

SECTION 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Commonwealth Policies and Inquiry Recommendations

Many Federal inquiry reports have linked resource-based industries with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' economic, social and cultural development. In 1974 the second report of the Woodward Aboriginal Land Rights Commission noted the 'great potential' for Aboriginal involvement in commercial fishing activities, if developed appropriately. It also raised but did not endorse the possibility that Aboriginal landowners might wish to licence commercial fishermen to use their waters.²⁰² A decade later, a workshop in 1985 on traditional knowledge of the marine environment in northern Australia, convened by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in Townsville, concluded that:

The issue of establishment of commercial fisheries for Aboriginal communities needs to be addressed, including evaluation of the economic biology of large species, for example turtles, trochus and clams.²⁰³

In 1985 the Miller Committee's *Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* reported that there was 'considerable potential' in natural resource industries such as fishing, forestry and wildlife culling for Aboriginal people. The review noted that few governments had provided incentives to encourage Aboriginal people to enter such industries.²⁰⁴ It recommended that 'favourable consideration, if not first preference' should be made available to Aboriginal groups wishing to take advantage of commercial opportunities from natural resource development, and that consideration should be given to affirmative action policies, exempting Aboriginal people from licensing requirements, and to ensuring that they share in the payments made by non-Aboriginal people for access to the resources concerned. It suggested:

Consideration should also be given to allocating to the ABTA [Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account] or similar organisations in the States/Territories a share in licence fees, royalties and other payments for exploitation of the natural resources of the environment.

Essentially this is a States/Territories matter, but the Commonwealth Government should endeavour to have them adopt positive policies for Aboriginal people concerning industrial use of natural resources.²⁰⁵

The *Aboriginal Employment Development Policy* (AEDP), which began in 1987, was the Commonwealth Government's response to the Miller recommendations. In 1993 AEDP underwent a review which resulted in 59 recommendations and a 10-point plan in 1994. The review found that there had been a marginal improvement in employment rates for indigenous Australians between the 1986 and 1991 census but that:

They were also 3 times more likely to be unemployed, and their experience of long term unemployment, ranging between 60% and 70% of all indigenous unemployed, was disproportionately high...

Factors influencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unemployment include low levels of formal education and training, discrimination and racism, a high concentration in the younger age groups, and especially in remote locations, a lack of conventional employment opportunities.²⁰⁶

The recommendations did not specifically address training needs for the fisheries sector but one recommendation did suggest that the Australian Nature Conservation Agency should continue to be funded for its contract employment work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in protected areas (including marine parks), on Crown land and on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Woodward, *Second Report, April 1974*, pp.80-81.

²⁰³ Gray and Zann (eds), *Traditional Knowledge ...*, pp.191-2.

²⁰⁴ Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs (M. Miller, Chairman), *Report*, Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1985, p.318.

²⁰⁵ Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs (M. Miller, Chairman), *Report*, p.335.

²⁰⁶ Commonwealth, *Social Justice for Indigenous Australians: 1994-5*, Canberra, 1995, p.77.

²⁰⁷ AEDP Taskforce (A. Bamblett), *Review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy*, Commonwealth, Canberra, 1994, p.xxiv.

The 1986 Australian Law Reform Commission *Report on the Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws*, identified employment as one of a number of advantages in allocating preferential rights to resource harvesting on Aboriginal lands for commercial use, but that the matter was for the relevant management authorities. It recommended that the distinction be maintained between traditional harvesting for use within the community and commercial fishing.²⁰⁸

The 1991 *Final Report of the Ecologically Sustainable Development Fisheries Working Group* recognised that many Torres Strait Islanders are heavily dependent on marine resources as an essential part of their lifestyle, nutrition, customary social relations, and as a livelihood. It noted that political and structural problems were the main inhibitions for indigenous Australians' achieving sustainable development, as reflected in 'the lack of coherent plans to integrate indigenous coastal fisheries and aquatic resources in national marine policy and fisheries administration'.²⁰⁹ It noted that historical inequities and ignorance concerning indigenous people's interests and rights in fisheries and in an array of coastal and aquatic systems needed to be overcome.²¹⁰

The 1992 *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* suggested that Governments will continue efforts to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' employment concerns in natural resource based industries which impact on their communities.²¹¹

The 1993 Resource Assessment Commission's *Coastal Zone Inquiry Final Report* identified as one of the four key elements of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fisheries Strategy:

measures to improve economic development and employment opportunities for indigenous communities in fisheries and mariculture ventures. Options include the reservation of a proportion of fishing or other licences for indigenous communities, the purchase of such licences on behalf of indigenous communities by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, and the establishment of fishing zones adjacent to land owned or controlled by indigenous people in which communities could operate their own commercial enterprises, participate in joint ventures, or license access by other marine resource users.²¹²

The Commission noted that improved educational and training facilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are necessary to ensure that those wishing to take part in commercial fishing ventures are able to do so effectively and it recommended that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) 'provide financial assistance and management training to indigenous people, to facilitate their participation in the commercial fishing (including mariculture) industry'. It also recommended that ATSIC assess the work of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research in supporting indigenous fisheries in the Pacific Islands, with a view to determining options for improving education and training among Australia's indigenous fishing communities. The RAC suggested that ATSIC also assess 'the potential education value of the experience gained by relatively successful indigenous organisations such as the Tiwi Land Council on Bathurst and Melville Islands and Yirrkala Business Enterprises Pty Ltd in north-east Arnhem Land'.²¹³

Several ATSIC staff have suggested that the RAC recommendation on comparative assessment of fisheries development projects has not been followed up. This is unfortunate as there is a significant literature on small-scale fisheries management and fisheries and aquaculture development in the South Pacific and South-East Asia.²¹⁴ Statistics are not available from ATSIC on how many of the approximately 28,000 participants in 256

²⁰⁸ The Law Reform Commission, *The Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws*, p.201.

²⁰⁹ Commonwealth, *Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Groups, Final Report — Fisheries*, pp.66, 153-4.

²¹⁰ Commonwealth, *Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Groups, Final Report — Fisheries*, pp.152- 3.

²¹¹ Objective 22.1, *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development*, p.82.

²¹² Resource Assessment Commission, *Coastal Zone Inquiry: Final Report*, p.187.

²¹³ Resource Assessment Commission, *Coastal Zone Inquiry: Final Report*, p.188.

