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'Wave to Plate': establishing a market for cultural fisheries in Tasmania

FRDC PROJECT NO 2016/204

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The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation plans, invests in and manages fisheries research and development throughout Australia. It is a statutory authority within the portfolio of the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, jointly funded by the Australian Government and the fishing industry.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land and water.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

FRDC-IRG funded projects use ethical methodologies and take place on Country with the consent of Traditional Owners.

This summary booklet was prepared by Leila Alkassab and Hanna Gallagher of Land to Sea Consulting Pty Ltd. as part of FRDC-IRG project 2018-183 'Identifying and synthesising key messages from projects funded by the FRDC Indigenous Reference Group.'

Photography by Emma Lee

Background

In 2011 the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) sponsored a national Indigenous fisheries forum to discuss and identify issues impacting the involvement of Indigenous people in Australia's fisheries. An Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) then collated this work and developed a set of research priorities to guide research, development and extension.

These research priorities were subsequently endorsed in 2012 by the original national forum. Using these research priorities the FRDC-IRG have supported a number of projects focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fisheries.

1 PRIMACY FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous people have certain recognised rights associated with and based on the prior and continuing occupation of country and water and activities (e.g. fishing, gathering) associated with the use and management of these.

3 SELF DETERMINATION OF INDIGENOUS RIGHTS TO USE AND MANAGE CULTURAL ASSETS AND RESOURCES

Indigenous people have the right to determine courses of action in relation to use and management of aquatic biological resources.

5 CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ARE ENHANCED

Indigenous people have the right to access capacity building activities to further their aspirations in the use and management of aquatic biological resources.

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INDIGENOUS CULTURAL PRACTICES

Indigenous people have the right to maintain and develop cultural practices to address spiritual, cultural, social and economic needs associated with aquatic resources and landscapes.

4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARISING FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CULTURAL ASSETS AND ASSOCIATED RIGHTS

Indigenous people have the right to engage in economic activity based on the use of traditional aquatic biological resources and/or the right to share in the benefits derived from the exploitation of aquatic biological resources.

About the project...

The 'Wave to Plate' project sought to establish a market for cultural fisheries in Tasmania whilst identifying some of the obstacles in regulation and policy that are holding back the progress and development of the cultural economies of Aboriginal Tasmanians. Using Indigenous methodologies, the project consisted of:

1. Desktop review of policy and legislation

2. Indigenous fisheries workshop

3. 'Wave to Plate' trial to publicly serve Indigenous wild-catch seafood

1 Desktop review

A desktop review was undertaken to identify the policies and regulations that historically and presently control cultural fisheries across Australia. They also explored how successful terrestrial joint management and governance models can be applied to a cultural marine management unit.

The review provides a step in repairing current legislation to acknowledge Indigenous values and stimulate more possibilities for Indigenous involvement in future decision making in the fisheries.

What they found...

Land and sea governance does not reflect Indigenous worldviews, which see land and sea as holistic and interrelated. Connections to sea country extend beyond Western understandings of conservation and sustainability. Indigenous concepts of sea country are underpinned by Traditional Ecological Knowledges. Furthermore, Indigenous cultural economies include processes of kinship, reciprocity and Indigenous worldviews within economic exchanges.

Australian government inclusion of Indigenous peoples in marine planning has been uneven and there are great disparities across jurisdictions. This has contributed to lack of characterisation for Indigenous cultural fisheries.



Recommendations...

THE DESKTOP REVIEW PRODUCED THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INCLUSION OF ABORIGINAL TASMANIANS IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT.

JOINT MANAGEMENT

- Would suit the application to cultural fisheries for future governance processes.
- Of government-owned quota units can serve as an equity measure towards cultural fisheries and reduce potential sector conflict.
- In marine protected areas to increase employment, resource access and strengthen connection to sea country.

CULTURAL FISHERIES

- Clarifying the definition of cultural fisheries will aid in clearer policy, regulation, roles and responsibilities, and provide governance foundations.
- Commercial sale of cultural activity catch under prescribed condition should be allowed.
- Research is integral in characterising cultural fisheries and designing effective policy and regulation.
- A cultural marine management unit be provisioned with staff and finding resources.

2 Indigenous Fisheries Workshop

An Indigenous Fisheries Workshop aimed to explore future development of cultural fisheries in Tasmania. The workshop included forty government members, researchers, fisheries stakeholders and Aboriginal Tasmanian community members.

Participants identified the processes involved in catching and serving Indigenous wild-catch in order to show the current barriers and opportunities in developing a market within the restrictions of current legislation.

What they found...

THE INDIGENOUS FISHERIES WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTED BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL FISHERIES.

