TASMANIAN SEAFOOD INDUSTRY COUNCIL
ABN 61 009 555 604

11 April 2016

Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra ACT 2601
fisheries.inquiry@pc.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry into the Regulation of Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture

As the peak body representing the interests of Tasmanian wild capture fishers, marine farmers and seafood processors, the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC) is pleased to make a submission to the Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture Productivity Commission.

The Tasmanian seafood industry is the most valuable seafood industry in Australia ($735 million) accounting for 30% of the Australian seafood industry by value. Farmed salmonids ($531 million), wild catch rock lobster ($84 million), wild catch abalone ($82.6 million) and farmed oysters ($21.6 million) are the key seafood industries in Tasmania. Tasmania also supports Commonwealth fishery licenced operators.

Seafood production in Australia is a highly regulated industry. There are multiple tiers of regulation, depending on the activity, nature of the activity and location of the activity. As such, a seafood operation may need to abide by local, state and federal level regulation. In many instances, these regulatory frameworks have considerable overlap and duplication.

While there is considerable opportunity to expand seafood productivity, excessive and costly regulation, along with resource allocation and access issues are significant impediments to growth and development. Improved resource access security, reduction in unnecessary and costly regulation and streamlining of regulatory requirements between jurisdictions will only have positive outcomes for seafood production in Australia.

In line with current community objectives around marine resource management, TSIC acknowledges the continued need for robust and transparent regulatory frameworks that ensure long term environmental sustainability. Agreed fisheries management frameworks that accommodate the values of a diverse set of marine stakeholders will not be easy. However, if we can strike the right balance, then our marine resources and all stakeholders who value our marine resources will benefit.

Yours sincerely

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Submission to the Australian Government Productivity Commission with respect to Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture

On behalf of the

Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC)

April 2016

Tasmanian seafood industry: An overview

The Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council is the peak body for the wild catch, marine farm and processing sectors of the Tasmanian seafood industry. The primary role of TSIC is to promote and represent the best interests of the industry as a whole.

The Tasmanian seafood industry uses a range of gears and technologies to produce a diversity of wild caught and farmed seafood species. The key species harvested within Tasmania are farmed salmonids (40,405 t / $531.3 million); wild caught rock lobster (1,165t / $84 million); wild caught abalone (2,158 t / $82.7 million); and farmed oysters (3,236 t / $21.7 million). Tasmania is also the home to many vessels participating in the Commonwealth managed fishery, which is regulated by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AMSA).

A common value within the Tasmanian seafood industry is to continue to operate as a fully sustainable seafood industry. This is achieved through a world's best ecosystem based and adaptive regulatory framework. As a foundation, this framework requires comprehensive scientific input into robust harvest strategy decision-making processes. Should adequate science not be available, then the management framework will proceed under the values of the precautionary principle.

TSIC understands that the regulatory framework required to manage our marine resources must be robust and transparent. After all, the seafood industry has access to a community owned resource, whether it be direct access of a wild stock or through access to water to farm seafood. The seafood story, however is exceptionally complex, with a diverse range of stakeholders having a diverse range of often competing values. A further complexity is the growing trend for consumers to demand both sustainable and ethically produced seafood. This has seen an increase in the number of seafood businesses and sectors seeking independent third party accreditations, such as the Marine Stewardship Council or Aquaculture Stewardship Council certifications. It is TSICs view that such accreditations are important for market access and / or community acceptance, however, they play no role in the management of our marine resources.

There is, however, significant over regulation and regulatory duplication (red and green tape) within the seafood industry, both within jurisdictions, and certainly across different jurisdictions and authorities. In some instances, this complexity crosses over from local government, to state government, to national regulatory requirements. Duplication and complex regulation is not only difficult to deal with, but also costly to seafood operations.

