

SOUTH COAST FISHERY, PILCHARDS

**21. Hon MURRAY MONTGOMERY to the Minister for Forestry and Fisheries:**

In the light of the return of the pilchards along the south coast and the reports of sea acres of those eating and bait fish, will the minister be increasing the unit value in tonnes to allow the commercial recommencement of that fishery, particularly in the Albany zone and in keeping with zone 4, the Esperance zone?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I thank Hon Murray Montgomery for that question. The answer is unequivocally yes, we will; however, dependent on the establishment of stock level demonstration which can support a reinstatement of commercial fishing. I am sorry that I cannot put a date on that because a determination of pilchard stock levels must be made to support a return to commercial fishing at that level. We cannot put a precise time on when any one of those three of the four southern zones will return to that level. However, I am happy to report that there is evidence of a healthy rebuilding of stocks. Pilchards have a lifespan of around seven to nine years and a resource with a biomass of that kind is able to rebuild quickly after it has been severely decimated. I am hopeful it will happen soon but unable to predict when. However, as the member has asked the question, I will inquire of Fisheries WA whether it is able to predict when fishing for pilchards in zones 1, 2 and 3 in the south coast may resume.