



**TUNA INDUSTRY
25 July 2001**

Mrs PENFOLD: It has been rightly stated that one of the few things that stay the same is change. Change is constant of all things, including successful businesses and successful parliaments. Today, I pay tribute to a change in the tuna industry in Port Lincoln, and to one of its pioneers, Joe Puglisi. Joe, who fished off the New South Wales coast, came to Port Lincoln in the early days of the tuna industry when fish were caught by the poling method. This method of fishing is physically demanding and backbreaking work, given the size of the fish caught. The drama of those days has been captured by Colin Thiele in his book *Bluefin*. Colin Thiele made up a fictional cast of characters to create a story based on real life incidents. There was the year when oil companies refused to extend any more credit. However, the state government intervened and companies allowed fuel for one more trip. The boats began to catch the tuna that had eluded them, and so the collapse of what had become a very lucrative industry was narrowly averted.

In the early days, most of the fish were marketed through SAFCOL, which began as a fishermen's cooperative, and its Port Lincoln cannery. SAFCOL also changed over the years. Fishermen moved to doing their own marketing and canning in their own factories. The identification of the Japanese sashimi market was a significant turning point. It brought added value to the industry, along with a new learning curve to present fish appropriate for the sashimi market. This change brought closer ties with Japan. Tuna is a migratory fish that covers the oceans of the world in a manner that would satisfy the most intrepid sailor. While the general pattern of migration could be determined, the fish still had to be found.

As the years went by, leaders in the industry were concerned at the difficulty of locating schools and at the decreased returns for increased effort. Joe Puglisi was one who recognised the need for sustainability in the industry and worked to that end. It was decided that the introduction of quotas was the best way forward, but it was ineffective for Australia to go it alone in an industry where several nations competed for the harvest. Talks with Japan and New Zealand brought about a tripartite agreement that has stood the test of time. However, the necessity to maintain income to maintain the profitability of the industry was the next hurdle. Tuna farming became the next innovation to value add. This, too, was a new venture where no advice of what to do or how to do it was available. It was a matter of trial and error. It was not even known whether tuna could be held and thrive in confined spaces.

The success of tuna farming is a tribute to the skill, ingenuity and commitment of Port Lincoln tuna fishermen. Joe Puglisi, by now joined by his sons Joe Jnr and David, was a pioneer in this field. Living things require food to stay alive and prosper, and that became the next problem to be solved. While progress has been made to supplement pilchards, difficulties have been experienced. This is where the international company, Stolt Sea Farm Holdings, came into the picture. This Norwegian company has bought Australian Bluefin, the tuna fishing and farming company founded by the Puglisi family. The family has retained some of its business interests, such as a portion of the southern bluefin quota. Stolt Sea Food Farming is the world leader in producing turbot, halibut, sturgeon and sturgeon caviar, and is experienced in producing pellet feed for their fish. The latter gives promise of further positive developments in the future.

Another thing Mr Puglisi has been considering for five years or so is the need to process and package tuna to value add before export. Stolt Sea Food Farm Holdings has the experience and technology to do this as an extension of what it already does with its other fish species. Joe has said that Port Lincoln has become a focus on the international scene not only because of his company's success but also because of Port Lincoln. Port Lincoln has advanced with the tuna industry, and it is the mutual support between the industry and the people of Port Lincoln that has contributed to Port Lincoln's becoming the premiere fishing port in Australia.

Time expired.

TUNA INDUSTRY

7 June 1995

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I draw the House's attention to a unique industry that has now been founded in Boston Bay in Port Lincoln, involving tuna farms. In 1982-83 catches peaked in the wild fishery but then fell dramatically. Five years ago Joe Puglisi decided that something was needed if the industry was to survive. At that time 15 kilogram tuna were being sold to the cannery for 90¢ per kilo. Now that the tuna farms have been in existence for five years they are selling 60 kilogram fish for a price of \$25-plus per kilo to the sashimi market in Japan, sashimi being a delicacy to the Japanese people. Five years ago there was no income from the farming of tuna fish, whereas this year we expect to make \$80 million, with an expected \$200 million in the next few years. Like all good ideas, this one was born of necessity, and it is a credit to people like Joe Puglisi, tuna boat owners and the people in the industry who have created this business. It is bringing people from around the world, and it is surprising to me how few people in Adelaide and South Australia are even aware of it.

A major research project was undertaken in 1990 by the Tuna Boat Owners Association jointly with the Japanese Overseas Fishing Cooperative and the State Government. The Japanese Overseas Fishing Cooperative put in \$2 million to assist with funding. During this research the project examined the capture of tuna from the wild and the transport of tuna from the wild into cages in the bay. It looked at the different holding systems, which over the past five years have evolved greatly. More recently, an aquaculture management plan has been undertaken for Boston Bay. The effects on the bay and its environment, including the effects of the nutrients put into the farms and of the dispersal of those nutrients, have been investigated. This aquaculture management plan was undertaken with considerable consultation involving the public, Government and industry.