TSIC believes there is considerable scope to improve fisheries regulations without compromising fishery policy and environmental objectives. Some changes may financially benefit seafood operations, others may benefit sustainability of stocks across jurisdictions, while others may improve perceptions of commercial operations by other marine users. The reality is, however, streamlining regulation, especially across jurisdictional boundaries, and keeping a diverse range of stakeholders, each of whom has conflicting values, happy will not be a simple task.

Structure of TSICs response

This submission provides responses against the broad topics found in Sections 2 to 6 of the Productivity Commission Issues Paper. Responses take into account the specific Information Requests found within each section. Given the relatively short period between the release of the Issues Paper (February 2016) and the submission date (31 March), and the very extensive range of information requests across a diverse range of issues, the TSIC submission only focuses on those topics of direct relevance and importance to the Tasmanian seafood industry.

2. Australian Fisheries

Sustainable management of Australian fish stocks

Australia's contemporary fisheries management framework ensures long term viability and sustainability of commercial fish stocks. This is in large achieved through independent scientific data and research feeding directly into a robust and transparent regulatory decision making processes. This decision making process takes a holistic approach to the marine environment. Not only are all users taken into account, but their impact on target species, bycatch, threatened, endangered and protected species (TEPS), and impacts on the broader marine environment are all considered. Decision making forums are inclusive, comprising consultation with the fishing industry, scientists, economists and other user groups, such as those that represent traditional fishing, recreational fishing and environmental non-government organisations. For more significant changes to our fisheries, governments are obliged to undergo broad public consultation.

The evolution of Australia's contemporary commercial fisheries management framework over the last 20 years has bought with it greatly increased control over fishing effort and catches. The end result, Australia's marine resources are now in very good shape. The evidence base for this statement is contained within the multitude of fishery stock assessments and scientific reports publically available from a diverse range of research and management agencies, including the comprehensive Fisheries Research and Development Corporation published Status of Australia's Key Fish Stocks Report. The 2014 Report assessed 150 stocks of 49 species, which make up the bulk of the commercially significant fisheries (approximately 70% of the commercial wild catch by volume and 80% by value). The report tells a very positive picture with 98 stocks classified as "sustainable", 11 as "transitional", 39 were "undefined" due to insufficient data, and just two – Southern Bluefin Tuna and School Shark – were assessed as overfished.

The process of managing our fish stocks, however, is complicated by the lack of robust data collection and the sporadic frequency of monitoring our recreational fisheries. Without proper monitoring and control of recreational catch, the good work being done by our commercial sector to rebuild stocks could be compromised.

Regardless, there is no denying that Australia's contemporary fisheries management regime is amongst the best examples of successful fisheries management worldwide.

Allocation of fish stocks

Managing the allocation of marine resources between the diverse interests and needs of commercial, recreational, Indigenous customary, environmental groups and the broader community poses a significant challenge. Each sector is competing for the same 'publically owned' resource, but each group has varied and often conflicting values with respect to how our marine resources should be used. Despite these differences, all groups share the same fundamental interest of long term sustainability of our marine resource.

Fisheries Acts in general do not clearly define access or allocation rights. This ultimately means that Ministers / Governments can 'interpret' the meaning of access and allocation. Subsequently, decision making is often driven by the general political environment of the day, and decisions are often highly politicised. The very large number of recreational fishers that frequent our waterways, and the regulatory and political difficulties associated with controlling or constraining recreational catch has often resulted in cuts to sustainable commercial take, or at the extreme, the complete removal of sustainable commercial effort, with little to no compensation.

Such decisions ignore the fact that commercial operators have been granted access rights through the issuing of a commercial licence. To maintain this access and allocation right, commercial operators pay annual resource rental fees and / or royalties, which in Tasmania go to the 'public purse'. It must be remembered that commercial fishers provide an important service to the broader community by providing access to fresh sustainable seafood to those who cannot go out and catch their own. The continued livelihood of commercial operators and the regional communities they support is reliant on continued access and allocation of fish resources. They need enough allocation and access to pay their operational costs and then hopefully make a dollar.

