

FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES

Statement

HON RICK MAZZA (Agricultural) [9.45 pm]: I rise tonight to speak about fish aggregating devices or what are commonly known as FADs. For those not familiar with FADs —

Hon Jim Chown: I always thought you were one.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Yes, well!

They are a very large float that is anchored to the sea floor. They have been used on the west side of Rottnest Island for two or three decades. Once FADs have been deployed, in a very short period, they gather algae, which small fish come to feed on and which attract bigger fish. In the end it attracts a lot of pelagic fish like wahoo, marlin, bonito, tuna et cetera. For years a lot of recreational fishermen have travelled to the western side of Rottnest and enjoyed fishing on the FADs. Unfortunately, to date FADs have been a fairly basic affair. During winter they have to be removed from the ocean so that winter storms do not damage them. They are a very short season device.

Today I had a good opportunity, because I was invited by Recfishwest chief executive officer Andrew Rowland, to visit a location at Belmont where there was a delegation from Japan from Okabe Co Ltd. They demonstrated some new fish aggregating devices they had developed and been using in Japan. Together with a Western Australian company called Subcon they have been contracted by the state government through Recfishwest to deploy eight of these new fish aggregating devices. Four of those devices will be submerged 20 metres below the surface with a sonar deflector on them so that people can pick them up with their echo sounders and the other four will be floating devices. Initially, these eight devices, which weigh some 800 kilograms each, will be put off the metropolitan coast and, hopefully, once more funds are available they will be established in the Agricultural Region in the midwest area to enhance the fishing experience there. Fishermen can now fish year round because these devices will take the winter storms; they will last a minimum of five years.

I want to go on record to congratulate Recfishwest for recognising the benefits of FADs. A lot of fishermen in Western Australia have been using and enjoying them for many years and it is a very good example of how recreational fishing licences have been used to enhance the fishing experience in Western Australia.