Fisheries Bill (No. 2)

energy of the contract of the

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

PART 1—PRELIMINARY

Clause 1 sets out the purpose of the Bill.

Clause 2 provides for the Act to come into operation on a day or days to be proclaimed. Provisions (other than 36 (3) (y), 42 (3) and 42 (4)) not proclaimed within 24 months of receiving the Royal Assent automatically come into operation at the end of this period. Clauses 36 (3) (y), 42 (3) and 42 (4) are to come into operation on a day to be proclaimed. Until they are proclaimed, a licence is not required to angle in marine waters.

Clause 3 sets out the objectives of the Bill.

Clause 4 defines various terms and expressions used in the Bill, specifies that any measurements of fish fixed by the regulations are the minimum permissible measurements, and enables the regulations to specify conversion factors from processed weight to whole weight of fish.

Clause 5 defines the term "fish", and enables the Governor in Council to declare a taxon of aquatic invertebrate (as defined in clause 4) to be fish for the purposes of the Act. (An invertebrate is an animal without a backbone eg. a crustacean, mollusc, worm or insect.)

Clause 6 enables the Governor in Council to declare a taxon of fauna (except protected wildlife) to be fishing bait.

Clause 7 specifies how a "fishery" may be defined for the purposes of the Act.

Clause 8 defines "Victorian waters" and "waters" for the purposes of the Act.

Clause 9 binds the Crown, but does not make the Crown liable to be prosecuted for any offence.

Clause 10 (1) specifies that wild fish and other fauna and flora found in Victorian waters are the property of the Crown. Sub-clause 10 (2) specifies the circumstances in which ownership of wild fish and other flora and fauna passes to holders of specified licences or permits, or to other persons (where no licence or permit is required).

Clause 11 (1) provides that the Act applies to fish and other specified biota taken in Victorian waters, and to prescribed priority fish species and other specified biota whether or not taken in Victorian waters. Sub-clause 11 (2) provides that the Act does not apply to the unintentional taking or possession of fish or protected aquatic biota in specified circumstances.

PART 2—COMMONWEALTH AND STATE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES

Division 1—Commonwealth-State Management

With the exception of sub-clauses 13 (2), 13 (3), 14 (1) and minor drafting improvements, Division 1 re-enacts Part 1A of the Fisheries Act 1968, as amended by the

Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1994. These provisions mirror similar provisions in equivalent legislation of the Commonwealth and other States, and facilitate intergovernmental co-operation, including by the establishment and operation of joint authorities to manage fisheries. Sub-clause 13 (2) expressly authorises the Minister to enter into agreements with Commonwealth and State Ministers or authorities in carrying out the purposes of the Act. Sub-clause 13 (3) obliges and empowers the Secretary to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources ('the Secretary') to give effect to such agreements. Sub-clause 14 (2) requires any such agreement to be published in the Government Gazette for evidentiary purposes under clause 122 (1) (f).

Division 2—State-State Management

Clause 26 empowers the Minister to undertake any action necessary to ensure the co-operation of any other State in carrying out the purpose of the Act. Sub-clause 26 (2) expressly authorises the Minister to enter into agreements with a Minister of another State in carrying out the purposes of the Act. Sub-clause 26 (3) obliges and empowers the Secretary to give effect to such agreements.

Clause 27 empowers the Minister to exercise similar powers with respect to another State as he has with respect to the Commonwealth, and facilitates the establishment and operation of joint authorities with other States.

PART 3—MANAGEMENT PLANS

Clause 28 empowers the Minister to declare management plans for fisheries, noxious aquatic species and fisheries reserves. Sub-clause 28 (6) specifies the mandatory elements of all management plans, and sub-clause 28 (7) specifies some of the optional elements.

Clause 29 sets out the purpose and specific contents of management plans for fisheries.

Clause 30 sets out the specific contents of management plans for fisheries reserves.

Clause 31 sets out the specific contents of management plans for noxious aquatic species.

Clause 32 specifies the consultation processes before the declaration of management plans.

Clause 33 specifies the process for amending management plans.

Clause 34 sets out the duty of public authorities to consult the Secretary before taking action contrary to a declared management plan.

