

Opinion

Frankston Leader



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EMAIL: hastings@leadernewspapers.com.au



MAIL: The Editor, Leader,
454 Nepean Highway, Frankston, 3199



Save the penguins

AS THE only wildlife rehabilitator that looks after penguins between Frankston and Melbourne, I cannot believe that the Government has given the go-ahead for the channel deepening.

Our little penguins provide Victoria with a huge and constant influx of revenue into the economy via the penguin parade and the endless tourists who come to view it and Seal Rocks.

Many tourists come only for the penguin parade but then spend their money all over the state and often the rest of the country.

Consider this for one moment: a penguin needs to be able to see the fish to catch the fish, and if our bay becomes a cloudy, murky mess this could either:

1. Discourage them from our bay completely, which will cause them to be at risk of predators (leopard seals) when they need to go into ocean water to catch the only fish on offer that they can see; or,

2. When breeding season comes around and they need fish close by to feed their chicks four to five times a day minimum, chicks could starve to death because the parents will take too long between feeds. This has the potential to cause the population of penguins to crash dramatically.

If all of this happens and we then allow bigger ships into both the bays, the possibility of an oil spill becomes even greater and this then has the potential to wipe out the entire colony at both Phillip Island and St Kilda.

Have we learnt nothing from the past?

Australia has the second worst history of species being wiped off the face of the earth.

I have seen more penguins since the trial dredging than ever before and they have all come in underweight for a penguin.

A healthy penguin in springtime should



Michelle Thomas releases a koala back into the wild.

Picture: HILTON STONE N32ML312

weigh at least 950g but most are coming to me barely weighing 700g.

They are starving to death already.

The wildlife carers are left to pick up the pieces out of their own pockets as we don't see any funds for the food/fish the penguins need along with the supplements and medications to get them back in tip-top condition, only to have to put them back in the bay to start the cycle all over again.

Michelle Thomas, Frankston