



Media Release

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For Immediate Release: **Concerns over the future of rigorous science in marine environments**

Announced on 2nd April was the transfer of marine parks and aquatic reserves to Department of Climate Change, Environment and Water with Philip Koperberg as its minister. Included in the move is the Threatened Species Unit and the Conservation Group of NSW DPI (Fisheries). Under the same Department is the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) which is used to provide advice, court actions and other legal procedures for the various environmental groups such as the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) as with the current case in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) concerning the grey nurse shark.

AAG President Phil Ingram said "Groups such as Harbourkeepers and Coastwatchers are initiatives of the National Parks Association (NPA) and consider themselves to be assistants in the management of the oceans of NSW, for which they receive funding from the State Government, such as the \$41,000 for the diving branch of the NPA. But what qualifications are required? A certificate of attainment at the local TAFE! It seems the role of good science and scientific procedure to obtain meaningful results is being thrown out the door. And what does it say of the Governmental bodies and departments that provide the funding or are accepting the data from these groups? And what of the decisions that are to be made based on these studies?"

The latest development is the State Government funded Environmental Defender's Office (EDO) representing the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) in proceedings in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) against the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water. The NCC is presenting evidence to the Tribunal that the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery (OTLF), and recreational fishing, has a significant impact on the east coast population of the "critically endangered" grey nurse shark population.

Phil remarked "We have seen recreational fishers locked out of parts of the coastline based on an extreme implementation of the precautionary principal in marine parks. No science at all. There are issues associated with the estimation of the grey nurse population which need to be explained and resolved, but none have been forthcoming. And now we have Government funded marine environmental groups that appear to be setting themselves up as research groups on which whose work decisions will be based. And if that fails there will be court action."

Phil continues "But there are real environmental disasters such as acid sulphate soils in the northern rivers of NSW, Caulerpa taxifolia in Careel Bay in Pittwater, and many more. All of these require funding but are placed in the too hard basket. One has to wonder why aren't these environmental groups taking these issues on board. But most importantly, it seems the State Government is condoning the lack of rigorous science in the decision making process."

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