

Food Authority



## NSW Seafood Industry Forum

The primary objective of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is to contribute to the Food Authority's goal of ensuring the production and sale of seafood products that are safe and suitable for human consumption, by advising on policy and practices introduced into provisions of the Seafood Safety Scheme as it relates to seafood and developed through a consultative process. Other government agencies may seek to use the broad expertise and experience of the Forum members to obtain advice on matters beyond the scope of the provisions of the Seafood Food Safety Scheme.

### Summary of meeting outcomes

#### NSW Seafood Industry Forum

7 May 2025

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The NSW Seafood Industry Forum met via video conference on Wednesday, 7 May 2025. Issues considered by the Forum are outlined below.

#### Attendees

**NSW Seafood Industry Forum:** Derrick Addison (Food and Beverage Importers Association), Olivia Churchill (De Costi Seafoods (Holdings) Pty Ltd), Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Michael Kitchener (The Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia), Christopher Melham (NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Inc), Erik Poole (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Russell Sydenham (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc).

**NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DIPRD) – Biosecurity & Food Safety:** Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Debra Doolan (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Jeffrey Go (Senior Veterinary Officer Aquatic Biosecurity), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations), Melissa Walker (Manager Aquatic Biosecurity Programs), Anthony Zammit – Chair (Manager NSW Shellfish Program).

**Apologies:** David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Andrew Davies (Acting Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Lisa Szabo (Executive Director Biosecurity & Food Safety), Bradley Willis (Clarence River Fisherman's Co-operative Ltd).

#### Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest.

#### Industry updates

Members provided updates on the following key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors:

- The consultation period has concluded for the proposed Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) for ready-to-eat seafood products sold in retail. The Australian seafood industry is now awaiting details on how the new regulations will be implemented, particularly regarding education, compliance, and enforcement during the transition period. The proposed changes to CoOL will be introduced under Australian

Consumer Law rather than Food Legislation. They are set to take effect on 1 July 2025.

- The trade tariffs implemented by the current U.S. administration are causing concern, particularly regarding their potential impact on seafood exports. Industry is also monitoring the U.S. administration's reduction of resources for the Food and Drug Administration and its potential implications for food safety in seafood imported from the United States.
- Industry is awaiting the outcome of an application to the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation regarding a proposal to rename the South American Flathead as the South American Duckbill. This fish is commonly and confusingly referred to as Flathead in Australian retail businesses. The proposed name change aims to reduce confusion and protect the integrity of the domestic Flathead recognised by Australians. There is some concern that the name change may reduce fish demand when local flathead is not available.
- The Commercial Fishermen's Cooperative reported that its members are satisfied with the current prices, and while inclement weather has reduced fishing windows, catches are high when industry can go fishing resulting in favourable overall supply to fishing cooperatives
- NSW Wild Harvest Fisher's Inc, formerly known as the Professional Fishermen's Association Inc., has elected its new board members and now has over 150 members spanning from Tweed Shire to Eden in NSW.
- Members expressed their gratitude to DPIRD for its handling of white spot detection and for the clear communication and consultation with industry and relevant stakeholders.
- The Sydney Fish Markets will move to its new location by the end of 2025. The new facility is expected to create fresh opportunities and capabilities for the seafood industry, including enhancing live seafood offerings.
- The algal bloom in South Australia is concerning for industry and members continue to monitor the unfolding situation.

## **1) Matters raised relating to the Seafood Food Safety Scheme**

### **Food safety compliance report**

Members were updated on seafood industry compliance activities for the period from July to December 2024. 96 percent of licensed seafood businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, a one percent rise compared to the previous two financial years. A total of 118 audits and inspections were conducted during this period, with a combined total of 6 regulatory interventions (improvement notices, prohibition orders, or warning letters).

The Department recently conducted a targeted audit program of licensed facilities that process seafood for human consumption. The aim of this program was to ensure the sector complies with all relevant food safety and traceability requirements. The audit results showed an acceptable compliance rate of 92 percent. Improvement notices were issued when instances of non-compliance were identified to ensure deficiencies were addressed in a timely manner. 16 businesses received follow up audits to confirm that appropriate corrective actions had been completed to resolve the identified issues.

The Regulatory Operations team continues to support key stakeholders, including regulated businesses, by providing guidance and educational materials to enhance compliance. The Team may need to adjust its planned activities and frequency of compliance monitoring depending on emerging risks and strategic priorities. Complaints, inspections, and

investigations relating to seafood businesses will continue to be managed on an as needs basis.

