



What's stopping you from keeping you and your mates safe?

Improving safety in the Commercial fishing industry

Dr Kate Brooks



We all know that the fishing industry is a high-risk environment where it can be challenging to create a safe place of work. Safe Work Australia data confirms that the industry has the highest rates of work-related injury and illness in Australia's primary industries. So, what are we all doing about it?

Thanks to the FRDC¹, Dr Kate Brooks and a small team of researchers and industry people are working to identify exactly what factors are stopping us, in the commercial fishing industry, from adopting safe work practices and looking out for themselves and others while on the job.

This research will work with a number of fisheries and fishers in New South Wales and Western Australia (where WHS has been identified as a high research priority) over eighteen months, involving:

- a relatively short baseline survey of fishers' experience, beliefs, attitudes and training;
- focus group sessions to explore fishers' experiences on the job that prevent or hamper adoption of safe(r) work practices;
- testing of an alternative approach to sharing a Work Health and Safety (WHS) culture; and
- a follow up survey to identify if the conversations and activities resulting from involvement in the research have changed their behaviour and attitudes toward safe work practices.

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The results of the research are intended to provide greater insight for fishers, their industry associations and safety authorities like AMSA, to help both fishers and industry associations to raise safety standards through changes in attitudes, behaviour and culture in the sector.

Dr Brooks said 'In the past, attempts to improve WHS have focussed on training — more, better, sooner and immediately after an incident'.

'But rather than focus on training, we want to work with fishers to understand what "flicks the switch" to be concerned enough to look out for themselves, their mates and other workers around them.'



She said that this would start with conversations about what made them care about getting home in one piece every day.

'Essentially, we will be looking for the stories that explain how and why fishers value their safety, and use this understanding as the basis for developing alternative approaches to fostering a positive WHS culture in the sector.'

Get involved

To take part in the survey, share a story (confidentiality is guaranteed) or to receive updates on the progress of the project, email Kate Brooks at kate@kalanalysis.com.au

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