

Summing up

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Rather than revisiting the outcomes of the case histories or covering the same ground as the final discussion, we felt it would be useful to highlight some of the more important issues raised.

- The best quote of the workshop came from Darryl McPhee in summing up the industry perspective: "An industry that does not embrace bycatch issues will be a short one indeed". This is a sobering thought and cuts right to the quick. It captures the notion that we don't have time to elegantly research many of the issues before taking action and the need to urgently address the concerns of the community for endangered species.
- The workshop clearly demonstrated that the entire bycatch issue needs to be tackled in a collaborative and cooperative way. If we, the R&D providers and federal, state and territory managers do not involve industry in all steps of the process we will not get very far.
- In terms of addressing the problem of setting targets, the most important take-

home message was the complexity of the issue. This is a major challenge and by no means a trivial issue. There is a high degree of uncertainty in many areas and the level of understanding of the issues is generally inadequate.

- It is difficult, if not impossible, to generalise with respect to targets or outcomes either in a generic sense across fisheries or within fisheries. Most of the issues are fishery-specific, species-specific and in many cases, area-specific within a fishery.
- There is a need to be clear and precise in the definition of the problem. This needs to take into account a range of often differing objectives including both socio-political and biological ones. In the face of good scientific information that may suggest that a particular fishing operation is sustainable in terms of low levels of bycatch, we might still be confronted by a political or community demand for zero bycatch.
- Duncan Leadbitter illustrated the importance of extending research results as a key to success. We are beginning to see

the importance of this in several fisheries around Australia already. We need also to examine other industries and learn from their example.

- It was recognised that technology transfer was possibly the fastest way to progress this matter, finding international examples with applicability to Australia and giving them a go here. This has been the approach successfully used with respect to TED and BRD work in prawn fisheries.
- Development of threat abatement plans and bycatch action plans as a process may be easily transferred from one fishery to the next. The similarity in these processes obviates the need to reinvent the wheel.
- A target is a point for which to aim but it may also be a trend.
- Assessing the performance of the fishery and the performance of the management objective towards a target is of crucial importance. To do this, targets need to be measurable, must be monitored and must have performance indicators. The key will be review and the flexibility to change as needed.

In summary, there can be little dispute that bycatch is a major issue confronting Australian fisheries. This was clearly stated in the presentations of Session 1 which gave status reports of the bycatch problems in some of these fisheries. At the workshop planning stage 12 months ago, the organising committee felt that we had enough information to consider setting bycatch targets, if not for all of fisheries, at least for some of them. Clearly, however, this workshop has demonstrated that we have some way to go. Several obstacles were identified, not the least of which is the lack of understanding

of the ecosystem dynamics and the interactions between target and bycatch species.

This should not distract us, though, because what is also clear is that we have moved forward and we see that the end point is in our grasp. We are confident that the proceedings of our deliberations will form a platform from which we can move towards targets for all of Australian fisheries.

In closing we'd like to thank all of you for your contributions to the workshop, especially the excellent talks given by the speakers. We also thank our major sponsors, the FRDC Effects of Trawling Subprogram, TAFI and the AMC, and the workshop organising committee who put a lot of work into making this happen. Last but not least we thank Cathy Bulman and her team for their help with the organisation, teas and lunches, and the CSIRO for providing their excellent venue.