Clause 35 resolves inconsistencies between management plans and other specified instruments.

PART 4—REGULATION OF FISHERIES

Division 1—Fishery Licences

Clause 36 creates the necessary heads of power and flexibility for various fishery licences under the Act, including commercial fishing licences, access licences, fish

processing licences, aquaculture licences, recreational fishing licences and if necessary, commercial aquarium licences. Other classes of licences may also be prescribed under regulations made under clause 41. Sub-clause 36 (3) (y) provides for the possible extension of angling licences to marine waters. However, this cannot happen until the Minister has received and endorsed a report from the Fisheries Co-Management Council on a program for the introduction of such licences and the proposed expenditure of the resulting licence fee revenue [clause 42 (3)]. Sub-clauses 36 (4) and (5) provides for additional "per fish" penalties for offences with respect to prescribed priority species, such as abalone or rock lobster.

Clause 37 exempts persons under the age of 16 years from the requirement to hold a fishing licence for recreational purposes. It also enables the Governor in Council to exempt any activity, person or class of persons from the requirement to obtain a licence under clause 36. For example, with the possible exception of abalone, all retailers and restaurants might be exempted from sub-clauses 36 (3) (l), (m) and (n). All fishing equipment manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers might be exempted from sub-clauses 36 (3) (h) and (h). Commercial viewing aquariums below a specified size or displaying any taxa except specified taxa might be exempted from sub-clause 36 (3) (s) and so on.

Clause 38 specifies the mandatory characteristics of access licences, including the controlled activities to be authorised by access licences, their duration, and the circumstances in which access licences may be cancelled or renewed by the Secretary. Sub-clause 38 (6) defines a transferable fishery licence. Sub-clause 38 (7) specifies that transferable fishery licences become part of deceased estates, and the procedures for subsequent transfer to an eligible person.

Clause 39 specifies the mandatory characteristics of commercial fishing licence, including the controlled activities to be authorised by commercial fishing licences, their duration and their renewability. Sub-clause 39 (5) specifies that a commercial fishing licence endorsed to take abalone cannot be renewed unless it is endorsed on an abalone access licence at the time of renewal. Sub-clause 39 (6) specifies that a commercial fishing licence is not transferable.

Clause 40 specifies the controlled activities authorised by recreational fishing licences and aquaculture licences.

Clause 41 enables the Governor in Council to make regulations prescribing various characteristics of fishery licences, including the classes, durations, eligibility criteria, procedures, numbers, transferability, conditions, grounds for refusal, fees, definition and procedures for prescribed financial interests, minor offences, renewability and endorsement of licences under the Act.

Clause 42 specifies the procedures for the issue or refusal of fishery licences. Sub-clause 42 (3) provides that angling licences cannot be issued for marine waters until the Minister has received and endorsed a report from the Fisheries Co-management Council on a program for the introduction of such licences and the proposed expenditure of the resulting licence fee revenue [see sub-clause 36(3)(y)].

Clause 43 provides for licence conditions and endorsements, including offences and penalties for breach of licence conditions, and stays of Magistrates' Court decisions pending appeals to the County Court.

Clause 44 provides for the variation of licences, on the initiative of either the Secretary or the licence holder, for the purpose of ensuring consistency with subordinate instruments.

Clause 45 specifies the procedures for the transfer, deferral or refusal of the transfer of transferable fishery licences by the Secretary, on the application of the holder or a prescribed financial interest together with the proposed transferee.

Clause 46 specifies the procedures for the renewal, deferral or refusal to renew access licences, commercial fishing licences and any prescribed class of renewable fishery licence by the Secretary. Copies of any 'show cause notices' with respect to a licence must also be sent to any prescribed financial interests in the licence.

Clause 47 empowers the Secretary to suspend or cancel a fishery licence (other than an access licence, a commercial fishing licence or a licence with a prescribed duration of one year or less) in specified circumstances, subject to a 'show cause' procedure.

Clause 48 provides for the registration of prescribed financial interests in a fishery licence or boat, such as a 'mortgagee' or financial partner, to ensure that registered prescribed financial interests are consulted prior to the transfer of a licence and can apply to a court for recovery of equity in a forfeited boat.

