**Cost Recovery Fishery-specific Forums 2014**

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| * Snobs Creek 22 July - Aquaculture * Queenscliff 25 – Eels, Mixed Fisheries * Queenscliff 30 July – EZ Rock Lobster, Aquaculture * Warrnambool 31 July – Mixed Fisheries, WZ Abalone/WZ Rock Lobster * Traralgon 6 August – Bays and Inlets * Lakes Entrance 7 August – Bait/Mixed Fisheries, EZ Abalone * Queenscliff 15 September – CZ Abalone |

**Overview**

In July, August and September, staff from Fisheries Victoria, and the Executive Director of Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV), travelled to 6 sites over 7 days, and met with 87 fishers and their representatives from 22 licence classes during the fishery-specific cost recovery forums. The discussions mainly focussed on services being provided under the new prospective fisheries cost recovery system. In particular, industry was seeking to clarify services for which there was cost recovery, and possible opportunities to reduce costs. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) explained potential areas for gaining efficiency and cost savings, including where savings could be achieved through a cooperative approach between industry and government. During the forums DEPI agreed to undertake a number of actions, and to present the issues identified at the forums to the Fisheries Cost Recovery Standing Committee (FCRSC) at its next meeting. The key issues and actions are listed below, and a summary of issues raised by each forum follows.

**Key Issues**

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| **No** | **ISSUE** | **RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Need to review definition of compliance inspections with respect to the activities included | This issue was considered by FCRSC at its August meeting. The inclusion of pre and post inspection activities is yet to be decided. |
| 2 | Compliance is charged equally for those that comply and those that do not | Consider creating incentives for strong compliance record. |
| 3 | Need for good communication between DEPI and fishers | Continue with regional fishery-specific forums and lodge additional material on the web site. |
| 4 | Industry is seeking assurances about the cost effectiveness of services for which they pay cost recovery levies ie. that services are being provided in a cost-effective manner | DEPI will continue discussions within the FCRSC and with industry at a fishery-specific level in order to improve the cost-effectiveness of cost-recovered services; but DEPI asks industry to consider alternative less costly means of delivering the required outcomes from the services provided eg. use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and other IT applications (eg. Smartphones) where appropriate.  DEPI, with assistance from FCRSC and the Fisheries IT Group, will identify priority fisheries for further development of cost effective IT applications. |
| 5 | Process for publishing fisheries-specific forums documents | Documents to be discussed with FCRSC and then forwarded to attendees at forums and published on the DEPI website. |
| 6 | Concern about the distribution of research costs across the rock lobster and giant crab fisheries | To be considered further through FCRSC. |
| 7 | Concern about the timing (season, time of day and meeting duration) of future fisheries-specific forums (need to maximise fisher attendance at forums) | DEPI will seek advice from SIV in setting meeting dates and times. |
| 8 | Industry suggested that delayed provision of some information led to industry focussing on wider management issues. | DEPI acknowledge the delayed provision of revised inspection estimates. |
| 9 | Contestability of service provision | DEPI will work with FCRSC to identify and prioritise opportunities for a case study of contestable provision of specified services. |
| 10 | Need for better estimates of recreational take to provide for more accurate estimation of recoverable costs from the commercial sector | DEPI is seeking to identify funds to undertake a state-wide survey of recreational fishing take. However, it should be recognised that a conservative approach has been taken in determining the proportion of commercial take used in the calculation of recoverable costs for each of the commercial fisheries. |
| 11 | Equity of scaling costs between and within fisheries on the basis of production or value of fish caught | Cost recovery relates to the expense of the provision of services, it does not directly relate to the volume or value of fish taken. Where there are fixed costs associated with the whole fishery (eg. for most Fisheries Management Services), it is appropriate to share costs evenly between licence/quota holders within a fishery. Where the cost relates to the size of the operator, it is more equitable to recover costs in relation to scale (otherwise there is a level of cross-subsidisation between fisheries or operators within fisheries). However, it problematic, complex and expensive to take cost recovery down to the individual operator level (rather than the fishery level) – a degree of averaging between operators within fisheries has been accepted in the current approach to cost recovery. |
| 12 | Accessibility of electronic reporting system for aquaculture production data | DEPI will check that the system is working as it should and, if not, fix it. |
| 13 | Definition of small operator (less than 500kg pa) does not equate to the aquaculture sector; suggestion that weight applying to a small operator be examined for each fishery. | FCRSC to consider. |
| 14 | Need a refund given the significant over-charging of rock lobster fishers on 1 April 2014, given that levy values have now been adjusted down. | DEPI will be looking at need for offsets and will discuss with the Fisheries Cost Recovery Steering Committee (FCRSC). |
| 15 | At what stage does industry get to input into upcoming biomass survey (scallops)? | FV agreed to discuss research in the Bass Strait scallop fishery with industry representatives and entitlement holders in the near future. A meeting took place on 18 September 2014. |
| 16 | The distribution of “research” costs across fisheries (45:45:10 for WZ:EZ:GC) has resulted in research costs increasing in EZ and decreasing in the WZ. | DEPI agreed to further unpack costs and discuss with industry. |
| 17 | Incorrect estimations of effort and costs by DEPI a major concern to industry, reducing confidence in DEPI and the new cost recovery system. | DEPI acknowledges that the first run of calculations was, in retrospect, not done well enough. DEPI will consider how adjustments to future levies will be made. Important that industry asks hard questions if the cost recovery system is to improve and for the associated processes to lead to improvement in efficiency and reductions in costs to stakeholders. |
| 18 | Concern about control of recreational take of rock lobster and abalone. | DEPI advised that abalone vehicle limits had been imposed in the west. Acknowledge that the black market is a major risk to fish stocks. This IUU activity is a focus for DEPI compliance. |
| 19 | Concern about major loss of seagrass in Corner Inlet, and impact on fish stocks. Fertiliser leaching from dairy farms around the inlet considered the major cause. | DEPI acknowledged that this is a difficult problem. Fisheries officers and managers advocate for fisheries in land-use forums, CMAs and planning processes wherever possible. DEPI will also investigate means to address this issue within DEPI. |
| 20 | The revised costs need to be applied to licences. | DEPI will calculate revised levies for 2015-16 for each fishery following amendments. |
| 21 | Concern that some fisheries pay FRDC on an unfair basis and %GVP is applied on whole of licence class basis. | DEPI will investigate Fisheries Research and Development (FRDC) framework, and how other jurisdictions pay FRDC levies (for aquaculture and abalone), including some apparent anomalies in FRDC levies. |
| 22 | Protocols for on-water boarding of vessels by Fisheries Officers. | DEPI will consolidate the protocol for on-water boarding of vessels for inspections and other purposes, and provide for comment. |
| 23 | Concern that pollutants going into Gippsland Lakes are impacting on bait stock levels. | DEPI to review bait Catch and Effort (C&E) data in Gippsland Lakes to assess when stock level trends reflect a perceived decline from habitat degradation. |
| 24 | Concern about cost of C&E data processing. | DEPI will review data entry and management costs for the C&E Unit. |
| 25 | Fisheries research costs are too high and the level of management costs are also a concern. | DEPI to review management and research costs for Corner Inlet. |
| 26 | Concern about the provision of abalone research. Lack of accountability for time spent. | DEPI to review abalone research services and potential for tendering. |
| 27 | Consideration of alternative service providers to SARDI for Rock Lobster research. Need better value for money spent and recovered. | DEPI, in conjunction with industry, review rock lobster research services provided through SARDI. |
| 28 | Travel and post travel times for abalone inspections. | DEPI to review travel and post-inspection activity times and apparent discrepancies between abalone and rock lobster data. |
| 29 | Non-staff costs for licence administration. | DEPI to review non-staff costs of aquaculture licence administration. |
| 30 | Length of time it takes for hard copy of licence to get to holder – appears excessive. | DEPI to review the timeliness for receipt of hardcopy licences by fishers. |
| 31 | How many inspections do you do in a day? Industry raised issue of spreading disease between enterprises if multiple inspections occurred. | DEPI to review compliance inspection protocol for aquaculture sites so that the risk of spread of disease from one site to another is minimised. |
| 32 | Services provided by aquaculture managers in relation to cost recovery. | DEPI to review and enhance where necessary descriptions in aquaculture service schedules. |
| 33 | We always return our production returns so why do we pay for those who don’t?  Paying for Catch and Effort services where a licence is not active. | DEPI to review level of cost recovery from fishers who are not operating and/or where risks are reduced. |
| 34 | A large number of aquaculture classes (often with only a few operators in each). Often need to pay for more than one licence because of different classes. | DEPI to consider combining some or all aquaculture licence classes to reduce complexity and cost. |
| 35 | Why are Wrasse licences not transferrable? | FV need to manage the risk of sudden influx of operators on the resource. FV have agreed with SIV to discuss the management of the Wrasse fishery, including options for transferability. |

