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Understanding, supporting and promoting effective participation by women in the Australian seafood industry

Kirsten Abernethy, Heidi Mumme and Karen Holder

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Researcher Contact Details

Name: Kirsten Abernethy
Address: www.womeninseafood.org.au
Phone: 0413 039 421
Email: eo@womeninseafood.org.au

FRDC Contact Details

Address: 25 Geils Court
Deakin ACT 2600
Phone: 02 6122 2100
Email: frdc@frdc.com.au
Web: www.frdc.com.au

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

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Executive Summary

This FRDC project, *Understanding, supporting and promoting effective participation by women in the Australian seafood industry*, was pivotal for WISA in supporting its future direction as an organisation. Research undertaken showcased the significance of the roles and contributions of seafood women and exposed the structural and cultural barriers faced by women in the industry. The provision of a bespoke entry level leadership program for women using an online format has provided WISA with greater understanding of the professional development needs of seafood women and how to deliver these effectively. The popularity and success of communication and extension activities incorporated into three key events throughout the project, including presentations, panel sessions, webinars, workshops and networking events, met several objectives including: increasing industry recognition of the contributions of seafood women, highlighting the value inclusion and diversity provides to industry and communities, and identifying ways forward to shift structures and cultures impeding women's participation and progression in the industry. Underpinned and supported by this project, WISA underwent a renewal including developing a strategic framework to deliver more to its members targeting the evidence-based needs of women in seafood, as well as transitioning to a new company structure which has resulted in a more effectively governed organisation.

Background

Traditionally there has been little emphasis placed on the role and contribution of women working in and with the Australian seafood industry. While other Australian primary industries have invested significant resources in advocating for gender equality and developing the capacity of women, the seafood industry is lagging behind. Investing in women is shown to improve organisations working conditions, performance and wellbeing of all.

The need for better data and understanding of women's participation in all sectors of the industry, the roles women play, and the structural and cultural barriers to women's participation and progression was identified over 20 years ago by WISA. Until this project, how women contribute to the Australian seafood industry has been poorly understood, underestimated and undervalued. A comprehensive and wide-ranging understanding of the current levels of engagement of women in the seafood sector is a valuable resource to the wider seafood sector to increase women's engagement and participation, in an industry that currently needs to attract new entrants and retain them. Having a greater understanding of seafood women also meets the needs of WISA as an organisation delivering support to seafood women.

There is also a need to support women participating effectively in the Australian seafood industry. WISA identified a need to build critical skills of seafood women, at an entry-level, and delivered in a way that is accessible to women and encourages participation from rural and regional areas. WISA identified that it was necessary to develop a seafood-specific pathway program for young women to gain the initial skills necessary to go on to build further leadership competences, or to take on leadership roles in their sector or community.

Given WISA is the only national organisation representing and supporting Australian women in seafood across all sectors, and WISA's priority for a renewed and refocused organisation that better met the needs of its members, WISA required capacity and capability building within the organisation itself. WISA also required opportunities to form strategic and mutually beneficial partnerships and alliances with other relevant organisations and build networks to capitalise on opportunities.

Aims and objectives

The project had four aims and objectives:

1. To create a baseline against which progress and impact of WISA activities can be measured.
2. To develop and deliver an online skills platform accessible to women in rural and regional areas
3. To establish a communications and extension program to highlight the roles of women in seafood and the value diversity provides to the seafood industry and community.
4. To support improvements to WISAs' organisational effectiveness

Methodology

This project had four components to meet the objectives of the project:

1. Research into seafood women's contribution, their roles and what women need to succeed in the Australian seafood industry, using Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data, in-depth interviews and an online survey.
2. Development and evaluation of the entry-level, seafood specific, online *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway C-Leaders Program* based on the highly successful National Rural Women's Coalition program
3. Preparation and delivery of key communication and extension activities at three events directly related to this project, including World Fisheries Congress 2021, International Women's Day 2022, and Seafood Directions 2022. Activities included presentations, panel sessions, webinars, workshops and networking events
4. Increasing the effectiveness of the WISA Board through Australian Institute of Company Directors training, engagement of expertise, and reforming WISA's systems and processes.

Key findings

This project, which included research, professional development delivery, communication and extension, as well as improving the effectiveness and governance of WISA, has set the foundations for WISA delivering more to its members through targeting the evidence-based needs of women in seafood. The project has contributed to:

- Building the WISA network and developing effective and in-demand networking, communication and extension activities
- Strengthening WISA's relationships with industry stakeholder relationships
- Understanding of women's contributions, roles and challenges in the industry, as well as identifying solutions
- Development of a program of work to shift structural and cultural barriers to women's participation and progression in the seafood industry
- Identifying further in-depth research needs with cohorts of women underrepresented or not uncovered in this project research
- Identifying effective and bespoke professional development training needs and methodologies for seafood women

Keywords

Gender, Women in Seafood, Workforce participation, Professional development, Governance, Network, Communication, Extension

Introduction

Background

Traditionally there has been little emphasis placed on the role and contribution of women working in and with the Australian seafood industry. Many other Australian primary industries have invested significant resources in advocating for gender equality and developing the capacity of women. Investing in women is shown to improve organisations working conditions, performance and wellbeing of all.

