

## **KIMBERLEY AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT ZONE**

*Statement by Minister for Agriculture and Food*

**HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Agriculture and Food)** [2.07 pm]: On 22 August I officially declared the Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone, an investment-ready fish farming area covering almost 2 000 hectares, 163 kilometres north of Derby. This aquaculture zone at Cone Bay can support the production of up to 20 000 tonnes of fish per year without a significant environmental impact. Currently, the only licensee in the zone produces around 2 000 tonnes annually, and is able to increase production to 7 000 tonnes. To put this in context, the annual volume of Western Australia's total wild capture fisheries is almost 19 000 tonnes, with wild capture finfish at about 9 000 tonnes. The state government has invested \$1.85 million into developing the zone at Cone Bay, and a second zone off the midwest coast, which is expected to be ready by 2016. The zones are essentially like land-based industrial zones, which have their environmental approvals pre-approved.

The Department of Fisheries will manage operations in the zones on behalf of the Minister for Fisheries. Strategic environmental assessment approval for the Kimberley zone will lead to a faster, easier and less expensive approval process for proponents of the aquaculture ventures in the zone. Any species of marine finfish that occur naturally within the Pilbara and Kimberley region may be cultured in the zone. The most likely species are barramundi and cobia. The sea cages will take up less than five per cent of the surface area of the zone. Recreational or commercial fishing in the area will be unaffected. Traditional owners will be able to continue to conduct traditional activities, including fishing and hunting, inside the zone. There will be opportunities for Indigenous people to be involved in future aquaculture business ventures in the zone.

Aquaculture is the fastest growing primary industry globally, with more seafood being farmed now than red meat. I recently visited the Huon salmon farm in Southern Tasmania. It started as a single-person operation in 1987, and it now has over 460 staff and turns over nearly \$200 million, with a growth rate of over 20 per cent per annum. That salmon farm, along with the other three major Tasmanian salmon farms, cannot keep up with demand. Aquaculture represents the most efficient method by which to convert feed to edible protein. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization regards a healthy, viable aquaculture industry as vital for the world's food security. Here in Australia, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation has estimated that in June 2014, for the first time in Australia, the value of aquaculture was equal to that produced by the Australian wild catch industry.

The Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone represents an excellent opportunity for Western Australia to generate and increase export earnings through sustainable aquaculture production. Furthermore, the Kimberley Aquaculture Development Zone, and the Mid West Aquaculture Development Zone when it is operational, will play an important role in showing that Western Australia is open for the business of aquaculture farming.