

Hon Dr Sally Talbot; Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Kyle McGinn; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Stephen Pratt; Hon Shelley Payne; Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Dr Steve Thomas; Hon Sophia Moermond; Hon Darren West; Hon Neil Thomson; Hon Dr Brian Walker; Hon Martin Pritchard

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## FISHERIES — MANAGEMENT

### *Motion*

**HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [1.05 pm]: I move —

That the Legislative Council commends the McGowan Labor government's ongoing commitment to sustainable management of Western Australia's fisheries.

I am very, very glad that today is the day that this motion has come to the top of the notice paper, because I know that there is enormous enthusiasm around the chamber for debating the topic of sustainable fisheries, and there is, indeed, a great story to tell. I know that a number of people on my side of the chamber are very keen to talk about the contemporary manifestation of Labor's great work in creating a sustainable fishery in Western Australia, so I thought I would introduce this topic, particularly given we have a number of new members all around the chamber in this Parliament, by going back over the last couple of years and talking about how we got to where we are now.

I am sure that some people in this chamber will know that it has been a very long and difficult road to get to the stage at which we can put our hands on our hearts and say that we have a genuinely sustainable fishery in Western Australia. Indeed, over several decades, that fishery has been under very, very serious pressure. I think it is a real tribute to a whole series of fisheries ministers, one of whom I have worked particularly closely with as I am actually married to him. I can tell members that being Minister for Fisheries—I know that Hon Jon Ford would agree with me—is actually one of the greatest jobs that one can get in government. It is richly rewarding and enormously challenging. I remember debating the amendments to the Aquatic Resources Management Act last year, I think it was, taken through this chamber by the parliamentary secretary, Hon Kyle McGinn. I think I am right in saying that Hon Dr Steve Thomas spoke to that amendment bill and talked about the role of the Minister for Fisheries. I think the honourable member said that the nickname for the fisheries minister was always “minister for killjoy”.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** That's pretty close, yes.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** Certainly, when fisheries are under the kind of stress that they have been under for the past couple of decades, there are very stressful moments when the minister has to announce the bad news.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Ask Norman Moore about the rock fishery things that he had to do.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** However, thankfully, we have made those hard decisions—a number of ministers have played their part in doing that over the years—and we are now in a very good position. But I want to explain how we got there, because it is quite an interesting story.

There were challenges moving into the twenty-first century, given that we are now 22 years into the twenty-first century, and we have not yet got to the stage at which the Aquatic Management Resources Act is in effect. Members will know from the debate we had last year and I think from a couple of questions that have been asked in recent months in this place that the ARMA will hopefully be enacted by the end of this year or early next year. It has taken a very long time to get to this stage; let us look at how that happened. I think it is worth going into this story in a bit of detail. When it comes to some of the great social, economic and environmental changes that we have made in Australia, we often say that we can map Labor governments onto the history of those great achievements. There is nowhere that is more true than in the area of fisheries. This story really starts in the late 1990s—the final years of the previous century. It still sounds weird to say that when we talk about the twentieth century. In the final years of the last century the Auditor General did a report. The essence of that report is contained in the title so members do not have to go and read the whole thing. The title is *Fish for the Future?*—with a question mark. We all know that “fish for the future” has become a bit of a byword for anything to do with fish. We talk about fish for the future. The key thing about the Auditor General's report is that he put a question mark after the title because when the report was released in October 1999 there was a serious question about whether we would have a fishery into the twenty-first century. It was the Auditor General's report in 1999 that laid out the challenge. That challenge was enormous.

It is worth looking at how fishing has changed in those 30 to 40 years or so. When the Auditor General's report was released there were about 1 400 boats and 6 000 fishers in the commercial sector. The catch value was a little bit over \$500 million and the commercial fishery was worth about \$1 billion a year to the Western Australian economy. On the other hand, the recreational sector involved about 600 000 people and was worth about \$500 million a year to the economy. What struck me in comparing those figures in 1999 with the modern figures is that the commercial fishery has not actually changed very much. I say “about” but I have a very exact figure here. The commercial fishery has 6 281 FTEs, according to some Department of Fisheries figures so I think that would be fairly accurate. The catch value is about \$633 million; that is about what we would expect given what it was 30 years ago. The value to the economy is about the same—around \$1 billion a year; however, in 1999 recreational fishing was valued at

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about \$500 million a year to the economy. According to the *WA Recreational Fishing Three-year Development Plan 2022–2025* that Minister Punch recently released, it is now worth \$2.4 billion a year to the economy. Have a think about that. That is amazing.

What we have to map onto that is some of the technological changes that have taken place in the last 30 years, which have primarily affected recreational fishers rather than commercial fishers. Many of us recently made a visit to the Pilbara. When we walk around towns like Karratha and Port Hedland we see that almost every house has a fishing boat. Almost every fishing boat has a fish finder, which was not true 30 years ago. Members can imagine how that has increased the popularity of fishing, to say nothing about the success rate of the fishers in this state. We can also see how that has increased pressure on stock; every fishing boat that has a fishfinder becomes what we tend to call a “fish killer”.

That is a little snapshot of what fisheries means to the state. In 1999 the Auditor General identified that, in Western Australia, we were subject—we were not orphans in this because it is a global phenomenon—to a factor about human nature that will be very familiar to some members of this chamber. I know that my colleague in the Greens will be familiar with this because we went to the same school. He will know all about the “tragedy of the commons”. The conceptual approach to something like a fishery is in grave danger when the mentality propagated or captured by the tragedy of the commons comes into play. The idea is a fairly straightforward concept to understand. Members who know their European history will know that fish have not been owned by anybody since the Magna Carta. In the thirteenth century nobody owned fish. Fisheries tries to regulate the taking of fish but the fishery is essentially seen as common property.

Garrett Hardin, who wrote the seminal article on the tragedy of the commons, talks about the fact that when something is owned in common people always tend to take a little bit more because it does not matter; there is plenty more out there. It is not like stealing from a neighbour; it is common property so we have an entitlement and we take our bit. It is very hard. That whole subject of the tragedy of the commons is a bit controversial now. It is probably fair to say that we work together a bit better than people like Garrett Hardin accuse us of doing. In general, it is a concept that is applied to global warming and climate change today. It is everybody’s responsibility so it ultimately becomes nobody’s responsibility. That is something that legislators and policymakers have to be consciously aware of when we make policy because it sometimes means it is a bit more complicated than we hope to regulate something like climate change or the subject of this motion, which is the fisheries.

Where did we end up with the Auditor General’s report? He talks about the fact that the fishery needs to be managed. The report states at page 7 —

Fisheries need to be managed because of their common property nature. A resource that is owned by everybody tends to be looked after by nobody. The risks of allowing unrestricted fishing are depleted stocks, low catches, an unprofitable industry, damage to the aquatic environment and the loss of long-term economic, social and other benefits to the community.

I have found a copy of this report and I recommend members read it because it is a good reminder of how governments, good policy and determination to make a change can actually have an effect, particularly when it comes to an environmental issue like overfishing. I actually found it quite empowering to realise that we came off such a low base. It will not be a surprise to anybody to hear me say that the person who rang the bell on all this and decided that it was a major policy issue for Western Australia was Hon Dr Geoff Gallop, who became the Premier in 2001. I cannot find anything recent to compare with the nine-page fisheries policy document that Dr Gallop put out before the 2001 election, which essentially goes off the back of the Auditor General’s report. I will read a couple of sentences from the first page. It states —

Clearly, with so much wealth being generated out of the marine resources of the State, it is vital that the management of Western Australia’s marine resources is placed on a sustainable footing, in terms of both environmental and economic sustainability.

That was Labor’s promise in 2001, when we were elected. That is what we started putting in place at the beginning of 2001. Where did it go from there? The single most significant thing that we did in the Gallop–Carpenter period of office, under the Labor government of that time, was to introduce a Minister for Fisheries. Others may correct me on this but I was advised that it was the first time in the world that a jurisdiction created a dedicated fisheries minister. Those members who have long memories will remember that fisheries always came under agriculture, so it was seen very much as a harvestable crop, a consumable; that is what fisheries was about. If you are of that mindset, it sits quite happily under the agricultural portfolio. Dr Geoff Gallop pulled fisheries out of ag and set it up with its own independent minister. That has continued to this day. It continued with the change of government when Hon Norman Moore became fisheries minister after Hon Jon Ford. I know that conversations have taken place, not behind the chair because neither of them have been in Parliament for some time so they do not have

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a chair to talk behind, but when they come across each other, occasionally they agree that they were pretty much both on the same track.

When I talked earlier about the difficulties of being fisheries minister, I acknowledge that it was probably a good training ground for Hon Norman Moore, who now seems to be trying to reform the Liberal Party, which is probably an even more difficult job than running fisheries. We have always had a dedicated fisheries minister since Premier Gallop introduced those changes, which started in 2001, and then in 2005 we ended up with a dedicated fisheries minister. What was the philosophy behind this idea? Nobody wants to create extra ministers. We all know that nobody needs more bureaucracy. But this was about a profound change in the way we looked at the fishery. From that moment on—from the time the Labor government was elected in 2001—fisheries was not a resource to be extracted; rather, it was a resource to be placed on a sustainable footing. We had to take into account not just the economic factors—I have already given members some of the numbers associated with that; they know the economics are serious—but we had to talk about environmental factors, social factors and, most importantly, cultural factors. One of the first changes that was made under the premiership of Geoff Gallop was the introduction of the idea that we would have a stocktake of the entire resource, and then we would essentially look at three stakeholders. Those three stakeholders were the commercial fishers, the recreational fishers and the traditional fishers. That became a very important element of traditional owners claiming the rights that were justly theirs after the Native Title Act was proclaimed by the commonwealth. They had customary rights to fishing, which then had to be factored into the whole management of the fishery.

