

WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY

**842. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the Minister for Fisheries:**

I refer to the March 2012 Western Australian government fisheries policy statement, in which the following point is made —

... the underlying principle to be applied in commercial fisheries allocations is that intra-fishery allocations are to be as fair and equitable as possible. Importantly, differential economic impacts of allocations on individual fishers must be minimised, unless there are reasons justifiable with respect to FRMA legislative objectives (and any subsequent fisheries legislative objectives) that may dictate otherwise. The WA Government, in liaison with WAFIC, will develop a procedure in this regard.

- (1) Has the procedure been developed; and, if so, will the minister provide details of the procedure?
- (2) If no to (1), when does the government intend to finalise the procedure?
- (3) What principles of fairness and equity have been observed in determining how the total allowable commercial catch has been allocated between western rock lobster fishery unit holders?
- (4) Can the minister inform the house under what circumstances future allocations will be altered?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE replied:**

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

- (1) Although a procedure has not been developed at this time, practical application of the principle set out in the government's fisheries policy statement has already commenced.
- (2) The Department of Fisheries will liaise with the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council—WAFIC—about an appropriate time frame for developing a procedure given the range of current priorities for both the department and WAFIC.
- (3) There appears to be a misconception that there has been some form of reallocation of existing units of entitlement as a result of the move to quota. This is not the case. Under input controls, the catch taken by rock lobster fishers in each zone was related to the quantity of legally available lobsters in the zone or zones in which they fished. Under the new quota-based controls, individual fishers are allocated a share of the TACC for their zone or zones based on unit holding. The TACC is based on the harvest strategy that ensures the sustainability of each zone. There has been no change in the allocation of fishing entitlement in this fishery as the allocation is consistent with the proportion of pot unit allocations under the former input control system. Zonal TACCs for 2013 are based on the quantity of legally available lobsters in each zone, the same as occurred under input controls.
- (4) For individual fishers, there will be no change in their allocation, other than by commercial transactions. The long-term harvest strategy for the western rock lobster fishery remains under discussion between the department and the Western Rock Lobster Council. Sustainable management of the resource in all zones of the fishery will continue to underpin the TACC setting process. This will necessitate consideration of differences in breeding stock levels and lobster abundance in each zone.