



Maningrida Homelands Coastal Fishing Business in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory Benefits, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Presentation to AIATSIS Native Title Conference
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*Don Wilton, Jimmy Olsen, Stuart Ankin, & Clem Bresson, from Maningrida
A/Prof Natasha Stacey & Peter Van Wyk, Charles Darwin University,
Northern Territory*



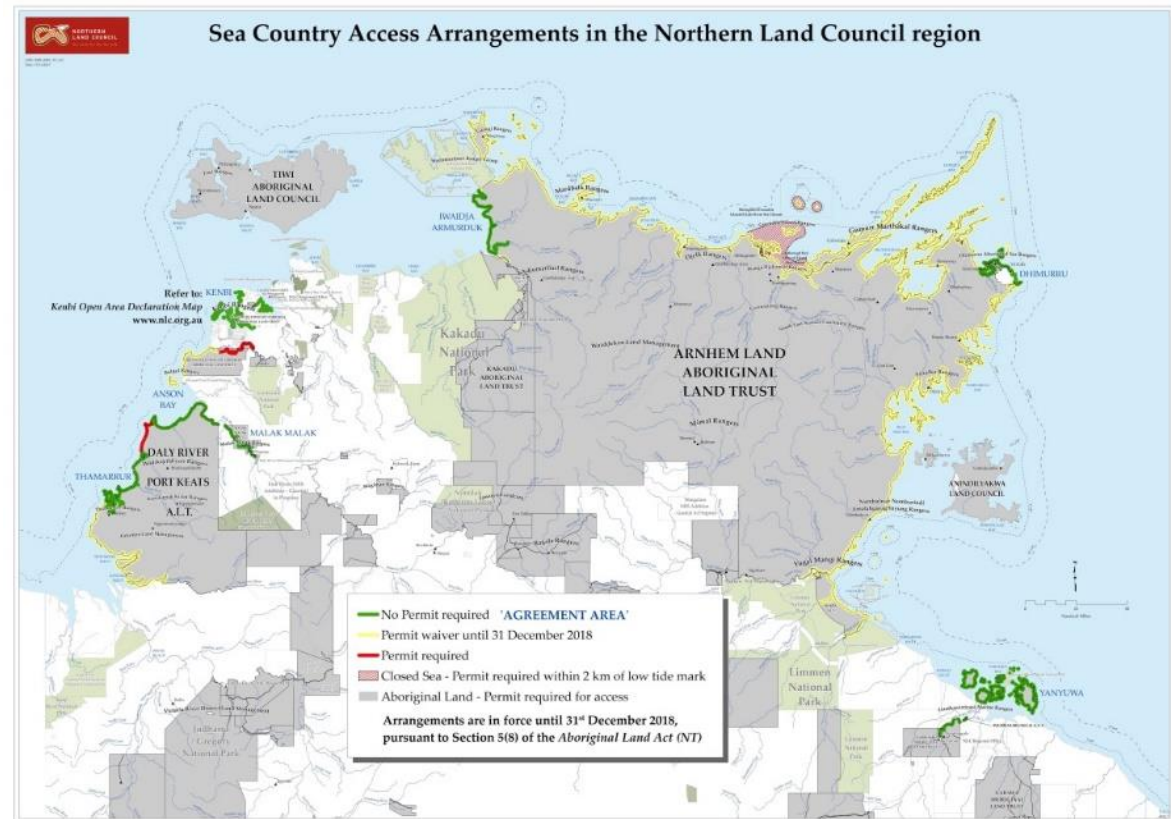
Outline of talk

The purpose of the talk is to share the story and experiences of the Maningrida homelands Aboriginal Coastal fishing business in the Northern Territory, Australia.

- 1: Background to Aboriginal Coastal Fishing Licences in the Northern Territory and the Maningrida Homelands Fishing Business (Natasha)*
- 2: Fishing operation at Nardilmuk (Don)*
- 3: Benefits and Challenges (Natasha)*

Background to Aboriginal Coastal Fishing Licences (ACL) in the NT

- Current Aboriginal coastal licensing regime is linked to High Court Blue Mud Bay 2008 decision.
- Traditional custodians have exclusive rights to the tidal waters (to mean low tide mark) under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1976).
- This applies to 85% of the Northern Territory coastline (shown in yellow).



