

Commission meeting

The Commission convened for its 88th meeting in Canberra, ACT on 10-11 May 2023.

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)

The Commission met with senior representatives from DAFF, including the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resources Science (ABARES). The discussion was an opportunity to share perspectives about Government and Ministerial priorities, outlook for the fishing industry, interactions with other marine uses/stakeholders and the ongoing reviews of key Commonwealth policies (harvest strategies and bycatch).

The Commission noted with appreciation the excellent working relationship between AFMA Management and DAFF and encouraged continuation of open dialogue. The Commission encouraged both parties to work together to ensure that fisheries issues are well understood and accounted for in overlapping government processes such as marine park and offshore wind planning.

“Spatial Squeeze”

The Commission received a comprehensive presentation highlighting the various avenues for competition for the marine estate that the fishing industry is dealing with. As well as demonstrating the spatial extent of potential access restrictions, the Commission gained an appreciation of the workload that industry associations and participants face in the consultation processed being undertaken by several government departments as well as numerous individual proponents.

The Commission noted that AFMA Management has substantially increased its direct engagement with other agencies and proponents, but that this comes at a cost to other business, as also reported by industry. The Commission encouraged a continuation of the increased engagement, and also noted that there is a role for AFMA to review its regulatory posture in the face of decreased fishing footprint and associated risk if and when they eventuate.

The Commission noted that AFMA Management would be presenting the same information to the Minister.

Climate change adaptation

The Commission noted the positive update from AFMA Management that the roll-out of the climate adaptation program initiated in 2022 has been almost universally positively received in RAGs and MACs. The Commission reviewed a proposal to further develop the program by developing a framework that integrates climate impacts and risk in the TAC setting process. This would involve a more consistent (between RAGs and MACs) process to incorporate understandings of climate sensitivities amongst stocks and consider a uniform set of decision rules that could contribute to decision making.

The Commission supported the proposal and looked forward to considering it in greater detail in future meetings. In doing so, the Commission noted:

- a. While this type of framework would be a welcome evolution to progress made in the last 12 months that incorporates climate and ecosystem report cards and information on climate sensitivity into the advice available to the Commission, it should only be viewed as an interim measure. Focus should continue to be placed on how to integrate climate signals into stock assessment, ecosystem modelling and Management Strategy Evaluation work at the ground level. Independent and international expert advice will be needed to achieve that.
- b. Development of the framework would need to be executed in conjunction with other work such as the development of a multi-species harvest strategy.
- c. Development of the framework should target SESSF TAC setting in March 2024 for initial application.

AFMA Chairman's Summary – 88th meeting
Fisheries Management Paper (FMP) on Co-management

The Commission approved FMP17 on Co-management, noting that it had been consulted with industry and publicly and considered by the Commission on several occasions. The Commission noted that there is still a difference in perspective on what the FMP could have focused on between the final version and the comments received from the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA). The CFA comments suggested broadening the scope of the paper to describe and support the full spectrum of AFMA's collaborative engagement with stakeholders, whereas the FMP remains tightly focused on implementing the section of the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* that enables delegated co-management.

The Commission was clear in adopting the FMP that the tight focus in no way diminishes the need for, value of, or commitment to AFMA's existing approaches.

Western Trawl Fishery (WTF) Harvest Strategy

The Commission approved the revised harvest strategy for the WTF. Noting the limited information available due to low levels of catch and effort, the Commission appreciated the level of analysis and assessment that had been produced to support the revised harvest strategy.

Other matters

The Commission:

- a. Noted that this would be My Angus Tye's final meeting in the role of acting Chief Operating Officer and thanked and congratulated him for ably filling the role over the previous 12 months.
- b. Noted the impending retirement of Mr Matt Daniel, and the very strong endorsements expressed by the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Association and Tuna Australia for his work. The Commission echoed this praise and wished Mr Daniel well in his retirement.
- c. Considered and approved AFMA's Corporate Plan for 2023-26.
- d. Met with the review team conducting the independent review of MACs and RAGs
- e. Received an update on the potential implications of the south east trawl buyback, noting that incomplete information was available at the time.

The Commission extends its thanks and appreciation to all industry participants, as well as members and contributors to all MACs and RAGs that help inform its decisions.

The Commission agreed to hold the next meeting (5-6 July) in Fremantle, WA which provides an opportunity to engage with stakeholders in Western Australia.



Helen Kroger

Chairman