During 1996 and 1997 a group of women associated with the South Australian commercial fishing industry began working together to address the situation. This resulted in the formulation of the South Australian Women's Industry Network (SA WIN). In February of 1998, SA WIN hosted a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) sponsored workshop entitled 'Capitalising on the Talents of Women in the South Australian Fishing Industry', FRDC Project 1997/348. One of the results of the workshop was the development of a four-point Action Plan for future operations of the network, which included increasing recognition of women in the seafood industry. In June 2000, SA WIN moved to a national and incorporated organisation as Women's Industry Network Seafood Community (WINSC).

In 2016 WINSC hosted a FRDC funded workshop entitled 'Providing Pathways for the Involvement of Women in the Seafood Industry Development - Shaping a New Community for Seafood, FRDC Project 2016/409'. The findings of this report were then workshoped in Melbourne in early 2018 which resulted in a commitment to renew and work towards a more dynamic and appealing organisation. WINSC has been operational for over 20 years, and it was time to look at the existing model and offerings. A clear value proposition for a renewed WINSC was developed along with priority actions for a renamed, renewed and refocused organisation that better met the needs of its members and would stimulate interest for new members.

In 2017, WISA conducted a national survey of Australian seafood industry men and women, 86 per cent of respondents said that being a woman was no barrier to doing any task or role in the Australian seafood industry. Yet at the same time, 42 per cent thought that there were jobs that women were particularly suited to (particularly traditional roles such as book work, administration and communications), and 32 per cent did not think or weren't sure that the seafood industry was a good choice for women. 60 per cent of the industry surveyed wanted to know more about what women in the industry do, but 40 per cent didn't want to know or weren't sure if they did. The 2017 research indicated that there was both a lack of knowledge about women's contribution to the seafood industry and significant barriers to women's participation and progression in the Australian seafood industry.

In October 2018 WINSC held its 20th Anniversary Gala Dinner. The new name was unveiled, Women in Seafood Australasia (WISA) along with plans for the WISA renewal. This project 2018-174 has been pivotal in the years since for the WISA renewal, and where WISA has got to today, in 2022. Based on consultation facilitated by prior FRDC funding and WISA strategic planning, this project has facilitated WISA to build the capacity and capability to better connect with women in the seafood industry and to deliver support and services that help them to increase their profile, capitalise on and improve their skills and contributions as well as ensure better participation in key decision-making roles.

Need

A lack of data and understanding of the multiple roles women play in the different sectors of the Australian seafood industry fundamentally inhibits understanding of the seafood industry. Women's roles in the seafood industry often diverge from men's, therefore an absence of knowledge about women means entire sub sectors of the industry are missing and overlooked by decision makers including within the seafood industry itself. Furthermore, women are critical assets for understanding the impacts of change to the seafood industry and communities.

The need for better data on women's participation in all sectors of the industry as well as what roles women play was identified over 20 years ago by WISA (the SA WIN). 20 years later, and until this project, how women contribute to the Australian seafood industry has been poorly understood, underestimated and undervalued, by the wider seafood community. A comprehensive and wide-ranging understanding of the current levels of engagement of women in the seafood sector is a valuable resource to the wider seafood sector to increase women's engagement and participation, in an industry that currently needs to attract new entrants and retain them.

Having a greater understanding of the diversity of roles women play, their contributions to the industry and also identifying women's challenges in the Australian seafood industry also meets the needs of WISA as an organisation delivering support to seafood women. There is a need to increase the industry's understanding of the benefits of having greater diversity within seafood enterprises, associations, research agencies, at senior management, board and committee levels, and the barriers to greater diversity.

There is also a need to support and promote the value of fully engaged women participating effectively in the Australian seafood industry. WISA identified a need to build critical skills of seafood women, delivered in a way that is accessible to them and encourages participation from rural and regional areas. This was identified to be particularly important for younger women, be easily accessible to remote, regional and rural women, and be focused on the specific and bespoke needs of women in the seafood industry. WISA identified that it was necessary to develop a specific pathway program for young women to gain the initial skills necessary to go on to build further leadership competences, or to take on leadership roles in their sector or community.

Finally, given WISA is the only national organisation representing and supporting Australian women in seafood across all sectors, and WISA's priority for a renewed and refocused organisation that better met the needs of its members, WISA required capacity and capability building within the organisation itself. WISA also required opportunities to form strategic and mutually beneficial partnerships and alliances with other relevant organisations and build networks to capitalise on opportunities.