<https://www.nlc.org.au/uploads/images/Sea-Country-Access-Map-A3-151117-copy.jpg>

Aboriginal Coastal Fishing (ACL) Licence Rules in NT

- The Fishing Licence system is regulated by the NT Government *Fisheries Act 1998* Regulations (section 183-186).
- Allows for multiple licences to be held in a community.
- ACL holders must nominate where they are going to fish on their traditional estate.
- Each licence can use one gill net 100 meters long with a mesh size of 65mm.
- The ACL holder is required to be present during any fishing activity.
- Some fish can be kept for food for the family.
- Most of the catch can be sold to community members, visitors, stores, organisations and to other buyers in other towns and Darwin.
- Limit of 5000kg/year per ACL holder.
- Some fish species (Barramundi, Spanish Mackerel or Threadfin Salmon) are restricted to sell 10 fish a month.
- ACL holder cannot also hold a commercial fishing licence (Reg 187)

Application for the grant of an Aboriginal coastal licence

NORTHERN TERRITORY FISHERIES ACT
(Part 11 Division 2 – Fisheries Regulations)

Information Relating to Applications

This form is to be used by a person who wishes to apply to the Director of Fisheries for an Aboriginal Coastal Licence.

This is an Application only - You are not permitted to carry out any activities in relation to this application until you have been advised of the decision. Application forms that are incomplete will be returned to the applicant and cannot be processed until completed.

Application Fee - \$ 50

Applying for an Aboriginal Coastal licence

Clause 183 (Part 11 Division 2) of the Fisheries Regulations provides the ability for a person to apply for an Aboriginal Coastal licence. These provisions are set out below.

Division 2 Aboriginal Coastal licence

183 Application for licence

An Aboriginal person who:

- (a) is a member of a community or group in respect of which land has been granted to a trust for the benefit of Aboriginals entitled by Aboriginal tradition to the use or occupation of that land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* of the Commonwealth;
- (b) is permanently resident on the land; and
- (c) has:
 - (i) where there is a council within the meaning of the *Local Government Act*, the approval of that council; or
 - (ii) where there is no such council, the approval of persons accepted by the majority of the community or group to be its leaders, may apply to the Director for an Aboriginal Coastal licence.

184 Director may grant licence

- (1) The Director may, subject to this Division, grant an Aboriginal Coastal licence to an applicant.
- (2) An Aboriginal Coastal licence shall not be granted to a person other than a natural person.

185 No transfer of licence

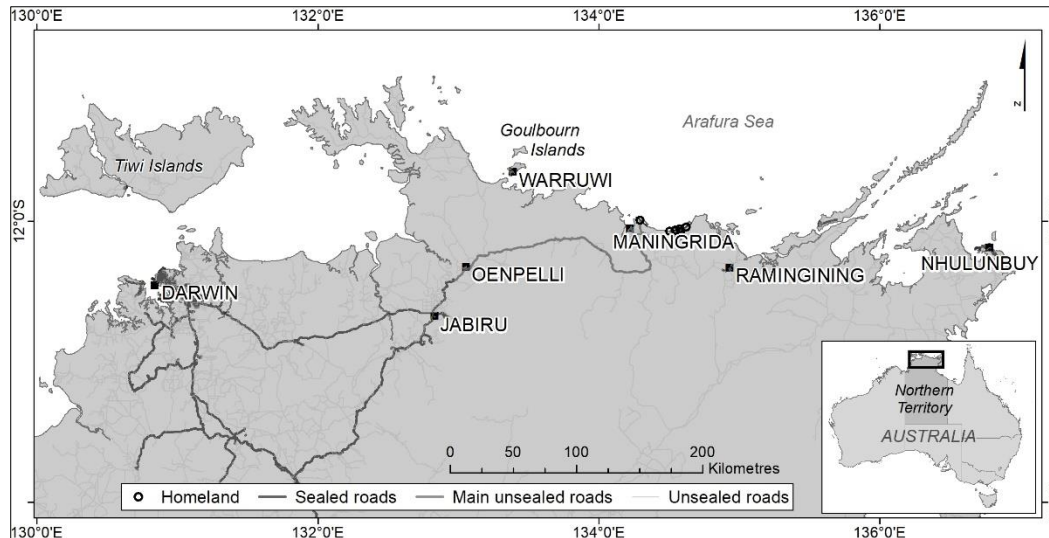
An Aboriginal Coastal licensee shall not transfer his or her licence.

