Primary Production Committee
Supplementary Questions – Briefing into fisheries

1. Have Fisheries New Zealand's concerns about the proposed Dome Valley landfill been addressed?

   As a result of Fisheries New Zealand's submission on the Dome Valley Landfill Waste Management arranged for their senior planners to meet with FNZ staff to work through the mitigations that are included within the landfill proposal. This occurred in October 2020 and was a productive exchange in terms of understanding how Waste Management intended to monitor and mitigate risks to waterways, and by extension the marine environment downstream.

   Following the recent decision on the landfill consent, FNZ will continue to engage with Waste Management and Auckland Council, where appropriate, to stay abreast of any issues that may impact on, or pose a risk to, fisheries matters.

2. How long does it take to undertake a fish stock assessment?

   Typically, a fish stock assessment takes less than 12 months to complete. However, in exceptional circumstances where a fish stock assessment is particularly challenging this process may take longer.

3. How is the budget for fish stock assessments set?

   Fisheries research is prioritised within the fisheries research appropriation. A range of research is suggested each year including for fish stock assessment, aquatic environment and biodiversity, customary and recreational fishing purposes. Suggested research is then prioritised against a range of criteria to determine the final planned research programme. There is no set budget for fish stock assessments, the amount spent each year varies depending upon the research needs and priorities in that year. However, the cost of fish stock assessments (when considered in combination with the costs of gathering information to support these) is the largest share of Fisheries New Zealand's fisheries research spend in any year.

4. How far out were estimates of hoki stocks from the stock assessment?

The largest discrepancy between the Total Allowable Commercial Catch from the hoki fish stock assessment and catch since 2000 was in the 2018-19 fishing year. In this year it was estimated that 150 000t of Hoki could be sustainably commercially caught, but only 117 000t were estimated to have been commercially caught.

Estimates of the size of the hoki stock are derived from the stock assessment. The hoki fish stock assessment is usually run every year, however for the first time in at least 15 years, the stock assessment was not updated in 2020. This was because of concern that the 2019 model outputs were not reflecting observations in the fishery.

Fisheries New Zealand decided to run a two-step process to rebuild the model. The first phase was a full review of the input data. The model itself was rebuilt based on the revised input data, using two different types of models to test assumptions.

The Deepwater Working Group and Plenary review processes concluded that observations of the fishery were better reflected in the 2021 stock assessment outputs, although noting that further refinement may be possible.