

**Final Outcomes
Ocean Trawl Industry Workshop**

**4 August 2005
Cronulla Fisheries Centre**

Attendants:

Bill Litchfield	Region 1
Gordon Farrell	Region 2
Darren Ward	Region 3
Murray Ham	Region 4
Paul Bagnato	Region 5 & south coast
Richard Bagnato	Region 5 & south coast
Darren Hale	DPI
Di Watkins	DPI

Note: For completeness, the following includes the outcomes from the workshop on 4th August 2005 as well as the outcomes of discussions at the Ocean Trawl MAC meeting the following day (5 August 2005) on common issues. These outcomes reflect the view of industry representatives for the ocean trawl fishery and have not been considered in full by the Nature Conservation Council or the ocean trawl recreational fishing representative.

Summary of Submissions

Industry representatives considered a summary of the submissions from fishers on the proposals detailed in the DPI newsletter sent to all trawl fishers during April 2005 concerning nights, BRDs, P2 prawn trawlers and trip limits.

Implementation of nights – interim 200 night cap

Industry representatives recommend that the Minister implement a cap of 200 nights per year in the NSW ocean trawl fishery until the management plan for the fishery is implemented. The cap should be enforced through a logbook maintained by the owner of the business, with appropriate penalties determined by DPI for those who do not complete the logbook prior to returning to port.

Implementation of nights & minimum shareholdings under the management plan

Subject to the Minister amending the rules that apply to prawning in estuaries as follows, industry members are willing to support the implementation of “nights” allocated proportionally in the ocean trawl fishery on 1 July 2006 or under the ocean trawl management plan, whichever comes first. The objective is to ensure the sustainability of the ocean trawl fishery, promote optimal use of the state’s prawn stocks, and to strive for equity in terms of access to prawn stocks (gear & quantities taken). Representatives strongly support any initiatives that lead to the rehabilitation of habitat in estuaries.

Changes to prawning in estuaries (includes relevant outcomes from the discussion on bag & size limits):

- Increase the size of mesh for nets used in estuaries to harvest prawns to the same size as in ocean waters (40mm diamond mesh or equivalent square mesh)
- Increase the size limits (ie. count) for prawns in estuaries, at least until such time as the nets used in estuaries are modified. Representatives suggest minimum size limits consistent with the size of prawns harvested in ocean waters.
- Prohibit the use of hand held haul nets in estuaries, otherwise, modify the net to harvest king prawns at the same size as in ocean waters. Also consider recent DPI research; “Reducing the discarding of small prawns in NSW’s commercial and recreational prawn fisheries”
- Reduce the recreational bag limit from 10 litres to 1 litre
- Prohibit the use of engines (powered set pocket net sites) when using set pocket nets in estuaries
- Use any available funds to remove effort on king prawns in estuaries

Implementation of nights (and minimum shareholdings) in the OT fishery

Industry representatives considered a number of options for allocating nights and setting minimum shareholdings, and resolved to pursue the following approach. It was noted that the current minimum shareholding requirements and relying on new entrants to restructure the fishery, is insufficient to restore viability to the fishery in a reasonable timeframe.

- Implement the following minimum shareholding requirements on commencement of the management plan [may need to give 6 months for fishers to trade shares]:

Sector	Current Minimum shareholding for new entrants	Minimum shareholding for existing fishers	Proposed minimum shareholding for new entrants to the fishery
Northern fish trawl	24 northern fish trawl shares	30 northern fish trawl shares	32 northern fish trawl shares
Inshore / offshore prawn trawl	24 inshore and or 5 offshore prawn trawl shares	16 inshore / offshore prawn trawl shares	32 inshore / offshore prawn trawl shares
Deepwater prawn trawl	24 deepwater prawn trawl shares	5 deepwater prawn trawl shares	32 deepwater prawn trawl shares

- Implementing separate allocations of nights for fish trawl (north) and prawn trawl on commencement of the management plan
- Allocating northern fish trawl nights based on northern fish trawl shares
- Allocating prawn trawl nights based on the largest ocean prawn trawl shareholding for each business
- Allocating 2.5 nights per share in each fishery for the first 12 months, and adjusting the total number of nights allocated, or the number of nights per share, as required (eg. to ensure effort does not increase).

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- Allowing for the free trading of shares in and between fisheries, subject to the following limits and any others necessary to manage potential increases or lateral shifts in effort:
 - New entrants to the industry must purchase a complete fishing business
 - New entrants to the OT fishery must already own a fishing business and must purchase all OT shares from a business that is already in the fishery
 - OT shareholders may freely trade shares between themselves, unless trading inshore prawn trawl or offshore prawn trawl shares in which case all of these shares must be transferred as a complete package and only to another shareholder, or a group of shareholders, with the same class(es) of share.