Clause 49 provides for stays of cancellation of transferable access licences for 6 months, to enable the compulsory divestiture of the licence as an alternative.

Clause 50 specifies the procedures for registered prescribed financial interests to apply to a court for recovery of equity in a forfeited boat.

Division 2—Declared Fisheries

Clause 51 obliges the Minister to consult with the relevant consultative body (as defined in clause 4) before making, amending or revoking a declaration of a fishery.

Clause 52 provides for the Minister to declare a fishery to be one or more specified types of fisheries, according to the way it is to be managed. The normal purpose of such a declaration is to enable the Minister to give effect to a fishery management plan, by specifying nature and timing of the detailed management rules and procedures to be applied to the fishery. However, where necessary, declarations can be made in advance of a management plan.

Clause 53 provides for the declaration of a quota managed fishery (as defined in clause 4), and the rules and procedures applying to that fishery.

Clause 54 specifies the rules and procedures relating to individual quota.

Clause 55 provides for an offence and penalties for exceeding individual quota. This offence and penalties is an alternative, and not in addition to, the offence and penalties for breaching licence conditions under clause 43 and the demerit points system under clause 128.

Clause 56 provides for the declaration of an input managed fishery (as defined in clause 4), and the rules and procedures applying to that fishery.

Clause 57 provides for the declaration of a developing fishery (as defined in clause 4), and the rules and procedures applying to that fishery. (A developing fishery will generally

be a new fishery, to be managed in a prudent manner in which the issue of renewable licences would be premature or otherwise inappropriate.)

Clause 58 provides for developing fishery permits.

Clause 59 provides for offences in relation to developing fisheries.

Clause 60 provides for the declaration of an export fishery (as defined in clause 4), and the rules and procedures applying to that fishery.

Clause 61 provides for the declaration of an adjusting fishery (as defined in clause 4), and the rules and procedures applying to that fishery. Where a licence in an adjusting fishery is cancelled under this section, compensation is payable in accordance with the specified procedures.

Clause 62 provides for the declaration of a specially managed fishery (as defined in clause 4), and the rules and procedures applying to that fishery. This provision enables the application of special rules and procedures to a particular fishery, where the other types of declarations would not be appropriate.

Division 3—Fishing Closures and Restrictions

Clause 63 provides for the closure of a fishery for a specified period, usually to ensure the sustainability of the resource by protecting declining fish stocks.

Clause 64 provides for emergency fishing closures, to immediately protect a fishery, the fishing industry or consumers of fish. An example might be the sudden discovery of a toxic algal bloom in the waters of a fishery. Emergency fishing closures must be notified to the public in various ways [sub-clause (6)]. Such closures last for a maximum of 7 days, which may be necessary to allow time for the making of a regulation or fisheries notice in a prolonged situation.

Clause 65 provides a statutory defence to the offence provisions relating to emergency fishing closures, as there is a risk that some fisheries might not be aware of the closure.

Clause 66 provides that fishing closures prevail over instruments made under this Act.

Clause 67 provides for offences in relation to size and bag limits, for both commercial and recreational licences.

Clause 68 provides for additional penalties for offences relating to size and bag limits, including 'per fish' penalties and penalties for subsequent offences.

PART 5—PROTECTION OF FISHERIES

Division 1—Protected Aquatic Biota

Clause 69 provides for the declaration of protected aquatic biota. The purpose of this provision is to enable the protection of taxa (plural of taxon) or communities of aquatic flora and or fauna. An example might be a need to protect certain seagrass beds, which are the nursery grounds for the King George Whiting. Sub-clause (2) avoids duplication of other Acts. Sub-clause (3) provides automatic protection of fish or aquatic invertebrates (as defined in clause 4) listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

Clause 70 sets out provisions applying to declarations of protected aquatic biota.

Clause 71 provides for offences in relation to protected aquatic biota, with an exemption for persons authorised under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

Clause 72 provides for the issue protected aquatic biota permits authorising specified activities in relation to protected aquatic biota. The maximum term of a protected aquatic biota permit is 12 months. Sub-clauses (5) and (6) specify the procedures for the revocation of permits by the Secretary.

