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Today I move:

That this house calls on the State Government to immediately prepare and implement an Overabundant Native Species Management Plan, noting the effects caused by the New Zealand Fur Seal on South Australian marine life, the environment and the fishing industry. This management plan to include a sustainable harvest of the New Zealand Fur Seal.

I am aware this specific seal is now known as the Long-nosed Fur Seal. However throughout my speech I will be referring to its former name, the New Zealand Fur Seal.

At present there are around 110,000 New Zealand Fur Seals in South Australia, and their population is continually growing at 5.5% per year. The New Zealand Fur Seals population is spread from the Eyre Peninsula

to the South East. South Australia has approximately 83% of Australia's seal population.

Male Fur Seals grow to a maximum length of 2.5m and can weigh up to 180kg. Females are considerably smaller, reaching 1.5m in length and 50kg in weight. The Average life span for these seals is generally between 14-17 years.

While I'm on the topic of their life span I would like to mention their breeding habits. The New Zealand Fur Seals were found breeding from Baudin Rocks in the South East to Fenelon Island in the North-West. From these 29 breeding colonies, 20,431 seal pups were produced. This number has been calculated to be 3.6 times greater than estimated in 1989-90. Further breeding colonies have also been found on Williams Island and at two other small sites on Kangaroo Island. It has been identified that the increasing population from the New Zealand Fur Seals is likely to continue, this is due to the expansion of their colonies. Females will begin breeding between 4 to 6 years of age. Female

seals will continue to give birth to one pup every year until their death. I can now understand why their population is rapidly increasing at 5.5% per year.

The New Zealand Fur Seals main source of food includes Cuttle Fish, Squid and Octopus species. Unlike the Australian Fur Seal, it also consumes seabird such as little penguins and shearwaters. Penguins have been greatly affected by the New Zealand Fur Seal species, an example of this is the decimation of the Little Penguin population on both Granite and Kangaroo Island. In just three days these seals would have consumed the equivalent of a year's catch by commercial fisherman in the Lakes and Coorong Fisheries.

These seals are having serious effects on South Australian marine life, the environment and the fishing industry. They are also harming pelicans, mainly around the Murray Mouth Region. A constituent that wrote into the Murray Valley Standard Viewpoint stated the following "We took visitors to Narrung today and found two dead pelicans on the bank of the lake with bites in

their neck and head” if I continue reading another constituent goes onto to say “I’d like to see journalists and photographers go to the Coorong and Granite Island and show what damage these predators are doing. The thought of pelicans being slaughtered and fish stocks killed off for fun more than food, might get to some of these people who are crying foul at the thought of culling or removing seals.”

Cultural rangers are having to euthanase pelicans which have broken legs or their wings torn off, all injuries which have been inflicted by the New Zealand Fur Seals.

If we look at the current overabundance of these seals from an environmental aspect you start to see a domino effect happening. For example, more seals, could result in sharks coming further inland to feed, which would present significant danger to humans. Another example is the impact the seals are already having on pelicans. A constituent who wrote to both myself and the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conversation, the Hon. Ian Hunter, stating that she had been residing in the

Southern Lagoon for nearly 14 years and had become quite observational during this time. Throughout her letter she expressed her concerns for the pelicans. She states that the pelican numbers in the area have lessened compared to previous years. She then goes onto to say she has not seen the flocks of pelicans returning to the breeding island to begin their breeding cycles. It is advised throughout the letter that her belief is the pelicans have been scared off by the seals and are moving elsewhere. I cannot stress enough the enormous influence the New Zealand Fur Seals will have if they inhabit pelican breeding grounds in the Southern Lagoon. Not only will pelicans be effected, but so will the native bird rookeries.

This government cannot deny the fact the seals are hurting pelicans, considering one was found dead in Lake Alexandrina on Tuesday after it was attacked by a New Zealand Fur Seal.

