

SOUTHERN GARFISH FISHERY

Statement by Minister for Fisheries

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Fisheries) [9.07 am]: I am very pleased to announce today that fishing for southern garfish will recommence on coastal waters between Lancelin and Myalup for recreational and commercial fishers from 1 May 2024. This comes after a seven-year closure to address sustainability issues with the species. Issues with southern garfish were identified by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in a 2017 stock assessment that showed that a combination of environmental factors and fishing pressure had depleted the stock to unsustainable levels. Today's announcement is great news for recreational fishers and demonstrates the importance and success of taking action to rebuild our fisheries to sustainable levels. Southern garfish is considered an important bread-and-butter species for recreational fishers. The species is well suited to land-based fishing, making it highly accessible, and it is also a great option for boat-based fishing in protected waters like Cockburn Sound. With southern garfish targeted by both recreational and commercial fishers, careful monitoring of the stock will be undertaken to ensure the sustainability of the species into the future.

Information on recreational catch and effort will be collected via the statewide recreational survey and metropolitan monitoring program. The DPIRD Send us Your Skeletons program is also being expanded to include southern garfish, allowing recreational fishers to further contribute to the ongoing sustainability of this species. The Send us Your Skeletons program plays an important role in helping to understanding the stocks of a number of species including dhufish and pink snapper. The commercial take of southern garfish will be carefully managed to set limits and the sector will contribute important information and biological samples to inform future stock assessments.

The recovery of southern garfish is a really encouraging result and builds on DPIRD's proven track record, which is also evident in the recent recovery of the herring resource. I am very pleased to reopen this fishery and I am sure fishers will be pleased to target southern garfish again alongside other popular near-shore species such as herring and whiting.