



Conservation Council SA

Hon Tim Whetstone MP
Minister for Primary Industries
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Sent via: Minister.Whetstone@sa.gov.au

10th September 2019

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Dear Minister,

It has been brought to my attention that a review into regulations enabling the use of pyramid nets as permitted fishing devices in South Australia is underway, with a view to mitigate risks to native fauna.

Open-top pyramid and similar open-top bucket style (hoop and drop) traps reduce the likelihood of non-target wildlife drowning, while still functioning as effective yabby traps.

I write to submit that enclosed and opera house style yabby (freshwater crayfish) traps should be banned as recreational fishing devices in South Australia. These traps have unacceptable and unnecessary impacts on wildlife, with many reports of non-target animals, including listed species, drowned in traps. These include:

- The Rakali is a unique semi-aquatic freshwater species also known as the Australian Water-Rat. It has a lifespan of just 3-4 years; prolonged recent drought is likely to have affected the overall population of this species, only just recovering from historical trade in its distinctive pelt. It is a cryptic species which does not form large colonies like its feral namesake, but rather has home ranges defended by solitary animals who come together to mate, with the female only nursing 2-4 young at a time. These attractive native animals are carnivorous and become trapped in enclosed yabby traps, including opera traps, regardless of any 'fixed ring'. As an air breathing mammal, this species will drown within 1-2 minutes.
- South Australia has three species of tortoise, locally known as freshwater turtles. Two of these species, the Broad-Shelled Tortoise and the Macquarie Tortoise are listed in the NPW Act 1972 as vulnerable, and their habitat coincides with that of the yabby. They are carnivorous species and will venture into enclosed yabby pots, where they drown within a couple of hours.
- The platypus is listed in the NPW Act 1972 as endangered in South Australia. The known range of platypus includes along the Murray River and also the Glenelg River, both of which extend into South Australia. Platypus swim with their eyes closed, relying on sensors on their

bill for navigation. These mammals become trapped in enclosed and opera house yabby nets, and drown within minutes. With drought, habitat loss and introduced predators all taking a toll on our iconic freshwater wildlife, a simple change in the net style used by recreational yabby fishers could lessen the pressure on freshwater wildlife, and we may find platypus in more places downstream in the future.

There are viable alternatives. Open topped traps known as drop nets and hoop nets are permitted fishing devices in South Australia, and are suitable for yabby fishing. These devices allow air breathing mammals such as Rakali and Platypus, and swimming freshwater turtles to find an exit before drowning. Along with open-top pyramid nets, they are the only type of yabby traps permitted in neighbouring Victoria, where enclosed traps including opera house traps are now banned. NSW and ACT have recently announced the intention to ban enclosed and opera style traps to protect non-target wildlife.

South Australia can provide consistency across the region by also banning these traps, and we would encourage a replica of the successful trap swap implemented in Victoria where opera house traps could be handed in to tackle stores and replaced with wildlife friendly open-top lift nets – similar to hoop or drop nets. This allowed recreational fishers to easily transition to wildlife friendly traps and the safe disposal of old traps whilst also facilitating broad community education about appropriate traps. Open top lift traps have been shown to have a similar success rate as enclosed traps for yabby fishing, without the detrimental effect on wildlife.

I urge you to bring South Australia in line with our neighbouring states by banning enclosed and opera style yabby traps in South Australia.

Yours sincerely,



Craig Wilkins

Chief Executive

Cc Minister David Speirs