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The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation plans, invests in and manages fisheries research and development throughout Australia. It is a statutory authority within the portfolio of the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, jointly funded by the Australian Government and the fishing industry.

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Introduction

Since 2013 the responsibility for regulating the on-board workplace health and safety (WHS) of domestic ocean-going vessels has progressively moved from a number of State-based agencies to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA). Changes to the National System for Domestic Commercial Vessels, mean that rules for safety requirements will be consistent across all vessels, with new minimum requirements, including the need for a Safety Management System (SMS). For the commercial fishing sector, these requirements need to be in place by 1 July 2016.

The Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012 defines general safety obligations on both the Owner and Master. The Owner has a general safety obligation to implement and maintain a safety management system that ensures that the vessel and the operations of the vessel are, so far as reasonably practicable, safe. The Master also has a general safety obligation aboard the vessel to, so far as reasonably practicable, implement and comply with the safety management system for the vessel and the operations of the vessel.

The Australian Government's Policy for a More Competitive and Sustainable Fisheries Sector included a commitment to assist commercial and recreational organisations adapt to National Maritime Safety Standards. The purpose of the Grant was to assist commercial and recreational charter fishing vessel owners and masters to implement systems to improve workplace safety, and to assist them to demonstrate compliance with National Maritime Safety requirements for a Safety Management System (SMS) to be in place on each boat by 1 July 2016. The quantum of funds was \$100,000 ex GST.

While the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) rolled out its program of risk management and SMS workshops to help industry meet the National Standard for Commercial Vessels, Part E Operations, this project recognised that some industry sectors face particular challenges in accessing these programs. These challenges include location, timing, English language proficiency, or sector specific needs for customisation. This project complemented the AMSA program by resourcing industry bodies to engage with small operators, and to address particular challenges of their industry sector or region.

This project, had a further goal beyond assisting industry to meet the new requirements. Working at sea is a high-risk occupation, and the death rate for workers in Australia's (wild-capture) fisheries is 22 times higher than the nation's all-industry average (2010-11). The project aimed to build industry's commitment to safety and to make safety top of mind in day-to-day operations. By building the capacity of industry bodies to take a lead within their organisations to encourage safety within their membership and/or regions, this project has contributed to this long term goal.

The project supported ten discrete activities across six States, with an additional activity being progressed through other funding sources.

Objective

Help industry meet the National Standard for Commercial Vessels, Part E Operations

Method

The Australian Government's funds were managed by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). In July 2015, the FRDC invited Expressions of Interest from organisations that were well positioned to support industry to develop Safety Management Systems. Eligible applicants included industry associations on behalf of members; fishing enterprises where planned activities

benefit a group of operators/enterprises, and training/service providers delivering SMS training to the target group.

The target groups was the operational level of industry, with activities targeted to fishing vessels (class 3B, 3C, 3D and 3E) and trading vessels (classes 2B, 2C, 2D and 2E) operating as charter fishing vessels, with a particular emphasis on small vessel operators.

Eligible activities included:

- Offsetting costs of customising training delivery/resources to meet specific sector requirements
- Offsetting costs of delivering training workshops that would not otherwise be delivered through other programs e.g. cost, distance or timing constraints
- Offsetting costs of training for industry operators or a representative, where learning will benefit multiple operators – e.g. ‘Train the trainer’ - may be appropriate where there are a small number of operators in a remote area.

Scope for funding did not extend to assessment of compliance against standards.

As funding through the Grant by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) was limited, applicants were urged to identify additional or alternative sources of support, including the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) as AMSA was rolling out a program of risk management and SMS workshops for industry. Five of the successful projects were aligned with AMSA activities, significantly leveraging the available funds, while facilitating the reach of the AMSA program to small operators.

Eleven Expressions of Interest (EOI) were received from eligible applicants and were assessed on the basis of:

- Need for financial support
- Value for money
- Engagement with small operators
- Geographic and sector distribution of funds
- Likelihood of the activity delivering improved safety outcomes

Of the eleven EOIs received, four were approved and six were approved in principal with revisions. Following revision, all six of these EOIs were approved. One EOI is still being progressed due to it being more complex and requiring additional funding, which has been committed subject to final project design and identification of an appropriate service provider.

