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FISHERIES RESEARCH &
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

National Recreational Fishing Conference 2017

Final Report

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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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Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation Board who committed resources and the drive to ensure the conference was strategically focused.

Conference presenters who provided insightful views on strategically important topics to the recreational fishing sector.

Conference Steering Committee who provided guidance and support to ensure the conference management was structured and on track in the lead up to the conference.

FRDC for providing the core funding and support to ensure the conference was held.

Kristina Royter & Tani Konsul (Inspire Fishing Network) for showing conference delegates the value of “Women in Fishing”.

Northern Territory charter fishing sector for providing conference attendees with the opportunity to “*catch a barra*” following the conference and for their active involvement as conference attendees.

Northern Territory Tourism for organising marketing collateral for conference attendees.

Steve Morgan for providing audio recording services and MC duties for the conference and the

Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation Chair, Mr Brett Cleary, who provided the leadership that the national conference required.

Abbreviations

AFANT Amateur Fisherman’s Association of the Northern Territory

ARFF Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation

FRDC Fisheries Research & Development Corporation

ISN Inspire Fishing Network

Introduction

1. Background

Following on from the success of the 2012 and 2015 National Recreational Fishing Conferences, the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation was successful in securing a funding grant from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) to deliver a National Recreational Fishing Conference for 2017. Holding a National Conference every two years allows sufficient time for issues, concerns and suggestions to proceed in a considered way and for actionable items to commence. The National Conference sought input from multi-jurisdictional and international speakers and developed a forum to question the current, and drive the future, direction of recreational fishing in Australia. A regular National Conference also provides the opportunity for peer networks to meet, discuss and learn from other jurisdictions about how the challenges that the recreational fishing sector faces are being addressed.

The 2017 National Conference was held at the Darwin Convention Centre on Saturday 25th November. 75 people attended the conference which included a broad spread of people from peak bodies, state and federal government agencies, charter industry, members of parliament, key industry stakeholders and grass roots fishers. Conference delegates also received an invitation to attend the Northern Territory Recreational Fishing Awards presentation at Parliament House on Friday night.

Northern Territory Tourism and the Amateur Fisherman's Association of Northern Territory (AFANT) provided fishing and destination marketing material on the concourse during the conference which provided attendees with opportunities to experience what the Northern Territory has to offer by way of recreational fishing and tourism. Many conference attendees took the opportunity after the conference concluded to go fishing with the local charter fleet who supported the conference with a strong number of conference delegates.

2. Need

The National Recreational Fishing Conference 2017 successfully enabled the recreational fishing community to gather and discuss issues of national strategic importance. The value of regular fishing sector conferences is recognised among the fishing community, and supported by FRDC, to facilitate continued progress, coordination and recognition of achievements. The primary aim of the conference was to bring opinion-shapers, decision makers and key representatives from Australia's recreational fishing sector together to develop a shared vision for the future of recreational fishing in Australia. Opportunities were taken to collaborate with other significant events planned around the same time and location of the conference.

Objectives

There were 4 main objectives for the conference.

1. *Deliver a National Recreational Fishing Conference which increases the level of meaningful engagement with the recreational fishing community in national issues of importance.*
2. *Engage with participants at the National Conference to identify priority actions to be progressed.*
3. *Acknowledge recreational fishing community achievements.*
4. *Publish extension products from the event.*

Methods

Objective 1: Deliver a National Recreational Fishing Conference which increases the level of meaningful engagement with the recreational fishing community in national issues of importance.

Method: A steering committee was established to underpin planning for the conference. The Steering Committee comprised:

- Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF) representative – Mark Nikolai
- Peak body representative for the Northern Territory – David Ciaravolo (AFANT)
- FRDC representative – Josh Fielding
- Fish Habitat Network representative – Craig Copeland (Ozfish Unlimited)
- Recreational fishing representative – Leyland Campbell (Recfishwest)
- Fisheries Minister Advisor – Tristan Sloan (Northern Territory)

The Steering Committee held regular meetings from October and worked through a detailed task list in the lead up to the conference commencement.

The Board of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation also received weekly updates on conference activities and planning requirements and ensured appropriate resources were allocated to the conference planning, organising and scheduling.

