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Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
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M E D I A R E L E A S E

18 December 2009

National petition launched to stop Peter Garrett's attack on recreational fishers

The Federal Coalition has today launched a petition to stop Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett's proposal to ban fishing of mako and porbeagle sharks.

The Minister's plan to list longfin mako, shortfin mako and porbeagle shark species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act will take effect at the end of January.

Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries Senator Richard Colbeck, in launching the petition, said this Rudd Labor Government plan will prevent game fishing clubs holding shark fishing competitions and charter operators will lose business.

"The listing of these shark species will come at a significant cost to not just game fishing clubs, but also to game fishing charter operators and bait and tackle stores," Senator Colbeck said.

"Game fishing clubs, game fishing charter operators and local fishermen have been kept in the dark about Minister Garrett's controversial and highly damaging proposal.

"The impact on fishing families who participate in fishing competitions will be significant.

"Many fishing families spend hundreds if not thousands of dollars preparing their boats and buying reels and other fishing equipment. Should the ban go ahead, this will be money down the drain."

Senator Colbeck said Minister Garrett's decision making process is just like his dancing style.

"It is completely *disjointed* from the broader community, totally *uncoordinated* from any consultation and only *aligned with fringe elements*." Senator Colbeck said.

"Minister Garrett needs to talk to local game fishing clubs, to recreational fishing groups, to tackle and bait stores and fishing charter operators. Only then will he understand what are the major social and economic consequences of his shark fishing ban proposal."

Senator Colbeck said he would be distributing the petition calling on Minister Garrett to postpone, beyond this fishing season, any decision to list shortfin mako, longfin mako and porbeagle sharks and begin a genuine consultation process.

"The Minister needs to demonstrate to the fishing community what science is behind his proposal and what exactly is the status of these shark species in Australia."