

# Calls to control seal population

By MICHAEL SIMMONS

Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick has called for the state government to act on the increasing numbers of New Zealand fur seals and he has the support of the local fishing community and the Victor Harbor mayor.

Mr Pederick, whose electorate includes the Coorong and Lower Lakes, wants the government to immediately prepare and implement an Overabundant Native Species Management Plan.

He has instigated a petition for the plan to be implemented.

The petition will urge the government to immediately implement a management plan, which should include a sustainable harvest of the New Zealand fur seals/long-nosed fur seals.

However, the state government environment department said there is no scientific support for culling or relocation, and these options have proven ineffective, but is aware of the petition and the concerns of commercial fishermen.

Mr Pederick said the New Zealand fur seal population is over 100,000 in South Australia, is rapidly increasing and is having serious effects on the state's marine life, the environment and the fishing industry.

"They are taking over and these fur seals will have an environmental impact in the future if they get down to the Southern Lagoon and Pelican Island and take out the pelican breeding grounds," Mr Pederick said.

"The acting district ranger for the Coorong has advised that the amount of birds injured or killed by the New Zealand fur seals is very high.

"Cultural rangers are having to euthanase pelicans with broken wings or with their legs torn off; injuries inflicted by the New Zealand fur seals.

"They've already taken out the Little Penguin populations on Granite Island and Kangaroo Island."

City of Victor Harbor mayor Graham Philip said he has been moving in this direction for the past two years.

Earlier this year he lodged two petitions in parliament with the assistance of Member for Finniss Michael Penilly.

One petition online had over 1000 signatures and a hard copy, which was circulated through the local community, also had 1000 signatures.

"There can be no dispute that the New Zealand fur seal population has been and still is, in rapid increase," Mr Philip said.

"We also know what a direct effect it has had on Little Penguin populations, with so many colonies wiped out and more to follow.

"The Coorong is a world heritage environment area which helps support many endangered species.

"There are now as many as 300 seals in this area, which are placing the ecosystem at risk and also at risk is our marine tourism industry.

"I suppose this may be able to adjust, the only predator for the seals are sharks."

In the Coorong fishery there are 33 licensed fishermen, and according to Mr Pederick their income is being decimated by New Zealand fur seals.

"They kill fish, and cost thousands of dollars in lost production of fish and in lost sales due to damage," Mr Pederick said.

"I had a net delivered to me and it was torn apart and I've been shown pictures of fish with their heads and tails torn off."

Darren Hoed of Hoed Fisheries has been fishing in the Coorong and Lower Lakes for 30 years and cannot believe how many seals are now in the fishery's water.

"Twenty years ago we would not see a seal, now they are everywhere," Mr Hoed said.

"We are licensed to have 10 nets from Tauwichtere to the Goolwa Barrage and we used to set at night and run them in the morning.

"Now we can't, we have to run them all the time, sometimes after just 15 minutes, as the seals will destroy your catch.

"Some days you will catch 100 to 150 kilograms of fish and the next you will have none and your nets trashed.

"We have to do something, they are breeding so much and getting thicker and thicker.

"I encourage people to sign the petition, as if it keeps going there will be no fish."

A Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) spokesperson said the



**SEAL FOOD:** Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick said seals are damaging the incomes of Coorong fishermen.

seals are now known as long-nosed fur seals.

"The name was changed to correct a widespread misconception that they were not native to South Australia," a spokesperson said.

"The South Australian Government understands the concerns of commercial fishers impacted by increases in long-nosed fur seal populations, particularly in the Coorong and Lower Lakes areas.

"The seals are a natural part of the marine ecosystem, not an environmental pest."

DEWNR does not agree that seals are impacting on pelicans and other bird life.

"Although some small seabirds, they form a very minor part of a seal's diet, which is made up mostly of redstart and lantern fish," the spokesperson said.

"The state government is committed to basing policy decisions on the best available science regarding this complex issue and continues to work with scientific and research institutions on assessments of the impacts of populations on the seafood industry and the broader environment.

"It is essential that industry invest in socially acceptable solutions."

DEWNR said they are working intensively with the fishery industry, local community and scientific institutions to find the best way to manage any impacts of seals in the Coorong and methods shown to be effective include modifying fishing practices and gear, and using deterrents such as firetracers.

## No update on dog hanging

VICTOR HARBOR - Police have released no update about an animal cruelty incident in Victor Harbor last month, other than saying investigations are continuing.

Victor Harbor resident Hayley Nash's Red Heeler was stolen from her yard and hung off the Greenhills Road overpass on Sunday, May 31.

'Red' was found by City of Victor Harbor council staff about 6am on Sunday, hanging from the bridge by a rope, and returned to Ms Nash on the same day.

Last week, Ms Nash and her partner, Paul Benson, alleged a Victor Harbor police officer was responsible for the crime.

On Wednesday, June 10, SAPOL acting commissioner Grant Stevens was forced to deny the allegations, saying SAPOL had "categorically

ruled out that a police officer was involved".

"The matter was thoroughly investigated by SAPOL's Ethical and Professional Standards Branch who continue to work with the complainants on this matter," he said.

On Monday, June 15, *The Times* asked SAPOL what charges the culprit would face if he or she was caught and how many days SAPOL's Ethical and Professional Standards Branch investigated the complaint for.

A police spokesperson responded with "police are continuing to investigate this matter".

Anyone who saw suspicious behaviour in the area on Sunday, May 31, is asked to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or online at [www.sa.crimestoppers.com.au](http://www.sa.crimestoppers.com.au)

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