



SENATOR THE HON RICHARD COLBECK

Senator for Tasmania

Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries and Forestry
Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Innovation, Industry and Science

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

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Murky waters surround Labor's marine park plans

Labor's black box marine park process continues in Brisbane today with Coalition members excluded from a consultation meeting.

"I was in Queensland today at the request of my colleague Paul Neville to meet with fishing industry representatives who are concerned about the Gillard Government's Marine Bioregional Planning proposals and process," Coalition Fisheries spokesman Richard Colbeck said.

"The occurrence of a round of the consultations gave us the opportunity to be observers to the process but a request made by Paul for us to attend was formally refused by the government.

"The fishermen were happy for us to attend and we were happy to attend as observers only but the government obviously wants to keep this secretive process to itself," Senator Colbeck said.

"Our attendance would have given us the opportunity to get a strong and practical understanding of the issues facing the fishing industry in the context of the Government's proposals," The Nationals Member for Hinkler Paul Neville said.

"We would also have heard first hand the justifications from the Government's perspective for the lock up of significant areas of the marine environment.

"It is believed that nine Federal licence holders and up to 40 State licence holders, based in communities between Gladstone and the Queensland/New South Wales border, could be affected by the Commonwealth's proposed closures," Mr Neville said.

Senator Colbeck said the Coalition took a very different Marine Parks policy to the last election, and the policy had been well received by coastal communities and stakeholders.

"The Coalition policy would have established bioregional advisory panels to give representation for affected parties and the policy also required peer-reviewed scientific evidence of threats to marine biodiversity be made publicly available before any decisions were made on future marine protected areas.

"It is clear Tony Burke learnt nothing from his time as fisheries minister where he managed to alienate nearly every fisho in the country.

"Now as Environment Minister he continues to keep the process segregated so that he can play stakeholders off against each other," Senator Colbeck said.