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## Two fisheries scholarships awarded for travel abroad

**R**hys Arangio from Willagee, Western Australia, and Ewan McAsh from Burill Lake, NSW, have been awarded 2012 Nuffield Scholarships, sponsored by the FRDC. Both are now preparing for travel, as part of 16 weeks of international study from March 2012, to research issues of relevance to the Australian fishing and seafood sector.

Rhys Arangio plans to use his scholarship, co-funded by Woolworths, to investigate ways to reduce marine mammal predation in longline fishing operations. He works as part of the management team for Austral Fisheries, a commercial fishing company with interests in Australia's Northern Prawn Fishery and in Patagonian Toothfish and mackerel icefish in the Southern Ocean.

"The main fishing method used to catch Patagonian Toothfish in Australian waters is demersal longlining, a method that can suffer significantly reduced catches from predation by the likes of sperm whales and killer whales," he says. When whales and seals 'steal' fish from fishing operations, there is an increased risk of injury or death to the mammal. It also reduces the fisher's catch.

He plans to investigate the effectiveness of available mitigation methods being used around the world including submarine harvest systems for longlines, the use of acoustic deterrents or different gear types such as pots to avoid interaction between these animals and the fishing operation. He plans to travel to Norway, Alaska and France to meet with equipment manufacturers, government, industry and fishers.

Ewan McAsh will use his scholarship to investigate new business development and marketing strategies for the NSW oyster industry. He is managing director of McAsh Oysters, producing Sydney Rock Oysters on the Clyde River, Batemans Bay. The company produces 50,000 dozen oysters a year, but has plans to triple production to 150,000 dozen in the next two years.

The expansion is part of his vision to revive what he calls a "sunset industry": to develop the NSW south coast as the 'Oyster Coast', with an oyster trail to attract tourists,

much like in wine-growing regions.

The lifestyle benefits of the NSW south coast, including the scenic locations, should be potential drawcards for investors and new entrants to the industry, he says. "With strong market conditions and the availability of labour-saving technologies, the oyster industry has great potential for growth."

However, more needs to be done to strengthen the industry as a whole and to support new entrants in developing efficient and profitable oyster operations.

"As an industry we need to review our strategic direction and communicate this vision to industry members, to assist and guide them with the aim of accelerating our turnaround from a declining industry to a profitable growth industry."

Ewan McAsh intends to travel to Toronto and Quebec in Canada, Massachusetts and New York in the US, and in Europe, particularly France.

FRDC people development program manager Jo-Anne Ruscoe says the Nuffield Scholarship program allows the scholars to pursue their ideas and develop relationships across industries, value chains, regions and jurisdictions, and beyond Australia's borders, helping to develop individual and industry leadership skills. **F**

### GRADUATING CLASS MEETS WITH LEADERS

As part of the final component of the 2011 National Seafood Industry Leadership Program (NSILP) the graduating class met with Parliamentary Secretary Dr Mike Kelly, Senator Richard Colebeck, The Hon. John Cobb, and senior government representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities in Canberra to discuss a range of issues impacting the Australian seafood industry.

Key issues were public perception of the seafood industry, marine reserves, environmental issues with aquaculture development and the overall direction of the seafood industry. The graduating class also used the opportunity to launch the Sustainable Seafood Stories website ([www.sustainableseafoodstories.com.au](http://www.sustainableseafoodstories.com.au)), which seeks to showcase the work and character of the people involved in the fishing industry.

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2011 NSILP graduates (from left): Dave Allen, Alistair Dick, Josh Fielding, Fraser Perry, Michelle Haase, Shane Geary, Claire Webber, Ewan McAsh, Ashley Oliver, Jamie Damaso, Eric Perez, Karen Collard, Will Bowman and Duane Baker.