



**The Hon Joe Francis MLA  
Minister for Emergency Services; Fisheries;  
Corrective Services; Veterans**

Our Ref: 51-10863

Attn: Mr Mark Warner  
Committee Clerk  
Estimates and Financial Operations Committee  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Via email: [icefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:icefoc@parliament.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mr Warner

**QUESTIONS PRIOR TO HEARINGS – 2016-17 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
ESTIMATES HEARINGS**

I refer to the letter dated 24 May 2016 from the Hon Ken Travers MLC, Chair of the Estimates and Financial Operations Committee regarding the above matter.

Please find enclosed responses from the Department of Fisheries.

Yours sincerely

  
HON JOE FRANCIS MLA  
MINISTER FOR FISHERIES  
13 JUN 2016

**ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**2016/17 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS**  
**QUESTIONS PRIOR TO HEARINGS**

**Department of Fisheries**

**Hon Lynn MacLaren MLC asked:**

- 1) In regard to the table titled 'Spending Changes' on page 623, please provide a breakdown of the activities on which the \$1,050,000 allocated in 2016-2017 to shark hazard mitigation will be spent, as well as, if feasible, a breakdown of activities that the same allocation in subsequent years will be spent.

Answer:

The funding outlined in the budget will enable the Department of Fisheries to assist with the continuation of the Government's Shark Hazard Mitigation program. Key delivery areas include:

1. Shark monitoring, notification and warning systems, so the public can make informed decisions about their water use, and improved operational responses to shark risk – delivering improved safety outcomes for the community.
  2. The operational management of responses to serious threat and shark bite incidents.
- 2) In relation to the table titled '2. Enforcement and Education' on page 626, what sort of concerns does this service "instigate investigations" into?

Answer:

The Department of Fisheries initiates investigations into possible breaches of the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*, *Fish Resources Management Regulations 1995* and the *Pearling Act 1990*.

- 3) How many FTEs in each year 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 had or have a primary focus on "investigations"?

Answer:

Investigation is one of the many activities that Fisheries and Marine Officers (FMOs) undertake. There are eight FTEs that have a primary focus on investigations while other FMOs may have an investigative role. The number of Fisheries and Marine Officers funded within the agency are as follows:

2013-14	114.5
2014-15	114.5
2015-16	114.5
2016-17	114.5

- 4) In relation to the comment on page 627 that 'The Department will also undertake new works of \$0.5 million for the replacement of receivers for the Shark Monitoring Network', how many receivers will be replaced with these funds; what type of receiver will they be; and where are they located?

Answer:

This capital allocation will enable the replacement of receivers that formed part of the trial Shark Monitoring Network.

The funding will allow for upgrading VR4 Global satellite linked complete receiver units and hydrophones (or equivalent), and compatible buoy installations with moorings.

Initial replacement locations include: 2.5 km off Mullaloo, 3.5km off Trigg, 1.5km off Scarborough, Floreat, City Beach, Swanbourne, North Cottesloe, Garden Island (north), Strickland Bay (Rottnest), Mullaloo North, Mullaloo South and Leighton Beach.

- 5) What unit within the Department is responsible for monitoring and responding to information about tagged sharks come from the receivers?

Answer:

The responsibilities are shared between the Research and Regional Services Divisions.

- 6) In relation to the line item 'Shark Monitoring Network' listed under 'new works' in the table on page 628, what are the new works to be paid for in 2016-2017? What are the new works to be paid for in the three subsequent years?

Answer:

The 2016-17 allocation is as described at the response to question 4 above. The out-year allocations will provide for repair, maintenance and replacement as required.

- 7) Will the Department continue to tag more sharks?

- a) If no, why not?  
b) If yes to 7) which species of shark/s will the Department tag?

Answer:

- a) Not applicable  
b) Yes - Sharks of a size and species considered to be potentially hazardous to people. This may include those which would trigger a beach closure at a patrolled beach under most circumstances. The Department also tags sharks as part of a Fisheries Research and Development project to track shark movements between management zones to provide more information for stock assessments. These species include sandbar, gummy, whiskery, dusky and copper sharks.

**Hon Robin Chapple MLC asked:**

- 1) Can the Minister advise how many recreational fishing from a boat license are currently held in Broome?

Answer:

A total of 2,489 Recreational Fishing Boat Licences currently have an address located in the postcodes of 6725 and 6726, which cover the Broome area.

