



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

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Labor lets down recreational fishers again, thresher shark fishing ban starts

It has become clear today that despite soothing comments by the Federal Fisheries Minister in May, the recreational fishing of thresher sharks is now banned.

This is the second major game fishing shark which has been banned for fishing by the Federal Labor Government after the mess it made of the mako shark. The thresher shark has been banned through Australia's membership of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC).

The thresher shark is a popular game fishing species, particularly off the coast of Victoria. A bag limit of one fish exists in that State.

Fisheries Victoria – in the apparent absence of information from the Federal Labor Government – have issued the following advice:

"Recreational and sport fishers may in no circumstances retain thresher sharks and must release them alive."

Federal Coalition spokesman for Fisheries, Senator Richard Colbeck said many angry fishers had contacted him wanting answers on why the fishing of thresher sharks had been banned by the Federal Labor Government without adequate consultation.

On May 25, Labor's Fisheries Minister Tony Burke said the Government *"will do all it can to support recreational fishers to continue fishing thresher sharks."*

"But just 5 weeks later the Government's ban is now in place," Senator Colbeck said.

"Like the mako shark, there is no evidence of any threat to thresher shark numbers in Australian waters, yet our recreational fishers are forced to accept the wishes of an international body

"I had a briefing from the Federal Government on this matter some weeks ago where departmental officers suggested action was being taken, but have heard nothing since.

"Fishers tell me that they too have received no advice on the status of thresher shark fishing from the Federal Government.

"Yet again, recreational fishers have been left in the lurch by the Federal Labor Government.

"Labor has displayed a complete lack of communication, a complete lack of consultation and a complete lack of consideration for recreational fishers."

Senator Colbeck said Labor's failure on the thresher shark demonstrated its attitude to the recreational fishing sector. Over the past two and half years, Labor has:

- Banned the fishing of mako and porbeagle sharks and then back-flipped following a national grassroots political campaign by fishers;
- 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."