²¹⁴ See for example: H. Campbell, K. Menz and G. Waugh (eds), *Economics of Fishery Management in the Pacific Islands Regions: Proceedings of an international conference held at Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 20-22 March, 1989*, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, Canberra, 1989; J.-M. Delaune, *The feasibility of developing a local supply of penaeid seed for aquaculture in Solomon Islands*, Ministry of Natural Resources, Honiara, 1989; D.J. Doulman, 'Community-based fishery management: Towards the restoration of traditional practices in the South Pacific', *Marine Policy*, Vol.17, No.2, 1993, pp.108-117; G. David, 'Traditional Village

Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) projects across the country are working on fisheries and aquaculture activities. Statistics are compiled within 10-15 categories, with the statistics on rural industries embracing fisheries and aquaculture. CDEP funding for both employment and training has been made available to several aquaculture projects, particularly in Tasmania and South Australia, including oyster and yabbie farms, and for cray fishing in the Torres Strait.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have expressed their wish to be more involved in commercial fishing activities. The *1995 Report of the Senate Select Committee on the Land Fund Bill* noted that:

numerous witnesses from the coastal areas and islands of the Northern Territory, Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (including Jervis Bay) drew the Committee's attention to the absence of provision for fishing rights and access to the sea and waterways under the Land Fund legislation...

The Committee concluded:

this is an issue which is beyond its capacity to address at this time. However, the Committee recognises the community perception that Aboriginal people live in arid inland locations, whereas a significant number live on the coast, where they maintain traditional customs. Their use of the sea as a source of food and a part of their culture should not be ignored when dealing with Aboriginal land issues. The opportunity to buy back leases and licences for oyster beds and fishing rights, and other marine culture and aquaculture activities, was a matter raised by a number of witnesses.²¹⁵

This report has not investigated the cultural tourism aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fisheries, whether in relation to customary fishery practices or indigenous involvement in the fishing industry, both past and present. These issues are worthy of consideration, should Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples wish to enter that market.²¹⁶ *The Draft National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Industry Strategy* focuses on the performing arts, and writing and publishing.²¹⁷ Methodologies of cultural mapping²¹⁸

Fishing in Fisheries Development Planning in Vanuatu', in J. Morrison, P. Geraghty and L. Crowl (eds), *Ocean and Coastal Studies*, Institute of Pacific Studies, Suva, 1994, pp.11-40; M.V.C. Falanruw, 'Traditional Fishing on Yap', in J. Morrison, P. Geraghty and L. Crowl (eds), *Science of Pacific Island Peoples: Vol. 1: Ocean and Coastal Studies*, Institute of Pacific Studies, Suva, 1994, pp.41-58; P. Kunatuba, 'Traditional Science Knowledge and Environmental Planning', in Morrison, Geraghty and Crowl (eds), *Science of Pacific Island Peoples...*, pp.91-97; A. Smith, 'Customary Marine Management Practices in Yap', in Morrison, Geraghty and Crowl (eds), *Science of Pacific Island Peoples...*, pp.99-111; T. Taniera, 'Traditional Fisheries in Kiribati: Survival and Sustainability', in Morrison, Geraghty and Crowl (eds), *Science of Pacific Island Peoples...*, pp.113-120; F. Toloa, M. Pelasio and R. Gillett, 'Adapting Traditional Marine Conservation in Tokelau', in Morrison, Geraghty and Crowl (eds), *Science of Pacific Island Peoples...*, pp.121-127; L. Gina-Whewell, 'Roviana Women in Traditional Fishing', in Morrison, Geraghty and Crowl (eds), *Science of Pacific Island Peoples...*, pp.73-79; R.E. Johannes, 'Pacific Island Peoples' Science and Marine Resource Management', in Morrison, Geraghty and Crowl (eds), *Science of Pacific Island Peoples...*, pp.81-89; V.R. Bidesi, 'How 'the other half' fishes: Accounting for Women in Fisheries in the Pacific', in 'Atu Emberson-Bain (ed.), *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?: Perspectives of Pacific Island Women*, Marama Publications, Suva, 1994, pp.123-130; A. Emberson-Bain, 'Backbone of Growth: Export Manufacturing and Fiji's tuna fish wives', in Emberson-Bain (ed.), *Sustainable Development...*, pp.149-171; C. Slatter, 'For food or foreign exchange? Regional interests versus global imperatives in Pacific fisheries development', in Emberson-Bain (ed.), *Sustainable Development...*, pp.131-148; K. Kuperan and N.M.R. Abdullah, 'Small-scale coastal fisheries and co-management', *Marine Policy*, Vol.18, No.4, 1994, pp.306-313.

²¹⁵ Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *Land: Report of the Senate Select Committee on the Land Fund Bill*, Department of the Senate, 1995, pp.49-50.

²¹⁶ See for example the Brewarrina fish traps: Anon, 'The Brewarrina fisheries', *Aboriginal Health Worker*, Vol.12, No.1, 1988, pp.24-25; L. Black, 'Aboriginal Fisheries at Brewarrina', *Wild Life*, Vol.6, No.4, 1944, pp.105-7; P. Dargin *Aboriginal Fisheries of the Darling-Barwon Rivers*, Brewarrina Historical Society, Brewarrina, 1976; R. Mathews, 'The Aboriginal fisheries at Brewarrina', *Royal Society of New South Wales: Journal and Proceedings*, Vol.37, 1903, pp.146-156. See also J. Henderson, 'Kidnapped', *Identity*, Vol.2, No.4, 1975, pp.14-16, which discusses the history of Aboriginal people in the Western Australian pearling industry in the latter half of the 19th century. See also S. Yamashita, 'The Torres Strait Pearling Industry', *Torres Strait Fisheries Seminar, Port Moresby, 11-14 February, 1985*, pp.118-121.

²¹⁷ ATSIIC, *Draft National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Industry Strategy, Part 1*, ATSIIC, Canberra, 1994.

may assist communities to realise the cultural tourism potential of their local environment and social practices, and there is a significant literature on cultural tourism and indigenous communities. Henry Reynolds has recommended that a major exhibition on pearling and indigenous Australians be established in Broome and on Thursday Island.²¹⁹

The Commonwealth Coastal Policy (1995) recognises:

As a matter of social justice, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be recognised as participants in the coastal management process, and should be able to derive social, cultural and economic benefit from the use of coastal environments in which they have an interest.²²⁰

Various initiatives announced in the Coastal Policy are to be used to strengthen existing programs such as the Contract Employment Program for Aboriginals in Natural and Cultural Resource Management and other 'community ranger' programs.

