

# Fisheries management training for sustainable governance

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## Abstract

There is an increasing awareness that good fisheries management outcomes are often related to the calibre and training of the participants in the fisheries management process.

In the 1994-2001 period several national training projects were undertaken across Australia to examine and develop the training requirements of both fisheries management staff in government and of stakeholder representatives in the co-management process. A suite of courses were developed to address basic fishery management needs in both these groups.

While there is a realisation of the increasing number of issues faced by all participants in fisheries management, there is also a need for greater professionalism and the potential for the development of competency based training systems in fisheries management. The paper discusses a range of training issues and provides a framework for discussion of these issues in the fisheries management community.

**Keywords:** Fisheries management training

## 1. Background

Training of fisheries managers has been identified as “the missing link” in improving the quality and effectiveness of fisheries management. Successive international conventions, reviews and conferences have identified the need for training of those involved in fisheries management (UNCED, 1992).

In the 1990s in Australia government agencies recognised that comanagement between government and industry was required to address fisheries management problems. This concept became widened to stakeholders which included recreational and community representatives as part of the comanagement framework.

Since 1991, the author developed training of Fisheries Administrators with a series of Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) national projects (1994-2001) to train “fishery managers” in all states of Australia (McIlgorm and Wilson, 2002). This was through the Australian Maritime College (AMC).

### 1.1 “Get them trained!”

The goals of training initiatives are generally ill specified and start with the fact the “people deficiencies” have been identified and therefore training is required.

Successive AMC/FRDC projects trained a total of 280 Professional Fishery managers from government agencies in Australia and New Zealand in residential schools and workshops of between 3-10 days duration.

A total of 350 Committee members from industry and other stakeholders groups were trained through a series of specifically designed short courses of 2-3 days duration. Initially these had industry participants, but gradually the scope was widened to include recreational, community and indigenous participants.

While the catch cry for training is made, there remains a fundamental issue of what they should be trained in? The purpose of the research program was to “get out there and find out”. The temptation is to instantly go to lists of what fishery managers need to know and develop lists of subjects such as biology, economics, management, stock assessment. This was followed by refinement of the subject content from the feedback

received from participants. The syllabi developed are reported in McIlgorm and Wilson (2002). This subject base approach was only part of the training approach developed.

## **1.2 The common needs of all fishery managers**

Training work with numerous professional fishery managers and stakeholder committee members suggests there are parallel needs in the two sectors. It is proposed the research showed the following parallel needs:

**Induction** - what is expected of me in this role?

**Personal/professional development** - if I want to contribute more, what skills do I need?

**Developing & implementing change - How do I change the system?** Applying leadership & technical know how to my work/policy environment.

The application of these principles to each sector is discussed below.

## **1.3 Discussion – training professional fisheries managers**

The course products developed for Professional Fishery Managers (PFM) are an initial Course A, covering a range of technical and managerial subjects in a 10 day period.

The objective for the PFM are familiarity with fisheries management issues, conceptual and technical awareness, and to develop a perspective on the fisheries problem and an introduction to management issues. As a delivery mode it is preferable to have managers out of the classroom in order to break boredom and to challenge mind sets. The use of the “MV Bluefin” to take PFM on short half day trawling trips was instructional for PFMs.

Personal and professional development was addressed through a “Workshop B”. Themes such as communication, conflict resolution, change and professionalism in fishery management enabled participants to deliver a paper on their current work topic to fishery manager colleagues from other states of Australia. The workshop also assisted in increasing professionalism in fishery management through the inclusion of leadership and teamwork exercises and case studies.

## **1.4 Discussion – training stakeholders for co-management**

On the co-management side of training the Management Advisory Committees (MACs) were inducted through a MAC I short course. This addressed participant’s responsibilities, presented relevant technical (economics, gear technology), biological and ecological information as required by a committee member interfacing with government. Personal development awareness through skills such as conflict resolution concluded the two days.

The major issues in stakeholder training were attendance and the time away from work and the loss of income. Subsidisation of tuition fees, travel, accommodation and meals was one way to address this. Secondly stakeholder groups were diverse in academic and business abilities with a wide range of formal adult learning abilities.

The effectiveness of such training is difficult to assess. Behavioural change among participants was noted, but there was concern on ability of the stakeholders to implement training in the “workplace”. This is not helped by the workplace for a MAC member being a mixed stakeholder and government committee meeting four days a year.

Fishers expressed a need for a training to promote personal skills and to develop representative skills. The MAC II course introduced policy, legislation, and the interpretation of information, such as presented to stakeholders by scientists. This “second layer” of personal and leadership skills included conflict resolution, negotiation, and leadership skills. Fishers had expressed a need for this course after completing the induction course, and thus the course was able to extend to 2.5 days duration.

It was found that the voluntary nature of the second level course led to fewer, but more interested fishers. Many used this for personal development and increasing effectiveness in their role as committees. The implementation of “cost recovery” of the costs of fisheries management services from industry meant stakeholders became interested in gaining committee skills and in being able to challenge government on details of service delivery!

