

WAFIC Board Communique No. 14 – 27 October 2017

At the Board meeting in August the then Chairman Clayton Nelson told the Board he was proud how people conducted themselves during and outside of the Southern Seafood Producers WA (SSPWA) Interim Management Committee meeting in Albany in July and that he was pleased with progress made. He thanked John Harrison, Alex Ogg, Angus Callander and Dr Rogers for their work on the initiative. Mr Nelson said WAFIC was providing a supporting role to the Transitional Management Committee to help them achieve their goals. He said part of this support was to hold a Summit on 8 September facilitated by Sue Middleton to work through some difficult issues in preparation for the future.

Also at the August meeting the Board noted that the WA Seafood Awards night held early August was an outstanding success with exceptional food and worthy winners.

The Board also discussed the “School Smartfish” project which has been running as a pilot but may extend into 2017/18 as a further trial. The Board acknowledged that the project promotes under-utilised lesser known species and could provide an opportunity for corporate sponsorship.

At the August Board meeting the Board appointed a three person delegation from WAFIC to meet with three representatives from the SSPWA Transitional Management Committee to help decide on the most appropriate base location for the SSPWA CEO/EO.

The Industry forum was also discussed at the August Board meeting noting that the intent of the Forum was to give industry an opportunity to provide comments, voice their priorities for the following 12 months or raise any concerns they have with WAFIC.

The 16 October 2017 Board meeting was my first as Chair of WAFIC and it was a pleasure to be welcomed by the new Board. I spoke candidly with the Board and advised them that although I am new to the fishing industry and will rely on them in the early stages for background knowledge I bring other skills to the job which will be a benefit to WAFIC.

One of the first order of business for the meeting following the AGM is to appoint a Deputy Chair. I am pleased to advise that Nathan Adams, with unanimous support for his nomination was reappointed to the position.

One of the first industry issues we discussed was the ongoing matter of gill netting in Derby. WAFIC will be demonstrating to the Minister that WAFIC will be standing firm in support for the fishing business owner who has already made considerable concessions to the recreational fishing sector in the area.

The Board went on to discuss the recent Industry Forum, with some suggested enhancements for next year. While discussing the AGM it was unanimously agreed by the Board that a comprehensive discussion on the Constitution is needed. This will form part of our future Board meeting agendas.

At the October Board meeting WAFIC staff joined the meeting to answer any questions for the Board. This was a good opportunity for the new Directors to not only meet staff but also delve deeper into the background of some of the industry issues presented.

We also discussed the now operational national peak body, Seafood Industry Australia (SIA) which has developed a Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) Policy Paper. It was encouraging to hear that Anne Ruston, the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and Dave Kelly, the WA Minister for Fisheries are both supportive of CoOL. And that a Seafood Origin Information working group led by Craig Laundry Assistant Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science has been convened to consider options for improving consumer access to seafood origin information in the foodservices sector.

The SIA has scheduled a members’ advisory forum in Perth on 6 December 2017 and it is an opportunity to raise the matter of CoOL. I told the Board I would like to see WAFIC as a leader for CoOL with WA having their own CoOL legislation if necessary.

Katie Hodson-Thomas
Chair