Approach

Gender-specific groups aid the initial development of networks and creates a safe learning space. WISA takes a practical and grass roots approach to its activities, including networking, professional development of women, and raising the profile of women involved in the seafood industry. Through WISA communications channels and networking activities, WISA provide support, encouragement and the dissemination of information to seafood women members. WISA believe that experiential learning increases the likelihood of long-term change and this philosophy sits at the heart of WISA's professional development activities. However, achieving gender equality and fairer opportunity is not only about 'fixing women'. It is WISA's aim to create a more inclusive industry that recognises, values, supports and listens to women. To do this, WISA seek industry supporters and champions. WISA believe a more inclusive and diverse industry improves working conditions, performance and wellbeing of all.

Objectives

1. To create a baseline (quantitative and qualitative) against which progress and impact of WISA activities can be measured.
2. To establish an online skills platform to provide access to training by women in rural and regional areas that will support greater diversity in seafood enterprises, research agencies and industry associations.
3. To deliver the Women in Seafood Pathways program targeting at least 15 graduates initially
4. To establish a communications and extension program to highlight the roles of women in seafood and the value diversity provides to the seafood industry and community.

Methods

This project had four components to meet the objectives of the project (Table 1). Each component is described individually in this section.

Table 1. Project components mapped to Objectives

Component	Description	Objective
1 Research	Women of the Australian seafood industry: Understanding Women’s contribution, their roles and what women need to succeed	Objective 1. To create a baseline against which progress and impact of WISA activities can be measured
2 Online leadership training	C-Leaders online leadership training	Objective 2. To establish an online skills platform to provide access to training by women in rural and regional areas that will support greater diversity in seafood enterprises, research agencies and industry associations. Objective 3. To deliver the Women in Seafood Pathways program targeting at least 15 graduates
3 Communications and extension program	World Fisheries Congress activities Webinar Series Seafood Directions conference: Power Up & Breaking Barriers & Panel	Objective 4. To establish a communications and extension program to highlight the roles of women in seafood and the value diversity provides to the seafood industry and community
4 Increasing WISA organisational effectiveness	Australian Institute of Company Directors Not for Profit training Supporting the WISA transition to Company Limited by Guarantee	Objectives 1-4.

1. Research

See report: (Abernethy, K. and Ogier, E., 2022, Women of the Australian Seafood Industry: Women’s contribution, their roles and what women need to succeed. October)

2. Online leadership training

The *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway Program* was developed in line with WISA's inclusive philosophy and mission and was designed to be an engaging format for seafood women to further develop their leadership, managerial, communication and advocacy skills.

2.1. Addressing a high priority for the seafood industry

The Australian Seafood Industry requires an increasingly agile, skilled, and innovative workforce in order to face industry challenges, rapid economic and environmental change, and capture new and emerging opportunities. Building the diversity of the workforce and the capacity of women in the seafood industry forms part of the solution. With women being underrepresented in all sectors of the industry, there is a huge opportunity for the seafood industry to improve diversity and reduce the employment gaps by acknowledging, improving and embracing the skills women in their sector provide. WISA encourages, supports and builds the capacity of women through programs, events and networking opportunities, benefiting the industry as a whole.

The *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway Program* included a C-Leaders program open to women working across all sectors and was designed to enhance understanding and build skills in leadership through structured sessions over six weeks. The C-Leaders Program was designed to take a small group of members on a structured journey to help prepare them for leadership and advocacy opportunities in the seafood industry. The C-Leader Leadership Pathways Program was a broad program aimed at members who want to take the first step towards leadership.

The program structure was designed to develop core skills and personal traits, such as self-awareness and confidence while also identifying leadership skills and strengths that can help participants meet industry challenges and build capacity. The training outcomes and understandings are equally useful for networking as they are in boardroom environments and were designed to build strong and effective management skills in women.



Figure 1. Advertising flyer for 2021 Program

2.2. Program approach

The *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway Program C-leaders* program employed a number of innovative methods to develop seafood women, meet their needs and overcome barriers to participation.

The C-leaders course material was presented as an online program to ensure that the tyranny of distance from major cities and centres was not an impediment to women accessing leadership learning opportunities. Seafood industry participants are not traditionally based in metropolitan areas, often do not work the typical 9am to 5pm hours, and do not always have access to childcare. Being an online program accessible from home and at times when women do have support with child caring responsibilities or could participate outside traditional working hours, has proven to be a successful formula.

There is a saying “you can’t be what you can’t see.” While the program included traditional online self-paced learning modules, it also included an interactive session where participants could engage with industry leaders. This was an important interface for participants to hear personal leadership journeys and have the opportunity to speak, interact and ask questions with acknowledged female industry leaders. This engagement created networks, built confidence and was an opportunity rarely offered in the seafood industry.

The program also employed a closed Facebook page for every cohort to help with the networking amongst each group, which was a necessary part of this online leadership program to foster groups’ ability to work and learn cohesively. This also allowed for continued cohort and mentor support beyond the completion of the program itself.

The program format allowed for all levels of leadership to be addressed and also offered materials for managers with developed skills to refine and further develop their leadership skills.