The very large number of recreational fishers all catching 'a feed for their family' results in significant recreational take. For example, the commercial catch of flathead in Tasmania during 2012/13 was approximately 6 tonnes while the estimated recreational catch of sand flathead in the same period was approximately 210 tonnes. This recreational take must not only be properly documented and monitored, but the total take of fish must be shared equitably with commercial operations. Unfortunately, the current reality faced by commercial operators is it is far easier for governments to control commercial fishing effort, because it is very hard to monitor and control recreational effort. Furthermore, there are far more votes within the recreational sector compared to the commercial sector.

It is such difficulties which in recent years has led to politicians being prepared to throw robust fisheries science and fisheries policy out the window, in order to remove sustainable commercial fishing effort to appease recreational and ENGO interests.

Examples are numerous and include:

- The unprecedented social media, recreational fisher and ENGO campaign against large freezer trawler operations in the small pelagic fishery resulted in the banning of 'supertrawlers' in Australian waters (see https://theconversation.com/au/topics/super-trawler for overview of stories).

- The removal of commercial netting effort within Port Phillip Bay to 'improve the recreational experience' (http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/fisheries/commercial-fishing/removal-of-net-fishing-from-port-phillip-bay).

Both decisions were made despite scientific evidence showing sustainability of the fish stocks and the commercial operations used to remove those stocks, and regulators following transparent and robust fisheries policy. Such political decision making processes have completely compromised Australia's world's best fisheries policy framework, which has seen the widespread recovery of fish stocks within Australian waters over the last 20 years.

How to measure and compare value

Each fishing sector use and / or place varying levels of importance on different metrics used to measure value.

The value of commercial fishing operations is based on Gross Value of Production or beach price. There is generally little to no value placed on collection of resource rents / royalties; provision of fish to those who cannot catch their own; production of new Australian dollars through export of product; and regional economic support through living in regional townships.

Recreational fisheries are often afforded a value based on the economic contribution to communities – equipment, fuel, food, and accommodation – and an 'enjoyment' value.

Weighting the relative importance and benefit of different values is intrinsically difficult, as each sector believes their values to be more important. Although there could be merit in developing an agreed standard for measuring the value and benefit of commercial, recreational and indigenous customary fishing practices for communities and economies, an agreed methodology would prove difficult.

Balancing competing interests

There are competing and conflicting interests between the commercial and recreational fishing sectors. Resolving this conflict has historically failed, with both sectors believing they have sole rights to access fish resources. Despite mechanisms joint discussion are in place, their success is varied, and ultimately, it is Ministerial decision making that creates a solution for better or worse. In most instances, one or both sectors feel like the victim.

Although improved and continual cooperation and effective dialogue between all fisheries stakeholders will over time improve the understanding of each sectors interests and values, it is inevitable that a small but probably vocal few will never accept commercial fishing operations.

It is vital that Governments and Ministers place their full faith and support in Australian fisheries policy when making decisions concerning our marine resources, even in the face of political loss (or gain). It is only with a scientific foundation, and robust fisheries policy and decision making processes that we will continue to see long term sustainability of our marine resources and continued fair and equitable allocation and access for all sectors.

Commercial Fishing

The Cost of regulation

Commercial fishers access a shared community resource, which is managed for the benefit of all. As such, the management of our marine resources requires a level of robustness, transparency and inclusiveness, which ultimately results in costly and time consuming regulatory decision making processes.

The higher the level of public scrutiny towards a particular fishery or fishing practice, the higher the regulatory burden and regulatory cost. In extreme cases, robust and transparent decision making processes have been overridden by political decision making. Such situations costs businesses time and money, while the unjustified overriding of sound fisheries policy also devalues fishing licences because of actual or perceived diminished access and allocation rights.

