



Chris Cherry, Mayor
Tweed Shire Council

8 September 2022

Dear Mayor:

I hope this message finds you well. We're pleased that Tweed Shire Council plans to ban helium balloons owing to the "devastating effects that balloons have on dolphins, fish, turtles, sea birds etc.". It's true that the planet – and all its inhabitants – is vulnerable, and once we know better, we must do better. **That's why I'm sharing some information about a huge threat to the environment – including oceans – and trillions of lives and urging Tweed Shire Council to lead the way and take sea animals off the menu at all council events.**

Non-biodegradable items like balloons do contribute to ocean pollution, but what many don't realise is that it's actually abandoned fishing gear that is "the most harmful form of marine debris and one of the biggest threats to marine life", per one report. At least 640,000 tonnes of abandoned fishing gear are added to our oceans every year. A shocking 46% of the 1.6 million-square-kilometre Great Pacific Garbage Patch comprises discarded fishing nets.

Commercial fishing causes [global devastation on a massive scale](#). More than 1 *trillion* fish and other sea animals die at the hands of humans each year, and although they may not always express suffering in ways humans can easily recognise, experts agree that fish feel pain and possess cognitive abilities comparable to those of dogs and some primates.

Of course, it's not only the intended species who suffer. More than 300,000 whales and dolphins and approximately 50 million sharks as well as turtles and sea birds are also killed each year as "bycatch". In fact, [an estimated 45% of the marine mammals listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List have been negatively affected by "ghost gear"](#).

A 2021 study by 26 marine biologists, climate experts, and economists found that [fishing trawlers release as much carbon dioxide – 1 gigaton every year – as the entire aviation industry](#). Also, as huge trawler nets sweep the ocean floors clean, they [damage delicate coral forests](#) and cause extensive erosion, which impedes the ocean's ability to sequester carbon.

Simply by removing fish from the menu at all Tweed Shire Council meetings and events, you can help protect the oceans and those who call them home.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Emily Rice
PETA Australia

PEOPLE FOR
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