GILLNET FISHING — KIMBERLEY

2547. Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the practice of gillnet fishing in the Kimberley region, and I ask:

(a) what is the total reported mortality of snubfin dolphins in the gillnet fisheries of the Kimberley, from Roebuck Bay to the Northern Territory border, and when did these occur;

(b) when and where was the last observer study undertaken that aimed to investigate the bycatch occurring in the gillnet fisheries of the Kimberley:

  (i) how many hours were spent undertaking these studies; and

  (ii) what percentage of the gillnet fisheries in the Kimberley have been studied, by year;

(c) will the Minister provide a population estimate, by location, for snubfin dolphins in the Kimberley:

  (i) if no to (c), why not; and

(d) will the Minister provide an estimate of the acceptable annual mortality of snubfin dolphins, as a result of the Kimberley gillnet fishery, that will ensure sustainability of the population:

  (i) if no to (d), why not?

Hon Ken Baston replied:

(a) There have been no reported interactions with snubfin dolphins in the Kimberley gillnet fisheries in recent years (i.e. between 2008 and 2014).

(b) Research was conducted in the Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery (KGBF) (and with gillnet operators on Eighty Mile Beach) between 2003 and 2004 [1] as part of a research program on sandbar and dusky sharks, which collected verified information about catches of all species from these fishing activities.

  (i) Approximately 1280 hours were spent over 160 days of fishing.

  (ii) In total, 160 days of gillnet fishing were observed in 2003 and 2004 in the study referred to in (b), which equates to between 6 and 32% of fishing effort levels in the KGBF between 2008 and 2014 [2].

(c) The only information currently available on population estimates for snubfin dolphins in the Kimberley is for Roebuck Bay, where the population is estimated to be 143 snubfin dolphins, excluding calves.

(d) No.

  (i) There is insufficient information on which to base such an estimate both in terms of population abundance and in life history parameters for this species.

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[1] McAuley, R.; Lenanton, R.; Chidlow, J.; Allison, R.; Heist, E. (2005). Biology and stock assessment of the thickskin (sandbar) shark, *Carcharhinus plumbeus*, in Western Australia and further refinement of the dusky shark, *Carcharhinus obscurus*, stock assessment. Final FRDC report, project no. 2000/134; Fisheries Research Report No. 151, Department of Fisheries, WA. 132 pp. http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/research_reports/frr151.pdf

[2] Newman, S.J., Mitsopoulos, G., Skepper, C., Thomson, A., Marriott, R. and Wallis, D. 2014. North Coast Nearshore and Estuarine Fishery Status Report pp. 185-191In: Status Reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia 2013/14: The State of the Fisheries eds. W.J. Fletcher and K. Santoro, Department of Fisheries, Western Australia, pp. 185-191