2.3. Recruitment of participants

The seafood industry is male-dominated, but there is a groundswell of inspiring women moving into the industry across the full suite of roles and sectors, from deckhands, hatchery technicians, processing workers, to scientists and training professionals, industry representatives and executive management leaders. WISA is consistently working to improve women's participation by encouraging young women to move into the industry and provide opportunities to move up.

The nation-wide WISA network used its significant footprint and industry partnerships to promote and attract participation to the C-Leaders program. This promotion not only ensured women accessed the opportunity to build their skills and networks vital for women's participation and progression, but also increased the visibility of women to the whole of industry. Through promoting and celebrating women's contributions in all the varied and diverse roles women hold across the industry, breaking down industry stereotypes and exposing young women to positive gender messages, the diversity of opportunities and people in seafood.



Figure 2. Women in Seafood Participation Pathway Program promotion and materials highlight opportunities and positive gender messages

2.4. Program development

The *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway* C-Leaders program was carefully and purposively developed based on identifying the specific needs of women in the seafood industry as part of this project and findings from previous projects including *2016-409: Providing pathways for the involvement of women in seafood industry development*. It focussed on women who were interested in starting their leadership journey.

The program material was developed and delivered in partnership with the National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC), who are one of six National Women's Alliances (NWA) funded by the Australian Government and are Australia's gender specialists in the rural space. WISA is one of the five founding

member organisations of the NRWC. NRWC and its national leadership facilitators have been developing and delivering bespoke online leadership programs for rural and regional women for ten years. The C-leaders program was designed to be bespoke for seafood women utilising the experience and expertise of NRWC, ensuring its fit for purpose design and content as well as successful outcomes.

The C-leaders program was also reviewed and improved during its delivery. The program was uniquely designed to meet the diverse needs of seafood industry women. Given the diversity of the seafood industry, in comparison to other primary producing industries, providing a successful program that meets all needs is not to be underestimated. The program brought together a diverse group of women representing a cross-section of the seafood industry, including wild catch, aquaculture, post-harvest, market development and government from every State and Territory of Australia. WISA ensured that there were opportunities for feedback and evaluation from the 2020 cohort which enabled the format and content to be refined for the second program in 2021. As part of the program evaluation, delegates were also asked about other topics women would like WISA programs to cover which enables WISA to further refine the program and give the organisation direction for developing and implementing future programs for women in the seafood industry.

3. Communications and extension program

In addition to WISA's regular communications and extension program (e.g. e-newsletters, social media), WISA engaged in three key communication and extension activities directly related to this project.

3.1. World Fisheries Congress 2021

World Fisheries Congress 2021 activities included:

- Presenting preliminary findings from Component 1 research
- Leading and chairing seven sessions
- Hosting a virtual exhibition pod

3.2. International Women's Day 2022

WISA developed and hosted "Inspiring Women in Seafood" Webinar Series for International Women's Day throughout March 2022, which comprised of:

- Bi-weekly webinars each with an inspiring woman giving a talk plus Q&A
- Seven webinars in total

3.3. Seafood Directions 2022

Seafood Directions 2022 activities included:

- WISA Power Up Breakfast
- "Breaking the Barriers" workshop
- Panel Session: A workforce in decline? How can the Australian seafood industry attract and retain women?

WISA also leveraged the above activities funded through this project.

- WISA with financial support from each State/Territory Government agency took 13 bursary holders to the conference. The bursaries were designed for women passionate about their work and the Australia seafood industry, and who wanted to develop their networks, connections, skills and capacity. The experience for bursary holders was a three-day immersive and supported experience. Each bursary holder was partnered with a WISA mentor for the conference. There were opportunities to network with other bursary holders, WISA members and mentors, as well as the wider industry. Bursaries included full registration, travel and accommodation; a ticket to the WISA Power Up Breakfast; a place at WISA workshops and a networking event with the National Seafood Industry Leadership Program alumni. Networking and professional development will be enabled beyond the conference as bursary holders received a three-year membership to WISA.
- Hosting a second workshop, delivered by Honey & Fox, “Communicating with Impact”

4. Increasing WISA organisational effectiveness

Throughout this project, WISA has been undergoing a renewal and a transition from an industry association registered in South Australia, to a Company Limited by Guarantee with obligations under the Corporations Act (financial reporting, auditing). Among the many actions and legal processes WISA underwent as part of this process, WISA wrote and is now governed under a new constitution. WISA also renewed its website, and sought assistance in improving the effectiveness of WISA's administration, processes and communications.

In 2020, the WISA Board completed the AICD 1.5 day course *Governance Foundations for NFP Directors*. The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) is Australia's leading provider of governance education and development programs, governance assessment services and board advisory services. Topics covered were:

- Governance Foundations for NFP Directors: Duties and Responsibilities
- Governance Foundations for NFP Directors: Finance
- Governance Foundations for NFP Directors: Strategy & Risk

The WISA Board now comprises a skills-based AICD-trained advisory Board representing each state and territory in Australia and covers the wide range of sectors in the seafood industry.