The whole mindset of fisheries changed between 2001 and 2008. In fairness to the other side of politics, it pretty much continued through the period of the Liberal–National government. It was about joining the dots and managing those competing interests. It was essentially about sharing the fisheries—not only sharing the resource, but also sharing responsibility for the maintenance of the fishery. It was about being proactive rather than reactive. If we think about the point that Hon Dr Steve Thomas was making about being the “minister for killjoy” because the government was always introducing bag limits, imposing restrictions and bans on taking certain stock, they were always reactive responses. We had a crisis. We changed the bag limits. The idea from 2001 to 2008, and really since 2001, has been that we needed to be proactive so that less retroactive action was needed.

We are now at a point where about 90 per cent of our fishery in Western Australia is certified by the Marine Stewardship Council as being sustainable. That is a remarkable turnaround in essentially 20 to 25 years. For many years now, the state government has helped local industry get their certification from the Marine Stewardship Council. In his March press release, the Minister for Fisheries, Hon Don Punch, stated that about 11 fisheries are now credentialed as sustainable fisheries in Western Australia. I believe it might be 12 now, but I will leave that to the parliamentary secretary to clarify when he responds to this motion. We have come such a long way in such a short time.

It is borne out by the latest *Status reports of the fisheries and aquatic resources of Western Australia 2020/21: State of the fisheries*. All that members need to read of this rather lengthy report is the editor’s overview, which states —

The 2020/21 financial year saw a continuation of the outstanding results achieved in fisheries management to ensure the continued sustainability of the State’s aquatic resources.

...

This year, 98% of our fish stocks were assessed as not being at risk or vulnerable through exploitation ...

That is an extraordinary turnaround in the last 20 years. I know that Hon Kyle McGinn will talk more about this later. Fish stocks are now classified as sustainable-adequate and sustainable-recovering. We still have a problem with dhufish, and I think there may be some snapper problems as well. I know the parliamentary secretary will talk about those later. The one resource that is classified as inadequate is the greenlip abalone of the abalone managed fishery. I know that a lot of work is going on in that regard that I do not have time to talk about now.

This is a really good story. It is largely a story about Labor’s drive to change the whole way we manage the fishery so that we now talk about ecological sustainability and ecosystems—a thoroughly twenty-first century way of managing such a precious resource for the state.

*Visitors — Warwick Senior High School*

**The PRESIDENT:** Members, I acknowledge in the public gallery for the first time in a very long time, a school. Welcome to the public gallery students from Warwick Senior High School, led by the member for Kingsley, Ms Jessica Stojkovski. Welcome to the Legislative Council.

*Debate Resumed*

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**HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [1.26 pm]: I wish to advise that I will not take up my full time because I know that a complement of members wish to speak on this motion moved by Hon Dr Sally Talbot, so I will keep my remarks relatively brief.

One of the interesting things about Hon Dr Sally Talbot's contribution was that she gave a kind of a history lesson, I guess, on fisheries legislation in Western Australia. She went back in time. I will go back a little further in time. Not long before I was born, back on 1 January 1890, the Fisheries Act 1889 came into effect in Western Australia. Western Australia has long acknowledged the need for proactive and ecologically sustainable management of fisheries. Obviously, that has evolved over time. Back in 1890, the Fisheries Act 1889 came into effect, which effectively meant that commercial and recreational fishers were required to observe a schedule of minimum weights by which 22 species of fish could legally be kept. Then a new fisheries bill, supported by both sides of Parliament, passed 10 years later, in 1899, which created an extension of the regulatory powers from the original bill as well as the introduction of a licensing system for commercial fishers and fishing boats, greater powers to board vessels and enter premises in the search for illegal equipment and undersized fish and a provision for the appointment of volunteer or honorary inspectors.

In the period through to 1905, there was a rapid expansion of commercial fishing and developments in recreational fishing—those developments that Hon Dr Sally Talbot talked about in terms of technology. Even back in 1905, there were some advancements that meant that recreational fishers could catch more. It was important that the legislation kept up. The powers provided the government with a much greater scope to manage fisheries resources with new powers of regulation, inspection and arrest. We see the evolution of the legislation in place for managing fisheries across Western Australia. Of course the need for sustainable management evolved over that period. The act that came in around 1905 remained in force for another 89 years. It took a long time from the implementation of those original laws for a serious evolution in the management of our fisheries. It has always been something that both sides of Parliament have supported.

In 2009, the previous government introduced the integrated fisheries management government policy, which was founded on the principle that an integrated, cross-sectoral approach to fisheries management with sustainability and ecological impact was paramount when determining appropriate harvest levels across all sectors.

In March 2012, the previous government also set in place the Western Australian government's fisheries policy. It specified the overarching principles for the efficient and effective management of the state's fish and aquatic resources and the environment and ecosystems on which they depend. That policy was in accord with the principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development and Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management, with a risk-based approach to determine management priorities and actions consistent with ESD and EBFM principles. It also specified the requirement for the development of long-term strategies aimed at ensuring the simple and effective management of fish and aquatic resources with flexibility and capacity to respond to change. The policy also set out that fisheries management in Western Australia would be underpinned by investment in sound science, strong stakeholder engagement, development of appropriate policy and an effective legislative base, which in combination with effective compliance, education and administrative services was aimed at ensuring sustainable fisheries for the benefit of the Western Australian community. That is something that all sides of politics have supported, and I acknowledge the work done by previous governments of all persuasions to make sure we have sustainable fisheries policy and legislation in place.

In 2015 it was, of course the previous Liberal–National government that introduced the Aquatic Resources Management Bill to replace the Fish Resources Management Act 1994 and the Pearling Act 1990 as the primary legislation for the management of Western Australia's fisheries and aquatic biological resources. The focus of the bill was to ensure the ecologically sustainable development of Western Australia's living aquatic biological resources and ecosystems by protecting those resources from over-exploitation and the threats posed by disease and harmful imported organisms, while encouraging the development of the industries and activities associated with their use. That bill was introduced in the Parliament in 2015 and passed through the Parliament with the support of all sides, but it did not come into effect in 2016 as contemplated due to technical transitional issues. The current government then amended and reintroduced that legislation, and it passed with the support of all sides of the chamber and has supported the sustainable management of our fisheries.

It was the previous Liberal–National government that enacted significant policy and legislative reform when it was last in government. It essentially set out the contemporary framework for sustainable fisheries management. However, if we look at some of the things that have gone on in fisheries in the last few years, some issues have come across my desk quite regularly from a number of different fisheries—for example, the implementation of the south coast managed fishery in 2021. Essentially, the current government was prepared to risk forcing small commercial operators out of business rather than simply extending the consultation period so that they could provide valuable input on the effect of the new management plans on their operations. Another example is the government's failure to listen to professional licence holders on the eastern zone of the south coast who implored the government

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to acknowledge that the scientific evidence that the south coast bioregion cannot and should not be treated as a single fishery, indistinguishable across its approximately 1 500 kilometre span. This is important. When the government manages fisheries and establishes management zones and so on, it should recognise the variations across fisheries, with a number of different aspects and components in those fisheries and that one plan based on a one-size-fits-all approach, which was largely dictated by resources, may not be appropriate. It is important that we recognise that and understand the impact of these changes on fishers who use those areas.

The other example is compensation for professional fishers around the Ngari Capes Marine Park, which is ongoing and is taking far too long. The successful implementation of any sustainable fisheries regime relies on the ability to fairly compensate those who have had to give up fishing ground or reduce their catch in order to reduce overall fish mortality. That was contemplated within the revised architecture set out in the ARMA, but it has not been implemented to any great effect. With the recent announcements regarding the Buccaneer Archipelago Marine Park, the impending establishment of the south coast marine park, the recent compensation issues around the Ocean Reef Marina development and the potential impacts of the west coast demersal scalefish requirement to reduce total fish mortality, one would think that the McGowan government would be doing everything in its power to enact fair and timely compensation processes in order to successfully manage those fisheries. In the past we have seen the government try to nationalise one of our fisheries.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** Which government?

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** This is the government that in the absolute height of hypocrisy has grandstanded its commitment to sustainable management.

**Hon Kyle McGinn** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, member! I am assuming you will seek the call, in which case you will have a really good opportunity to voice your concerns.

**Hon COLIN de GRUSSA:** Thank you, President. I will complete my remarks because I know there are plenty of honourable members who would love to jump up.