186 Lapse of licence

It shall be a condition of each Aboriginal Coastal licence that it lapses where the licensee ceases to be a permanent resident on the land granted for the benefit of the members of the community or group of which he or she is a member as referred to in regulation 183(a).

Maningrida and homelands region

- Maningrida township is located in West Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.
- It has a population of around 2400 people (mostly Aboriginal people) who live in Maningrida and the surrounding homelands.
- There are 12 language groups in the region and 3 main language dialects spoken: *Ndjebbana*, *Burarra* and *Kuninjku*.
- The town is a service centre for the region, with a school, health clinic, supermarkets, and arts centre.
- It is serviced by commercial flights operating daily to Darwin.
- In the wet season the town and homelands are mostly not accessible by road.



Starting the fishing business

- In 2015, men applied for an Aboriginal Coastal Fishing Licence (ACL) to set up the family fishing business.
- Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) helped with administration, logistics and equipment, business plan, market development, funding applications.
- BAC also set up a Community Development Program (CDP) fishing activity for family members to participate in fishing and get a top-up payment.
- The NT Government Indigenous Fisheries Mentor team helped with advice and training to set up the fishing operation.
- The NT Government provided some grants to purchase some equipment.

Maningrida fishermen

Draft business plan

July 2017



Don Wilton catching fish at Nardimuk



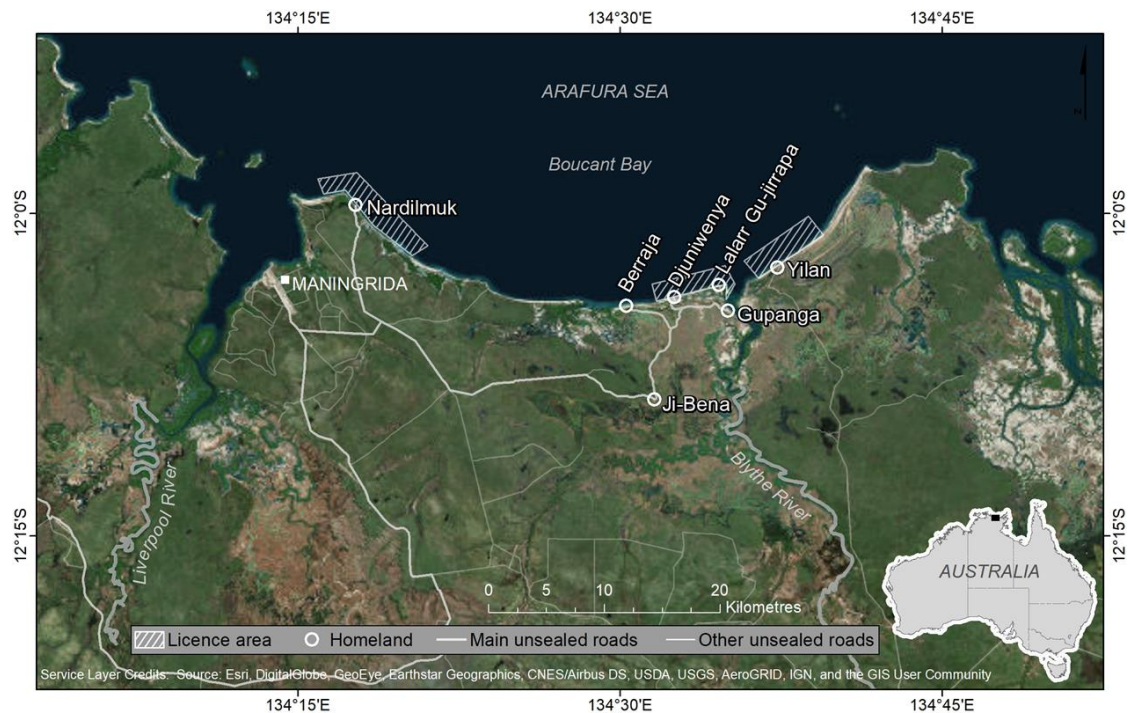
Fishing licence holders

Currently there are three active Aboriginal Coastal licences along the Maningrida homelands region coastline.

Don Wilton operates from Nardilmuk outstation, Jimmy Olsen and Stuart Ankin both operate from Blyth River near Gupanga homeland.

Andrew Duwadi plans to operate from Yilan outstation, but has not started working.

They are senior custodians of their country.



Fishing at Nardilmuk Outstation

Don Wilton was the first person to commercially fish using an ACL in 2016 on country, near Nardilmuk outstation, 25 kilometres from Maningrida.

But Jimmy and Stuart work with Don on his country until they can start to fish on their country in 2018.



Going fishing at Nardilmuk can be really hard in the wet season when the roads are boggy. Gupanga outstation is cut off for more of the wet season, so all fishing is done at Nardilmuk

Fishing equipment at Nardilmuk



