

Dean Wells MP - Ideas and action

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Environmental Preservation

Canal developments have always been divisive. Offering a lifestyle yearned for by many, they were seen as environmental vandalism by environmentalists, and hated by members of the public who didn't want to see public beaches privatized. Successive Environment Ministers pushed for a Coastal Plan and Coastal Act that would ban canal developments, but over a decade all attempts at achieving consensus foundered on the strident opposition of the developers, who were not prepared to sign up for legislation based on the proposition that they were vandals. When Wells became Environment Minister he solved the problem by redescribing the solution. He instructed his department to draft legislation that did not ban canal estates but permitted them – but only on the effectively impossible condition that it could be demonstrated they would not do environmental harm. The “vandal” insult removed (and therefore a public relations disaster averted) the developers fell into line, the Coastal Plan and Act were passed, and of course Environment Minister Wells never had any new canal estate development applications presented to him. He used the following rhetoric to introduce the Bill.

Our beaches, shorelines, and coasts are not just tourist attractions. These are not just things of economic value. These are things that are part of the spirit of Australia and part of our national soul. They are part of the life and experience of our families. We need to protect our shoreline and we need to do so not just for next Sunday afternoon, the Christmas holiday or the next time we go to the beach. We need to do so for the ages and the generations.

This country and coastline of ours is unique. We live in an area of maximum biodiversity. Our coastline, including the Great Barrier Reef and the rainforest that comes down to the Great Barrier Reef on part of our coast, are areas of maximum biodiversity. ... They make us stand out. They make us unique. Through this legislation we are protecting this uniqueness.

What we are doing here today is the culmination of the work of 10 years. What we are doing here

today is giving a voice to the consultation that has been going on for 10 years. There has finally been synthesized a consensus that goes from the greens right across to the developers, so much so, that some of the developers have become quite green in the process.

...When we vote for this piece of legislation, we will be voting not only for next Sunday afternoon but also for the lifestyle and future of our children, our children's children and our children's children's children.

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