**Summary of issues per forum**

1. ***Aquaculture – Snobs Creek***

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| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Aquaculture (PL-Salmonids) | 4 |
| Aquaculture (PL-Indoor intensive) | 2 |
| SIV | 1 |
| By email (CL-Other) | 1 |

**Table 1. Aquaculture (Salmonids, Indoor Intensive, Tourism, Warm Water Finfish, Ornamentals, Yabbies)**

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|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **ACTION/RESPONSE** |
| 1 | How do aquaculture businesses in other states pay their FRDC levies? | DEPI agreed to follow up. |
| 2 | We always return our production returns so why do we pay for those who don’t? | The cost recovery system is not designed to account for individual circumstances at present. DEPI agreed to look into introducing a tiered system that would effectively ‘reward’ those that achieve a 100% compliance rating over a period of time by paying a lower levy. |
| 3 | How many officers are doing inspections? | Five stations, two officers per station (10). Two officers are required per inspection. |
| 4 | Concern that aquaculture inspections are being performed by compliance officers, with insufficient knowledge of aquaculture How many officers are trained in aquaculture inspections? | Nearly all of them. DEPI recognised that Fisheries Officers need to know the species they are looking for. |
| 5 | How many inspections do you do in a day?  Industry raised issue of spreading disease between enterprises if multiple inspections occurred. | Usually only one. DEPI agreed to build this into the inspection protocol for Aquaculture. DEPI indicated that multiple inspections may result in savings from conducting single inspections. |
| 6 | Why is it necessary for aquaculture on private land to do returns? | DEPI indicated that production data is important for managing illegal markets, checking licence conditions, resource allocation for government services, data provision requirements to Commonwealth and support for sector. |
| 7 | Concern that confidential information is shared | Data sharing arrangements exist between Fisheries Victoria and other government agencies. Individual data is not published or shared more generally. |
| 8 | Why does industry have to pay for travel to and from inspections? | For aquaculture, Fisheries Officers mostly try to organise appointments before inspecting sites to ensure multiple visits are not required. In certain cases unannounced inspections may be required but this is not the usual scenario. Aquaculture travel time is fairly predictable and varies only with the distance to the site (not the time to locate it). |
| 9 | How can compliance costs be reduced? | Compliance of aquaculture licences is generally good. Industry can help by supplying DEPI with information on illegal activity. Calls can be anonymous and the 1300FISH hotline is an appropriate mechanism for this. |
| 10 | What are the non-staff costs for licence administration? | DEPI agreed to find out the answer. |
| 11 | Isn’t there doubling up in the checking of C&E reports ie C&E do it then compliance do it? | No. The C&E unit are responsible for entering data and checking accuracy. It does not progress to compliance until an issue arises and gets escalated. |
| 12 | Why have the FRDC costs increased from previous years? | Production has been underestimated. For the past 5-6 years the FRDC levy component has only been adjusted by CPI and has not been the appropriate portion of the GVP. FRDC levy is now being calculated as 0.25% of current GVP. |
| 13 | Aquaculture farmers indicated that they preferred receiving information electronically by email or website that contains the necessary information. | FV agreed to provide website links to FCRSC, quarterly reporting and service schedules as a follow up to the meeting. |
| 14 | Poor compliance is punished but why isn’t good compliance rewarded? | DEPI agreed to discuss ways this could be achieved through the existing system with FRCSC. |
| 15 | Why is the small % of property dedicated to aquaculture heavily monitored with high standards required while agricultural runoff is not managed? | Water quality is monitored and regulated by EPA. Aquaculture is regulated by Fisheries Victoria. Each regime (and costs) is implemented independently. |
| 16 | What we want to see is the return on our cost recovery investment | Cost recovery services support the provision of statutory services. These services ensure compliance with the regime. The purpose of the forums is to discuss the services in detail and to look at ways where services can be made more efficient. |
| 17 | SIV indicated it was willing to represent Aquaculture. | Industry indicated that Salmonids currently have representation on SIV but some individuals expressed reservations about being represented by one individual or organisation. |
| 18 | Aquaculture Crown Land – Other was not on forum schedule | DEPI noted and apologised for oversight. |

***Eels - Queenscliff***

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| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Eel Fishery | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |

**Table 2. Eels (Eel Fishery, Crown Land – Eels, Private Land – Eels)**

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|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **RESPONSE/ACTION** |
| 1 | Drought recovery strategy needed. | This could be addressed through the management plan. |
| 2 | A severe natural event (eg bushfire) could have a 100% impact on one or several operators but not across a whole licence class making those affected inoperable and their levies a subsidy to the rest of the licence class. | At present, the trigger for a waiver or reduction in levies must apply across a whole licence class. DEPI agreed to consider the response to a severe disaster where a business ceased to operate. |
| 3 | The service schedules do not provide detail/information that industry can understand in terms of what they are paying for. | DEPI will continue to improve the content of schedules. |
| 4 | Why should industry be paying for information requests? | Industry is not charged for all requests received by DEPI; only that proportion which are deemed to benefit industry. |
| 5 | That the system deals fairly across all fisheries, and within fisheries is of paramount concern; ie don’t punish those doing the right thing but don’t let the bad guys get away with doing the wrong thing. | Each licence class pays for compliance (inspections) for that class, based on the perceived risk in that fishery. Incentive to operate legally benefits the whole licence class through reduced risk in the fishery. |
| 6 | “At landing” needs clarification eg at residence, other premises etc | Agreed to revise. |
| 7 | Industry are not informed of how bycatch reporting data is used, or the use of such information (eg: to what extent publically released) | Reporting bycatch data provides an information base for the fishery manager to answer questions that arise on industry practice at a fishery level. |
| 8 | The current reporting books are impractical | DEPI agreed that the fishery was a candidate for alternatives such as A5 size, waterproof covering and electronic such as the new App. |
| 9 | The difficulty in engaging eel fishers stems from timing of forums and history of interactions. | One of the outcomes from cost recovery is better engagement because services have to be defined and this allows industry to understand and examine what they are paying for. |
| 10 | How does industry know if they are getting what they are paying for? | DEPI indicated that the first quarterly report was due for release soon. This reporting will set out what DEPI has delivered in particular service areas. |
| 11 | A key question from industry is  ‘How much is my licence going to cost?’ | Licence costs include a number of charges which vary with licence class. The cost recovery component of licences is transitioning to those listed in the service schedule (with a phased increase of 30% in 2014, a further 30% in 2015 and full implementation in 2016). Costs recovered will be revised annually subject to services delivered and efficiencies made. |
| 12 | Why do those with greater production potential pay the same as those with less? | Cost recovery is not a production tax, and does not operate at an individual operator level. It recovers for the costs of services provide to the commercial fishing sector by government. The levies charged are averaged across a whole licence class. Concessions were introduced to address the issue of low production. |
| 13 | Eel management needs some serious consideration | This will happen through the review of the management plan. Resourcing will limit how much can be addressed. Industry and DEPI need to work together to focus on highest priority issues. |
| 14 | Keep hearing about bycatch as an issue. Industry asked for list of species of most concern. | DEPI indicated all protected species are of concern but would produce a list of species of particular concern. |

***3. Mixed Fisheries - Queenscliff***

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| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Ocean Access | 3 |
| Wrasse | 4 |
| Ocean Scallop | 1 |
| Inshore Trawl | 2 |
| WPPPB | 1 |
| Unknown | 1 |
| VSFA | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |
| By email (Wrasse/Ocean Access | 1 |

**Table 3. Mixed Fisheries (Ocean Access, Trawl Inshore, Wrasse, Ocean Scallop, Fish Receivers, PPB Purse Seine, Westernport/Port Phillip Bay**

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|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | | **RESPONSE/ACTION** |
| 1 | How are costs split between the recreational and commercial sectors? | | The cost for recoverable services is based on the estimated proportion of take by commercial fishers. The percentage recoverability is available in the service schedule for each fishery. FCRSC agreed that the finfish apportionment would be set at 50/50. This is effected through the levies charged for stock assessment for shared species and some management functions until further data becomes available. |
| 2 | We haven’t ever seen anything from the stock assessments | | DEPI will be transferring status reports to the web to provide accessible, up to date information on stock status. |
| 3 | Why are Wrasse licences not transferrable? | | FV need to manage the risk of sudden influx of operators on the resource. FV have agreed with SIV to discuss the management of the Wrasse fishery, including options for transferability. |
| 4 | Wrasse is a small fishery that is not being recognised by government approaches. Need to remove latent effort and open up viable options for fishers in this licence class. | | DEPI will discuss improved management of the Wrasse Fishery with Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV). Commercial entitlements should ideally be secure and transferable, but there also needs to be effective constraints on take. |
| 5 | How can we improve reporting and reduce compliance costs? | | DEPI is in discussion with FCRSC and SIV to identify candidate fisheries as a priority to consider/trial shifting to electronic reporting. |
| 6 | What business would accept 75% of services being delivered? | | Approximately 250 categories of services are delivered across the 42 licence classes. Some of these services involve very small amounts of staff time and operating cost. The 75% delivery is arbitrary but represents a practical level to monitor these services. |
| 7 | | Do you recover all the costs? | By 2016 FV will only recover 69% of recoverable services based on Department of Treasury and Finance guidelines. This level of recovery is a result of the concessions on services, including recreational fishing, intelligence and surveillance, preparation of management plans, and administration of cost recovery. |
| 8 | | Would introducing VMS across a licence class reduce costs? | VMS will generally reduce search time and these are costs of at-sea inspections. DEPI can calculate savings for particular fisheries identified as priority candidates. |
| 9 | | Is scallop research going to be done 3 times ie by each jurisdiction? | The current arrangements for managing Bass Strait scallops across jurisdictions are inefficient. There is potential to consolidate services eg one stock assessment process. Victoria has promoted this consolidation with the Commonwealth and Tasmania, but has not been able to make progress. |
| 10 | | What do fishers get for these levies? | Levies are cost recovery for statutory services. However cost recovery does provide benefits over time through opportunity to develop more efficient services and reduce costs through greater use of industry data and involvement in management. |
| 11 | | Do DEPI have a gut feel for how widespread non-compliance of reporting is in PPB? | The department does not have precise estimates. However last year, DEPI looked at two cases and both were reporting falsely, did not abide by warnings, and were not in attendance at nets.  Collaboration between industry and DEPI to identify deliberate misreporting will reduce the risk of non-compliance, reducing cost of compliance services.  Finding fishers at night and in remote areas result in a time consuming and expensive element of compliance. |
| 12 | | What is the cost breakdown of an inspection? | FV has provided tables setting out a breakdown of components of inspections and their cost for each fishery. |
| 13 | | What do the inspection FTE figures mean in dollars, and how have they been apportioned? | FTE costs are identified in the service schedule for each fishery.  Inspection costs per visit on land and on water have been provided for each fishery.  Commercial inspection estimations have been allocated by 1/3 of pre and post inspection time to differentiate between time spent on recreational/commercial/illegal fishing.  Compliance costs have been estimated to factor in   * the number of active licences in a class; * where multiple inspections occur on one trip; and * dividing costs where operators hold more than one licence. |
| 14 | | Will the costings be revised at the end of the year? | The schedules set out FTEs and costs for different services “on average” over four years. In some cases issues raised at forums, or in discussion with FCRSC, will lead to adjustment to these FTEs and costs. |
| 15 | | What value are the biomass surveys for scallop fisheries? | They inform quota setting and provide information on stock distribution. |
| 16 | | Who does stock surveys; is it DEPI in-house? | Stock assessment and monitoring are primarily undertaken by Fisheries Victoria, but for some fisheries (abalone, rock lobster) services are contracted. FV is open to discussion of contestable provision of research services. |
| 17 | | How do I know that I’m getting value for money? | FCRSC has looked at ways to assess value:   * benchmarking (South Australia and New Zealand); * transparency (through specification and cost of services in schedules); and * contestability (same service by external provider). |
| 18 | | Fish receivers schedule needs correction to indicate attribution of costs between receivers and fishers, in relation to undertaking inspections at the receiver’s premises. | Costs accrue to the receiver once the receiver has taken possession and recorded the catch. Generally DEPI check both the fisher and receiver when at the receiver’s premises. |
| 19 | | If we came to you and said we want to bring in VMS, can it happen? | In principle, yes. At this time it is likely DEPI would use Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) to monitor, and fisher buys unit. It would take at least a few months to introduce, get agreement with AFMA, vary licences initially and change the Regulations later. DEPI has invested in trial VMS units as the use of VMS is supported by the department. Data collected through VMS reporting would help with science and reduce compliance risks. |
| 20 | | Why don’t the schedules include services that will advance/rebuild the scallop industry? | The schedules set out services to manage the scallop fishery. The research and management services seek to manage a depleted stock and re-build the fishery. |
| 21 | | Are these the final costs? | No. As risks change so will the costs and changes are expected as a result of these forums and the deliberations of the FCRSC. |
| 22 | | Licences are slowly having access to stock reduced eg urchins and pipis now need separate licence. | DEPI committed to work with SIV and industry to ensure the Ocean Access licence retains value in the future. |
| 23 | | By email:  Non-transferable licences  Regulation that restricts use of nets to target shark  Costs cannot be measured  Paying costs without seeing benefits | Noted. |