There is a shipping container with an ice machine and an air-conditioner. It takes two hours to make enough ice for one day of fishing. All of this equipment is run from the generator behind the house. Thanks to the NT Government Business and Innovation for funding equipment.

Loading the Fishing Net and Eskies



We normally fish 2-4 times a week – Monday to Thursday

At the start of each fishing day, the workers (around 5-8 people) drive from Maningrida to Nardilmuk. The fishermen load the fishing net and the eskies. This equipment and other supplies are taken to the fishing place about 3 kilometres from Nardilmuk outstation and set up for the day. Some days we fish at a different place on Don's country.

Low Tide at the Fishing Spot



The first job is to take a long rope out to a permanent post in the sand at low tide. It is important to check that the pulley is clear of sand each time. Sometimes the ropes are left set up in the water over night if we want to fish the next day.

Putting the Net in the Water



The rope is attached to two poles at the high tide mark on the beach and the net is connected to one end of this rope. Next we wait for the tide to come in a little. It is important to check that the rope can move through the pulley before the tide comes in too far.

We teach the new boys how to fish on the job.

Ready to Catch Some Fish



Finally when the tide has come in enough the net can be pulled out into the water. As the net goes out check that all tangles are cleared so the net sits on the sea floor properly. Then we leave it for 2 or more hours while the tide comes in and catch any passing schools of fish.

Fishing Camp



There is a large shady tree where the fishing team has a rest and wait for the fish. During the rest it is a good time to drink some tea and have something to eat. Each person keeps an eye on the net for fish, everyone is excited when a school of fish swim into it.

This is our favourite fishing camp spot.

Beach Security



Sometimes there are crocodiles in the area when we fish. There is always have one man with a fish wire for safety.

Pulling in the Net



After waiting for the tide to come in and then start to drop again the fishers pull the net out of the water. As the net comes up onto the sand you can see all of the fish caught. Everyone is excited when lots of fish have been caught.

Today's Catch



On a good day lots of fish are caught, with **Blue Tail Mullet** the most common fish. All of the fish are collected from the net and sorted into different species.

This is the busy part of the operation and everyone gets to work clearing the net as quickly as possible before the fish get too hot.



