

Rare Foods Australia Ltd/Evaluation Pty Ltd
Commercial Dive School: CONCEPT DOCUMENT

Australian Institute of Commercial Diver Training

INTRODUCTION

The traditional pathway to gaining commercial qualifications in the Australian Diving industry is to complete a diving course certified by ADAS at an Accredited Training Establishment (ATE). ADAS stands for the Australian Diver Accreditation Scheme.

ADAS deliver commercial diver training to course participants under the Australian standard AS/NZS 2299 Occupational Diving Standards. Commercial diver training can be delivered and certified by any Registered Training Organisation (RTO) that is recognised by the Australian Government so long as the course training competencies it delivers to students that it assesses as competent adhere to the Australian Standard AS/NZS 2299. ADAS is such an organisation that is certified to provide commercial diver training to the AS/NZS 2299 Standard.

It is widely recognised that ADAS courses deliver a pathway for students to enter the high-risk work commercial diving industry. This may include entering the diving construction industry, offshore oil and gas, rig construction/maintenance, pipeline construction, jetty construction etc. The industry is seen as a high risk, high reward industry with high financial compensation.

There are also lower risk dive industries such as aquaculture, scientific diving and fishing that do not require diver training to the same levels as that in the 'offshore' diving industry, are 9-5 type salaried jobs in regional locations and as such do not have the same high levels of remuneration seen in high-risk diving occupations.

Companies such as Rare Foods Australia have from experience seen high staff turnover due to the aquaculture industry being seen by ADAS students as a '*steppingstone*' pathway to gaining valuable initial commercial dive experience fresh from ADAS commercial diver training and then applying that experience to gain employment in the higher paying 'offshore' diving industry. Traditionally, 'offshore' dive companies only give those ADAS divers a start if they have extensive prior commercial diving experience, which is quite often gained in the aquaculture industry.

The aquaculture, science and fishing industry cannot compete with the high salaries on offer in the offshore diving industry. They require qualified, safe and experienced divers to operate their business but in recent times have suffered from high staff turnover and high training costs when using the ADAS training pathway in their business. From bitter

experience, RFA has many times paid for expensive ADAS training for its employees, provided them with extensive on the job training to become competent divers then exit the industry for the 'offshore' diving industry just as they were becoming competent divers for the company.

It became apparent to the RFA that it could not continue down this pathway of being essentially a 'diver training school' for the offshore diving industry, incurring the costs of training and the patience and cost required for the diver to attain the required level of competency only to then lose that employee to the offshore industry. It became clear for RFA that a different approach was required.

That new approach was to develop a new course specifically for our industry. A non-ADAS affiliated course. One that is not recognised by the 'offshore' diving industry. A course that encourages them to become a 'seafood professional', an employee that sees this occupation as a long-term, meaningful career.

RFA approached RTO – Evaluation Pty Ltd. Its principal Peter Payne is an industry veteran in the diver training arena and had heard our story many times before, i.e. pay for the training, get them experienced, see them leave to go up North, then start all over again – unsustainable. Peter's approach was to in consultation with RFA develop a Commercial Diver Certification, based on the standards of core competencies as outlined in AS/NZS 2299 standards, tailored to our specific requirements, leaving out the high-risk competencies not required (eg underwater welding, bell diving, etc) that the ADAS course offered. We call this the 'Seafood Diver' course.

The certified Seafood diver after completing this course has all the competencies to safely undertake commercial diving activities within the seafood industry. We find that our employees remain with us longer, we can train and retain local kids as the course is conducted at our Augusta business. Previously we were sourcing ADAS ticketed divers from a small pool all over Australia and New Zealand which has its own logistical challenges as well as issues around accommodation and homesickness.

If an employee with the Seafood Diver certification wishes to further his diving career into the offshore industry the pathway is to undertake at their own expense an ADAS course at an RTO interstate affiliated with ADAS, and we wish them well.

We are now presently running our second Seafood Diver course through Peter Payne and have others planned. The interest in what we are offering is high. We have already trained divers in this course for Cone Bay Barramundi, a leading WA Aquaculture Company that has experienced similar HR issues as to that I have described above. Other WA Aquaculture companies have also registered their interest in this training.

The interest in this "non-ADAS" commercial diver training extends to other areas of commercial diving as well – as we do not offer training competencies in the more high-risk commercial diving aspects our course can be completed in a shorter timeframe, for less cost. We are running a course in May for the University of WA that has a requirement for researchers to be certified as 'Scientific Divers with SSBA'. SSBA refers to certification of

competency with air supplied from the surface via a hose. Peter has tailored a 3-day course based on the national standards to meet those competencies. Again, delivered at a much cheaper cost and in a shorter timeframe than would have been delivered by an ADAS course interstate.

The OH&S rules around scientific divers have strengthened recently and our investigations have found that universities and TAFES and other marine research organisations will require Scientific Diver qualifications to the AS/NZS 2299 diving standards. We can offer this training. There would be a large demand for a course of this type from such organisations.