## **2) Other matters raised**

### **White spot response and program update**

The Manager of Aquatic Biosecurity Programs provided an update on the confirmed detection of White Spot during long-term surveillance by DPIRD. White Spot was once again found in wild school prawns from inshore oceanic waters outside the river mouths of the Clarence, Evans, and Richmond Rivers.

This detection occurred during the fourth round of surveillance in the Clarence River control zone and its surrounding areas, as well as during the second round of surveillance in the control zones of the Evans and Richmond Rivers, conducted in March and April 2025.

As a result of the ongoing detections, NSW has not met the standards established by the World Organisation for Animal Health for demonstrating freedom from white spot disease.

As a next step, the DPIRD is engaging in discussions with affected industry members and the National Aquatic Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases to determine the best way forward.

DPIRD organised meetings in Maclean and Ballina to consult with affected fishers and aquaculture farms on the future management of White Spot. The current White Spot Control Orders will remain in effect and include a minor amendment to extend the Clarence River control zone to include the recent positive detection, which was located approximately 6 km north of the previous boundary.

Discussions are ongoing at the national level and are informed by input and feedback from industry members, technical risk assessments, epidemiology and surveillance data. Industry representatives have expressed strong support for DPIRD separating the management of rivers from adjacent offshore areas. This recommendation is based on the fact that, throughout all surveillance efforts, the white spot syndrome virus has not been detected in any estuarine river samples.

There has been strong internal discussion and collaboration with fisheries management, aquaculture, and aquatic biosecurity to ensure that industry perspectives are well represented as we work toward the best possible outcome for the future.

Communication messages issued throughout the White Spot response continue to reassure consumers that white spot does not pose a threat to human health or food safety and that NSW seafood, including prawns, remains safe to eat.

Further information is available at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/aquatic-biosecurity/aquaculture/aquaculture/white-spot>

### **Aquatic Biosecurity update**

NSW DPIRD's Animal Biosecurity unit provided an update on the continued detection of Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) in South Australia. AVG was first detected in wild abalone near Port MacDonnell, South Australia, in February 2024.

NSW DPIRD implemented the [Biosecurity \(Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis\) Control Order 2024](#), which was implemented on 24 February 2024 for a duration of 2 years which also now prohibits the movement of any live abalone originating from South Australia into NSW. The requirements of the previous control order prohibiting the importation into NSW of live wild abalone sourced from Tasmanian and Western and Central Victoria, remain unchanged, with the movement of live farmed abalone from Tasmania and Victoria also prohibited unless specific conditions are met.

The Order is designed to control the risk of AVG entering into and being spread within NSW through the live trade of abalone.

Additionally, any abalone wastewater that has been in contact with abalone from outside the NSW wild abalone fishery or Victorian eastern zone abalone fishery must be disposed of directly to the sewer when moved into NSW.

AVG is not known to occur in wild NSW abalone. There is no evidence that AVG has any effect on human health.

Members were also informed of the recent detection in December 2024 of Epizootic Haematopoietic Necrosis Virus (EHNV) in Oberon Dam, which is the second detection in the last two years in the Central Tablelands region of NSW. EHNV is an Australian iridovirus that is known to affect introduced wild populations of redfin perch and farmed rainbow trout. Oberon Dam is a potential location for EHNV outbreaks due to the presence of susceptible fish species like redfin perch.

### **Animal Welfare update**

NSW DPIRD's Animal Welfare unit provided an update on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2025. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2025 commenced on 1 February 2025.

The [Regulation](#) provides for critical animal welfare protection for animals in NSW, including:

- Safeguarding animals during certain procedures such as declawing of cats, debarking of dogs, pinioning of birds' wings, and docking tails of cattle
- Prescribing animal trades and the standards, guidelines and codes relating to these trades, including dog and cat breeding, pet shops, commercial pig production and land transport of livestock
- Greater welfare requirements for layer poultry such as prescribing improved cage requirements for new installations
- Provisions relating to the enforcement of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (the Act) and the Regulation, including how Police are to exercise their powers and what evidence is considered to satisfy certain thresholds as set out in the Act
- Exemptions from provisions in the Act in certain limited circumstances. Without maintaining these exemptions, current activities may not be lawful
- Reporting requirements for approved charitable organisations.

The [Regulation](#) also defines the penalty notice amounts, without which penalty notices could not be issued by inspectors.

In addition to the commencement of the [Regulation](#), the NSW Government is progressing work on implementing a new animal welfare framework in NSW.

*The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is 17 September 2025.*