Results and Discussion

1. Research

See report: (Abernethy, K. and Ogier, E., 2022, Women of the Australian Seafood Industry: Women's contribution, their roles and what women need to succeed. October)

2. Online leadership training

At the 2022 National Seafood Industry Awards, WISA were awarded the People Development Award for The *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway C-Leaders Program*.

2.1. Participation

The *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway C-Leaders Program* resulted in more people with higher qualifications or skills working in the seafood industry. The inaugural program in 2020 had a full-capacity cohort of 20 delegates with a completion rate of 95%. The success of the inaugural cohort and demand for additional courses underpinned the strong participation in the 2021 intake with another fully subscribed cohort and 100% completion.

2.2. Overview of program developed

The C-leaders program developed and enhanced skills to be used within business and boardroom as well as in everyday life. With subject areas covering advocacy and influence, and resilience and confidence building, the program developed a practical understanding of self-leadership and how to self-assess and effectively engage within management roles. Delegates learned negotiation techniques and tactics to work more collaboratively and effectively, manage potential conflicts, deal with different personality types and monitor personal impact in management situations.

The program consisted of five webinars (60 minutes each) and one panel discussion (90 minutes). Participants were resourced with the presentation and additional resources, tools and readings. Table 2 outlines the session topics.

Table 2. Session topics

Session	Topics
Session 1	Foundation and Goal Setting
Session 2	Identifying personal leadership strengths
Session 3	Building my leadership confidence
Session 4	Leadership by example
Session 5	Leading teams, groups and organisations
Session 6	Leadership strategy and tactics

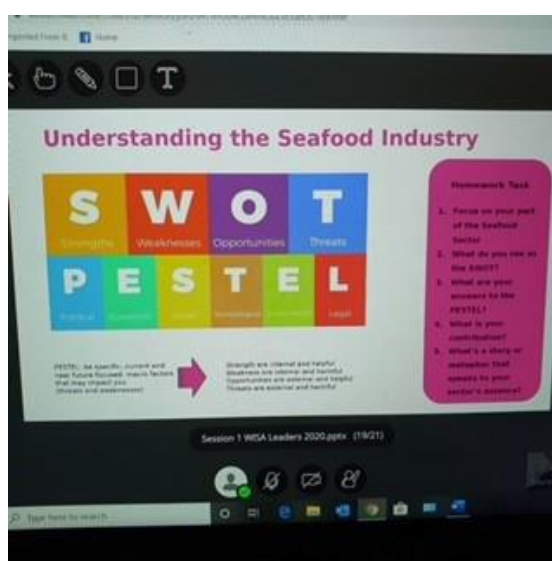


Figure 3. The bespoke online course material was designed to cover a range of skill levels from those new to the industry through to executive level managers.

2.3. Evaluation of program

The program was evaluated by the facilitator of the program, Meredith Turnbull, immediately after the program had ended. Overall, the evaluation was positive (Table 3).

Table 3. Evaluations from participants in 2020 and 2021

Evaluation questions	2020	2021
How satisfied were you with the content of the program?	73% very satisfied 27% satisfied	75% very satisfied 25% satisfied
Knowing what you have learned about leadership, do you now feel like a leader?	73% Yes 27% No	80% Yes 20% No
How do you rate the facilitator?	73% Extremely useful 20% Very useful 7% Somewhat useful	69% Extremely useful 31% Very useful
Did you find the closed Facebook page helpful?	100% Yes	100% Yes
Rate the overall impact on your leadership journey	33% A great deal of impact 47% A lot of impact 20% A moderate amount of impact	56% A great deal of impact 31% A lot of impact 6% A moderate amount of impact 6% A little impact
Has completing this program increased your confidence?	100% Yes	100% Yes
After completing this program would you now consider the NSILP or other premium leadership programs?	60% Yes 33% Maybe	63% Yes 31% Maybe 6% No
After completing the program has your cross-industry knowledge increased?	13% significantly increased 73% Much better than it was but I want to know more 7% Marginally increased 7% No change in knowledge	31% significantly increased 56% Much better than it was but I want to know more 13% Marginally increased
Will you encourage other WISA members to participate in the program?	100% Yes	100% Yes

3. Communications and extension program

3.1. World Fisheries Congress 2021

WISA maintained a strong presence at the World Fisheries Congress 2021 (WF 2021) through multiple avenues, despite that it was an online conference due to the COVID19 pandemic. The conference attracted 1200 registrations from over 60 countries. As a selected sponsor for this event, WISA was prominently displayed on a scrolling banner at the top of the home page of the WFC2021 virtual portal for the duration of the Congress.

Dr Kirsten Abernethy presented preliminary findings of Component 1 research: *Women of the Australian seafood industry: Women's contribution, their roles and what women need to succeed* to World Fisheries Congress 2021 during the live session "People: Women in fisheries, workforce, investment, safety and building capacity".

WISA President and Vice President were two of the lead contacts for the “*People: Women in fisheries, workforce, investment, safety and building capacity*” session topic. In addition Board members chaired a combined total of six sessions during the conference.

