

New approaches to delivering prawn aquaculture R&D



The Australian Prawn Farmers Association (APFA) strategic R&D workshop in Townsville in early May this year was the flagship for a new proactive approach to developing collaborative industry-led R&D programs at JCU. The workshop was funded by a small partnerships grant from JCU's Research and Innovation Division and followed on from a 'getting to know you' meeting between multi-disciplinary JCU researchers and the APFA R&D committee in late 2015. The 2016 workshop brought together a diverse range of research expertise with nearly 40 people attending from the APFA's R&D committee, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Biosecurity Queensland, CSIRO, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory and JCU. Over 2 days the APFA's top seven R&D priorities were explored, projects scoped and ideas ground-truthed with a visit to a local prawn farm.

The workshop goals were twofold. Firstly to build a strategic research partnership that enables the APFA to access the full breadth of researcher and infrastructural resources for aquaculture research in a more coordinated and collaborative way over the next 5 years. This in turn will help them to maximize the way they leverage their FRDC funds into other research grant funding schemes. Secondly to ensure those unfamiliar with relatively large scale prawn farms got to visit one and understand how they operate. As a consequence on day 2, 25 people had a guided tour of the Pacific Reef prawn and Cobia farm at Ayr. They also got to see a drone demonstration of the potential for real time monitoring of pond water quality parameters and the MBD pilot algal bioremediation scheme that will be scaled up further and used as the basis for dealing with the

water quality requirements that will underpin significant expansion of Pacific Reef's size and operations.

The workshop and tour proved to be a great success – resulting in 3 major projects being reasonably well scoped (including potential funding sources identified), 4 concepts discussed and an additional 12 potential student projects outlined. Dinner at Jam Corner provided further networking opportunities and the chance to try some fabulous local food. Thanks to all the hard work behind the scenes from the staff at JCU who made this happen (especially Kristin and Yvette). The next steps will be to facilitate some successful funding applications and get the projects started!

