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## National Indigenous Fishing Technical Working Group (NIFTWG)

The impact of illegal fishing and new ventures for Indigenous involvement in the commercial fishing sector were key themes at a national meeting of Indigenous fishing stakeholders held in Fremantle in late February.

The event was attended by 35 people from government, Indigenous and the commercial fishing sectors who gave a series of presentations about the progress made towards recognition of Indigenous customary fishing and emerging opportunities for economic development through aquaculture.

Among the case studies were projects from Maningrida in the Northern Territory where mud crabs are being farmed, a barramundi fishing venture in the Tiwi Islands and plans in WA and the Northern Territory to employ more Indigenous people as marine rangers equipped to tackle illegal fishing.

The meeting drew together developments since the first national Indigenous Fishing Rights conference, held in 2003 and discussed jurisdictions experiences in implementing the [Indigenous Fishing Principles](#).

The National Indigenous Fishing Technical Working Group (NIFTWG) was established as a result of the conference and has led to the establishment of national Indigenous fishing principles, endorsed by the Australian Government.

Tribunal member John Catlin chaired the meeting which was held in advance of the international Sharing the Fish—Allocation Issues in Fisheries Management 2006 conference.

Mr Catlin said there was an open exchange of ideas on engaging Indigenous people in the commercial fishing and aquaculture industries across Australia.

For papers and presentations from the meeting including updates from: the Australian Government; all state and the Northern Territory governments; and, an update on current native title law as it relates to marine areas, go to the National Native Title Tribunal's website: [http://www.nntt.gov.au/publications/NIFTWG06\\_Info.html](http://www.nntt.gov.au/publications/NIFTWG06_Info.html)

# Indigenous fishing in the news

## March 2006

### **Qld: Landmark decision on net fishing raises sustainability concerns, 03/03/2006**

Queensland's fishing authority will closely consider ecological sustainability concerns after a landmark court case involving Indigenous people and the use of commercial fishing nets. The Court of Appeal ruled Rockhampton's Riccardo Yasso was free to continue using a commercial fishing net to catch fish because it was Aboriginal tradition. Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries Central Queensland regional director, Paul Walmsley, said the ruling had wide-spread implications and changed the way their staff made decisions when they found people using a net.

Source: Ruling opens can of worms, *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 03/03/2006, p. 6.

Full judgment: *Stevenson v Yasso [2006] QCA 40*

<http://www.courts.qld.gov.au/qjudgment/QCA%202006/QCA06-040.pdf>

### **WA: Community group praised for monitoring role, 04/03/2006**

Customs has praised an Aboriginal community after they raised the alert about a suspected illegal fishing boat off Western Australia's Kimberley coast. A spokesman said the case was a good illustration of how both Customs and the local Indigenous community are working together.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200603/s1583839.htm>

### **Qld: Extend exclusive zones, say Torres Strait fishers, 08/03/2006**

Torres Strait Island fishermen want to increase the present exclusive fishing zones around selected Islands to include all the Islands and cays of the Torres Strait. The island's fishermen representatives, who took part in the Lobster Working Group meeting last week, were disappointed at the way the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) had been proceeding up to now.

Source: Fishermen want exclusive zones extended, *Torres News*, 08/03/2006, p. 11.

### **WA: Bardi community patrol officers catch illegal fishers, 09/03/2006**

A joint patrol by the Department of Fisheries and One Arm Point community has nabbed its first batch of Indonesian illegal fishermen. It comes only a month after Fisheries officers joined forces with the community to patrol local waters, in an effort to stop plundering of local fish and trochus shell stocks.

Source: Bardi catch first illegals, *Broome Advertiser*, 09/03/2006, p. 5.

### **Qld: Community outrage at turtle kill, 16/03/2006**

Animal welfare groups have called on the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) and traditional owners to bring to account those responsible for killing a large number of freshwater turtles and leaving them in a shopping trolley. About 40 dead freshwater turtles were discovered in a shopping trolley outside a home in Mundingburra.

Source: Turtle kill furore, *Townsville Bulletin*, 16/03/2006, p. 3.

### **Qld: Traditional owner speaks out against turtle killings, 17/03/2006**

'Absolutely disgusting' was a traditional owner's reaction after 40 freshwater turtles were killed for food and left in a shopping trolley in Mundingburra this week. Wulgurukaba traditional owner Alice Dowden said she would seek action against those responsible for killing the turtles, which were left in shopping bags in a trolley outside a home.

Source: Rage at death of turtles, *Townsville Bulletin*, 17/03/2006, p. 9.