The assessment panel included a representative from the FRDC, the DAWR, and AMSA. An agreement was exchanged between the FRDC and each successful applicant.

Results

The project delivered ten projects in six States. Each project and outcomes are reported below. Funding is ex GST.

Project 1: Fishermen’s Portal

Funding: \$10,000

Target sectors: Commercial fishers – inshore net, line, Charter operators.

Locations: Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York Peninsular

Workshops and one on one training delivered in Rockhampton, Gladstone, Mackay, Townsville, Mossman and Lucinda, Ayr, Bowen.

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 500
Key person: Robert Pender, Chair of The Portal.

Description of activity:

The Fishermen's Portal has large network within regional Queensland. Its' executive provided the contact and liaison between industry and AMSA, and accompanied AMSA facilitators into regional and remote areas of Northern Queensland. For the targeted operators, many have difficulty with access to the Internet and to office facilities. Assistance was provided to develop their first SMS.

Results:

The Portal has played a leading role in representing industry during the transition to the new safety regulations since industry first became aware that change was on its way. The project allowed fishermen to connect with fishermen, and acted as liaison between operators and the Regulator (AMSA). The activity leader reported that "working with some of the older people and people who have difficulty with computers and with writing things down is at times tricky. We found that being able to work one on one and in small groups and on the phone provided the opportunity to explain (sometimes quite a few times) the rationale behind the changes".

"The Portal has members in most areas and among our members are people who others identify with as natural leaders. These people are held in high regard by the fishing community and have played an important role in delivering the changes with a positive attitude. As a result we have been able to encourage uptake by many people who would otherwise have been extremely resistant. There were examples where operators refused our assistance due to conflict among stakeholders or a feeling of intolerance to the regulator but at least they were made aware of the changes and as a result should have been able to make their own enquiries on their own terms."

"My personal view is that by end of May 2016, most people will have their SMS in place. There are exceptions and some of these people will find that once the new obligations are being enforced they are likely to exit as they have no intention of observing the changes. The Regulator has worked extensively with industry to ensure the transition has had minimal impact while ensuring the objectives are met. I think that those who are not compliant will find little sympathy from their peers. As at the end of April I am still helping people and expect this to continue into the future. Many fishers have been surprised about the simplicity of the SMS and once they grasp things have no trouble complying."

Project 2 Professional Fisherman's Association of NSW (PFA)

Funding: \$12,460

Target sectors: Commercial fishers – inshore net, trawl line.

Locations: NSW – coastal from Tweed Heads to Eden. Yamba, Ballina, Tweed Heads, Hawkesbury, Sydney, Ulladulla, Bermagui, Eden, Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Foster-Tuncurry, Port Macquarie

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 250

Key person: Tricia Beatty, EO.

Description of activity:

The PFA has completed combined AMSA/PFA workshops from across NSW from February to March 2016. These workshops were highly successful and popular with commercial fishers. Positive feedback has been received by AMSA, PFA and on social media regarding the effectiveness of the workshop. This is due to the PFA and AMSA working together to deliver a practical workshop with a completed and approved individually tailored SMS (that PFA had designed and provided to all participants) at the conclusion of the workshop.

Results:

12 Safety Management System (SMS) workshops completed across NSW from February to March 2016. Approximately 250 fishermen from across the NSW coastline attended training (235 registered). Customised SMS templates produced, support from PFA to develop SMS post workshops.

Project 3 Southern Rock Lobster Ltd.

Funding: \$12,000

Target sectors: Rock lobster

Locations: Hobart, King Island

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 64

Key person: Ross Hodge

Description of activity:

Deliver the two-day Clean Green training workshop in Tasmania which will address the AMSA Vessel Safety Management System (SMS) of the National Standard for Commercial Vessels (NSCV) Part E Operations. The SRL Clean Green program and the On-Boat induction manual has been formally recognized by AMSA as an equivalent solution for meeting NSCV Part E.

