



Department of
**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

West Coast Demersal Scalefish Ministerial Advisory Committee – meeting #4

30 June 2026

The 4th West Coast Demersal Ministerial Advisory Committee meeting was held on 3 June 2026.

Mr Matt Gillett, Chair of the Committee, opened the meeting and updated members on action items from the previous meeting. He explained that, at this point in time, no funding has been made available for constructing bespoke spatial models to inform demersal recovery zones.

Recreational Fishing Surveys

As requested by the Committee in meeting 2, Dr Karina Ryan presented an overview of recreational surveys and the role they will continue to play alongside mandatory catch reporting. Dr Ryan explained that such surveys can be adapted to future management strategies that may be recommended by the Committee.

It was noted that currently, recreational fishers can voluntarily contribute to demersal scalefish research through the FishCatchWA digital reporting tool, the Research Angler Program and the Send Us Your Skeletons program.

Proposed West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Total Removals Limit

In confidence, DPIRD presented proposed annual catch limits for the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource (WCDSR) when it reopens in Spring 2027, which were developed using available stock assessment modelling in line with the following objectives;

- to rebuild the spawning biomass of snapper and WA dhufish to above the limit reference level by 2030, with 80% confidence; and
- to allow some fishing while maintaining fishing mortality well below the threshold level.

In response to Committee members' queries, DPIRD agreed to conduct scenario testing on model projections using different levels of recruitment (e.g. below average).

Committee members discussed the balance between social amenity and sustainability risk associated with any extension to the proposed rebuilding timeframe beyond 2030.

There was broad (but not unanimous) support amongst the Committee for a 2030 interim milestone to rebuild stocks to above the limit level. The Chair committed to contacting members individually, out of session, to ascertain each member's views on proposed catch limits and interim recovery objectives.

Trends in Recreational Fishing Behaviour

DPIRD presented data summaries from statewide recreational fishing surveys, highlighting;

- the 'bookending' effect on catches at the beginning and end of open seasons;
- that the recreational fleet was capable of taking significant amounts of demersal scalefish in a very short time during favourable weather conditions and holiday periods; and
- that changes to bag and size limits for some demersal scalefish in the West Coast region have reduced release rates and associated post-release mortality.

DPIRD advised that it can analyse the impacts of the 2023 management changes on vessel retrievals at regional boat ramps to indicate any impacts these changes may have had on visitation to regional towns.

Separate Management for Offshore Demersal Scalefish

The Chair facilitated discussion regarding the potential for development of separate management arrangements for offshore demersal scalefish, and whether these could be introduced prior to Spring 2027.

Key points raised in discussion included;

- natural limitations exist on recreational fishing for these species;
- a targeted opening of the resource could provide enhanced research opportunities;
- consideration must be given to safety around incentivising this type of fishing; and
- significant resourcing, compliance and management challenges would likely accompany any such management change.

Next Steps

Committee members will continue to consider proposed total removals limits and recovery objectives for the WCDSR in developing management advice to the Minister for Fisheries.

The Chair will contact Committee members to gauge a suitable date for the next meeting.

Wednesday, 3 June 2026.

Matt Gillett

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