



Election 2008: the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council's Position on Policies to Support Professional Fishing and the Aquaculture Industry for the Next Government

The Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) is the peak body representing the professional fishing and aquaculture industry in Western Australia.

Independent research indicates that the professional fishing and aquaculture industry:

- *Contributes* to the Western Australian lifestyle by providing seafood to the 8 out of 10 people who prefer to buy their seafood rather than catch it themselves;
- *Provides* a sustainable and healthy alternative to imported seafood;
- *Supports* communities in regional WA where 85% of professional fishing activity takes place, both through employment opportunities and by providing locally sourced seafood;
- *Employs* over 4,500 people directly and more than 15,000 indirectly;
- *Promotes and funds* \$27 million in research and management initiatives that support the sustainable use of Western Australia's unique marine environment;
- *Generates* in excess of \$1 billion for the Western Australian economy with annual exports valued at over \$333 million; and
- *Has Invested* in more than \$7 billion in vessels, fishing licences and infrastructure to support viable professional fisheries and aquaculture.

WAFIC has identified a number of key influences on the industry:

- *Climate change* is modifying the distribution and abundance of fisheries resources and driving required reductions in the carbon footprint of the industry;
- *High fuel prices and labour shortages* are driving up costs of seafood provision whilst low returns and competition from imported seafood are eroding profitability;
- *Interest in, and demand for, access* to the marine environment is increasing across all sectors; and
- *Increasing public expectations* for sustainability of the marine environment.

WAFIC seeks a commitment from all WA political parties that they will ensure the environmental and economic viability of professional fishing and aquaculture in Western Australia. The focus of the next Government's fisheries policy platform should be a reinvigoration of marine resource management and fisheries and aquaculture resources in particular. WAFIC's position is that such a reinvigoration is best delivered by (1) building cross-sectoral partnerships and (2) strengthening key existing policies such as Integrated Fisheries Management and Regional Marine Planning, clarification of policies such as Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management, and development of mechanisms to increase security within professional fisheries and aquaculture.

Western Australia's fishing industry plays a critical role in regional communities, provides Western Australians with seafood experiences that are now a part of our social fabric and plays significant roles in the stewardship of our marine environments. A Western Australian aquaculture industry also has the potential to enhance and diversify the range of domestic seafood available to Western Australians as well as providing marine products such as algal-fuels.

The key planks of the next Government's fisheries policy should:

1 Promote co-management and self-management of professional fisheries and aquaculture to improve environmental and economic sustainability

- 1.1 Provide security of access to marine resources for professional fishers and aquaculturists to reduce perverse incentives to overexploit the resources through:
 - a. decisive Ministerial action on the issue of input verses output controls in the Western Rock Lobster fishery to maximise the value of the catch and the establishment of a unit register;
 - b. license unitisation in other Western Australian fisheries such that units can be easily transferred within the fishery;
 - c. reinvigoration of the IFM process such that existing allocation processes are progressed;
 - d. maintaining a strong voice for the professional fishing and aquaculture industry in regional marine planning processes, supporting access arrangements for all sectors including recreational fishing, conservation, oil and gas and other resource projects that impact on marine areas, such that priority areas for professional fishing and aquaculture are also secured;
 - e. rapid progression of fishing entitlements to interim management plans or management plans, particularly for fisheries that have been on entitlements for more than five years;
 - f. formal recognition of the role that the professional fishing industry plays in maintaining the marine environment, particularly through long term monitoring, and an enhanced contribution to this process in the future; and
 - g. completion of the Cole House review on cost recovery and consideration of alternative co-management models that ensure cost-effective delivery of sustainable fisheries management under declining profit scenarios.
- 1.2 Assess core functions of the Department of Fisheries such that more effective delivery of fisheries and aquaculture outcomes are achieved through Government-Industry-Community partnerships.
- 1.3 Create a public fund to assist industry in obtaining credible third party certification to respond to growing market demand and provide confidence for Western Australians that the State's fisheries are well managed, sustainable and environmentally responsible.
- 1.4 Establish a fuel incentives program that supports the participation of professional fishers as research volunteers, ensures that researchers benefit from fishers' knowledge, and that fishers diversify their activities across all fisheries as well as enhance their capacity for self-management.
- 1.5 Establish a stand-alone Aquaculture Act that creates a secure regulatory environment including statutory timeframes for approval processes for onshore and offshore operations, streamlines environmental requirements, and supports self regulation of small, low impact sectors.

2 Enhance productivity in the professional fishing industry

- 2.1 Review potential for license buy backs in smaller and/or urban professional fisheries through the creation of a Structural Adjustment Taskforce.
- 2.2 Create a fund to establish voluntary fisheries schemes to help reduce over capacity in the industry, building on the successes of previous programs.
- 2.3 Review the use of the Ministerial Advisory Committee process, particularly for smaller fisheries, and consider more cost-effective options that ensure effective consultation and strong fisheries outcomes.

3 Support the development of an industry response to climate change

- 3.1 Ensure that the Federal government is aware of the necessity for carbon credits for the professional fishing and aquaculture industry.
- 3.2 Fund research to quantify the carbon footprint of professional fishing and aquaculture in the context of provision of domestic seafood to Western Australians, potential for carbon sequestration and the increasing efficiency and spatial reach of the fishing fleet, and develop mechanisms to aid the industry in reducing this footprint.
- 3.3 Extend the ground breaking research of the 1980's on environmental drivers of Western Rock Lobster productivity by funding cutting edge science that determines how climate change will affect the productivity and distribution of WA's marine resources.

4 Promote Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management and Conservation

- 4.1 Formalise WA's existing Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management policy through the adaptation of internationally recognised indicators to WA's fisheries.
- 4.2 Establish a competitive fund to deliver monitoring of ecosystem indicators that are not currently incorporated within Government programs such that achievement of Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management can be demonstrated.
- 4.3 Amend the *Fishing and Related Industries Compensation (Marine Reserves) Act* to ensure that fishers and aquaculture lease holders have a right to compensation in the event that Fish Habitat Protection areas declared under the *Fish Resource Management Act* or Marine Management Areas declared under the *Conservation and Land Management Act* remove access.

5 Promote community and social outcomes

- 5.1 Provide State Funding for the SeaNet Program as the environmental and community outreach program of the professional fishing and aquaculture industry.
- 5.2 Create a mentoring program to assist indigenous Australians to enter professional fishing and aquaculture, particularly in remote regions; such a program would deliver health benefits to indigenous Australians by increasing local availability of seafood as well as providing alternative income streams to those professional fishers and aquaculturists involved in mentoring and training programs.
- 5.3 Expand the IFM to include allocations to all sectors as per the Toohey Report, thereby ensuring that Western Australia's marine resources are shared by the community.
- 5.4 Ensure enforcement of seafood labelling regulations to protect Western Australian consumers.
- 5.5 Help reduce the incidence of obesity, diabetes and other health issues by promoting the consumption of domestic seafood.

The implementation of these policies will assist professional fisheries and aquaculture to remain on the front foot of sustainability and economic productivity. Ensuring that Industry has a strong voice as it works with Government to achieve these outcomes will require secure and adequate funding to the Professional Fishing and Aquaculture Industry for the Term of Government.

WAFIC Contact Details:
PO Box 55, Mt Hawthorn, WA 6915
Phone: 9492 8888; Fax: 9244 2934
Email: wafic@wafic.org.au
www.wafic.com.au