Within the Tasmanian jurisdiction at least, the cost of managing lower value fisheries is disproportionately high. This issue is particularly relevant to fisheries subjected to annual closures and/or setting of low TACs, because there is still a base level of management and associated cost required. For example, a Tasmanian scallop fisher recently revealed that, averaged over the last 5 years, the management costs associated with this fishery were >40% of his GVP. When taking into account other costs of operation (fuel, salary, food etc.) net profit over the last 5 years has essentially been $0 (Stuart Richey pers. comms.).

With increasing and conflicting values and interests of various marine stakeholders, many commercial fisheries are being subjected to more and more complex rules and regulations. While the commercial fishing industry is supportive of robust regulation that ensure long term sustainability of fish stocks and the broader marine environment, increased regulatory burden is bringing with it an increased cost of operation, decreased capacity to operate and uncertainty around most current rules and regulations.

In many instances, new or changed regulation is implemented to control or catch a lowest common denominator within a fishery (i.e. those operating illegally). Such ideology treats

all commercial fishers as criminals until they prove themselves innocent, and subjects all operators to complex regulatory arrangements. For example, operators are often not allowed to transit closed zones back to their home port with fish on board. Although technology, such as VMS, GPS loggers and phone reporting could resolve such issues, regulatory bodies often don't have the capacity or appetite to implement such technologies or systems.

It must be acknowledged that finding the balance between catching illegal fishers, while at the same time giving the honest fishers a fair go is a very difficult task. However, we do not want to see commercial fishers lose their livelihood because of an honest mistake, related to over burdensome, unnecessary and sometimes archaic regulation.

Use of Input controls

Input controls are very important tools for constraining fishing effort, and in turn controlling the abundance of fish removed from the available stock. Input controls are very important for fisheries with no output controls; as well as for recreational fisheries where control over the amount of fish taken from a stock is intrinsically difficult to control and / or implement.

Input controls by nature impact the economic efficiency of fishing operations. It could be argued that for fisheries with robust output controls (i.e. Total Allowable Catches), there is no need to further reduce economic efficiency through the use of input controls.

Input controls may have an important role in controlling industry structure, including the number of participants in a fishing fleet. However, such values are generally poorly defined within fisheries policy, with greater focus on economic efficiency.

Investment in the fishing industry

There are many aspects of regulation and regulatory decision making processes that influence investment in the fishing industry.

The complexity of regulation is often a deterrent to new entrants in the industry. The diverse and consistently shifting range of Fisheries Rules, Management Plans, vessel requirements and technology make compliance very difficult. You almost need a university degree to deal with the rules, regulation and paperwork that must be submitted in order to be compliant with fisheries regulation.

Lack of (or at least perceived lack of) permanent resource allocation and access arrangements, combined with the increasing trend for political intervention to robust fisheries policy and decision making, is also a significant deterrent to investment in many fisheries. Scientifically supported decisions that fall in line with fisheries policy and decision making processes must be adhered to.

Future challenges and opportunities

The Tasmanian and Australian seafood industries are currently facing significant challenges. Key challenges include:

- *Community acceptance* – ENGOs have increased their time and effort towards campaigns that suggest poor management of our marine resources and widespread decline of fish resources in our oceans. These campaigns tend to be based on patterns or happenings in areas / countries with little to no regulation of their fish resources. The sale of one line rhetoric through social media platforms has far greater uptake within the broader community than the 'sale' of reams and reams of scientific reports and papers that support a sustainable Australian seafood industry. As an industry we must become more proactive in promoting our world's best, sustainable practices.

- *Resource allocation and access* – Recent precedents of political intervention overriding robust science and sound fisheries policy and decision making poses a significant threat to commercial seafood operations.

- *Increasing cost of operation* –the costs associated with all aspects of the fishing industry, from financing management and science through to operational costs, are continually increasing, often disproportionately to the value of a fishery.

