



The Hon. Peter Garrett
Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Peter.Garrett.MP@aph.gov.au

1st February 2010

Dear Minister,

Re: Support for listing porbeagle, shortfin and longfin mako sharks under EPBC Act

I have been directed by the State Council of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to raise our concerns regarding your recent announcement to downgrade the protection afforded to three species of migratory sharks in Australian waters.

Wildlife Queensland is one of the longest established and most respected wildlife-focused conservation groups in Queensland. With over 3500 supporters spread across numerous branches throughout Queensland, Wildlife Queensland is a strong voice for our wildlife and its habitat.

Wildlife Queensland is apolitical. Our aims include;

- Preserve the flora and fauna of Australia by all lawful means
- Educate the community in an understanding of the principles of conservation and preservation of the natural environment
- Discourage by all legal means, the possible destruction, exploitation and unnecessary development of any part of the natural environment
- Encourage rational land use and proper land planning of existing and future development, and the use of the natural environment and its management

Wildlife Queensland is strongly opposed to the Government taking actions that disregard our international obligations to protect internationally vulnerable species. Wildlife Queensland is extremely concerned that in the face of pressure from a small section of the community the Government is willing to compromise its own legislation and international agreements. This sets a precedent where the Commonwealth Government is prepared to arbitrarily change long-standing and strong environmental legislative provisions in the face of pressure from what is essentially, commercial interests.

Migratory sharks are in decline worldwide and require a concerted international effort to protect them. The global declines of the porbeagle, longfin and shortfin mako have been so severe that all are now listed as 'vulnerable' by the IUCN.

The recently released media statement (25 January 2010) states that your decision was based on "a lack of evidence suggesting that Australian populations of these shark species face the same threats as other parts of the world..." Under the EPBC

Act the Government is obliged to take into consideration the precautionary principle. Wildlife Queensland is of the opinion that until there is independent scientific evidence to indicate that the populations of these shark species in Australian waters are sufficiently robust to allow fishing to continue, these sharks should be strictly protected as migratory species under the EPBC Act.

Your Government must use the legislative powers of the EPBC Act to ensure that any of the three shark species caught by commercial, game or recreational fishing are immediately returned to the sea and not retained. Further investigations into the post release mortality rates of the three species is required in order to demonstrate that targeted catch and release fishing does not pose a threat to these species.

Wildlife Queensland implores that you exercises the powers available to you under the legislation wisely. An assessment of the scientific data and our international obligations should leave you no choice but to reverse your decision to ensure the protection of these species under the EPBC Act. We look forward to your response so that we can inform our supports of the care that the Rudd Government has for the environment.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F Maxwell', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Fiona Maxwell

Community Conservation Officer

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland