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Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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Coalition welcomes end to Government's Mako mess

The long overdue approval of legislation to overturn the Rudd Labor Government's ban on Mako Sharks has been passed in the Senate tonight with the support of the Federal Coalition.

Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries, Senator Richard Colbeck said this brings an end to an unnecessary mess brought about by Environment Minister Peter Garrett's complete failure to consult the recreational fishers of Australia.

"Recreational fishers, particularly game fishers, charter boat operators and regional businesses reliant on their trade will breathe a sigh of relief with the passing of this legislation," Senator Colbeck said.

In December, recreational fishers were made aware of a plan by Minister Garrett to ban the fishing of popular game fish, the mako and porbeagle sharks, under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act from 29 January.

This came about due to international action on threatened stocks particularly in the Mediterranean and North Atlantic Ocean, but there was no scientific evidence or data suggesting low stocks in or around Australian waters.

A massive effort by thousands of recreational fishers, in conjunction with the Federal Coalition, saw a grassroots campaign eventually force a backdown by Minister Garrett in January.

"This whole saga is symbolic of Labor's attitude to the recreational fishing sector. Over the past two and half years, Labor has:

- stripped the national peak body, Recfish, of all of its funding;
- threatened massive new no-take marine parks around Australia;
- allowed fringe environmental groups to unilaterally influence policy; and
- the Fisheries Minister makes the fishing sector only his third or even fourth priority in his list of four portfolios.

"Unlike Labor, the recreational fishing sector and its many millions of participants can be assured they will be listened to by a Coalition Government.

"We will not place bans on fishing without very strong reason and, even then, not before genuine consultation.

"The Coalition will give recreational fishing the respect and recognition it fully deserves as a contributor to the environment, to healthy lifestyles and to the nation's economy."

Patrick Clancy

Office of Senator Richard Colbeck

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