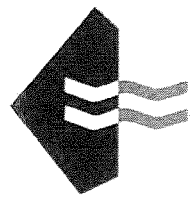
SUBMISSION NO. 31
Inquiry into the Role of Science for Fisheries and Aquaculture



WAFIC
Western Australian Fishing Industry Council inc.

11 May 2012

Mr Thomas Gregory
Inquiry Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Gregory

Inquiry into the Role of Science for Fisheries and Aquaculture

Please find enclosed the WA Fishing Industry Council's (WAFIC) submission in relation to the House Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry's inquiry into the role of science for fisheries and aquaculture. The WA Fishing Industry Council is the peak body recognised by government for the commercial fishing, pearling and aquaculture industry in Western Australia.

I note that an extension to the deadline for submissions was sought by WAFIC and received on Friday 4 May.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Research, Development and Extension Manager Richard Stevens on telephone should you or the Committee require further information.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Guy Leyland
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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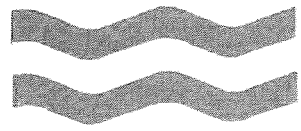

Inquiry into the Role of Science for Fisheries and Aquaculture

Submission by the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC)

This submission is focussed only on the research carried out in and for Western Australian professional fishing and aquaculture. WAFIC is the peak industry body for professional fishing and aquaculture and defends the security of supply of seafood to the Australian consumer.

In making this submission, WAFIC notes that the quality and scope of fisheries and related research in the State (including research by AIMS and CSIRO) is very high. Of concern is that the Government, in making policy decisions that affect the supply of local, sustainable seafood, appears to have been influenced by misinformation circulated by some Environmental Non-Government Organisations, many of which are based overseas. In this context, there is a genuine need for Government to apply scientific evidence to its decision and policy-making processes.

WAFIC recognises that fisheries are a community resource and that there is a large 'public good' component in the research activities funded by the State and the Commonwealth, activities which are of benefit to industry and the broader community.

Fisheries are a community resource because oceans beyond the high-water mark are vested in the crown and harvested only by licence. The public good component of fisheries research relates to the community and conservation benefits from sustainable fisheries, the amenity value from recreational fishing and the health benefit that the Australian community derives from the consumption of its seafood.

The significance of fishing to our national economy in the short and long terms also needs recognition.

"When Australia has mined its last tonne of iron ore, drilled its last drop of oil, smelted its last ounce of gold and polished its last diamond, all that will be left of our primary resources will be fishing, forestry and agriculture." Indeed this point was explicitly recognised by the Treasury in the 2010-11 Budget papers.[1]

[1] 2010-11 Budget paper #1, Statement #4 Table 1

Terms of Reference

The Committee will inquire into and report upon the role of science for the future of fisheries and aquaculture, and in particular:

a) *the relationship between scientific knowledge of fish species, ecosystems, biodiversity and fish stock sustainability.*

WAFIC submits that, with sixty years of applied science in Western Australia, forty of them largely funded by industry, the relationships are generally well understood. It is this standard of science that allowed, for example, the Western Rocklobster Fishery to be the first in the world to achieve Marine Stewardship Council certification as an ecologically sustainable fishery. All major fisheries in Western Australia have the science to underpin management to the extent that they achieve export certification under the EPBC Act.

b) *fishery management and biosecurity, including but not limited to:*
   a. *the calculation and monitoring of stock size, sustainable yield and bycatch, as well as related data collection*

WAFIC submits that this is well understood.

   b. *the effects of climate change, especially relating to species dispersion, stock levels and impacts on fishing communities*

WAFIC submits that this is less well understood, but that there is some evidence of commercial species extending their range southward (eg Mudcrabs) and new opportunities for professional fishing may result from the effects of climate change. It is critical that fisheries and marine management measures are responsive to climate change and changes in the nature of fisheries.

   c. *pest and disease management and mitigation*

WAFIC submits that while more research may need to be carried out in this area, the management of these potential problems is based on the assessment of risk and this is well understood.

   d. *minimising risks to the natural environment and human health*

WAFIC submits that the science shows that the risks to the environment from professional fishing and aquaculture are well managed. WAFIC submits that there is already effective management of these risks through sophisticated and responsive fisheries management measures.

The risks to human health were well documented in the assessment by FASANZ for the Primary Production and Processing Standard for Seafood. Only edible oysters from unmanaged fisheries were considered high risk to human health

e. cooperation among Australian governments on the above

WAFIC submits that, while this is improving with the concept of three regional 'hubs' based on the major offshore current flows (Leeuwin-South West; Tasman-South East and Tropics) there is still something of a jurisdictional 'silo mentality' with each State, CSIRO and Universities competing rather than co-operating in science. This has been mitigated in Western Australia to some extent with the establishment of the co-operative WA Marine Science Institute and the Centre of Excellence for Seafood, Science and Health.

c) research, development and applied science of aquaculture, including: transitioning from wild fisheries to aquaculture in individual species

WAFIC submits that this is a growth area which requires further Government support noting the bulk of aquaculture lies within State jurisdiction. WAFIC notes that aquaculture development is at different stages around Australia due to varying degrees of state Government support and regulatory burden

d) *improving sustainability and lifecycle management practices and outcomes*

WAFIC submits that the industry has made massive strides in this area, evidenced by the WA Government's recent commitment to have fisheries certified by an independent third party for sustainability. Science and research is required to support this initiative.

e) *pest and disease management and mitigation*

As above – the control of pests and diseases in aquaculture should be via evidence-based risk assessment. Much can be gleaned from overseas studies in countries where aquaculture is far more highly developed than in Australia.

f) governance arrangements relating to fisheries and aquaculture, including the implications for sustainability and industry development

WAFIC submits that governance of fisheries in Western Australia is at world's best practice. The South Australian model for governance and aquaculture development is an exemplar for the rest of the country.

g) current initiatives and responses to the above matters by state, territory and Australian governments

WAFIC submits that the State government is well equipped to manage fisheries in this State but Commonwealth marine planning creates a false perception that fish stocks are 'in need' of protection from overfishing.