## Rationale for setting the 2020/21 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. The Western and Central Abalone Zones are currently in their respective consultation periods and will be published separately.

***Eastern Zone***

* a blacklip abalone TACC of 337.5 tonnes (a reduction of 8.0 tonnes); and
* to set legal minimum sizes for blacklip abalone.

The Eastern Zone Abalone Industry Association and the VFA continue to work together on the draft harvest strategy framework with the objective of rebuilding the abalone biomass in the zone. The draft harvest strategy was again trialled alongside the existing process for the 2020/2021 commercial abalone fishing season, with a contribution now made by MRAG Asia Pacific, contracted by the VFA to conduct the stock assessment. There are 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.

After consideration of information at the stock assessment and quota workshop, no changes were suggested to catch levels and one recommended size limit change was supported. The reduction made to the TACC this year was industry initiated to address an access complexity that is subject to litigation. The VFA has undertaken to redress the quota allocation should the access complexity be remedied.

Travis Dowling

Chief Executive Officer Victorian Fisheries Authority

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