The conference focused on bringing together opinion shapers, decision makers and key representatives of the recreational fishing community to develop a shared view on key issues of relevance to the sector and agree upon strategic actions to advance the common interests of Australian recreational fishers. A broad and highly interactive program was delivered for the conference, with industry leaders and fishing celebrity keynote speakers providing concise, engaging and relevant presentations, followed by facilitated panel question and answer sessions.

Planning and associated marketing was integrated through social media, website and strong peer networks. Efforts were made to build a virtual audience for the event with some live streaming sessions and making digital content available through a range of platforms, to help build the audience exposed to discussions and outputs of this important national event.

Objective 2: Engage with participants at the National Conference to identify priority actions to be progressed following the conference.

Methods: A facilitated panel session was held at the end of each conference theme to answer specific questions from the audience in that theme. A Key Issues/Points/Questions overall panel discussion was held at the end of the conference to identify and discuss strategic priority actions required to advance recreational fishing in Australia in the foreseeable future.

Objective 3: Acknowledgement of recreational fishing community achievements.

Methods: A Gala Dinner was held on Saturday 25th November at the Darwin Racing Club, as part of the national conference, where nearly 70 conference delegates and partners attended to receive a presentation from Kristina Royter & Tani Konsul (Inspire Fishing Network) on “Women in Fishing”. The objective of the presentation was to showcase the networks efforts in raising the profile and activities associated with increasing participation by women in what, to date, is largely seen as a male dominated sport. The Northern Territory Fisheries Minister, the Hon. Ken Vowles also provided his thoughts on “Recreational Fishing in the Northern Territory”. The Minister explained the value of recreational fishing to the Northern Territory and highlighted the extensive program that is currently in place to support recreational fishing activities and related tourism.

The Gala Dinner also included the presentation of the Mal Ramsay Lifetime Achievement Award to John Burgess from the Australian National Sportfishing Association. The “Mal Ramsay” lifetime achievement award recognises outstanding contribution by an individual Australian to the development and/or administration of recreational fishing over a substantial period of time. Recipients of the Award must set excellent examples for others involved in recreational fishing administration and development. They must have demonstrated a high level of dedication and made a substantial contribution as did the namesake for the award. Mal Ramsay was a stalwart supporter of recreational and sport fishing in Australia. Mal dedicated thousands of hours over many years to help further the interests of recreational fishers.

The Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation Board decided on the 2017 award recipient with the ARFF Chair noting John’s tireless efforts over the long term on behalf of recreational fishers at a regional, state and national basis made him a worthy winner.

Objective 4: Publication of extension products from the event.

Method: The presentations, discussions and actions from the conference form a valuable reference for the recreational fishing sector, government bodies and political leaders going forward. Copies of all conference presentations were uploaded onto the conference website (<https://www.recreationalfishing.com.au/event/national-recreational-fishing-conference/>) by early December and communicated by email directly to conference delegates by personal email and to the broader recreational fishing sector via the broad and extensive networks throughout the peak bodies and fishing clubs across Australia. This Post Conference Report also forms part of the conference outputs and will be placed in the public domain following acceptance of the report by the FRDC. This document will help maintain momentum of the event and drive delivery of priority actions identified.

Results/Identified Key Priorities

- *In the immediate short term consolidate the national peak body, its structure, funding, functioning and capabilities*

- *The terms of trade with the political and bureaucratic structures needs to be amended*
- *Secure independent funding for respective peak bodies*
- *Consideration of the values of a General Recreational Fishing Licence across Australia*
- *ARFF needs to ensure it represents the needs of its broad member base*
- *The recreational fishing sector must address its challenges with a united front*
- *Opportunities for engagement are broad, don't underestimate the power of numbers*
- *Recognise when we are talking to ourselves, expand the audience and experiences*
- *Build capacity and capability to support requirements, build a wide well-resourced base*

Discussion/Conference Feedback

Questioned the logic of holding the conference in a faraway/costly location – the ARFF Board want to ensure over time that the location of the National Conference is held in locations across Australia rather than a single central location. Attendance costs will always be an issue for some recreational fishers irrespective of the location chosen.

Could there be an EOI process for where/who holds the conference overall and not just the topics/presentations. This could be a good way of capturing ‘grass root’ needs/priorities/opportunities and a way of having one of the ARFF members lead the conference organising and running.

Consideration should be given by the organisers for a component of future conference topics/presenters to be sought through a pre-conference expression of interest type process.

