



## NATIONAL SEAFOOD INDUSTRY ALLIANCE INCORPORATED

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3 May 2016

Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra ACT 2601  
[fisheries.inquiry@pc.gov.au](mailto:fisheries.inquiry@pc.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

### RE: Inquiry into the Regulation of Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors

The National Seafood Industry Alliance Inc (NSIA) brings together jurisdictional and sectoral peak bodies of the commercial wild-catch and aquaculture sectors of the seafood industry to provide national representation to the Australian federal government.

Seafood consumption continues to grow both nationally and internationally. Australia is well placed to meet this challenge and opportunity.

Current governance and management frameworks have evolved out of a growing international concern for the depletion of commercially valuable fish stocks. Today management is predominantly focused on biological sustainability often at the expense of current social and economic issues. Australia's fisheries are managed against a range of international agreements and frameworks such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing and the National Strategy for Ecological Development. At the core of these strategies and agreements is the principle of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

The fundamental of ESD is often overlooked by fisheries and other natural resource managers who focus solely on the resource rather than the broader responsibilities of the Principles of ESD. This is summarised well in the quote below:

***"It is however, important to remember that sustainable development is a three legged stool embodying environmental, economic and social sustainability: dangers arise when one of these legs is weakened by neglect."***<sup>1</sup>

Australia's goal, core objectives and guiding principles for the Strategy, are:

Goal:

Development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

<sup>1</sup> Whatever became of social objectives in fisheries policy. Symes, D and Phillipson, J, 2008

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#### Core Objectives:

- to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations
- to provide for equity within and between generations
- to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems

#### Guiding Principles:

- decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations
- where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered
- the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised
- the need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised
- cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms
- decisions and actions should take into consideration community values and expectations on issues which affect them

These guiding principles and core objectives need to be considered as a package. No objective or principle should predominate over the others. A balanced approach is required that takes into account all these objectives and principles to pursue the goal of ESD.

Australia is recognised as a leader in science and fisheries management, yet despite this our fisheries are often over managed and driven only by a belief in resource sustainability, at some inexplicit level, rather than managing to maximise both the resource and the economic efficiency of the industry and the social structures it supports. This would require the adoption of an approach consistent with the fisheries management maxim of Maximum Economic Yield (MEY).

The failure by governments across Australia to acknowledge the broader social and economic values from well managed fisheries has led to the position that Australia's seafood industry is suffering from a lack of social licence to operate and an erosion of access security; both of which are necessary to underpin growth and investment across the industry.

#### **Solution**

Industry seeks overarching governance arrangements that are transparent, independent and informed by management policy that is flexible and efficient to ensure that industry and businesses are biologically, economically and socially sustainable in order to meet the obligations under the above strategy for ESD.

Achieving social licence for industry and improving certainty for seafood businesses through clearly defined shares and certainty over management processes and decisions will drive investment, innovation and growth required to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

We have untapped or underutilised resources but are constrained in our ability to develop them and so enhance the certainty over food security for Australians and provided for increased economic contributions by this sector of our primary industries.

Commercial fishers and aquaculturists need the same certainty provided to terrestrial farmers and other primary producers to enable them to innovate and invest in productivity improvements and improved market development.

Kind Regards

Katherine Winchester  
Chair  
National Seafood Industry Alliance Inc.