

The Hon. Mark Furner, MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Shark Netting & Marine Life Entanglement

We are writing to express our deep concerns over the lack of effective measures to end the continued entanglement of whales and dolphins in shark nets on the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia.

The Gold Coast prides itself on its natural resources – clean beaches, blue waters and abundant marine life – with whale watching and marine-life based tourism a multi-million dollar industry in this region. Together with the Queensland government, we all have a desire and duty of care to ensure that whales and dolphins continue to call our coast their home, now and in the future.

The eleven shark nets installed as part of the Queensland shark control program, in addition to continuing coastal modification, are putting whales and dolphins at risk.

In the past twenty-five years, there have been over one hundred and fifty reported entanglements of whales and dolphins in south-east Queensland shark nets, with the majority killed or injured and an unknown number of unattended incidents. In 2014 alone 6 whales were entangled and 8 dolphins were killed in the Gold Coast shark control program. Between 1992 to 2020 the program reports 68 whales entangled of which 7 died in shark nets on the Gold Coast. Every year the risk of entanglements increases by almost 10% with increasing whale numbers migrating past the Gold Coast.

The entanglements of whales and dolphins in shark nets are costly, cause injury or death to the animals and put rescuers in danger. They are also negative publicity for a tourist destination and cause damage to Australia's image as nation.

Australia has been a longstanding and outspoken advocate for the protection of cetaceans at the International Whaling Commission. Australia has also signed international agreements to protect threatened cetaceans in Australian waters. The rest of the world measures our country based on its action. Protecting whales at our doorstep is equally as important as putting pressure on whale hunting nations.

The Gold Coast is home to a unique whale resting area in trust for the rest of the world. We therefore urge you to increase your efforts to secure south-east Queensland as an area where humpback whale calves can rest and dolphins forage without facing death or injury in the nets.

We wish for a constructive dialog with the government to establish independent research and translate the best available knowledge into effective management to stop entanglements. As a result, agreed policies and management actions can be established to protect humans and marine mammals.

We, the undersigned, therefore ask you to work together to find solutions to remedy

and mitigate the impacts of shark netting as a matter of urgency by:

- Centering management decisions and policies on the best available **independent scientific information** to prevent costly entanglements, causing unnecessary pain or death to marine mammals;
- Developing objective, science-based, measurable and testable **management targets** for the avoidance of entanglements;
- Implementing a comprehensive, scientifically sound **observer program** to identify and quantify interactions, and to assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures.
- **Removing nets** during whale migration, in particular the nets in the southern Gold Coast bay with the highest incident numbers and replacing them with alternative shark protection gear such as but not limited to: video/aerial surveillance; ecofriendly barriers; sonar barriers; satellite tagging and methods that are directed to mitigate incidents with large shark.

We, the undersigned, are seeking a collaborative approach on effective strategies that mitigate and lessen entanglements of whales and dolphins in the Gold Coast bay.

Please, help us to protect whales and dolphins from entanglements.

Yours faithfully

The undersigned parties