Clause 73 provides for exemptions from the requirement to hold protected aquatic biota permits. The purpose of this clause is to authorise activities where a requirement to obtain a permit is unnecessary or unreasonable, and to ensure that no person will be required to obtain more than one permit for the same activity.

Division 2—Noxious Aquatic Species

Division 2 is similar to those provisions of the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 which apply to terrestrial pest plants and animals.

Clause 74 sets out the duties of the Secretary in relation to noxious aquatic species.

Clause 75 provides for the declaration of noxious aquatic species, including the classification of noxious aquatic species into four categories similar to those in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

Clause 76 provides for the declaration of prohibited noxious aquatic species, which it will be an offence to bring into Victoria or keep etc. An example might be dangerous fish species such as Piranhas.

Clause 77 provides for the declaration of controlled noxious aquatic species, which may be permitted to be kept under high security conditions for management, research or scientific purposes only.

Clause 78 provides for the declaration of regulated noxious aquatic species, which may be permitted to be kept in approved places for specified purposes only.

Clause 79 provides for the declaration of established noxious aquatic species, which may be permitted to be kept for unspecified purposes. An example might be European Carp.

Clause 80 provides for further penalties, including daily penalties and recovery of costs.

Clause 81 specifies rules and procedures for the issue or refusal of noxious aquatic species permits.

Clause 82 provides for the revocation of noxious aquatic species permits.

Clause 83 provides for exemptions from the requirement to obtain permits. An example might be certain approved coarse fishing competitions.

Clause 84 creates an offence for failure to notify the Secretary of the possession of noxious aquatic species.

Clause 85 provides for the seizure and removal of noxious aquatic species.

Clause 86 provides for the prevention of the spread of noxious aquatic species.

Clause 87 provides that no penalty applies to the taking of an organism of a noxious aquatic species if a person immediately kills the organism.

Division 3—Fisheries Reserves

Clause 88 provides for the declaration of reserves for fisheries purposes, including consultation requirements. Sub-clause (5) saves marine reserves proclaimed under the **Fisheries Act 1968** until further decisions on the future of these reserves are made.

Clause 89 specifies various provisions relating to fisheries reserves, including offence provisions.

PART 6—CO-MANAGEMENT

Clause 90 establishes the Fisheries Co-Management Council, and specifies its membership and procedures. In recommending appointments to the Council, the Minister must consult relevant recognised peak bodies.

Clause 91 specifies the functions of the Fisheries Co-Management Council.

Clause 92 requires the Fisheries Co-Management Council to annually report on the carrying out of its functions and on the operation of the Act. The Minister must table this report in each House of Parliament.

Clause 93 facilitates the establishment of fishery committees by the Minister, and specifies their membership and procedures. In making appointments to a fishery committee, the Minister must consult relevant recognised peak bodies.

Clause 94 specifies the functions of fishery committees.

Clause 95 obliges the Minister to declare recognised peak bodies within 12 months of the commencement of this section.

Clause 96 facilitates the establishment of fishery bodies corporate and the recognition of relevant existing fishery associations.

Clause 97 provides for the preparation of draft codes of fishing practice by the Fisheries Co-Management Council in consultation with other specified bodies.

Clause 98 specifies the matters which may be included in a code of fishing practice.

Clause 99 specifies the procedures for approval of draft codes of fishing practice by the Minister, including consultation requirements.

Clause 100 specifies procedures for the operation of codes of fishing practice. Compliance with a code is not required by law unless the code is incorporated in regulations.

PART 7—ENFORCEMENT AND LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Division 1—Enforcement Powers

Clause 101 empowers the Secretary by notice to require specified information to be provided and is a re-enactment, with amendments, of section 78 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 102 specifies powers of entry and inspection for authorised officers' (as defined in clause 4) and members of the police force, including the power to require production of licences and permits under this Act, and is a re-enactment, with amendments, of sections 23 (5), 23 (5A) and 48 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 103 specifies the powers of authorised officers' and members of the police force to search residential premises with a warrant issued by a magistrate, and is a re-enactment of section 48A of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 104 specifies procedures in relation to the seizure of items, and is a re-enactment, with minor amendments, of section 48B of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 105 specifies authorised officers' powers of seizure, and is a re-enactment, with amendments, of part of section 49 of the Fisheries Act 1968.

