

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 20TH OCTOBER 2016

NEW ZEALAND FUR SEALS

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:30): I rise today to talk again about the impact of the New Zealand fur seals on the Lakes and Coorong Fishery. I want to make some points about some of the questions I asked of the Minister for Environment in estimates on how they were managing the effects the New Zealand Fur Seals were having on native birdlife and Ngarrindjeri totems in the Lakes and Coorong. The minister made the claim that not one bird has been killed by the New Zealand fur seals. The minister is failing to include visual evidence from the Hon. Tammy Franks and from fishermen who have had to accept seals wreaking havoc on birdlife and their livelihoods as an everyday occurrence.

I recently came across some *Hansard* from a few years ago, when on numerous occasions the Minister for Environment stated that he was advised that New Zealand fur seals do occasionally kill and consume seabirds. On 11 September 2013, when the minister was asked by the Hon. Tammy Franks in the other place about what impact New Zealand fur seals were having on the little penguin species on Granite Island, he responded with the following:

It is true that New Zealand fur seals do sometimes eat seabirds, including penguins, but they form only a minor part of the seal's diet, I am advised. Most of a fur seal's diet is made up of red bait and lantern fish and small bait fish that have no commercial fishery in South Australia.

Again, when the minister was asked on 6 May 2015 about Granite Island he said:

It is true that—and the Hon. Ms Tammy Franks raised the issue of long-nosed fur seals—fur seals do sometimes eat seabirds, many varieties, including penguins, but I am advised that they form only a minor part of a seal's diet.

I find these comments very interesting considering the comments from the minister during estimates, when he confirmed more than once that in his belief not one bird had been killed by the New Zealand fur seals.

Furthermore, if the countless number of pelicans, musk ducks and other native birdlife were not killed by seals, why are they found dead and floating in the middle of the lake and over the barrages, where the seals sit all day, with only the contents of their stomachs eaten or their beaks torn off? Lastly, if these birds were killed by a feral inland animal, why do the fishermen keep witnessing attacks and finding them in the water? Those are very good questions, and I think it is time that, from the minister down, they had a very good look at what is happening in the Coorong and Lakes and put a proper overabundant native species management plan in place.

I will make some comments on some of the things the department has been trying, and they have been talking about trying crackers with the fishermen. These trials were started not quite 12 months ago. Underwater crackers cost

\$3.50 each, and one fisherman would need to use 10 to 20 crackers per session. There are 36 licences in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery and, on the basis of these fishermen going out 195 days by 10 crackers per day by 36 licences, this equates to \$245,000 per year the Lakes and Coorong Fishery has to find to fund the use of these crackers. It has also been suggested by one fisherman that they would need to catch an extra 100 kilograms of fish per week to make the cracker use profitable. The fishermen have not even had their second round of training to gain their permits to use the crackers. This is almost 12 months after the crackers were introduced.

Fishermen have told me that crackers are not the answer; they are just another tool in the toolbox which needs a lot more tools. The financial impacts on the fishermen can be clearly seen. One has adopted a tourism approach for their fishing industry on the Coorong, another has become the local baker, and another one has become involved in the local motel. As more and more fishermen and their workers drop out of the industry, I really do fear for the future and potential of the Lakes and Coorong Fishery until there is proper management of these New Zealand fur seals. The minister must take notice of the impact they are having not just on the fishing industry but also on the native birdlife in the area.