Results:

SMS Training has been completed in Hobart on 3 and 4 May for new entrants (never previously trained) to the Clean Green program with 21 skippers and 8 crew attending. A further 35 operators previously trained attended workshops to receive and be trained in the updated on-boat induction manual in Hobart X 2 on 5 May and 23 June and in Currie King Island on 22 June.

SRL will conduct follow up audits on all the vessels with the skippers that are new to the Clean Green program in the first two weeks of September 2016 to ensure that that have adapted the On-Boat induction manual and the SMS to meet the specific requirements of their vessel.

Project 4 Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council

Funding: \$10,000

Target sectors: Commercial fishers who operate small open dinghies.

Locations: Port Huon, Hobart, Dunalley, Triabunna, St Helens, Launceston, Devonport, Stanley, Strahan

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 30 fishers to date. Estimated 110 – 120 fishers by the end of October (utilising further financial support from the Tasmanian Government).

Key person: Julian Harrington, CEO

Description of activity:

Development of an SMS template in a format and design suited to fishers who operate small open dinghies. This has required consultation with each sector to identify specific risks associated with each operation and development of a generic / sector specific SMS templates in a format suitable for delivery. Regional workshops delivered in conjunction with sector Association meetings or other suitable forums.

Results:

Preliminary discussions with AMSA led to confusion around the minimum requirements to be contained within a SMS. This challenge has been resolved, with AMSA acknowledging that Part E of the NSCV is the only real minimum guidelines for a SMS. Combined with TSIC concerns around WH&S laws and vessel insurance implications, TSIC modelled their SMS template around Part E with explicit instructions that more detail, especially within the Risk Assessment, Standard Operating Procedures and Emergency Plans was the safest option.

A template has been customised for small operators working out of dinghies and all 629 TSIC members who operate vessels have been notified and provided access to the template. One on one discussions and consultation has been conducted with an estimated 30 fishers who operate small dinghy operations.

Through further support funding from Skills Tasmania (Tasmanian Government) a significant strategy of workshops is planned in the near future.

Joint TSIC / Seafood Training Tasmania workshops are planned for:

Smithton	4 August
Launceston	5 August
Hobart	10 August

Follow-up regional workshops will be conducted throughout August – October on an ‘on demand’ basis and will cater for small groups and one-on-one tuition for those with poor literacy and numeracy capabilities.

In all, it is anticipated that TSIC will engage directly (workshops or meetings) with >250 operators, of which 110 or so will incorporate small open dinghy operations.

[Project 5 Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association \(ASBTIA\)](#)

Funding: \$3,000

Target sectors: Tuna industry

Location: Port Lincoln

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 20

Key person: Claire Webber

Description of activity:

A one day workshop for attendance by tuna farm managers, skippers and safety staff to learn how to implement an SMS.

Results:

A SMS development workshop was held in Port Lincoln on 19 November 2015. 20 attended representing 10 fishing companies. This project was developed in response to previous poorly attended AMSA workshops due to timing with harvest operations. The workshop was attended by tuna farm managers, skippers and safety staff to learn how to implement an SMS. The workshop was customised for the sector and provided opportunity to discuss sector-specific issues. Follow up activities will be facilitated by ASBTIA to support operators to reflect on how implementation of new SMS's went. This will take place following the conclusion of tuna harvest in August 2016.

[Project 6 Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Fishermen’s Association \(SGWCPFA\)](#)

Funding: \$3,000

Target sectors: Commercial fishers – prawn trawl

Locations: Port Lincoln

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 32

Key person: Simon Clark, EO

Description of activity:

Two workshops were delivered in partnership with AMSA. A working group was established and a consultant engaged to develop and document procedures to satisfy both AMSA and South Australian WHS legislation. Documentation is 90% completed.

Results:

32 owner/skipper/crew have participated in SMS development workshops to date. Next workshop will be 18 May 2016. Discussing electronic options with AMSA.

By the end of May the Association will complete an overarching safety management systems template for the fleet, including the state's work, health and safety legislation.