In its simplest form, it seems to me to be the absolute height of hypocrisy for the government to grandstand its commitment to the sustainable management of Western Australia's fisheries, yet it has not applied any urgency to providing fair compensation for those who inordinately suffer significant financial loss in the process of delivering that sustainability. If the government wants to make a fishery sustainable, it will ultimately mean that people catch fewer fish. There is nothing wrong with that, but if the government takes away from those people who legitimately make a living out of the fishery and who follow the requirements, it needs to put fair compensation in place and it needs to expedite that process. That was contemplated in the Aquatic Resources Management Act, including proposed amendments to the Fishing and Related Industries Compensation (Marine Reserves) Act to allow compensation processes to occur in a timely manner and not after the fact when these people have had taken away not only their income but also the opportunity to fight effectively for fair compensation because they have no capacity or resource with which to fight for that compensation. It is a grossly unfair system and it needs to be changed.

**HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary)** [1.37 pm]: I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing this great motion to the house. I was compelled to jump up very quickly after that outrageous material we just heard from the opposition. The opposition started off well, because it obviously accepts that the government is doing a good job on sustainable fisheries, but then it took its normal dive into the dumps, where the opposition lives. It really is quite amusing to hear a lecture from the other side around consultation and the implementation of sustainable legislation. It is pretty funny to hear the member opposite gloss over the Aquatic Resources Management Act that was brought forward by the previous government in 2015. The member did say that this act was supported and passed by the Parliament. Why was ARMA not utilised, member? It was because it was inept.

It was not the right legislation—the former government rushed it. It did what it always does—it talked the talk but failed to walk the walk. This government has gone in and fixed that legislation. We made sure that the ARMA was drafted properly and it was passed in the Parliament, and we have made sure it is being implemented. I really dislike sitting in this place hearing the opposition gloss over its failings. Members opposite are constantly saying that the government looks in the rear view mirror too much.

**Hon Colin de Grussa** interjected.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** The member does not look back enough! You guys do not learn from your mistakes. On the one hand the member stated how great the legislation has been for marine parks and all that sort of stuff. It is hilarious to hear the opposition's argument when the government is out consulting, talking and engaging with

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stakeholders. We are finding out what they need so we can have a sustainable fishery. All the member worries about, down in the dumps over there, is just the little pieces of rubbish —

**Hon Colin de Grussa** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Member, I suggest that you address your comments through the chair rather than across the table. It makes for a more interesting debate.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** President, I know that you really want to hear this because it is very important that we get the truth out there instead of rubbish that we just heard. I want to talk about the great story that we have to tell about sustainable fisheries and about how this government has fixed up the buggery that was done before it. Western Australia has over 13 000 kilometres of coastline and a diverse set of aquatic resources that underpin highly economical and socially valuable commercial, recreational, charter and customary fisheries. I will touch on something that Hon Dr Sally Talbot said. Cultural and customary fishing is really important and the world, let alone Western Australia, has a long way to go to ensure that we get that right because it is critical. Our First Nations people have been surviving and living off the oceans for over 60 000 years. My friend and colleague Hon Rosie Sahanna is a good fisherman from the Kimberley. She has not taken me out yet to catch any decent ones but —

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** She's probably a fisherperson as opposed to a fisherman.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** Sorry, a fisherperson. I cannot win them all.

For many Western Australians, having access to quality fishing experiences, enjoying fresh local seafood and knowing that these resources are well managed is a key part of our lifestyle in WA. Although other jurisdictions face the many challenges presented by overfishing, as Hon Dr Sally Talbot stated, we are 98 per cent not at risk in the fishing industry, as detailed in the status reports of the fisheries and aquatic resources of WA. It is a brilliant achievement to have fishing groups that are 98 per cent sustainable to ensure that they are not overfished.

As Hon Dr Sally Talbot stated, the COVID pandemic has created many challenges. One of the challenges of having internal tourism—that is, Western Australians travelling within Western Australia—is that Western Australians take home more fish than international tourists would. I remember hearing stories from Exmouth locals who said that back in the 1980s, people used to drive to Exmouth from Perth with coolers in the back of their car. They would fish until they filled their coolers and then drive them back to Perth. Hon Dr Sally Talbot made a very good point. The journey that we have taken to create such a world-class sustainable fishing is phenomenal and should be applauded because we have come a very long way. Most fisheries are classified as sustainable or adequate in the report. Several are classified as sustainable and recovering, which indicates that the management actions taken by the government have resulted in these fishery resources recovering at an acceptable rate. That is a brilliant outcome. These fisheries include the dusky and sandbar shark stocks that support the temperate demersal gillnet and demersal longline fisheries. These excellent results reflect the strong successful history of innovative fisheries management in Western Australia and we should all acknowledge and applaud that.

I want to talk about one of our really critical industries: the western rock lobster industry. The opposition chooses to only talk negatively about things. I will not be negative. I will talk about the positivity within this industry and this fishery. I will not talk about the negativity that members opposite come into this place with. All they have is at the bottom of that dumpster. They should just keep fishing.

**Hon Colin de Grussa** interjected.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** Let us talk about the great western rock lobster.

**Hon Colin de Grussa** interjected.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** There are some Tories around. Can I hear some Tories?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! We are getting disorderly. I would like to hear the debate.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** Sorry, President. I try my best to be as orderly as I can. I understand that sometimes people can get upset when the truth is told.

**Hon Colin de Grussa:** Do you want to nationalise the industries? That is the truth.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** The Nationals cannot help but say “national, national, national”, but it is all good.

**Hon Colin de Grussa** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! It is customary to sit when the President calls order. Now we have some semblance of a return to order.

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**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** That was very unruly. The western rock lobster fishery has historically been Australia's most valuable, single species wild catch fishery and it is certainly WA's highest value fishery. The COVID-19 global pandemic trade disruptions presented a significant challenge for the fishery with the loss of direct market access to China. We all know of the impacts that had and how hard it has been for some of our fishos to go through that process. Despite these challenges, the economic contribution of the western rock lobster fishery to Western Australia has remained relatively high at an estimated value of \$419 million while supporting 1 841 direct and indirect full-time jobs. What a great industry! The rock lobster industry continues to investigate alternative markets, with representatives from the Western Australian Western Rock Lobster Council attending Invest and Trade Western Australia's mission to India in July. They worked closely with the Western Rock Lobster Council to ensure the future sustainability of the rock lobster industry. The mission identified opportunities to grow a sound, stable, long-term market through establishing strong trade relationships based on shared values. How good is that? That is some positivity around our great, sustainable western rock lobster industry. I love talking about these things in a positive light rather than a negative light like the opposition. The Minister for Fisheries has done many things to support this industry through this period. Minister Punch has been a massive advocate for our Western Australian rock lobster. He took steps to support the fishery in a wider commercial —

**Hon Colin de Grussa** interjected.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** It is like hearing sea dragons flap around the ocean. They do not know where they are going. They just keep running into walls. President, it is like algae floating in the ocean and getting eaten by whale sharks. The McGowan government has taken steps to support —

A member interjected.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Well, they do not eat people; they eat algae. The opposition members are the algae.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I am getting a little bit of rumbling on my left. It is making it difficult to hear the debate.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** I accept that sometimes the opposition get a bit grumbly.

The McGowan government has taken steps to support the fishery and the wider commercial fishing industry throughout the course of the pandemic including the deferral of fishery access fees in 2020. For the lobster fishery, it commenced the back-of-boat sales initiative and allowed for an 18-month season, which is six months longer than usual. The industry was very happy with that. I do not hear the Nationals WA celebrating that at all. They just talk negatively as usual. On 6 May 2021, the Minister for Fisheries, Hon Don Punch, approved a second 18-month season for the fishery that had the effect of deferring another six months of access fees, further supporting the industry and making it solid so that it would still be there into the future. The back-of-boat sales was a successful initiative of the government and industry that provided lobster supply to the domestic market. Western Australians love their western rock lobsters and they really did enjoy those back-of-boat sales. Since the introduction of back-of-boat sales in September 2020, the lobster sales have supported more than 80 lobster fishing vessels to supply freshly caught lobster direct to local customers at 19 landing areas along WA's west coast. Last year, the McGowan government approved a request from the Western Rock Lobster Council, representing the local lobster fishers, through communication and consultation—all that stuff we love—to double the number of lobster licences for commercial lobster fishers who can sell from their landing.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas** interjected.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** The Leader of the Opposition is not used to the word "consultation". Imagine if members opposite had done that with the Aquatic Resources Management Act in 2015. We might have actually had legislation that would have worked—who would have thought?

**The PRESIDENT:** The parliamentary secretary is doing pretty well to not take the bait. Order!

*Point of Order*

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Noting that perhaps the parliamentary secretary may well have been baited, members of the opposition are baiting. I would ask you to remind members of the opposition that they should listen to the parliamentary secretary in silence and then he will not have to be baited and raise his voice.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you, minister. I will continue to chair the Parliament as I see fit. There is no point of order. I have called those to my left to order a number of times and I have expressed that I wish to hear the debate in silence.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** Some people cannot catch fish with hooks. They need circle hooks, but we do not allow them anymore.

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The lobsterers were able to sell up to 400 Western rock lobsters per landing. That met a huge demand over the Christmas period. Outside December, the number of lobsters that fishers can sell per back-of-boat landing has now been doubled to 200 to ensure again that we have a viable industry and it keeps going whilst we are looking for alternatives. Thousands and thousands of rock lobsters have been sold via back-of-the-boat sales since the program began in 2020. The industry appreciates it and I know Western Australians do as well.