### **NT: Customs accused of ignoring illegal fishing, 17/03/2006.**

Archie Johnston, a traditional owner on Vanderlin Island, has accused Customs of not responding to reports about illegal foreign fishermen operating in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Customs say bad weather in the Gulf prevented their boats intercepting the fishers.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200603/s1594006.htm>

### **NT: Sea rangers criticise govt's response to illegal fishing, 20/03/2006.**

On a visit to Maningrida in north-east Arnhem Land, a federal Labor Party taskforce on illegal fishing has been told, by the local Indigenous community, that 90 per cent of poachers have to be caught before foreign fishermen decide it is not worth the risk.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200603/s1596574.htm>

### **NT: Aboriginal sea rangers training 'makes sense', 21/03/2006.**

The federal Labor Party has backed calls for Aboriginal sea rangers to be trained to do quarantine inspections aboard illegal fishing boats. Sea rangers at Maningrida on the Northern Territory's Arnhem Land coast believe they should be trained to prevent animals and diseases reaching mainland Australia.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200603/s1597353.htm>

### **WA: 10 year vision for fishing in the Kimberley, 21/03/2006**

WA Fisheries Minister Jon Ford has called on Kimberley communities and fishing stakeholders to contribute their knowledge and experience to a plan to create a 10-year vision for the use of fish resources in the region. A series of workshops throughout the Kimberley will gather input from Indigenous, recreational and commercial fishers, pearling and tourism interests, plus other community groups.

See the media statement for further information:

<http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/media/media.nsf/news/49F0C5BA0648E4B14825713800274881?opendocument>

### **Qld: Indigenous trainees monitoring coral bleaching, 22/03/2006**

Traditional knowledge and the latest scientific research are joining forces to monitor the impacts of coral bleaching on one of Australia's icons, the Great Barrier Reef. Four Indigenous trainees are spending the next couple of months working alongside Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) research scientists aboard a sailing catamaran designed for marine research, environmental, social, and educational projects.

Source: <http://www.deh.gov.au/minister/env/2006/mr22mar306.html>

### **WA: Kimberley Aboriginal fishers concerned about new laws, 23/03/2006**

A group of 25 local Indigenous people visited Kimberley MLA Carol Martin recently, upset they had not been considered in the newly imposed fishing laws. Mrs Martin said they were concerned about the fact that they were not recreational fishermen and that they took fish for subsistence instead.

Source: Indigenous anglers seek limit changes, *Kimberley Times*, 23/03/2006, p. 3.

### **WA: Bardi people seek compensation for poached trochus, 24/03/2006**

A remote Kimberley community is seeking almost \$4 million for the near-collapse of their trochus industry caused by poaching. The One Arm Point's Bardi community has written to Prime Minister John Howard calling for the Federal Government to address the illegal fishing crisis and compensate them for nearly \$1 million a year for four years.

Source: More boats caught as Bardi seek \$4m for poached trochus, *West Australian*, 24/03/2006, p. 9.

### **WA: Lawyers probe trochus compensation bid, 25/03/2006.**

Federal Government lawyers are to investigate a claim for compensation by a Kimberley Aboriginal community that harvests trochus shell. One Arm Point, north of Broome, has called for compensation of nearly \$1 million for shell losses amid claims of poaching by Indonesian fishermen.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200603/s1600730.htm>

## **April 2006**

### **NT: Crustacean crop growth surprises farmers, 04/04/2006.**

A new crab farm at the Kulaluk Indigenous community in Darwin says its trial crop of crustaceans will soon be ready for harvesting. The farm is hoping two harvests each year will produce at least 10 tonnes of mud crab.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200604/s1608526.htm>

### **NSW: Fish traps make a welcome return, 17/04/2006**

Permission to recommence use of ancient fish traps near Yarrowarra Headland has come through just in time for an Easter feast. Dee Murphy, project officer for the cultural heritage and research unit at Yarrowarra Aboriginal Corporation, said that the Aboriginal community were excited about using the traps again to catch food such as mullet, bream, pipis, cockles and oysters.

Source: Return of the old ways, *Woolgoolga Advertiser*, 17/04/2006, p. 3.

### **NT: Major illegal fishing crackdown labelled 'publicity stunt', 19/04/2006.**

Aboriginal sea rangers say a recent operation targeting illegal fishing off the Northern Territory coast was a two-week publicity stunt. Operation Breakwater caught 23 suspected illegal fishing boats in two weeks, but the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation says it needs to be sustained on a permanent basis.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200604/s1618694.htm>

### **Qld: Food stocks protected after native title ruling, 20/04/2006**

A native title ruling over a series of uninhabited Torres Strait islands will stop visitors helping themselves to wild yams, turtle eggs and coconuts, a ranger claims. Horace Nona of Badu Island's ranger program said the Federal Court's recent determination meant islanders now had the legal right to police what they had known was theirs for centuries.

