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M E D I A R E L E A S E

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## Confusion, division and panic in Labor ranks over mako fishing ban

Statements from Labor Party backbenchers about the Rudd Labor Government's plan to ban the fishing of mako sharks point to confusion, division and panic within Labor ranks.

In December, Environment Minister Peter Garrett quietly released a plan to list mako and porbeagle sharks under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act taking effect from 29 January. No consultation was undertaken with fishermen prior to this decision.

Today, Federal Labor backbencher, Darren Cheeseman stated that he "agrees there is no logic and a lot of confusion" about the ban.

Yet earlier this week, Mr Cheeseman implied there wasn't a problem with the ban.

Victorian State Labor backbencher Michael Crutchfield also demonstrated further confusion, panic and division in Labor ranks.

Mr Crutchfield said there was no evidence to support a ban, that he was at loggerheads with his Federal Labor colleagues and most of his State Labor colleagues agreed with him.

Prior to a rally of 500 fishermen in Torquay on Tuesday night and the launch of a national petition - now containing 5000 signatures - no Labor MP or Minister indicated any opposition to Minister Garrett's fishing ban.

Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries Senator Richard Colbeck said recreational fishermen and businesses would be wondering what to believe with Labor's many confusing and panicked statements.

"If Labor backbenchers are confused, divided and panicking about their own government's plan, then what is the ordinary fishermen meant to think?"

"The more and more fishermen indicate their opposition to the mako fishing ban, the more and more Labor MPs realise the Rudd Government ban is bad news for their political careers.

"Yet Minister Garrett remains on holidays and won't be back until the day before the ban starts according to his office.

"Minister Garrett gives all the impression of a Minister in his ivory tower with no concern for the ordinary fisherman or small business operator."