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M E D I A R E L E A S E

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New marine parks proposal threatens fishing future

A proposal by a fringe environmental group to introduce 20 new marine parks off the coast of Victoria is yet another major threat to Australia's recreational and commercial fishing industries.

Federal Coalition spokesperson for fisheries Senator Richard Colbeck said the Victorian National Parks Association's new marine parks proposal has all the hallmarks of recent opportunism by fringe environmental groups around Australia.

"With the Labor Party desperate for Green preferences, fringe environmental groups have been given great confidence their extreme marine proposals will be gratefully received by State and Federal Labor Governments," Senator Colbeck said.

"At a Federal level these fringe groups are also assisted by a former brother-in-arms, the now Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

"There has become a marine lock-up mentality across Labor Governments fed by fringe environmental groups.

"The Federal Government decisions to ban mako shark fishing along with unilaterally declaring the entire Coral Sea as a conservation zone following a proposal from environmental fringe group the Pew Foundation are both symptomatic of this mentality.

"What these groups fail to realise or refuse to acknowledge is the massive impact their marine proposals have upon coastal communities, small businesses within these communities and on upon both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors.

"Recreational fishing is a massive contributor to healthy lifestyles and to regional economies. It is estimated 3.5 million Australians participate in recreational fishing every year.

"At the same time, our commercial fishing sector which operates under world-leading regulatory regimes is critical to fishing communities, to local employment and to contributing to a healthy national diet.

"Any suggestion that either the recreational or commercial fishing sectors are raping and pillaging our marine environment is either ignorant or deliberately misleading," Senator Colbeck said.

Details of the VNPA's new marine parks proposals at:
<http://vnpa.org.au/admin/library/attachments/Marine/marine-priority-areas.pdf>