***4. Abalone & Rock Lobster - Queenscliff***

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| **Forum Attendance** | |
| **Licence class/organisation** | **No. present** |
| Rock Lobster EZ | 4 |
| Ocean Access | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |

**Table 4. Abalone Central Zone and Rock Lobster Eastern Zone**

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|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **ACTION / RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Slide on under recovery of levy funds is invalid because basis for calculation of levies was incorrect. | DEPI acknowledged that it represented an earlier point in time when the RIS was released. Levy values had changed since that time. |
| 2 | Need to review catch and effort logbooks to make data recording easier. | DEPI prepared to review C&E provision. |
| 3 | Need for separation between “intentional” and “accidental” breaches. Industry needs feedback onsite so can address. | Fisheries Officers do distinguish offences by intention. DEPI is actively considering electronic recording of catch and effort input data. Noted that an app (IT application) had been developed for specific fisheries, and there exists a need for industry training prior to use. |
| 4 | Clear demonstration of industry savings will help support for electronic applications. | DEPI will, as far as possible, estimate costs and potential savings, and will discuss within the FCRSC and with industry before considering implementation. DEPI flagged the evaluation and possible use of VMS as a means to make savings in inspection services. |
| 5 | Apportionment of inspection costs where service provided to more than one sector. | DEPI advised that it has allocated only a 1/3 of preparation time to the commercial fishery under consideration. Also only allocated travel time appropriately to accommodate instances where multiple inspections are likely to occur. |
| 6 | Greater inspections time on-water for rock lobster in the Eastern zone than in the Western zone | DEPI advised that greater spread of fishers in the Eastern zone means more travel time per inspection. |
| 7 | Noted that rock lobster sector will be considering management costs in more detail at a later point. | DEPI acknowledged industry wants to continue discussion on management. |
| 8 | Needs to be clear separation of data management from pure research function because of differences in cost. Potential savings in the SARDI contract. | DEPI agreed to discuss as part of review of contractual research services. |
| 9 | Problem of obtaining quota in RL Eastern Zone, potentially due to claimed monopoly on quota holdings in the zone. It was suggested limits be placed on the amount of quota able to be held. | DEPI agreed to work with SIV to consider the issue. |
| 10 | The cost of data entry and management costs related to catch and effort recording need to be looked at. | DEPI agreed to consider these costs in consultation with industry. |
| 11 | Quarterly reporting of results in relation to services provided. | Will go on website following consideration by FCRSC. |
| 12 | Length of time it takes for hard copy of licence to get to holder – appears excessive, noting that fishers are unable to operate without the licence and majority of changes (lease, etc) are processed on the first day of the season. | DEPI will look into scope for improvements in interactions with fishers with improved IT systems. |
| 13 | Time of day of meetings – afternoons and evenings preferred. | DEPI will discuss best timing of meetings with SIV in setting up future meetings. |
| 14 | Amount of time needed for these industry consultation meetings. | DEPI agreed to further engagement as needed. |
| 15 | Fishers’ involvement in selection process of contractors to provide services (eg outsourced research services). | DEPI will provide information on probity issues and work through issues with relevant fishery representatives. |
| 16 | Foreign ownership of fisheries entitlements. | Fisheries legislation excludes foreign ownership. However, if an Australian company is established by a foreign national with Australian residency, then no restriction applies. |
| 17 | Goodwill and respect for DEPI weakened – need to build trust between industry and DEPI. | Current consultative process a start. |
| 18 | Central Zone Abalone requested an alternative meeting date. | DEPI agreed. A meeting was held on 15 September 2014. |
| 19 | Issues raised in an email from a Central Zone abalone entitlement holder who could not attend the meeting:   * Short notice of forum unacceptable. * Levy imposts well outside cost imposed on abalone industry in other states. * Increases in levies come at an all-time low in productivity in the abalone industry. * Process of setting levies does not allow the affected fishers to be engaged. * In real commerce it is not possible to base cost calculations on estimates. * Explanation of levies inadequate and 2-hour window to discuss is too short. * Rights and certainty across all fisheries remain unresolved. * System is too bureaucratic, unfair and self-serving for the good operation of an industry from which to draw equitable management fees. * More helpful to industry to express changes in percentages and compare with other states. * Not enough transparency in the development of levies. * Little industry support due to the complex, covert, imprudent nature of the scheme thus far. | DEPI has noted the issues raised and regrets not having the opportunity to discuss abalone Central Zone concerns at the 30 July meeting. |

***5. Aquaculture - Queenscliff***

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| **Forum Attendance** | |
| **Licence class/organisation** | **No. present** |
| Aquaculture (Onshore Abalone) | 3 |
| Aquaculture (CL-Abalone) | 1 |
| Aquaculture (Bivalve Shellfish) | 2 |
| Aquaculture (multiple classes) | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |
| By email | 1 |

**Table 5. Aquaculture (On-shore Abalone, CL Abalone, CL Bivalve, CL Offshore, PL Marine)**

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|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **ACTION / RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Payment of FRDC levies by Victorian abalone farmers into national fund, when other states do not have the same requirements. | DEPI is looking into the matter. |
| 2 | Fairness of small operators having to pay the same amount of FRDC levy as large operators within an aquaculture class. | DEPI will further consider issues in relation to FRDC levy payments. |
| 3 | Cost for management of the contract for the Queenscliff shellfish hatchery. | DEPI will examine its inclusion in cost recovery levies. |
| 4 | Services provided by aquaculture managers in relation to cost recovery. | DEPI will clarify wording of services and deliverables for aquaculture, including meeting dates, and breakdown of non-staff costs. |
| 5 | A large number of aquaculture classes (often with only a few operators in each). Often pay for more than one licence because of different classes. | DEPI agreed that there was a need to rationalize the number of classes, especially where activities authorised by the licence class, and DEPI services, are the same. |
| 6 | Proposal for reports on a 6 monthly basis, rather than quarterly. Preferable to have DEPI staff delivering services than preparing reports. | FCRSC to consider. |
| 7 | Exposure of aquaculture sites to trespass. Safety issues associated with speed of vessels and jet skis traversing boundaries. Difficulties with marking of marine aquaculture boundaries. | DEPI, Parks Victoria and PTV to work with aquaculture industry about the management of marine aquaculture farms. |
| 8 | Value of and need for aquaculture production returns. | Compliance issue where potential for laundering of wild harvest. Production returns support advice to government on the sector. |
| 9 | Difficulty of finding ICE on the DEPI website. | DEPI will investigate; notification of problems with ICE to the DEPI manager for aquaculture. |
| 10 | Concern about black market operations and illegal movement of crustacea from interstate. | DEPI reminded forum of benefits of using 13FISH number for reporting unusual and/or illegal activity. |
| 11 | Need for better engagement between DEPI and aquaculture sector. | DEPI outlined the establishment of aquaculture engagement forum. |
| 12 | Meetings accessible by skype. | This would be difficult in a large venue. |

