

July 2005

Seafood Industry Week a Huge Success

It officially commenced on Saturday 9 July with the Seafood Industry Ball and Awards and finished at 10 pm on Saturday 16 July, when the second Darwin Seafood Festival closed. In between, the seafood industry was featured in the media each day, with the vast majority of that coverage being positive.

Hundreds of interstate and overseas delegates attended a range of conferences, workshops, seminars and meetings in Darwin during the week and thousands of people attended the one day Darwin Seafood Festival, held on Fort Hill Wharf.

A key element in the success of the week was the effort of the very significant number of volunteers from industry, the general public and government. They put in many hours each to ensure that events went smoothly and already a number are looking forward to next year's Festival.

Ball and Awards Night

Some 245 people attended this black tie event, which was held in the Overseas Passenger Terminal on Stokes Hill Wharf. The fourteen Tapas style dishes on the menu was overseen by celebrity chef Andrew Fielke, from Adelaide. Most people had never tasted many of the specially prepared dishes featuring Northern Territory seafood, the majority of which was donated by producers.

The night was an outstanding success and was attended by a diverse group of people, from seafood producers to support industry representatives, government and politicians. Chief Minister Clare Martin, Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, Kon Vatskalis, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Dr Chris Burns, federal Fisheries Minister Senator Ian Macdonald, Senator Nigel Scullion and the immediate past NT Administrator John Anictomatas were also present, several presenting Seafood Industry Awards.

There were eight Awards presented on the night, all of which reflected the national seafood industry Award structure for 2005.

Newsletter of the Northern Territory Seafood Council

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Seafood Industry Training Award

Winner - Captain Tony Wilson, Seafood & Maritime Industries Training Ltd.

Tony began his life at sea in 1970 in the Western Australian prawn industry and in 1977 travelled to the Northern Territory. He has worked for some of the famous names in the seafood industry, Haritos, Lombardo, Kailis and Northern Research to name a few.

He began his career as a formal trainer with Seafood & Maritime Industries training some years ago, specialising in introducing young people to the industry as deckhands, a role that he still occupies.

Tony has a particular skill in dealing with young people from different social and ethnic backgrounds and this is widely acknowledged.

Seafood Restaurant Award

Winner: Crustaceans on the Wharf

Seating 400 people, Crustaceans on the Wharf is owned and operated by Vicki Jenkins. It offers no less than 36 different seafood dishes on its menu and is located overlooking the water on Stokes Hill Wharf.

Crustaceans on the Wharf is actively marketed both locally and nationally, and an example of the commitment to providing a memorable dining experience is the Chef's daily provision of samples of dishes on the menu to wait staff so that they can describe dishes to patrons.

Chefs have also been assisted in travelling interstate and overseas to seek innovations and new ideas.

Seafood Industry Research & Development Award

Winner: "The Genetag Hook"

Dr Rik Buckworth, Charles Bryce, Adrian Donatti

This project is a world first for marine research and has already won several prestigious awards. It has also attracted significant national and international interest in the scientific community.

The key to the basic concept of genetic tagging is a unique hook the team has developed which allows a small amount of tissue to be collected from a fish without having to land it. Currently being developed in the Spanish Mackerel fishery, fish subsequently caught commercially have their DNA compared with the data bank of samples. The genetic tag is invisible unique and indelible.

The potential to use this as a powerful tool for estimating stock populations is immense.

Seafood Industry Promotion Award
Winner: Darwin Seafood Festival Pty Ltd

The Directors of this company are Ziko Ilic and Nick Hanigan.

The inaugural Darwin Seafood Festival was held in July 2004 and was the result of the vision and commitment of Ziko and Nick. Many thousands attended the one day Festival, far exceeding what anyone had predicted. The Festival will be an annual highlight of the dry season calendar of the Northern Territory and, in its second year, has attracted a number of industry related conferences, meetings and events leading up to it on 16 July. Several hundred interstate and overseas delegates are travelling to Darwin to participate.

Seafood Industry Environment Award
Winner: Benoa Nominees (Trading as Arda-tek)

Located on the banks of the Blackmore River at Berry Springs, south of Darwin, Arda - Tek's aquaculture venture covers 14 hectares of saltwater ponds in which prawns, barramundi and mud crabs are grown.

