



Mr Anthony Beasley
 Secretary to the Committee
 C/- Parliament House
 Adelaide SA, 5001
 By email: scdolphins@parliament.sa.gov.au

23 October 2022

Dear Secretary to the Committee,

RE: Select Committee Inquiry on Dolphins in the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary and Port River

The Conservation Council SA welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee's inquiry on *Dolphins in the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary and Port River*.

The Conservation Council SA is an independent, non-profit and strictly non-party political organisation representing around 60 of South Australia's environment and conservation organisations and their 90,000 members.

We are deeply concerned at the ongoing degradation of the environment in the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary and the declining numbers of dolphins.

The presence of dolphins in an industrial port so close to a major city centre is a unique and wonderful gift to the people of South Australia. The Sanctuary was established to ensure the dolphin pod's survival and the preservation of their habitat, and the powers in the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Act are extensive. Yet, the population is declining, and the future of the pod is of major concern.

We welcome the Committee's broad and timely review of potential causes, stressors and impacts, including industrial pollutants, impact of recreational line and commercial net fishing, dredging, level of enforcement, boat activity and other human disturbance.

We are particularly focused on the impacts upon dolphins and other marine life from the die-off of the St Kilda mangroves following illegal contamination from hypersaline brine. As noted in the current ADS Management Plan, "*Seagrasses and mangroves are key ADS habitat elements, directly supporting overall ecosystem health.*"

It is still unclear the extent of the negative impact on dolphin habitat from the hypersaline poisoning and mangrove die-off, as the brine slug is still travelling out into the gulf and sea grass via groundwater.

In addition, there has been a die-off of invertebrates and other marine life in the food chain potentially impacting dolphin food sources.

We welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee.

Recommendations

1. **The Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary (ADS) Management Plan needs to be urgently revised and updated.** The current ADS Management Plan was published in June 2008 and is now 14 years old. Its publication predates the closure of the salt-fields; the construction of the North-South Motorway; the loss of the Little Para Retreat Zone; and the loss of the Mutton Cove seawall. It should also be noted that under the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (SA), the Minister must take into account the provisions of the ADS Management Plan; the Minister is being poorly served by an out of date Management Plan.
2. **The Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Advisory Board (ADSAB) should be re-established** to advise the Minister on the effectiveness of the ADS Management Plan in achieving the Objects (section 7) and Objectives (section 8) the *Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Act 2005* (SA); to engage in monitoring and evaluation of the Sanctuary; to advise the Minister on the predicted trajectory of the Sanctuary and opportunities for improvement, as measured against the Objects and Objectives of the Act.
3. **The Government should increase protections in the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary**, including:
 - a. **banning the use of heavy gauge fishing practices and the use of large hooks, live bait and trawling;** and
 - b. **implementing a permanent reduction of boat speeds.**
4. **The Government should effectively resource the implementation and enforcement of the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Act 2005 (SA)**, and proactively follow through on enforcement actions. This requires the ongoing presence of full-time rangers. DEW's ability to effectively manage the Act and the Sanctuary is compromised by a lack of resources.
5. There appears to be continuing industrial toxic and heavy pollution into the Sanctuary and marine environment. **A greater focus on enforcement and monitoring of pollution sources is required**, informed by a comprehensive audit of pollutants and potential sources.
6. As noted in the current ADS Management Plan, "*Seagrasses and mangroves are key ADS habitat elements, directly supporting overall ecosystem health.*"¹; **the removal of the hypersaline brine from the leaking ponds adjacent to the St Kilda Mangrove boardwalk** (pond PA6) is required as a matter of urgency, followed by a comprehensive program of flushing and rehabilitation of the mangrove die-off area.

¹ See: Issue 2.2, p11, *Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Management Plan*, Department for Environment and Heritage, June 2008; <https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/docs/cons-gen-dolphinsanctmanagplan.pdf>

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit to the Select Committee's inquiry into *Dolphins in the Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary and Port River*; the Conservation Council SA looks forward to continuing its engagement with the Government on these issues.

We look forward to presenting to the Committee on the 27th October. If you require further information, please contact me at craig.wilkins@conservationsa.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Craig', followed by a stylized flourish or checkmark.

Craig Wilkins
Chief Executive