WISA hosted a virtual exhibition pod to promote the research findings from the Component 1 research. The virtual exhibition hub provided delegates the opportunity to view promotional materials loaded into the pod space. Within this pod we were able to provide delegates the opportunity to attend events such as “Meet the Board” and “Research Launch” enabling the direct interaction with more than 25 conference attendees who would otherwise have been unknown to WISA.

3.2. International Women’s Day 2022

A webinar series “Inspiring Women in Seafood” was delivered in March 2022 in support of International Women’s Day 2022. A total of 408 registered across all webinars. Hosted by WISA, webinars consisted of talks by invited speakers followed by question and answer.

The webinar series was advertised through Facebook and WISA networks, including the FRDC newsletter. WISA used Eventbrite to manage the event: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/inspiring-women-wisa-webinar-series-158339>.

The webinars were recorded and can be found via the WISA website on WISA’s YouTube channel. There has been a further 267 views since uploaded in April. <https://womeninseafood.org.au/what-we-do/promoting-seafood-women>

The details of the webinars are listed in Table 4 along with the number of registered participants.

Table 4. Details of Webinar Series including date, topic and registered participants

Date	Topic	Registered participants
March 8 2022	<i>Who are the women in the Australian Seafood Industry and what do they want?</i> On International Women’s Day, Dr Kirsten Abernethy launched WISA’s foundational research ‘Women of the Australian seafood industry’.	100
March 11 2022	<i>Break the bias: What it means for Australian women in agriculture</i> An inspiring speaker, Alana Johnson (AM) is recognized for work in gender equality, community activism, and is a pioneer in women’s leadership.	42
March 15 2022	<i>Building leadership in the Australian Seafood Industry</i> A leader in the Queensland fishing sector, Kylie Dunstan talks about the importance of good decision making.	58
March 31 2022	<i>Whispers from the Bush: The Workplace Sexual Harassment of Australian Rural Women</i> Dr Skye Charry presented her staggering findings from Whispers from the Bush. Due to the sensitive nature of the conversation we haven’t shared the webinar.	43
March 22 2022	<i>A fish out of water: Experiences as a leader</i> Heather Brayford discusses her experiences as a senior leader in fisheries in Western Australia.	87
March 25 2022	<i>Staying Afloat: Wellbeing in the Australian seafood industry</i> Jo Marshall has a conversation about workplace wellness and culture change in the Australian seafood industry.	36
March 29 2022	<i>Next generation: The power of collaboration in the seafood industry</i> Simoan Hayman talks to Claire Webber about the new generation in seafood, breaking norms, evolving, diversifying and working together.	48

3.3. Seafood Directions 2022

WISA had a strong presence at Seafood Directions in Brisbane, 13-16 September 2022. Activities at Seafood Directions was coordinated by a specific sub-committee of three WISA Board members and the executive officer. In addition to the three activities listed below, also delivered a second workshop, “Communicating with Impact” by Honey and Fox, and a joint networking event with Affectus for emerging and existing leaders.

Furthermore, with sponsorship support from all State and Territory Government Agencies, WISA offered thirteen bursaries for women in seafood to attend Seafood Directions. The bursaries were designed for women, who are passionate about their work and the Australian seafood industry, and who wanted to develop their networks, connections, skills and capacity. The experience for bursary holders was a three-day immersive and supported experience, including all expenses, all WISA activities, a connection to a mentor and conference buddy specifically chosen for each bursar, and a three year membership to WISA so that bursars continue to be connected and supported. The approach used by WISA to offer a fully supported experience to women who would not usually attend an industry conference or events, was enormously successful. WISA hope to continue to offer bursaries to Seafood Directions and other events using this approach in the future. The professional development and relationships built by the bursary holders was observable to WISA as well as the conference attendees throughout the conference.

3.3.1. WISA Power Up Breakfast

The WISA Power Up breakfast has been traditionally held at Seafood Directions for a number of years now. For many at Seafood Directions in 2022, the WISA Power Up was a highlight of the conference. Ever popular, WISA’s Power Up Breakfast was sold out three months before the conference. Hosting 120 people, Power Up was an opportunity to network with industry leaders, innovators and disrupters from all sectors of the seafood industry.

This year, WISA’s high-profile speaker was Annabel Crabb, one of Australia's most beloved journalists, who gave attendees insights and experiences on working as a women in a male dominated industry, while also being highly entertaining. The MC for the event was WISA President, Heidi Mumme. Board Directors Sam Nowland and Claire Webber held a conversation after Annabel’s keynote, discussing the challenges of having both a fulfilling career and family. On the menu was local Rocky Point cold smoked grouper, and Umar Nguyen (a.k.a The Fish Girl) provided each table with a sample of Scampi Caviar. Each attendee received a goody bag, including Kansom abalone sauce and a WISA keep cup.