Adam Body, Managing Director of Arda - Tek, has developed a "raceway" pond design that is unique in Australia. The design has minimised discharge of water from the ponds, thus minimising impact on the receiving water body.

As Adam Body sums up his environmental approach as follows, "...to grow aquaculture product while leaving a virtually undetectable environmental footprint and in a sustainable way and do it year after year , with minimal impact and still make money out of it..."

Seafood Industry Producer Award
Winner: Taroona Pty Ltd

The owner of the company is Norm Hedditch, who has been an active fisherman for over twenty years. In 1988 he started his own business with one vessel and now has four vessels which work in the Spanish Mackerel and Timor Reef fisheries.

A former Board member of the Northern Territory Seafood Council, Norm also finds time in his busy life to contribute to the training needs for the future of the seafood industry. He is presently a Board member of the Primary Industry Training Advisory Council.

Norm constantly strives to improve the product of Taroona Pty Ltd and markets this both in Australia and overseas. In addition to all this, and the complexity of running a company with four vessels, Norm continues to be a practicing fisherman, spending a number of days at sea each month.

Seafood Industry Business Award
Winner: Seaking Enterprises Pty Ltd

Established in 1986 by two brothers who were fishermen, the company has grown from a small backyard operation to one which has modern, export approved premises in Winnellie employing 10 staff. It specialises in Mud Crab for both the domestic and export markets.

Seaking has extensive experience in catching, handling, packing and marketing Mud Crab. It has a particular focus on the “high end, prestige product” of the market. It’s commitment to quality and the constant search for new markets has led to it winning some prestigious awards for business conduct and excellence in export of product.

Seafood Industry Icon Award
Winner: Australia Bay Seafoods

The directors of Australia Bay Seafoods are Gary Kessel and Bill Passey.

Bill began fishing 43 years ago, in 1962, in the WA rock lobster fishery. A qualified skipper since 1966, Bill relocated his operation to the Northern Territory in the latter part of the 1980’s.

Acknowledged as the founder of what is now the Timor Reef dropline and trap fishery, Bill entered what is now the NT Finfish Trawl fishery in 1989.

In 1997, Bill went into partnership with Gary Kessel, a highly experienced fishing industry operator from Western Australia. Together they have transformed the Finfish Trawl fishery into a 1,000 tonne a year producer, most of the product being exported. Their commitment to quality of product and practice has resulted in a number of “firsts”, including the ecological seal of approval for their fishery by the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage.

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The following Award winners have been sponsored to participate in and attend the Australian Seafood Industry Awards, held in Sydney in conjunction with Seafood Directions 2005 in mid September;

Seafood Industry Icon
Seafood Business
Seafood Industry Producer

The volunteer committee members that organised the Ball and Awards are Carmel McCaskel-Ball, Julii Tyson, Debbie Atkinson, Marianne St.Clair, Serina Tran, Chris Calogerous and David Murtah.

Darwin Seafood Festival 2005

With twice the display and food preparation space of the 2004 Festival, this year's Festival was also hugely successful. Through the Northern Territory Seafood Council, industry mounted ten displays featuring fishery and non-pearl aquaculture specific information. Covering over 100 square metres, the displays attracted a very significant amount of positive comment from patrons and was well worth the large amount of effort, time and money involved.

The displays were built around two key themes, the ecological sustainability of our industry and the message "NT seafood, you deserve the best, demand local".

The community was better able to gauge the breadth of the seafood industry because of the enhanced displays and a highlight was the product featured in the booths. A big hit with the public was the live Trepang arranged by Tasmanian Seafoods. Being able to hold them out of the water certainly made many people's day. The Aquarium fishery and non-pearl aquaculture exhibits also attracted a lot of attention and the very positive feedback received about patrons being able to talk directly with producers at all the exhibits was heartening.

Patrons were able to talk to producers directly at each display and the very positive feedback received about this contact was heartening.

Other exhibitors with links to the seafood industry included the Fisheries Group, Seafood and Maritime Industries Training, the National Oceans Office and Seafood Services Australia. Seafood handling and preparation demonstrations were conducted by the Sydney Fish Market throughout the day and visiting celebrity chefs Andrew Fielke and Peter Howard with chief winemaker Phil Ryan from Mt Pleasant wines also entertained the crowd.

