



# SENATOR THE HON RICHARD COLBECK

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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

25 January 2010

### **Recreational fishermen force backdown on mako shark ban**

Australia's many thousands of recreational fishermen, in conjunction with the Federal Coalition, have scored a huge victory with the Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett finally backing down on a decision to ban the fishing of mako sharks.

Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries Senator Richard Colbeck said Minister Garrett's long overdue backdown was the result of an extensive campaign.

"The mako shark fishing backdown is a win for grassroots politics," Senator Colbeck said.

"Mr Garrett did not consult with either recreational or commercial fishermen – just his mates in fringe environmental groups.

"Labor backbenchers were content to merely parrot the claims of Minister Garrett that mako fishermen were "unlikely" to be breaking the law. The pressure finally showed last week with panicked Labor MPs calling on the Prime Minister's office to intervene.

"Finally the Government has caved into public pressure and agreed to make legislative changes allowing for mako sharks to be fished – just as the Federal Coalition asked it to do at the outset of this campaign in December.

"In working with recreational fishermen to force this backdown, I have been impressed by their commitment to the cause. They understand the need to maintain sustainable fisheries, but they also understand when they haven't been given a fair go.

"The backdown follows a coordinated campaign by recreational fishermen to phone, email and write to Minister Garrett and Prime Minister Rudd and express their disgust with the ban and the failure by the government to conduct consultation over the ban.

"These fishermen are to be praised for their efforts and commitment.

"My office has received over 5000 petition signatures calling on Minister Garrett to postpone the ban and conduct genuine consultation with recreational fishing groups. Hundreds have also joined packed public meetings on the issue.

"This backdown should cause Minister Garrett to finally start listening to the ordinary Australian rather than just fringe green groups who, among other things, want to shut down Australia's fishing industry.

"Consulting with fringe green groups and not consulting with the people who are directly affected – in this case, the fishermen - has become a disturbing pattern of behaviour for Mr Garrett.

"Relying on fringe groups to advise on the fishing industry is akin to asking the fox to advise on hen house security."