Another really important thing to focus on in ensuring that we have sustainable fisheries is innovation. There is some innovation that began back in the 1960s, with the commercial rock lobster fishery becoming the first ever limited-entry fishery in the world. That is really great, a really good move. Obviously, we have seen other parts of the industry follow and all WA's commercial fisheries have now subsequently transitioned to full management using appropriate forms of limited entry, including the innovative use of transferable effort units for multi-species fisheries. We would all be aware, maybe not the opposition, of Marine Stewardship Council certification. As of June this year, 12 fisheries, which represent over 90 per cent of the total commercial value of the state, have achieved third party sustainable certification through the world-leading Marine Stewardship Council. This is a big deal, members. Acting President, this is a big deal.

Most recently, the state government supported Rare Foods Australia to become part of this group, becoming the first Western Australian aquaculture venture to be MSC certified as a hatch-and-catch enhanced bivalve fishery. It is brilliant. This certification does not come easily. This is really important. MSC is a really important certification to have on our fisheries. It sells us to the world. It makes sure people know that we are sustainable.

In 2009, the operators of the company began trials of ocean ranching for abalone, which led to the creation of the deployable "ABITAT"—not "habitat", "ABITAT", like "abalone". It is one of those really good abbreviations. This reef was then colonised with algae so they can be stocked with hatchery-raised juvenile abalone that can grow in the ocean with little interference and no supplemental feeding. It is brilliant. To be able to create an ABITAT reef that we could put abalone on and grow here in Western Australia further goes to the innovation we have in our departments, further goes to the sciences that we have and further goes to the ministers who have been pushing for this to happen. I think it has been an amazing effort by Minister Punch to continue the legacy we have in innovation in that space. Rare Food Australia operates on Flinders Bay near Augusta, and in 2020–21 the company supplied 75.9 tonnes of premium greenlip abalone to markets in Australia, Europe and Asia. Abalone is not for everyone but around the world people absolutely love it and it fetches a very high price. The quality is very important as well. Western Australia has a very high quality greenlip abalone and it is very much wanted by Asian and European markets.

This most recent accolade means that these ranch-based abalone join other WA certified fisheries. I mentioned earlier that everyone has started to follow suit. These are some of the fisheries that we have here in WA that have MSC certification, which is important. There is the Western Australian rock lobster. There is the Exmouth Gulf and Shark Bay prawn fishery, for which the first trawl fishers to be MSC certified under the program are used. They recently got recertified in 2020—brilliant effort there. Exmouth prawns, get on them! They are beautiful; they are absolutely lovely. They are great exports as well. There is Peel–Harvey Estuary blue swimmer crab. I know everyone here has had a blue swimmer crab before. They are amazing. They are also MSC certified, the first time that both the commercial and the recreational sectors have been certified. Brilliant! There is the Peel–Harvey sea mullet. Who doesn't like a good sea mullet?

**Hon Darren West:** And a mullet!

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** And a mullet! I did not get the pun in that one!

There is the western south coast —

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** That is because you are not very "punny"!

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** I am not very "punny"? Now I am off track.

There are also western south coast abalone and west coast deep sea crab. There is pearl oyster, the first "gem" fishery to be certified. There is also sea cucumber, south coast and west coast western rock octopus and Abrolhos Islands scallops. They are all achieving MSC certification. Certified fisheries have the effect of increasing the marketability of the goods produced. There is also independent recognition of WA's effectiveness in the sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture. It goes a long way to showing that we are doing something right over here in WA with our fisheries. We are making them sustainable. We are ensuring that the fisheries are safe and in good hands. It does not help me with catching any fish though; I can tell you that! The MSC tick of approval for a fishery is internationally regarded as the global gold standard in third party sustainability certification.

The MSC's rigorous standards are based on three key elements: sustainable fish stocks, minimising environmental impact and effective fisheries management. That to me is something for Western Australians to be proud of. I am



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very happy that Hon Dr Sally Talbot brought this motion on the great achievements of WA fishing and the fisheries department and the ministers to the floor so we could put it to this chamber. Hon Dr Sally Talbot touched on the fact that WA could potentially have been one of the first places to implement a standalone fisheries minister. I did have a quick look and we were very close. I cannot put my finger on it specifically to say that we were, but I think it is right to say that we are one of the best in the world for returning ourselves to sustainability. As Hon Dr Sally Talbot so eloquently put it, there was a crisis that we then averted. As I have gone through in detail here today, we have seen that our efforts in re-creating some of these fisheries have been successful. They are starting to regrow. I like to be able to talk about creating new abalone habitats, to be able to grow more abalone, to be able to have scallops, to be able to have these fisheries working in spaces that sustain them. I think this is the right direction for the government.

I also have been doing a fair bit of work. The minister is very interested in the sustainability of some of the aquaculture projects we see in Western Australia as well. That ties in with cultural and customary practices. How can we connect our First Nations people with having these type of projects, particularly in the north? I think that there is a massive opportunity. I know as a young fellow cherabin was a really good freshwater animal, almost like a yabby, down where Hon Dr Steve Thomas is. The cherabin is probably a little bit more aggressive.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Yabbies are on the eastern side of Albany Highway.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** So there are the marron and then there are the yabbies. Yes, but I want to make sure they are on the west side.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon KYLE MCGINN:** I do not think they are overrated, Hon Darren West. I do not think any of Western Australia's seafood is overrated, but I have to say that up north there is a good opportunity to find some aquaculture projects in that space. We all know about the sea cucumber and the story that is being played out for Western Australia in that space. We have Indigenous businesses working at Shark Bay, I believe. Over thousands of years of being in this country they have come to understand that the moon controls when the sea cucumbers come out and that there is a sustainable way to harvest that sea cucumber. I managed to look at one of these projects, and what they do is get the sea cucumber and dry it until it becomes a tiny, dried sea cucumber, which is then very popular with Chinese people for soups. It is known for having some really good health benefits. It is really sought after in the high-end market as well, which is a good opportunity for us to create First Nations small businesses that will then be able to sell a First Nations product. I think that is an amazing opportunity.

My time is running out. I could talk all day about the great job that the government is doing on sustainable fisheries. The minister has done a fabulous job, and I think he will continue to do that. I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing such a great motion to the house. I hope that in the future the opposition will have a closer look at some of the positives rather than going to the bottom of the barrel, as it always does, and finding negatives about a process with a good story, not a negative story. One day we will get a positive comment out of the opposition, but sadly, members, that is not today.

*Visitors — Comet Bay Primary School and Newman College*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Peter Foster):** Before I give the call, I just want to acknowledge some guests that we have in the chamber. We have some visitors here today from Comet Bay Primary School, and we also have some visitors here today from Newman College. We would like to welcome you all here to the chamber today, and we hope you have a great day.

*Debate Resumed*

**HON STEPHEN PRATT (South Metropolitan)** [1.59 pm]: I, too, will try to carry on in the same vein as Hon Kyle McGinn and keep this positive, surprisingly. I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing this motion to the house.

I am no expert on fishing industry stuff, but I will do my best not to flounder. Minister Dawson is equally disappointed with that, so that is good.

Several members interjected.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** You are in the wrong place!

**Hon STEPHEN PRATT:** As a member of the McGowan government, I have certainly done my bit to ensure our fisheries remains sustainable. Every time I go fishing, I come home empty-handed.

Western Australia truly leads the way in sustainable fisheries, which is a credit to both the success of government programs and the industry's commitment to sustainability. As Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned, more than 90 per cent of the value of our state fisheries is now certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council. The industry provides hundreds of jobs without sacrificing important principles of sustainability.

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The *Status reports of the fisheries and aquatic resources of Western Australia 2020/21* stated that the fisheries industry saw a “continuation of the outstanding results achieved in fisheries management”. This could not have been achieved without the McGowan government’s ongoing investment in sustainability. The state government has provided \$14.5 million in funding to give all WA fisheries the opportunity to be assessed by the Marine Stewardship Council, the most rigorous and scientific standard for sustainability. This government understands that a commitment to sustainable fishing is essential for the industry to thrive.

In my capacity as a member for the South Metropolitan Region, I have a particular interest in the fisheries industry. For decades, fisheries have played an important role in the port city of Fremantle, where I grew up. As Hon Kyle McGinn did, in my contribution I would like to draw the house’s attention to the fantastic work of the western rock lobster fishery, which highlights that a focus on a sustainability-led approach improves, rather than hinders, business. A shining light for sustainable fishing in WA is the western rock lobster industry. It is a fantastic example of industry and government working together to push sustainability as something that is good for the planet and good for business. In 2000, the western rock lobster fishery was the world’s first fishery to be certified as ecologically sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council. At that time, western rock lobster was the only MSC-certified fishery in WA. Thankfully, it now shares this certification with a number of other fisheries. The western rock lobster fishery is very proud to have recently had its MSC certification renewed for a fourth time. After a particularly bad season in 2008, in partnership with the Department of Fisheries, the industry moved towards a regulated output management system to ensure the long-term sustainability of rock lobster stocks. This has been hugely successful, and it continues to be the gold standard for sustainable seafood in Western Australia.