Clause 106 provides for the forfeiture or return of things seized, or security given in lieu of things seized and is a re-enactment, with amendments, of the other part of section 49 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 107 provides for the disposal of live fish, protected aquatic biota or other perishable things.

Clause 108 creates offences in relation to seized property.

Clause 109 requires offenders to give name and address, and includes an arrest provision for giving a false name and address. This is a re-enactment, with amendments, of section 50 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 110 provides for the hot pursuit of persons and boats beyond coastal waters of Victoria. This clause is similar to section 261 of the NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994.

Clause 111 creates offences with respect to authorised officers, and is a re-enactment of various sections of the Fisheries Act 1968.

Division 2—Offences

Clause 112 prohibits the use of explosives or other harmful substances for fishing, and is a re-enactment, with amendments, of section 60 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**. Sub-clause (2) enables exemptions for prescribed fishing equipment or methods, for example, the use of bark poisons by aboriginal persons.

Clause 113 prohibits interference with lawful fishing or aquaculture activities. In addition to other penalties, a court may order the defendant to pay compensation for any loss or damage.

Clause 114 prohibits the use of prescribed equipment, and is a re-enactment of section 52 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 115 prohibits unlawful interference with prescribed commercial fishing equipment or aquaculture equipment.

Clause 116 prohibits the sale of fish taken in contravention of this Act or a corresponding law of the Commonwealth or another State.

Clause 117 prohibits the use of a foreign boat in Victorian waters for fishing.

Clause 118 prohibits the possession of a foreign boat equipped with commercial fishing equipment.

Clause 119 provides for the passage of fish in enclosed waters.

Clause 120 specifies the persons who are liable for offences generally and provides certain defences.

Division 3—Proceedings and Evidentiary

Clause 121 specifies procedures for the service of notices.

Clause 122 specifies provisions relating to evidence and certain onuses of proof, and is a re-enactment, with amendments, of sections 74 and 75 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 123 provides for specified simplifications of proof, and is a re-enactment, with amendments and additions, of section 73 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 124 provides that certain statements purporting to be signed by the Secretary are evidence of those facts.

Clause 125 provides for evidence of locality, and is a re-enactment with amendments of section 72 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**. Sub-clause (1) (c) allows the use of a global positioning system (GPS).

Clause 126 provides for evidence of consignment, and is a re-enactment of section 72 (4) of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 127 specifies the maximum time for bringing proceedings after the commission of the alleged offence.

Division 4—Additional Penalties and Remedies

Clause 128 provides for a demerit points system, similar to that used for driver's licences under the **Road Safety Act 1986**. This system will be able to be applied to prescribed offences (except those under sections 43 or 55) with respect to any licence or permit under the Act, except licences for recreational fishing purposes.

Clause 129 provides for additional penalties for offences by corporations.

Clause 130 empowers a court to prohibit a convicted person from fishing, being on fishing boats or being at certain places. The purpose of this provision is to prevent the repetition of offences by habitual offenders.

Clause 131 provides for prior convictions within the last 10 years under this Act, the **Fisheries Act 1968** or a corresponding Commonwealth or State Act to be taken into account in sentencing under this Act.

PART 8—GENERAL

Division 1—Licensing Procedures

Clause 132 provides for the continuation of the existing Commercial Fisheries Licensing Panel and the appointment and removal of members of the Panel.

Clause 133 provides for the proceedings of the Commercial Fisheries Licensing Panel.

Clause 134 specifies the functions of the Commercial Fisheries Licensing Panel.

Clause 135 provides for the continuation of the existing Licensing Appeals Tribunal and the appointment and removal of members and deputy members of the Tribunal.

Clause 136 provides for the proceedings of the Licensing Appeals Tribunal.

Clause 137 defines "reviewable decision", ie: the types of decisions which may be reviewed by the Licensing Appeals Tribunal.

Clause 138 obliges the Secretary to maintain a register of specified information, and provides for access to that register.