More recently, a nutrition research project has been undertaken with the National Agriculture Research Centre. SARDI and the tuna boat owners have recently had their first trials of a soft food pellet. That pellet is to supplement the pilchards that have been brought from America and Japan into Boston Harbor to feed fish in the tuna farm.

The Marine Science Centre, which was built this year on the shores of Port Lincoln, acknowledges the importance of the fishing industry to that area and to the State. Not only do we have tuna but we also have oysters, abalone and crayfish. We are the premier fishing port in Australia. Our harbor is five times larger than Sydney Harbour.

Joe Puglisi, who developed the farm idea, spoke at a luncheon meeting at the Tunarama Festival for the ABC Businesswoman of the Year award. Mr Puglisi pointed out the value of the tuna farms also for tourism. As he said, they are unique. Japanese tourists will love to visit the farms at Port Lincoln, catch a tuna and take millions of photographs to show back home. They will be marvellous ambassadors. Sashimi is such an expensive delicacy in Japan that to serve a meal of unlimited sashimi to those Japanese tourists will be a never-ending talking point and excellent publicity for Eyre Peninsula, Port Lincoln and South Australia.

Another television personality, Rex Hunt, was impressed with the fishing along the Eyre Peninsula coastline, so the region is receiving further positive publicity as a result. He, too, was impressed with the scale of the tuna farm operations. As he said, they are an innovation that is leading the world.

It is not only Japanese tourists who will be interested in this initiative. Tourists are coming from as far afield as America to look at what we are doing in tuna farming. It is important that we devise packages that are specifically designed to suit tourists in this boutique industry. Hundreds of jobs are being provided as a spin-off from tuna farms. The tourism potential, research and development, and education in and the manufacture of food all involve employing people. Therefore, that one innovative idea has created a great number of jobs in an area that badly needs them.

TUNA INDUSTRY

13 April 1994

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I want to draw attention to a new and exciting fishing industry that is already generating huge wealth for Port Lincoln and for South Australia's economy. I refer to the tuna farms established inside Boston Harbour at Port Lincoln. The hardy fishermen based in Port Lincoln catch wild tuna miles out to sea in a costly and dangerous operation involving several types of high tech fishing boats. Briefly, the operation involves a tuna boat chumming up a school of tuna and bringing them to the surface to feed. A purse seiner ship is then used to throw a huge net all the way around the school, eventually trapping the fish. Two large outboard aluminium boats are used to keep the net open while the travelling fish net, towed at about 1 knot an hour, is brought alongside.

The net of the purse seiner is opened directly to the towing cage and the fish, thinking of escape, are herded into this cage. Often this operation is carried out in extremely rough weather. Feeding the tuna to increase their fat content and to improve their flesh colour commences on the slow and laborious trip back to Boston Harbor and the fish farm, where

the tuna spend the next three to four months. This year, the tuna farms will generate a similar value to the economic welfare of the State—

The Hon. FRANK BLEVINS: Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the House.

A quorum having been formed:

Mrs PENFOLD: This year, the tuna farms will generate a similar value to the economic welfare of the State as the total South Australian dairy industry, and this is only the second year of farming tuna. The fishing companies involved in this venture have taken a fish that was once sold to a cannery for a few cents a kilogram and turned it into a product commanding a premium price from the Japanese of approximately \$50 to \$80 per kilogram. However, despite this success, there are several issues that require urgent attention. The product from these fish farms has to be flown to Japan as quickly as possible to be presented to markets in the best possible condition.

Some of the companies involved in this exciting export trade are using airlines flying out of Sydney Airport to take their product to Japan. This involves taking a perishable product for nearly an extra day by road transport to its destination, and that has an effect on the product as the truckload of fresh fish bounces across the nation. Many companies would rather use Adelaide to export their products, but when a fresh product is being dispatched every week to service a discerning market a regular carrier is required. Too often freight is left behind at Adelaide as safety margins for take-off are adhered to, particularly in hot weather—the worst time for fish to be left on the tarmac.

The length of the Adelaide Airport runway is severely restricting the full benefits the fish farms can bring to South Australia. As a matter of urgency, I request the Premier and his Government to investigate the possibility of attracting more freight-carrying aircraft to South Australia, conducting an audit on what freight is going interstate for export, and taking steps to win this cargo back for dispatch out of Adelaide.

I am sure that with the right incentives for an operator to get started, and with promotion, we can increase our trade links with South-East Asia and Japan using air freight out of Adelaide, even if we have to use the Edinburgh base as a starting point. However, we must identify what freight is already leaving South Australia for dispatch by air. From there the possibilities are endless. The growth in the air freight industry has been meteoric and there is every possibility the Government could attract an operator who is interested in operating out of Adelaide on a regular basis.