

COMMERCIAL FISH TRAPS

30. Hon RICK MAZZA to the Minister for Fisheries:

Thank you, Mr President!

In answer to my question C009 of yesterday, the minister advised that the trial of commercial fish traps in Carnarvon was subject to consultation with Recfishwest and the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council as stakeholders.

- (1) Can the minister advise whether a public consultation and submission period will be undertaken?
- (2) Can the minister advise the impact of fish traps on the quality of fish flesh and the estimated bycatch that will be wasted?
- (3) Can the minister advise what measures, if any, would be undertaken to minimise the impact of fish traps lost at sea continuing to catch and kill fish until they rust away?
- (4) Can the minister advise how Fisheries plans to enforce fish trap compliance?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) Consistent with agreed consultation protocols, the Department of Fisheries forwarded an industry proposal to trial the use of fish traps in the Gascoyne demersal scalefish managed fishery to Recfishwest on 25 January 2016 for an agreed 28-day consultation period, which has been extended for a further two weeks.
- (2) The industry proposal to trial the use of fish traps in the Gascoyne demersal scalefish managed fishery is based on the same trap design used in two existing fish trap fisheries operating off the Pilbara and Kimberley coastline. These fisheries supply high-quality fresh fish to the Western Australian domestic market through the use of modern fish trap designs and improved post-harvest handling techniques. The use of fish traps in these fisheries is considered to be ecologically sustainable with minimal by-product or detrimental impact to the environment.
- (3) Research into the use of fish traps using underwater video in the Gascoyne in the late 1980s, and more recently in the Pilbara, indicates that there is some potential for lost traps to “ghost fish”; however, many fish move in and out of the traps freely, depending on the availability of bait. Additionally, the loss of fish traps in the existing trap fisheries is a rare event and considered to pose a negligible risk to stock sustainability.
- (4) Should the proposed fish trap trial be approved it will be subject to specific rules regarding fish trap design and usage, based on existing trap fisheries in the Pilbara and Kimberley. Fishers will also continue to be subject to the existing legislative requirements and Department of Fisheries’ compliance strategies for the Gascoyne demersal scalefish managed fishery.