Food outlets featured Grey mackerel, shark, scampi and reef fish by NT Fish, barramundi and Threadfin Salmon (now officially called King threadfin) by Ilic Holdings, mud crab by Seaking Enterprises, prawns by Newfishing; pearl oyster meat, crocodile, spanish mackerel and squid by the Dragon Palace and oysters by the Sunset Oyster Bar.

While a very significant number of volunteers made the day a success, the volunteer Festival organising committee guided the development of the event. They were, Ziko Ilic, Nick Hanigan, John MacCartie, Fiona Stanley, Helena Kearns, Jane Brennan, Pam Satchell and Carolynne Yates.

Between the Ball and Awards night and the Seafood Festival seven days later, key events included;

- a four day special workshop conference of the Australian Society for Fish Biology
- an otolith workshop and several research project co-ordination meetings
- a three day conference of the Australian Marine Sciences Association
- a one day Environmental Management System workshop run by Seafood Services Australia
- a one day seafood traceability workshop run by Seafood Services Australia
- a one day Seafood Services Australia national network meeting
- a one day Board meeting of the Australian Seafood Industry Council

The positive industry publicity generated by 2005 Seafood Week activities and events certainly benefited the NT industry.

Government Department Restructure

With an additional Minister being appointed by the NT Government, taking the total Ministry to nine, key changes have also been made to the structure of some government departments.

A new department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines has been formed, thus putting the wealth producing industries together under new Chief Executive John Carrol. Richard Sellers remains the Executive Director of Fisheries.

Kon Vatskalis remains Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries and Dr. Chris Burns is Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, another important portfolio to industry.

Industry Codes of Practice

Nine fishery Codes of Practice have now been signed off by the relevant Licensee groups and the artwork for publication is now being developed.

The Northern Territory seafood industry Code of Conduct was completed and printed in time for display at the Darwin Seafood Festival and a copy is included with this Newsletter. Also included for information are the following updated Seafood Council publications.

- Seafood Sensations
- Seafood in Seconds
- Snapshots of fisheries and sectors

- Overview of the Northern Territory Seafood Council
- Overview of fisheries management arrangements
- 2005 industry fact sheet

More comprehensive Environmental Management Systems are also being developed for several fisheries and these will all be completed by March 2006.

Review of Fisheries Act

Work has commenced on the review of the NT *Fisheries Act*, scheduled for completion in mid 2006. A special reference group has been established to oversee the review and the Seafood Council CEO Iain Smith is a member of that group.

A draft discussion paper is presently with Minister Kon Vatskalis office and it is expected that this will be released shortly for an extended public comment.

National Promotion Of Seafood

The following information has just been released by the Australian Seafood Industry Council.

Australia's seafood industry is building a sharp new professional edge to the marketing and promotion of seafood to consumers at home and overseas.

In an unprecedented move, industry participants are joining forces to establish a marketing and promotion entity which will take responsibility for boosting sales of our quality, healthy and value-for-money seafood harvested from sustainable wild harvest and aquaculture fisheries.

The momentum has come from industry itself, and will be pursued through business planning for a new, stand alone entity of a kind never attempted before in Australia.

The moves have been welcomed and endorsed by the Australian Seafood Industry Council (ASIC), meeting recently in Darwin. ASIC Deputy Chair, Mr Grahame Turk, said the concept of the new entity could draw together a range of forward-looking initiatives either mooted or already underway.

“Industry operators have not been passive on marketing and promoting their product, but we do recognise the need for an entity which can draw it all together – something which has been seriously lacking in the past,” Mr Turk said.

ASIC has thrown its support behind:

- an application for research funding to develop a business plan for the new entity, devised by National Aquaculture Council in light of recent Aquaculture Action Agenda work, and
- concrete steps now being taken to establish an Australian Seafood Marketing and Promotion Corporation (ASMPC).

“We are now seeing industry figures putting aside their differences and taking specific united actions,” Mr Turk said.

Sharp time lines have been set for the new work on marketing and promotion, with a strong chance that outcomes will be delivered before the end of 2005.