



## South Australian Women's Industry Network



Women's Industry Network  
Seafood Community

For too long fishing has been about “blokes in boats” and for too long the fishing industry has been judged on the image that these blokes presented to the general public.

As in every sector of primary production that minority that cared little for sustainable fishing and farming practises but only about financial rewards receive all the attention from the press, the compliance, the conservationist and the Federal and State Governments.

Our industry is much more than that: for example in my own sector in South Australia we developed the World's first environmental Management Plan for a whole of fishery, yes that is right a world's first back in the 1990's.

Many other fisheries in Australia and over the world are copying this plan.

When we launched it we were pretty chuffed and so we invited all the South Australian press and many other dignitaries.

No press turned up because no one opposed it. It was a good news story.

Our fishery has recently been assessed for Marine Stewardship Council Certification for Sustainable Fisheries an independent third party accreditation and an internally recognised eco-label. This has taken nine years of intense work.

The image of “blokes in boats” and because they are few in numbers made it easy for politicians to make themselves heroes by transferring the non fishing communities share that the commercial fisherman catch to the recreational fishers.

The social impacts of this were complete ignored because it was thought there are only a few blokes affected and therefore it does not matter.

With the bar being constantly raised, on many occasions unrealistically, and governments redistributing the fish consumers share of the resource it is a big ask to expect commercial fishers to keep reinvesting in our industry which provides some of the best healthy food feed their families.

Our grandson has just joined us in our business and he makes the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of our family to fish. It is his dream to be able to continue this tradition.

There were many reasons why our Women's Industry Network was founded in South Australia, but the main two were

1. Our image, that with nine out of ten fishing families, was not deserved. These “blokes in boats” were perceived as rapers and pillagers of the environment.
2. The social impacts on families, businesses and communities were not taken into account when politicians slashed fishing families' livelihoods for no scientific reasons. It is pretty easy to take a fisherman's livelihood away and throw him out on the street, but a little harder when his wife and children are in the same position. It gave these “blokes in boats” a more acceptable image. It did not matter that most of them are fourth and fifth generation and usually pillars of their communities when decisions to get rid of them were made.

WIN just gives industry a human face, We have been doing half the work anyway, all the onshore work, including most of the office work, marketing, radio work, spare parts pick up and delivery, public relations etc.

Traditionally there has been little emphasis placed on the role and contribution women make to the fishing and seafood industry.

Furthermore, women have not played an active role in industry decision-making, however in 1996 a group of women associated with the fishing industry in South Australia came together to explore opportunities for involvement and as a result the Women's Industry Network (WIN) was formed.

In 1998 WIN conducted a State Conference that resulted in the preparation of a strategic plan.

The aim of WIN is: to tackle important issues to ensure a positive future. This organisation has been active in the promotion of the industry, in addition to its members becoming actively involved in policy and decision-making bodies. Our main aim is to see a social impact assessment framework developed so that changes to policy and other decision making cannot be done without ticking off all the boxes or status quo must remain. If this is developed then the loudest voice cannot be the deciding factor and policy cannot be made for other than good sound science.

The Women's Industry Network (WIN) of South Australia through their initiative and determination provided a valuable model for women involved in the fishing and seafood industries throughout Australia.

It was their preparedness to become actively involved in both industry issues within their own state, as well as becoming informed of the potential to work at a national level, which resulted in a National Conference for Women in the Fishing and Seafood Industry.

The purpose of the organisation was defined as: Network members influencing decision making to ensure a profitable, dynamic, secure, innovative and sustainable industry – an industry which is proactive and responsive to the needs of the industry and community.

As WIN became aware of the importance of considering issues at a national level, they actively pursued the concept of a national forum for women within the fishing and seafood industry.

A grant was secured through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation to hold a National Conference that reflected the diversity within the industry, with representation from fishers, importers and exporters, peak industry bodies, Government, processors, educators, researchers and environmentalist.

The National organisation is known as the Women's Industry Network Seafood Community (WINSC). WINSC has members in every state and territory of Australia. Many workshops have been held for our members to further their skills including: "Capitalising on the Talents of SA Fishing Women"; "Empowering Fishing Women to Capitalise on Networks"; several workshops on working with the media; Corporate Governance workshops.

WIN members have been involved voluntarily in mentoring and preparing historical projects on fishing in their regions; Seafood Industry Awards programs have been established by WIN members in South Australia and Northern Territory; cookbooks have been collated and printed by WIN members; SAWIN coordinated the South Australian Maritime Museum "Catch of the Day" and also participated in the Basin Bytes website project.

We were involved with the Living Health project "Eat well, live well" and actively involved in World Environment Day using the theme of the River Murray and Lakes and Coorong.

At SARDI open days WIN has cooked and provided seafood tastings to the public, up to 8,000 people. Similar events have been held in other states.

WIN has held training days on meeting roles and procedures.

WIN was a participant in the case studies of women on agricultural boards in South Australia “ From cake stalls ... to boardroom walls”

Helped and supported by the Office for Women, DAFF and FRDC some of the projects organised by WIN are; “Capitalising on the Talents of Women in the Fishing and Seafood Industry, BRS study

“Understanding the Roles of Fishing Women”; “Seafood Women Embrace Best Practice Decision-making – “A calling of Seafood Women to Action”, developing a Community Communication Guide (strategies for positive action)

As part of the “Seafood Women Getting Involved project a member plan and a skills audit and needs analysis were developed.

We were privileged to be part of the “100 women to Washington” and also the Australian women to Spain delegation.

WIN participated in the “Women Taking Action” making a difference in regional and rural communities.

Due to encouragement from WIN members are continually taking up offers of leadership courses and moving on in their industry.

Several WIN members have won RIRDC Rural Woman of the Year awards in the past years and 2 members were runners up this year in their states.

Some members have been Telstra Business Women of the Year.

DAFF has funded WINSC to organise a Corporate Governance Course for members at our National Conference this year and we do hope to work through the findings of our membership plan and our skills audit and needs analysis to benefit our members.

Each year WINSC holds an AGM and National Conference changing from state to state and this year celebrates 10 years of networking and friendship in Melbourne in September 2006 .

WINSC has opened up opportunities for women in fishing to have their voice heard, has secured recognition for them, and given opportunities to form friendship with other fishing families and their communities.

These are some of the things that WIN has done over the past 10 years. We look forward to the next 10.

For further information contact

Gloria Jones Tel 85370047 Fax 85370054 or Email [yabby@hotmail.net.au](mailto:yabby@hotmail.net.au)