Fish Catch

The fish we catch most are:

- Blue Tail Mullet
- Diamond Mullet
- Golden Trevally
- Queenfish
- Blue Threadfin Salmon

Sometimes we also catch

- Milkfish
- Barracuda

and

- Whiting
- Shark
- Spanish Mackerel
- Barramundi

Yókkarra • Njonja • Jichicha

NDJÉBBANA

NA-KARA

BURARRA



Nganakarlóla • Ngunukkorora • Nguykal
Gnathodon speciosus • Golden trevally



Njanabardákka • Njanabbardákka • Miyanga
Caranx ignobilis • Giant trevally



Nmárdaba • Na-memda • Jayma
Scorpaenoides commersonianus • Giant queenfish



Manalórribba • Namanbilbba • Ana-wukanba
Liza vaigiensis • Diamondscale mullet



Ngayeméla • Ngayemela • Gumdarra
Valamugil bichanani • Bluetail mullet



Malkkádjana • Wulkayana • Mobarla
Sphyraena barracuda • Great barracuda



Mabbardóbbarda • Nangulubbarra • An-bulabinya
Eleutheronema tetradactylum • Blue salmon



Mabbardóbbarda • Ngunubborngara • Gu-wakich
Polydactylus macrochir • Threadfin salmon*



Kalabbórnba • N-djirkara • An-gubarrangarfcha
Sillago sihama • Northern whiting



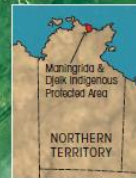
Yíbarda • N-bardabarda • Rajarra
Lates calcarifer • Barramundi*



Kalabbókkarra • Baikkarra • Jinimbu
Scorpaenoides commerson • Spanish mackerel*



Bíbbba • Na-barddja • Rrugungurda
Scylla serrata • Mud crab*



Coastal fish of the Maningrida region

This poster was produced by the Aboriginal Coastal licence holders in the Maningrida region of the north-central Arnhem Land coast. It shows some of the fish that are caught and sold by the Aboriginal Coastal Licence holders. Each species is shown with its local name in three of the languages of this coastline – Ndjébbana, Na-kara and Burarra – along with the English common name. There are of course many other fish that are caught and eaten daily by people from the clans that own the fishing grounds along this coastline.

*This species is not to be targeted by Aboriginal coastal licence holders: each licence holder may sell only 10 of this fish per month.

We are grateful for the support of the following organisations for their contribution to this poster:



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Scan this QR code with your smart phone or tablet to find out more.

The knowledge represented on this poster has been documented by Kuntjakij, Na-kara and Burarra elders working with linguists since the 1970s. Thankyou to Don Wilton, Jimmy Karaminda, Mary Na-bardj-garran, Stuart Arkins, Jimmy Oshan, Dean Cooper, Kara Lawrence, Gavin Lewis, Wilton, Al Johnson, Arkin, Marvin Maco, Jack Dostars, Larry Isading, Jaramich Darcy, Elton Maxwell, Derek Cooper, Terry Isabodjiny, Alastair James, Loris Djababba, Glenn Basson, Rebecca Green, Carolyn Cosman, Isabel O'Neale, David Mason, Mason Scholtes and NT Fisheries staff. Photographs: David Mason, NT Department of Primary Industry and Resources, Project management: Margaret Cooper, Design: Lisa Moore & Christine Isabodjiny.

Putting the Fish on Ice



The next part of the process is to get all the washed fish into the esky full of ice.

The fish are packed very carefully with fish put into layers with an ice and water slurry.

Nardilmuk Sea Eagles



Each time the team go fishing at Nardilmuk a pair of Sea Eagles are always watching from a nearby tree.

The Eagles always get a few fish for their lunch.

Selling the Fish in town



FRESH LOCAL FISH AVAILABLE TONIGHT

BARLMARRK SUPERMARKET (TOP SHOP)
FOR LATE NIGHT SHOPPING FROM 5PM
TO 8PM OR UNTIL SOLD OUT



Mullet, Blue salmon, Skinny fish, etc..

All from Nardilmuk



Each Thursday night the fish are sold outside the Maningrida super market. All the fish are weighed and cost \$12.00 per Kilogram.

Most times some of the team will drive around the community to sell directly to households.