- 2) Can the Minister give any figures on projections for growth of fishing from a boat licence that are currently held in Broome?

Answer:

No.

- 3) Can the Minister advise if any modelling has been done of what the impact of proposed marina or boating facilities would have on the number of fishing from a boat licence in Broome?

Answer:

The proposed marina and boating facilities in Broome are being initiated by the Broome Marina Working Group. The Department of Fisheries has not estimated the potential increase in the number of Recreational Fishing from Boat Licences held in the Broome area as a result of the new marina.

- 4) If yes to 3), what are the projections?

Answer:

Not applicable.

- 5) Can the Minister advise the catch by species (in tonnes) from the commercial gillnet operation in Roebuck Bay in the five years prior to the licenses being bought by Government?

Answer:

The Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Fishery (KGBF) catch from Roebuck Bay in the 5 years prior to the two licences being bought out by Government was in the order of 60 tonnes per year. I can advise that approximately 80% of the Roebuck Bay KGBF catch was made up of king threadfin and blue threadfin, plus smaller amounts of barramundi, tripletail and black jewfish.

- 6) Can the Minister advise if any estimates have been done of overall recreational catch in Roebuck Bay in total or by species?

Answer:

The Department of Fisheries (Department) does not have total recreational catch data for the Roebuck Bay area. The Department began conducting two yearly state-wide surveys of boat-based recreational fishing in 2011/12 that provide an estimate for the Kimberley region, but not for Roebuck Bay. The reports are available on the Department's website. The Department collects charter fishing information on a scale that is available for Roebuck Bay. That information is detailed at answer No. 7.

- 7) If yes to 6), what are the estimates?

Answer:

The table below shows the number of fish kept and released by charter boat operators in the Roebuck Bay area from 2009 to 2014.

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Kept	Released	Kept	Rel	Kept	Rel	Kept	Rel	Kept	Rel	Kept	Rel
Total	249	500	692	2982	106	1764	700	3487	150	1569	347	2184

- 8) If no to 6), is the Minister able to provide an estimate?

Answer:

Refer to question 6 answer.

- 9) Can the Minister advise if any estimates have been done of projected recreational catch in Roebuck Bay against projected growth of fishing from a boat licence in Broome?

Answer:

Recreational catch projections are not routinely undertaken by the Department of Fisheries. State-wide surveys are conducted every second year to monitor recreational catch levels.

- 10) If yes to 9), what are those estimates?

Answer:

Not applicable.

- 11) If no to 9), can the Minister provide estimates?

Answer:

Not applicable.

- 12) Can the Minister advise the total recreational catch of mudcrabs and threadfin salmon in Roebuck Bay for the past five years?

Answer:

No.

- a) What is the accuracy of these estimates?

Answer:

Not applicable.

- b) What are the sustainable limits of recreational fishing catch of threadfin salmon and mudcrabs?

Answer:

Estimates of the sustainable harvest level for threadfin salmon and mudcrabs in Roebuck Bay or the broader Kimberley area have not been determined. Trends in catch rates are used as an index of abundance of these stocks in addition to other fishery and biological data to monitor stock status.

- 13) Can the Minister advise the estimated natural unfished population for threadfin salmon and mudcrabs in Roebuck Bay?

Answer:

Estimates of the natural unfished population for threadfin salmon and mudcrabs in Roebuck Bay or the broader Kimberley area have not been determined.

- 14) Can the Minister advise what studies have been done of the ecological impact of commercial and recreational fishing in Roebuck Bay?

Answer:

The Status Reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia 2014/15 indicates the ecosystem effects have been assessed as low, noting that the fishing gear has minimal impact on the habitat.

- a) How have these studies been taken into account in the zoning plan for the draft Yawuru Nagulagan Roebuck Bay Marine Park?

Answer:

The draft zoning scheme for the proposed Yawuru Nagulagan Roebuck Bay Marine Park recognises recreational fishing as a permitted use in Roebuck Bay. The zoning scheme provides for recreational fishing in Roebuck Bay and recognises the existing prohibition on commercial gillnetting in Roebuck Bay. Other than pearling, there is currently only a very low level of commercial fishing in Roebuck Bay, including commercial collection of specimen shell, marine aquarium fish and land hermit crabs. These activities are proposed to be permitted in the marine park.

- 15) Can the Minister advise what management measures are currently in place for recreational fishing in Roebuck Bay?

