



# 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

4 February 2010

### **8000 Fishing voices heard in Federal Parliament**

A national petition calling on the Rudd Government to backdown on its mako shark fishing ban was today tabled in the Federal Parliament by the Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries, Senator Richard Colbeck,

The national petition, along with two separately organised petitions also tabled, contained the signatures of 8877 members of Australia's recreational fishing community.

The Minister's plan to list longfin mako, shortfin mako and porbeagle shark species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act took effect last Friday, 29 January.

Following a concerted grassroots campaign by the recreational fishermen in conjunction with the Federal Coalition, the Government announced last week it would make legislative amendments which would allow recreational fishing of mako shark to continue.

"The mako shark fishing backdown has been 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.

"Yet the impact on fishing families, game fishing clubs, bait and tackles stores, fishing charter boat operators and others in the sector was enormous."

Senator Colbeck said there is still more work to be done by Minister Garrett in coming weeks to amend the EPBC Act and consult over a mako shark management plan, but at least he is now recognising the efforts of fishermen.

"And I remain concerned about the legal status of fishermen catching mako sharks prior to the legislative amendments being passed by Parliament. In particular the January 29 listing of the sharks is a major threat to upcoming game fishing tournaments that are critical events to coastal communities."

The national petition called on the Rudd Government and Minister Garrett to:

1. postpone any decision to implement any no-take policy on shortfin mako, longfin mako and porbeagle sharks beyond this fishing season;
2. begin a genuine consultation process involving both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, including game fishing clubs;

3. publish and explain, as part of the consultative process, the science relating to any shark fishing ban proposals including the status of the species in Australian waters; and
4. develop, with input and feedback from both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, credible protocols for the management of the fishery prior to any bans being implemented.

*Senator Colbeck's speech to the Senate upon tabling of the national petition:*

**Senator COLBECK (Tasmania) (9.31 am)** – Mr President, I seek leave to make a short statement in relation to the petition that was tabled on my behalf this morning.

Thanks to the chamber for allowing me to make a short statement.

This petition was commissioned only on 18 December last year and is a clear demonstration of grassroots politics at work in relation to a decision the government made to ban longfin and shortfin mako and porbeagle shark fishing.

For 5,935 people to sign this petition in this period of time, and two other documents, which I would like the opportunity to place on the record – one which has 1,079 signatures, and another one, an online petition, which has 1,863 petitioners – gives a demonstration of the public feeling about this particular matter.

Very quickly, I would like to pay tribute to a number of people who have played a specific part in this particular campaign: Mr Dale McClelland, who is president of the Bass Strait Game Fishing Club; Mr Grahame Williams, president of the Game Fishing Association of Australia; Ben Scullin from VRFish; Garry Kerr from the Victorian Surf Coast; John McGiveron, the president of the St Helens Game Fishing Club, Mark Nikolai from TARFish; and Greg Barea from the Shellharbour Game Fishing Club, and many other individuals who have taken the time out to participate in this process.

It is really a victory for grassroots politics and campaigning. I also pay tribute to Sarah Henderson for the terrific work that she did in the Geelong region, around Corangamite. I thank the chamber for its indulgence.