CHAIRPERSON'S INTRODUCTION

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Fisheries managers are required to assimilate various data sources into management plans that address:

- ecosystem maintenance;
- sustainable exploitation;
- social and economic demands aimed at maximising the benefits to individual, specific groups and the current generation of resource users, to the possible detriment of the community in general and future generations;
- competing uses for particular habitats.

Fisheries management has always been espoused as being based on sustainable development.

This intent has been reflected in almost all fisheries legislation e.g. the South Australian Fisheries Act which is directed towards:

- ensuring through proper conservation, preservation and fisheries management measures, that the living resources of the waters to which this Act applies are not endangered or overexploited;
- achieving the optimum utilisation and equitable distribution of these resources; and
- the Department of Fisheries "Mission Statement", which aims "To conserve living marine and freshwater resources and develop them on behalf of current and future generations."

It can be arguably stated that the era of modern fisheries management reflecting this intent has been the last 20–25 years. However, regrettably, the history of fisheries management over this period has not been the achievement of the intent/level of expectations. Until recently most of the research/data sets have had a single species/stock perspective.

Without an holistic/integrated/ecosystem-based approach two outcomes have resulted:

- Many species and stocks have been systematically overexploited through serial depletion, because of the tendency to concentrate on a specific component of the ecosystem or stock and only redirect attention when other components have become threatened, and a preoccupation with the problems associated with the original components.
- There has been a failure to present advice on an integrated/ecosystem basis and therefore to "educate" the community/industry/politicians to think on an holistic basis as well as on the traditional fisheries viewpoint.

These have resulted in:

- a failure by these sectors to recognise the interrelated dependence of each component of the system;
- the need for a greater commitment to the maintenance of the system's integrity;

- a failure to recognise the collective extent of serial depletion;
- the need for a greater commitment to combat loss of habitats etc through other factors such as pollution, urbanisation;
- the commonly held image of fisheries and fishers as exploiters/plunderers, rapers.

These have occurred despite warnings from relevant scientific/management sectors.

In recent years this situation has improved. With the greater/increased awareness of environmental issues by a wide cross section of the community (ie the "greening" of the world) the required holistic/integrated/ecosystem approach has achieved greater prominence, support and credibility.

This is reflected through initiatives such as:

- Draft National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development—3 recommendations;
- Biodiversity;
- Resource Assessment Commission, Coastal Zone Enquiry;
- A National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity;
- Ocean Rescue 2000.

The challenge for fisheries managers is to recognise the changes that are occurring, and to assimilate and apply them, both in the management of fisheries as well as in the wider educative role for management. Our keynote speaker Stan Moberly, suggested activism. Whilst this may appear self evident and sensible, it may not be simple to achieve. This is because of:

- the need for greater financial and personnel resources (just look at the costing associated with the sustainable development proposals);
- the need to develop analyses and methodologies to handle other than single species data bases;
- the need to reconcile the views of those trained in the more traditional fisheries management methods compared with those advocating the holistic integrated ecosystem-based approach.

As an example, in the South Australian Department of Fisheries this very issue has recently been vigorously debated.

Our three speakers, one each from the marine, estuarine and freshwater areas, will present overview and case study data to illustrate these points.