



**King George Whiting regulations
1 October 2004**

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold warned recreational fishers that new bag, boat and possession limits for King George whiting will come into force on October 1.

She urged people to write to the Minister for Fisheries, Rory McEwen, expressing their concerns about the regulations effect on seaside communities especially in the area of tourism, and suggesting alternative conservation measures.

“The Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Caroline Schaefer, will move for their disallowance however this will not be possible until October 11 or 12 when parliament resumes.

“The regulations will be in force in the meantime until the disallowance is voted upon,” she said.

The most detrimental proposal for tourism is for a possession limit of 36 which will apply everywhere, for instance it will include fish in home freezers.

The measures have been introduced to preserve the KGW in response to falling catches in the Gulfs. However Mrs Penfold said “The reduction of the possession limit will actually put more pressure on the Gulf’s because people from the city will not be willing to travel over to Eyre Peninsula if they can only take home 36 fish they are more likely to go a shorter distance more often”.

Liberal Leader Rob Kerin said the Government should adopt a holistic approach and should explore options such as a voluntary buyback of nets from commercial fishers.

If the net endorsements are removed from the scale fish licence and compensation provided the fishers will still have a commercial scalefish licence that can be sold or used.

The regulations concentrate on bag, boat and possession limits rather than a whole of industry approach using conservation methods that have proved successful on the west coast of Eyre Peninsula and enforcement of existing regulations. It is the people who are abusing the existing regulations and taking hundreds of fish who will continue to do so.

“Regulations are of no use if the compliance officers are not there to enforce them. Making regulations tougher will only make honest people inclined not to be honest, particularly if they know others who are abusing the system and getting away with it” she said.

Mrs Penfold pointed to the abundance of KGW at Ceduna and the return of fish to Coffin Bay.

“Marine scale nets were banned in Ceduna bays in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

“Those who understand the habits of this species can catch their limit easily,” she said.

Mrs Penfold said the recovery of fishing at Coffin Bay was even more dramatic.

“The banning of nets in those bays was one of the platforms in my initial bid to be the Member for Flinders, and the bans were put in place soon after my election in December 1993.

“The late John Rogers never stopped extolling the success of the bans when fish – and tourists - returned to the bays over the next 12 months,” she said.

Mrs Penfold said this contrasted with the many constituent complaints from the Tumby Bay area where nets continued to be used further offshore particularly around the islands called Sir Joseph’s Banks Group.

Mrs Penfold said netting is indiscriminate, killing all species including undersized whiting. “Netting is more damaging to fish than line fishing, a fact that was recognised by early commercial fishermen who had to keep their catch alive for several days before being able to get it to market in Adelaide.

“Undersize fish that are hooked and then released are highly likely to survive whereas undersize fish that are netted have little hope of survival.”

Because King George whiting are a bottom feeding fish, nets touch the seabed thus causing further damage to the environment.