

Kiwi Party congratulates Jim Anderton for Great Barrier decision.

The Kiwi Party Press Release

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Kiwi Party leader Larry Baldock today congratulated the Minister of Fisheries Jim Anderton for his decision to reject the application for the 495 square kilometre Great Barrier Marine Reserve.

“I am personally overjoyed at this decision because of the time and effort I spent opposing the application.

It was always clear to me that the reserve did not have the support of the residents of the Island, local hapu, Ngati Rehua, the Ngatiwai Iwi, nor the large number of people in the recreational fishing community.

During a period of negotiation with the former Minister of Fisheries, David Benson-Pope I committed to assisting with passing of some difficult legislation and at the same time was able to receive a commitment that the (MRB) Marine Reserves Bill, the darling of Jeannette Fitzsimons, would be shelved at least until after the 2005 elections.

Had it proceeded it would have been yet another piece of legislation passed in the face of major objections by Maori and the Recreational fishing community.

If I had not put a stop to the MRB the opponents of this reserve would have lost their battle because the new bill intended to remove the need for concurrent consent on any marine reserve, and would have left the decision entirely with the Minister of Conservation. At the time that was Chris Carter, whose track record revealed a frequent failure to consider the interests of New Zealanders who did not share his ideological commitment to locking up large areas of the marine environment for no sensible reasons.

“It is interesting however to see that the reasons Jim Anderton gives for declining the application are in fact the kind of sensible considerations the Minister of Conservation should have arrived at,” said the Kiwi Party leader.

In giving his reasons the Minister has said, “I do not believe the interests of the public would be best served by creating such a large no-take marine reserve in this relatively remote area where access to the sea is a large part of life on the Island.

Great Barrier Island is isolated with few shops and limited services. Many residents rely on the sea for food. Many also rely on fishing-related tourism, either directly or indirectly.

While further marine protection could benefit eco-tourism in the area, a large no-take marine reserve may have negative effects on the local lifestyle and economy. I also carefully considered the effects on recreational and commercial fishers who use the area.”

“The vast majority of submissions on the application made exactly the same points and it is very satisfying that at last they have been listened to”, said Larry Baldock.

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