Cockle split must be resolved

With the cockle season due to start on November 1st, the need for industry and government to find an acceptable solution to the quota dilemma is urgent, says Shadow Minister for Fisheries, Adrian Pederick.

Mr Pederick said the regulations that were to be introduced recently had drawn criticism from many of the state's professional cockle fishermen. This was complicated by the fact that some had focused their fishing practices on cockles, while others had fished for cockles on their multi-species licences in a small way. Some licences had not been used for cockles at all.

Changes are vital to preserving SA's cockle fisheries, which have suffered severe depletion from years of unregulated fishing. While cockles, also known as pipis, have traditionally been sold as inexpensive bait for recreational fishing, a rapidly growing market for human consumption has increased demand and changed the face of cockle harvesting.

Mr Pederick said the opposition was keen to see a solution to the problem that had the general acceptance of the professional fishermen whose livelihoods were most affected.

'The government's proposal is for a 68:32 split of the Total Allowable Catch, while there is a call for a 60:40 split,' Mr Pederick said.

'After extensive discussions with numerous industry groups, it would seem to me that some fine-tuning would close that gap to something acceptable to all.

'The government has failed after years of discussions to resolve this and notwithstanding previous meetings have failed to get final consensus, time is almost up and no-one will gain from a continued impasse.

'I call on the government to bring together representatives from the opposing viewpoints to meet with an independent mediator and hammer out an agreement, which must then be accepted by all and implemented immediately.'

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