

FRDC 2018/150: Hayley Abbott–People Development Award

**Attending the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries
Commission Meeting 15 Honolulu, Hawaii, USA 9–16
December 2018**



Ms Hayley Abbott

February 2019

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In submitting this report, the researcher has agreed to FRDC publishing this material in its edited form.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the FRDC for enabling me to attend the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Meeting 15 Honolulu, Hawaii, USA 9–16 December 2018.

Executive Summary

This report is an overview of my attendance at the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Meeting 15 Honolulu, Hawaii, USA 9–16 December 2018 which was made possible through a FRDC Development Award. The report includes information on: (i) what issues were discussed at the meeting, (ii) key learnings; (iii) any networks made, (iv) how might you use any learnings in your career and (v) any opportunities for knowledge transfer and R&D adaption for the ETBF fishery. The report was circulated to Australian Tuna fishers via David Ellis and a Power Point was prepared for presentation at COMRAC as a communication and extension component of this development award.

Keywords: Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Meeting; WCPFC, Australian Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery.

Introduction

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) was established on the 19th of June 2004, as a result of the need for conservation and management of the highly migratory fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The area covers almost 20 percent of the Earth's surface and is made up of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of water bordering countries including high seas pockets between countries. The role of the WCPFC is to consider requirements of the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) and its Convention¹ while meeting the needs of the fishery. This is achieved through collaborations between political, environmental, geographical and cultural traditions depending on this resource.

The commission is made up of members, participating territories and cooperating non-members. These parties are supported by three subsidiary bodies; the Scientific Committee, Technical and Compliance Committee and the Northern Committee. These bodies meet independently throughout the year and are assisted by a Finance and Administration Committee (<https://www.wcpfc.int/about-wcpfc> - viewed 14th December 2018)

The WCPFC meetings are led by Madam Chair Rhea Moss-Christian. The WCPFC uses a consensus-based decision making as per their rules and procedures. This is used to encourage countries to develop, negotiate, agree and support proposals brought up as discussion items at meetings. Although at times proposals and outcomes may adversely impact individual members. According to the guidelines, if all efforts to come to a mutual agreement have been exhausted, they can proceed to a vote. On a matter of substance (such as a CMM) a decision can be taken by a three-fourths majority of those present and voting provided that the majority includes a three quarter majority in both "chambers" – FFA members voting and present and non FFA members voting and present; and provided that a proposal is not defeated by two or fewer votes in either chamber. If the voting threshold is not achieved, then the vote does not pass. Decisions on matters such as the budget and allocation must be made by consensus².

¹ *Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean*, available at <https://www.wcpfc.int/doc/convention-conservation-and-management-highly-migratory-fish-stocks-western-and-central-pacific>

² The Commission's decision-making procedures are outlined in Article 20 of the Convention.



Figure 1 WCPFC Logo

Objective

The objective of this award was to attend the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Meeting 15 Honolulu, Hawaii, USA 9–16 December 2018 as a development opportunity.

As part of this development award, the following conditions were agreed to:

- Provide a final report on the meeting including: (i) what issues were discussed; (ii) key learnings; (iii) any networks made; (iv) how might you use any learnings in your career; and (v) any opportunities for knowledge transfer and R&D adoption for the ETBF fishery.
- Present this report as a Power Point to COMRAC at the next Committee meeting on 21 March 2019 to further develop your presentation skills.

Method

The following steps were undertaken as part of this development awards:

- (1) Arrange permission to be part of the Australian Delegation with help from Dr Ian Cartwright.
- (2) Attend the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Meeting 15 Honolulu, Hawaii, USA 9–16 December 2018 and learn from this opportunity, including to participate in and observe the deliberations of the Australian Government.
- (3) Compile a final report on the meeting including information on the following: (i) what issues were discussed, (ii) key learnings; (iii) any networks made; (iv) how might you use any learnings in your career; and (v) any opportunities for knowledge transfer and R&D adoption for the ETBF fishery.
- (4) Present this report as a Power Point to COMRAC at the next Committee meeting on 21 March 2019 to further develop your presentation skills.

