Question on Notice

No. 255

Asked on 29 March 2022

MS A CAMM ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES AND MINISTER FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Peer Review by Dr Neil Klaer, which has informed the stock assessment of the Spanish mackerel fishery, and given that Dr Klaer said he is 'unable to support the conclusions regarding future harvest levels for the east Coast Spanish Mackerel stock'— Will the Minister advise (a) what actions will be taken to verify stock assessment levels and (b) will there be a halt to any change in regulations for the Spanish mackerel fishery until questions regarding the stock assessment are fully addressed?

ANSWER:

I advise the member that I answered the question in the Legislative Assembly on 31 March 2022 and subsequently tabled a response that can be accessed via the hyperlink to the document in question at https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tp/2022/5722T481-005F.pdf.

(a) The reservations raised by Dr Klaer related to the value for the ‘steepness parameter’ or how resilient Spanish mackerel are. They did not relate to the validity of the input data for the stock assessment.

Subsequent work conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in response to Dr Klaer’s review showed that his preference for a higher steepness value was not supported by model testing, and that the stock assessment team had used a more appropriate value.

The stock assessment and Dr Klaer’s review were presented to the Sustainable Fisheries independent Expert Panel. The Expert Panel commented that, while Dr Klaer’s comments were justified, the department’s response was considered appropriate. Further, given the department’s model is more precautionary than the reviewer’s, the Expert Panel considered that the most responsible way forward is to accept the stock assessment base case as the most credible scenario and to make management decisions accordingly.

This is further supported by an estimate in the recent stock assessment of Spanish mackerel in the Torres Strait. The Torres Strait stock assessment estimated steepness at 0.47. The department used a value of 0.45 for the east coast fishery, whilst Dr Klaer’s preference was higher at 0.7.

(b) A thorough review of the stock assessment has been undertaken and, consequently, the department has commenced public consultation on proposed management changes to rebuild this iconic fishery. Consultation closes 5pm Thursday 5 May 2022 and interested parties are encouraged to have their say via the departmental engagement hub at https://daf.engagementhub.com.au/.