Action

1. DPI & industry members on the MAC to consult fishers on increasing the southern fish trawl transfer criteria from \$30,000 worth of validated catch history (VCH) in specified years to \$50,000 worth of VCH in specified years, consistent with the proposal for other sectors of the fishery.
2. DPI to conduct modelling to determine the suitability of the minimum shareholding requirements, criteria for allocating nights, and rules for trading shares (nights) recommended by the Committee, including administrative requirements / barriers.

Trading shares (nights) between different size boat

It was recommended that the freeze on amalgamations in the ocean trawl fishery be replaced as soon as possible with a policy that recognises the capacity of the boats that the shares are moving between. Shares should be forfeited / acquired proportional to the total units allocated to each boat.

Amalgamating units

The provision for amalgamating units, for the purpose of acquiring additional engine power and net in the offshore prawn trawl fishery, should be abolished under the ocean trawl share management plan and fishers be advised of this. Units should be maintained for the purpose of assessing boat replacements.

Action

DPI to contact QLD DPI for advice on their experience of the risks associated with relaxing input controls, such as engine power and hull capacity restrictions.

Offshore prawn trawl P1 to P4 boat licence endorsements

It was recommended that management be streamlined by retiring the P1 to P4 arrangements applying to offshore prawn trawlers as soon as possible. If this occurs, boat licences with P2 & P4 endorsements may be amalgamated with other P1, P2 or P4 boat licences once the freeze on amalgamations is lifted. Businesses with a P3 endorsement are allocated only 1 offshore prawn trawl share, and remain non-transferable under the current minimum shareholding requirements.

Action

DPI to identify how many P2, P3 and P4 endorsements exist and if there is a real risk of effort increasing as a result of this recommendation.

Square mesh panel BRD

The latest version of the draft specifications for the square mesh panel BRD were supported, subject to the panel being positioned within 40 meshes of the cod-end drawstring instead of 33 meshes, and a maximum twine diameter of 4mm (QLD scallop net) instead of 3mm. [Note that at the Coffs Harbour workshop the MAC supported new specifications for some of the other BRDs approved for use in the fishery, including the big eye BRD].

Trip limits

It was recommended that the trip limits applying to NSW fishers be modified, as follows, to reduce the wasteful practice of dumping. The changes recommended aim to minimise the incidence of dumping without promoting targeting. A request received by DPI to open up access to orange roughy stocks north of Barrenjoey Headland was discussed (ie. lift the 0kg trip limit).

Species	Current trip limit	Suggested trip limit	Comments
Redfish	250kg Nov to Jun & 1000kg July to Oct	1000kg Nov to May & 2000kg June to Oct	Issue with redfish is that when a catch is taken it's usually a large catch. No change required south of Barrenjoey at this point (100kg).
Orange roughy	0kg	500kg	Consider additional access to orange roughy under developing fisheries policy, when finalised
Ocean perch	500kg Jan to Mar & 1000kg Apr to Dec	No limit	Ocean perch is a primary target species for northern fish trawl. No change south of Barrenjoey (300kg).

Action

1. When the gemfish recovery plan is prepared, consider replacing the 50kg trip limit applying to trawlers with a limit on gemfish proportional to the catch of other species. The objective being to continue discouraging fishers targeting, but at the same time allow legitimate bycatch to be landed instead of dumped. Fishers would like this issue addressed before the 2006 season.
2. With regard to incidental catch of flathead in prawn trawl nets, develop & implement a BRD to be used south of Smoky Cape that eliminates flathead. June to September is main time of year flathead are targeted / taken as incidental catch in prawn trawl nets.

Bag & size limit review

Industry representatives briefly discussed the review on recreational fishing rules, and saltwater bag & size limits.

Action

Industry is encouraged to make a submission on the review of the NSW Recreational Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing rules, and Saltwater Fish Size limits. Issued flagged by industry members as important include:

1. Reduce the recreational bag limit for prawns from 10 litres to 1 litre
2. Gear to selectively harvest at optimum sizes (larger than commercial counts)
3. Prohibit use of the 6 metre hand prawn net by recreational fishers, or at least consider recent research and modify it to catch optimum size prawns only
4. Support size limit (count) for prawns until gear is modified
5. Support aggregate bag limit of 20 fish
6. Prohibit use of electric winches
7. Support introduction of boat limit
8. Introduce possession limit that covers all species (not just those with size limits)
9. Introduce tagging of recreational catch (remove top tail fin on landing)
10. Increase the size limit for blue swimmer crabs

End.