The potential economic value of Australia's exclusive economic zone was estimated recently in the 1995 report *Ocean Outlook: A Blueprint for the Oceans*. The report noted the potential wealth of the commercial fishing and aquaculture industries:

While Australia's wild fish catches of about 200,000 tonnes a year are relatively low by world standards, the economic importance of the industry is boosted by its high value export fisheries, including abalone, prawns, cultured pearls and rock lobsters.

Exports of seafood products have almost doubled in the past five years to be Australia's fourth largest rural export industry. The value of the industry is predicted to accelerate to \$2 billion per annum by 1998, driven by further value-adding to the wild catch and developments in aquaculture.

Current Value: \$1.3 billion

Potential Value: est. \$5-10 billion by 2020.²²¹

On the potential of marine pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, the report stated:

A significant proportion of prescription medicines are derived from natural sources: seven of the top 25 prescription drugs in the world with sales of more than \$1 billion are in this category. To date, bio-prospecting has been confined mainly to terrestrial microbes and plants.

The huge biodiversity of the marine environment and the novel array of chemical structures documented in marine samples points to the potential of Australia's oceans to become a major source of pharmaceutical lead compounds over the next 25 years.

Current Value: Untapped. Australia has 11% of the world's biodiversity and contributes about 2% of the world's biomedical-related research.

Potential: Australia has the capacity to develop a pharmaceutical and agro-chemical industry based on its marine natural resources of between \$2 and \$5 billion a year by 2020.²²²

Amongst its other recommendations, the Ocean Outlook report recommended that the following actions be undertaken:

- implement a national Exclusive Economic Zone mapping and resources survey;
- determine marine management and resource ownership rights.²²³

²¹⁸ Dept of Communications and the Arts, *Mapping Culture: A Guide for Cultural and Economic Development in Communities* (I. Clark, J. Sutherland and G. Young), Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1995.

²¹⁹ Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, *Sharing History: A Sense for all Australians of a Shared Ownership of their History*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994.

²²⁰ Dept. of the Environment, Sport and Territories, 'Living on the Coast', p.27.

²²¹ CSIRO Division of Oceanography, CSIRO Division of Fisheries, Australian Geological Survey Organisation, Australian Institute of Marine Science, *Ocean Outlook: A Report from the Congress 16-17 November 1994 and a Scientific Program Proposed by the Steering Committee, (summary pamphlet)*, Hobart, 1995, p.7.

²²² CSIRO Division of Oceanography, CSIRO Division of Fisheries, Australian Geological Survey Organisation, Australian Institute of Marine Science, *Ocean Outlook*, p.8.

²²³ CSIRO Division of Oceanography, CSIRO Division of Fisheries, Australian Geological Survey Organisation, Australian Institute of Marine Science, *Ocean Outlook*, pp.16-17. There is some literature on customary marine

The Report stated:

The establishment of off-shore constitutional settlements and the drawing up of internationally acceptable boundaries to marine jurisdictional zones, maximising benefits to Australia, are already being pursued. This process should determine marine management and resource ownership rights, including claims of indigenous populations and access to genetic resources.²²⁴

The Commonwealth Government is currently developing policy on access to Australia's genetic resources. A Commonwealth-State Working Group on Access to Australia's Genetic Resources (CSWG) was established in May 1994, and in that year the Federal Office of the Chief Scientist released a discussion paper on Access to Australia's Biological Resources in 1994.²²⁵ Also in 1994 an issues paper on Access to Australia's Genetic Resources was issued by a number of Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) Agencies.²²⁶ Neither discussion paper made recommendations, but both addressed the issues arising for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Commonwealth-State Working Group is required to take into account 'the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the use and ownership of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices and genetic resources on Aboriginal lands'. Thus the issue of ownership of marine genetic resources is an issue justifying resolution, but this is unlikely to occur until a High Court native title ruling on sea rights.

One of the Resource Assessment Commission Coastal Zone Inquiry consultancy reports which addressed indigenous Australians' interests suggested that arguments in favour of indigenous management zones also support indigenous resource rights, and that:

a case could be made for the hypothecation of a share of rents from the commercial exploitation of coastal resources (such as fisheries, minerals or 'the environment' for tourism) to be earmarked for indigenous interests. Alternatively, a share of such resources (such as tradeable commercial fishing or abalone licenses) could be provided in compensatory recognition of lost customary property rights.²²⁷

Evidence presented to the Milimngimbi and Castlereagh Bay sea closure applications in the Northern Territory is also said to refer to the need for royalty payments to be linked to the commercial take of certain totemic species.²²⁸

tenure issues and aquaculture in the Pacific, see for example: T. Fairbairn, 'Marine Property Rights in Relation to Giant Clam Mariculture in the Kingdom of Tonga', in C. Tisdell (ed.), *Giant Clams in the Sustainable Development of the South Pacific: Socioeconomic Issues in Mariculture and Conservation*, Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research, Canberra, 1992, pp.119-133; T. Fairbairn, 'Marine Property Rights in Fiji: Implications for the Development of Giant Clam Mariculture', in Tisdell (ed.), *Giant Clams...*, pp.134-152; T. Fairbairn, 'Reef and Lagoon Tenure in the Republic of Vanuatu and Prospects for Mariculture Development', in C. Tisdell (ed.), *Giant Clams...*, pp.153-168; T. Fairbairn, 'Traditional Reef and Lagoon Tenure in Western Samoa and Its Implications for Giant Clam Mariculture', in C. Tisdell (ed.), *Giant Clams...*, pp.169-189; L. Tacconi and Tisdell, 'Institutional Factors and Giant Clam Culture and Conservation in Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa', in Tisdell (ed.), *Giant Clams...*, pp.190-201; C. Tisdell and K. Menz, 'Giant Clam Farming and Sustainable Development: an Overview', in Tisdell (ed.), *Giant Clams*, pp.3-14.

²²⁴ CSIRO Division of Oceanography, CSIRO Division of Fisheries, Australian Geological Survey Organisation, Australian Institute of Marine Science, *Ocean Outlook*, p.17.

²²⁵ Office of the Chief Scientist, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Access to Australia's Biological Resources: A Discussion Paper*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994.

²²⁶ Several ANZECC Agencies, *Access to Australia's Genetic Resources: An Issues Paper Prepared by a Number of Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) Agencies*, Typescript copy, Canberra, 1994.

