

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES — SALMON STOCK — ASSESSMENT

3716. Hon Adele Farina to the Minister for Fisheries:

- (1) When did the Department of Fisheries last undertake an assessment of salmon stock?
- (2) What scientific evidence did the department rely on in providing its advice to the industry that industry should commit to an annual salmon catch of 500 tonnes only, despite a 2013–14 report indicating a target catch range of between 1 200 and 2 800 tonnes per annum?
- (3) Is the department still using the computer modelling devised by Curtin University for the management of the salmon industry?

Hon Ken Baston replied:

- (1) An assessment of the breeding stock levels of the WA salmon stock is undertaken annually.
- (2) The commercial salmon catch varies between years depending on a range of factors including environmental factors. There is no upper catch limit. In 2014, Industry members requested that the Department of Fisheries (Department) “guarantee” an ongoing annual salmon catch of 2000 tonnes, for the purposes of Industry establishing a new salmon market.

Given annual variation, it was not possible to provide a “guaranteed” catch. Instead, the Department committed to providing information on what quantity of salmon the fishery could, with some confidence, reasonably be expected to be available annually on an ongoing sustainable basis. Noting the annual variation and lack of scientific certainty surrounding the harvest level achievable from the Australian salmon stock, the Department advised Industry that it was likely that Industry could reasonably expect an annual catch of 500 tonnes on an ongoing basis.

Importantly, the Department advised Industry that this was not a quota or a catch limit and Industry had no obligation to restrict its catch to 500 tonnes at this time. However, for the purposes of Industry establishing a new market, and being confident Industry could service that market on an ongoing basis, the Department indicated that an annual catch of 500 tonnes (South Coast and South West Coast combined) would be prudent until more robust information about the stock is available.

- (3) No