The deficiencies identified in the MAC I and II were addressed by the development of a third level course, the Policy Development Program. This program was to enable stakeholders to study “How to change the system”. Participants would generate policy on an issue relevant to their fishery and implement it in the MAC. The initial course was 2 days followed by a 3 month program via teleconference.

In the selection of policy development topics it was found that stakeholders focussed on development of policies and sectoral interests in the management system. Leaders in industry focused on issue development. The program enabled monitoring of change among the participants. This enabled more appraisal of the effectiveness of the training to be undertaken as stakeholders developed with their policy proposals.

### **1.5 Issues arising from project experience - PFM training**

It is found that a mix of agency groups in training covering generic material works well, but may only partially address agencies training needs. In coming away from the workplace, the PFM is faced with it being a choice for personal development or for excessive socialising.

More fundamental educational problems arise with short courses. They can be merely issue identification from a range of experts and discussion with remarkably little impact on the “educational stock” retained by the participant. My abiding feeling is that long term agency change will be more directed by individuals with sound undergraduate training in fisheries management or applied post graduate study in fisheries management than by a “dip in the ocean” via a ten day short course.

The issue of participant selection is a recurrent bugbear. Who gets selected to come on short courses and why? I recall the parable of the fruit tree that was not looking so well and the advice of Jesus (Luke Ch. 13v6-9) to “dig around it” (encouragement), “put fertiliser on it” (reward), and “if it does not respond, pull it out” (pre-exit). I have found the first two reasons to be the norm and the last one to be applied in some circumstances where individuals have not responded as measured by other performance measures!

Often I am asked, should participants be tested? Generally if it helps retention and outcomes, why not. The issue may be that it does not significantly increase retention of knowledge! The key element for retention is the subsequent chances of it being useful in the participant’s work place.

### **1.6 Discussion points – PFM short course training**

There seems to be a role for generic fisheries management training outside the Fisheries Dept “workplace” context. It is reasonably unaccountable, generally untested and opens minds to the content and purpose of management and reduces gaps in knowledge that can be filled by participants subsequently.

Staff development within the Fisheries Department context is entirely different and is usually regarded as a “who spends the conference money this year” issue, rather than a strategic equipping of staff for the needs of the agency. (The latter takes time and skill and is not ephemeral). Work place training must be accountable, tested, and measured in the workplace. This is not achievable in generic short courses.

I suggest that a Fisheries Agency needs these two rails of training PFMs- (a) generic short courses and (b) strategic internal work place training. Short courses are possibly the superficial shot gun approach to a suite of training interventions that should be employed to train PFMs within the fishery department. The strategic approach is illustrated in the recent work undertaken by Dominion Consulting with Sun Dial group NZ as illustrated in the paper by Arbuckle in these proceedings (Arbuckle, 2002)

## **1.7 Discussion points –MAC training**

Training stakeholder representatives requires a tiered program structure enabling stakeholders to be trained for a general committee role and to eventually become a leader with policy development capacity.

After preliminary research, “competencies” can now be identified and developed for the stakeholder “workplace”. In late 2001 a study was undertaken to determine the needs of the MAC stakeholders across Australia (CIT, 2001) and to develop a competency based unit for Management Advisory Committees. These units may be part of the National Seafood Training Package organised through Seafood Training Australia..

Standards and competencies may be developed, but face all the besetting problems of training adults in committee / fisheries advisory skills. One of these is the attendance of stakeholders in training initiatives. This requires incentives and subsidisation in the program. A generic induction with information is needed in training and will come across a diverse range of abilities.

Much of the training is required by the need of government to have an advisory committee for co-management consultation (or just for show and manipulation). Whether for the requirement of the Fisheries Department for MAC members, or for the industry’s representation need, there is a shortage of trained industry/stakeholder people for both.

## **1.8 Developments**

There is no “magic bullet” to get well trained people. Training people takes time, resources and expertise using a diversity of approaches within a strategic program to produce measurable outcomes.

Both PFMs and MACs have a range of significant adult learning issues to be addressed in any training intervention. Adult learning expertise required in generating measurable solutions. In the future Fishery Departments will have to develop their human resource development profiles if the goals of sustainable fisheries governance are to be met. Currently most Fishery Department human resource development plans are trivial and piecemeal. Strategic planning for staff development needs to be rapidly improved and independent staff testing is required (Arbuckle, 2002).

## **1.9 Thanks**

To the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, (FRDC) Canberra for funding and Australian Maritime College, the executing agency. To 600+ participants who came for various reasons and under differing degrees of duress. This paper is dedicated to them and their willingness to give it a go, usually after a lot of persuasion!

I was pleasantly surprised to receive the following email at the end of the project. An actual e-mail from a fisher’s wife whose husband attended the MAC training program.

“Well the old bugger has been and gone with the MAC Course and has now asked me to contact you and ask why the funding has been stopped by the Government? He now feels he wants to go to more courses! Well wonders never cease, he just needed that little shove out the door.

I laughed when I saw him come home again, a fisherman who used to wear old clothes and smell like crays when he got home - to arrive back home with briefcase, jacket and not smelling like fish”.

The take home message? - training is about people.

## **1.10 References**

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