²²⁷ Altman, Ginn, Smith and Roach, *Existing and Potential Mechanisms...*, p.71.

²²⁸ Williams, *Manbuynga ga Rulyapa...*, pp.3-4.

Relevant State and Territory Legislation and Policies

Tasmania

The objectives of the 'Resource Management and Planning System of Tasmania' include: promoting the sustainable development of natural and physical resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity; providing for the fair, orderly and sustainable use and development of air, land and water; and encouraging public participation in resource management and planning. They also include promoting the sharing of responsibilities for resource management and planning between the different spheres of government and with the community and industry in the State. Aquaculture development in Tasmania is to be regulated by the *Marine Farming Planning Act 1995 (Tas)*, due for proclamation in about April 1996. Some Aboriginal organisations and individuals have expressed considerable interest in aquaculture as a means of fostering community economic development, particularly in the Furneaux Group.

Victoria

In Victoria there has been little policy development specifically addressing Aboriginal involvement in the commercial fisheries sector. The Fisheries Branch of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is in the process of developing an aquaculture strategy which examines issues such as employment generation and regional development, but it does not identify particular social groups for assessment of their interests (such as Aboriginal peoples).²²⁹

Further, section 42 of the new *Fisheries Act 1995 (Vic)* provides for the issue of new fishery licences (including aquaculture licences), depending on the management arrangements in place at the time. While there is nothing in the Act to stop such licences being issued to Aboriginal people, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has suggested there may possibly be problems with setting aside such licences for Aboriginal people only, under the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.²³⁰

Only the Framlingham Aboriginal community in the west of the State has applied for a commercial fisheries licence, to net eels. An Eel Fishery Management Plan was issued by the Victorian Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in 1995 which includes objectives for ecologically sustainable management. The plan was developed with public input. The plan notes that provision for the traditional fishery of eels by the Aboriginal community at Framlingham was one of the terms of reference of the original review of the fishery, but that:

This is now being considered as part of discussions taking place with the Aboriginal community concerning the wider implications of Aboriginal fishing rights in a number of fisheries.

This issue will be resolved in that wider forum and the term of reference has therefore not been developed further at this stage. However, the Department is prepared and willing to resume negotiations and further develop the initiatives proposed in the earlier review.²³¹

South Australia

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation (ATSICDC) entered into a joint venture for the development and operation of two 10 hectare oyster leases at Ceduna in South Australia in April 1993.²³² The joint venture involves Tjutjunaku Worka Tjuta Incorporated, the ATSICDC and the Stott family companies. The Tjutjunaku Worka Tjuta Incorporated includes representatives of all local Aboriginal

²²⁹ Ross Winstanley, Manager, Recreational Fishing and Aquaculture, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Victoria, personal communication, 6 October 1995.

²³⁰ T. Harding, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Victoria, correspondence commenting on the draft version of this report, 25 March 1996.

²³¹ Dept of Conservation and Natural Resources, *Eel Fishery Management Plan 1995: Victorian Fisheries*, 1995, pp.8-9.

²³² Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation, *Ceduna Clearwater Oysters Joint Venture, Ceduna South Australia — Investment Portfolio Introduction*, May 1994, pp.1-2 at p.1.

groups and is the umbrella organisation for the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) for the Ceduna area. According to the ATSICDC:

The Ceduna Clearwater Oysters Joint Venture is now one of South Australia's major growers of the Pacific Oyster, producing 24% of the State's output last year. The venture will sell 3,000,000 oysters in the forthcoming year...Markets have been established in Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne and trial exports into Asia have been undertaken. Ceduna Clearwater Oysters has recently joined in the formation of OYSA Ltd (the marketing arm of the South Australian Oyster Growers Association), which will handle the sales side for the venture as well as for the majority of oyster growers in South Australia. The venture has been independently valued at \$1.6 million.²³³

Some of the reported benefits of the joint venture include profit sharing, Aboriginal employment and management training, local infrastructure development, equal participation and joint executive management of the venture.

The ATSICDC enters into joint venture agreements with vendors and interested Aboriginal organisations concerning long term commercially viable investments which are likely to benefit indigenous organisations in terms of employment, training and income. The corporation does not provide grant funding.²³⁴

Western Australia

According to the Policy Officer (Native Title) in the Fisheries Department of Western Australia, Ms Summerfield, the Fisheries Department has the following approach to economic development for Aboriginal communities interested in fishing and aquaculture:

Preliminary consultation has taken place with coastal communities in the Kimberley and the Pilbara to explain the provisions of the new *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* [FRMA] and find out about the communities' desires and concerns in relation to fishing. For many people, there will be no opportunity to claim native title but they have ongoing concerns about feeding their extended families, meeting ceremonial obligations and providing a future for their children...

Since 1989 the Fisheries Department of Western Australia has provided Special Commercial Fishing Licences for Aboriginal Communities in the trochus, beche-de-mer and mud crab fisheries. Furthermore, in 1992, the trochus fishery was reserved to Aboriginal communities — though including the opportunity for joint ventures. These three fisheries are currently being examined to fit into the Interim Managed Fishery model provided for in the FRMA. The FRMA allows policies to be developed for classes of persons (in the instance of trochus for example with a history of participation in the fishery, resident in the location of the fishery) and species of fish.²³⁵

She also advised that:

The ability of Aboriginal people to participate in the commercial fishing industry is mainly dependent on access to funding for commercial licences which now command market prices in excess of \$45,000. In 1989 the Department developed a policy for Special Commercial Fishing Licences for Aboriginal Communities...which allowed for participation in the trochus, beche-de-mer and mud crab fisheries. Access to the trochus fishery is reserved to Aboriginal communities. In 1992 the then Minister for Fisheries expanded participation in the trochus fishery to a number of other specified Aboriginal communities and their joint-venturers on a developmental basis for 24 months. The Minister's initiative was specifically directed at encouraging value-adding of product and providing economic opportunities for Aboriginal communities. This arrangement is currently under review as provided for in the initial agreement...

Broome, in the Kimberley, is a key location for indigenous interests and the majority of coastal native title claims. It is also the site for development of a Tropical Aquaculture Park which is encouraging Aboriginal participation, especially in a trochus hatchery, and has received financial support from ATSIC. An

²³³ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commercial Development Corporation, *Ceduna Clearwater*...

²³⁴ Julie Wilson, Business Development Section, ATSICDC, personal communication, 26 September 1995.