- *Cheap imported seafood* – The higher sustainability, food safety and ethical standards within the Australian seafood industry should be celebrated. But instead, the perceived high cost of local seafood compared to the low cost of sometimes unsustainable and unethical imported seafood is regularly questioned. TSIC would suggest that people should not ask why the cost of local seafood is so high, but instead ask why the cost of imported seafood is so low!

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities to increase productivity and value of our fisheries. Growth in productivity and harvest will, however, be reliant on support from our regulatory agencies and political decision makers. Opportunities include:

- Streamlining regulatory burden (red and green tape) both within and between different jurisdictions.

- Increasing demand from SE Asia – has bought with it elevated prices for high value products. There is an opportunity to export lower value species into these lucrative markets. Capacity to achieve this is heightened through Free Trade Agreements.

- Selling / telling our sustainable story – with the advent of social media platforms, and a general public who want confidence that the food they are consuming is both sustainable and ethically produced, there is a huge opportunity to sell our positive seafood story and in turn fetch top prices for our seafood product.

Overcapitalisation

The main overcapitalisation issue within Tasmania would be the advent of quota fisheries, which has bought with it a separation between investors and fishers. The capital required to become an owner/operator in many fisheries is restrictive, and has led to an increase in the number of lease fishers, who catch fish on behalf of the investor. Declining TACs in some fisheries, coupled with no decline in the number of operators has resulted in a reduction in catch of many operators and associated reductions in financial return. Furthermore, investors continually want increased returns on their investment. Combined with demand for quota, lease price within some fisheries is high relative to the beach price. There will be a point where some lease fisher operations become so marginal they will be forced out of the industry.

Harvest strategies and sustainability

Harvest strategies have, in general, been a very effective tool for the sustainable management of our fisheries. Pre-defined rules for monitoring and assessing stocks, combined with reference points for sustainable stocks allow the implementation of control measures that ensure sustainability.

In general, defined rules detailed within harvest strategies provide industry a level of certainty around allocation and access to a fish resource, which in turn improves business capacity to balance investment with financial risk. However, recent politically motivated decisions have overridden fisheries policy and diminished access and allocation certainty.

Harvest strategies are not without their costs, with the need for significant scientific input and increasingly burdensome regulation increasing management costs.

Managing bycatch interactions

Fisheries management regimes have a focus on reducing interactions with bycatch and discard species. Furthermore, it is not in the interest of fishers to catch unwanted species as it takes time and effort to dispose unwanted catch.

Under current fisheries management regimes, consultation between science, management, fishers and other stakeholders aims to mitigate bycatch interactions. Furthermore, many fisheries have bycatch action plans and / or codes of practice that address bycatch.

When levels of interaction with bycatch, discard, TEPS becomes unacceptable, the fisheries management process will require solutions, or otherwise a fishery may be shut down (i.e. South Australian shark fishery).

Innovation and productivity improvement

The key influences and barriers to innovation and productivity improvement in commercial sector are:

- *Time delays in regulatory approval processes.* For any change from the 'norm' there is a requirement for diverse consultation with interested stakeholders and the wider community. In many instances the time delay is a deterrent for many fishers to continue.

- *Political intervention* – There are increasing examples of politics overriding sound and sustainable fisheries policy process and procedure. This not only interferes with commercial fishing operations, but also devalues commercial access and allocation rights.

- *Cost of research* – change and innovation generally requires scientific evidence, usually at a cost to industry or a cost to other research priorities being funded.

- *Costs of regulatory compliance* – There appears to be a growing trend in Tasmania for any innovative or productivity improvement for significant and burdensome regulatory compliance mechanisms to be implemented.

- *Other marine stakeholders* – ENGOs and recreational fishers are increasingly becoming involved in commercial fishing industry management and operations

Recreational fishing

Management controls such as bag limits, size limits and seasonal closures are not always effective tools for management of recreational fisheries. The sheer volume of recreational participants, and the capacity for recreational fishers to rapidly respond to available fish stocks are what makes controlling recreational take difficult.