Division 2—Miscellaneous

Clause 139 creates an offence with respect to the taking or attempted taking of fish from fish hatcheries and research stations, and is a partial re-enactment of section 8 of the Fisheries Act 1968.

Clause 140 authorises research or field studies to be carried out, or fishing equipment which may be used by the Secretary, and is a re-enactment, with amendments, of section 44 of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 141 provides for the Minister to issue authorities to any person for the purpose of carrying out specified special activities, including research.

Clause 142 is an immunity provision for specified persons, similar to section 8 of the Royal Botanic Gardens Act 1991. Any liability attaches instead to the Crown.

Clause 143 provides that no compensation is payable by the Crown as a result of the enactment of this Act and the repeal of the **Fisheries Act 1968**.

Clause 144 limits the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court for the purposes of clause 143.

Clause 145 obliges the Secretary to make specified instruments and documents available for public inspection.

Clause 146 is a secrecy provision. The main purpose of this provision is to protect the confidentiality of personal information, and thus to facilitate the ability of the Secretary to obtain accurate data and other information from licence or permit holders or other persons for the purposes of the Act. An example is the individual catch and effort returns which are required to be submitted monthly by licence holders.

Clause 147 prohibits the improper use of information obtained by a person during the course of the person's duties under the Act, for the purposes of clause 146.

Clause 148 specifies the general procedures for applications for both licences and permits. Sub-clauses (4) to (6) provide for third party objections to the issue of prescribed classes of licences or permits. Sub-clauses (7) to (10) prohibit and specify penalties for false information in applications under this Act.

Clause 149 contains general provisions relating to licences and permits.

Clause 150 provides for the prescription of royalties in respect of any licence or permit under the Act.

Clause 151 provides for the prescription of a levy in respect of a prescribed class of licences or permits, and the use of levy proceeds for specified purposes. Sub-clause (5) provides for grants to recognised peak bodies, but without cross-subsidisation between peak body interests. This clause also requires a review of the operation of this section within 4 years of it coming into operation.

Clause 152 provides for fisheries notices, and is a re-enactment with amendments of section 80 of the Fisheries Act 1968.

Clause 153 contains general provisions relating to the making of regulations under the Act.

PART 9—CONSEQUENTIAL AND TRANSITIONAL

Clause 154 repeals the Fisheries Act 1968, and saves specified persons, things, circumstances, instruments, documents and other matters.

Clause 155 is a transitional provision which provides for the saving and conversion of existing licences and permits into new licences and permits under this Act, substantially on the basis of existing entitlements. Sub-clause (5) provides for a 'prescribed beneficial owner' of a specified licence to apply to become the holder of the resulting access licence.

Clause 156 provides for reviews of and appeals against decisions made under section 155.

Clause 157 (a) maintains the existing statutory management arrangements with respect to transferable master fisherman's licences, pending declarations of the relevant fisheries as adjusting fisheries. Sub-clause 157 (b) maintains the existing statutory management arrangements with respect to declared abalone licences pending the declaration of a management plan and the declaration of the abalone fishery as a quota managed fishery.

Clause 158 provides for continuation of previous eligibility criteria for holders of commercial fishing licences and access licences for 10 years and 5 years respectively, except for the medical criteria for abalone access licences.

Clause 159 preserves the existing abalone licence fee formula under the **Fisheries Act** 1968.

Clause 160 amends the **Fisheries Act 1968**, so that the Fisheries Management Committee can be replaced as soon as possible by the Fisheries Co-Management Council, and regulations with respect to abalone processors' and storers' licences can be made.

Clause 161 provides for consequential amendments to other Acts.

Clause 162 amends the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987, as a consequence of clause 10 (1) of this Bill.

Clause 163 amends the Wildlife Act 1975, as a consequence of clause 69 (3) of this Bill.

SCHEDULES

SCHEDULE 1—MEMBERSHIP AND PROCEDURE OF BODIES

Schedule 1 specifies the membership and procedure of the Fisheries Co-Management Council and fishery committees.

SCHEDULE 2—CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Schedule 2 amends various Acts as a consequence of passing this Bill.