BARRIERS

- Cultural fishers being unaware of the Aboriginal activities permit process that allows more catch.
- Policy limits opportunities for expanding engagement and participation in cultural fisheries.
- Health and safety regulations and management.
- Lack of investment interest due to unclear permit rights.
- Prohibition of sale and commercial use of Indigenous wild-catch.
- Lack of research into cultural fishing market.
- Current permits for Aboriginal activity contribute to stress on fishery resources.
- Permits do not allow for on-selling of cultural catch.
- There is no system in place that empowers Tasmanian Aboriginal participation or planning in fisheries and community development.
- Aboriginal Tasmanians don't have the resources to buy fisheries-quota units which leads to a lack of involvement in the commercial sector.
- Poor communication between interested parties leads to a lack of appreciation of the broader potential influences of cultural fisheries.
- Lack of engagement of Indigenous Australians in marine research.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Employment opportunities in food tourism, cultural heritage conservation and beyond.
- Creation of roles that could help overcome policy barriers.
- Re-establishment of cultural practices.
- Greater awareness in broader community of Indigenous fisheries.
- Recovery and development of traditional knowledges.
- Relationship development between Aboriginal Tasmanians and others in regional development.
- Indigenous wild-catch provision to vendors within permit conditions.
- Community and regional development in partnerships and business agreements.
- Support of Aboriginal Tasmanian equity.
- Fisheries advisory committee.
- Allocation of quota within management plans.
- Policy and programs to promote cultural fisheries and Indigenous wild-catch.
- Education.
- Rights to water under expansion of the Indigenous Land Corporation remit.

Recommendations...

Through the development of the Indigenous Fisheries Workshop, the establishment of an Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee is recommended to advise the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), and empower Aboriginal Tasmanians. This committee may also be tasked with the planning of research and development opportunities.

A review of the definition of 'cultural catch' and 'Aboriginal activities' is also recommended, as is the consideration of handback, buyback and joint management models.

3 'Wave to Plate'

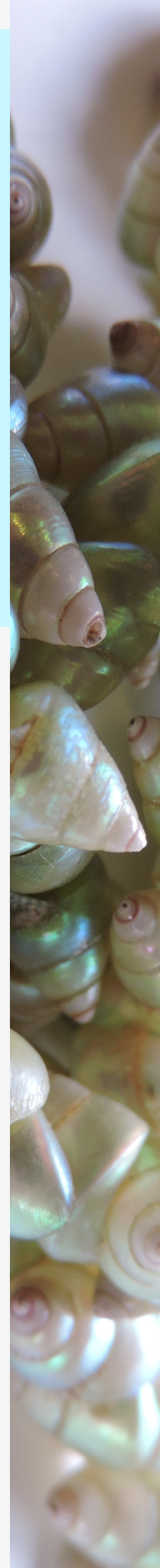
The 'Wave to Plate' concept was undertaken to publicly test, with commercial partners, public interest in the cultural fishery market. The project team partnered with MONA museum to serve Indigenous wild-catch during the Dark Mofo Winter Feast. This allowed the sharing of cultural stories from Aboriginal Tasmanian participants to local, national and international guests.

Aboriginal Tasmanian participants and non-Indigenous chefs prepared the harvested abalone and warrener and Indigenous divers delivered the wild-catch to the chefs on the days of harvest. There were also cultural hosts who shared their knowledge with paying guests over the six nights of the Palawa Fire Pit event, where the Indigenous wild-catch was provided for free.

What they found...

The successful trial of the 'Wave to Plate' concept showed the potential for establishing a cultural fisheries market in Tasmania. The event provides an example of:

- How the Aboriginal activity permit can be used to source Indigenous wild-catch and provide it to the public.
- The barriers and opportunities of using Aboriginal activity permits.
- Positive public interest in cultural fisheries in the food tourism market.
- The potential for development of traditional knowledges in harvesting Indigenous wild-catch.
- The principles of joint management.
- Successful development of commercial and community partnerships.
- Two-way learning between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Tasmanians.
- The sharing of stories, knowledges, practices and traditions with paying guests.
- The gaps in skills, training, networks and collaborations that can now be addressed in order to establish a market for cultural fisheries in Tasmania.





Recommendations...

'Wave to Plate' highlighted the way that cultural fisheries governance, management and regulation can encompass different types of models aimed at servicing the needs of both social enterprise and business venture.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODEL BASED ON AD HOC ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURAL FISHERIES

An Aboriginal activity permit can be used for small scale event where Indigenous wild-catch is provided for free. A shift in regulation to allow the on-sale of Indigenous wild-catch would create greater transparency, accountability and effectiveness in cultural fisheries. This would allow Aboriginal Tasmanian organisations to work with regional partners to develop cultural economies that combine the strengths of culture with market economies.

BUSINESS VENTURE MODEL BASED ON COMMERCIAL ENGAGEMENT WITH CULTURAL FISHERIES

This model would allow for successful commercial business ventures and valuable add-on to the harvest, promotion and consumption of Indigenous wild-catch. Furthermore, a 'cultural commercial' model, created through the conversion of government owned quota, would allow communities to manage these processes within their own country.

This new model would ensure that cultural fisheries are built on an economy centred around cultural values so that the conservation of resources in the activity of fisheries can continue as it has for thousands of years.



Conclusions...

The various barriers and opportunities in Tasmanian government policy concerning cultural fisheries have been identified through undertaking this project.

A joint management model is suggested to encourage future Indigenous-led cultural fisheries development.

This was supported by the goodwill shown by the broader community during the Indigenous Fisheries Workshop towards Indigenous peoples fisheries aspirations.

It was also supported by the wider community who showed keen interest when presented with the idea of a cultural fisheries market in Tasmania during the trial of the 'Wave to Plate' component.

The processes involved allowed for identification of barriers and opportunities that lie within this food tourism market and clearly showed the future steps to be taken to establishing cultural fisheries and in doing so, bringing Indigenous knowledges, customs, traditions and practices to the marine table.