Specifically, this opportunity will enable me to understand how the WCPFC meetings are structured, and why this structure is necessary to create a productive environment for discussion and decision making. Furthermore, I will be able to learn about the various Conservation and Management Measures (CMM) currently applied by the WCPFC and how these relate to the Australian Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF); build my professional networks; and apply knowledge/skills learnt to my business, the ETBF industry, and boards and committees that I am a member of.

Results

WCPFC Meeting Structure

The WCPFC is made up of twenty six member countries, seven participating territories and seven cooperative non-members. The delegation size of the members and territories ranges from two up to eighty representatives per country, and is held over seven days. The meeting room is set out in a rectangular manner as to allow two representatives from each country and territory to sit at the main table for discussion. Additional delegates are seated behind the head of delegations to assist during discussions and are connected through group Skype. There is an overflow observer area towards the back of the hall for additional delegates and observers from environmental groups. An agenda and all relevant papers are available prior to the meeting to allow adequate time for countries to prepare for the meeting. (<https://www.wcpfc.int/about-wcpfc>, 14 December 2018).



Figure 2 Conference Room at the Hawaii Convention Centre, Honolulu.

To achieve a measure that is binding requires a meeting process where there are small working groups (often more than 150 people) that will robustly discuss proposals. This is often a very long and tedious negotiation process extending over several days.

When an agreement has been reached and the commission has adopted the new measures, it expects all countries to adopt these policies in their fishing fleets. By using the consensus-based approach, it makes it very difficult for an individual member to refuse these policies without coming under political scrutiny and pressure from WCPFC members.

Role of the Chair

The Madam Chair Rhea Moss-Christian's role was to organise, manage, conduct and facilitate discussions between countries to achieve sound outcomes to meet the objectives of the WCPFC.

I was very impressed with how Madam Chair was able to achieve balance and harmony while achieving outcomes. The range of skills applied by Madam Chair to achieve outcomes included varying speaking tones, using pause and humour, and succinctly describing country positions when there are language barriers. She used positive body language which influenced the meeting into a constructive environment and defuses tense situations. This reinforced my belief that a good chair is essential for an efficient and effective meeting, regardless whether the meeting is a large member base such as the WCPFC, a FRDC meeting or an industry association.



Figure 3: Madam Chair Rhea Moss-Christian and Hayley Abbott

Issues discussed

Issues discussed ranged from membership of WCPFC, fishing access, cultural rights, environmental interactions, labour issues and stock management which had significant implications for many member and non-member countries. Discussions around Conservation and Management Measures (CMM) were of particular relevance and interest to me (see Table 1).

The Australian government provided me with briefing papers describing Australia's position in response to agenda items at WCPFC15. The briefing papers were very much appreciated as they allowed me to follow the meeting and understand Australia's position on key issues. Although there were many proposals discussed at the WCPFC15 I have selected a number to review:

1. Financial Administration Committee (FAC)
2. CMM and resolutions of the WCPFC
3. Tropical Tuna - Conservation and Management Measure for Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean
4. Albacore Target Reference Point

1. Financial Administration Committee (FAC)

The Financial Administration Committee is a subsidiary body of the WCPFC. Its role is to provide advice and recommendations to the commission on matters relating to budget, finance and administration of the commission.

In the lead up to WCPFC15 proposals, including research, were submitted for funding; requiring consideration by the FAC. The amount of money sought was \$300,000 and was directed at empowering and supporting Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to attend meetings, improving their skills to convey their country position at meeting with confidence, and negotiating outcomes to underpin development in their countries.

The amount sought for these initiatives was \$300,000. Interestingly, the WCPFC has a GVP of \$6 billion (Pers Comm SPC <https://www.spc.int/about-u>) of which SIDS receive a total income for fishing access of \$500 million. The increase to the budget represents an increase of levies to WCPFC of 0.005%. Despite this small financial contribution, the proposal did not pass initially. Although this proposal was approved the amount was reduced by 50%.

So why did a handful of countries not support this proposal.

I discussed this with many people at the meeting and it appears some larger countries are reluctant to allocate more of their budget towards this initiative as they believe there is a sufficient amount of money already allocated to SIDS through other avenues. I observed a difference in views between the

FFA and non-FFA chambers on this issue, and the importance of this issue to FFA members was clearly demonstrated.