Augusta Commercial Dive School Concept

It has dawned on RFA and Evaluation Pty Ltd that there is a real demand for non-ADAS commercial dive certifications. There is no commercial diver training school in WA and non-anywhere else in Australia that offer the non-ADAS pathway to commercial dive competency as previously described. We believe that there is significant demand for this type of qualification, such that warrants a full-time training centre. We propose to develop a commercial dive school to meet the demand for the types of businesses and organisations as below:

- Aquaculture Industry – Seafood Diver
 - Rare Foods Australia.
 - Cone Bay Barramundi.
 - Leeuwin Coast.
 - 888 Abalone
 - Tuna/SBT
 - Atlantic Salmon
 - Seaweed
- SSBA/SCUBA Scientific Diver
 - Universities
 - TAFE
 - Government agencies – DPIRD, EPA, DBCA
- WA Lobster Industry – moorings, pot retrieval
- Commercial Fishing Industry
 - Abalone.
 - Sea Cucumber
 - Tropical Lobster
- Pearl Diving Industry
- Any person seeking a career in the above industries.

We have come up with the proposal of developing a commercial dive training school to be located in Augusta. We will offer nationally accredited diver training specific to the competencies required by each industry. Rare Foods Australia has a base in the Augusta Marina. The location is ideally suited to a commercial dive school

- Protected marina, with pens available for diver training vessel
- Land base facilities – RFA has compressed air plumbed into boat pens for refills of dive tanks. We have dive equipment technicians employed.
- RFA is one the largest employers of commercial divers in Australia (16 full-time divers on its roster)
- Protected beach and safe water area for diver training.
- Safe area protected from weather to conduct underwater commercial dive training drills.
- Close to deeper oceanic water for assessing core competencies.
- Room to construct a dive training centre.
- Accommodation facilities available in the local area Augusta/Margaret River.

Evaluation Pty Ltd would develop and own the training modules. The modules would be developed in consultation with each industry to determine their specific competency requirements. The types of courses we envisage that could be offered include:

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| • Aquaculture/Wildcatch SSBA/SCUBA/NITROX | 12 days |
| • SSBA/ NITROX – Universities (PADI science diver upgrade) | 3 days |
| • Scientific Diver SSBA/SCUBA/NITROX | 12 days |
| • Occupational Dive Supervisor | 9 days |
| • Lobster Industry Diver
(pot retrieval, moorings, rope un-entanglement) | 5 days |
| • Pearl Industry Diver | 12 Days |
| • Dive Equipment Technician | 5 days |

This would be a partnership between Evaluation Pty Ltd and Rare Foods Australia. Evaluation Pty Ltd would be the course owner and be responsible for:

- Writing standards
- Maintaining the courses
- Delivering the training
- Providing trainers.
- Train the trainers
- Provide the certifications
- Provide insurances
- Audit the training

Rare Foods Australia would be the administrators.

Augusta Marina – Ideal Location

We would look to have a classroom on-site. The laydown area of the marina would be ideal. Would require storage for dive equipment. 2 x shipping containers.

Utilise the safe water area at the toe of the marina to undertake safe diver training. This area is protected from wind and swell. We have been using this area for the past 2 courses we have conducted and found it very suitable. I estimate it would be suitable for diver

training 300 days per year. There is a beach for water entry that could be accessed by building some stairs over the rock wall. This area would also have a pontoon moored for drills. It gets to 8m depth quite quickly where you could place some ABITATS for airbag training, mooring blocks to teach mooring construction, place a cray pot in an ABITAT to teach pot retrieval. Etc etc.

Requirements- Estimated Quantum

• Classroom incl fit out	\$300,000
• 2 x Shipping containers to store equipment	\$15,000
• Dive vessel – 12m (13 pax capacity)	\$450,000
• Pontoon	\$8,000
• Stairs to Beach	\$10,000
• Dive Equipment	\$60,000
• Contingency 10%	\$70,000
TOTAL	<u>\$913,000</u>



Stakeholders

- Department of Transport – permission for classroom, stairs, pontoon, use of safe dive area (have netted off to restrict access).
- SWDC – South-West Development Commission
- JTSI – Dept jobs, innovation training
- DPIRD
- TAFE
- Universities
- All businesses that require this training

From the courses we have developed and operated we believe the demand for such occupational diver training is significant and would grow in time as the 'word' gets out. We could see a situation where we are hosting students from all over Australia and even SE Asia. The Augusta Marina is the ideal location. The Augusta Marina is underutilised. There may be the opportunity to tie this in with the planned FESA building – to have a classroom available for training.

Rare Foods Australia currently operate the largest commercial dive team in Australia with 17 qualified commercial divers employed in Augusta – we have a requirement to be continually training new staff and have the capacity in-house to operate the facility in partnership with Evaluation Pty Ltd.