Filleting The Fish

In May 2018 BAC installed a fish processing container (filleting shed) in Maningrida where all of the fish can be processed and packaged within Australian food standards rules.

The filleted and packaged fish can now be sold at supermarket stores in Maningrida and in neighbouring communities.

It is hoped that in the future packaged fish can be sold to the school and old age facility in Maningrida.



Thanks to NT Chief Minister's Department for funding for the shed.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-06-06/fish-processing-facility-opens-in-maningrida/9836462>

Friday Cook Up



Some weeks the team barbeque fish on Friday lunch time and sell them in Maningrida.

We also sell BBQ fish at special community events.

In the future the fishing team would like to get a take away food van and sell the cooked fish around Maningrida community.

Fish Sales To other Communities and Darwin



When the roads are open we drive to Gunbalanya and Ramingining communities a couple of hours drive from Maningrida and sell our fish there.

In Ramingining we set up outside the Store. They make an announcement on the speakers around town. People come to the Store and we sell all our fish very quickly.

Fish Sales to Darwin



The licence holders at the Darwin fish shop.



Don Wilton with some Mullet from the first 300kg shipment of fish from Maningrida to the Darwin Fish Markets in June 2017.

It is hoped to be the start of an ongoing partnership between the Aboriginal Coastal licence fishers and the Northern Territory seafood industry.

BAC Office Story

Clem Bresson is the BAC Enterprise Officer and he has been the main person to help us set up our business.

Our workers are supported through Community Development Program (CDP) at the moment. We have about 15 men who go fishing with us on different days. We have to follow the rules CDP sets.

We keep records of our fish sales each month.

We have a system for sharing the money earned from fishing with the licence holders, BAC and the workers.

It is important we invest for the future.