***6. Mixed Fisheries - Warrnambool***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Ocean Access | 5 |
| Wrasse | 2 |
| Rock Lobster WZ | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |

**Table 6. Ocean Fisheries (Ocean Access, Wrasse)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **ACTION / RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Excessive book work required. | DEPI advised of importance of Catch and Effort (C&E) information and initial education approach by compliance. |
| 2 | Need for documents on rock lobster vessels. | DEPI agreed to review the licence process and consider improvements that could be made to logbooks and reporting requirements. |
| 3 | Cost of inspections at weekends and public holidays. | DEPI advised officers are rostered so inspections occur on all days of the week. This assists in detection of offences. Intelligence and records suggest offences during these periods. |
| 4 | Cost of inspections for commercial sector compared with the recreational fishing sector. | DEPI advised that recreational sector paid significantly through recreational licence fees including funding of 13 Fisheries Officers. Commercial fund approximately 3 FO’s. |
| 5 | Comparison of relative proportions recovered from the recreational sector compared with the commercial fishing sector. | With regards to commercial inspections, 1/3 of the travel and pre/post inspection time was allocated to the commercial industry. DEPI agreed to advise further on this issue, following further discussions with the FCRSC. |
| 6 | Action minutes from forums to be put on web | Action minutes will be circulated to attendees who left their email or postal address and published on the DEPI website. |
| 7 | Scientists, Fisheries Managers and Fisheries Officers invited to spend time on boats when in operation. | DEPI thanked and will consider, especially in relation to training programs. |
| 8 | Pipi stocks not in danger as often advised by DEPI. Enough data to set take limits. | DEPI advised that consultation on pipis management will occur in the near future. Improved management is dependent on resolving vehicle access. |
| 9 | Paying for Catch and Effort services where a licence is not active. | Still required to put in nil returns which have to be processed. Costing for compliance has been undertaken on active licences because inspection is only relevant for active licences. |
| 10 | Lack of transferability of wrasse licences. | DEPI advised desirably all entitlements should be transferable but in some fisheries latent effort is problematic to providing transferability. DEPI has agreed to discuss with SIV about improving the management of the wrasse fishery (particularly to address latent effort). |
| 11 | Quarterly reporting by DEPI against milestones and deliverables. | The number of inspections will be reported annually and other services quarterly. |

***7. Abalone & Rock Lobster - Warrnambool***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Rock Lobster WZ | 10 |
| Abalone WZ | 4 |
| SIV | 1 |
| By email | 1 |

**Table 7. Abalone Western Zone and Rock Lobster Western Zone**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **ACTION / RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Focus on catch and effort monitoring. | Required because key source of information on stocks for most species. |
| 2 | Boats having to wait before docking because of the need to prior report. | “Alteration calls” are accepted if there has been earlier reporting of fish numbers.  DEPI will discuss with the FCRSC and the Fisheries IT Reference Group about possible trials using new interfaces for reporting. |
| 3 | Provision of information by commercial fishers who observe breaches of fishing regulations. | DEPI indicated that such action would be valuable. DEPI’s approach to collecting intelligence in order to focus compliance activity. Use of the 13FISH reporting line was encouraged, even though reporter may not see immediate activity – information goes into intelligence analysis. |
| 4 | Industry questioned Giant crab inspection costs and how these can be reduced. | DEPI will discuss alternative approaches further with industry given the high cost of the current approach to off-shore inspections. |
| 5 | Apportionment of inspection costs. | DEPI advised that the cost of preparing for inspections was charged at 1/3 of full cost due to compliance work for other sectors that is undertaken on the same trip. |
| 6 | Restitution of over-charging for Fisheries Services in 2014-15, especially WZ rock lobster fishers. | DEPI will in the first instance work with FCRSC on the need for adjustments next year. |
| 7 | Provision of fishery-specific cost recovery forums. | DEPI advised that cost recovery presents an opportunity for engagement with industry with services and efficiency being the focus of discussion. |
| 8 | Fishermen keen to hear detail of costs and why they are changing. | DEPI noted. All services and costs are set out in the service schedules, but note industry concern that there are areas of the schedules that require greater detail. |
| 9 | Justification for travel times for giant crab inspections. | On-water inspections require boat travel to the edge of the continental shelf and DEPI leases a larger vessel to undertake these inspections. DEPI would like to work with industry to introduce on-board electronic applications to reduce costs. |
| 10 | Rationalisation of how available Giant Crab money is allocated for compliance. | There is potential for a very large and real compliance risk with giant crab – critical issue is Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) measures. DEPI keen to work with industry to reduce costs of inspections. |
| 11 | Travel and post travel times for abalone inspections. | DEPI to review travel times and post inspection times to consider discrepancy between abalone and rock lobster. |
| 12 | Cost recovery in the recreational fishing sector. | DEPI does not cost-recover in the recreational sector. However, the recreational fishing licence funds go into a trust account, from which the salaries of 13 Fisheries Officers are paid. The trust also funds fishery specific research projects. |
| 13 | Limited value of forums on TACC due to fishers’ views not being taken into account. | DEPI does consider all submissions. DEPI advised that the Management Plans and the available science guide outcomes on Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC). |
| 14 | Lack of proper consultation on TACC and Management Plans. | DEPI does undertake an appropriate consultation process in reviewing TACCs. There is not always consensus with industry. DEPI committed to work with industry on the management plan. |
| 15 | Concern that submissions are summarised before being placed on the DEPI web site. | The full submissions are all lodged on the DEPI website, except those where the submitter requested otherwise. In transferring the document to an html format, some changes in style and layout appear; however all content has been published. |
| 16 | Need to rethink how DEPI reports on performance (eg frequency of reporting, reporting back through SIV). | DEPI agreed to further consider the process in consultation with FCRSC. |
| 17 | Rock Lobster Management Plan report on the DEPI website. | DEPI advised that the report has only recently been put on the web. It can be accessed at http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fishing-and-hunting/fisheries/fisheries-management-plans/victorian-rock-lobster-management-plan/progress-of-actions-in-the-rock-lobster-fishery-management-plan. |
| 18 | Is apportionment of costs for management and science correct between abalone zones? Industry noted the requirements of the Victorian Government Guidelines on Cost Recovery which provide guidance. | DEPI will look at the distribution of cost and whether they are fixed for need to be scaled (ie will unpack costing figures and consider the basis on which they are attributed). |
| 19 | Consideration of alternative service providers to SARDI for Rock Lobster research. Need better value for money spent and recovered. | DEPI to review, in consultation with industry, the provision of research services for Rock Lobster. |
| 20 | Concern about abalone research service provision. Lack of accountability for time spent. | DEPI agreed to unpack abalone research services and how best to provide them. Agreed to work through the process of tendering for service (eg standards and specifications) in consultation with FCRSC. DEPI is open to discussion about how a process of competitive tendering would work, including how industry could be involved. |
| 21 | Concern about the costs of abalone data input into the Catch and Effort database. Need for it to be closely looked at. | DEPI agreed to review catch and effort costs for wildcatch abalone. |
| 22 | Question as to why Government does not pay for industry participation in FCRSC. | DEPI noted that the Cost Recovery Guidelines indicate that administration costs should be recovered. Currently, only cost of FCRSC meetings recovered. |
| 23 | Savings to be made through reporting methods. | DEPI to do analysis of cost savings for VMS and App for, initially, fisheries which industry identifies as highest priority. |
| 24 | WADA put forward WZ abalone as candidate for App reporting. | DEPI would raise this with FCRSC. |
| 25 | Industry commented that at sea compliance travel times for WZ abalone and WZ rock lobster were inconsistent. | DEPI agreed to review and adjust at sea travel time for WZ abalone and rock lobster. |
| 26 | By letter: not enough lead time to attend meeting. | DEPI recognised that timing of pre-forum material was an issue. |
| 27 | Next steps. | DEPI advised that it would write up action minutes and circulate. Discussion with FCRSC (meets on 21 August).  Following discussions about changes in levy values with FCRSC, would need to include changes in regulations so that they are operative from 1 April 2015. |