**Final Outcomes
Ocean Trawl MAC Meeting**

**5 August 2005
Cronulla Fisheries Centre**

Attendants:

Neil Ward	Chairperson
Bill Litchfield	Region 1
Gordon Farrell	Region 2
Darren Ward	Region 3
Murray Ham	Region 4
Paul Bagnato	Region 5 & south coast
Richard Bagnato	Region 5 & south coast
Darren Hale	DPI
Megan Kessler	Nature Conservation Council
Alan Keft	Recreational Fishing

Observers:

Di Watkins	DPI
Anthony Hurst	DPI
Kevin Rowling	DPI
Marcel Green	DPI
Ken Graham	DPI
Karen Astles	DPI
Cameron Lay	DPI
Steve Montgomery	DPI

Welcome & Apologies

Thanks were extended to past Ocean Prawn & Fish Trawl MAC members, Greg Parker, Leo Lukin, Pat Wade, Ian Craig, Barry Cason and Andrew Donnelly for their contribution to the process. There were no apologies.

Draft minutes

The draft minutes for the ocean trawl MAC meeting held on 20 & 21 May 2004 were approved.

Outcomes of industry workshop on 4 August 2005

The outcomes from the industry workshop held on 4 August 2005 were noted by the Committee and include (details can be found in the attached draft outcomes for the workshop):

- An industry recommendation to the Minister for an interim cap of 200 nights per year in the ocean trawl fishery, and a commitment to implement nights allocated on the basis of shares under the management plan subject to effort on prawn stocks in estuaries being further reduced.
- An industry recommendation to the Director-General on Bycatch Reduction Devices.

- An industry recommendation to the Minister to modify the NSW trip limits for redfish, orange roughy and ocean perch to reduce the incidence of dumping and high grading.
- An industry recommendation to retire the P1 to P4 offshore prawn trawl endorsements, and by doing so allowing P2 and P4 boat licences to be amalgamated for engine and net units. And, removal of the unit amalgamation policy under the management plan.
- An industry recommendation to lift the freeze on amalgamations in the ocean trawl fishery and implement a policy that applies on amalgamation or transfer of shares that involves forfeiting / acquired shares proportional to the total units allocated to each boat – this then influences the number of nights available to a businesses following transfer or amalgamation.

Review of the Preferred Strategy Report (PSR)

The Committee reviewed the ocean trawl preferred strategy report and made the following comments on the Key issues. NCC views on the PSR provided in a letter dated 2 August 2005 were noted, and have been incorporated into this record of outcomes.

Key Issue 1 Spatial Controls

- Industry representatives advised that the existing arrangements and closure proposals in the fishery management strategy are sufficient in respect of the ocean prawn trawl fishery, however additional measures are required within the estuaries to further protect juvenile stocks. Industry also do not support closing waters between 275 and 365 metres (150 to 200 fathom) to prawn trawling on the basis that the extent of ground protected (<1km) is minimal and bugs are targeted in those waters.
- Industry representatives also advised the existing arrangements and closure proposals in the fishery management strategy are sufficient in respect of the ocean fish trawl fishery, subject to amendments to closures south of Barrenjoey Headland which should read “Close a significant area of water south of Barrenjoey Headland to fish trawling subject to consultation with Industry”. Industry representatives also support closure outside 1100m if the trip limit for orange roughy is modified to allow legitimate incidental catch and minimise dumping inshore of the 1100m closure. Industry representatives advised at the industry workshop the day prior that a 500kg trip limit would allow legitimate incidental catch to be landed without promoting targeting.
- Recreational fishing stakeholders prefer option 1 in Table 1 of the PSR for a larger inshore closure with specified areas for taking prawns etc, and suggested it would be easy to map and then enforce this type of closure.
- NCC supports proceeding with all closures 1 to 8 outlined in the PSR and reducing the timeframes for closure types 2 to 6 to Immediate. NCC believes that closure 7 should also be immediate and closure 8 should occur in the short term. NCC further supports the closure outlined as Option 1 *Larger inshore closure* in Table 1, to be completed in the medium term. However, it is again unclear how this closure will be implemented. There is no guarantee that currently trawled areas will be protected if areas *specified for targeting school prawns, king prawns and whiting* are not appropriately defined. How these zones will be protected must be made explicit

using criteria that ensure that at least a comprehensive, adequate and representative sample of all habitat types within the region are protected from trawling.