2. CMM and resolutions of the WCPFC can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 List of current Conservation and Management Measures and Resolutions of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

Reference	Title	Discussed at WCPFC15
2004-03	Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels	✓
Res. 2004-04	Resolution on Conservation and Management Measures	✗
2005-03	Conservation and Management Measure for North Pacific Albacore	✓
Res. 2005-03	Resolution on Non-Target Fish Species	✗
2006-04	Conservation and Management Measure for Striped Marlin in the Southwest Pacific	✗
2006-07	Conservation and Management Measure for the Regional Observer Program	✗
2006-08	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Boarding and Inspection Procedures	✗
2007-01	Conservation and Management Measure for the Regional Observer Program	✗
2008-03	Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles	✓
Res. 2017-01	RESOLUTION ON THE PROVISIONAL APPLICATION OF CMM 2017-01	✗
2008-04	Conservation and Management Measure To Prohibit The Use Of Large Scale Driftnets On The High Seas In The Convention Area	✗
Res. 2008-01	Resolution on Aspirations of SIDS and Territories	✗
2009-02	Conservation and Management Measure on the Application of High Seas FAD Closures and Catch Retention	✗
2009-03	Conservation and Management Measure for Swordfish (<i>Replaced CMM 2008-05 and CMM 2006-03</i>)	✗
2009-05	Conservation and Management Measure Prohibiting Fishing on Data Buoys and Information Package on Data Buoys as at 18 May 2010	✗
2009-06	Conservation and Management Measure on the Regulation of Transshipment	✓
2009-09	Conservation and Management Measure for Vessels without nationality	✗
2009-10	Conservation and Management Measure to Monitor Landings of Purse Seine Vessels at Ports so as to ensure reliable catch data by species	✗
2009-11	Cooperating Non-Members	✗
2010-01	Conservation and Management Measure for North Pacific Striped Marlin	✗

2010-06	Conservation and Management Measure to Establish a List of Vessels Presumed to have carried out Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing activities in the WCPO (<i>Replaced CMM 2007-03</i>)	×
2010-07	Conservation and Management Measure for Sharks (<i>Replaced CMM 2009-04, which replaced CMM 2008-06 and CMM 2006- 05</i>)	✓
2011-03	Conservation and Management Measure to address impact of purse seine fishing activity on cetaceans	×
2011-04	Conservation and Management Measure for Oceanic Whitetip Sharks	×
2012-03	Conservation and Management Measure for implementation of the ROP by vessels fishing north of 20N	×
2012-04	Conservation and Management Measure on the protection of whale sharks from purse seine operations	×
Res. 2012-01	Resolution on the best available science	×
2013-04	Conservation and Management Measure for WCPFC Implementation of a Unique Vessel Identifier (UVI)	×
2013-05	Conservation and Management Measure on daily catch and effort reporting	×
2013-06	Conservation and Management Measure on the criteria for the consideration of conservation and management proposals	✓
2013-07	Conservation and Management Measure on the special requirements of Small Island Developing States and Territories	✓
2013-08	Conservation and Management Measure for Silky Sharks	✓
2014-02	Conservation and Management Measure Commission VMS (<i>Replaced CMM 2011-02 (2012-2014), which replaced CMM 2007-02 (2008 – 2011)</i>)	✓
2014-03	Standards, specifications and procedures for the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission Record of Fishing Vessels (<i>Replaced CMM 2013-03 (June 2014 – June 2015)</i>)	×
2014-05	Conservation and Management Measures for Sharks (<i>This CMM does not replace or prejudice any other existing shark CMM</i>)	✓
2014-06	Conservation and Management Measures to develop and implement a harvest strategy approach for key fisheries and stocks in the WCPO	✓
2015-02	Conservation and Management Measure for South Pacific Albacore <i>Replaced CMM 2010-05 (2015-2011), CMM 2005-02 (2006 - 2010)</i>	✓
2015-06	Conservation and Management Measure on target reference point for Skipjack Tuna	×
2016-02	Conservation and Management Measure for the Eastern High Seas Pocket Special Management Area <i>Replaced CMM 2010-02 (2011-2016)</i>	×

