



For Immediate distribution 26 February 2009

MEDIA RELEASE

Recfish Australia Criticises Queensland Conservation Council

Recfish Australia, the peak national body for recreational fishing has hit back at James McLellan from the Queensland Conservation Council over claims that recreational fishing 'plays a big part in declining fish stocks.'

Reacting to an interview on ABC Radio's Country Hour, Len Olyott, Chief Executive Officer of Recfish Australia said; "No one is saying that recreational fishers do not have an impact on fish stocks, we do. However, it's not true to say that we play a big part in declining fish stocks. I would ask Mr McLellan to produce his evidence which proves that this is true.

Most Australian recreational fisheries are managed sustainably. Most recreational fishers do the right thing and believe in sustainable utilisation of fish stocks. We are tired of being branded as mindless fish killers. Recreational fishers have been at the forefront of conservation since long before many contemporary conservation organisations. We spend time on the water, we introduce our children to the natural environment and we care for our environment.

I encourage Mr McLellan to contact me so that we can discuss ways in which the Conservation Council and recreational fishers can work together to improve the sustainable management of our natural resources."

Olyott also dismissed claims by Dr Colin SImpendorfer that recreational fishers cannot identify different fish species. "Given appropriate identification guides, fishers can distinguish different fish species. We are not stupid; we just need the right tools. Recreational fishers, in particular spearfishers, are contributing to the biggest, community-driven shark monitoring program in the world.

The Great Australia Shark Count is an initiative of the Australian Underwater Federation and is finding out where sharks occur and the range of species that inhabit our coastal waters. The main problem is a lack of funding for this project; existing funding sources such as Caring for Our Country simply do not recognise fish as part of our cultural and environmental heritage. In fact, fish or fishing is not mentioned once in the 90 page business plan for Caring for Our Country Funding.

Recreational fishers represent a vast resource of passionate and knowledgeable champions for the environment. Work with us, not against us."

ENDS

Media enquires to Len Olyott 0427073356 or Bruce Schumacher 0418499322

Recfish Australia is the peak national body for recreational and sport fishing in Australia. Members: Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT (AFANT); Australian National Sportfishing Association (ANSA); Australian Underwater Federation -Spearfishing (AUF); New South Wales Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (NSW ACoRF); Western Australian Recreational & Sportfishing Council Inc (Recfishwest); Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing (TARFish); Victoria's Recreational Fishing Peak Body (VRFish). Affiliate Member: Recreational Fishing Alliance of New South Wales (RFA)

Our mission - One voice promoting sustainable fishing and representing recreational fishers at a national level