Call to release science behind lobster decision

Shadow Fisheries spokesman Adrian Pederick has called on state Fisheries Minister Michael O'Brien to release the information that led to his decision to shorten the Southern Zone rock lobster season.

Following his discussions with representatives of the Southern Rock Lobster Zone industry, Mr Pederick said the decision threatens the entire economy of many South East coastal communities.

'The industry feels the consultation was too narrow and has undervalued their experience and knowledge,' Mr Pederick said.

''The peak industry body submitted detailed, thoroughly researched proposals to protect future stocks with no mention of October and I'm not aware of any contrary official advice to the minister on that.

'It would appear his decision to exclude October is based on very little credible information – if any.

'October is the most important month for these fishermen and the families and communities that depend on them.

'The minister's statement that he is protecting future stocks because 50 per cent of lobsters caught in October are carrying eggs doesn't stand up because it is a legal requirement that lobsters carrying eggs are returned to the water.

'If the minister is saying those lobsters are not being returned to the water, that becomes a compliance issue, not a quota issue.

'Given there were only two expiation notices issued last season for this offence, there is no significant threat to recruitment.

'This ill-advised and untimely decision also threatens important export markets, such as China, and that has implications for the future as well as the present.

'I call on the minister to release the data and information on which this decision is based. If that information is accurate and compelling, those most affected by it are entitled to know what it is and can better accept the need for the cut.'

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