A recent story in the Murray Valley Standard expressed the anger and devastation the Ngarrindjeri people have

by the inaction from the Government. An Ngarrindjeri elder, Darrell Sumner quotes “the seals are killing birds and lots of fish – pelicans, swans, terns, musk ducks – I have not seen musk ducks in a long time.” He goes onto say that the Ngarrindjeri people are angry because “they’re our totems, they’re part of our ancestors who have passed on, what they’re doing it hurts, it hurts spiritually it really does.” Mr Sumner stated in this article that the seals are destroying native wildlife in an area where this “predator” does not historically live. According to the Ngarrindjeri records and history the New Zealand Fur Seals did not live in the Coorong and Lower Lakes before European settlement. All the great uncles that live there said there has never been seals in the Coorong or the River. They are calling on the State Government to take action and states “action has to happen and no more talk; if it goes on for too much longer, the whole system will be gone, the seals have got to go, they have to be culled.”

I have been told of fisherman not allowing their children to dangle their feet or any other limbs in the water as

they are frightened of being bitten or attacked. These seals have been known to aggressively attack rare bird species in the Coorong, so what's to say they wouldn't do it to a small child innocently swimming. If you look at the teeth on these animals and factor in their weight and size, there is potential for serious damage to be inflicted. This government cannot deny the risk of a child or any human for that matter being bitten or attacked by these seals, it is clearly states in the Long-nosed Fur Seals FAQ "**Do not approach seals.** They are wild animals and they may bite if they feel threatened" which was published by the Government of South Australia.

Speaking of this FAQ, it seems this fact sheet no longer can be found on the website. Why may this be? A quote from a government spokesperson states that an "early draft of the fact sheet was put on the website by mistake" and that amended information is currently being finalised. I will be very interested to see this amended fact sheet.

The Coorong District Council have considered installing “Do not swim” signs on the lakes foreshore, the council decided against, it but many tourism operators in the region are concerned that if tourists are deterred from swimming in the lake, it may result in decreased tourism and revenue loss.

While on the topic of revenue I would like to mention the closure of the Ski Racing SA Championship titles in Murray Bridge which was caused by a New Zealand Fur Seal being hit by an oncoming speed boat. Many were thankful that it was the boat that hit the seal and not a skier, I think the outcome would have been a lot more horrifying. You can ensure the safety for the people and animals involved by cancelling the Ski Titles which run over one weekend, but what about all weekends in summer where recreational boating activities take place on the Murray River. It is concerning that if the New Zealand Fur Seals decide to inhabit the Murray River they will have a serious effect on the summer boating culture in Murray Bridge.

A June 2014 SARDI publication states the following:
“There is a growing concern about how the increasing population of the Fur Seals will impact the future and sustainability and production of key fisheries and the broader marine ecosystem as a whole. As such, accurate information on the status and trends in abundance of the species is important for stakeholders, and essential to assist management agencies to make informed management decisions.”

A recent article in the Victor Times, Darren Hoad from Hoad Fisheries states that he has been fishing in the Coorong and Lower Lakes for 30 years. Darren cannot believe how many seals are now in the fisheries water, he goes onto say “Twenty years ago we would not see a seal, now they are everywhere.”

There are 33 licensed fisherman holding 36 licenses in the Coorong. These 33 fisherman believe that if nothing is done to maintain the population of the New Zealand Fur Seals, they will be out of business in two years. I have witnessed first-hand, images of fish with their

heads and tails torn off. I have had a net hand delivered by a fisherman which had been ripped apart.

The Australian Tuna Fishery has stated that with the increasing population of New Zealand Fur Seals it is causing a number of issues in the fishing industry, this resulting in thousands of dollars' worth of damage. I would like to re-alliterate on a previous comment, in just three days these seals have consumed a year's catch. Can you imagine the in-balance this is causing the marine ecosystem and the Lakes and Coorong Fisheries.

