

ABALONE FISHERS — WEST COAST ZONE — SAFETY

Statement by Minister for Fisheries

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Fisheries) [12.08 pm]: On Sunday, 15 October I announced a number of management changes that will improve the safety of recreational fishers fishing for abalone in the west coast zone. This includes the Perth metropolitan coast. These changes were a result of a review into the operation of the fishery following the deaths of four people since 2012. My approval for the changes followed consultation with Recfishwest and Surf Life Saving Western Australia. The west coast zone season will now run over summer to reduce the risk of abalone fishers encountering rough weather conditions. The season will now occur on four specified Saturday mornings instead of Sundays, with the first scheduled for 9 December. This ensures that Surf Life Saving resources can be available during the fishing times. Importantly, if severe weather conditions are forecast, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will be able to close the fishery and reschedule the fishing session to a later date.

To ensure the fishery's sustainability, the recreational catch will be closely monitored so that this season's catch is between 18 and 22 tonnes. The number of fishing days may be reduced or extended to keep the catch within this range. Almost 18 000 licences are issued annually in this iconic, highly valued fishery on Perth's doorstep. It is another example of the collaboration between the key fisheries stakeholders working together to improve the safety of our state's fisheries. I look forward to continuing to ensure that all Western Australian fisheries not only remain the best in the world for sustainability, but are also safe for all to participate in.