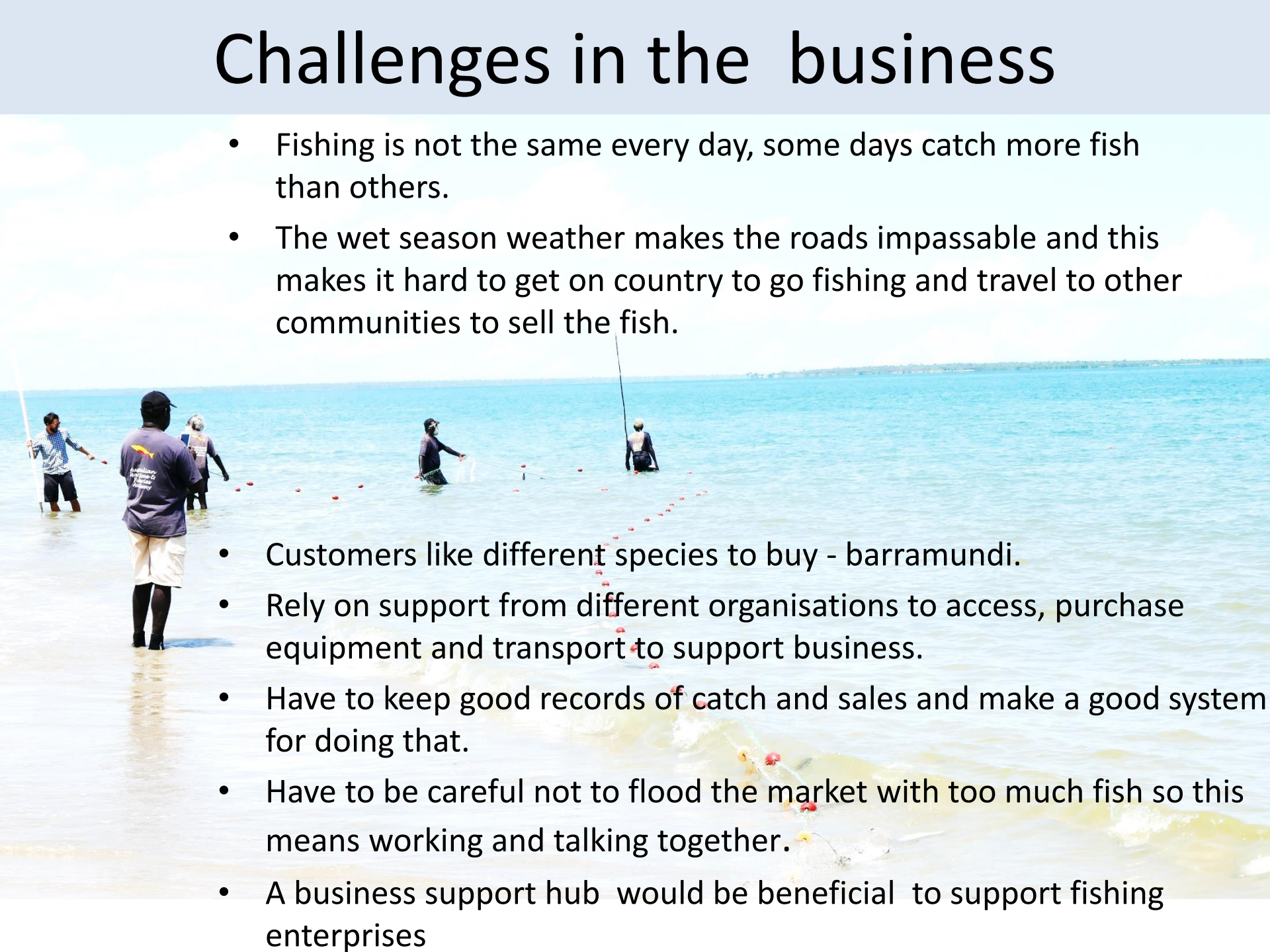
The Benefits of the fishing business

- Family business – people all know each other and work together.
- Maintains social connections to one another and cultural connections to country.
- Strong leadership from elders to run the business.
 - “It is good to have this licence and be in charge of our business”.
- Business provides healthy tucker and jobs on country for families and members of the Maningrida community.
- Earn extra income through selling fish.
- Have learnt from experiences over last 18 months that can start small and build things up along way.



