



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

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MEDIA RELEASE

SKIPPER FINED OVER FUR SEAL DEATHS

The federal environment department has welcomed a court decision to impose a significant fine on a Perth man for killing 11 threatened fur seals.

Dennis Whennen, 44, who pleaded guilty for killing 11 Australian fur seals while trawl fishing off Tasmania, has been fined \$5000.

Federal environment department spokeswoman Rose Webb said this was the largest penalty imposed for such an offence under national environment law.

“The magistrate took a very serious view of the case. This fine shows that people who don’t comply with our wildlife protection laws will be dealt with seriously,” Ms Webb said.

“Australian fur seals were killed for their skins in the last century, which decimated their population. As a result, they are protected under national environment law.

“These laws are in place to protect Australia’s wildlife and to prevent reckless actions, such as these trawling practices, leading to unnecessary deaths.

The magistrate took into account that the defendant was no longer in the trawling business, so did not impose a jail term. The maximum penalty for this offence was 12 months jail or a \$6600 fine, or both.

Whennen was charged with taking an action that led to the death of a listed marine species while in Commonwealth waters, under section 254 (1) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.