***8. Bays & Inlets - Traralgon***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Corner Inlet | 7 |
| SIV | 1 |

**Table 8. Corner Inlet**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **ISSUE** | **RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Graph of under-recovery is not accurate. | DEPI acknowledged that it represented an earlier point in time when the RIS was released. Levy values had changed since that time. |
| 2 | Penalty for illegal fishing and trading needs to be severe. | DEPI agreed and noted that it used the ‘fit and proper’ provisions under the Fisheries Act to exclude persons from industry where they have serious offences. |
| 3 | Value in legitimate fishers assisting in identifying illegal operations. | DEPI agreed – valuable in terms of maintaining the resource and reduces costs to be recovered for compliance. It is appropriate to report through the 13FISH number. |
| 4 | Accurate filling out of logbooks – problems when required to fill out each day but do not have a measure of weight until fish sold. | DEPI noted that an estimate is required. The catch and effort data is key information for managing stocks in most fisheries. Recent IT applications show considerable promise for improving efficiency and accuracy of reporting. DEPI will trial in some fisheries with assistance from fishers. |
| 5 | Definition of river mouth when fishing. | DEPI advised that mouth of rivers for fishing purposes is the most seaward point of land. DEPI acknowledged that judgement was needed as the position at the mouth of a river changes, however there has been high compliance with this requirement. |
| 6 | Number of inspections by fishery. | DEPI advised that it would report the number of inspections per year in the annual report, but would not advise of targets in advance. |
| 7 | Definition of activities that make up inspection. | DEPI noted this is an on-going matter being discussed in FCRSC. |
| 8 | Taking account of tandem inspection of other sectors (eg recreational) when calculating cost, especially on-water costs. | DEPI advised that a pragmatic approach taken – some elements of the inspection costed at 1/3 for commercial fishers. DEPI is trying not to charge for elements that are not related to commercial fishing. DEPI considers estimates are very close to the real costs. |
| 9 | Cost recovery in the recreational fishing sector. | DEPI advised that there is no cost recovery from the recreational sector, but advised that Recreational Fishing Licence funds are deposited in a trust account which funds projects and other activities (eg: compliance). 13 Fisheries Officers are funded from the trust account, which also funds projects involved with stock assessment. Minister approves funds allocation from the trust following consideration of recommendations from a special working group of recreational fishing interests. |
| 10 | Inspection costs seem high. | DEPI advised travel time is a major cost component in costing inspections, noting 2 fisheries officers are required for on-water inspections on protected waters and 3 officers required on exposed/off-shore water or out to sea inspections. |
| 11 | No of inspections seems variable between fisheries (eg Corner Inlet vs Gippsland Lakes). | DEPI noted that as risks increase, inspections increase (and vice-versa), and that some fisheries have higher risks than others. Understanding where cost fall and risks are highest will assist in determining when IT applications might be most effectively applied. |
| 12 | Level of fisheries management costs in Corner Inlet. | DEPI advised that costs are lower for non-quota fisheries. DEPI will look again at management costs recovered (eg in areas of travel, accommodation, printing, provision of Ministerial advice) and will ensure these are adequately reflected in the fishery schedules. |
| 13 | Concern about major loss of seagrass in Corner Inlet, and impact on fish stocks. Fertiliser leaching from dairy farms around the inlet considered the major cause. | DEPI acknowledged that this is a difficult problem. Fisheries officers and managers advocate for fisheries in land-use forums, CMAs and planning processes wherever possible. DEPI will investigate means to address this issue within DEPI. |
| 14 | Concern that catch and effort data are only collected on fish that are marketable and within size limits. | DEPI acknowledge that size profile data are also very important for management of stocks – sound stock assessments are needed. There will be a King George whiting assessment later in 2014 (every 3 years). Industry offered to assist through taking researchers out on their boats. |
| 15 | Fisheries research costs for Corner Inlet are too high. | DEPI will considered further. |
| 16 | Water sampling and analysis cost for Gippsland Lakes mussels. | DEPI advised that water sampling was a PrimeSafe function, not DEPI. SIV offered to look into matter. |
| 17 | Need to collect recreational catch data for use in stock management. | DEPI looking to undertake a state-wide recreational fishing take survey (last was 2006). |
| 18 | Number of recreational fishers in Victoria. | DEPI advised that an Ernst & Young study estimated number to be about 700,000. Considered to be on the high side. |
| 19 | Commercial versus recreational share of fisheries. | Minister’s Fisheries Advisory Council has been asked to consider means to address resource sharing in Victoria. |
| 20 | Sea urchins in eastern end of Corner Inlet. | DEPI advised that a transferrable quota regime has been introduced for the take of sea urchins in 2 areas of the state. Other areas could be allocated if sufficient biomass. |
| 21 | An issue raised in a letter from a Bay and Inlet entitlement holder who could not attend the meeting: Levies and fees be made payable on a quarterly or monthly basis | To be considered at FCRSC. |

***9. Mixed Fisheries - Lakes Entrance***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Wrasse | 1 |
| Ocean Access | 7 |
| Inshore Trawl | 7 |
| Rock Lobster EZ | 3 |
| Ocean Scallop | 3 |
| Bait (Sydenham Inlet) | 2 |
| Bait (Gippsland Lakes) | 3 |
| VSFA | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |

**Table 9. Bait Fisheries, Ocean Access, Inshore Trawl, Ocean Purse Seine, Ocean Scallop**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **ACTION / RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Implementation of VMS in these fisheries. | DEPI advised that it was currently considering fishery priorities for trials of VMS and other means of electronic reporting, in collaboration with the Fisheries IT Reference Group. |
| 2 | Daily recording of catch and effort data. | DEPI advised that it was a requirement for rock lobster, but for other fisheries the requirement for recording was generally at landing (daily recording is highly preferable for obtaining accurate data). |
| 3 | Prior reporting by recreational fishers. | DEPI advised that it would generally not be practical. |
| 4 | Prevention of illegal fishing. Industry suggested that illegal operators would always find a loop hole in regulations, and good operators had to bear the cost of bad ones. | DEPI advised that compliance costs could be reduced over time by legal fishers report breaches or questionable behaviour. Use 13 FISH reporting line. Compliance services protect the rights of legitimate operators. |
| 5 | Need to charge recreational fishers more as they benefit from removing illegal behaviour, in accordance with the number of inspections performed on recreational and commercial vessels. | DEPI advised that the recreational fishing trust account funds 13 Fishery Officers annually. The commercial sector does not pay for surveillance, investigation and intelligence compliance services – which are high-cost activities. |
| 6 | Recreational fishers target particular spots along the coast for different species to the long-term detriment of commercial fishers and the fishery. | DEPI acknowledged the significant pressure of recreation fishers and targeting of specific species. |
| 7 | Catch and release and high-grading is another recreational fishing related issue. | DEPI noted industry comments and advised that it is grateful for any information that can be provided. |
| 8 | Recreational fishers taking more than commercials in some areas. | DEPI acknowledged that this is the case for some species eg snapper in Port Phillip Bay. DEPI seeking to undertake another state-wide survey of recreational fishing. |
| 9 | Recreational fishers make significant contribution to regional economies. Should be a level playing field. Could use tags to control recreational take of rock lobster. | DEPI noted the industry views expressed about recreational fishing. |
| 10 | Concern about the costs of inspections generally. Lack of industry support for some components of inspection costs eg. travel. | DEPI acknowledged that inspection cost as significant, especially the travel component when undertaking on-water inspections. |
| 11 | Concern that in the Ocean Access fishery, most illegal take occurring near PPB, but eastern part of the fishery required to pay as much as the PPB fishers. | DEPI advised that inspection costs are spread across all participants in the fishery. |
| 12 | Need to consider the “user pays” approach (eg. PrimeSafe model). | DEPI noted suggestion. |
| 13 | Payment by commercial fishers for education. | DEPI advised that the commercial industry education services were removed at request of industry. |
| 14 | Education included in on-shore inspections. | DEPI agreed that there is an advisory component of inspections. |
| 15 | In-shore trawl managed as one fishery across the state – possibly need to split into 3 areas as costs are driven from one area. | DEPI has identified this as one of the matters for further discussion with SIV. First step is to identify priority areas for action. |
| 16 | Transparency of costs is one thing, but affordability is another. Impact of relinquishment of significant numbers of licences. | DEPI advised that affordability was one of the principles adopted by FCRSC. Need to consider tailoring of services and level of risk in deciding on level and type of services provided. |
| 17 | Concern that total of all government costs, including Primesafe and fisheries cost recovery, as well as mooring, boat registration and surveys, are putting Victoria’s commercial fishing sector at a competitive disadvantage. | DEPI acknowledged that there was a range of costs that industry must meet. DEPI is focussing on improving the efficiency of fisheries services, as a means of reducing costs. |
| 18 | Only 20-30% if the Ocean Access fishery licence holders are active. Licences are not transferable. Government responsibility for keeping supply of fresh fish to the local market. Trip limits on some species (eg. gummy shark) too low. | DEPI recognised that trip limits are not an efficient way of managing take. DEPI has recorded a number of issues to work through in the commercial sector, which it will do with SIV in the first instance. |
| 19 | Problem of latent effort in the ocean fisheries. | DEPI acknowledged that non-transferability of licence is a crude approach to controlling take and addressing risks to the resource, and that there is a need to consider the matter further – wrasse would be a good case study. |
| 20 | How much will it cost to be licenced to fish licenced next year? | DEPI advised that the full cost included renewal fee, SIV levy, FRDC levy and cost recovery levies for Fisheries Services (Research, Compliance, Fishery Management and Administration). |
| 21 | Some industry members raised concern about SIV levy, while others voiced support for SIV. | DEPI advised that the government sees real value in having a representative organisation. SIV representative would be happy to discuss any issues. |
| 22 | VSFA representative wished it to be noted that there is no “SIV Levy” and that is a “Grants Levy” that is used provide funding for SIV. | DEPI acknowledged that was correct, but noted that it is commonly called the SIV levy. |
| 23 | Concern about the estimated percentage of commercial versus recreational take in the calculation of cost recovery in the Gippsland Lakes and Ocean Access fisheries. | DEPI re-iterated that it was seeking to do another state-wide study of recreational take, which would, amongst other things, assist in using a more accurate estimate of percentage recreational take in all fisheries. |
| 24 | Cost recovery for Fishery Specific Forums, and contribution from the recreational fishing sector. | DEPI advises that there is nil cost recovery for the forums - they are seen as an important element of the cost recovery administration process. The recreational fishing sector is not a part of the cost recovery process. |
| 25 | Fisheries Management meetings and cost recovery. | DEPI considers that meetings about management of commercial fisheries are cost recoverable. |
| 26 | How does DEPI demonstrate that it takes appropriate note of industry submissions (eg Scallop TACC setting)? | DEPI considers all submissions in developing advice. DEPI pointed out that the Minister or his delegate is the final decision maker in relation to matters like TACC – they are not obliged to agree with any particular submissions. Decision making is not a consensus or voting process. Submissions are put on the web unless individual submitters ask that their submission not be put on the web. |
| 27 | Consultation process. | DEPI agreed to the topic of “how to consult” being placed on the agenda for the meeting of the Ocean Scallop industry with Fisheries Management. |
| 28 | Transferability of licences. | DEPI considers that it is preferable to have transferability of licences in managing fisheries, but sustainability is an issue in fisheries where there is significant latent effort. |
| 29 | Need to monitor recreational take of rock lobsters more closely. | DEPI acknowledges the concern expressed. The best way for commercial fishers to assist is use the 13FISH number to report unusual fishing related activity. |
| 30 | DEPI doesn’t seem to take action in relation to 13 Fish reporting. | DEPI advised that Fisheries Officers will not visit the site of all reports but information may still be valuable in undertaking the DEPI intelligence gathering function. DEPI will take steps to ensure all reports to 13FISH are acknowledged as received. |
| 31 | Working relationship between fishers and Fisheries Officers. | DEPI acknowledged that good relationships are desirable, but Fisheries Officers are obliged to work to achieve compliance with the fisheries legal framework. |
| 32 | Research function expense. | DEPI acknowledges relative high cost of research, including surveying. Out-sourcing of research is an option where there are suitable suppliers who can deliver at lower cost. |
| 33 | Stock levels in the Gippsland Lakes bait fisheries – concern about pollutants going into the lakes (from fertiliser application and fire retardants). | DEPI advised that other agencies have responsibilities in relation to pollution in the lakes. DEPI advocates for fisheries where and when possible, including areas within DEPI responsible for water management. DEPI advised that it would look again at the bait catch and effort data from the lakes. |
| 34 | Cost of Catch and Effort data processing. | DEPI acknowledged that attribution of costs between fishers was an issue, especially where there are nil returns over a significant period. DEPI recognised that paper-based systems are more expensive and is looking at IT applications that could mean less data entry undertaken by Catch and Effort staff – thus lower costs. DEPI will consider issuing of logbooks on request, but pointed to the need to have books available. |
| 35 | Need to consider that not all fishers or operators have IT capability. | DEPI noted issue. |
| 36 | Need for fine-scale management in some fisheries. | DEPI pointed to the development of IT applications in support of finer scale management. |
| 37 | Ability to put licences in “abeyance” when they are not being actively worked, thus saving on levy payments. | There is no provision to put licences “in abeyance”. Levying for services is based on holding an access licence in a fishery. Latent effort in fisheries is a matter for DEPI to discuss with SIV. |
| 38 | Consistency of scallop catch and effort data in different publications. | If industry can point out where inconsistency exists DEPI will investigate. DEPI agreed to look at the accuracy of data provided to the Commonwealth. |
| 39 | Auditing of catch and effort data. | DEPI noted prospect of audit data being made available to fishers, and advised that it is happy to discuss further. |
| 40 | Quarterly reporting against deliverables. | DEPI advised that quarterly reports will be made available on the DEPI website. But advised that it would not disclose data on number of compliance inspections until the end of the year. |
| 41 | Public reporting of the names of offenders against the Fisheries Act and regulations. | DEPI advised that its current policy is not to name offenders, but it could reconsider the matter if it was requested by the sectors (commercial and recreational). |
| 42 | It was difficult to consider the figures in the schedules due to the delayed release of information to industry. | DEPI acknowledges there was a delay in circulating the revised service schedules prior to the forums, however the original service schedules were available on the DEPI website from June 30 2014. While some FTE values and costs for compliance changed under the revisions, the majority of costs, and all services, did not alter from this time. |
| 43 | Prospect of quota on take of prawns and bugs, and take limits on other fisheries. | DEPI advised that there is no active consideration of changing management of prawns or bugs. However, there are issues across Victoria for a large number of licence classes, ineffective controls on take, lack of transferability, etc. |