²³⁵ P. Summerfield, *Management Implications of the Native Title Act: A Western Australian Perspective*, Conference Paper delivered at the Australasian Fisheries Managers Conference, 1-4 August 1995, pp.1-7 at pp.6-7.

aquaculture field officer based in Broome is giving particular attention to programs involving Aboriginal interests.²³⁶

Elsewhere Ms Summerfield has written:

Although the trochus industry did not start until the 1890s, under the control of pearling companies and missionaries, it had long been collected on a subsistence basis by Aboriginal people in the Broome area.

In more recent history, a small trochus fishery, which was largely incidental to pearl shell fishing, existed in Western Australia prior to 1939, but no trochus shell had been taken commercially since about 1959. The fishery later recommenced following a substantial increase in the market value of the shell.

Trochus fishing in King Sound was resumed about 15 years ago by the Bardi Community at One Arm Point as a community project. The fishery is authorised by a 'letter of permission' from the Executive Director of the Fisheries Department rather than a licence procedure. The fishery is having a reasonable degree of success with an annual catch varying between about 30 and 90 tonnes which is estimated to be slightly less than the sustainable yield for the area.

In recent years strong interest has been shown by other Aboriginal groups and by non-Aboriginals wishing to be licensed to enter the trochus industry because of its commercial value. As a result, the then Minister for Fisheries, Gordon Hill, reviewed the trochus fishery with a view to developing the fishery trochus value-adding of trochus products. Following the review, licences have been approved to a further three Aboriginal communities for a 24 month development.

Future participation by these groups in the trochus fishery will be subject to full review based on opportunities for value-adding and the benefits offered to the Aboriginal communities.²³⁷

The 1989 Fisheries Department Policy Guidelines for Special Commercial Fishing Licences for Aboriginal Communities, current in February 1995, are as follows:

- that special non-transferable commercial licences be available to isolated Aboriginal communities;
- that applications from communities located close to population centres be considered on a case by case basis taking into account the proposed fishing area and any permission obtained from another community which may have tribal rights over the proposed fishing area;
- that a licence application by an individual Aboriginal person to take fish for sale be treated in the same way as a licence application from any other Australian;
- that fishing boat licences issued to Aboriginal communities be issued to the corporate body of the community on behalf of community members;
- that Professional Fishermen's Licences be issued to each of those individuals nominated by the community to fish under the community licence;
- that the Council of the community be made responsible to determine who is a community member and therefore who can fish under the licence;
- that the species allowed to be taken under the 'special licence' arrangement be restricted to beche-de-mer and mud crabs;
- that Aboriginal communities be permitted to fish commercially for mud crabs and beche-de-mer in waters adjacent to traditional lands on which they live or waters adjacent to adjoining land with the permission of the community with tribal rights over the area; and
- that Aboriginal communities not be permitted to fish commercially for finfish species unless they purchase a Western Australian Fishing Boat Licence.²³⁸

In April 1996 it was reported that the Western Australian Government and the Rubibi Aboriginal Land, Heritage and Development Co. Pty Ltd had entered into a landmark joint business agreement to establish an aquaculture park near Broome. The park is to offer infrastructure and research facilities to fish farmers and the pearling industry. The State Government is to contribute \$650,000 to the project. The Rubibi group will own 49 per cent of the venture, will get two seats on the management board and will share in any profits earned.

²³⁶ P. Summerfield, personal communication, 26 September 1995, Ref. 1161/94, pp.2-3.

²³⁷ P. Summerfield, *Implications of Native Title Legislation for Fisheries Management and the Fishing Industry in Western Australia*, Fisheries Department of Western Australia, Perth, 1995.

²³⁸ Summerfield, *Implications of Native Title Legislation ...*, p.21.

The existence of a native title claim over the area over which the park is proposed is reported to have encouraged the Government to enter into negotiations over the project.²³⁹

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Government has developed a 'Future Directions' strategy for the sustainable development of fishing industries in the Territory. It refers to the need to address Aboriginal interests, and to a strengthening of relationships between Aboriginal people, industry and the Government; the need to survey recreational, tourist and traditional Aboriginal catches and other measures. Its goal in five years is to have in place a management framework which will facilitate continued commercial development involving all interested participants; recognise the interests of Aboriginal people and include them as participants in fisheries consultation processes and management arrangements; overcome present legal uncertainties and establish a viable approach to sustainable fisheries, taking into account Aboriginal knowledge and traditional practices and aspirations; and complement management arrangements established for the coastal zone by Aboriginal people.²⁴⁰

A workshop was held in Darwin in September 1995 on commercial fishing and Aboriginal interests in the sea. It was noted that although Aboriginal people had formerly held barramundi licences, they had been sold back to the Northern Territory Government. Participants were encouraged to consider buying out existing licences.²⁴¹ At the workshop the chairman of the Northern Territory Fishing Industry Council, Mike Fraser, discussed business opportunities for commercial development for Aboriginal communities. He raised the following points:

- The Northern Prawn Fishery is a high cost fishery and difficult to get into because of the high cost of a vessel, fuel and vessel maintenance. It may cost \$3000 a day to operate, and needs at least a 10 year commitment.
- The Pearl Fishery is also of high value and a difficult fishery to enter for financial reasons.
- The Barramundi Fishery is easier to get into and a full licence (10 units) is worth about \$160,000 which could be paid off in 5 years. The good wets over the past two years have produced very high numbers of juveniles to support another 10 years of good fishing. Even with aquaculture fish, there will always be two markets and the price of wild fish is expected to increase to \$16 a kilogram for fillet by the end of this year. Threadfin salmon is another major fish and has a great future in Asia because Asian people seem to prefer salmon to barramundi even though they have about 1000 barramundi farms. It is good business to work a barramundi licence with a mud crab licence and any bycatch like sawfish and shovelnose shark can be used as crab bait.
- The Shark Fishery has a bright future with successful marketing. The vessels are expensive to buy but cheap to run because they only have to run the auxiliary motor for the brine tanks.
- Licences are being reduced in the Spanish Mackerel Fishery so to get into this fishery you need to buy two licences at a total cost of \$30000 and give one back to the Government. The traditional market has been frozen product, but now some fresh mackerel are being sold in Australia and in Asia.
- It would be better if the effort in the Mud Crab Fishery was spread out along the coastline. It is in good biological condition because of restrictions and because one female can produce 3 million eggs which grow very fast. For the first time the Commonwealth Bank will lend the full amount for a licence without deposit. Five years ago the price of mud crab was \$5 a kilogram, now it is \$13.50 and by the turn of the century it will be \$45 a kilogram. The industry wants to put on a display for the Olympic Games and in a few years time the Chinese will be having a once in a hundred year celebration for which mud crab will be in demand.
- The Timor Reef Fishery has big potential with gold band snapper. The vessels are expensive and must be very stable and need to be of a special class survey because of the distance they operate out to sea. It seems that the juvenile snappers are in the Australian waters but we do not know how much the Indonesians catch on our side or their side of the international line.