David Paton a professor of Ecology from Adelaide University spoke on the topic of New Zealand Fur Seals on 891 ABC on the 28th April. It is believed by Mr Paton that the management of these seals is not being dealt with correctly. When asked if we manage these animals well he responded with "I don't think we do, we tend to think that the problem will just go away." Another quote taken from this interview after speaking on his view with "culling" and "managing" the Fur Seals, "The notion here

would be we should be educating the community about the reasons why you would do this, that those species aren't going to be threatened by this, that any control program that's brought in will be humane but it actually helps support all other species which actually make this country a very different to many others.”

As stated in my notice of motion “This management plan to include a sustainable harvest of the New Zealand Fur Seals” I wish to give some background information on other countries which harvest the seals.

It is estimated that nine countries in the world have a management plan in place for the seals and they are the following:

1. Canada
2. United States
3. South Africa
4. Namibia
5. Iceland
6. Norway
7. Sweden

8. Finland

9. Greenland

It has been confirmed that Canada, United States, South Africa and Namibia all allow clubbing as a form of managing the Seals, I however do not condone this method. I believe there are much simpler and more humane way to deal with the issue, such as specifying high calibre rifles. The seals are used as meat for both humans and animals, seal oil which is rich in three kinds of Omega-3, this is widely believed to have numerous health benefits, various seal products like leather, handicrafts and there are also international trade opportunities, especially with China.

I would like to inform the House one of the reasons both Namibia and South Africa harvest the Seals is due to them praying on threatened seabirds or to address a burgeoning and unsustainable seal population which threatens the fishing industry.

The reasons provided above are very familiar to me, in fact, I believe that is because we are experiencing exactly this in South Australia right now.

The following animals are considered as either “invasive, overabundant or feral” species and are either farmed or culled:

1. Cane Toads
2. European Wild Rabbit
3. European Red Fox
4. Feral Camels
5. Feral Cats
6. Feral Deer
7. Feral Goat
8. Feral Horse
9. Feral Pigs
10. Feral Water Buffalo
11. Wallabies
12. Kangaroo's
13. Crocodiles
14. Tasmanian Brush tail Possums

How can some be so against a sustainable harvest when along with many other animals our national emblems are harvested, whether it be through an Emu farm, a secret Koala Cull, or just applying for a license to exterminate Kangaroos, Australia is not unfamiliar to harvesting overabundant species. Recently a story was told to me by someone who visited the markets while in Melbourne. This person found it very intriguing when she saw Kangaroo, Fox, Cow, Rabbit and many other skins being sold for people to have as an item in their home or as a coat or jacket. Should I also mention that we use crocodile, snake and emu for leather?

Why do we cull all these animals above? In particular Kangaroos. Because there is an overabundance of them. Again I say that this all sounds too familiar. The fisherman's wages in the affected areas are basically being slaughtered by the seals. Yet we have a Government that is happy to fully support the culling of many other animals for the same reasons stated above but are not supporting the local fisherman in the

Coorong and Lakes, instead they think alternate ways will fix the issue.

The State Government is considering the use of Underwater Fir Crackers to deter the seals from fisherman. It has been proven that in many cases the Cracker method has been effective for only short term use and eventually becomes ineffective. These Seals learn that crackers are no harm to them and simply ignore the sound. This will bring the Government, The Environment and the Fishing Industry back to square one, where the seals are still overabundant and do nothing more than cause havoc.

I'm sure those on the other side are more than aware of the petition I currently have circling in the region, it calls of the State Government to immediately implement an Overabundant Native Species Management Plan, which should include a sustainable harvest. This petition has been out for some weeks now and I have received minimal negative feedback, in fact the first week it was available it had received over 200 signatures, and I can assure you that number is growing very rapidly.

I am not saying we need to decimate the New Zealand Fur Seal population, but we do need to put an Active Management Plan in place because the environment and the fishing industry are and will continue to suffer.

I commend the motion.