Only a few months ago, I was lucky enough to facilitate an introduction and meeting between representatives of the Western Rock Lobster Council, Fedele Camarda and Stephen Minutillo, and Western Australia’s newly appointed trade commissioner to India and the gulf region, Nashid Chowdhury. As a result of that meeting, the representatives attended an overseas trade delegation to India with the Western Australian government. Our home-caught seafood is the best quality and a hugely successful home-grown industry, and I commend the government’s commitment to a continued expansion of our agricultural markets. The Western Rock Lobster Council representatives took 200 kilograms of rock lobster to India, and I understand that they were one of the highlights of the delegation. They were extremely popular and have sparked a lot of interest in different markets in India. I think it is a case of “watch this space” to see what comes from that opportunity.

Hon Kyle McGinn touched on the abalone fishery, which also expanded its sustainability credentials. The Flinders Bay greenlip abalone fishery has also been awarded an MSC tick of approval. In Western Australia, 12 fisheries now meet this industry gold standard. The Flinders Bay greenlip abalone fishery is at the cutting-edge of abalone farming, pioneering an approach that produces a world-class product, which has been celebrated in Australia and throughout Asia.

Before I conclude my comments, I want to touch on an aspect that has not been covered so far, and that is the courses on offer at South Metropolitan TAFE. Recently, I did a tour of the Fremantle TAFE at Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour, and I was lucky enough to be shown the aquaculture course and its programs. It is quite incredible to see. They have huge breeding tanks of yellowtail kingfish. I saw each stage of the fish’s development as I walked through the facility—from the really small initial stock to the huge fish that are swimming around in tanks. It is really something to be seen.

**Hon Darren West:** Did you find Nemo?

**Hon STEPHEN PRATT:** I did, actually. The member might have seen my social media post. I did find Nemo. I must say that I am disappointed that Hon Kyle McGinn did not refer to the clam at all, but anyway.

I am excited to see where aquaculture can go because, from my perspective, the opportunities are endless. We always talk about diversifying the economy, and there are endless opportunities to expand in this space. In the near future, we will see some big industry players looking to use that technology and learning in Western Australia. A very exciting thing is happening down in Fremantle. It would be great to see more people going through that course and getting the skills they need to get involved in what will be a growth industry in Western Australia.

I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing this motion to the house. We can talk about endless positive things as a government that has supported this industry. I look forward to continuing my relationship with the western rock lobster industry and seeing how I can support them. Thank you.

**HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [2.07 pm]:** I, too, would like to thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing this motion forward today. I have been very excited, waiting for this motion, to talk about fishing and sustainable fishing, which is something that is close to my heart and to my region. I also thank Hon Kyle McGinn for his positive contribution to the motion.

We are really lucky in Australia. We are a huge island, with a huge coastline and huge areas for offshore fishing. Western Australia is such a huge state with plenty of fishing areas. We have a wide and diverse fishing industry

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that stretches all the way from the north of our state, down to the south and through to Eucla and the South Australian border. This industry is really important for our regions, and it supports a lot of family businesses.

Every two years, the Institute of Marine Science prepares an index of the marine industry. Western Australia is leading the nation in the economic value of its commercial fishing. We are almost due for another report, but the last time the report came out, the Australian fishing industry was estimated to be worth about \$1.8 billion. Here in WA, the value of our fishing industry was over \$554 million. We are leading the nation, which is really fantastic.

As Hon Kyle McGinn noted, the most valuable species is the rock lobster, but the rock lobster, prawns and abalone that we catch are all very high value species. Those three alone account for more than 64 per cent of the economic output of Australia's wild-catch fisheries. The other important thing for our regions is that every dollar earned by the marine industry stimulates the economy and has downstream impacts.

As we talk today about the sustainability of our fisheries, Western Australia is one of the few jurisdictions in the world to have a comprehensive ecosystem base plan for managing our fish stocks. Hon Kyle McGinn talked about the Marine Stewardship Council. The state government has been working for over a decade with both commercial and recreational fishing sectors to enhance the standing of our WA fisheries and aquaculture operations through this independent third party certification. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council and Recfishwest have been working together over the last decade and have made great progress.

As Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned, the Marine Stewardship Council is highly regarded, and it was selected by the WA government as the preferred fisheries accreditation scheme. It sets the highest sustainability standards in the world. The MSC is a not-for-profit organisation. It works to ensure that the fishing stocks and surrounding ecosystems can be sustained indefinitely, even in the face of changing environmental circumstances, which we all know are happening today. The three key elements, which Hon Kyle McGinn also mentioned, are making sure that we have sustainable fish stocks, minimising the environmental impacts and ensuring that we have effective fisheries management.

When a fishery gets approved with this certification, it gets to put the MSC blue tick on all its products, which helps consumers to easily identify it as a sustainable seafood. We can look and if it has the blue tick, we know that we can buy that product with the confidence that it comes from a sustainable industry. The blue tick also provides confidence that our fisheries are being sustainably managed. As Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned, in 2000, the western rock lobster was the first in the world to achieve this certification. Over the past 10 years, a lot of other fishing sectors have achieved that certification. We even had the first joint commercial and recreational fisheries certification—that is, the Peel Harvey blue swimmer crabs, which Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned. He also mentioned that 12 fisheries are certified, ranging from the rock lobster, the prawn fisheries, the blue swimmer crab, the deep-sea crab fishery, the pearl oyster, the abalone ranch, the octopus fisheries, the sea cucumbers and the Abrolhos Island scallop fishery, which is the first scallop industry in Australia to be certified, and, as Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned, the abalone ranch near Augusta is the world's first abalone ranch to achieve certification.

Earlier this year, we celebrated 10 years of commitment to sustainable fishing industries, which is really great. The government is committed to the sustainable management of our fisheries to ensure the future of our state's commercial and recreational fishing industry.

One of the recent success stories, which members might have heard in the media, is about our herring. This season recreational fishers will benefit from some of the action taken to protect this fishery back in 2015 when there were some management changes to protect the herring stock. The catch was reduced by 50 per cent for both recreational and commercial fishers. This season the bag limit will be increased from 12 to 20 starting 1 October. This herring is the most common fish taken by recreational fishes on the south and lower west coast, so this is another example of how well we have done in working with our fishing stocks.

The Western Australian Fishing Industry Council is supportive of the Western Australian commercial fishing industry. It is interesting that there is still quite a disconnect between people and where they think the seafood comes from. It is great to see that WAFIC is working hard, as part of a national program, to raise awareness for the commercial fishing industry, providing a boost to the Australian seafood industry and trying to get the Australian seafood brand going. Australian consumers are slowly changing and prioritising Australian produce, and the pandemic has helped with this.

I am from Esperance. I have been there for about 20 years. My husband is an abalone diver, and so I have had quite a lot to do with the fishing industry over the years. We have quite a lot of amazing fisheries that run off our south coast. We have the southern rock lobster, which is a trap fishery, and deep-sea crabs. These fishers have a significant travel time to get to the fishing grounds because they are not directly off Esperance. The Daniel and

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Bradley families are doing a great job with this high-value fishery. We have a local company called Ocean King Fishing as well as some abalone farming across the south coast of Esperance. We also have a lot of shark fishing. Gillnet fishing is happening in the Great Australian Bight. It is a three-day trip for these fishermen to go out to the Great Australian Bight, and, generally, they have at least 10-day trips. Sharks have had a bad rap lately, but this is a sustainable and amazing shark fishery. We all buy fish and chips, and the fish is usually shark, but it is tasty and healthy, and it all comes from our own Western Australian shores. The Madgen and Tonkin families go out there and put in so much effort getting the shark for our fish and chips.

The Gray family has also done a great job. They are second-generation fishers who process sardines and have had a difficult time with some of the issues arising from the sardine kill in the 1990s and the recovery from that. But they are doing a great job value-adding to their products now. Esperance also has some offshore hand-line and drop-line fishing. One of the youngest commercial fishermen, Thomas Haberley, operates off the Esperance coast. If members want to check out the Esperance Professional Fishermen's Facebook page, they can read about some of our local fishermen.

I want to do a shout-out to Hon Don Punch, who came down to Esperance recently, at the end of June, to meet with and listen to the commercial fishermen's concerns. We heard the rant by Hon Colin de Grussa earlier, but this was a great opportunity for the fishermen to talk about things like compensation and the new marine park in Esperance and for the Minister for Fisheries to listen to the fishermen and their concerns. There are some concerns with the marine park and with some of the moves to a quota system so we can have more sustainable fisheries. It is really great that our government is consulting directly with these commercial fishermen.

The other great thing that our government is doing is running a number of the grant programs that support our fishing industries. The regional economic development grant program is investing \$45.8 million over eight years, and a number of fishing businesses have benefited from that. Southern Sardines in Esperance has value-added by filleting its sardines. It has also entered the silver flounder industry and processes and crumbs the fish. People can go to Lucky Bay Brewing to have amazing fish tacos. Albany Seafoods also had a regional economic development grant to value-add to the wild salmon it catches. This is a really healthy fish that is generally not eaten for human consumption. Some of the stuff Albany Seafoods is doing is just great, and I urge members to try it. It is really yummy.

The other grant program is our international competitiveness co-investment fund, which has supported a number of fishing businesses. There have been two rounds of funding from this program, totalling \$4.9 million. Some businesses like Rare Foods Australia, which Hon Kyle McGinn talked about, with its abalone ranch off Augusta, have the MSC tick. Some of the funding that we are giving it will help it change its packaging so it can put the blue tick on it as well as find new markets and improve its digital, ecommerce and marketing capabilities. We have helped Austral Fisheries with funding for online retail for its toothfish, and we have helped Harvest Road Oceans, which is starting to farm, for the first time in Australia, a new akoya oyster, which is more like a pearl oyster but is edible. That grant is helping fund the global launch of that product. As I said, these fisheries businesses make a significant contribution to our regional economy and employment. These grants will continue to help lay a solid foundation for future jobs in our regions, which is really great.

