

Nuatali Nelmes, Lord Mayor  
City of Newcastle Council

11 May 2021

Dear Lord Mayor:

Hello, I hope this letter finds you well. I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to commend City of Newcastle Council for voting to dispense with shark nets. As you've rightly recognised, their impact on marine life is devastating. **While laudable, this move is hollow if the council doesn't also do all it can to reduce the risk of the most dangerous nets in the ocean: fishing nets.**

Currently, the global fishing fleet is two and a half times larger than what oceans can support. Experts estimate that more than 650,000 marine mammals and turtles are injured or killed annually by the commercial fishing industry. Meanwhile, shrimp trawlers discard as much as 80% of their catch.

Another concern, of course, is ocean plastic pollution. Contrary to popular belief, the biggest culprit when it comes to marine plastics is not plastic straws but discarded fishing gear. More than 640,000 tonnes of nets, lines, pots, and traps used in commercial fishing are discarded in the sea every year, and up to 70% (by weight) of the macroplastics floating on the surface of the ocean are related to fishing.

Leaving fish in the sea is itself an act of conservation. In 2015, researchers from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University found that fishing removes important predatory fish from the reef ecosystem, causing significant changes to the make-up of its fish populations. Sadly, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that 90% of commercial fish "stocks" are fully exploited.

Fishing is also deeply cruel. Research confirms that fish are sensitive individuals who feel pain, form complex relationships, have good memories, and possess cognitive abilities not unlike those of dogs and some primates. Yet each year, trillions of fish are yanked from their homes – gasping for breath – and bludgeoned or left to suffocate before being beheaded and gutted.

**While we wait for the state government to do the right thing regarding shark nets, City of Newcastle Council could already be protecting precious marine animals by prohibiting the consumption of sea life at council functions.**

We sincerely hope compassion, moral consistency, and a willingness to put your beliefs into practice will prevail. We stand ready to share with you vegan alternatives to everything from calamari to salmon.

May we please hear back from you?

Yours faithfully,



Emily Rice  
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