Source: Food stocks off-limits on vacant isles, *Cairns Post*, 20/04/2006, p. 8.

TSRA media statement: <http://www.tsra.gov.au/www/index.cfm?pageID=595>

### **NSW: Ancient fish traps back in use, 21/04/2006**

The age-old Aboriginal stone fish traps on Arrawarra Headland, north of Coffs Harbour, are being brought back into use by the local Indigenous community. Traditional trapping began over Easter, coinciding with tidal and moon phases.

Source: Fish traps back in use, *Northern Star*, 21/04/2006, p. 32.

NSW Government media statement:

[http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/news/releases/fisheries/fishing\\_and\\_aquaculture\\_news\\_2006/stone-fish-traps](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/news/releases/fisheries/fishing_and_aquaculture_news_2006/stone-fish-traps)

### **Qld: Lobster fishing partnership offers economic growth, 26/04/2006**

Lobster fishing is providing a lucrative employment alternative for Indigenous communities in far northern Queensland. Earlier this year, the State Government announced a \$300,000 grant to a fishing enterprise in the Cape York community of Lockhart River. Already 17 people from the community have received accredited commercial dive training, as per the industry standard.

Source: Lobby group bolsters struggling far north communities, *Courier Mail*, 26/04/2006, p. 20.

Queensland Government media statement:

<http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=44329>

### **Qld: Funding boost for dugong and turtle management project, 28/04/2006**

A plan for the management of dugong and turtle populations in Torres Strait islander communities has received \$700,000 extra funding from the Natural Heritage Trust, to drive its expansion throughout the region. The Regional Activity Plan is said to be a step towards empowering Torres Strait Islanders to determine their own future use of the region's natural resources.

Source: <http://www.tsra.gov.au/www/index.cfm?pageID=600>

## **May 2006**

### **NT: Doubt cast over sea ranger funds, 12/05/2006**

Federal Labor MP, Warren Snowdon, has raised questions about how the government will distribute \$9 million it promised to Aboriginal sea rangers in this years' federal Budget. The money is part of a campaign to reduce the number of illegal fishermen operating off Australia's north coast.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200605/s1636963.htm>

### **SA: Fishing ILUA negotiations progressing, 16/05/2006**

The South Australian Fishing Industry Council (SAFIC) says that recreational fishers in the Yorke Peninsula area should not be concerned about access to waters in light of ongoing negotiations for a fishing and aquaculture indigenous land use agreement (ILUA) in the area. Neil McDonald from SAFIC said that community concern about not being able to fish is misplaced.

Source: Rec fisher fears "misplaced", *Yorke Peninsula Country Times* (Kadina), 16/05/2006, p. 5.

### **SA: ILUA bid concerns fishing industry, 17/05/2006**

The Seafood Council of South Australia has expressed concerns that aquaculture and fishing industries on Eyre Peninsula could be affected by native title claims over the region's waters. Negotiations have begun for indigenous land use agreements, which cover coastal land and waters from Cowell to Venus Bay.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200605/s1640679.htm>

### **WA: Fashion industry seeks partnership, 23/05/2006**

Members of Italy's fashion industry have visited One Arm Point, north of Broome, to pitch a proposal for a joint venture with a Kimberley Aboriginal community in northern Western Australia to increase its production of trochus shell.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200605/s1645014.htm>

### **Qld: Local MP calls for Fisheries Act amendments, 22/05/2006**

Member for Keppel Paul Hoolihan has called for amendments to Queensland's Fisheries Act following a Court of Appeal decision allowing Indigenous people to fish with commercial-sized fishing nets. Mr Hoolihan said he had received many calls from members of the small Keppel Sands community over a local family's claim that their

rights as Indigenous people allowed them to use monofilament nets to catch fish.

Source: Right-to-net rule divides fishermen, *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 22/05/2006, p. 5.