World Fisheries Day is coming up in November, so I urge everyone to give a shout-out and thank the fishermen for our great clean seafood. We are lucky here. A lot of other countries around the world do not get the clean seafood from the clean waters that we get. We should count ourselves so fortunate. Another one of my favourite annual events is the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council's WA Seafood Industry Awards. It is held each year to help celebrate achievements in the fishing industry and is a fantastic event with amazing seafood on offer from some of our top chefs. I hope that some members might join me at the event this year, like Don Punch did last year. A couple of years ago our abalone deckhand won the inaugural deckhand award, which was great, and last year one of our Esperance locals Manue Daniels won the young achievers award for her commitment to making a positive difference to the industry.

Hon Kyle McGinn also mentioned COVID. I want to refer to the support the government has given the fishing industry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. I refer to not only the significant package the government gave to the western rock lobster industry, but also the other industries, including by waiving licence fees for commercial fishers, which was valued at \$1.3 million. We got our commercial licence and needed to pay only \$1, which was fantastic and much needed at the time.

The only other thing I want to mention is that the new WA Fisheries Council had its inaugural meeting last month. This is a really great way for this newly formed council to come together. The new body is bringing together executives from each of the aquatic resource peak sector bodies. This is a great way for everyone—WAFIC, Recfishwest, the Western Rock Lobster Council and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development—to communicate together and share and discuss the significant issues pertaining to fishing as well

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as aquaculture development in Western Australia. As Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned, that is an opportunity to discuss the changes to the Aquatic Resources Management Act and its implementation and also to discuss marine parks and their impact on fisheries. I would like members to know that at that meeting the minister affirmed his commitment to delivering marine parks in WA and supporting the fishing and aquaculture sectors. In Esperance, Minister Punch stressed to the commercial fishermen that this is a really valuable industry for Western Australia. We want a sustainable industry and we want to work together with the commercial fishermen to make sure that the outcome of the marine park planning process is a win-win for everyone. We all want these industries into the future.

We also talked a little about some of the fisheries that we were having difficulty with like our demersal finfish resources. The council had a chance to discuss that at its meeting and how it can be better managed in the future. The meeting was really great and the group has committed to meeting again before the end of the year. I look forward to seeing what the Fisheries Council can achieve.

I again want to thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for moving this motion today. It is a great opportunity to talk about the amazing stuff DPIRD and Fisheries are doing for our commercial fishing sector. I also thank Hon Kyle McGinn for his contribution and Hon Stephen Pratt for his positive contribution today.

**HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West) [2.23 pm]:** I will keep my contribution short because my colleagues have covered a lot of ground and they have been fantastic, so I will not repeat any of that. However, I want to thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for bringing this motion forward because it gives me an opportunity to tell everyone that I caught a fish during the winter recess. I was excited!

Several members interjected.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** It was within size. It is not the first fish that I have ever caught in my life, but it was the first fish that I have caught for many, many years, not least because I get incredibly seasick and my husband usually goes fishing in the ocean. I do not go fishing in the ocean. We took the opportunity to head north during the winter break and fish on the Ashburton River near Onslow. After my husband provided the fishing line, rigged it up, cut up the bait and put the bait on the hook, I was able to cast the line and catch it myself!

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Don't overexert yourself!

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** I reeled it in and everything!

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Did you take it off the hook?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** I caught a blotched javelin fish, which is also known as a grunter, apparently. Neither me nor my husband, Matt, knew what the fish was. Being a southern fisherman, he is not used to those northern species.

I can tell members that the government's Fisheries website is a great resource. It is [fish.wa.gov.au](http://fish.wa.gov.au). The fish are listed in alphabetical order and can be filtered by regions so that people can look for the region they are in. The website also has pictures of the fish, so I could identify my fish. I could see that the minimum catch size for the fish was 30 centimetres. I am happy to report that the fish I caught was about 38 centimetres, which the parliamentary secretary will be pleased to know. I think he was probably one of the first people whom I told that I had caught a fish. I was very excited. I could also see that the bag limit was eight for that species. I caught only the one because I believe in sustainable fishing! Hon Kyle McGinn was right: I think the days of people going up there with massive freezers and coolers and catching a lot of fish have gone. We were camping off grid in a caravan. We did not have a lot of fridge or freezer space. We needed only the one fish, and it was our dinner for the night. After I reeled it in, my husband gutted it, filleted it and cooked it, and it was very nice.

Obviously, there has to be a level of compliance in order to have sustainable fisheries. While I was up north, I was pleased to see that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development had a compliance operation in partnership with an officer from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Fisheries officers from DPIRD and a ranger from DBCA had the assistance of a couple of police officers. They had set up a checkpoint near the Overlander Roadhouse on North West Coastal Highway for returning holiday-makers at the end of the school holidays. DPIRD reported that it spoke to over 500 holiday-makers to raise awareness and conduct compliance checks. I can assure members that there were lots of people with boats. The officers stopped people and chatted to them. The operation was mainly about raising awareness and educating the public, particularly those who fish once or twice during the school holiday periods, about bag limits and the resources available to them and where they could find more information.

I am pleased to say there were no breaches of the Fish Resources Management Act. It was a really worthwhile exercise. It was a reminder that people are very used to seeing Fisheries officers at boat ramps and places like that, but to have a Fisheries compliance operation on North West Coastal Highway was a really good reminder for people and an opportunity to educate them. I commend DPIRD and its partners, DBCA and the Western Australia Police Force, for running that operation. With that, I will again thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot.

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**HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.27 pm]: I thank members for the opportunity to make a few comments on the motion before the house today. As the parliamentary secretary said, it would be good to start with a particularly positive comment, so I will attempt to deliver that in a very positive manner. It has to be observed that the government is struggling a little with the reputation of some of its ministers and their performance. We might find ourselves debating that tomorrow, I suspect. In the meantime, there is a question mark about a number of ministers and their performance. I have to say that when I read the motion commending the government for its commitment to sustainable fisheries, I actually thought about how I could amend the motion to make it more appropriate. If there is a positive to throw in there, I think my amendment would sound like this: I would congratulate the McGowan government for having the foresight and the courage to get rid of the dud fisheries minister the government previously had and put in somebody else. The government should be congratulated for that because we have been wondering what it takes for this government to remove a minister who is obviously a non-performer. What does it take? We discovered it in Fisheries. There is always a balance between the positive and the perhaps not so positive. The positive is that the government saw the issue. I will get back to why crayfish go red. Perhaps it is because of the nationalisation of the crayfish industry once they are cooked! We might come back to that in a minute. Whether then Minister for Fisheries, Hon Dave Kelly, wrote that policy, as he claims, or others did, the fact is he could not even deliver a dud policy written by somebody in the public sector, but that is a question for later down in the track.

**Hon Kyle McGinn** interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I will come back to China in a minute.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I think that the government should be congratulated for at least that step.

I am not sure what the poor old timber industry did to deserve the fate it got at the hands of the same minister. I am pleased; congratulations to the McGowan government for saving the fishery industry. It is a bit sad it did not do the same thing and save the timber industry at the same time. Perhaps, in the fullness of time, with a bit of foresight, it may save the water regulation industry, but removing the “minister for nationalisation of at least 17 per cent of the crayfish industry” is a positive step in the right direction. I think that is great.

It has got better I think. We have to acknowledge that there was an absolute improvement at the end of 2021, because the minister who was struggling was removed from that portfolio. That is a positive. I know government members were keen to hear the opposition give the government some positive encouragement.

The government could probably let a few more ministers go in other portfolios, but I like to see a step in the right direction. I like to see a bit of courage taken in that direction.

**Hon Dan Caddy:** We’ve got more ministers than you’ve got members.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** We keep recycling.

There will be a bit of pressure on ministers at the moment because I suspect that there will be a potential reshuffle towards the end of the year, so there will be a bit of tension in the air. Perhaps that is why there has been conversation in the media about what is happening at Labor Party love-ins et cetera. I suspect that there will be pressure going forward.

A government member: McGrath!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I would be careful about taking on Johnny!

A government member interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** There you go.

I suspect that a bit of push and shove and argy-bargy is going on. We can only hope that the fortitude, courage and good sense that the government was able to show in shifting the fisheries portfolio will be repeated a few more times in the not-too-distant future—so that is very positive. There we go. I have started with a positive and I am sure members opposite are grateful for it.

**Hon Dan Caddy** interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It started with a positive.

Let me talk specifically about what has come up a few times today about the fishing industry. Hon Dr Sally Talbot referenced my comments that being the Minister for Fisheries is like being the “Minister for killjoy”, and that is largely true. It is a very difficult portfolio to do well in. I note that the current minister has at least attempted to grasp

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the thorny nettle of sustainable fisheries in some areas. That is not a bad thing. He is not the first minister to do so, just quietly. As I referenced in debate during the contribution of Hon Dr Sally Talbot, members who want to see how tough the fisheries portfolio can be should look at the work of—I think he is still honourable—Norman Moore when he was Minister for Fisheries and managing the rapid decline in young crayfish, the puerulus, and mapping forward a plan in an industry that was not particularly prepared for massive cuts in bag limits and quota. It is a tough portfolio.

