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Consumer support for local seafood and Country of Origin Labelling overwhelming: survey finds

A community perception survey of West Australians across the State has revealed overwhelming support for locally produced seafood – citing quality, freshness, confidence in processing methods and a desire to support local industry as key reasons for their choice.

The confidential survey of more than 800 men and women from both metropolitan and regional WA also revealed even greater support for Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL), claiming the main reason for their support was so they could make informed choices about the seafood they bought.

Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) Chief Executive Officer John Harrison said the raw numbers from the survey demonstrated that the dumping of a Private Member's Bill designed to provide clear labelling of seafood as "local or imported" in the Senate in August last year was clearly misguided.

"Our Federal politicians took a bi-partisan approach to rejecting a Bill that was designed to give people more confidence in buying seafood in the food service sector such as restaurants, fish and chip shops and takeaway food outlets," Mr Harrison said.

"Those politicians obviously misread, or didn't care, about the clear preference of the public – as this community perception survey shows."

Mr Harrison said that the confidential survey commissioned by WAFIC had found that the great majority of WA adults, 75 per cent, preferred buying Australian rather than imported seafood – with almost 60 per cent of them having a 'strong preference'.

"In addition 94 per cent believed it important, at some level, that CoOL is clearly identified on seafood products, with 74 per cent saying it was 'very important'," Mr Harrison said.

Mr Harrison said some of the reasons the survey respondents declared for supporting locally caught seafood included:

- Fresher;
- Supporting Australian jobs;
- Australia has cleaner water for fish to grow in;
- Unsafe fishing farming methods in other countries;
- Health concerns about processing – more confidence in Australia; and
- Australia has a better managed and more sustainable fishing industry than other countries.

Other results identified in the report also revealed that 55 per cent of respondents believed that fishing practices to support sustainable marine environments are better in WA than overseas and that almost 60 per cent believe that aquaculture, or farm fishing, contributes to marine sustainability.

(ends)

Note to Editor/Journalists: *WAFIC has included several pie charts to illustrate this media statement: See attachment.*

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