

WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE

Statement by Minister for Fisheries

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Fisheries) [9.10 am]: I have previously brought to the attention of the house sustainability concerns relating to demersal scalefish in the west coast region between Kalbarri and Augusta, including the iconic species of pink snapper and dhufish. We are currently 12 years into a 20-year recovery plan and the 2021 stock assessment, released late last year, was the fourth health check on the recovery progress. This latest science shows that current management arrangements have been successful at preventing further stock decline, but there has been limited recovery. Further management action is required to allow the species to recover by 2030. Fishing pressure is still too high as there continues to be a lack of older breeding fish in the population. Following release of the stock assessment in February, I accepted a recommendation of the industry-led harvest strategy working group to reduce the total catch for demersal species by 50 per cent to meet the 2030 recovery targets. At this stage, no management changes have been made or presented to me for formal consideration.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is working closely with Recfishwest, the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council and Marine Tourism WA to develop new measures to protect the sustainability of the resource. Recfishwest, as the peak body representing recreational fishers in Western Australia, will lead consultation with the recreational fishing sector on proposed management changes to meet the new total catch limit. Consultation is open now and will run until 29 April. Following consideration of feedback and proposed management options put forward by the community, DPIRD will release a proposed management package for broader community consultation around June this year.

As this is a complex fishery, innovative and out-of-the-box thinking on potential management options is very welcome. I encourage anglers to engage with Recfishwest to develop new measures to help boost the recovery. They can do so by visiting recfishwest.org.au. I have assured Recfishwest that all options to achieve the required reductions in fish mortality and catch limits are on the table. As a community we have to make sure we all fish for the future so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy the WA fishing experience for decades to come.