

Workshop: Changing the face of Commercial Fisheries in Australia

**Tuesday, 18th September
1.55pm – 2.25pm
Main Hall, Anglican Church**

Facilitator: Anissa Lawrence, Simon Rowe, Bec Nicoll, Michael Wooden, OceanWatch Australia

Background

The commercial fishing industry internationally and in Australia continues to receive negative publicity about its practices being unsustainable and about potential contamination issues with seafood.

Awareness of environmental issues is growing and as consumers, Australians are increasingly making decisions about their purchases based on what they know or hear about how sustainable particular industries are or how safe certain foods are to consume.

The last two decades have seen concerted efforts made by the seafood industry and fisheries management agencies in Australia to establish sustainable fisheries management plans and develop environmental management systems.

Significant advances have been achieved in terms of by-catch reduction and the industries themselves have undergone major adjustments in terms of available licences, yield reductions and regulations.

Discussion

Are consumers already cynical and suspicious of the claims of industry groups that they are 'sustainable'?

Has 'sustainable' become tired and redundant as 'lite' has to the food industry and do we need to find another more engaging angle?

How can the commercial fishing/seafood industry improve their profile and better communicate to the Australian public what they're doing to maintain sustainable fisheries?

Do Australian consumers see fishermen as the farmers of the sea or do they view them more harshly? Do they apply the same values with regard to people on the land or on the sea 'just trying to make a living'?

What things might an organisation like OceanWatch be able to do to tackle some of these issues?

<p>What was discussed (please list the main dot points such as identified issues or threats)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of the local seafood industry? • Sustainability is the aim. How can commercial industry be sustainable if outside inputs are so unregulated? (fisher) • Everyone likes seafood • Anyone can take up farming and contribute to the problem • DI&F has a lot of regulatory powers at sea but legislation on land is poorly regulated (farmer) • Tackle what's occurring on land • Q – is there something seafood industry needs to do to clean up their act? • Q – is there market research on fish (survey) public perception Vs fact? Majority of people get information from media. • Q – demand for fish will be a large part of future. Is industry doing enough (marketing) to answer this demand? Real gap in communication between fishers and community. Lots of bad press comes from recreational fishers. Can more be done here. Recreational fishers can't catch a fish, they initially blame commercials. Need for more education. • Q – is fish stocks in this industry stable? Need more public education on how and what species of fish are being caught. Where & by who, effectiveness of fish ladders? Is there cover-up in Burnett River concerning water allocation, weirs etc? Are the stories correct of the negative publicity? • Complex problem, 50 years ago different species about, real lag in succession of fish. Lack of education. With new technology fish becoming scarce. Increase in demand over world for fish. Gains are being made. • Learn from old time fishers, good source of information, knowledge may not be documented. Log records good. Past knowledge is out there and often fishers were the only ones aware of early environmental problems in fishing. 	
<p>Suggested follow-up actions</p>	<p>Action</p>	<p>Who will undertake this action?</p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>Raise awareness in community. Story is in the characters.</p>	<p>OceanWatch Australia; NRM Groups</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Make documentaries of the stories.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Do the above before these people die.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Work on point of sale information.</p>	<p>Occurring by industry with labelling</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>BRDs and other acronyms need to gain higher profiles within the community.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Promotion of health benefits from fish.</p>	