## 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 Eastern abalone zone. Consultation on the Western and Central Zone has not been completed and will be published separately.

***Eastern zone***

• a blacklip abalone TACC of 345.5 tonnes (a reduction of 1.0 tonnes); and

• to set legal minimum sizes for blacklip abalone.

The Eastern Zone Abalone Industry Association and the VFA have worked together on a draft harvest strategy framework with the objective of rebuilding the abalone biomass in the zone. The new harvest strategy was trialled alongside the existing process for the 2019/2020 commercial abalone fishing season. Only a minor reduction was made to the TACC this year after consideration of information at the stock assessment and quota workshop. There are recent signs of stability in the performance indicators used to assess the fishery and culling of the long spined sea urchin is continuing to prevent further habitat loss.

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