Key Issue 2 Fishing Effort

Industry representatives made the following recommendations at the workshop on 4 August 2005 and request a firm commitment to implement them. The preferred strategy report can also be modified to strengthen commitments to implement these programs (ie. nights & minimum shareholdings). For further details of these recommendations see the attached outcomes from the OTMAC workshop on 4 August 2005.

- The ceiling cap of 200 nights per year be implemented immediately
- Nights be allocated proportional to shares and take effect on commencement of the management plan or 1 July 2006, whichever comes first, subject to measures to protect juvenile prawn stocks in estuaries
- Trading of share classes across industry be freed up to allow operators to adjust their businesses
- That the minimum shareholdings agreed at the workshop are implemented under the management plan

Industry is also keen to investigate and pursue sources of funding for buyout of commercial fishing entitlements, including the possibility of an industry levy to service a low interest rate loan.

NCC supported the work that the commercial fishers have done to develop the proposals, and provide in principle support subject to further modelling to demonstrate that the recommendations will have a positive outcome on the resource and the fishery.

NCC, DPI and recreational fishers whilst supporting the recommendation for a “nights” based regime in the ocean trawl fishery do so without the caveat that this will only occur if effort on prawn stocks is reduced in the estuaries. Non industry members of the Committee believe that a proactive approach is required across **all** sectors to optimise the harvest of prawn stocks

In response to discussion on administration the Committee agreed to include a management response in the PSR “to investigate mechanisms and processes to promote efficiency in operations and administration as a consequence of moving into a share management regime and introduction of effort management systems such as a “nights” regime.

NCC supports shortening the timeframe of response 5.2(a) to short term and developing a system that limits the number of days/nights that each boat may work. The comment that *to assist in achieving the shorter timeframes, the timing for some other programs will need to be extended to account for the refocusing of resources* is concerning when the *other programs* are not specified. If this is referring purely to action 7.1(a) then this should be specified.

Key Issue 3 Protection of threatened and protected species

NCC remains concerned about the lack of detailed action designed to reduce risk to threatened species. It is recognised that the closures outlined under Key Issue 1 may provide significantly more protection for a number of these species but this issue further highlights the need for a comprehensive observer program in this fishery. Further action on threatened species should not be linked purely to an observer program but should be responsive to any issues identified through any mechanism when interactions occur between threatened species and the Ocean Trawl Fishery.

The Committee otherwise agreed that the proposals in the FMS are sufficient.

Key Issue 4 Measures to improve the selectivity of trawl gear

For fish trawl nets, the hanging ratio should be specified rather than a maximum number of meshes around the cod-end because some fishers use larger nets (eg. 200 round above bell). Fishers support the proposed hanging ratio and single twine outside 55 fathom.

For prawn trawl nets the hanging ratio should be specified as follows “no part of the cod-end should exceed 150 meshes around”.

Action item: DPI to check with the scientists the outcomes of research before amending the PSR.

NCC supports the proposal to retain the gear selectivity changes proposed in the draft Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS).

Key Issue 5 Bycatch

Industry members on the Committee recommend that all fishers in the ocean trawl fishery be allowed to continue taking whiting, and that the specifications for the square mesh panel be set so that whiting can be retained in prawn trawl nets. In response to trials by Gordon Farrell since the Coffs Harbour workshop on the positioning of the panel and loss of whiting, industry members recommended that the draft specifications be modified as follows:

- The panel may be positioned up to 40 meshes from the cod-end drawstring, and
- The mesh in the panel is to have a maximum twine diameter of 4mm.

Industry members also recommend that flexibility be provided with regard to the cod-end that may be used rather than just prescribing one type of gear for all species.

NCC recognises that the proposal is an improvement on the device currently used by most fishers (larger mesh & size of panel), but there is still concern about the quantity of juvenile fish that is taken and the lack of information about the performance of the gear. DPI will discuss the proposal with the relevant scientific staff and report back to the MAC.

NCC prefers the square mesh panel to be positioned within 33 meshes of the cod-end drawstring as outlined in the PSR instead of 40 meshes as recommended by industry, and supports the future use of the square mesh panel only as long as ongoing research to continue to improve the performance bycatch reduction devices is a key part of the FMS. NCC also supports the addition of an action to assess the need for Turtle Excluder Devices or Seal Excluder Devices but believes that this should be done in the medium term. The proposed timing *following the collection of sufficient observer data* is open to

interpretation and assumes the observer program will be comprehensive enough to detect significant impacts, which cannot be guaranteed.

