

PAPER No. 1: Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)

Executive Summary

The commercial fishing industry is dependant and responsible for the sustainable use of our fisheries resources. The Northern Territory Seafood Council (NTSC) primary objective is to ensure that the Northern Territories fisheries resources are managed and utilised in a sustainable manner. The NTSC is fully supportive of the nationally agreed principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)¹.

NTSC Policy Position:

The NTSC position is that it is fully supportive of the nationally agreed principles of ESD, and more specifically recognises that;

- Achieving the objectives of ESD is dependent on the sustainable development of our fisheries.
- ESD is dependent on addressing biological, economic and social issues in all aspects of fisheries management and operations.
- That the pursuit of ESD is an ongoing and evolving process.
- Public support is integral to the industries development and the pursuit of ESD.
- Secure access to well managed fisheries provides commercial operators' with strong incentives to ensure long term sustainability.
- Rights based management is the cornerstone to successfully implementing ESD principles (see NTSC policy paper number two).

¹ Please see definition of ESD, page two, "Issues"

Issues

Pursuing ESD requires the consideration of short and long-term economic, social and environmental effects by all stakeholders. The National Strategy on ESD (CoA, 1992) was agreed to by all Australian governments and includes three key objectives:

- *To enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations;*
- *To provide for equity within and between generations; and*
- *To protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.*

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) is defined as follows:

“Using, conserving and enhancing the community’s resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased” (CoA, 1992).

Whilst ESD has often been wrongly assumed to address only environmental issues, the above objectives recognise that continued development is a necessary element in meeting the overall objectives.

ESD and fisheries

ESD in fisheries is not only related to the target species, but any effects there may be on the ecosystem. Importantly the economic health of a fishery relies on ensuring the sustainability of our resources. Ongoing access to these resources also requires broad community support for management of the fishery and a clear understanding of the community benefits. Essential to this process is that the governance of the fishery can meet the challenges of pursuing ESD (including both the legislated management arrangements for the fishery and any additional measures such as EMS and industry codes of conduct). The principles of ESD are not a fixed end point and stakeholders need to work in partnership to ensure we maintain this ongoing process.

Factors affecting ESD in Fisheries

To help ensure the fishing industry meet the objectives of the ESD process eight major components affected by fisheries (in three main categories) have been defined:

Contributions of the fishery to ecological well-being

1. Retained species
2. Non-retained species
3. General Ecosystem

Contributions of the fishery to human well-being

4. Indigenous well-being
5. Community and regional well-being
6. National social and economic well-being

Factors affecting the ability of the fishery to contribute to ESD

7. Impact of the environment on the fishery

8. Governance Arrangements

In all decision making processes regarding our fisheries we must ensure these issues are adequately addressed.

Rationale

The investment required to operate in commercial fishing including licences and infrastructure can only be returned if the fisheries resources are managed and utilised in a sustainable manner. A long term and viable fishing industry is completely dependent on the sustainable management of the NT fisheries resources. An economically viable fishery based on the unsustainable biological use of the resource is not possible.

While the term ESD is often mistaken as only referring to the biological impacts of sustainability it is actually also reliant on economic and social sustainability. Management and operation decisions must consider biological and economic impacts and the acceptance and accountability to the public.