The Association will work with owners and skippers through to October 2016 to implement safety management systems before the start of the new season.

Project 7 North Regional TAFE (formerly Kimberley Training Institute and Pilbara Institute)

Funding: \$15,102

Target sectors: Commercial fishers, Sea ranger groups, Charter fishing operators, pearling, aquaculture

Locations: Broome and the Kimberley

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 20 – people engaged in the program however all have not completed due to seasonal / business constraints

Key person: Jeff Cooper

Description of activity:

Training program designed around the development of SMS for vessels. Targeted at skippers of the vessels rather than managers of the organisations. The project will contextualise 3 units of competence (SFISHIP201C - Comply with organisational and legislative requirements and BSBINM201A - Process and maintain workplace information, TLIE3004A - Prepare workplace documents) to enable training delivery and development of SMS for a broad range of clients across the expansive Kimberley region.

Results:

Contextualising is complete - of 3 units of competence (SFISHIP201C - Comply with organisational and legislative requirements and BSBINM201A - Process and maintain workplace information, TLIE3004A - Prepare workplace documents). AMSA has noted these as appropriate.

Activity has been postponed until the end of the dry season. The dry season is when the majority of work is undertaken at sea and the target groups do not have the time to commit to the program during this season. Crews and vessels are scattered across the Kimberley during the dry and will consolidate more centrally at the end of the dry, allowing for more effective delivery and outcomes for the activity.

The project leader will continue to promote this free (for now) training to the target groups. At the end of the project fishers will continue to benefit through improved training and training resources.

Project 8 Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV)

Funding: \$7,000

Target sectors: Small-scale in-shore fisheries, abalone, trawl.

Locations: State-wide.

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 30+ abalone and expect to in total assist 100+ with implementation.

Key person: Johnathon Davey, Executive Director

Description of activity: Assistance provided to industry in developing an SMS template for abalone fishers who operate small dinghies. We intend on using this template to further develop generic templates for other small-scale fisheries. This requires further consultation with specific sectors to identify relevant risks and development of a generic/sector specific SMS templates in a suitable format. Regional briefings will be delivered in conjunction with industry meetings or other suitable forums and the template will be available online.

Results:

A template has been customised for small operators working out of dinghies, particularly the abalone divers. This must now be developed into a more generic template that can be applied across other open dinghies and larger vessels operating across Victoria. All SIV members who operate vessels will be notified and provided access to the template once completed. One on one discussions and consultation has occurred with approximately 30 plus abalone fishers who operate small dinghy operations.

Once the generic template is completed, follow-up discussions will be conducted throughout August – October on an opportunistic basis and will cater for small groups and one-on-one capacity.

SIV has also been working to utilise AMSA workshops that were scheduled to be held in Victoria, however communication breakdowns with AMSA have not enable this to be promoted and to occur at present.

Project 9 Silent Wings Unit Trust

Funding: \$16,000

Target sectors: Inshore trawl to 16 metres, under 10 metre net/crab/line fishing vessels/beam trawl
Locations: Wynnum, Rockhampton, Tin Can Bay, Scarborough – a further minimum 3 workshops will be held in July-August 2016.

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 27 to date.

Key person: Lyn Wheatley

Description of activity:

Development of an SMS manual for a trawl vessel owner, and delivery of SMS Development Workshops aimed at small fishing vessel owner/operators and charter fishing vessel owner/operators (classes 2B, 2C, 2D and 3B, 3C, 3D and 3E).

Results:

SMS Writing Support Group sessions have been held at four locations on the East Coast of Queensland at locations where there are concentrated areas of fishing fleets in Queensland. The workshops ran for 6 hours and the fishing vessel owner/operator participants had access to laptops during the workshop so that they could use MS Word templates and start to compile their SMS manual. Industry experts also attended the workshops to provide guidance on SMS requirements specific to the fishing industry. Experts included representatives from Maritime Safety Queensland, Commercial Marine Industry Association and Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association.