### **Qld: Traditional fishing needed for health, 23/05/2006**

A central Queensland Aboriginal man says traditional hunting and fishing rights are an important part in improving Indigenous health. Leonard Yasso, whose son Riccardo was involved in a landmark court decision on Indigenous fishing with nets earlier this year, says traditional food has important nutritional value.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200605/s1645122.htm>

### **WA: Foreign fishers jailed for trochus shell poaching, 26/05/2006**

A court has sentenced 13 Indonesian fishermen to jail terms ranging from seven to nine months for illegally poaching trochus shell in WA waters. A fishing group comprised of local Bardi people members spotted the boat hiding in mangroves, just 13 kilometres from the One Arm Point community.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200605/s1648311.htm>

### **WA: Trochus fishery added to endangered fishing zones list, 27/05/2006**

The trochus fishery at remote One Arm Point has been added to the State Government's list of endangered fishing zones, a move which could threaten the livelihood of the Bardi Community—which manages the area. The community has threatened to rebel against any attempts to close the fishery, which stands to bring in millions of dollars every year if a business deal with Italian company Seacrest goes ahead.

Source: Bardi up in arms over fish zone, *West Australian*, 27/05/2006, p. 4.

## **Issues in brief**

### **Federal Budget 2006**

A \$388.9 million plan to combat illegal foreign fishing in northern Australian waters was announced as part of the Howard Government's 2006-07 Federal Budget.

To enhance the Government's response to foreign fishing incursions, **\$6.9 million** will be allocated to engage Indigenous community groups to help monitor the bio-security risks from illegal foreign fishing vessels—with a review of the program in 12 months.

For further details, see the media release from Australian Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Senator Eric Abetz: <http://www.mffc.gov.au/releases/2006/06035aj.htm>

### **Australasian Aquaculture 2006 – Adelaide**

Indigenous aquaculture will be on the agenda at the Australasian Aquaculture 'Innovation in Aquaculture' Conference which will take place at the Adelaide Convention Centre in South Australia from 27 to 30 August 2006. The event will bring together more than 1,000 delegates from across the planet to share knowledge and showcase aquaculture's best innovations.

Registration is open now: <http://www.australian-aquacultureportal.com/austaqua/aa06.html>

## Useful links

### Conferences

Australasian Aquaculture 2006: <http://www.australian-aquacultureportal.com/austaqua/aa06.html>

### Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority: <http://www.afma/default.php>

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies: <http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/>

Australian Institute of Marine Science: <http://www.aims.gov.au/>

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry: <http://www.dpie.gov.au/>

Department of Environment and Heritage: <http://www.deh.gov.au/index.html>

Fisheries Research and Development Corporation: <http://www.frdc.com.au/index.htm>

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority: <http://www.gbmpa.gov.au/>

National Native Title Tribunal: <http://www.nntt.gov.au/>

National Oceans Office: <http://www.oceans.gov.au/home.jsp>

Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority: <http://www.pzja.gov.au/>

Torres Strait Regional Authority: <http://www.tsra.gov.au/www/index.cfm>

Wet Tropics World Heritage Area: <http://wettropics.gov.au/>

### State and Territory Government

Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia: <http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/index.shtml>

Department of Primary Industries Tasmania: <http://www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/Home/1?Open>

Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries: <http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/home/default.html>

Northern Territory Fisheries: <http://www.fisheries.nt.gov.au/>

NSW Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries: <http://www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au/>

Victoria Department of Primary Industries: <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/dpi/index.htm>

WA Department of Fisheries: <http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/>

### Networks

Australian Aquaculture Portal: <http://www.australian-aquacultureportal.com/>

The Marine and Coastal Community Network: <http://www.mccn.org.au/index.php>

### Online publications

*Hi ika* – Indigenous fisheries magazine issued quarterly in New Zealand:

[http://www.fish.govt.nz/customary/hi\\_ika/](http://www.fish.govt.nz/customary/hi_ika/)

*Kantri Laif* (coun-try li-fe) – twice-yearly newsletter produced by NAILSMA:

[http://savanna.ntu.edu.au/publications/kantri\\_laif.html](http://savanna.ntu.edu.au/publications/kantri_laif.html)

CRC Reef Newsletter: <http://www.reef.crc.org.au/publications/news/>

### Education

Australian Maritime College: <http://www.amc.edu.au/>

James Cook University Native Title Studies Centre: <http://www.jcu.edu.au/app/law/ntsc/index.cfm>

Marine Education Society of Australia: <http://www.mesa.edu.au/>

Reef Ed: [http://www.reefed.edu.au/explorer/traditional\\_owners/index.html](http://www.reefed.edu.au/explorer/traditional_owners/index.html)

### International

Fisheries and Oceans Canada: [http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/home-accueil\\_e.htm](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/home-accueil_e.htm)

New Zealand Ministry of Fisheries: <http://www.fish.govt.nz/>