



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

**ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND
BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION
AMENDMENT (RECREATIONAL
FISHING FOR MAKO AND
PORBEAGLE SHARKS) BILL 2010**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Thursday, 11 March 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Thursday, 11 March 2010 Page 39 Questioner Speaker Hunt, Gregory, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr HUNT (Flinders) (1.43 pm)—The opposition supports the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Recreational Fishing for Mako and Porbeagle Sharks) Bill 2010. We support it because we proposed it. We support it because we argued for it. We support it because we ran a campaign through the agency of Senator Richard Colbeck over summer to bring this bill to pass. The bill rectifies another error from the Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts, Mr Garrett. It was patently obvious to everybody associated with recreational fishing in Australia that the government had made a mess of the recreational fishing sector in November last year when the minister listed for prohibition recreational angling for mako and porbeagle sharks.

He did that despite there being no evidence that these sharks were facing an extinction threat in Australia. And it came as a result of the government's own attempts to get these sharks listed on an international convention which related to Northern Hemisphere stocks but not Southern Hemisphere and, in particular, Australian stocks. The result was very simple: a healthy recreational fishing sector was cut off. It was through the agency of Senator Richard Colbeck and through the numerous different fishing associations in Australia, such as the Game Fishing Association, RecFish, TARFish, VRFish and the Fishing and Boating Council, that we were able to get a successful campaign up and running throughout the summer to make it clear that that decision by Minister Garrett was wrong and needed to be overturned. This bill seeks to overturn the decision by Minister Garrett. It was introduced by the minister to rectify his own error. It is the latest in a series of errors which undermine his ability to continue in his portfolio. We have elsewhere made the case that the serious errors that led to catastrophic human consequences in the Home Insulation Program should have been in themselves enough to terminate the minister's ministerial career. This is another error.

What we saw was a decision by the minister to operate through an international forum which was carried out with blind disregard to the circumstances in the waters around Australia. A recreational fishing sector which had been conducted carefully, which had been managed well, which had operated appropriately, was brought to its knees overnight. The ban was due

to come into force on 29 January. On 25 January the minister announced the reversal of his position. This bill now seeks to bring to pass the changes which the recreational fishing sector campaigned for and which my state colleague Neale Burgess MP, the state member for Hastings in Victoria, Sarah Henderson, the Liberal candidate for the seat of Corangamite, and Bob Baldwin also campaigned for. We know that Senator Colbeck led the charge on the campaign, which I helped participate in.

These changes should not have been necessary. It was a bad decision. The minister should have recognised that at the outset, having made a bad decision. It should not have required public meetings around southern New South Wales and the Victorian coast to have it reviewed. There were 300 fishing folk who came to Hastings, just near my office. They met outside for a public meeting. There were 500 who went to the coast in Corangamite for a meeting organised by Sarah Henderson. There were also meetings elsewhere in Tasmania. It should not have required a major public uprising by the fishing community to show the errors of the minister's ways.

However, there is a systemic problem in the way in which the government has gone about managing many environmental issues: snap, unilateral decisions, taken without any understanding of the consequences, have brought about unintended outcomes. We saw that in relation to the Home Insulation Program most catastrophically. We saw that in relation to the Green Loans Program, which has been a financial disaster for thousands and thousands of assessors who relied upon the work of the government. We saw that in relation to the overnight cessation of the solar rebate program, which was put in place by the previous government and mismanaged by the current government. And now we see that in relation to the management of Australia's fisheries and the decision to bring recreational fishing to its knees overnight on the basis of no scientific evidence.

Now that the minister has reviewed his position it has been confirmed that there was no scientific evidence as the basis for that decision. So it is very clear that what the public saw, what the recreational fishing community saw, what Sarah Henderson saw, what my state colleague Neale Burgess saw, and above all else what Senator Richard Colbeck and the

member for Paterson, Bob Baldwin, saw, was correct: this was a sustainable, well-managed recreational fishing sector involving highly capable and competent people, such as the Game Fishing Association of Australia, RecFish, TARFish, VRFish and the Fishing and Boating Council. All of these groups did the right thing. They helped collect 9,000 signatures. A petition was tabled in parliament opposing the ban. There was a massive phone campaign by those recreational fishing community members. They have done a tremendous job. I am delighted that this bill has been drawn to the parliament's attention, that the bill has been introduced. We campaigned for it, we support it, we believe in it and we will now see that it passes through the parliament as expeditiously as possible. I thank the members of the fishing community who brought it into being. I commend the bill and I condemn the minister.