

Questions to Nigel Scullion

David Hall (Director of Fisheries, NT) was happy to take up Nigel Scullion's challenge but, as chairman of Session 3, preferred to defer his response until more time was available.

Laurie Gwynne (QFMA) offered a correction in relation to the compensation said to be paid to the Pumicestone Passage fishermen. Their actual entitlement to fish was not bought out; their entitlement to fish in that area was removed.

Mike Dredge (QDPI) referred to the process by which we can recognize stakeholder groups where difficulties were expected, but where the government was able to negotiate directly with that stakeholder group through a representative body, for example the SUN-FISH group in Queensland.

Nigel Scullion agreed with regard to stakeholder representation and believed that SUNFISH has done a great job. He expected that it will become representative in every State of Australia and, through Recfish, internationally. With other stakeholders, whether it is indigenous people or the tackle groups, i.e. the Australian Federal Tackle Association, he expected they would have some very strong representation. With good representation, rather than a cast of thousands, real progress can be achieved.

Trevor Simmonds (Amateur Fisherman's Association of the Northern Territory) asked how, if Recfish Australia is not recognized as a national body, the recreational sector is

going to deal effectively with the Australian Seafood Industry Council (ASIC).

Nigel Scullion replied that, as chairman of a national organization, he has lobbied to ensure that Recfish continues to get funding. The way that the industry intends to continue to make contact is through the existing stakeholders, i.e. each State recreational fishing entity, that make up the body of Recfish, should Recfish funding be discontinued.

David Hall's subsequent response to Nigel Scullion

I will indeed be allocating time and effort to ensuring that a process is developed to allocate resources within the Territory in which all stakeholders have ownership. I do, however, think that this is more about making existing processes work rather than re-inventing new systems. All of us involved in fisheries management, whether it be from the perspective of one of many user groups or from the perspective of government, know that the fisheries environment represents a complex cocktail of competing interests.

I am a strong believer in the existing MAC (Management Advisory Committee) system of consultation as a focus for work that the Division does unilaterally with each stakeholder group, to address their needs and achieve sustainability and economic outcomes for the Territory. MACs are essential to make resource management and allocation decisions by consensus.

A "process" to guide the resolution of resource-sharing conflicts is being strived for by fisheries agencies world-wide. I do not think that such a process can possibly be prescriptive in nature. At the end of the day accurate stock assessment information, economic and social information, and collective bargaining around the MAC table between all stakeholder groups (including government scientists and managers) is the best approach.

In contrast to this approach, addressing the opportunities and needs of each stakeholder group or industry need not be directed

through the MAC. For example, the commercial catching sector could deal directly with government over issues such as assistance with optimal harvesting strategies, marketing programmes, value adding assistance, fishing methods or any other activities or projects that do not have a direct influence on the management or allocation of the resource itself. At the end of the day, the outcomes we need to achieve from whatever processes are agreed upon are solutions to allocation decisions that are ecologically sound, economically optimal, socially acceptable and politically palatable.