The Tasmanian rock lobster east coast stock rebuilding strategy highlights the difficulties associated with managing recreational fisheries. This 10 year strategy aims to rebuild lobster stocks on Tasmania's east coast by limiting the amount of lobsters harvested each year. The commercial catch is constrained using an east coast catch cap, which is monitored under a Quota Management System. The preliminary control on recreational catch was a reduction in the daily bag limit from 5 to 3. As stocks rebuilt, the recreational catch increased above their resource allocation limit. In response, bag limits were decreased to 2 per day. As stocks continue to rebuild on the east coast, it is projected that the recreational take will continue to increase, even with the 2 per day limit. Subsequently, further alternative mechanisms to constrain recreational catch must be implemented to ensure the 10 year rebuilding strategy is outcomes are maximised.

Illegal fishing activities

The scale and scope of illegal fishing is essentially unknown in Tasmania, however, there is significant commercial scale illegal take of some higher value species, especially abalone, by recreational and commercial anglers. There is also wide scale illegal take of undersize and/or too many fish by recreational anglers.

Enforcement agencies require robust regulation in order to catch illegal operations. Any loophole within regulation may result in no prosecution. Therefore, regulation may ultimately be a burden on honest fishers, as it needs to be in place to catch illegal fishers.

There are also issues around enforcement capacity across different jurisdictions. For example, the inability for Victoria police to enforce Tasmanian law, and for Tasmanian police to enforce Tasmanian law while in Victoria has resulted a ban on operators unloading Tasmanian quota managed species within Victoria. This is a significant burden on honest operators, but a significant loophole that allowed significant illegal operations.

3 The management of fisheries

Multi-jurisdictional governance

Robust fisheries policy under threat?

Australian fisheries management regulation is widely accepted as being amongst the best in the world. Over the last 20 years, our fisheries policy has seen widespread rebuilding of fish stocks. Despite this success, Australian fisheries policy is currently under significant threat from an increasing number of examples where political intervention has overridden sound fisheries policy and robust scientific support. Such decisions diminish commercial access and allocation rights, threaten the world leading fisheries policy that is credited with rebuilding our fish stocks and creates uncertainty and confusion with respect to fisheries decision making process and procedure.

Australian governments and the general public must have faith in the robust fisheries management systems in place within Australia. Robust science and clear and transparent decision making processes will ensure long term sustainability of our marine resources.

Cross jurisdictional overlap

There are many examples where cross jurisdictional regulatory overlap results in duplication and/or conflict. This paper will deal with four examples:

SE Scallop Fisheries – There are three scallop fisheries targeting commercial scallops in the SE of Australia - Tasmania, Central Bass Strait and Victoria. These three jurisdictions are separated by lines on the water, which bear no relevance to population structure or available stocks. Decisions and management rules in one jurisdiction take no account of decisions and rules in another jurisdiction. Furthermore, there is triplication of management and research across each jurisdiction. A streamlining of management across the three jurisdictions would greatly decrease management costs.

SE southern rock lobster fisheries – There are three key southern rock lobster fisheries in SE Australia – Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria. Population structure and source / sink patterns of recruitment across the entire range of the fishery is relatively unknown. With lobster larvae having a long pelagic larval stage, there is capacity for decisions in one jurisdiction to impact recruitment in another. The Tasmanian harvest strategy takes into account minimum egg production as a safeguard to maximise recruitment within the fishery. Such considerations, however, are not taken into account with in the SA or Victorian management framework. Could low egg production in SA be impacting recruitment in Tasmania? Is there scope for greater standardisation of management techniques and decision making rules for stocks that span multiple jurisdictions?

