



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

15 January 2010

Labor's mako shark ban threatens scientific research

The Rudd Labor Government's decision to ban mako shark fishing is threatening the collection of scientific data for research purposes.

The ban, which will also have major social and economic impacts, is being opposed by Australian recreational fishermen who are voting with their pens in their thousands.

More than 3000 fishermen from every State have signed a national petition calling on Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett to stop his plan to prevent fishing three shark species including the mako shark under the EPBC Act from 29 January.

"In the space of a few weeks during the summer holidays thousands of recreational fishermen have united in their anger with the Rudd Government's decision," Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries Richard Colbeck said.

"Minister Garrett has been advised by recreational fishing peak bodies and clubs that his actions threaten further research being conducted by prominent researchers and data being collected, but he continues to ignore the industry.

"The major contributors to mako shark scientific data in waters off Australia are the recreational fishermen through tagging and releasing their mako catches. Fishermen take great responsibility for maintaining sustainable fish stocks and that is no different for the mako shark."

"Tagging and releasing, a popular form of mako shark fishing, has allowed marine scientists to track the species, understand their migration paths and determine the level of stocks.

One major project currently underway which has benefited significantly from the efforts of recreational fishermen is at: www.seaturtle.org/tracking/index.shtml?project_id=308

"But with a no-take policy, this data collection work would be put at threat with fishermen less likely to invest in equipment, time and effort to undertake such activities.

"Fishermen would also be in fear of being nabbed for breaking Federal environmental laws by targeting the mako sharks – even if they only planned to release them."

"Minister Garrett has claimed that more data is required on mako sharks to determine their stocks yet this ban threatens further scientific research."

Senator Colbeck urged any recreational fishermen or other member of local communities affected by the ban to sign the national petition if they had not already done so.

Petitions need to be returned to Senator Colbeck's office prior to the end of January so they can be tabled in Parliament in early February.

The national petition calls on 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.