***10. Abalone Eastern Zone – Lakes Entrance***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Abalone EZ | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |

**Table 10. Abalone Eastern Zone**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **ISSUE RAISED** | **ACTION / RESPONSE** |
| 1 | Protocols for on-water boarding of vessels by Fisheries Officers. | DEPI indicated that it had a process of assessing risks prior to any particular operation or inspection. DEPI agreed to provide written protocols to Eastern Zone Abalone Industry Association for comment. |
| 2 | Cost of Research Services. | DEPI agreed to its abalone research scientist and fishery managers discussing the abalone research program in more detail ie breakdown of the cost components, including the cost-effectiveness of the Abase and advice to divers. |
| 3 | Definition of “inspection” (Compliance Service) for cost recovery purposes. | DEPI acknowledged that this matter would be discussed again at FCRSC. DEPI advised that it would not be providing information on the number of inspections until the end of each year as it would compromise the effectiveness of inspections. |
| 4 | Concern about IVR reporting reef codes, especially as occurred 2013/14 licensing year. | DEPI agreed to check that last year’s issue has been resolved. |
| 5 | Abalone receiver costs. | DEPI confirmed that costs were associated with quota monitoring. |

***11. Abalone Central Zone – Queenscliff***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Forum Attendance** | |
| ***Licence class/organisation*** | ***No. present*** |
| Abalone CZ | 11 |
| Abalone Receivers | 1 |
| SIV | 1 |

**Table 11. Abalone Central Zone**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Issue** | **Response/Action** |
| 1 | Receiver costs currently attributed to licence holders | DEPI agreed to review and re-allocate costs as appropriate. |
|  | Transaction fees are paid for licence transfers. Why are they also cost recovered? | DEPI will check to see whether the schedules include services recovered through a transaction charge. |
| 3 | Is it safe to have undersize abalone on the boat (ie picked up by diver and some bumped off or during cleaning) | Although compliance officers can exercise discretion, undersize abalone must be returned to the ocean floor. |
| 4 | Education and Code of Practice for divers and deckhands to understand regulations. | Fisheries officers work with new operators to educate them. DEPI willing to work with industry on Code of Conduct approach but would be cost recoverable. |
| 5 | Central zone need a representative body. | DEPI agreed. Accumulated grants levies are being held and a new body is on the way to being established. |
| 6 | Industry should be notified where efficiencies made. Cost savings should be shared. | DEPI noted. |
| 7 | Inspection times are over estimated | DEPI agreed to review. |
| 8 | How do you prepare for inspections? | DEPI Fisheries Officers have online access to systems containing information. Sometimes inspections are targeted. |
| 9 | Can industry develop an MOU to employ their own compliance staff? | DEPI indicated this would not be possible as compliance officers need to have statutory powers to perform certain functions. Industry could employ staff for educational purposes. |
| 10 | Subsequent inspections on the same trip should not include pre, post and travel costs. | DEPI agreed. Estimates will be reviewed but already build in multiple inspections on one trip. |
| 11 | Industry questioned the estimation of travel times. | DEPI indicated they were averaged and that travel time includes more than just getting to and from a vessel (eg finding a vessel can take time). |
| 12 | Without knowing minimum inspections industry cannot calculate 75% delivery for compliance. | DEPI agreed that compliance was a service where delivery could not be calculated. This is necessary to protect the confidentiality necessary for an inspection regime and will not be disclosed. DEPI is open to discussing alternatives if industry can provide them. |
| 13 | Sean Buck provided alternative service breakdown for CZ abalone research services (in advance) | Harry Gorfine provided FTE estimates according to the new service breakdowns. These were concurrent with existing service costs. The cost recovery schedule will be revised. |
| 14 | Do the cost recoverable services include outsourcing? | DEPI outsources the technical components of research services, however internal resources are needed to interpret, validate and manage information. |
| 15 | Abundance surveys are costly. How do we know we are getting good value? | The contracts are selected through tender and follow a strict government procurement regime. Previously based on management plan but now will be according to harvest strategy. |
| 16 | Are the abundance surveys obtaining the right data? | Important to get biomass and trend data.  DEPI will look at best value and alternatives in next review process. |
| 17 | Industry needs to be able to understand what services are in deliverable terms. | DEPI agreed to look at terminology and milestones in service schedules. |
| 18 | Industry are interested in efficiencies from moving to electronic systems. | DEPI indicated there would likely be improvements in cost and comprehensiveness as electronic reporting is introduced. |
| 19 | What reports are generated? | The fishery manager generates an automated weekly report through Abase. A monthly report is also provided from FILS for all 3 abalone zones. |
| 20 | Why can’t the plebiscite occur before the next election? | Resolution of issues will take longer than November. Industry representatives suggested it would not be useful to hold meetings in December or January when entitlement holders come to the TACC forum in February. The Chair of the proposed board will soon write to industry indicating forward process. |
|  | Economic margins in CZ abalone are the lowest in 35 years. | DEPI acknowledged the economic circumstances and the need to work to achieve cost effective services. |
|  | The number of inspections should take into account the number of prior infringements for a fishery. | Risk and intelligence information is used to target and scale inspections. This assessment takes into account the level of infringements in a fishery. |
|  | The sample size of independent surveys are very low. | Independent surveys provide important time series and a representative sample that is more sensitive to change than commercial CPUE. |
|  | Need a flowchart for abalone product data flow. | DEPI agreed to produce a flowchart showing the flow of documentary data from abalone divers at landing through to receiver and subsequent points of sale. |