The workshops specifically targeted fishing vessel operators who struggle with the ability to write an SMS as the workshop also focused on using graphics to depict operations and risk awareness. Each

of the sessions has encouraged a hands-on approach allowing each participant to tailor their SMS manual and risk assessment to their own vessel and operation. Groups were kept small to ensure a greater level of understanding and interaction during the sessions. Some of the participants operate multiple numbers and classes of commercial fishing vessels.

An SMS manual for a trawl vessel owner has been prepared and the project leader has provided ongoing support and advice as needed to the participants of the SMS Writing Group sessions.

At the end of the workshop, the participants had acquired the skills and tools to be able to perform a risk assessment and to be able to write safety procedures based on reducing those risks identified in the workshop session.

Initial funding for this project was \$6,000. As the deadline for compliance approached in June 2016, there was evidence of additional industry demand and support for further training to be delivered in south eastern Queensland. The project has been extended and a further \$10,000 funds allocated. At least three additional workshops will be completed, and final preparations are underway at the time of reporting.

Project 10 Clarence River Fishermen's Cooperative

Funding: \$6,000

Target sectors: Commercial Fishers, Co-Op staff education

Locations: Clarence Valley NSW

Estimate of numbers of fishers engaged: 79

Key person: Danielle Adams

Description of activity:

Deliver, in partnership with AMSA and Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), deliver SMS development workshops, and provide follow up one on one training and support for fishers to develop their SMS.

Results:

48 fishers attended AMSA workshops (4 workshops over 2 days), and 31 attended Roads and Maritime Services meetings. 29 private consultations & SMS development sessions with a Co-Operative trained staff member were undertaken over an additional 2 days. Almost all of the Commercial Fishers operating out of the Clarence Valley (NSW Region 2) had the opportunity to undergo the education program to gain comprehension of the SMS requirements and create the required paperwork to ensure their own vessel SMS's were completed. The CRFC staff member assisted with, and is still assisting with the creation of SMS documents for the Regions Commercial fishers. Almost 30 SMS documents have been produced. This is an ongoing education program and having a trained person in house will continue to assist in raising safety awareness to members.

Discussion

While the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) did itself roll out a program of risk management and SMS workshops to help industry meet the National Standard for Commercial Vessels, Part E Operations, this project recognised that there were barriers for some sections of the industry to engage with AMSA.

These barriers included:

- reluctance to engage with the regulator

- remote locations
- poor access to internet and communications
- timing of workshops clashing with fishing operations
- English as a second language
- literacy required to complete a SMS
- resistance to change
- sector specific needs that were not addressed by generic information or documentation

This project complemented the AMSA program by:

- resourcing industry organisations to encourage fisher engagement and building that necessary bridge to the regulator
- leveraging AMSA resources to allow further reach into regional and remote areas
- providing one on one support to individual operators following workshops to develop their own safety management systems

In addition to the ten contracted projects, another high priority project was identified, but was not commenced. The project would see development of E learning resources led by the South East Trawl Industry Association in association with a registered training provider. At the time of application assessment, it was noted that this activity would provide significant ongoing benefit to the broader commercial fishing industry, however the funds required were beyond the scope of the funding order. The Commonwealth Research Advisory Committee (CommRAC) and AMSA have agreed in principal to support with additional funds. It is the intention for the FRDC (through the CommRAC) and in partnership with AMSA, to progress the following activity once an appropriate service provider can be identified.

Conclusion

The success of the project can be measured by the level of involvement of the target groups nationally in the project, and their capacity to understand new requirements under the National Standard for Commercial Vessels, Part E Operations; and to develop and implement safety management systems (SMS) for vessels. The project has demonstrated outstanding reach – with more than 1,050 fishers attending focused and sector specific sessions to raise awareness of their obligations and resources to develop the required documentation at the vessel level.

At its core, this project was not only about providing access to information to allow operators to be able to demonstrate compliance to new maritime safety regulations, but to assist in building an improved culture of safety in the industry – particularly for smaller operators most at risk. The project has lasting benefit to industry as it has developed resources, and importantly, built internal capability of industry bodies to continue to push for increased safety and to support operators to implement systems. The project will continue to deliver benefits as industry associations engage with more fishers over time.