Figure 4. Power Up Breakfast SD2022 (Photo: Seafood Industry Australia)

3.3.2. “Breaking the Barriers” workshop

“Breaking the Barriers” workshop was designed as a pilot for a WISA and Affectus future program of work to develop small group training for seafood women on specific topics including building leadership capability and capacity, with participants developing actionable plans to shared barriers inhibiting progression, innovation and entrepreneurship in the industry.

The two-hour workshop was co-designed by WISA and Affectus and facilitated by Affectus with WISA support.

The outcomes of the fully-subscribed workshop (45 attendees) were:

- Open and inclusive discussion about issues that impact women in the Australian seafood industry and community.
- A deeper understanding of current issues impacting the women in the Australian seafood industry and community.
- Collaborative problem-solving and solution-finding to these current issues
- An advocacy paper for WISA Board, members and wider industry to action based on the top six barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential (please contact eo@womeninseafood.org for copies of paper):
 - The existence of ‘the boys club’
 - Balancing work with family and responsibilities at home
 - A lack of recognition of women in perceptions of the industry
 - The lack of women leaders and need for mentoring
 - Unconscious gendered bias
 - A lack of confidence in women



Figure 5. Breaking the Barriers workshop facilitated by Jill Briggs

3.3.3. Panel Session

The panel session, *A workforce in decline? How can the Australian Seafood Industry attract and retain women?* was delivered at Seafood Directions in a 40 minute session. It was chaired by Heidi Mumme (President WISA). Executive officer, Kirsten Abernethy, presented Component 1 research. This was followed by an interactive panel session including the following speakers, selected for their diverse experiences:

- Dr Emily Ogier (UTAS Marine Social Science and Policy, Leader Human Dimensions Research Coordination Program)
- Craig Fox (Chair Western Abalone Divers Association, Chair Abalone Council Victoria, Director Abalone Council Australia)
- Sally Roberts (FRDC Capacity Capability & Culture Change Manager)
- Lukina Lukin (Owner/Managing Director Dinko Seafoods, Director KIN Seafood)
- Chris Calogeras (C-AID Consultants, Non Executive Director FRDC, Executive FRDC Indigenous Reference Group)

The panel session was based on the workforce issues that the industry is currently facing:

- The Australian Seafood Industry is changing rapidly and profoundly as it faces challenges of food provision while maintaining economic resilience and community expectations, as well as responding to environmental and ecosystem change. New opportunities in the industry are also emerging.
- To meet these challenges, the industry requires an increasingly agile, skilled, innovative and entrepreneurial workforce. However, as an industry we have a problem. Women are not choosing the Australian seafood industry as a career pathway, which means the industry has a much-reduced talent pool.
- It is no surprise that women working in and with the Australian seafood industry are under-represented across all sectors. However, it is surprising that the number of women in the industry has declined by 20% since 2006, while the number of men has stayed the same. It also appears from ABS Census data that emerging opportunities in the aquaculture and fishing sectors are attracting men but not women.

In this panel session, Dr Kirsten Abernethy, Executive Officer of Women in Seafood Australasia, first presented the findings of WISA's recent FRDC-funded research project, *"Women of the Australian seafood industry: Women's participation, roles and what they need to succeed"*. The research revealed why women may not be attracted to work, remain and develop in the seafood industry. The research discusses how the whole of industry would benefit from having greater inclusivity of women and other under-represented groups.

The research presentation formed the basis of an engaging and facilitated discussion between the panel and the audience. This included a discussion of the opportunities for increasing the attractiveness of the seafood industry to women and other under-represented groups entering and thriving in the industry. The panel sought to find actionable solutions for organisations to attract and retain women in the Australian seafood industry in both the short and long term.

The audience walked away from this session with a greater knowledge of the challenges facing women in the Australian seafood industry and tangible and practical ideas for what they could implement in their own workplaces to make a difference. WISA walked away with industry-led ideas for future investment to create change.



Figure 6. SD2022 Panel session (Photo: Seafood Industry Australia)

The key takeaways from the session were:

1. The current state of participation and contribution of women in the Australian seafood industry and why this is important for the Industry
2. Five key barriers to women participating and progressing in the Australian seafood industry and why this is important for the Industry
3. Ideas for individuals, businesses and industry to achieve short term and long term changes required to attract and retain women in the Australian seafood industry

4. Increasing WISA organisational effectiveness

Nine WISA Board Directors completed the AICD 1.5 day course *Governance Foundations for NFP Directors*. Three Directors remain from this 2020 cohort and hold senior Board positions. The materials and learnings now form part of new Directors induction package.

Conclusion and implications

This FRDC project has been pivotal for WISA as it moves to the next stage of its work. The project met its objectives and set the foundations for WISA delivering more to its members, targeting the evidence-based needs of women in seafood.

