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Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
SG.62, Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

By email: Tim.Watling@aph.gov.au

21st October 2014

Dear Mr. Watling,

I write in order to correct statements made concerning the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) at the Senate Committee hearing held at Sydney Fish Market on Monday 29th September.

The following statement was made by Mr. Grahame Turk, Chair, National Seafood Industry Alliance, P. 49 of Hansard transcript:

"I have a statement from the Australian Marine Conservation Society, who was here today. In their guide they have used words like 'bottom trawling, the equivalent of using a nuclear bomb to catch rabbits'. That is very evocative. It is very emotional. They do not go on to say, for example, 'However, some methods of bottom trawling have been proven by some of the world's leading scientists to be benign.' They do not say that. When those sorts of comments come out, people pick up on those and they just think, 'We won't buy trawled fish.' So I do not think you can put 'trawled' on it.

CHAIR: *Who said that?*

Mr Turk: *Craig Bohm, who I think was the head of the AMCS."*

Mr. Turk was basing his comments on an article published on 27th August 2008 in the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper, the full text of which is copied at the end of this letter. However, we wish to point out the specific text of the article, which is:

"The method by which a fish is caught is also important. Catching by handline is better for the environment than bottom trawling, the equivalent of using a nuclear bomb to catch rabbits."
The correction we wish to seek is that this specific comment is not a quotation from Mr. Bohm or AMCS, but was written by the journalist. Mr. Bohm was, at the time of article publication, the AMCS Campaigns Manager, rather than the head of AMCS.

The 'Guide' that Mr. Turk refers to is *Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide*, published by AMCS. We assess the impacts of fishing methods on the marine environment, taking into account the type of habitat impacted by fishing. In many cases around Australia, trawling takes place over

mud and sand habitat, habitat that is not considered high risk, which means there are trawl fisheries that are ranked as green, or a 'Better Choice' in the Guide traffic light system. Where there are uncertainties over the impacts of trawling on sensitive marine communities, this is also taken into account and the fishery under assessment ranked in a more precautionary manner.

We wish to clarify that statements comparing fishing using trawl methods being akin to hunting rabbits using nuclear bombs is not language we use in the Guide (www.sustainableseafood.org.au) or in our organisational communications on fisheries and sustainable seafood and that it is incorrect to claim otherwise.

AMCS appreciates the opportunity to correct the record of the position of the organisation on sustainable fisheries and the nature of our communications material.

Yours sincerely,

Tooni Mahto
Fisheries Program Manager
Australian Marine Conservation Society

Fish 'n' chips that last forever

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/fish-n-chips-that-last-forever/2008/08/26/1219516472379.html>

Simon Webster
August 27, 2008

What seafood should I buy?

Seafood has been on Australian menus for tens of thousands of years. That's even longer than Vegemite. If you asked an Australian to stop eating fish and chips there's a good chance they'd assume you'd copped a bang on the head with a double-handed gaff and proceed to slap you around the chops with a wet mullet until you came to your senses.

We aren't alone in our love of things scaly and slimy: three-quarters of world fish stocks are fully exploited, over-exploited, depleted or recovering from depletion, Greenpeace says.

The righteous eco-warrior will want to make sure seafood purchases come from sustainable sources. However, with such information hard to come by, this may require some detective work.

"It's time to crack open the world of seafood and let people see how things are done," says

Craig Bohm, campaigns director for the Australian Marine Conservation Society.

A step forward was taken in June with the standardisation of fish names and the introduction of labels indicating in which country a fish was caught. But Bohm suggests not everyone's local fish and chip shop would have got on board.

He also says labels should go further, detailing the state of origin of Australian fish, the method by which they are caught or farmed and the name of the catcher or farmer.

Meanwhile consumers should ask retailers lots of questions about the what, where and how. "Answers may be superficial, dismissive or detailed, if you're lucky," Bohm says. The important thing is to keep asking.

The society's "Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide" is available from www.marineconservation.org.au.

It divides species into three categories: "Say no", "Think twice" and "Better choice".

Species to avoid include those that have been over-fished, such as shark and orange roughy (or deep sea perch).

Deep sea species are vulnerable to over-fishing because they tend to be slow-growing and long-living.

The method by which a fish is caught is also important. Catching by handline is better for the environment than bottom trawling, the equivalent of using a nuclear bomb to catch rabbits. There are several methods in between.

The question of farmed fish versus wild isn't straightforward. Different methods of farming have different impacts. Choose seafood from land-based farms rather than sea cages, which can pollute, entangle wildlife and tend to use a lot of fishmeal - fish caught to feed other fish (as well as farm animals and pets).

It takes 12 kilograms of wild fish turned into fishmeal to produce one kilogram of sea-caged tuna, says the society. Sea-caged tuna: who even knew there was such a thing?

When it comes to tinned tuna, Bohm warns not to fall for those dolphin-friendly labels. Anyone can put one on a tin.

Avoid tins labelled yellowfin, which is being over-fished, says Greenpeace.

Most tinned tuna will be skipjack, which isn't threatened. However, the method by which it was caught is crucial. Greenpeace is campaigning against the use of fish-aggregating devices, which attract all sorts of species that die along with the skipjack. Pole-and-line causes the least damage.

As for prawns, unfortunately, both the wild and farmed variety are in the "Think twice" category. The good news: oysters are a better choice.

The Marine Stewardship Council monitors and certifies sustainable seafood around the world. For lists of certified products, suppliers and fisheries see www.msc.org.