

Commission meeting

The Commission convened for its 90th meeting in Port Lincoln, South Australia on 13-14 September 2023.

Stakeholder Engagement*Written updates*

The Commission considered and discussed the written industry update reports from the Northern Prawn Fishery Industry, the Scallop Fishermen's Association of Tasmania Inc., the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association, Tuna Australia, the South East Trawl Fishery Industry Association, the Southern Shark Industry Association and the Great Australian Bight Industry Association. The Commission again emphasised its appreciation of, and the value it places on, these regular reports from industry associations. The Commission identified specific items from some of the written reports that will require additional consideration prior to AFMA responding.

Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association (ASBTIA)

The Commission met with representatives of the SBT catching and farming sectors, as well as a representative of the South Australian Sardine Industry Association. Key issues raised in the discussion included the generally positive outlook for the global SBT stock thanks to significant total allowable catch (TAC) reductions in the past, and the successful application of the Management Procedure. AFMA committed to continuing working with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), ASBTIA and other Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) members to ensure a positive outcome from the October CCSBT meeting.

Domestically, the discussion highlighted several concerns that are combining to increase pressure and uncertainty on the fishery, including crew and farm labour availability and capacity, especially with revised safety and certification regulations being considered, competition for marine space ("spatial squeeze"), the impact of climate change on the marine environment, international pressures within CCSBT and the need for a strategic vision for the seafood industry.

Great Australian Bight Industry Association (GABIA)

GABIA representatives met with the Commission and engaged in similar discussions to those outlined for ASBTIA above. In particular, GABIA strongly supported the need for a strategic plan around the future of the wild catch sector, particularly focused on fleet and shore-based infrastructure investment to deliver a sustainable and viable commercial fishery that meets expectations such as decarbonisation.

While noting that several of the issues raised by both ASBTIA and GABIA are beyond AFMA's remit, the Commission assured GABIA representatives that AFMA continues to play an active role in whole of government discussions and is committed to keeping its own regulatory posture under continual review to ensure fisheries sustainability objectives are met, but without unnecessary efficiency losses.

Seafood Industry Australia (SIA)

The Commission received a presentation from SIA on the *Futures of Seafood Project*, which aims to provide analytical assessment of many of the issues discussed with ASBTIA and GABIA and raised in the written briefs from other industry stakeholders. Commissioners were supportive of the project, and particularly its potential to provide decision support tools for marine spatial planning and the implications for fisheries management. AFMA will be supporting the project through data provision and is also interested in sharing some analytical products already developed.

Review of AFMA Consultative Structures (MACs and RAGs)

The Commission considered AFMA Management's initial response plan to the MAC and RAG review that was presented at its July meeting by the consultants who conducted the review. The Commission reiterated its view that the report highlights a well-performing consultative structure, that with some immediate adjustment actions would result in improvements to certainty, consistency, and efficiency of the process. Longer-term actions are being explored that will require further consideration by the Commission on implementation, costs and management. The Commission approved the proposed implementation workplan, subject to some suggested amendments. The workplan will be disseminated to MAC and RAG Chairs and industry representative bodies, as well as being discussed at next month's Commonwealth Fisheries Association Roundtable.

The Commission also continued discussions on how best to engage with recreational and indigenous fishing interests. The Commission noted that the AFMA *Indigenous Fishing Engagement Strategy Project* is progressing and is expected to provide better guidance on how AFMA can identify and take into account indigenous fisheries interests.

Similarly, the Commission noted and supported a proposal to seek semi-regular meetings with the board of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation as a way of better engaging recreational interests in AFMA fisheries.

Climate change, data, stock assessment and harvest strategies

Following from decisions taken at its previous meetings, the Commission reviewed plans for three upcoming AFMA workshops in September and October 2023 on:

- *Implication of climate change on harvest strategies – experiences from around the world*: the Commission highlighted the importance of sharing international experience to ensure that Australian fisheries science and management continues to evolve to account for climate-driven impacts more explicitly.
- *Climate Risk workshop*: at its July 2023 meeting, the Commission supported development of an interim Climate Risk Impact Framework to increase the prominence of climate change impacts in management decisions. The Commission noted the work that has been undertaken on the Framework to date and welcomed the upcoming workshop to finalise it. The intention is that the Framework will provide guidance to RAGs, MACs and the Commission on when decision making should be modified to account for climate change while technical work progresses to include climate change in stock assessments and/or harvest strategies on a more quantitative basis (including through the international workshop above).
- *Transition to multi-species harvest strategies (SESSF)*: The Commission continued its support for the need to move away from single species management in order to achieve ecosystem outcomes and dedicate available resources into key species assessments without imposing inappropriate risks to others. The Commission supported a workshop to begin operationalising a multi-species framework for the SESSF.

Meeting with Minister

The Commission appreciated the opportunity to meet with Senator, the Honourable Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Discussions with the Minister were free flowing, but generally included the issues raised above in discussions with ASBTIA, GABIA and SIA. The Minister expressed his understanding of these issues and assured the Commission of his commitment to ensuring that the interests of the fishing industry are adequately recognised in government discussions and cross-over whole-of-government programs such as the National Sustainable Oceans Plan.

AFMA Chair's Summary – 90th meeting

Commission transparency and communication

The Commission reviewed its current practices for receiving information from and providing feedback to key stakeholders. The Commission agreed to strengthen its communication by increasing the speed of publication of Chair's Summaries, offering opportunities for key stakeholders to receive additional information on key decisions after each meeting, and better formalising correspondence to respond to specific issues raised in each meeting.

Next meeting of the AFMA Commission

The Commission agreed to hold the next meeting (08-09 November 2023) in Canberra.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Kroger', is positioned above the printed name.

Helen Kroger

Chair