

### PAPER No 8: Resource Sharing

#### Executive summary

Effective resource sharing arrangements are necessary to ensure fisheries are managed sustainably and that conflict between users is minimised. A resource sharing framework for NT fisheries is required as priority.

#### NTSC Policy Position

That with the support and input from all stakeholders (commercial, recreational, traditional, government etc) a resource sharing framework be developed for the Northern Territories fishery resources.

To ensure that access to fisheries resources is shared equitably between all stakeholders, no further resource reallocations should be considered until the resource sharing framework is finalised.

The framework should include the following principles;

- Provide certainty and security for investment decisions to all sectors.
- Where all stakeholders can agree on resource sharing arrangements the Government should consider these as a priority and implement arrangements where appropriate.
- In instances where agreement cannot be reached the government should appoint an independent facilitator to work with all stakeholders to develop options.
- Any independent process should use an agreed cost benefit analysis framework to ensure resource sharing options are transparent and seek to maximise community benefit.
- Pursuing maximum community benefit requires consideration of social, biological and economic impacts.
- All Ministerial decisions on resource sharing should be based on the best available<sup>1</sup> social, biological and economic data.

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<sup>1</sup> Best available data means all reasonable endeavors will be made to collect all the available data, however uncertainty in any area will not limit a decision being made.

- Resource sharing must include extensive stakeholder consultation well before the implementation of any arrangements.
- Where re-allocation of fisheries resources from one user group to another result in erosion of existing rights, fair and adequate compensation or adjustment assistance will be paid for any unavoidable impacts such as those associated with the loss of access to fishing grounds and/or the value of commercial fishing licences.
- Resource sharing arrangements are implemented as a priority in all inshore fisheries.
- That all stakeholders are considered by the arrangements.
- That the arrangements are based around a common currency (i.e. catch, effort or area) and that a sectors share will be based as a proportion of the fishery.
- That each sector will be responsible for ensuring its impact on the fishery is constrained within the resource sharing arrangements.
- That management measures allow each sector the ability to access their share in a meaningful way.
- The resource sharing arrangements be reviewed every ten years to ensure they are delivering maximum community benefits.

## **Issues**

Resource sharing describes arrangements that give different users, such as commercial and recreational fishers, shared access to the fish resources in a particular fishery. There are a number of ways in which a share of a resource can be expressed through an arrangement for effective management. These can include proportion of a Total Allowable Catch, proportion of mortality in a fishery, historical catch, spatial and temporal separation. These tools will all need to be considered when determining options for resource sharing between user groups. It may be that in some cases a range of tools may provide the best way to meet stakeholders' needs in a fishery.

While in the past predominantly access by the commercial fishing industry has been regulated, resource sharing arrangements formalise shared access arrangements for all relevant user groups.

### **Why have resource sharing?**

There are three key reasons for using resource sharing arrangements:

- To ensure the community receives maximum benefit from the resource;
- To ensure the total extraction of resources is sustainable; and/or
- To minimise conflict between user groups

### **Maximizing Community Benefit**

Different stakeholders have different needs and objectives in relation to the use of our fisheries resources. Increasing populations and demands on resources means access to our

fisheries has to be shared. The use of a fisheries resource will provide the community with different benefits. Commercial fishing allows the community access to fresh fish and provides jobs, recreational fishing also provides jobs and for the improved well being of participants. By carefully considering the social, biological and economic impacts of differing resource sharing options, one can seek to provide for optimal community benefit. In simplest terms - what different levels of access to stakeholders provides community with the best balance of recreational fishing opportunities and access to fresh fish? What levels of access provide for the greatest economic return from the fishery? Careful cost / benefit analysis is required investigating the social, biological and economic impacts of any decision.

### **Sustainability**

Strict monitoring and the use of appropriate management tools has meant that commercial fishers can no longer increase their catch to unsustainable levels. Other sectors that were historically seen as having little impact on sustainability have grown considerably with increasing populations. Numerous examples now exist where commercial fishing has had to be further restrained due to the unmanaged expansion of other sectors.

Resource sharing ensures the combined impact from all users does not exceed sustainable limits. Fisheries cannot be managed sustainably if any sector is allowed to increase its impact unchecked. Explicit resource shares to all stakeholders are therefore essential in sustainably managing fisheries.

### **Conflict**

Competition between stakeholders for limited fisheries resources can lead to considerable levels of conflict. The cause of this conflict can take many forms, competition for limited resources, competition for area or use of facilities, propaganda, misinformation and many more. It is important to identify the cause of any conflict and ensure appropriate measures are implemented.

Ad hoc or political decisions relating to resource sharing rarely reduce areas of conflict. In fact the contrary is true, with ad hoc decisions in a number of fisheries only going to inflame conflict further. This ongoing conflict also limits stakeholder's ability to effectively contribute to the management of fisheries

### **Rationale**

Effective and stakeholder supported resource sharing frameworks are essential to the sustainable development of all the NT Fisheries. Stakeholder conflict is greatly limiting the optimal management of our fisheries and an agreed resource sharing framework is required as a priority.