



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

Fishing

SPEECH

Thursday, 11 February 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 11 February 2010	Source House
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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP	Question No.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (12.55 pm)—Recently, as the result of our international obligations under our environmental responsibilities an impasse occurred affecting recreational fishers with regard to shortfin mako sharks and porbeagle sharks. Essentially, it arose out of a legislative requirement under the Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act in Australia that makes it mandatory to list the species that are listed under the Convention on Migratory Species. A species that is deemed and listed to be threatened under the Convention on Migratory Species is automatically listed under our EPBC Act in Australia. That affected the shortfin mako shark, in particular. Recreational fishers and others engaged in this recreational activity were upset and confused, and, without the right information, correctly so.

We immediately had a number of members of parliament contact the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, and his department, to seek clarification on this. The department and the minister clearly and quickly responded to the situation by at least setting out what the obligations were by law in this situation. The minister gave a commitment that he would immediately investigate it, and he has, along with his department.

Unfortunately, there were some who mischievously used this situation for political points. I found it rather ironical that some of those people, such as Senator Colbeck in my electorate, were part and parcel of a government who passed the legislation which made this mandatory, but they never pointed that out. I thought they made a political situation out of a confusing situation where we have a mandatory obligation to follow our own legislation.

The minister gave an assurance that he would act on this. He also gave out a recommendation that he did not see an issue with catching and releasing mako sharks for recreational purposes. The minister has now investigated it and he has set out that it is not so much a regulatory solution that we need here as a legislative one and, as I mentioned, the minister is as a matter of priority progressing a legislative solution. I want that on the record—to mitigate the impact on recreational fishers of the recent mandatory listings of mako and porbeagle sharks.

For the record, and particularly for Senator Colbeck to publicly acknowledge, it is intended that subject to completion and approval of all necessary legal documentation, a bill introducing the required legislative changes will be introduced into parliament during the next sitting week, which commences on Monday 22 February. That is the commitment of the minister: given and notwithstanding those conditions, to introduce the legislation.

We were bound by former legislation—that coming particularly from those who are out there criticising publicly, like Senator Colbeck—and we honoured that and we are now setting out to change the legislation so that fishers are not disadvantaged for ‘catch and release’ or ‘catch and kill’. I congratulate the minister. I look forward to the legislation coming to the House as quickly as possible and to the support of those opposite, particularly those who so mischievously used this for their own political purposes, but never told the whole truth when they did it.

Question agreed to.