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

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Extreme green group gets seat at key marine meeting; fishing industry misses out

An extreme environmental group had a key seat at the table when an international decision was made to stop Australian fishers from fishing for mako sharks.

Representatives of the recreational fishing industry were not invited nor adequately consulted about what could occur at the conference – the decisions of which will have a major financial impact on the industry. Neither were representatives from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority on the official list.

The fringe group, Humane Society International (HSI), attended the Rome conference of the Convention on Migratory Species, along with 3 other Australian Government delegates from the Environment Department.

HSI's Australian Program Manager, Ms Danielle Annese-Arenas, is listed as an official participant of Australian delegation at the December 2008 conference.

Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries Senator Richard Colbeck said it was unclear whether HSI was given financial or other kinds of support to attend the conference in Rome.

“It seems the extreme HSI were in a position to be a key influence on international talks which are having major impact on recreational fishing.

“Of course, HSI were greatly opposed to the fishing of any shark species – even without any scientific evidence of overfishing in Australian waters.”

Senator Colbeck said the Federal Labor Government needed to explain what role HSI played as an official participant within the Australian delegation.

“Was any support provided to HSI by the Federal Government to attend the Rome conference? What level of cooperation occurred between the Government and HSI to allow the extreme green group to influence the conference?”

“And, critically, why weren't any fishing groups given a seat at the table?”

“Following this conference, Minister Garrett has proposed to ban the fishing of mako and porbeagle sharks – a plan which will come into place on January.

“Minister Garrett must postpone his ban plan and being to understand the major impact his proposal, no doubt influenced by the fringe HIS, will have upon coastal communities and businesses.

“He must immediately announce the postponement of his ban and begin a genuine consultation process prior to any decision being made.”