like. Anyway, I believe that the action that Senator Thorp, Minister Collins and others have taken in briefing the Prime Minister's office about the real concerns of the recreational fishers and the Tasmanian community, and working with the appropriate ministers to raise these concerns and awareness of the issues, is the best way to resolve this issue. Do I want the super trawler here? No, I do not. Do I think this motion is the best way to proceed? No, I do not.