2016-05	Conservation and Management Measure for Charter Notification Scheme (<i>Replaced CMM 2015-05 (2016), CMM 2012-05 (2013- 2015), CMM 2011-05 (2012), which replaced CMM 09-08 (exp 31 Dec 2011)</i>)	×
Res. 2017-01	Resolution on Provisional Application of CMM 2017-01	×
2017-01	Conservation and Management Measure for Bigeye, Yellowfin and Skipjack Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (<i>Replaced CMM 2016-01 (2017), CMM 2015-01 (2016), CMM 2014-01 (2015), CMM 2013-01 (2014), CMM 2012-01 (2013), replaced CMM 2008-01/CMM 2011-01 (2009-2012), which replaced and CMM 2005-01, and CMM 2006-01.</i>)	✓
2017-02	Conservation and Management Measure on Minimum standards for Port State Measures	✓
2017-03	Conservation and Management Measure for the protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Program Observers (<i>Replaced CMM 2016-03 (2017)</i>)	×
2017-04	Conservation and Management Measure on Marine Pollution (effective 1 Jan 2019)	✓
2017-05	WCPFC Record of Fishing Vessels and Authorization to Fish (<i>Replaced CMM 2013-10, CMM 2004-01, and CMM 2009-01</i>)	✓
2017-06	Conservation and Management Measure for Mitigating Impacts of Fishing on Seabirds (<i>replaced CMM 2015-03 (effective 1 Jan 2017), and CMM 2012-07, which replaced CMM 2007-04 on 1 July 2014</i>)	✓
2017-07	Conservation and Management Measure on Compliance Monitoring Scheme (<i>Replaced CMM 2015-07 (2016), CMM 2014-07 (2015), CMM 2013-02 (2014), CMM 2010-03 (2011), CMM 11-06 (2012), CMM 12-02 (2013)</i>)	✓
2017-08	Conservation and Management Measure to establish a multi-annual rebuilding plan for Pacific Bluefin Tuna (<i>Replaced CMM 2016-04 (2017), CMM 2015-04 (2016), CMM 2014-04 (2015), CMM 2013-09 (2014), which replaced CMM 2012-06 (2013), which replaced CMM 2010-04, which replaced CMM 2009-07</i>)	✓

3. Tropical Tuna - Conservation and Management Measure for Skipjack, Bigeye and Yellowfin Tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

The tropical tuna conservation and management proposal has been the most contentious issue at WCPFC15. This measure determines access to Skipjack, Yellowfin and Bigeye Tuna resources, which are three of the main species of tuna that all members of the WCPFC depend on. These species are caught using many methods, however the two main forms of fishing in the region are:

- The Purse Seine Fishery targets Skipjack Tuna (and to a lesser extent yellowfin) – access is based on the allocation of days that can be fished during the year.
- The Longline Fishery that targets Bigeye Tuna and Yellowfin Tuna (and other species including billfish) and operates based on flag-based catch limits (for bigeye). Catch limits are determined from when the WCPFC first started. Figure 2 shows the tonnage of fish caught in relation to the catch effort since 1960.

Balancing the management restrictions between the purse seine and longline fisheries to effectively manage bigeye has been the key driver of negotiations on this measure since it was first implemented in 2005.

