

Summary of the Fifth Meeting (22 June 2016) of the United Seafood Industries Task Force

Written by Chair of the USI Task Force, Martin Exel of Austral

The USI Leadership Task Force met via teleconference to further develop its final recommendations report on forming a national peak body. The report will be presented at the Industry Forum on 13/14 July 2016 in Melbourne.

The meeting concentrated on developing the funding model and the communication strategy for after the USI forum, along with identifying the transitional tasks that would need to be completed by the end of June 2017 to establish a peak body, if industry decides to proceed.

Funding

The Task Force considered how the funding will be structured and the initial amounts required to firstly establish and then to operate a new peak body. It included discussion of the various costs of establishing a legal entity. Several estimates were discussed, and the Task Force agreed to research the likely costs in more detail.

Task Force members re-affirmed that the preferred funding mechanism is a voluntary tiered membership fee, with fees based on levels of business revenue. Proposed membership tiers are:

- small, medium and large seafood businesses
- small and large industry associations/resource sector groups and
- affiliate members (non-voting)

The Task Force confirmed that it is critical for the model to have direct membership for all seafood businesses, and to apply the principle of “one member, one vote”.

The group discussed the estimated number of members from each tier of membership that might join in the first year, to help in estimating the likely fees and the total revenue that could be generated. The Task Force agreed that estimating the number of members is difficult until the proposed structure and funding model is discussed at the Industry Forum and afterwards with the wider industry.

Communications

The Task Force considered the main processes to be completed after the Industry Forum, subject to the outcomes and recommendations of the Forum. It was proposed that:

1. An Implementation Group be formed, with one representative from each of the wild-catch, aquaculture and post-harvest sectors, as well as State Associations, and Resource Sector groups to oversight the transition process, including:
 - a. Formation of a communications group to be responsible for operationalising industry communications and engagement on the recommended peak body
 - b. Governance matters associated with forming the legal entity and
 - c. The process for appointing foundation Directors
 - i. Those Directors would then elect an Executive Chair, and establish the appointment of an Executive Officer

The communications group would ideally be made up of people with industry communications and marketing expertise, and strong networks across the industry.

The Task Force recommended the communication 'campaign' to promote the formation of a peak body to the broader industry, should follow a strategic approach, using a mix of tools and communication avenues such as direct marketing, posters, online engagement, selected state/regional meetings and one-to-one contact with industry. It would be important to work closely with existing industry associations in tailoring and implementing the communications strategy.

It was proposed to identify a single person as the "driver" for the communications process and task of promoting the body to industry around Australia. The Task Force recommended that person have close links to the post-harvest sector, as the numerous individual entities and lack of associations or sector groups would make communications with the post-harvest operators critical.

The communications strategy would be active from after the Industry Forum, through to December 2016. By this time, success would be measured as firm support to form the peak body, and a willingness to invest as members. If the process does not result in support for a peak body by the end of December 2016, the project would cease.

USI Forum

The Task Force is in the final stage of developing its peak body recommendations report. The report will be presented to the USI Forum that is to be held in Melbourne on 13th-14th of July 2016.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled Task Force meeting is a teleconference on the 30th of June 2016.