

WESTERN ROCK LOBSTER FISHERY — SUSTAINABILITY

Statement by Minister for Fisheries

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Fisheries) [12.14 pm]: Management of the west coast rock lobster fishery is well recognised as world leading in sustainability, being the first fishery in the world to receive Marine Stewardship Council certification in 2000. The MSC standard pushes for continuous improvement in stock management, reducing the impact of fishing on the marine ecosystem and improved fishery governance. Early reports indicate the fishery is on track to receive its fifth MSC certification later this year.

In more good news, the 2022 stock assessment for the western rock lobster resource indicates the stock is sustainable, and the abundance of the breeding stock is at near record levels. The fishery's sustainability credentials are a wonderful achievement and a result of the strong partnership between fishers, industry leaders and the state government in delivering sound fisheries management and science that underpins the fishery and ensures that it remains one of Australia's most valuable.

The COVID-19 global pandemic presented a significant challenge for the industry, and just when export product was beginning to move again, the Chinese market was lost. Despite these challenges, and with the support of the McGowan government through deferred access fees, season extensions and the increased back-of-boat sales, the economic contribution of western rock lobster to the WA economy has remained comparatively high.

The rock lobster industry continues to investigate alternative markets, with representatives from the Western Rock Lobster Council attending the invest and trade mission in India in July. The mission identified opportunities to grow a sound, stable, long-term market through establishing strong trade relationships based on shared values. I recently met with local lobster fishers at their annual management meeting and it was clear to me that the long-term sustainability and economic resilience of the fishery is front of mind. I commend the Western Rock Lobster Council on the initiatives it has undertaken to support the industry through this period and its ongoing commitment to sustainable management of the fishery.