



**The Hon Joe Francis MLA
Minister for Emergency Services; Fisheries;
Corrective Services; Veterans**

Our Ref: 51-10636
Your Ref: Petition No 112

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
GPO Box A11
PERTH WA 6837

Dear Mr O'Brien

PETITION NO. 112 – OPPOSE FISH TRAPS GASCOYNE REGION

Thank you for your letter of 2 May 2016 regarding petition No. 112 opposing the use of fish traps in the Gascoyne region.

The Gascoyne Demersal Scalefish Fishery (GDSF) is a line based commercial fishery which operates in the waters between Coral Bay and just south of Steep Point, excluding Shark Bay's inner gulfs. The GDSF is a quota based fishery with annual catches of pink snapper limited to 278 tonnes and catches of all other demersal scalefish limited to 228 tonnes.

In late 2015, licence holders in the GDSF approached the Department of Fisheries (Department) with a proposal to trial the use of fish traps in the fishery in a bid to improve economic viability and reduce overall fishing mortality as a result of shark predation. The Department consulted with the recreational fishing sector on the proposal through Recfishwest, the sector peak body. The proposal generated significant public interest and debate between the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

Following consideration of the views put forward by all parties, the then Minister for Fisheries, Hon. Ken Baston MLC, did not support the proposal to trial traps in the Gascoyne. The Minister made note of some specific concerns raised by the recreational sector, including:

- the potential for a change in commercial catch composition to include a greater percentage of recreationally important non-pink snapper demersal scalefish;
- the potential for trap fishing to occur in areas of high importance to the recreational fishing sector;
- the lack of independent data regarding the extent of shark predation of commercial catches; and
- the lack of a formal harvest strategy for the GDSF.

The Minister appointed an independent mediator, Mr Bardy McFarlane, to work with the commercial and recreational fishing sectors and the Department on a contemporary harvest strategy for scalefish off the Gascoyne coast.

This process is currently underway and it is anticipated that a draft harvest strategy will be released for broader public consultation in August 2016.

Thank you for bringing these matters to my attention.

Yours faithfully



HON JOE FRANCIS MLA
MINISTER FOR FISHERIES
13 JUN 2016