## Rationale for setting the 2019/20 abalone total allowable commercial catches

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) uses a multiple-lines-of-evidence assessment approach to assess the state of the abalone resource and set the annual total allowable commercial catch (TACC) for each of the three commercial abalone zones.

The information considered in arriving at the TACCs includes:

* *Fishery dependent information*: catch history, catch per unit effort (CPUE) and diver observations; and
* *Fishery independent information*: independent dive survey data that includes pre-recruit and recruit abundance.

Following a comprehensive consultation process that included workshops and a call for submissions from key stakeholders, I have made the following decision on the TACC for the Western and Central Zone abalone zones. Consultation on the Eastern Zone was completed earlier and published separately.

***Western zone***

• a blacklip abalone TACC of 73.2 tonnes which includes a sub-zonal allocation for Discovery Bay of 4.2 tonnes; and

• a greenlip abalone TACC of 1.4 tonnes.

The Western Zone fishery is still a recovering fishery and a cautious approach, consistent with the harvest strategy, is continuing to be taken to ensure the long-term sustainability of the fishery. Discovery Bay is an area of the fishery where no fishing activity has occurred for an extended period and the sub-zonal allocation is designed to promote exploration and assessment of this area. The Western Abalone Divers Association and VFA are continuing to work together to rebuild the fishery, and these arrangements are expected to be formalised through a co-management arrangement this year.

***Central zone***

• a blacklip abalone TACC of 262.5 tonnes; and

• a greenlip abalone TACC of 3.4 tonnes.

The abalone biomass in the Central Zone fishery has been declining for a protracted period and a further reduction to the TACC has been made this year to prevent further declines and to enable the stock to rebuild to support an increase to a larger quota in the future. The approach outlined in the draft harvest strategy was used to determine the final TACC. A review of size limits will be completed early in 2019 with the aim of setting size limits in 2019 that will provide additional protection to spawning stock and further promote stock recovery.

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