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8th November 2005

The Honourable Ian MacDonald, MLC  
Minister for Primary Industries  
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Dear Minister,

Re: Juvenile great white sharks at Stockton Beach

I refer you to your decision to impose area specific tackle and bait restrictions which are aimed at the taking of juvenile great white sharks off Stockton beach, an activity by two anglers that has received a lot of recent media attention.

From the outset, we must say that our group does not condone the actions of these anglers, but we do see a number of issues related to the decision to restrict the actions of these two anglers.

Firstly, being a protected species, the question that needs to be asked is: was the activity of these two anglers adequately covered under the existing legislation, which states: "Part 3, Section 18 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 specifies a person must not take an action that: has or will have a significant impact on a listed threatened species included in the vulnerable category; or is likely to have a significant impact on a listed threatened species included in the vulnerable category."

Secondly, many anglers consider that the reaction of declaring area specific tackle and bait restrictions is an overreaction that will affect other styles of fishing, for example fishing for mulloway with live baits such as tailor. This is despite assurances that these

restrictions "will not affect the legitimate operations of other commercial and recreational fishers".

Thirdly, one has to question just how many great white sharks there are off the NSW coast. Is their population increasing or decreasing? Just how endangered is the species? There are similarities with another endangered shark species, the grey nurse, supposedly with a population estimated to be about 500 and in a state of decline. In both cases what is the end game? If it is purely a population size issue, then at what level will the population be reached before it is not classified as being critical? And what on-going assessments are being made of these population numbers?

Recreational anglers are paying increased fees for a license to fish with ever increasing access restrictions and now bait and tackle restrictions. Whether people agree with your actions with regard to this issue or whether other actions could have been taken under the current legislation is immaterial, the overriding aspect is that once the right to do something is lost, it is rarely given back.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Ingram  
President  
Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc.

Cc Duncan Gay