
PART E

COMHISSIONS

The workshop broke into five commissions to consider topics given to them by the workshop Chairman. The commissions were to regard traditional fishing as a special Australian resource in which is embedded a series of interests. These interests are commercial, traditional and academic.

The specific subjects for consideration were to be considered in this context. The commissions are listed below with chairman and rapporteurs. The commissions reported back to the main group and there was minimal discussion of the reports.

COMMISSION

CHAIRMAN/RAPPORTEUR

1. Marine Demography

Chairman: Dr Leon Zann
Rapporteur: Dr Helene Marsh

2. Management Principles

Chairman: Dr Bob Johannes
Rapporteur: Ms Sally Driml

~~3. International Action~~

~~Chairman: Mr Peter Hunnam~~
~~Rapporteur: Mr Bob Speirs~~

4. Education

Chairman: Mr Perry Rendell
Rapporteur: Mr Kirk Peterson

5. Communication/Planning Forum
Chairman: Mr Graeme Kelleher
Rapporteur: Ms Claudia Baldwin

Summary of Commissions' Recommendations

Commission 1: Rarine Demography

The group noted the following:

- , The necessity to collect data on:
 - catch from traditional fisheries and other sources;
 - nature of fishing effort;
 - stock size and identification of major target species used by traditional communities.
- , Turtles, dugongs and barramundi are most affected by traditional hunting and fishing and require individual management plans.

- . Short term, coordinated studies of the marine resource usage of a large number of communities using a range of sampling strategies are required.

. The program should be coordinated by the appropriate State, **Commonwealth and** Territorial agencies.

Commission 2: Management Principles

The group noted that the following were the major issues:

- . Traditional **knowledge is** a useful shortcut to information that is valuable for marine resource management.
- . This knowledge, as well as traditional marine **resource** management methods, deserve considerably more study than they have been accorded so far in Australia; their importance has been demonstrated widely elsewhere throughout the tropics.
- . Traditional marine resource management sometimes (but not always) provides a useful framework on which to build contemporary marine resource management programs.

Commission 3: International Action

The group noted the following:

- . The Australian populations of turtles and dugongs used by traditional inhabitants cannot be managed in isolation from **neighbouring** countries.
- . Several of these populations are of **world-wide** importance.
- . It would be desirable that **cooperation** occur between countries concerned, particularly in relation to:
 - exploitation of common stock;
 - trade;
 - exchange of information;

Commission 4: Education

The commission on public education recommended that a coordinating mechanism or committee be established with a view to taking educational initiatives to:

- . Address the gaps in the state of traditional **fishing/hunting knowledge** in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities in Northern Australia;

improve the dissemination of traditional
fishing/hunting knowledge amongst Aboriginal and
Islander communities, government agencies and the
public at large;

prioritise the recording of traditional fishing/hunting
knowledge held by Aboriginal and Islander peoples in
Northern Australia before it is lost.

Commission 5: Communication/Planning Forum

The group noted the following:

That an appropriate forum should have terms of
reference which include:

- planning action arising from this workshop;
- communicating with and involving all interest groups.

An expert committee should be appointed to plan and
communicate future action in relation to a national
research program in traditional fisheries.

Membership of the committee to be decided in the
future.

The ~~expert committee should report~~ to the ~~sponsoring~~
agencies and through them, to other interested parties.

The mechanisms previously drafted for this purpose in
the Commonwealth government be adopted, namely:

- the appointment of a national coordinator;
- the appointment of three liaison officers, one from
each of Queensland, Northern Territory and Western
Australia, with the function of involving
traditional communities.

The appointment of a senior scientist to oversee the
quality of the research program.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/ISSUES/CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY THE WORKSHOP

Traditional Knowledge and Integration of that Knowledge

A considerable amount of traditional knowledge exists in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland Aboriginal and Islander communities related to marine biology, marine use and management.

The extent and form of the knowledge differs between areas.

There are major gaps in the collection of that knowledge in Western Australia, Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria communities and some Queensland East Coast communities.

Any new studies to collect traditional knowledge from Aborigines and Islanders should:

- build on previous programs;

- be multi-disciplinary;

- involve community participation to the maximum extent;

- be undertaken in the near future because the, knowledge is dying out.

While communication between individuals appears to be satisfactory, there appears to be a need for another forum for exchange of ideas, for instance, group communication. Traditional communities need to decide what information should be given away and what information should be retained to enable the communities to retain their integrity. Such a forum is also needed to enable communities to find information they may want from management agencies. There is a need for a forum for an exchange of ideas and development of positions and views.

There appears to have been some loss of contact with traditions in some communities and it is necessary for these communities to determine whether they wish to regain some of the traditional knowledge.

It is not always clear whether the "traditional management" of resources has been conscious conservation or whether it has been management by default. Indications of "worry" about declining or over-use of resources and subsequent reductions in exploitation of those resources suggests that such management may not always be management by default.

Existing traditional use and management of marine resources has changed, because of changing technology, culture and community social requirements. Existing traditional management needs to be related to what is required to ensure availability and sustainability of stocks. There needs to be assessment of what is needed from management agencies to close the gap between current traditional management and currently desirable, management.

There needs to be some consideration of the Australian position vis a vis the world regarding resource availability with respect to target species, such as turtles, as the ranges of individual species extend beyond the area of Australian jurisdiction.

Main Conclusions with Respect to Target Species

There is a pressing need for information on population numbers and population dynamics, particularly for turtles and dugong.

There is a great need for information on catches of target species involved in traditional fisheries by other than traditional communities.

There needs to be consideration of other problems in relation to the target species in addition to adult harvest, for example foxes and pigs digging up turtle eggs.

There needs to be consideration of international harvests and management of target species. This is particularly true where commercial markets are involved.

There appears to be significant traditional knowledge of dugong in Western Australia and Torres Strait, green turtle populations particularly in Western Australia, rock lobster especially in the Northern Territory, trochus in Northern Territory and Western Australia, reef fish generally, seabirds and other fisheries.

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.