

Call for drastic measures on 'sea rats'



KELLY BARNES

Fisherman Tim Richards, who fishes in the Coorong, supports a cull on the fur seals that have invaded South Australian waters

A 'humane' cull is one option facing a growing population of fur seals

MICHAEL OWEN
THARVE COOK

A booming fur seal population in South Australia has sparked calls for a "humane" shooting program, as fishermen warn that only urgent action will save an industry on its knees.

An increasing number of "rats of the sea" have infiltrated the Coorong and Murray Lakes and have been seen as far as Murray Bridge, 75km southeast of Adelaide, sparking fears about their impact on the Murray River's recreation and tourism industry, which is worth about \$500 million a year.

Ski racing state titles last month were abandoned over safety fears related to seals. Liberal agriculture parliamentary secretary Adrian Pederrick will move a motion in state parliament



TAT SCHMAL

A colony of long-nosed fur seals in South Australia

ment today to sanction a cull to reduce seal numbers, which have increased to more than 100,000, an annual rise of more than 5 per cent.

Mr Pederrick said fur seals were wreaking havoc on the environment, attacking rare birds and pelicans and threatening the viability of the fishing industry.

More than 400 people in his southern Adelaide electorate have signed a petition backing a cull. Mr Pederrick said the "invas-

ing" seals were causing great distress to the environment and the fishing industry throughout lakes Albert and Alexandrina and into the Coorong.

"I am not talking about a wholesale harvest, I am talking about sensible management using a dedicated, high-calibre weapon with professional shooters," Mr Pederrick said yesterday.

"I think they (seals) are smart enough to disappear fairly quickly and get back out to the sea where they belong," Mr Pederrick said.

Second-generation fisherman Tim Richards, 50, said seal numbers "have just absolutely gone out of control" during the past 18 months and his industry "is on its knees".

Mr Richards's business is located in the small fishing town of Meningie on the banks of Lake Albert, the gateway to the Coorong, 150km southeast of Adelaide.

He said fish stocks were being damaged by seals and certain areas were no-go zones because of them, with catches and incomes halved.

Pelicans also were suffering from chest and necks from seals, he said, and the region's sensitive ecosystem was out of whack.

"I definitely support control measures, whether you call it a cull or whatever," he said. Waterproof devices such as crackers and plungers that govern

ment authorities wanted fishermen to use to scare off seals were only temporary measures that "last for a month until the seals get used to them".

"The seal numbers just need to be controlled ... time is our enemy," Mr Richards said.

"Leave it any longer than six months and I don't think we'll have an industry left — we need help."

Greens MP Tammy Franks said a cull was a "kneejerk reaction" and called for a cross-party response to consider other options, including "acoustic harassment devices".

A government spokesman said yesterday there were options other than culling, including modifications to fishing gear, exclusion devices and the development of non-lethal deterrents.

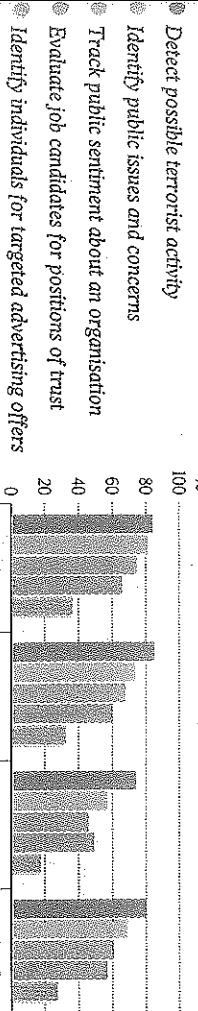
Many MFs are understood to be worried about a wider community backlash to a seal cull.

University of Adelaide professor of ecology David Paton has backed a cull, saying the key was educating the community about the reasons and reassuring people it would be humane.

Line terror surveillance but alarmed by 'creepy' ads

DATA DIVIDE

Percentage comfortable with organisations monitoring social media for specific purposes, by age



QUESTION: Please say whether you are comfortable or not comfortable with organisations monitoring publicly available social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to do each of the following things?

Unisys Security Insights survey, conducted by Newspoll, April 2015

targeted advertising with only 27 per cent viewing this as acceptable. However, the poll identified a shifting attitude between generations, with 36 per cent of younger Australians comfortable with the practice, compared with just 17 per cent of those older than 50.

Unisys Asia-Pacific security program director John Kendall said the poll results showed that a heightened awareness of the use

of social networks by terrorists had convinced Australians to forsake a degree of privacy.

"I think there is an extraordinary sense of tolerance when it comes to areas of national security," Mr Kendall said.

"There is a certain level of trust that people have that this is used for the right purpose and it resonates with their own personal values."

"Where Australians believe it is for the greater good, (they are) somewhat altruistic in being willing to give up privacy in return for greater national security."

But the rejection of the use of personal information by corporate entities was based on a view

that targeted advertising was "creepy".

"There are places in the world where this is accepted, but Australia is not one of them," Mr Kendall said. "They don't believe that monitoring their social media is something that commercial organisations should use for their own benefit."

"Consumers don't react well when they feel their personal information is being abused."

The Newspoll of 1210 people found Australians were largely ambivalent about employers evaluating job candidates through their online profiles, with 56 per cent saying they were comfortable with the practice.

Bosses warned on work drinks

PIA AKERMAN

Inappropriate behaviour flowing from too many drinks at the office Christmas party may not be a sackable offence — as long as the worst of the misconduct occurs outside the physical bounds of the official function.

A decision from the industrial umpire has paved the way for Stephen Keenan, who lost his job on a Leighton Boral Arney roads project in January, to reclaim his position despite drinking heavily at last year's Christmas party, telling his bosses to "k off" and hitting on female colleagues.

The case has also delivered a warning to employers who allow their staff to access their own drinks at work functions, with

'If alcohol is supplied ... (it is) predictable that some individuals will consume an excessive amount'

ADAM HATCHER
FAIR WORK VICE-PRESIDENT

Fair Work Commission vice-president Adam Hatcher declaring it "contradictory and self-defeating" for companies to expect good behaviour if there is free alcohol on tap. "If alcohol is supplied in such a manner, it becomes entirely predictable that some individuals will consume an excessive amount and behave inappropriately," he said.

The commission heard that while in a hotel function room — where guests were able to serve themselves bottled beer — Mr Keenan told a Leighton Boral Arney director "f, k off mate" after being interrupted in a conversation, as well as repeatedly asking a female colleague for her telephone number.

After the function officially ended at 10pm, Mr Keenan moved to the public bar area where he touched another female colleague's face, told another he used to consider her a "stuck-up bitch", and finally grabbed another with no warning and kissed her on the mouth. He allegedly told her afterwards: "I'm going to go home and dream about you tonight."

While waiting for a taxi to head to another pub, Mr Keenan told another female colleague: "My mission tonight is to find out what colour your knickers you have on (sic)."

She replied, "They are white, touch my skirt and I'll kill you."

Mr Keenan was elected the Australian Workers Union delegate on the project in April last year, and was also one of the two elected employee work health and safety representatives.

The AWU argued that his conduct after the end of the function at the public bar and out in the street was outside the scope of his employment was properly characterised as private activity and therefore did not represent a valid reason for dismissal.

Mr Hatcher agreed the dismissal was harsh and unjust and will hold a further hearing on whether Mr Keenan can return to his job without being near the colleague he kissed.