Key Issue 6 Whiting arrangements

Industry members on the Committee advised that:

- Defined whiting grounds are not supported by industry on the basis it will concentrate boats and effort and be detrimental to catch rates and the stock.
- There is concern with the proposal to introduce square mesh cod-ends specifically for whiting, as whiting tend to get meshed. Industry prefers a conventional [diamond] cod-end for targeting whiting (and prawns).
- With regard to option 2 in the preferred strategy report, industry representatives advised that whiting are found outside 30 fathom and re-iterated previous requests that double braided cod-ends be permitted out to 55 fathoms (as recommended by industry for key issue 4 above).

NCC would like to see the results of the research on the selectivity of trawls off Sydney, and for any “new” gear to be implemented as soon as possible. NCC also believes that all changes to the management of whiting harvesting should be done in the short term. NCC supports identifying specific whiting trawl grounds and implementing option 2 under *prawn gear and areas*, and the first option under *fish gear and areas* pg 23. NCC believes that there should be trip limits on whiting for all Ocean Trawl activities that are not using specific whiting gear.

Key Issue 7 Jurisdictional issues

NCC supports implementation of the larger inshore closure and therefore supports the corresponding management action in this section. Other members suggested no change to arrangement already proposed through the FMS.

Other FMS / PSR issues

- NCC supports the prohibition on the use of *bobbins*, but acknowledges the advice of industry members [below] and would be supportive of research on the affect of bobbins and chain.
- Industry advise that small *bobbins* do not enable fishers to work over reef and that they have less effect on the bottom than chain. Industry representatives recommended that the current provision for bobbins up to 4 inch not be removed from the fishery as proposed in the preferred strategy report.
- Sydney and south coast industry representatives do not support the introduction of a *vessel monitoring system (VMS)*.
- NCC believes the need for mapping of trawl grounds, defining grounds, and for compliance with other programs such as nights and the myriad of closures in place and proposed, reinforces the need for this industry to introduce a *vessel monitoring system (VMS)*.
- For a saving on costs for the *observer program* it was suggested that MAC members or port representatives be trained to be an observer, or to train other

operators to collect information. In principle, DPI wishes to explore ways to involve industry to a greater extent in fisheries management, and had lodged an unsuccessful FRDC application to develop a system involving industry in the FMS monitoring program with appropriate safeguards to ensure the independence and validity of the data acquired. DPI is also considering other ways to save costs and ensure efficiencies during development of the observer program, including testing outsourcing and setting priorities for the program across multiple fisheries.

- With regard to the issue of *economic viability of the fishery*, NCC believes that simply noting that there are programs that promote industry development, training and profitability does not address the key FMS Working Group concern that the actions outlined in the FMS will not be completed due to insufficient funding. Further work needs to be done on this issue.
- With regard to the issue of *coastal habitat management and rehabilitation*, NCC supports the proposal to include recognition of the importance of this issue in the FMS.
- With regard to the *use of spikes on non-retained catches*, NCC believes a short term timeframe on banning the use of spikes should be implemented
- With regard to the *status of eastern angel shark*, NCC believes that the ongoing concern about the status of and impact on elasmobranchs has not been completely addressed in this PSR. The PSR has also failed to address the concern noted in the Environmental Impact Statement that “*the draft FMS does not directly address the issues that arose from the draft National Action Plan of Sharks*” (pg 323). Given the national and international recognition that elasmobranch populations are in decline and require recovery action further recommendations for action should be undertaken.
- With regard to *greenhouse gas emissions and marine debris*, NCC supports the inclusion of an investigative type action on this issue.
- With regard to the *review of fishery monitoring requirements*, NCC supports a biannual review.
- NCC supports the prohibition of mid-water trawling in State waters.
- The proposed *changes to draft performance indicators and trigger points* are supported by NCC subject to the following clarification. NCC believes that it is necessary to also monitor the relative catch shifts within the fish and prawn trawl fishery. If this action is not included then NCC believes further modification is required.

Other business

Review of fishing rules, bag limits and size limits

The Committee agreed to provide comment to DPI on the Review of NSW Recreational Fishing Rules & Saltwater fish size limits so that a consolidated MAC submission can be made through the Chairperson. Reference was made to the industry workshop on 4th August for a list of issues raised by industry members. NCC advised that it would also be making a submission.

SIAC nomination

Following the resignation of Bill Litchfield from the Seafood Industry Advisory Council (SIAC), Richard Bagnato and Paul Bagnato were nominated as candidates.

Next Meeting

To be determined out of session.

End.

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- Ocean trawl workshop (4 Aug 05) and ocean trawl MAC meeting (5 Aug 05) –