²³⁹ Irving, 'Venture signals Court's softer line on native title', p.2.

²⁴⁰ Northern Territory Government, *Future Directions: The Fishing Industry in the Northern Territory*, Government Printer of the Northern Territory, Darwin, n.d.

²⁴¹ Northern Land Council, 'Minutes: 'Commercial Fishing and Aboriginal Interests in the Sea' Workshop, Mirambeena Tourist Resort, 2-3 August 1995'.

- There is only one trawler working in the Demersal Trawl Fishery but the Government is under pressure to have more trawl licences issued. If Australia doesn't utilise the large amounts of red emperors then joint ventures may be re-introduced. Red emperors are very popular in Asian countries because of their colour.
- The Demersal Fishery is for trap and dropline. The inshore coastal line fishery costs about \$10000-\$15000 for a licence and you must buy two and give the Government one.

At the same workshop, Mr Pender outlined the following proposal that commercial fishermen had put to the NLC:

A mud crab fisherman who holds several licences is interested in working one licence along any area of coastline from the Goomadeer River to Arnhem Bay. He is willing to pay about 20% of catch as resource rent and to train Aboriginal crew.²⁴²

Queensland

The Aurukun community is currently engaged in commercial fishing in north Queensland, although Palm Island has had an oyster farm.²⁴³ In 1990 Aurukun obtained a fully endorsed barramundi licence. Six Aurukun people hold Master Fishermen's Licences, and social and economic interest in commercial fishing is reported to be growing locally and in the region.²⁴⁴ The Injinoo community was offered a 15 ton trochus quota licence in 1995.²⁴⁵ The Queensland Fisheries Management Authority (QFMA) also issues Community Fishing Licences to community chairpersons for commercial fishing activities undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. According to the QFMA the licences are generally issued 'for a defined area and for the use of specific apparatus as required by each community'.²⁴⁶ The Torres Strait Island Coordinating Council is in the process of buying up fishing licences so as to better the islands' long term economic prospects.²⁴⁷

In 1993 the Queensland Fishing Industry Training Council Inc. conducted a Trainee Master Fisherman's Program in situ at Aurukun, on behalf of the Shire Council, and 6 students successfully completed the course and became eligible to obtain Master Fisherman's licences.²⁴⁸ The 1993 program report included the recommendations that:

- a master fisherman be engaged by Aboriginal and Islander communities to coordinate the on-the-job training program prior to any trainee master fisherman's course training taking place;
- trainee master fisherman's licences be purchased for all students participating in the program to formally log the required two years on-the-job training;
- the off-the-job trainee master fisherman's program training be delivered on-site and the trainers reside on-site for the duration of the course;
- the trainee master fisherman's course be assessed by oral/competency based demonstration of skill methodology;
- a sustainable fishing resource be identified within the intended operational area of the future Master Fishermen.²⁴⁹

A recent case study of the planning and management of a trochus fishery in north Queensland is critical of the initial absence of a representative of Aboriginal peoples on a Trochus Fishery Working Group which was

²⁴² Northern Land Council, 'Minutes'.

²⁴³ Anon, 'Palm Island Oyster Farm Ready for Commercial Production', *Australian Fisheries*, Vol.38, No.9, 1979, pp.56-57.

²⁴⁴ Smyth, 'Indigenous Peoples and the Marine Environment...', pp.1-36.

²⁴⁵ Ross Williams, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, personal communication, 26 September 1995.

²⁴⁶ Ray Clarke, QFMA, personal communication, 5 October 1995.

²⁴⁷ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs Section and Reserve Systems Unit, *Draft Minutes from Working Group Meeting*, p.31.

²⁴⁸ Queensland Fishing Industry Training Council Inc., *Aurukun Project: Trainee Master Fisherman's Program: Report, 1993*, unpub., p.7.

²⁴⁹ Queensland Fishing Industry Training Council Inc., *Aurukun Project*, p.10.

established in 1993 to develop a five-year management plan for the fishery. The Trochus Fishery Working Group's failure to consult Aboriginal people, and its subsequent marginalisation of Aboriginal interests in the recommendations that were made, has also been noted.²⁵⁰ Despite more equitable recommendations being made in 1994, Smyth has noted:

As a result of changes to fisheries management in Queensland associated with the new fisheries legislation, the 1994 Working Group report has so far not been formally considered or endorsed by Government. The 1993 Working Group report, however, has been adopted and currently forms the basis of trochus management policy.²⁵¹

Planning for the beche-de-mer fishery for 1994-5 has been assessed favourably following the more equitable consideration of respective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests during the planning process. The Beche-de-mer Working Group recommended that:

following the establishment of fisheries protocols between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, a process will be developed to identify indigenous traditional/geographic groupings to establish indigenous fishing areas; and to develop joint management arrangements for use and access to beche-de-mer stocks within these defined areas. These management arrangements should include full consultation with all stakeholders.²⁵²

Torres Strait

The peoples of the Torres Strait have long asserted the importance of the marine environment to their social and economic well-being, both in the Strait and on the mainland.²⁵³

Michael Southon and the Kaurareg Tribal Elders have written a case-study of the customary marine tenure, traditional knowledge of the marine environment and contemporary fisheries problems for the Kaurareg people of the Torres Strait, focusing particularly on Kaurareg living on Narupai (Horn Island). Southon and the Kaurareg Tribal Elders note that there are five full-time Kaurareg fishermen on Horn Island who fish for crayfish. In 1990 an attempt was made to establish a trochus gathering enterprise on Muri Island using funds from the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) which is administered by ATSIC, but this project was subsequently abandoned.²⁵⁴

In 1989 a report commissioned by the Island Coordinating Council (ICC) was released which assessed the present and possible future constraints on and potential growth areas for the economy of the Torres Strait Islands.²⁵⁵ Its recommendations were as follows:

- CDEP funds should be increased and made more flexible so that they complement rather than inhibit fisheries development;
- the fishing industry can contribute to the economic development of the outer islands but that further economic research was necessary as part of a regional strategy;
- a sustainable development strategy for the Strait's fisheries should be developed;
- a fisheries development officer should be employed to prepare a Fisheries Development Strategy in consultation with Islanders and the relevant authorities, and to help residents develop plans for fisheries projects. The officer should be employed within the Regional Development Agency. Issues such as

²⁵⁰ Smyth, 'Indigenous Peoples and the Marine Environment...', pp.15-17.