Hon Don Punch has started the process. I reference his media release of 4 April 2022 in which he said that he had started the process of a 50 per cent reduction in the total catch of west coast demersal species. He is obviously talking about those very popular species, particularly snapper and dhufish—those prime target fish that people like to get. They are very nice, are they not? They are a fantastic fish. Hon Jackie Jarvis mentioned the grunter that she caught. I do not generally like to get into too much one-upmanship, but the Thomas family went to Shark Bay and we pulled in the occasional very nice and large pink snapper, so I think that we probably win.

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It was not my first pink snapper, as it were.

Those are the species. I may have missed the parliamentary secretary give a more updated result of that consultation process, but there was consultation and a discussion around what will happen. Almost every recreational fisher I have spoken to in recent months is waiting for the hammer to fall on the bag limits of fish stocks, which are necessary. Currently, the bag limit is two demersal species per licensed fisher, with a variation. If a fisher gets a pink and black snapper, they are able to increase their intake. But the assumption is that people who own boats and fish recreationally will be limited to—for example, in the prime target off the southern part of the west coast, the dhufish—a potential bag limit of one. It may well be. Members who talked about the early days in Shark Bay are absolutely correct. The fishery source in Shark Bay in the early days—I remember some of it—was raped and pillaged. People went up there with chest freezers, plugged them in and filled them up and then took them home. At the time, it was horrendous, but not illegal. It has taken significant effort to recover that fishery. I think that there has been some recovery in that area. Certainly, the number of pink snapper in Shark Bay is significantly higher than it used to be. There is general acceptance among most in the fishing community, but the 80–20 rule applies throughout life and there will always be people who rot the system and take fish that they should not take. There is a discussion around the survival rates when someone pulls up a fish, keeps one and then perhaps pulls up a second because they are fishing for a different species, but then get a second or third fish of the same species and have to throw them back. A suggestion has been put forward that they might have to keep the first fish that they get. It might even be the case that the first fish, even if it is not the legal size, is the fish that is the most environmentally viably to keep, because to put them back in the water is problematic. All that needs to be gone through in detail. The government and the Minister for Fisheries understand that, and it is not going to be an easy process to fix.

The debate will also need to take into account all those people who love to fish recreationally, particularly boat owners. It is not cheap to own a boat. I scab rides from people who own boats because it costs a fortune to maintain and licence them and all the rest of it. It is not only expensive, but also a huge industry is attached to all those recreational fishers who travel up north from the south west. They fill up at fuel stations and buy lots of bait. Issues will arise if catch and bag limits are reduced to a point that recreational fish gain no benefit from doing so, especially if they cannot catch enough fish to make their day worthwhile. I suspect that for most recreational fishers the cost of going out fishing is significantly higher than the cost of going out and buying the equivalent fish in the marketplace. I think that, by the sound of it, that certainly applies to Hon Jackie Jarvis. I would say that the value of her fish was far exceeded by the drive up north to Exmouth, the drive back, and all the various costs.

**Hon Jackie Jarvis:** It was Onslow!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It was Onslow, sorry. It would have been much cheaper if the member had gone out and bought a fish dinner. That is okay, but there is an industry attached to this, so there is work to be done because there are jobs involved, particularly as we drive further north. For a lot of that tourism sector—particularly Shark Bay, but also others, and Exmouth is a good example—that tourist dollar is a major driver of the economy in those regions, so if we start to reduce bag limits to a point at which it is not worth the effort, we may have a problem. Of course, the other issue is that if fishing becomes unviable in certain areas of the coast because of significant restrictions, people will start drifting to other areas.

We have said this about the shark component in Shark Bay. The parliamentary secretary will be interested in this. We had a debate last year when I went to Shark Bay and, as I said, we struggled to get a fish into the boat because the sharks would take them. One of the problems was that as we dropped the line down and pulled up the fish, a third of the way up, a shark would take it. The sharks hang around, follow the boats and sit under them, because we are providing them with a free meal. It is probably fair enough, too. A shark can go and hunt a fish, or it can sit under

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the boat and when we pull up the fish it will be right there in front of it. I have to say, this year we lost very few fish to sharks, but I reckon that was luck rather than good planning. It remains an issue. I do not think there is an obvious solution to it. Once again, it is hard to measure the take of fish that is not the fish that remains in the boat, comes back to the shore, gets filleted and eaten. There is also the fish that are lost, the fish that are put back and die in the process, and the fish that the sharks take on the way through, so we are probably having a bigger impact on some of those species than we think we are, and that needs to be looked at, as well.

Obviously, we have to address what the long-term sustainability will be. I do not have the easy answer for that. As I said, the Minister for Fisheries is the minister for killjoy, and it is likely that there will be some tough decisions going forward, as there always are.

I want to address another point in my brief time remaining. Obviously, there are other fisheries. There are freshwater fisheries. To a large degree, the marron industry has now become completely commercialised. Marron does not exist in significant numbers in many places in the wild anymore. Overfishing is only a component of that. I would say that salinity might be a bigger issue on their survivability than anything else. In the early days, we used to get marron in the Blackwood River right up towards Dinninup and out that way. It was a long way up the river. We would probably now be lucky to find any inland from Nannup. There is 100 kilometres of habitat that is now probably too salty for marron to survive. That is our patch, so there is plenty of marron, but they are commercially farmed at the moment. The yabbies et cetera should stay. Ideally, they are supposed to be east of the Albany Highway. However, people bring them in and stock them, which is problematic because they wash into the river systems and the marron struggles to compete.

Obviously, everybody is a supporter of Brad Adams down in Augusta, the creator of Ocean Grown Abalone, and the things that he is doing. Everybody tries to jump on board and be a great supporter of that.

I mentioned the shark fishery resource; I do not know if it still exists. One member talked about Esperance. There was an octopus fishery operating out of Esperance. I am not sure whether it still does.

**Hon Shelley Payne:** Yes, it does.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It is still there. It was Hon Shelley Payne who said that. I went out on the boat once to have a look. An octopus fishery probably has more potential. It has slowly spread. Geographe Bay has one; Perth has had one for a while; the research archipelago at Esperance is not a bad spot for that. There are potentially some unrealised opportunities in octopus fisheries.

The last thing we probably want to have a look at is the shark fishery itself. It would be a wonderful process if large sharks were a commercially harvestable resource. Unfortunately, they are just not. There is no market for a shark that is full of ammonia. It is the small shark fisheries that obviously provide the bulk of that shark meat that was discussed earlier. It seems to be a public campaign that we cannot talk about shark fisheries, but I would urge the government to have a look at sustainable shark fisheries. The secret will be sustainability, because I suspect there are some areas where a sustainable shark fishery can be maintained, but for political and public reasons, it seems to be a no-go area. We need to focus on sustainability. Like I say, the poor old timber industry should have been focused on sustainability, but that was chucked out of the window. They still have the same minister that the fisheries managed to rid themselves of. That perhaps saved the fisheries industry. But it is worth looking at the shark industry to work out where there might be a sustainable shark industry.

There is an enormous amount of work to be done. With regard to the halving of the demersal fish rate, does the parliamentary secretary have a time frame for what will happen there as yet?

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** No; I would have to get that for the member behind the chair.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Okay. Obviously, everybody is waiting. It has been a few months now. I have some sympathy, it is not an easy debate to have, and he is not the first minister that has had to cut bag limits, but I would like an idea of when that might come in. It is going to be a very technical announcement. Maybe the parliamentary secretary could give us a time frame at some point. I could ask a question, but I have asked it now.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** I will ensure that we have a chat about that behind the chair so you don't have to ask the question.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** There we go. I have plenty of others that are bringing the government down, so I will put that one to one side.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** PFAS!

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Yes, we are just about due for a PFAS one! Rather than being combative in the debate today, we have found some positives. We started on the positives and we will finish on the positives. The fishing industry is much better served by a minister who does not appear to be anywhere near as clumsy and problematic as the



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previous one, and that is a great outcome for the fishing industry. That is a good thing for Western Australia. I would urge the government to start applying those same rules to that minister and a few others who could use a reboot.

**HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West)** [2.47 pm]: I shall also keep my contribution short, because of goldfish. Thank you to Hon Dr Sally Talbot for moving this motion. The environment and sustainability are obviously of major importance. Similar to Hon Stephen Pratt, my parents were also avid conservationists, to such a degree that sometimes they would come back from fishing and other fishermen would share their catch with them. I do feel that a large component of my inheritance is somewhere at the bottom of the ocean. The oceans, including the coral reefs, are the basis for our food chain. They are often referred to as fish nurseries. Obviously, overfishing is a major concern. Other concerns include pollution by microplastics, mercury and other heavy metals, and now oestrogen and xenoestrogen also seem to be affecting fish populations. Defective oestrogen, being a female hormone, is leading to an increase in female fish and a decrease in male fish. Even though this issue of hormones polluting the water has been around for a while, not a lot of publicity has been given to this. This means that sustainability is not just an ocean problem; it also requires a holistic approach to include all aspects, including various types of pollution.

