## Rationale for setting the 2018/19 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 decisions on the TACC for the Victorian Abalone fishery.

***Central zone***

• a blacklip abalone TACC of 274.0 tonnes (no change) subject to conditions;

• a greenlip abalone TACC of 3.4 tonnes (no change), subject to conditions; and

• to set legal minimum sizes for blacklip and greenlip abalone.

Abalone Victoria [Central Zone] and the VFA are continuing to work together to improve management arrangements for the fishery. A Fishery Resource Advisory Group is now meeting four times a year and a draft harvest strategy framework has been developed. I anticipate that the new harvest strategy will be implemented for the 2019/2020 commercial abalone fishing season. No change has been made to the TACC this year while these new management arrangements are being finalised.

***Eastern zone***

• a blacklip abalone TACC of 346.5 tonnes (a reduction of 6.0 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 will be trialled for the 2019/2020 commercial abalone fishing season. A minor reduction was made to the TACC this year after consideration of information at the stock assessment and quota workshop.

***Western zone***

• a blacklip abalone TACC of 70.0 tonnes (an increase of 6.8 tonnes);

• a greenlip abalone TACC of 1.4 tonnes (no change), subject to conditions; and

• to set legal minimum sizes for blacklip and greenlip abalone.

The Western Abalone Divers Association and the VFA are continuing to work together to rebuild the abalone biomass in this zone following the disease outbreak. The results of this year’s assessment were overwhelmingly positive with all performance indicators showing positive improvements consistent with increasing stock biomass and evidence of continued recruitment to fishery. An increase was made to the TACC this year after consideration of information at the stock assessment and quota workshop.

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