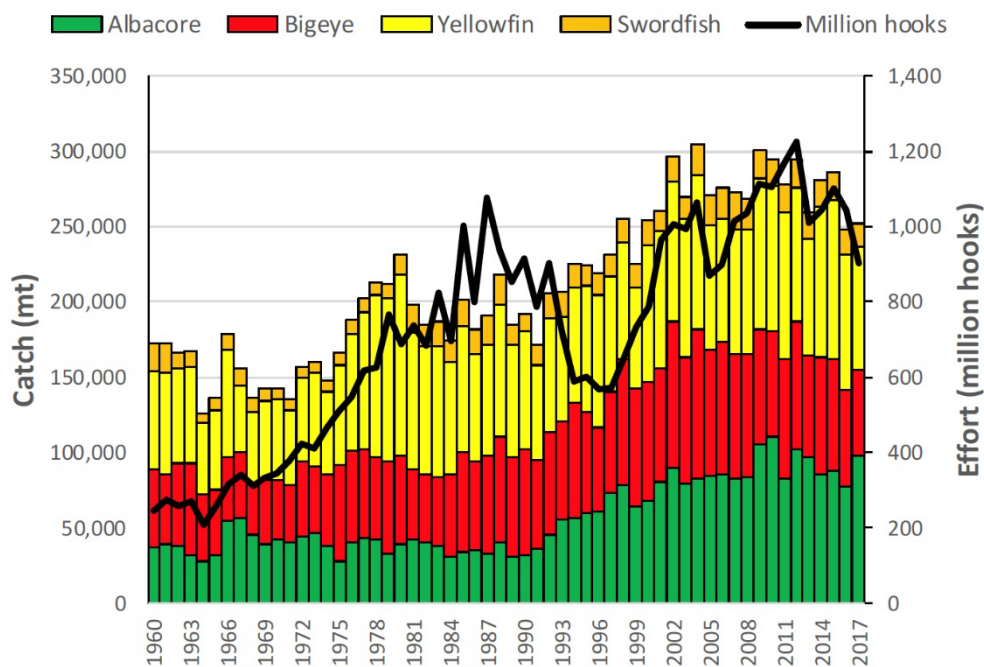


Table 4 Longline fishing effort in the WCPO for species and hooks used

Last year, negotiations on the tropical tuna measure went on into the early hours of the morning, which was largely due to the stock assessment showing Bigeye Tuna was in a better state (33% spawning biomass) and sustainable rather than earlier assessments. A small number of member Countries subsequently looked to gain a greater share of the resource rather than the previous conservative management measures when it was thought the fishery was in decline. As a result, Japan made a one off 500 tonne transfer of quota to China in order to implement a measure while more studies were conducted on Bigeye Tuna stocks.

This year the start of the week saw the USA take a strong stance to increase their Big Eye quota based on several points:

- They had taken significant extra efforts to control their longline fishery (via 100% monitoring and banning high seas transshipment) and should be rewarded for their effort. Emphasising the USA meets the WCPFC requirement of 5% observer coverage by a very large measure; they have a Catch Documentation for landings; and manage turtle interactions.
- Their ties with American Samoa (AS), who is experiencing an economic downturn, related to reduced catch processed through their canneries.

Negotiations shifted to small working groups to try and move through these issues with limited success. This forced the chair to have a closed meeting allowing only two delegates from every country to be present in the meeting (as described previously). This demonstrated the value of moving contentious discussions out of plenary or very large working groups – by moving to a smaller setting, the Chair was able to “take the temperature down” but also open delegations up to a more frank exchange.



Figure 5 The ‘Small’ Working Group of the Tropical Tuna Discussion

4. Albacore Target Reference Point

The implementation of the Albacore Target Reference Point (TRP) has been on the agenda for the past 3 WCPFC meetings. Over these years the commission has been unable to progress this agenda item under a harvest strategy as China has opposed the TRP.

I discussed this issue with many people present at the meeting. A consistent view was that China was resisting as they believed their future volumes in the Albacore fishery will be reduced for their heavily subsidised fishing fleet.

A TRP will ultimately result in a harvest strategy and sustainable catch determined to meet targets.

Although initially opposed to a TRP at the meeting, China finally agreed to a TRP of 56% of spawning stock biomass in the absence of fishing. This was a significant outcome as it recognises the importance of achieving long term regional economic security.

Networking

Attending WCPFC15 allowed to me to create valuable networks throughout the week. These contacts included members of industry, government, consultants and non-government organisations (NGO).

Table 2 Networking contact details

Industry	Background
Michael Goto	Hawaiian Longline Association, United Fishing Agency, Auction Manager
Nelson Aberilla	United Fishing Agency, HACCP Manager
Fred McGrew	IHU NUI Sportfishing
Jim Cook	Hawaiian Longline Association, Vessel owner, Restaurant owners, Gear Supplier
Amanda Hamilton	Tri Marine (Singapore)
Ricardo da Rosa	Boat Owner- Pacific Princess
Government	
John Kaneko, MS, DVM	Hawaii Seafood, NOAA
Russel Ito	Marine Biologist - NOAA
Laura Timmins	Acting Assistant Secretary Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Mathew Kertesz	Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

