



The Hon Steven Marshall MP
Premier of South Australia

24 September 2020

Dear Premier,

We'd like to thank the South Australian government for banning some single-use plastics, which, as the government rightly notes, maim and kill countless animals – especially those who call the ocean home.

By discarding a staggering amount of plastic in the ocean, the fishing industry takes a huge toll on that ecosystem. Given the government's concern for animals and the environment, we hope it'll enact a policy based on common sense, moral consistency, and conservation and prohibit the consumption of sea animals at government events as well as in the staff café at the State Administration Centre.

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.

Of course, 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. Fish-filled oceans are essential to life on Earth, yet the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations reports that 90% of commercial fish "stocks" are fully exploited.

Of course, fishing is also very cruel. Research confirms that fish are sensitive animals 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.

South Australia's new policy on single-use plastics is a laudable step towards ocean conservation, but prohibiting the consumption of sea animals at government events and eateries would be even more powerful and purposeful.

We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Emily Rice
PETA Australia

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

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