²⁵¹ Smyth, 'Indigenous Peoples and the Marine Environment...', p.18.

²⁵² Smyth, 'Indigenous Peoples and the Marine Environment...', p.17.

²⁵³ G. Mye, 'Address by Torres Strait Islander Leaders to the Torres Strait Fisheries Seminar', in *Torres Strait Fisheries Seminar, Port Moresby, 11-14 February, 1985*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986; Anon, 'Islanders planning 'export' fishery', *Australian Fisheries*, Vol.35, No.4, 1976, p.26.

²⁵⁴ M. Southon and the Kaurareg Tribal Elders, 'Indigenous Peoples and the Marine Environment of Cape York Peninsula (typescript version)', in Cordell (ed.), *Indigenous Management of Land and Sea...*, typescript copy, pp.1-21.

²⁵⁵ W.S. Arthur and V. McGrath, *Torres Strait Development Study 1989: Report prepared for the Island Coordinating Council, Thursday Island*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1990.

strategies toward licence take-up in the prawn fishery should be examined, as well as expansion of the beche-de-mer fishery;

- policy attention should be focused on the different levels of access to fisheries evident in the Strait;
- CDEP should reflect the way development is occurring in a region and should be considered as a regional development subsidy and used to develop local small-scale private fishing businesses;
- fisheries training needs to include attention to the economic development needs of the peoples of the Islands including mechanical maintenance and budgeting;
- banking facilities need to be upgraded so that Islanders are better able to do their own marketing and exporting;
- the potential for the marketing of mud-crabs should be investigated, both from natural stocks and farms, and further economic assessment was needed of a proposed pilot plant;
- Islanders may wish to enter the cray boat sector, and the efficiency of dinghies versus boats should be investigated;
- the ICC should encourage local pearl farms to diversify into the local market so that Islanders could develop a high quality sector of the artefact/craft industry;
- an economic appraisal of the prawn trawl income similar to that undertaken for the Gulf fishery by the Northern Fishing Companies Association and collated by the Federal DPI in 1989;
- developments in the beche-de-mer (trepane) fishery should be developed toward older men and women;
- clam farming warrants further investigation;
- the shark fishery should be targeted as a possible fishery for the Top Western group of Islands; and
- the potential of the tourist market in Queensland for trochus shells should be investigated.

In 1994, Arthur re-iterated the need for a Torres Strait Islander strategic fisheries development plan, as follows:

As the TSRA develops the Torres Strait Development Plan, it would be useful to consider strategic options for greater Islander active participation in commercial fisheries. The need for such a strategic fishery plan was recommended by Arthur (1990) in a regional economic development study undertaken for the ICC in the aftermath of the 1987 full sovereignty claim, but such a plan has not been developed in the past five years.

There are a range of issues that could be addressed in such a strategic plan, including whether enhanced Islander participation should be targeted at particular fisheries (perhaps those where Islanders have a competitive advantage rather than just a concessionary advantage); what extension services and commercial structures need to be established for individual and Island-based fisheries; and the links between government programs, especially the CDEP scheme, and the potential for increased effort in commercial fisheries. One important barrier that remains is an antipathy towards joint ventures evident, for example, in the reservation of three prawning licences for vessels wholly crewed by Torres Strait Islanders. Given the identified barriers, like limited expertise and the capital and infrastructure reliability outlined above, it seems that joint ventures might provide an ideal avenue in the short-to medium-term to facilitate greater Islander participation in commercial fisheries especially via active buy-in. A final strategic and tactical issue of political import is whether a TSRA representative can become a member of the intergovernmental TSPZJA.²⁵⁶

...As the TSRA moves to produce a Torres Strait Development Plan from 1995, it is imperative that longer-term research is undertaken, initially to create a quantitative baseline of indigenous involvement in commercial fisheries, and then to gauge indigenous performance and participation over time. There is evidence that opportunities exist in Torres Strait for both expansion of commercial fisheries and for greater Islander participation in both existing and potentially expanding fisheries. There is an urgent need for commercial structures to be established for Islanders to take advantage of these economic opportunities. One option is for a significant Islander buy-in into particular sectors of commercial fisheries. Such a buy-in could be financed via the TSRA Land and Natural Resources Fund, a statutory mechanism established under s.144W of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Act (No. 3) 1993*. In particular, there may be options for commercial joint ventures, possibly with ATSIC's Commercial

²⁵⁶ J.C. Altman, W.S. Arthur and H.J. Beck, *Indigenous Participation in Commercial Fisheries in Torres Strait: A Preliminary Discussion*, Discussion Paper No.73, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 1994, pp.17-18.

Development Corporation, in the prawn and rock lobster fisheries that may not require active local participation.

Concessionary entry to commercial fisheries is available to Islanders; utilisation of such opportunities could generate increased regional income and additional employment for Islanders. In this way, the stated TSRA goals of enhanced indigenous participation in commercial fisheries and greater regional economic self-sufficiency for Torres Strait could be facilitated (TSRA 1994).²⁵⁷

Southon *et al* suggest that Torres Strait Islanders are not involved in prawn trawling because of the high capital costs of entering the fishery and the arduous conditions of employment, while the relatively high indigenous participation in the lobster fishery is attributable to high profit margins and the relative cheapness of acquiring an aluminium dinghy and outboard engine. Trochus collection is also a high-participation activity partly because of Islanders' 'long-standing involvement and expertise'. But the prawn fishery is said to contribute 78 per cent of the total value of Torres Strait commercial fisheries.²⁵⁸

In 1994 a report was prepared for consideration by the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority in response to conflict between the peoples of the eastern Torres Strait Islands and commercial fishing interests which had erupted into the declaration of an economic zone around the islands by the Torres Strait Islanders.²⁵⁹ The report explained that the key issue leading to the dispute was 'the desire of the indigenous people particularly on Mer for economic independence and to manage the seas in accordance with their traditional laws'. It noted that aspirations for local control and autonomy were strong, particularly following the High Court's recognition of native title and the uncertainties about offshore rights. Islanders were seen to be frustrated by the lack of economic benefits accruing from commercial fishing activity in their region. Other exacerbating factors were found to be:

- native title issues, especially the unresolved question of off-shore rights;
- the complexity of fisheries management arrangements in the Torres Strait and their perceived ownership by bureaucrats;
- the related perception by Torres Strait Islanders on Mer and elsewhere that the current consultative arrangements of the PZJA do not adequately recognise indigenous peoples' status in the Torres Strait...or provide for the adequate representation of their views and culture;
- political and economic rivalry in the Torres Strait [with Mer being relatively disadvantaged following the withdrawal of ATSIC Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) funding in 1989]; and
- the March 1994 round of elections for the Torres Strait Regional Council (soon to be Regional Authority) and for local government.

