

FISH AGGREGATION DEVICES PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for Fisheries

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Fisheries) [9.30 am]: I am pleased to inform the house that the McGowan government is supporting the expansion and ongoing deployment of the highly successful fish aggregation devices program. FADs provide recreational fishing infrastructure that attracts a range of large pelagic fish species such as tuna and dolphin fish, which are prized by recreational fisheries. As part of the \$10 million support package for the west coast demersal scalefish recovery program, \$1.5 million has been committed to the statewide FADs program. The funding will facilitate expansion of the current program with a focus on the west coast region. This will provide an additional 12 FADs deployed across four locations to complement the existing 28 FADs across eight locations from Albany to Broome. The expanded FADs program will provide increased pelagic fishing opportunities for boat-based recreational and charter fishers. This will provide a greater range of fishing opportunities to support keen fishers to switch their fish away from demersal species and alleviate pressure on west coast demersal stocks.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the great work done by Recfishwest, which undertook a three-year statewide FADs trial. The trial, funded through the government's recreational fishing initiatives fund, successfully demonstrated the excellent fishing opportunity created by FADs and their value to the fishing community. I was very pleased to read in the media this week some great stories of fishers off Jurien Bay that highlighted the fantastic opportunities the devices create, particularly for fishing tourism. Recreational fishing is an important part of the WA lifestyle and plays a key role in attracting people to regional Western Australia. Expanding the FADs program is a great example of how the McGowan government is supporting the recreational fishing community and providing a range of diverse opportunities for recreational fishers to enjoy.