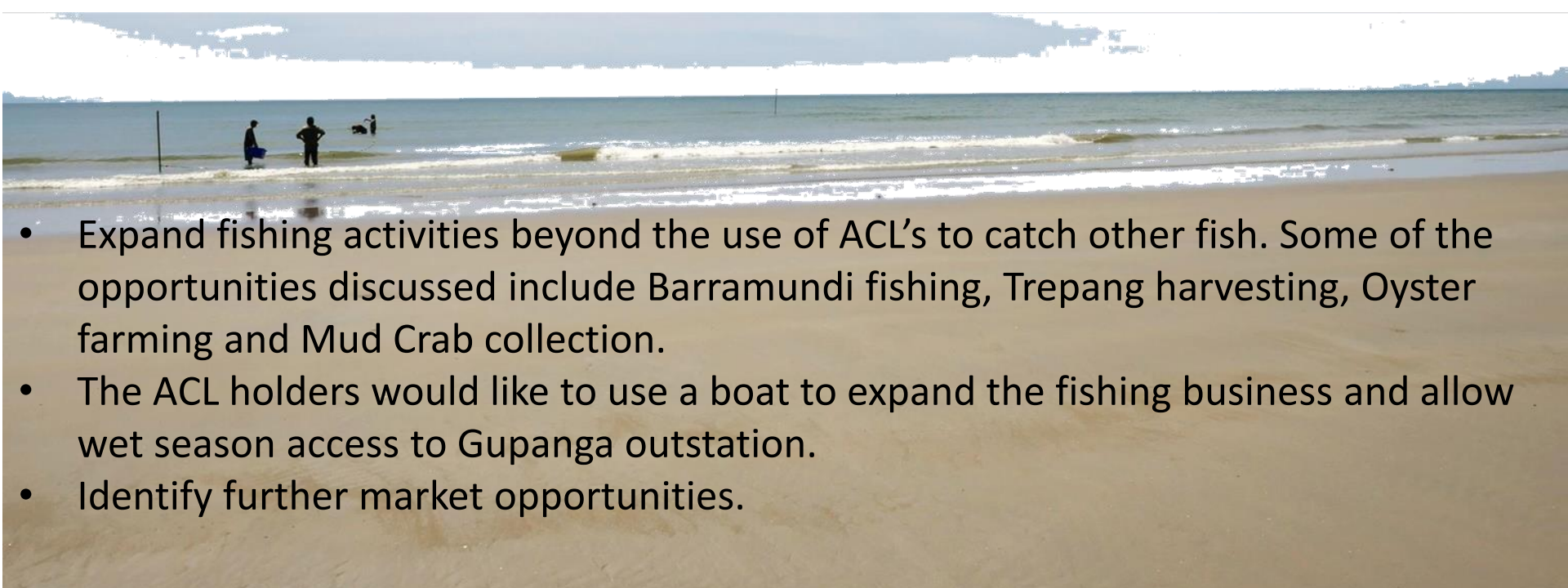
Challenges in the business

- Fishing is not the same every day, some days catch more fish than others.
- The wet season weather makes the roads impassable and this makes it hard to get on country to go fishing and travel to other communities to sell the fish.

- 
- Customers like different species to buy - barramundi.
 - Rely on support from different organisations to access, purchase equipment and transport to support business.
 - Have to keep good records of catch and sales and make a good system for doing that.
 - Have to be careful not to flood the market with too much fish so this means working and talking together.
 - A business support hub would be beneficial to support fishing enterprises

Fishing Business in the Future

- The fishing business is currently supported by CDP.
- Would like to look at other models to transition it to a small business enterprise.
- Fishing has the potential to become a successful local industry in the Maningrida region. This is because of a strong leadership, good office support, enthusiastic and knowledgeable work force and a proven market for our fish, both locally and to other places.



- Expand fishing activities beyond the use of ACL's to catch other fish. Some of the opportunities discussed include Barramundi fishing, Trepang harvesting, Oyster farming and Mud Crab collection.
- The ACL holders would like to use a boat to expand the fishing business and allow wet season access to Gupanga outstation.
- Identify further market opportunities.

Barriers with ACLs in NT

- NT Government recent review of ACLs (workshop)
- Low uptake of ACLs to date is due to various barriers and challenges and lack of preparedness before applying for a licence
- Requires dedicated personnel to support ACL holders and organisations in training, business development, fishing
- Issues with boats, compliance and expenses - have to fish from boats in some areas due to crocs
- Value chain/market development support needed
- Barriers with fish sales through community stores and food handling and safety requirements
- CDP and need for flexibility

Other Developments

- NLC -led sea country management and zoning plan underway for end of 2018 to meet with new permit system for intertidal zone.
- Consultations between seafood industry and Maningrida North Wind Fisheries Committee (NWFC), has **called for commercial fishing vessels to be banned** from entering the Liverpool River.
- NLC has funding to support indigenous ownership of commercially orientated fishing licences.

Summary

Aboriginal Coastal Fishing Business provides jobs, income, caring for country, and can improve nutrition outcomes in communities

ACL holders and supporting organisations require ongoing fisheries mentoring, business support, funding, infrastructure and equipment.

ACL is a pathway into other seafood enterprises.

Acknowledgements

The research project was supported by CDU and BAC with human ethics research approval from CDU and a research permit from the NLC.

Thank you to AIATSIS for funding support to attend the Native Title Conference.

Thank you to the NT Government for funding, training and support to build up the fishing business. Also the ILC.

Fishing in Maningrida is supported by the Federal Government's Community Development Program.



Fishing Award and Recognition

The business has been recognised by many people.

The Northern Territory Government Chief Minister Michael Gunner and Minister Ken Vowles has visited our fishing operation.



Receiving our Certificates with Chief Minister and Minister in 2017

The business story has been praised in the media on ABC TV and radio.

And features in the national Fishing magazine this year.



The Chief Minister of the NT visited The fishing operation in 2017



FISH magazine March 2018 edition