Kerrie Robertson	Acting Director Regional and Multilateral Fisheries
Liz Brierley	Fisheries And Ocean Specialist, Fisheries and Environment Section Pacific Regional Economic Branch, DFAT
Don Bromhead	Manager ETBF and WTBF Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA)
Kerry Smith	Senior Manager Foreign Compliance Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA)
James Larcombe	Senior Scientist - Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences
Eric Kingma	Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
Consultants	
Claire Van der Geest	International Seafood Sustainability Forum (ISSF)
Frank Meere	Representing Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
Wez Norris	Consultant to Parties to the Nauru Agreement, Previous Deputy Director General of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)
Rhea Moss-Christian	Outgoing Chair WCPFC
Johnne Bell	Consultant- Conservation International

Personal Development

When looking over my experience of attending the WCPFC15 it is hard to comprehend how much I have gained through attending the meetings and networking with colleagues from all over the Pacific. Throughout the week I have learnt of all the different countries that are members of WCPFC, along with the diverse and unique issues of these each country conducting fishing operations within this region.

I have come to an understanding of the term *disproportionate burden* and how there is an onus on the Commission to not transfer a higher proportion of the conservation burden onto SIDS. This is a key principle of both UNFSA and the Convention.

I have established valuable industry networks throughout the week. This allowed me the opportunity to learn about the different international fishing fleets, how they operate, the different markets they supply, and challenges faced which are not dissimilar to ours. This was both informative and a little disconcerting. This includes restricted and recognition of fishing rights, environmental issues,

government regulations, increasing overheads, lower catch rate, labour issues, and lack of government support for industry. In discussions with the Hawaiian longline industry association they stated that the industry doesn't receive the full backing of the government despite providing a significant proportion of the state's protein requirements.

I was fortunate to receive a tour of the Hawaiian Fish Markets and processes. This included vessel unloads, product sales, markets and traceability systems, and the Federal Drug and Administration (FDA) processes they implement ensuring product quality.



Figure 6 Live Action of Tuna at the Hawaiian Fish Market



Figure 7 Example of the Tagging and Traceability System allowing fish to be traced from boat to plate. Boat: Broad K, Weight: 66 pounds, Price: \$1.00 per pound.

Meeting Dynamics

I analysed CMM proposals that were discussed and was able to assess the impact on WCPFC members and consequence for the ETBF fishery. This was perhaps the most intriguing part of my week as it allowed me the opportunity to examine how the WCPFC manages fishing fleets through CMMs, and how these impact on the ETBF.

I have observed high-level international negotiations between multiple countries lasting days, and believe industry and the government can continue to work towards better outcomes to protect both Australia's interests and the region's interests.

The networks I developed allowed me to understand the political drivers of different countries. This provided the context of how compromises were reached.

I now understand the importance of having a chair who is calm, fair, rational and able to articulate a discussion to include all parties and their issues or concerns to achieve the most out of a meeting. This is important in any meeting, but is essential in the WCPFC when dealing with a large number of countries and their delegations.

I also had the opportunity to speak to several consultants about the potential to improve social license of the ETBF within Australian and overseas markets. Our discussions included the upfront cost to industry, maintenance costs associated with meeting annual compliance audits, and the expected outcomes benefitting industry. This is important for industry to continuously improve the image of fishing and the ETBF as a premium seafood product, as it will lead to maximising our economic return. This is very important due to the rising costs of fishing and uncertainty in fishery access.

The skills and knowledge that I have developed over the week attending the WCPFC are invaluable in advancing my career within the ETBF industry, boards and committees that I contribute to; as well as the domestic and international governing bodies.

Finally, I would like to thank the FRDC for giving me the opportunity to attend the 15th Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. I would also like to thank the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DoAWR) for allowing me to be part of the Australian Delegation and providing me with documents that allowed me to learn and understand meeting discussions. Finally, the team from Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) who provided clarification and explanation of any questions I had over the week.

This opportunity has been rewarding. However, it has highlighted areas within that I would like to pursue to expand my knowledge and develop my career including:

- Training in corporate governance to understand meeting procedure.
- Leadership training to understand how to influence industry, community and political agendas.
- At a personal level, I would sincerely appreciate training in emotional intelligence, media (including social), marketing, conflict resolution and negotiation.



Figure 8 The Australian Delegation of the WCPFC15.

Extension and Adoption

- A Power Point will be presented to COMRAC at the next Committee meeting on 21 March 2019.
- The Final Report will be circulated to industry members via David Ellis.

Project materials developed

A Power Point compiled for COMRAC was developed for this development award.