Striped Trumpeter – Striped trumpeter is a migratory species, which enters shallower water to spawn. There are two jurisdictions for striped trumpeter around Tasmania – the state fishery and a commonwealth fishery. Tasmania has implemented size limits and spawning closures to protect stocks, however, commonwealth fishers are not bound to follow these regulations, even though they are targeting the same stock. Again, should there be greater harmonisation of management input controls that protect spawning / recruitment dynamics, improve available stocks and ultimately improve catch rates and returns to commercial fishers?

Recreational fishery catches – Within Tasmania, there needs to be improved data collection and monitoring of recreational fisher numbers and catches. Implementation of a basic recreational licence would provide far greater insight into the numbers of recreational fishers. The more frequent collection of recreational catch data through phone and logbook surveys will provide more up-to-date information about recreational catch. Such information will greatly improve stock assessments and long term sustainability of fish stocks.

Management and Governance Models

Co-management

The concept of co-management as a mechanism for shared decision making responsibilities between the regulator and industry is a concept supported by industry. The ultimate model would be to devolve some decision making powers to industry, under the authority of agreed decision making strategy. The regulator would take an auditing role within the management process. Such a management structure would take considerable trust between the regulator, industry, interested stakeholders and the broader community.

Private accreditation schemes

Private sector accreditations and certifications ultimately evaluate government regulation and sector / business practices to assess the overall sustainability of a fishery / business. In some instances, a third party accreditation will require higher environmental standards than those bound in regulation.

Any alignment of fisheries regulatory power with third party accreditation schemes is not justified and would simply open the door for ENGOs and often uneducated social interest groups to have greater power over the operations of the fishing industry through third party accreditation requirements. Such a scenario would most likely create increased regulatory burden on Australian fisheries. Furthermore, independent accreditation is an expensive process, with costs being unregulated.

Should government managed regulation not meeting public sustainability standards, it is TSICs view that the regulation should change to accommodate changing/changed values and the decision to be compliant with costly third part accreditation schemes should remain a marketing, market access or community acceptance decision for individual business or fishing sectors.

4 Meeting environmental objectives

The precautionary principle

Conceptually, the Precautionary Principle is clearly defined; however, in practice, the principle can be used to support overly conservative decision making and often inaction, depending on the political environment and environmental side of the fence decision makers sit on.

Rules around the use and application of the precautionary principle need to be far better defined to ensure regulatory decision making processes are based on best available science and fisheries policy.

Marine Parks

It is TSICs view that the only 'perceived' threat that marine parks provide protection against is fishing effort. All other threats to the marine environment (climate change, oil spills etc.) can simply cross the boundary of a marine park.

Australia's well managed fisheries, however, are not a threat. Through tighter controls on catch and effort, Australia's fish stocks have rebuilt to sustainable levels. So what is the actual value and benefits of MPAs and what are they actually protecting?

TSIC would suggest the Commission watch the documentary 'Drawing the Line' to gain a better understanding of the Marine Parks and fishing industry issue/s (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDMy88RqsDY).

5 Regulation of aquaculture

In relation to regulation of aquaculture TSIC supports the submission of the National Aquaculture Council.

6. Fish processing, wholesale and retail

Seafood processing, wholesale and retail outlets handling locally produced seafood are forced to meet stringent food safety and handling requirements which ultimately increase the price of seafood. In many instances, there is considerable regulatory and cost overlap between different jurisdictional requirements, with some requirements overlapping local, state and federal regulatory requirements. In such circumstances, compliance with the highest level of regulation should automatically fulfil lower jurisdictional requirements.

The high level of food safety and handling scrutiny placed on domestic seafood producer's places businesses at an economic disadvantage relative to cheaper imported products, whose producers are not bound by the same level of environmental, ethical or food safety requirements.

With respect to cooked seafood purchased at food service outlets, there is no requirements for country of origin labelling. The interchangeable use of common fish names means that consumers are not aware of whether their seafood is imported or local. For example, flathead served in Tasmanian restaurants or cafes could be locally caught tiger or sand flathead or imported flathead (actually not flathead) from Argentina.