The Live Well

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Dear Monica,

**Proposed Fisheries (Mako Shark) Notice 2018**

I write to provide my submission in response to the Proposed Fisheries (Mako Shark) Notice 2018. I thank you for the opportunity to submit my position.

It should be noted that I would support any Fisheries notice proposal that provides clear peer reviewed science on the sustainability, welfare and protection of any recreational fish targeted by recreational fishers that requires it. In this case the science is lacking and the poor presentation of the submission was presented to me with misleading and inaccurate information.

To inform my position and rationale I have:

1. Consulted with my live audience consisting of individual anglers who are able to actively engage with our program while viewing on social media platforms. On the episode where discussion took place we had 4800 live viewers on 3 media platforms, of these viewers 88.6% were Victorian.
2. I am also an active member of the VRFish State Council were I was present on 3 occasions where this presentation was presented so I was able to see and hear the evidence supporting the size limit proposal.

Using an evidence-based approach and the wider expertise of The Live Well audience to consider the substance of this proposal and being present to hear original presentation to the VRFish State Council, I present my findings.

* **Misleading information presented about length to weight calculations for Mako Sharks**

During Mr Elluls presentation to the VRFish State Council he made mention of the length to weight ratio of a Mako Shark, measured at the furthest gill slit to caudal of 120cm would only weigh between 25 to 30 kg. Both Game fishing club records and angler photographic evidence shows that fish in the size measurement can weigh in excess of 80kg.

* **Misleading information presented on science pertaining to length to age of Mako Sharks**

Mr Ellul also spoke about the science done around length to age of Mako species, the information provided was done outside of Australian waters and in cooler climate fisheries were growth rates vary dramatically. No research has been conducted on this subject that is available to anglers on the warmer climate growth rates.

* **Misleading information presented on support of all local Game Fishing Clubs**

Part of the submission by Mr Ellul to the VRFish State Council there was mention that this proposal had been done with the full support of local Game Fishing Clubs, we have since found out that this support was not officially from all clubs, we are still waiting for the written support from these clubs.

* **Angler concerns on the safe handling of Mako Sharks for accurate measurement**

For an angler to be able to measure a fish of any size it needs to be contained and subdued for enough time to take an accurate measurement. Bringing a live shark of more than 1 meter into a boat for any any purpose is dangerous to the people in the boat and can cause damage to the boat rendering it powerless. As Mako sharks are found in offshore locations it is not an appropriate action to take when assessing the risk against the reward.

Bringing a shark alongside a boat to measure prevents new levels of risk. Having an animal with sharp puncturing teeth alongside is one thing, asking an angler to reach down to measure said animal with a tape is another. Considering that the Mako Sharks only method of defense is to bite and without option of appropriate tethering of the fish (Gaff, wire rope and tail rope) then increased injury to angler is inevitable.
For an angler to be able to measure a Mako Shark safely the use of tethering equipment is required. Flaying gaffs, hand gaffs, wire ropes and tail ropes all contribute to high and in some cases guaranteed mortality of sharks. To safely measure a Mako Shark this fisheries notice will have the opposite effect of species sustainability and many sharks will die as a result.

The increased risk to anglers will be conducive to the purpose of the proposal.

* **Increased Mortality of Mako Sharks for accurate measurement**.

If a shark is to be measure alongside it will need to be fished to a point of exhaustion. Mako Sharks that have been involved in prolonged fights on heavy tackle so they are calm and subdue enough to measure will not be in a condition that supports its survival. The point of this proposal is to provide protection of baby Mako’s, to see increased mortality as a side effect of measuring the fish does not support the sustainability of the species or the ethos of the proposal.

* **Numbers of juvinile caught Mako Sharks or under represented in harvest for food**

The number of Mako Sharks caught each year in Victoria are low at best. The overwhelming majority of anglers who target them generally release smaller Mako Sharks without measuring them. If the number of anglers who target them are low and the amount harvested for food are low what is the justification for the change in legislation. From discusion with my viewers it would seem that most of the people who target them are members of a Game Fishing Club, the sharks kept by these anglers are in excess of 60kg and harvested for food. Those fish that are not harvested are released with a tag so that valuable data can be collected and the fish continues to live. Knowing that many of the fish in excess of 60 kg are also inside of the 1200mm size requirement it will mean that the those who target them the most will now be forced to measure the fish thus increasing the chance of mortality. Those who in the past have caught and kept very young Mako Sharks are at the very low end of the anglers represented in targeting Mako sharks. The total number of young sharks being caught and kept are already very low.

* **No requirement of commercial adherence to the change in legislation**

 The group with the highest rate of baby Mako mortality is the commercial fishing sector, as a non target species they are often kept as a by catch product and have a higher rate of capture for food harvest than the recreational sector. As mako’s feed on the species targeted by commercial fishers the bycatch rate is much higher than the total catch by Recreational fishers. If there is genuine concern on making alterations to the recreational legislation for sustainability then surely the same would be reflected by the commercial catch take. If this is not the case then the change to legislation is being done on purely social concerns and does not reflect good science or fisheries management.

Conclusion;

Having been present at the presentations to VRFish on the proposal I feel that the information presented was lacking in science and does not reflect the wants and needs of species specific sustainability. The VRFish State Council voted to support Mr Elluls proposal based on information provided by Mr Ellul and may have been misleading and showed misrepresentation of facts at the time of presentation. After speaking with many Game Fishing Club members, anglers from the broader community and seeking advice from my viewers, the proposal does not reflect any benefit to anglers, Mako Sharks, Victorian Fisheries Authority and the broader angling community. We have since been advised that the proposal was submitted based on the idea of a young angler under the age of 16. This young man should be congratulated for his ideals and encouraged to continue to take part in recreational fishing advocacy long into the future and that any decision good or bad is a win for awareness. I do not wish to discourage him from being passionate about our fishery. I am also proud to know Mr Ellul personally and am well aware that the presentation and preparation of this proposal was done with the best intentions and with the best supporting information available at the time of proposal creation. Mr Ellul’s knowledge and commitment to fisheries in Victoria is and has always been nothing short of amazing and the time dedicated to supporting rec angler advocacy should be celebrated and commended.

Based on the information above I can not, will not and do not support the proposal as presented. More information needs to be provided with the facts to support it including the support of clubs in writing. I do support better education of the size and age of Mako Sharks and the encouragement of anglers who wish to target Mako Sharks to join a club where better education can be provided.

I am committed to working with groups, such as Fishcare Victoria and the Victorian Fisheries Authority and VRFish, in order to develop and deliver an education campaign to our industry relating to the harvest of young Mako Sharks. The Proposed Fisheries (Mako Shark) Notice 2018 has generated discussion and further ideas among our recreational fishers, I welcome further discussion around my submission and effective education delivery to the broader angling community.

Kind Regards

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The Live Well

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