

# FOR WA SHARK FIN



On the menu: Jeff Cooke's son, Anthony, with a shark catch from local waters off Augusta destined for the state's fish and chip shops.

## Global embarrassment or fair fishing practice?

### Against Jeff Hansen Sea Shepherd Australia

SEA Shepherd Australia director Jeff Hansen says WA's "narrow-minded" plan to export certified shark fin to Asia will encourage illegal poaching and be a big blow to the global campaign to stop finning.

The price of shark fin has dropped from \$40 to \$10-\$20 a kilo in the wake of a worldwide campaign against shark-fin soup and a market crash because of overfishing in foreign waters.

But Mr Hansen, who is based in Fremantle, said exporting WA shark fin – even if it was taken sustainably – would rekindle Asia's appetite for the delicacy, "completely undermine" the anti-finning campaign, push up prices and encourage poachers.

"Imagine where our humpback whale population would be today if, right on the eve of the global moratorium on commercial whaling, some nation offered up a sustainable

form of humpback whale meat," he said. "To offer this last remaining stronghold for the sharks would be like finding an undiscovered group of endangered African rhinos and offering them to the ivory traders."

He said the plan showed a "complete lack of respect" not only for sharks and the natural world, but for future generations.

He said the apex predators were essential for the oceans' health.

"Our oceans give us up to 80 per cent of our oxygen so we rely on sharks for our survival," Mr Hansen said. "We can live just fine without a tasteless, nutritionless bowl of soup, but we cannot live in this world without sharks."

Mr Hansen has just returned from the Galapagos where he documented Sea Shepherd's fight against fin poachers.



### For Jeff Cooke Augusta shark fisherman

JEFF Cooke says WA is the most regulated and sustainable shark fishery in the world and fishermen here shouldn't be tarred with the same brush as illegal shark-fin poachers elsewhere.

Mr Cooke says the laws in WA mean the entire animal is used, unlike in foreign waters where sharks are often illegally finned and the rest of the animal is thrown back into the sea.

Failing to export shark fin would be wasting a valuable part of the animal, he said.

If WA exported shark fin that was officially certified as sustainable, the veteran fisherman said he couldn't see how that would encourage the illegal trade in fins, as the WA Conservation Council claims.

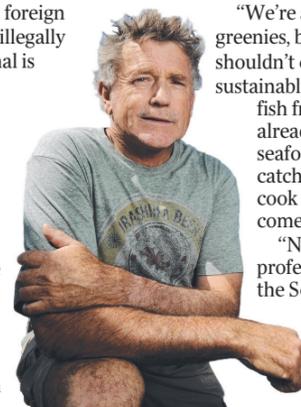
"It's a completely different product. We'd be the only shark fishery in the world with

the Marine Stewardship Council stamp. They don't hand that out lightly," he said.

Mr Cooke uses gill nets to catch gummy and whiskery sharks with his two sons in the South-West. He said shark numbers were the healthiest he'd seen in 20 years.

"We're always copping it from the greenies, but I can't see why fishing shouldn't continue when it's done sustainably. What do people want to eat – fish from the Mekong Delta? We're already importing 70 per cent of our seafood," he said. "Not everyone can catch their own fish. Every time you cook or sit down to a meal, it's got to come from somewhere."

"Now there's only five professional (shark fishermen) left in the South-West. What I'm saying is, there are plenty of sharks out there because the fishery is being managed to make sure it'll be here in years to come."



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