

Ministerial Statement



The Hon Paul Caica MP
Minister for Sustainability,
Environment and Conservation
Minister for Water and
the River Murray
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4 September, 2012

FV MARGIRIS

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make a ministerial statement.

Today, the South Australian Government has written to the Federal Minister for Fisheries, the Honourable Senator Joe Ludwig, urging the Commonwealth Government to not allow the *FV Margiris* to operate in the Small Pelagic Fishery.

As Members would be aware, the arrival of *FV Margiris* in South Australian waters late last week has attracted a great deal of controversy.

The South Australian Government understands that there is widespread concern among commercial and recreational fishers, conservation groups and local communities about the proposed operation of this vessel, and its potential impact on local fisheries and marine life, in particular in Commonwealth waters adjacent to South Australia.

I want to assure the South Australian community that this vessel does not have permission and will not be granted permission by the South Australian Government, to operate in South Australian waters.

I understand that the vessel is seeking to operate under a Commonwealth fishing permit in Commonwealth waters adjacent to South Australia, targeting jack mackerel, blue mackerel and

redbait in the Small Pelagic Fishery. Approval of this venture rests entirely with the Commonwealth government.

Madam Speaker, if the vessel is granted approval to operate in these areas - the Government would have serious concerns about the potential risks of the ship's operation to threatened, protected and endangered marine species, as well as localised depletion of small pelagic fisheries and potential impacts on fish species that are commercially important to this State.

In particular, significant concerns have been raised with the State Government about the potential for large quantities of sardine bycatch to occur. This would place in jeopardy the sustainable sardine fishery which makes a significant economic contribution to our state.

Of significant further concern is the potential for this vessel to damage the reputation of our State's premium, clean green seafood industry, which is highly valued and recognised across the world.

We understand that this is the largest fishing vessel to ever seek authority to operate in Australian waters. The nets are 300 metres in length and the vessel can process over 250 tonnes of fish in a single day. This ship has a cargo capacity of 6,200 tonnes making it effectively a fish-factory on water.

We acknowledge that the Federal Environment Minister, the Honourable Tony Burke, has recently announced new conditions on the management regime for the small pelagic fishery that requires the operators to take all reasonable steps to ensure that listed threatened species, listed migratory species, cetaceans and listed marine species are not killed or injured as a result of trawling operations.

However, Madam Speaker, these conditions are only interim and do not give any certainty to the South Australian community that our important marine life and seafood industry will not be impacted.

The Government is also aware of speculation that the operators of this vessel are considering setting up base in Port Lincoln and I can advise that the Government has not received any information to that effect. The Government would indeed be very concerned if that were the intent of the owners.

Madam Speaker, the presence of this immense trawler in our region highlights the importance of establishing marine parks to protect our marine environment and the unique life within it. And by better protecting our marine environment we are securing the future of our State's vital fishing industry.