

**FISHERIES — BLUE MANNA CRAB FISHING LICENCES — AUGUSTA**

5037. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister representing the Minister for Fisheries:

- (1) I refer to the Department of Fisheries' rules and regulations in respect of commercial fishing for blue manna crabs in the Hardy Inlet in Augusta, and I ask:
  - (a) is the Minister aware that a commercial fisherman, who was only two years ago convicted of using blue manna traps illegally, has been granted a new licence to fish commercially for crabs in the inlet;
  - (b) if yes to (a), when did this person's licence commence, when does it expire, and what conditions have been placed on the licence holder to ensure he does not act illegally again; and
  - (c) is the Minister and his Department aware that this licence was granted against the advice of RecfishWest?
- (2) What studies or analysis have been carried out over the last five years to assess the impact of commercial crab trapping in Hardy Inlet in Augusta inlet and its effect on the sustainability of the area's blue manna crab populations?
- (3) What consultation has the Minister or his Department undertaken with the local recreational blue manna crab fishing community around Hardy Inlet in Augusta to determine the current state of population and fishing conditions?
- (4) Are there any plans to grant more blue manna crab commercial fishing licences for waterways in the South West and/or Great Southern regions?

**Dr K.D. Hames replied:**

- (1)
  - (a) Hardy Inlet is part of the West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery. I am aware there is one commercial fisher authorised to operate in the Hardy Inlet and that fisher was granted a West Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery Licence in 2014. The aforementioned commercial fisher has been licensed to fish for crabs in Hardy Inlet since 2004 and not been convicted of illegally using crab traps. In September 2015 the aforementioned Managed Fishery Licence holder was granted an Exemption to trial the use of 20 crab traps for the commercial take of blue swimmer crabs.
  - (b) The Exemption expires on 31 July 2018.

Prior to the Exemption being granted the commercial fisher legally used nets to take finfish and crabs.

The Exemption has been granted to trial and assess the use of crab traps, rather than nets to take crabs in Hardy Inlet.

If the trial is successful the use of crab traps would enable the commercial fisher to use a more discriminate and generally accepted method to take crabs in Hardy Inlet. This is likely to deliver benefits in the form of a more reliable supply of crabs to local wineries and restaurants and reduced resource sharing/user conflict with local recreational fishers and community members who oppose netting. Importantly, while the crab traps are being trialled the commercial fisher has undertaken to release any crabs caught in his nets.
  - (c) Yes. Recfishwest was consulted and while not supportive of the Exemption my delegate considered the Exemption had significant merit to warrant its approval, noting:

it is a trial;

the use of crab traps as an alternative method to take crabs may provide economic benefits to the local tourism industry and social benefits for the local community; and

that the commercial fisher has undertaken to maintain his catch of crabs within historical levels.
- (2) The Exemption to use (20) commercial crab traps commenced in September 2015. The fisher started fishing under the Exemption in December 2015. The three-year trial will be used to assess the outcomes and relative merits of using crab traps as an alternative to using nets to take crabs in Hardy Inlet.
- (3) The Department of Fisheries consulted with Recfishwest, the peak representative body for recreational fishers.

- (4) No. There is currently an Exemption permitting commercial licence holders in the South Coast Estuarine Fishery to trial the use of crab traps in the Wilson and Irwin Inlets. Prior to this Exemption being granted these fishers were permitted to take crabs via nets. The Exemption expires in February 2017.