Answer:

Statewide fish minimum size limits, bag limits and boat limits apply in the Roebuck Bay area. Gear restrictions also apply, including a Kimberley-wide prohibition on the recreational use of set and haul nets. Recreational fishing licences are required for the use of a cast net and to fish from a boat. There are no recreational fishing seasonal closures in place.

- a) What other measures are being considered?

Answer:

The Roebuck Bay Marine Park is currently being developed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife. The marine park management plan will aim to maintain the ecological values of the marine park that relate to recreational and customary fishing. The proposed marine park will be created under section 13 of the *Conservation And Land Management Act 1984*, which specifies the purpose of marine parks as "...allowing only that level of recreational and commercial activity which is consistent with the proper conservation and restoration of the natural environment".

- 16) Seasonal fishing closures have been mooted as a possible option for Roebuck Bay, if these were to happen, for what months of the year would the fishery be closed?

Answer:

A seasonal closure for recreational fishers in Roebuck Bay is not a management measure that is currently being considered by the Department of Fisheries. Commercial line and net fishing is not permitted in Roebuck Bay.

- 17) Can the Minister please advise what the levels of recreational fishing were at Ningaloo Reef in the five years prior to, and five years following, the rezoning of the Ningaloo Reef marine park in 2004?

Answer:

The Department does not have this information.

- 18) Between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015 a series of stories were published with tourism operators calling for a ban on gillnets in the remote North Kimberley after footage was released of a dead crocodile in a barramundi gillnet. (<http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/nov/10/crocodile-found-drowned-in-kimberley-river-prompts-calls-for-ban-on-gillnets>). So far the Government has not heeded these calls. Can the Minister please advise:

- a) What actions the Government has taken to address the concerns of tourism operators?

Answer:

A Department of Fisheries vessel, the PV Walcott, searched the area where the net was alleged to have been located and no evidence of the net or a dead crocodile was found. There are ongoing compliance checks of Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Fishery (KGBF) and other fishers in the area.

- b) The value of the gillnet fishery on the Kimberley Coast between Bigge Island and the Cambridge Gulf?

Answer:

The most recent public information regarding the KGBF is for 2014. The estimated Gross Value of Production for the area between Bigge Island and Cambridge Gulf was \$230,000.

- c) The number of people employed in gillnet fishing between Bigge Island and the Cambridge Gulf?

Answer:

In 2014, seven crew were directly employed on three licensed vessels fishing in the area between Bigge Island and Cambridge Gulf, with additional employment through local processors and distribution networks.

- d) The percentage of total fish production coming from the gillnet fishery between Bigge Island and the Cambridge Gulf?

Answer:

In 2014, 38% of the total fish production from the KGBF came from the area between Bigge Island and Cambridge Gulf.

- e) The value of marine tourism on the Kimberley Coast between Bigge Island and the Cambridge Gulf?

Answer:

The Department of Fisheries does not have this information.

- f) The last time independent monitoring occurred on the Kimberley gillnet fishery?

Answer:

Independent research monitoring of catches occurred during 2003 and 2004. Monthly catch and effort data from the commercial fishery are used to assess the status of barramundi and threadfin populations on an ongoing basis. These are reported annually in Status Reports of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of Western Australia. Compliance checks of fishing activity take place within the fishery on an ongoing yearly basis.



g) How many reported incidents of lost nets, bycatch or other complaints have been made in the Kimberley gillnet fishery over the past 20 years?

Answer:

There were a number of resource sharing complaints in relation to the KGBF operator in Roebuck Bay before the buyout of those licences in 2012.

After a period of inactivity, the KGBF licensed fisher authorised to operate in King Sound has recently re-commenced fishing. This renewed fishing activity has prompted two recent complaints, one from a charter operator in Derby, the other from a Derby recreational fisherman, primarily relating to resource sharing issues between the sectors.

There is a very low level of complaint received in relation to the operators in the north of the fishery, with two formal complaints received by the Department of Fisheries in the last nine years.

The Department of Fisheries does not routinely record information on the number of lost nets in the KGBF.

Commercial fishers in the KGBF submit monthly returns as a statutory requirement, including a requirement to record any retained bycatch and interactions with protected species, such as crocodiles.

Information regarding interactions with protected species in the KGBF is available from 2006 to 2014 and is reported in the table below:



h) The cost of installing cameras or full time observers in the Kimberley gillnet fishery?

Answer:

The Department of Fisheries does not have this information.