The quality and content delivered by the presenters was informative, topically broad and sufficiently detailed given the limited time frames of their presentations.

It was a credit to ARFF to successfully run the National Conference even though it had some untimely internal staffing issues in the months leading up to the conference. It was clear that the State Peak bodies had come together and effectively worked together in lieu of there being internal ARFF staff resources for organising and running the conference.

Conclusions

Holding a National Recreational Fishing Conference on a regular basis provides the impetus to review the state of recreational fishing across Australia, learn from your peers, foresee the oncoming issues and challenge the future direction of the sector. As has been noted by previous conference organisers it is imperative for the future of a strong recreational fishing sector that regular biennial conferences are held.

The future of representation of the recreational fishing sector lies in continuously developing future leaders. Peak bodies and fishing clubs have limited programs in place and there were many attendees who participated in the conference who were part of such programs or past participants.

The quality of future leaders coming through programs is exciting but more work in the area is necessary to lessen the workload and spread the responsibility more broadly across the recreational fishing sector. The same comments relate to increasing female participation and it was heartening to understand the value of initiatives such as the Inspire Fishing Network and how they aspire to boost women in fishing.

Participation in the “greater good or national focus” by grass roots fishers remains a hurdle that is challenging to overcome. Generally, unless the issue (bushfire) is in their back-yard engagement is frustratingly limited.

There are many challenges facing the fishing industry, including the recreational fishing sector, and a resilient and strong sector remains our best strategy to take on the future effectively. Independence, skilled people and a consistent sustainable funding model are the keys to effective representation and remain key priority areas at both a state and national level.

Project materials developed

In 2018 ARFF will review its Strategic Plan and incorporate the Identified Key Priorities into the planning process and implement a structured work program to address the key priorities. The review of ARFF’s Strategic Plan will include all member entities to ensure a broad range of input and collective agreement about the way forward for recreational fishing at a national level.

Electronic copies of all presentations are available from the conference website at <https://www.recreationalfishing.com.au/event/national-recreational-fishing-conference>

A Post Conference Report also forms part of the conference outputs and will be placed in the public domain following acceptance of the report by the FRDC. This document will help maintain momentum of the event and drive delivery of priority actions identified.

Appendix 1 – Conference Agenda

Welcome to Country – Larrakia Nation - Donna Jackson

Opening Remarks - Brett Cleary - ARFF Chair

Opening – Senator the Hon Anne Ruston - Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources

Key Note - Fighting for a Fishing Future - Martin Salter (International Guest Speaker)

Theme - Sustainability/Management for Recreational Fishing

Chair - Mike Burgess (VRFish)

Key Note – The Good Old Days? Fishing for the past to inform the present - Julian Pepperell

Recreational fisheries: a national perspective - Anthony Moore (ABARES)

Panel Discussion

Theme - Habitat + Fish = Community Involvement

Chair - Andrew Rowland

Key Note – Fishers making more habitat on the Macquarie - Matt Hansen
Artificial Habitat Enhancement - Michael Tropiano (Recfishwest)
Helping fishers restore habitat across Australia - Craig Copeland (Ozfish Unlimited)
Panel Discussion

Theme - Growing the Pie

Chair - Brett Cleary (ARFF Chair)
Key Note – Governments role in getting more Australians fishing - Travis Dowling (Vic. Fisheries Authority)
Leisure Time ‘Market Share’ Gruen Style - Paul Nagy
Key Points from World Recreational Fishing Conference #8 - James Florrison (Recfishwest)
Panel Discussion

Theme - Opportunities

Chair - David Ciaravolo
Million Dollar Barra: National focus on ‘Market Share’ - Hon Lauren Moss MLA, NT Minister for Tourism
Opportunities with Australia’s Marine NRM - Lowri Price (Oceanwatch)
Social impacts of recreational fishing - Matt Tripet (The Fly Program)
Data Democracy/Not all fishers are equal - Stefan Sawnok (Fisheries Consultant)

Key Issues/Points/Questions

Panel Discussion on key points/issues/questions from floor
Panel Members:
Chair – Patrick Hone (FRDC)
Brett Cleary, Paul Nagy, Travis Dowling, Martin Salter, Craig Copeland, Julian Pepperell, Mike Burgess, David Ciaravolo
Wrap Up & Conference Close - Brett Cleary (ARFF Chair)

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