On economic development issues, the report recommended:

- That the PZJA note that increased effort should be made to facilitate greater Torres Strait Islander involvement in the commercial fishing industry in the Torres Strait and in particular:
 - (a) agree that a proposal be developed through the proposed Torres Strait Islander Working Group, in conjunction with the Torres Strait Regional Authority and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, for the appointment of training and development officers (two) with the role of facilitating and supporting Torres Strait Islander participation in the commercial fishing industry; and
 - (b) recommend to the Queensland Minister for Employment, Vocational Education, Training and Industrial Relations that additional effort should be made by TAFE to meet the training needs of Torres Strait Islanders in the commercial fishing industry. This should be done in conjunction with the PZJA, the ICC and the Torres Strait Regional Authority.
- That the PZJA support, in principle, the training program being developed by the Torres Strait Prawn Fishermen's Association with the assistance of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and in conjunction with Island communities, with the aim of increasing Torres Strait Islander participation in the Prawn Fishery.

²⁵⁷ Altman, Arthur and Beck, *Indigenous Participation*, p.19.

²⁵⁸ Southon and the Kaurareg Tribal Elders, 'Indigenous Peoples and the Marine Environment...', p.10.

²⁵⁹ Ellims, McGregor, Turner, Mye, et al., *Report of the Committee on Fishing in the Eastern Islands of the Torres Strait*, pp.1-8.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority is seeking administrative control of funding currently administered by other Commonwealth and Queensland departments as an important step towards self-determination. The Commonwealth Government is considering this request. It is also seeking to negotiate a regional agreement or agreements with the Queensland government on self-determination. It has also sought:

- support for claims to rights over seas and marine resources;
- acknowledgement of the Torres Strait Development Plan and marine strategy as providing the framework for a comprehensive and integrated approach to development in the Torres Strait area and in particular to promote sustainable economic development to increase the self sufficiency of the people of the Torres Strait as an essential underpinning of self determination; and
- continuing discharge of responsibilities and obligations to the people of the Torres Strait under the Torres Strait Treaty with their full involvement at all levels of decision-making in relation to the Torres Strait Protected Zone.²⁶⁰

The Queensland Fisheries Management Authority is involved with the development of training programs for Torres Strait Islanders, as is the Queensland Fishing Industry Training Council and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. A workshop in 1994 developed a 12-month pilot program targeting the prawn trawl fleet and the communities of Yorke, Coconut and Stephen Islands. The workshop recommended that:

- a Fisheries Training Officer be employed to progress and coordinate the training program;
- that a formal liaison be developed between the commercial prawn trawl fleet and the three island communities;
- the Queensland Fishing Industry Training Council Inc. (QFITC) be appointed as the Managing Agent of the program;
- the Torres Strait Fisheries Consultative Committee (TSFTCC) representative of all stakeholders in the project be established to oversee the project; and
- the pilot project be used as a model for training on all Torres Strait Islands and Cape York communities.²⁶¹

The President of the Torres Strait Commercial Fishermen's Association, Jo David, has commented that some Torres Strait Islander trainees are becoming increasingly frustrated at the lack of employment opportunities for them in the islands despite successful completion of training programs; that training programs are sometimes repeated unnecessarily; that local training is needed which is more appropriate for the Torres Strait such as welding, marketing, processing, budgeting etc. and that more opportunities need to be available for Islanders to obtain Master Fisherman's licences.²⁶²

New South Wales

Under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994 (NSW)* the Minister for Fisheries may develop a commercial aquaculture industry development plan. As the aquaculture industry is so diverse, plans will be developed for each sector in the industry, and estuary by estuary.

New South Wales Fisheries is involved in a variety of projects involving Aboriginal people in aquaculture. In 1994 the Fishing Industry Training Council and NSW Fisheries were jointly involved in six programs which involved ninety Aboriginal people at Wallaga Lake, Mogo, Moruya, Batemans Bay, Ulladulla and Greenwell Point. The six-month programs involved sourcing leases and stock; and training in oyster husbandry, farm management, quality control, licences and permits. The South Coast Aboriginal Aquaculture Corporation was formed recently with association members from the six programs. In 1995 there has been a project at Crookhaven which involves some Aboriginal participants who are assisting in the restructuring of the oyster

²⁶⁰ Torres Strait Regional Authority, *An Act of Self-Determination for the People of the Torres Strait: A Framework for Achieving the Aspirations of the People of the Torres Strait: Response to the Social Justice Task Force*, typescript copy, n.d., pp.2,4.

²⁶¹ Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, *Planning Workshop: Torres Strait Island Training Program: Project Report FRDC Project No.93/242*, 1994.

²⁶² Jo David, personal communication, 9 October 1995.

industry, rebuilding existing leases, and pursuing other measures in an attempt to make the local industry viable.²⁶³

In 1995 a project was funded by the Fishing Industry Training Council at South West Rocks, having full Aboriginal involvement, which is similar to the south coast project; and there is a proposal to discuss an aquaculture development with the Eden Local Aboriginal Council. NSW Fisheries, the Office of Labour Market Adjustment and Aboriginal groups are also involved in a project which proposes to establish an abalone stock enhancement program using facilities at Port Stephens Research Centre and nursery facilities at Port Stephens. Pilot commercial farming trials are also proposed for abalone.

The Jerrinja Aboriginal community near Nowra runs a commercial fish co-operative which buys from local fishers and sells to the public.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Ian Lyle, NSW Fisheries, personal communication, 3 October, 1995.

²⁶⁴ Smyth, *A Voice in All Places...*, p.155.