

**SUBMISSION TO SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATION RE  
SUPER TRAWLERS**

I had thought that in 2012 when the question of the Margiris, later named the Abel Tasman and now the Geelong Star had been resolved and would not be allowed to obtain a licence. How wrong was I?

The only reason the vessel was financially viable in the northern hemisphere was because of EU fuel subsidies. So it was hard to believe, that a trawler of that size and with enormous costs to sail down here would do so just on the off chance that it could get a licence to fish.

However the answer it seemed, according to the 4 Corners program of October 22 2012 was that the federal government had more or less said it would get permits so no wonder it took the chance. So much for transparency in government! More backroom deals!

Diversity is the fairest way in any industry and for one company to be allowed to take such a huge proportion of fish is not fair to the countless smaller businesses which are the life blood of the Australian economy.

Apart from the income from the occasional docking of the vessel and provision of food and other necessities surely all its profits would head overseas. So Australia will not only lose any profits but also a large chunk of its pelagic marine life which will affect the whole food chain and the livelihoods of the countless tourism operators and recreational fishermen which rely on this resource. What possible benefit is there, therefore, to Australia in allowing this super trawler to fish in our waters?

As regards AFMA's involvement, the so called scientific modelling had been based on data 10 years old so there is no guarantee that overfishing will not occur as no one really knows how many fish there were to start with, in which case the precautionary principle should have been invoked.

- The conditions laid out in 2012 did nothing to address the concerns of conservationists and recreational or commercial fishers about local over exploitation of fish stocks
- The conditions allow up to 10 seals to be killed every day, if more are killed a simple 'review' is triggered and the trawler is required to move 50 nautical miles. Trawlers can cover these distances in a few hours and given marine wildlife such as seals, dolphins and turtles are highly mobile this does nothing to protect them.
- The conditions do not address the flow on effect of localised depletion of fish stocks on the marine environment or the flow on effects to other marine wildlife which may lose their food source such as penguins, tuna, seals, whales and dolphins.
- There is supposed to be an observer on board, but how could one person be on duty 24/7?
- According to one local eco tourism operator who spoke at the Devonport forum back in July 2012, there are around 2,500 whales which migrate up the east coast of Australia every year; 137 operators take 1.6 million tourists to see marine wildlife worth around \$300,000.000. All this could be put at jeopardy by a single boat which at best will only produce 40 casual/part time jobs.

I have viewed the DVD "End of the Line" by Charles Clover about the collapse of fishing industries worldwide following the introduction of super trawlers. It was mind blowing- I had a bit of an idea about the devastation caused by the greed of the owners of these massive trawlers and how they are negatively impacting the lives of small fishing industries worldwide but the reality was far worse.

- For example 90% of the Cod fishery has gone from the Newfoundland area. It has never recovered. Blue fin tuna is in dire straits. Catches in the Mediterranean have decreased by

80% in the past 10 years. The Japanese are massively overfishing as fast as they can, then freezing the fish so that when the shortage becomes evident worldwide they can step in and use these stored fish.

- There are also side effects apart from the loss of the fish; because there are now not so many predators there is an increase in other less desirable species such as the cow nosed ray off Chesapeake Bay in US. In waters closer to home there is a massive explosion in numbers of deadly jelly fish. The whole balance of the marine ecosystem is being overturned.
- There is also the tragic squandering of 10% of the by catch. These fish could be the food for local people. The nets used by these trawlers are colossal and could accommodate 13 x 747 jets with ease and the longline industry baits 1 billion hooks per year- it can't be sustainable.
- The West African coast has been badly hit. Local fishermen who previously had a decent living from using their small boats now have nothing and the irony is that super trawlers such as Geelong Star will be freezing its catch and exporting it back to West Africa at the pittance of \$1 per kg. They are estimated to only reap about \$25 million from this venture. How obscene is that? Is it worth decimating our fisheries for them to then export fish back to people whose livelihoods they have already ruined?
- They have plundered northern fishing areas and now they have headed our way.
- The film showed a graphic illustration of the increase in worldwide depletion, the speed of which was staggering. It is estimated that if we continue at this rate by mid century there will be a total collapse of the fishing industry worldwide. We have to get in and do something now.
- At present only 0.06 % of the marine environment is protected. This has to increase exponentially. Where reserves have been created in areas such as the Bahamas within 7 years of being protected an increase of around 3 to 4 times in marine flora and fauna has been observed. The percentage of protected areas needs to be extended to at least 20-30% of the world's oceans for us to have any hope of saving this finite marine resource. It would be expensive to run but would create an estimated 1 million jobs worldwide.
- I would urge you all to obtain a copy of this DVD and see for yourselves. See <http://endoftheline.com/> for a trailer to the film and details of purchase.
- It is based on the book of the same name by renowned British journalist Charles Clover who was the Environment correspondent for the Daily Telegraph. He and many other researchers have investigated this destructive industry worldwide to produce the DVD.

The Geelong Star has already proved that it cannot fish without trapping dolphins etc in its nets. There is no proof therefore that it can comply with the necessary rules and regulations

To sum up we have to stop any super trawler from ever fishing in our waters, create new marine reserves and immediately rescind the Geelong Star's licence.

**From Estelle Ross**

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