Objective 1. *To create a baseline against which progress and impact of WISA activities can be measured.*

The research undertaken by Dr Kirsten Abernethy and Dr Emily Ogier has provided baseline data on the women who work in and with the Australian seafood industry. It effectively answered three key research questions using both quantitative and qualitative data using the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, in-depth interviews and an online survey:

1. What is the contribution of women in the Australian seafood industry?
 - a. What is the level of participation of women in the Australian seafood industry?
 - b. What are women's roles in the Australian seafood industry?
2. Who are the women in the Australian seafood industry?
3. What needs to change for women to have a career and succeed in the Australian Seafood Industry?

This research was fundamental and allows for monitoring progress in the future. It also identified future research needs on gender in the Australian seafood industry. While the insights gained from this research alone is unlikely to change the position of women, it has laid the foundations to support further research and advocacy for a gender equal Australian seafood industry by WISA.

Objective 2. *To establish an online skills platform to provide access to training by women in rural and regional areas that will support greater diversity in seafood enterprises, research agencies and industry associations.*

The *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway C-Leaders Program* was designed to take a small group of WISA members on a structured journey to take the first step towards leadership and advocacy opportunities in the seafood industry. It was presented as an online program to ensure that the tyranny of distance from major cities and centres was not an impediment, and it was accessible to women at times when women have support with child caring responsibilities or could participate outside traditional working hours. It was a bespoke designed program for the seafood industry context based on the highly successful NRWC program, which was refined across the two cohorts of participants through evaluation. The program also supported women during and after completion through a closed Facebook page to facilitate networking amongst each group, continued cohort and mentor support, and foster participants ability to work and learn cohesively.

Objective 3. *To deliver the Women in Seafood Pathways program targeting at least 15 graduates initially*

33 WISA members completed the *Women in Seafood Participation Pathway C-Leaders Program* with high satisfaction ratings and over 60% of participants interested to continue to pursue leadership training at a higher level. This program has demonstrated there is a need for an entry level leadership program for seafood women, and that WISA is trusted to provide this. It has been instrumental in helping to develop WISAs future delivery of professional development to its members.

Objective 4. *To establish a communications and extension program to highlight the roles of women in seafood and the value diversity provides to the seafood industry and community.*

In addition to WISA's regular communications and extension program being supported by this program, WISA successfully delivered key communication and extension activities at three events directly related to this project:

1. World Fisheries Congress 2021
2. International Women's Day 2022
3. Seafood Directions 2022

These events, which included presentations, panel sessions, webinars, workshops and networking events met the objectives of highlighting the roles and contributions of seafood women and the value diversity provides to the industry and communities. These activities highlighted the stories of women's significant contributions to the wider industry. They also underlined the barriers facing women's participation and progression, and identified solutions and ways forward to shift structures and cultures that are impediments.

Objectives 1-4. *Increasing the effectiveness of WISA as an organisation*

All activities throughout the project contributed to increasing the effectiveness of WISA as an organisation through increasing WISA's profile, levels of membership and relationships with stakeholders. Underpinning these activities has been the increased effectiveness of the WISA Board, through AICD training, engagement of expertise, and reforming WISA's systems and processes.

Extension and Adoption

The end users of this project are:

1. WISA
2. Government Agencies
3. FRDC
4. Seafood Industry Australia and other industry stakeholders
5. Seafood women

The project outcomes included:

- Enabling WISA members to building their leadership capacity and capabilities
- Piloting and evaluating an online leadership program for seafood women, from which learnings will be used to develop future WISA programs to increase capability and capacity of seafood women
- Increasing WISA membership by 100% through increasing visibility of the organisation through the communication and extension program of this project
- Increasing the visibility of women in the seafood industry through the communication and extension program of this project
- Informing industry of the challenges and barriers to women's participation and retention in the industry through the communication and extension program of this project
- Enabling WISA to have framework to measure and report women's participation in the seafood industry workforce
- Enabling WISA to measure progress and impact of WISA activities
- Improving data and measurement of women's participation in the seafood industry workforce through:
 - Contributing and shaping future research (e.g. FRDC 2022-034, support for PhD studentships)
 - Identifying research gaps for future research
 - Making research data collected through this project available to other researchers. Data are stored with WISA and WISA will make clear on research webpage that de-identified quantitative data are available for researchers to use.
 - Developing recommendations to improve data on women in the Australian seafood industry (See attached research report)

The project outcomes and outputs will continue to be extended by WISA to:

- Communicate the research findings to seafood women and the wider industry via WISA website and social media
- Submit research report to the National Library of Australia
- Using outputs of the project, including photos, WISA factsheets, research presentation, workshop format and plan for WISA activities and promotion in the future
- Develop future WISA activities using research findings through the Federal Government Prime Ministers Office of Cabinet, Women's Development and Leadership Program funding secured by WISA in September 2022. This includes:
 - Further building the WISA network and associated networking activities
 - Extending WISA's stakeholder relationships
 - Publishing of research from this report
 - Engaging in further in-depth research with cohorts of women underrepresented or not uncovered in this project research
 - Provision of professional development training for WISA women
 - Provision of a program of work to shift structural and cultural barriers to women's participation and progression in the seafood industry