

## **Commission meeting**

The Commission convened for its 93<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Lakes Entrance, Victoria on 13 and 14 May 2024.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The Commission met with the Executive Officer of the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association, the Southern Shark Industry Alliance and the Small Pelagic Fishery Association to receive a comprehensive briefing on issues impacting the sustainability and viability of those fisheries.

The Commission also considered and discussed the written industry update reports from the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association, the Northern Prawn Fishery Industry Association, the Scallop Fishermen's Association of Tasmania, and the Great Australian Bight Industry Association.

The Commission met with a number of local fishing industry participants, including vessel owners, seafood retailers and the Lakes Entrance Fishermen's Cooperative.

## Outlook and issues of concern

Engagement with stakeholders confirmed a suite of common challenges and threats to the viability of various fishing industries in Australia. The well-publicised issue of "spatial squeeze" through increased competition for the marine estate, including through marine park planning, offshore energy areas and oil and gas production and exploration is an area of particular concern across southern Australia. Broader external economic and social issues such as the lack of availability of fishing vessel crew, high fuel and freight costs and low fish prices were also common themes raised by all. While most issues of concern are outside AFMA's direct mandate, these discussions serve as a continual reminder to keep our regulatory settings under review.

## Commission stocktake and forward planning

Relatedly, the Commission reviewed key decisions it has taken over its five-year term, including those instances where decisions differed from the recommendations of relevant Management Advisory Committees (MACs) or Resource Assessment Groups (RAGs). The Commission was pleased to note that many such instances reflected actions taken by the Commission to reduce regulatory burden or cost, or increase operational flexibility for industry. The Commission noted that overall, the sustainability risks posed by such decisions were well understood and appropriately considered. The Commission noted that, in the context of the significant economic pressures outlined above, it is imperative that AFMA continue to regulate fisheries in a way that ensures sustainability, while reducing regulatory burden on industry where possible and appropriate.

The Commission identified a range of priority areas of work that AFMA will need to focus on over the next five years. Ensuring cost efficiency in AFMA's operations was a central theme underpinning much of this discussion, and Commissioners recognised that forming new relationships on data collection, monitoring and assessment with a range of other marine stakeholders would be pivotal.

The Commission reviewed information about how each RAG considers economic issues in their deliberations, and the status of economic advice to the Commission. The Commission agreed to convene its Economic Working Group to develop a common understanding amongst RAG economic members as to the type of assessment of economic risks and benefits that would be useful to the Commission. This would likely include commentary about the implications of various recommendations or options on the Gross Value of Production, and assessment of potential implications on the value and trading price of Statutory Fishing Rights. The Commission agreed that SFR price data should be made more accessible to RAGs and MACs.

#### Review of Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy

The Commission received an update on the policy review, including the recent stakeholder workshop convened by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The Commission discussed what it considered to be AFMA’s broad needs from the review and the revised policy, including:

- It needs to find the right balance between aspiration and achievability (including cost). It needs to provide pragmatic scaffolding for Commonwealth fisheries management over this next, difficult, period of change.
- It and/or the guidelines needs to be more explicit on a range of issues that are mentioned in the current policy, but lack sufficient detail to facilitate uptake, such as the level of evidence and assessment required for the implementation of multi-species approaches, mechanisms to respond to changing environmental conditions, and the risks associated with different approaches.
- It needs to give greater guidance on how performance will be measured, including definitions and worked examples of elements such as when terms like “overfished”, “subject to overfishing” and “uncertain” will be applied.

#### Shared stocks and cooperation with States and Northern Territory

The Commission noted that the economic issues above, coupled with fishery changes from climate change, mean that cooperation between jurisdictions is more important than ever. The Commission noted that the range of opportunities for better cooperation is diverse, and encouraged AFMA Management to work through the Australian Fisheries Management Forum and with other jurisdictions directly to explore ideas such as:

- Sharing programs such as licensing, electronic monitoring and observers to reduce overall administration costs and promote consistency.
- Developing a framework to guide rapid cooperation on remedial action to address depleted or rebuilding stocks.
- Simpler catch sharing arrangements for shared stocks.
- Dual jurisdiction fishing trips.

#### Management Advisory Committee appointments

- a. The Commission agreed to the following MAC chair appointments<sup>1</sup>.
  - i. TTMAC Chair – Anthony Hurst from 1 July 2024 until 30 June 2027;
  - ii. NorMAC Chair – Ian Dutton from 1 July 2024 until 30 June 2027;
  - iii. SouthMAC Chair – Geoff Richardson from 1 July 2024 until 30 June 2027; and
  - iv. ScallopMAC Chair – Ian Dutton from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2027;

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission made MAC chair appointments at its March 2024 meeting.

AFMA Chairman's Summary – 93<sup>rd</sup> meeting

The Commission expressed its gratitude to Dr Daryl McPhee as the outgoing chair of ScallopMAC, Dr Rachel Baird as the outgoing chair of SouthMAC, Catherine Sayer as the outgoing chair of TTMAC and Dr John Glaister as the outgoing chair of NorMAC, for their significant contribution to AFMA and wider industry.

The Commission made the following member appointments to MACs:

a. TTMAC from 1 July 2024 until 30 June 2027

i. Industry Members:

1. Terry Romaro
2. Adam Whan
3. Daryn Logan
4. David Ellis

ii. Conservation Member: Dr Glen Holmes

iii. Research Member: Dr Ashley Williams

iv. Recreational / Charter Fishing Member: Grahame Williams

v. AFMA Member: Senior Manager AFMA Tuna & International Fisheries

b. NorMAC from 1 July 2024 until 30 June 2027

i. Industry Members:

1. Bryan van Wyk
2. Greg Albert
3. Ian R Boot
4. Phil Robson
5. Michael O'Brien

ii. Conservation Member: Dr Geoffrey Muldoon

iii. Research Members:

1. Dr Denham Parker
2. Dr Ian Knuckey

iv. AFMA Member: Senior Manager AFMA Northern Fisheries

c. SouthMAC from 1 July 2024 until 30 June 2027

i. Industry Members:

1. Malcolm McNeil
2. Rhys Arangio

ii. Conservation Member: Dr Lynda Goldsworthy

iii. Research Member: Dr Phil Ziegler

iv. AAD Member: Sally Carney

v. AFMA Member: Senior Manager AFMA Tuna & International Fisheries

d. ScallopMAC from 1 June 2024 until 31 May 2027

i. Industry Members:

1. Andrew Watts
2. G (John) Hammond
3. John Cull
4. Steven Mantzaris
5. Stuart Richey

ii. Conservation Member: Dr Sylvia Zukowski

iii. Research Members:

1. Dr Brendan P. Kelaher
2. Prof. Caleb Gardner

iv. AFMA Member: AFMA Manager for the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery.

Ministerial Statement of Expectations and AFMA Corporate Plan

The Commission reviewed the Statement of Expectations (SOE) that Minister Watt had recently issued to AFMA under the Regulator Performance Framework. The Commission appreciated the clarity that the SOE provides, and the Minister's commitment to ensuring that the legislative and policy environment of AFMA remains fit for purpose. The Commission provided guidance to the CEO to assist the preparation of the responding Statement of Intent.

The Commission also reviewed and provided feedback to AFMA Management on the draft AFMA Corporate Plan 2024-27.

Next meeting

The Commission agreed that the next meeting would be held in Canberra, ACT on 09 and 10 July 2024. The following meeting will be determined subject to the appointment of Commissioners before June 2024, but the Commission generally agreed it should be 12 and 13 September in Hobart, Tasmania, to coincide with Seafood Directions 2024.

Helen Kroger

Chairman