



Fisheries Factsheet

This factsheet was informed by the ILSC's activities and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations relating to fisheries.

Indigenous communities used and been custodians of Australia's marine and freshwater environment for thousands of generations. However, Indigenous Australians typically have very limited involvement, ownership or influence in Australia's commercial fishing industry.

Australia's fishing industry is estimated to be worth \$3.15 Billion with salmon, rock lobster, prawns, abalone and tuna bringing in the majority of revenue. While Australia has some of the best managed fisheries in the world, the sustainability of wild catch is under pressure. In a trend that is reflected around the world, aquaculture is increasingly used to produce our seafood.

Australia has not always had a system of allocating rights to catch seafood through fishing licences and quotas. Many of Australia's 165 commercial fisheries were assigned their allocations only in recent decades. Indigenous groups have mostly missed out through this process, with the amounts provided for 'Indigenous catch' often being a tiny (and often nominal) percentage of the total allocation.

Commercial, recreational, Indigenous and conservation interests in Australia's fish stocks are often conflicting. This is compounded by different rules and regulations at territory, state and national levels.

There is significant interest in seeing increased Indigenous presence in the fishing industry. All territory, state and national regulators have Indigenous representatives in place seeking opportunities to increase Indigenous involvement.

Challenges

- Indigenous groups presently hold few rights to commercial fisheries.
- Fishing and Aquaculture industries are expensive to enter with significant upfront costs for licences, fishing rights and equipment.
- Entering many fisheries is difficult, with quota and licences fully allocated and controlled by a small number of actors with vested interests.
- Fishing rights and quotas are linked to stock levels and therefore subject to change, adding to the risk of entering the industry.
- There are both regulatory and sustainability challenges that can affect new rights or quotas being allocated.
- Limited information on opportunities for greater Indigenous involvement in fisheries is complicated by the different state rules and regulations across fisheries and the need for business cases specific to particular species.
- Developing the skills, capacity, appropriate governance models to successfully establish and operate commercial fishing operations.
- Gaining the multitude of licences and accreditations needed to establish a fishing operation, from boat licences to workplace and food safety.
- There is opposition from some elements of the fishing industry to the prioritised allocation of fishing rights to Indigenous people to redress historical dispossession.
- Funding has focused on research and regulation rather than Indigenous fishery business development.



Northern Australia
Aquaculture Project



Eulimbah at
sunrise, Gayini



Wanna Mar Stehr
tuna fishing, Port
Lincoln, SA

Opportunities

- Regulators, investors and retailers are seeking greater Indigenous involvement across the fishing industry.
- Indigenous people are building on native title and other agreements e.g. the recent incorporation of the Aboriginal Sea Corporation in the NT (implementing outcomes from the 2008 Blue Mud Bay decision).
- Regulators are looking for solutions to manage any conflicts between Indigenous and other fishers.
- Increased Indigenous ownership and involvement in fisheries will lead to greater recognition of native title over sea country.
- Promoting, learning from and replicating examples of good Indigenous governance, investment and partnership models.
- Exploring emerging species which Indigenous groups could lead e.g. cultivating a red algae that can reduce methane from cattle, thereby reducing carbon emissions.

Tell Us What You Need

How can the ILSC best support your participation in the fishing industry? Should we:

1. Provide information on where fishing industry opportunities exist and how to take advantage of those opportunities?
2. Help to build your business planning and capabilities? e.g. feasibility studies, capacity building, links to technical advisors and networks.
3. Link you with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and groups to learn from each other? e.g. sharing ideas, lessons and business models that work, supporting conferences etc.
4. Actively support Indigenous-led organisations, networks, alliances and initiatives to have a greater voice in industry development and government?
5. Provide funding support for projects?
6. Other suggestions?

Projects supported by the ILSC

The ILSC expanded its operations into sea and freshwater country in 2019 and have supported projects including:

- buying the land and providing funding for a hatchery and grow out ponds for freshwater prawn (Cherabin) in Derby, WA;
- funding operating equipment for a start up wild sea cucumber harvesting business, Denham, WA;
- investing \$5 million over four years to enable Kuti Co to acquire it's fishing licence and a significant quantity of commercial pipi quota; and,
- supporting the Land and Sea Aboriginal Corporation Tasmania to fish the 40 state-owned abalone units at Murrayfield, on Bruny Island, Tasmania.

To find out more about what we do please go to www.ilsc.gov.au and check out our Project Profiles.



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Join The Conversation



Come along to one of our face-to-face sessions or join an online session. Visit our website to book in.



Complete the on line survey.



Phone us on 1800 818 490 for a confidential chat.



Email your submissions to NILSS@ilsc.gov.au to share your thoughts.



Get your full Information Pack: visit www.ilsc.gov.au, or email NILSS@ilsc.gov.au.



A feedback report summarising what we have heard from you and how we will use this important information will be available on the website.



www.ilsc.gov.au