



Department of
**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

West Coast Demersal Scalefish Ministerial Advisory Committee – meeting #3

23 June 2026

The West Coast Demersal Ministerial Advisory Committee met for the 3rd time on 28 April 2026 to continue discussions on future management arrangements to support the ongoing recovery of the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource (WCDSR).

Mr Matt Gillett, Chair of the Committee, opened the meeting and updated members on the progress of action items from meeting 2, making note that proposed catch limits would be made available for the Committee's consideration at the next meeting.

Development of Guiding Principles and Objectives for Management Measures

Following on from the previous meeting, the Committee further discussed guiding principles to underpin its recommendations and continued to develop an overarching objective for spawning protection and demersal recovery zones. The Committee agreed to revisit these objectives once catch limits become available.

Charter Catches, Consultation Outcomes and Demersal Scalefish Biology

DPIRD presented information in response to member queries raised at the previous meeting, which included summaries of;

- spatial and temporal trends in charter catches;
- species composition of charter catches;
- outcomes from the 'Have Your Say' survey and the importance of spawning protection to the WA community;
- spatial and temporal trends in mean ages of WA dhufish and snapper;
- dispersal and recruitment patterns for WA dhufish; and
- the stock structure of snapper.

A Case Study for Demersal Recovery Zones

Dr Tim Langlois presented modelled effects of spatial and temporal fisheries management measures in the Ningaloo region for spangled emperor, which indicated that a combination of both management frameworks could produce a greater recovery in biomass of demersal scalefish species. Members discussed the merits and details of demersal recovery zones, commenting that spatial closures could act as a good insurance policy for maintaining larger, older demersal fish in the population, and that similar modelling approaches could be used to inform recommendations regarding demersal recovery zones in the West Coast region.

The Chair advised that he would continue discussion on demersal recovery zones with each Committee member out of session. DPIRD will consider whether sufficient resources are available to develop a suitable spatial model to inform recovery zones.

Spawning Protection

The Committee discussed principles for spawning protection, considering key demersal spawning times, the benefits of simpler arrangements and potential social impacts. While the Committee broadly supported spawning closures for inshore demersal fish, there remained differing views on depth management, spatial management (recovery zones) and sectoral considerations.

The Committee agreed that spawning closures should;

- a) be focused on WA dhufish, with incidental benefits provided to other demersal species; and
- b) apply to the entire inshore demersal suite.

Next Steps

The Chair will individually engage members out of session with regards to recovery zones and spawning protection. DPIRD will invite Dr Karina Ryan to present on recreational fishing surveys, including their benefits and limitations, at the next meeting. The Committee will continue to develop advice to the Minister for Fisheries on management options that support the long-term sustainability of demersal scalefish while maintaining recreational fishing amenity.

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, 3 June 2026**.

Matt Gillett

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