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [2.49 pm]: I will be brief because I am mindful that other members wish to speak. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for her wonderful motion and the very positive way that it has been debated by government members. It is a difficult industry to manage and some tough decisions have to be made from time to time. We are criticised by the opposition when we make those decisions and we are criticised by the opposition if we do not make them, so it is sometimes a bit of a no-win situation in that portfolio. I acknowledge Minister Punch and his able parliamentary secretary for the work that they are doing.

I turn to an element that the parliamentary secretary touched on briefly. I want to give a bit of a shout-out to our aquaculture industries across Western Australia. We have tremendous potential for aquaculture in places such as the Abrolhos Islands, Shark Bay and Flinders Bay, as mentioned by Hon Shelley Payne. Some great people are doing some really good work in that aquaculture space. I stand corrected—the parliamentary secretary may know the answer to this—but I understand that in 2011 or 2012, farmed fish was eaten more than wild catch fish. Over the last half a century, there has been a great move to farmed fish over wild catch. That is significant. I come back to the comments made by Hon Dr Steve Thomas about the forestry industry. I think there is a great similarity there; we cannot keep exploiting the reserve because the reserve will run out. A great deal of research is being done by Challenger TAFE, the University of Western Australia and other bodies into how we can better farm our fish and farm our own food. Fish is a staple of the human diet. It is very good for us. It is well known that omega-3s have great health benefits. It is important that we have a high amount of fish in our diet.

To everyone working in the aquaculture sector across the state, and of course all those working in the traditional fishing industries, we thank you for your work. We appreciate your work. It is very nice to have a piece of fish, whether that be fish and chips by the ocean —

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** Western Australian.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** Yes, Western Australian, of course. Or we enjoy some of our finer fish in places such as the dining room of Parliament House and our good restaurants. To all those people involved in those sectors, thank you for your efforts and keep up the good work because we are counting on you.

**HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral)** [2.52 pm]: Likewise, very briefly, I rise to speak. It is true that the fisheries industry is managed in a bipartisan way. I want to point out a couple of issues. Hon Dr Steve Thomas talked about the challenges of the rock lobster industry. I wish to clarify a point. A review was actually undertaken during the time that Hon Jon Ford was the Minister for Fisheries. I was a senior economist at the Department of Fisheries when work was undertaken to look at world's best practice in relation to the management of fisheries. We had that terrible breakdown in the puerulus count at the time. Economic controls that are outlook-based are a proven approach. At the time, we had an input-based control measure. There was a lot of procrastination under the minister at the time. I would not say that about the now deceased and much-loved Hon Kim Chance, whom I think everybody on both sides of the house had a lot of time for. He was responsible for a very controversial decision relating to the removal of the 150 pot rule. It affected a lot of small fishers operating up the coast. I was in Kalbarri the other day talking about how the huge fleet used to go out there every day. That does not exist anymore. We know that economics also drives some of these things. It is important to note that that vital decision to introduce quotas was made by Hon Norman Moore when he was the minister. The quota system gave new life to the rock lobster industry. I want to make a couple of comments. We saw the absolutely appalling management of that industry under Dave Kelly, the former minister, with the proposal to nationalise it. Some of the commentary at that time was no different from the commentary from Hon Alannah MacTiernan, who gloated about the possibility of cheaper food prices if we had a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in Western Australia. We heard the same commentary when we saw the collapse of the market in China and the price of rock lobster was going through the floor. People were on their knees but all the minister was interested in was the nationalisation of part of the quota. That is the

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attitude of this government to the misfortune of our primary producers. We see the misfortune of our primary producers, and the government seems to think that is great.

Fortunately, I have heard that the new minister, Don Punch, has positive outcomes. He is a decent person. I concede that there are a few decent people on the other side. We are glad that a change was made. The industry was almost on its knees because of the market conditions, but it is now building back up. A great regulatory regime was put in place by Hon Norman Moore. It is of huge value to Western Australia, particularly our coastal communities, from Kalbarri all the way down the coast to Jurien Bay and those sorts of places. It is very important to Geraldton. It is a vital part of our industry. That is a comment I make in relation to rock lobster. I could go on.

The other area where we see the failure of this government is when dealing with the streamlining of red tape around the aquaculture sector. Goodness me: if we want sustainable fisheries, we have to develop aquaculture in this state. That is something we see constantly—the amount of red tape, the slow process and, of course, the lack of consultation on the marine park up at Derby.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members! I have tolerated some interjections. I would ask that we allow the member to continue his comments in silence.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** I sat at the table with a very dignified gentleman who has lived in Derby all his life. I have not seen too many grown men cry; that person was crying when that first announcement was made because of the situation. People had been going up there and getting a few fish for their family for years. They felt completely shut out of the consultation process.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** What do you mean? We are engaging in consultation.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** I am going to speak about what I hear from people in the community. I speak to people, unlike members opposite, who do not bother to talk to the people on the ground.

I was in Kalbarri. People up there are concerned about the bag limit of the demersal fishery. That is a big issue. I concede to Hon Dr Sally Talbot that hard decisions definitely have to be made in the fishing industry. That is a tough job. It has to be done because the sustainability of our fishing industry is vital for our children's future. We all want to take our kids out and teach them to fish and know that they can always collect a little bit of natural harvest from the sea. It is a fantastic process for every human being to learn and understand that they can take part in that wonderful process of nature and be part of that if they so choose.

I strongly suggest that members talk to people in places such as Kalbarri because they are worried that people might not come to Kalbarri. They are concerned.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** No, you don't. You talk to yourself.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** I do talk to people up there. They are concerned about the future. Please go out there and speak to them. When I saw this motion, I thought something was coming up—that an announcement would be made and government members would engage in a bit of self-congratulation in order to protect the Labor government.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Jackie Jarvis):** Order! Members, again, I have been very patient, I think. I will refer back to the member who had the floor. I will check with Hon Dr Sally Talbot. Will you be seeking your five minutes to respond?

**Hon Dr Sally Talbot:** No.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** I am almost done. All I am doing is asking the government to listen, to go out in advance of these announcements so that people do not have a sense of disempowerment about some of these customary and traditional factors. We are talking in the broadest sense possible. People have fished the coastline for years and years, and generation after generation. We need to protect that right. We need to make sure people are comfortable with the decisions. That is part of it.

I want to make one last comment about the motion and Hon Dr Sally Talbot's rather unusual statement about the special individual minister situation that the Gallop government identified. I think that Hon Monty House was the Minister for Fisheries as well as the Minister for Agriculture. It was not as though there was some weird kind of farming attitude for the fishing industry. No, that was the process. It just happened that he was the Minister for Agriculture as well. We have ministers in this government with more than one portfolio. This government has rammed together the Department of Fisheries, which had existed as a standalone department I believe since the

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1930s, with the department of regional development, or whatever it is called now. It is very hard to work out what these departments are. It is the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development!

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members!

**Hon Kyle McGinn** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Parliamentary secretary, I ask that you please hold your tongue. We have four minutes left on this motion. It is incredibly difficult. We just welcomed Hansard back into the chamber. It is incredibly difficult for me to hear, so I am sure it is incredibly difficult for them to hear. I ask that you please allow the member to finish his comments.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** We have disempowerment. I remember people like Peter Rogers, the director general of the then Department of Fisheries, who were like the old-style mandarins. They worked with industry and built relationships. No disrespect to the executive director or whatever title Heather Brayford, who is there now, holds; they do not have the same authority as the director general. I hope that Don Punch gets to meet with Heather on a regular basis. We have a shemozzle with these mega-agencies being rammed together across the public sector. We had something special and I can say with the greatest confidence that of all my time in the public sector, the most wonderful time I had was with the Department of Fisheries. I spent three years with an agency that had a very strong laser-like focus on the regulation, management and conservation of our important fisheries.

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan)** [3.03 pm]: In the three minutes left to me, I want to finish with some scientific information. Members will be aware that I am very much focused on science, and facts and figures. Although we can all be happy that we are looking at sustainability and allowing our fish stock to increase and indeed the benefits to the ocean, I am not sure that many members are aware that there has been an examination of how cannabidiol can improve fish welfare.

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** Smoked fish!

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** Not quite, but if you insist!

In this motion, we are looking at how we can improve the welfare of animals that have been cultured. It is not just fish, but other animals and mammals. This article is the first examination of non-vertebrate and non-mammalian animals. I will seek leave to table this paper shortly. It shows that for the first time CBD could be used as a tool to increase non-mammal welfare, presenting a great potential to be explored in other husbandry and captivity species. It is fascinating. Fish have an endocannabinoid system and CBD also affects the mental health of fish, believe it or not, and their stress and their cortisol levels. I kid you not! Therefore, on this, I hope enlightening but not high note, I seek leave to table the paper.

[Leave granted. See paper [1471](#).]

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [3.04 pm]: It is hard to follow that. I will be a little bit sombre. I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for moving this motion. It must be very difficult for oppositions, because this government is doing a marvellous job in so many areas.

I will move away from that and thank the people in the industry we are talking about today. It is an extremely dangerous industry. Back in 1989, I lost my brother-in-law off a crayfishing boat off the Abrolhos. He was dragged overboard and passed away; he was aged 24 years. It is a very dangerous industry and I thank the people who work in that industry for the hard work they do.

Question put and passed.