



# National Native Title Tribunal

Welcome to the second edition of the National Native Title Tribunal's Indigenous fishing bulletin.

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### **National Indigenous Fishing Technical Working Group (NIFTWG) update**

A high-level meeting involving Indigenous groups, fishing managers and industry bodies, convened by the Tribunal in Adelaide, has confirmed the move towards a national approach to managing the customary fishing practices of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders with the fishing activities of other users.

A major outcome of the meeting of the National Indigenous Fishing Technical Working Group on 1 June was an agreement to develop a set of nationally endorsed principles to guide policy and strategy in relation to the fishing activities of Indigenous people. The principles, if adopted and implemented, will have great potential for guiding the future development of indigenous fishing strategies within the context of sustainable fisheries management.

The technical working group, comprised of experts from the seafood industries, recreational fishing, indigenous fishing, native title, and state and federal government natural resource managers, was established following a resolution passed by more than 70 Indigenous delegates in October last year at the Indigenous Fishing Rights conference. The resolution, which was further endorsed by the full conference plenary, says that local, regional, state and national structures need to be established to coordinate indigenous fishing strategies.

Working with the authority of their respective organisations, the representatives at the meeting agreed that the next step to progress this resolution was to develop the guiding principles. Input has now been received from all stakeholders, and though the drafting process has been

postponed due to current caretaker conventions, it is envisaged that agreement on the full set of principles will be reached pending the outcome of the October 9 election.

For more information about NIFTWG please go to: <http://www.nntt.gov.au/media/Projects.html>

### Indigenous fishing in the news:

#### **Qld: Murrandoo Yanner calls for more Indigenous involvement in commercial fishing**

The *Weekend Australian* (4/9/2004) reports comments by Indigenous leader Murrandoo Yanner who has called for more Indigenous participation in the prawning and commercial fishing industry in the Gulf of Carpentaria. A Federal Court decision handed down in March found that the Lardil, Yangkaal, Kaiadilt and Gangalidda peoples held non-exclusive rights in line with their traditional law and customs over areas of sea in the lower Gulf region. Mr Yanner said the rights of commercial fishermen in the region remained, but that their activities now had to take into account the rights, interests and customs of Indigenous people. 'There is more than 95 per cent unemployment on Mornington (Island) and nearby communities and this is the chance to alleviate that social inequity and get involved in real business,' Mr Yanner said. 'The seafood industry and the various governments now have to recognise our rights and come to the table to talk this through.'

**Source:** 'Fighting against the raw prawn,' 4 September 2004, *The Weekend Australian*, p. 2.

#### **NSW: Landmark customary fishing test case to be heard in November**

A landmark customary fishing rights case involving 11 Aboriginal men from the New South Wales south coast has been stood over until November. The men are facing more than 20 charges relating to abalone poaching and will reportedly use their traditional rights to fish in their defence when they face the Narooma Local Court in November.

**Source:** 'Test case for spirituality,' 25 August 2004, *Koori Mail*, p. 7.

#### **NSW: Report calls for major reforms to protect Indigenous fishing practices**

A report commissioned by the NSW Minister for Primary Industries and NSW Fisheries to look at illegal and black market fishing in the state has concluded that major reforms are needed to protect Indigenous cultural fishing practices. The part of the 'Report on Illegal Fishing for Commercial Gain or Profit in NSW' that addresses Indigenous fishing has called for more involvement of Aboriginal people in the management of fishery resources in NSW, in line with the state's Indigenous Fishing Strategy (IFS). ATSIIC national spokesman on fishing Rodney Dillon has praised the recommendations of the report. 'This is what we've been saying all along and really puts Indigenous fishing on the agenda of the NSW Government,' Mr Dillon said. 'When we take fish we're treated like criminals but it's something our people have been doing for thousands of years.'

A PDF version of the report is available from: <http://www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au/com/pdf/Black-Market-Report.pdf>

**Source:** 'Reforms needed: NSW review looks at Indigenous fishing,' 11 August 2004, *Koori Mail*, p. 4.

### Issues in brief:

#### **WA Fishing Industry Council seminars to discuss Indigenous fishing**

The WA Fishing Industry Council will be holding a series of Regional Fisheries Seminars in Carnarvon (27 September), Geraldton (7 October), Broome (27 October). WAFIC invites all interested groups and individuals to attend one of three remaining regional fisheries seminars, which will provide the fishing industry with an update on the major reviews that are under way, including Integrated Fisheries Management, Marine Reserves, the Wetline Review, indigenous fishing and Ecological Sustainable Development.

For further information please contact WAFIC on (08) 9244 2933, email [reception@wafic.org](mailto:reception@wafic.org) or visit [http://www.wafic.org.au/news\\_and\\_events/newsitem.phtml?NewsID=26](http://www.wafic.org.au/news_and_events/newsitem.phtml?NewsID=26)

### **Shark Bay dugong monitoring program wins national award**

The WA based Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation has achieved national recognition for its highly successful dugong monitoring program by winning the inaugural Alcan Landcare Indigenous Award. The project, which has been under way since 1999, was undertaken to track the movements of dugongs through an extensive tagging program within the Shark Bay World Heritage Property along Western Australia's Pilbara coastline. The groundbreaking study was one of the first of its kind to track the seasonal movements of dugongs in the region and the success of the program has led to its adoption as a model for other research projects involving traditional owners, governments and research organisations.

For more information please visit the Landcare Australia website: <http://www.landcareaustralia.com.au/MediaDisplay.asp?ArticleID=97> (Landcare's media release) and <http://www.landcareaustralia.com.au/Admin/upload/A5052650-4024-4E94-9ABE-E72FB5FC42E8.pdf> (further information about the Alcan Landcare Indigenous Award finalists).

### **Sponges found to be abundant in the Torres Strait**

The first stages of study that will explore the potential for bath sponge culture in the Torres Strait region has found at least 30 new bath sponge species, some which are new to science. The study is a two-year collaborative project between the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), CRC Torres Strait and the Torres Strait Regional Authority. Worldwide demand for bath sponges is currently outstripping supply and this project seeks to outline the potential for cultivating sea sponges for commercial harvest using low-technology in-sea aquaculture that will be compatible with the customs of coastal Indigenous communities.

See the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) website for further information about the sea sponge project: <http://www.tsra.gov.au/www/index.cfm?pageID=302>

### **Hearings begin in relation to New Zealand's controversial Foreshore and Seabed Bill**

Three months of Senate Committee hearings kicked off in July relating to the proposed Foreshore and Seabed Bill which will effectively declare all of New Zealand's coastline public property. In May the Government introduced a bill into Parliament that, if passed, will place ownership of the foreshore and seabed in Crown hands. Many Maori believe they should be able to make claims to these areas through the courts. More than 4000 submissions had been received on the controversial proposal before the special fisheries and other sea-related legislation select committee began hearing the submissions in late July.

For the latest information on submissions received and reactions to the proposal, go to: <http://www.scoop.co.nz/>