



**Southern Bluefin Tuna
8th May 2006**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): At last, the bluefin tuna's place on the international list of threatened species is being reviewed. Brian Jeffries, the Chairman of the Tuna Boat Owners Association, has welcomed the review, stating on ABC radio today:

We actually have asked 13 times in writing to the group who run that list, exactly for any documents which could justify the listing. As of this stage, they haven't produced one document. Now what they're doing to their credit is now reviewing the whole situation as to whether that should've been listed or not.

The Australian southern bluefin tuna industry is estimated to be worth about \$1 billion, almost all of which is in South Australia. The industry has had many ups and downs in the almost 50 years of its operation. That led to tuna farming and a rebirth of the fishing industry in a new direction. **The Hon. M.J. Atkinson:** Why did the tuna barons back Hank?

Mrs PENFOLD: Hagan, I think, not industry. The majority of southern bluefin tuna caught in Australian waters is caught off the South Australian coast. The fish are transferred to cages to fatten and grow, then sold on the lucrative Japanese sashimi market. While southern bluefin tuna are not the only fish used for sashimi, they are considered among the best for this purpose.

For many decades some of those in the industry have experimented to find ways to close the tuna cycle. This has been recognised by other nations that fish for southern bluefin tuna, principally Japan, as a necessary factor if the fishery is to continue and expand in the future. Some of that research and experimentation is being done here in South Australia and on Eyre Peninsula by the Stehr group at Arno Bay.

The leaders in the Australian section of this worldwide fishery have been concerned for decades about the future of their industry. They were among the first—if not the first—to push for quotas and a reduction of effort. Australia has consistently obeyed the restrictions. It is ironic that, while Australian fishers obey the rules, some other nations that fish for southern bluefin tuna do not necessarily see quotas as a constraint to be observed.

An increase in the effort required to catch the same tonnage of fish in the wild as in past years was noted decades ago, when leaders began to push for limitations. They were concerned about the sustainability long before sustainability became a catchword trotted out on almost every occasion by a certain group of people in relation to anything and almost everything.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: Why did you lose two of the three Port Lincoln booths?

Mrs PENFOLD: I didn't.

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: You did.

Mrs PENFOLD: Labor lost 3.3 per cent of their vote on the Eyre Peninsula. Those both inside and outside the industry who are genuinely concerned about sustainability worked together for solutions. The formation of a worldwide body that included all countries that fish for southern bluefin tuna was a major step forward in the introduction of quotas that were eventually accepted by participating nations.

The ones who have the most to lose if the fishery collapses are those involved in it, or depending on it for their livelihood. Conversely, they are the ones to gain most by ensuring that the fishery is stable and recovering in the wild so that any suggestion that southern bluefin tuna is an endangered species is removed. When tuna fishing, as an industry, took off in Port Lincoln in the 1950s there was also a thriving tuna industry operating out of Eden in New South Wales. That base and cannery have long since gone. While the Port Lincoln cannery is thriving, the tuna species is no longer the valuable southern bluefin tuna.

Longliners have been credited with seriously depleting southern bluefin tuna boats. Local boats preferred poling and later purse seining. In poling a line with a barbless hook on the end was attached to a pole about three metres in length. The hook was flung into the school of tuna and the fish were flipped aboard, when caught. It was extremely physical and tiring work. Purse seining is a method where a long net is run around a school of fish and then pulled in at the bottom so the fish cannot escape.

The fish are often caught in the Great Australian Bight and are carefully pulled to Port Lincoln, where they are artificially fed until they reach their optimum weight for the Japanese market, when they are humanely killed and flown chilled or frozen and shipped to the lucrative Asian markets. The value to this state of the employment and associated industries that live off the tuna industry is probably, in its own right, worth much more than a billion dollars. There are boats and crews, shipyards and slips that build and maintain the boats and the staff employed.