



A7200559

13 November 2025

FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE

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NOTICE TO LICENCE HOLDERS IN THE MARINE SCALEFISH FISHERY
Temporary fishing restriction on the use of lift nets in the West Coast Fishing Zone

Dear Licence Holder

I write to advise of temporary arrangements regarding the commercial use of lift nets in the West Coast Fishing Zone (WCFZ) in 2025/26.

For the 2024/25 Blue Crab Fishing Season, temporary measures were implemented from 15 November 2024 to 14 November 2025 to curb targeted effort and support reductions in the total catch of Blue Crab in the WCFZ. These arrangements limited the number of lift nets that could be used to 10 regardless of the number of licences operating from one registered boat.

On 23 October 2025, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) met with key stakeholders to review 2024/25 catch information, preliminary information from the voluntary catch sampling program, and to consider potential management options for 2025/26. The meeting also considered the previous SARDI advice which indicated that whilst the Blue Crab stock in the WCFZ was classified as sustainable and estimated biomass was just above the target level, the biomass was expected to decline if catches persisted above the estimated maximum sustainable yield of 52 tonnes, particularly for a prolonged period and consecutive years.

A number of management arrangements were discussed at the meeting which noted that 2024/25 catches reduced significantly from 81 tonnes in 2023/24 to 63 tonnes in 2024/25. Whilst there was no clear consensus, there continued to be a level of support for retention of the temporary lift net restriction in place in 2024/25.

After consideration of stakeholder feedback, recent catch and effort information, the ongoing sustainable status of Blue Crab in the WCFZ, and objects of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* (the Act), I am supportive of continuing temporary measures aimed at curtailing targeted effort and total catch of Blue Crab in the WCFZ in 2025/26.

As delegate of the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, I have decided to continue temporary measures to limit lift net effort in the WCFZ and have signed a temporary prohibition notice pursuant to section 79 of the Act, to –

limit the number of lift nets that can be used in the WCFZ by Marine Scalefish Fishery (MSF) licence holders to a maximum of 10 lift nets per boat, irrespective of the number of licences operating from the one registered boat from 15 November 2025 to 14 November 2026 (Enclosure 1).

These temporary management arrangements will be reviewed in 2026 and that review will consider the new Harvest Strategy for the MSF, further information from the voluntary catch sampling program, and updated SARDI advice to inform management arrangements for 2026/27.

I encourage all MSF fishers taking Blue Crabs to participate in the voluntary catch sampling data program that is being led by industry to support future enhancements to the assessment of this species. Further information can be obtained from your industry body, SARDI or Fishery Manager Yolande Markey.

Should you have any further queries in regard to this matter please contact Mrs Yolande Markey, Fisheries Manager on 0427 979 085.

Yours sincerely



Prof Gavin Begg
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE