

BLUE SWIMMER CRAB — DISCUSSION PAPER

1063. Hon RICK MAZZA to the minister representing the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's blue swimmer crab discussion paper.

- (1) What mechanisms are in place to ensure the commercial fishing licence buyback scheme in the Peel–Harvey estuary results in more crabs being made available to recreational fishers?
- (2) As part of the commercial fishing licence buyback scheme, will a quota system be implemented?
- (3) Could Cockburn Sound, currently closed to protect blue swimmer crab breeding stock, support a three-month summer recreational fishing period?
- (4) How many tonnes of blue swimmer crabs have been taken by commercial crab catchers in Western Australian waters in the past 12 months?
- (5) If the above information is not yet available, when is it anticipated to be?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. The Minister for Fisheries has provided the following information.

- (1)–(2) A decision on the most appropriate method to reallocate commercial catch to the recreational sector will be made following the completion of the voluntary fisheries adjustment scheme. All management options will be considered, including the appropriateness of moving the commercial fishery to quota.
- (3) The Cockburn Sound blue swimmer crab stock remains in recovery. Current research indicates that egg production and the number of juveniles within Cockburn Sound remain below acceptable levels. Consequently, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development does not support any fishing in Cockburn Sound by either the recreational or commercial sectors.
- (4) Catch returns for the past 12 months are still being verified. Based on preliminary estimates, the statewide commercial catch of blue swimmer crabs is estimated to be around 600 tonnes.
- (5) Statewide catches are reported every year in the department's "Status reports of the fisheries and aquatic resources of Western Australia", which is likely to be published by the end of the year.