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Resource Assessment Groups - Roles, Responsibilities and Relationship with Management Advisory Committees

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Resource Assessment Groups - roles, responsibilities and relationship with Management Advisory Committees

1. PURPOSE

This paper seeks to clarify key decision making processes associated with the delivery of research advice in the pursuit of AFMA's legislative objectives. This includes the interactive processes, respective roles and responsibilities between the AFMA Board, Resource Assessment Groups (RAGs), Management Advisory Committees (MACs) and their subcommittees (see Figure 1). This paper also provides operational guidelines for AFMA's two types of fishery-focussed research committees. These guidelines cover procedures, reporting, membership arrangements and remuneration for the respective committees.

This Administration Paper should be read in conjunction with two other AFMA policy papers - Fisheries Management Paper (FMP) No.1 - Management Advisory Committees; and Fisheries Administration Paper (FMP) No.7 - Information and Advice for Industry Members on AFMA Committees.

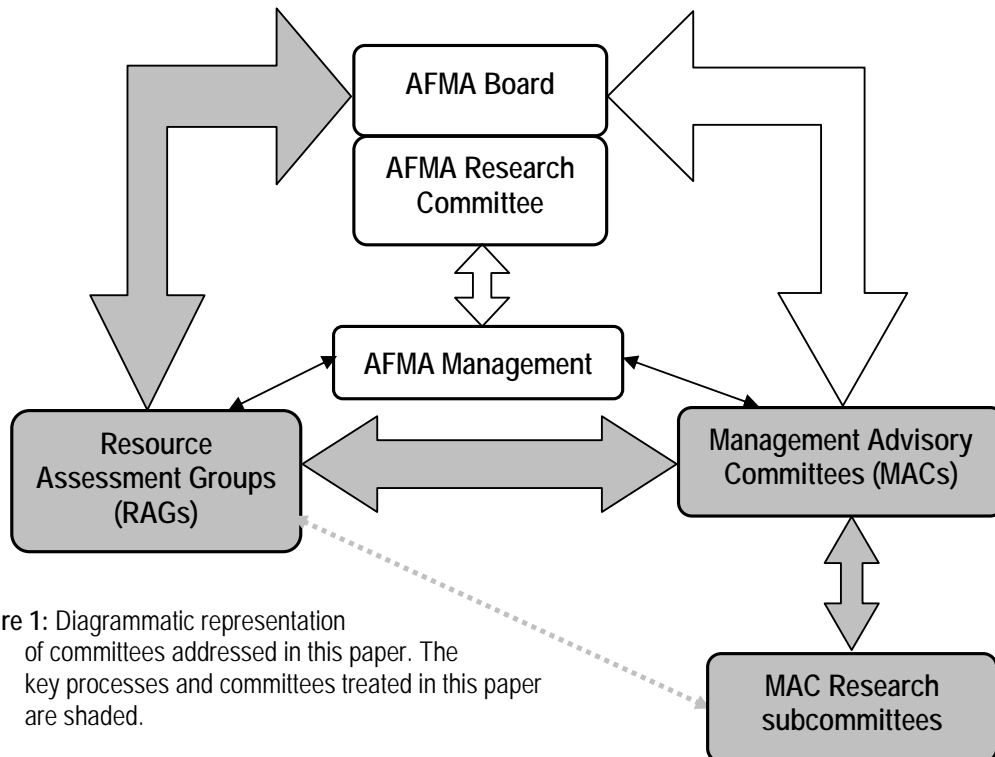


Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of committees addressed in this paper. The key processes and committees treated in this paper are shaded.



2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Fisheries Administration Paper:

ARC	means the AFMA Research Committee. A committee of the AFMA Board with responsibility for scientific and research processes. The ARC also acts as the Commonwealth Fisheries Research Advisory Body (ComFRAB), which provides advice to FRDC on research matters.
MAC	means any Management Advisory Committee established by AFMA under Section 56-57 of the Fisheries Administration Act 1991 to advise on management and operational issues in a fishery.
MAC Research Subcommittee	means any scientific or research subcommittee established by an AFMA Management Advisory Committee (MAC), to provide scientific / economic advice.
RAG	means any Resource Assessment Group or other scientific group constituted to make assessments on the state of a fishery and report these to AFMA.

3. PRINCIPLES

Key principles that will be observed in relation to the respective committees/groups within AFMA's decision-making framework are:

- i. Unless delegated by the Board, all committees are advisory rather than decision-making.
- ii. Committees will provide expert advice that best pursues AFMA's legislative objectives and identified organisational outcomes.
- iii. AFMA seeks, through its scientific processes and committees to obtain best quality information and advice.
- iv. Decisions will be made on the best advice (and information) available at the time.
- v. Committees will have defined roles and there should be minimum overlap in responsibilities.
- vi. Scientific advice and reporting will be a transparent and open process.

4. FUNCTIONAL GUIDELINES

4.1 MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES (MACS)

Management Advisory Committees are the principal source of advice on fishery-specific management issues. MACs and their subcommittees have specific research-related functions that support the decision making process.

MACs advise the AFMA Board on fishery objectives, strategies, reference points, risk profiles and management arrangements for achieving fishery-specific goals. For the Board to be able



to make decisions based upon MAC advice, the Board has to be confident that the MAC has put in place rigorous processes to determine the best package of measures in pursuit of AFMA's objectives. Good governance and business efficiency demand that the Board is normally able to approve MAC advice without delving unnecessarily into the MAC business details, or needing to seek clarification from the MAC. In order for this to happen, the Board must be confident that MAC advice is comprehensive and of the highest standard

Larger MACs may form expertise-based subcommittees to deal with technical matters. In summary, research subcommittees provide the technical expertise for the MAC to determine the research and data requirements for effective management decision making. Such MAC subcommittees advise the MAC on research priorities and assess the relative returns on investments in research and data collection.

Under the existing Australian Government cost-recovery policy, MACs and their subcommittees are funded largely by industry levies as their functions are attributable to industry as the principal beneficiary.

4.1.1 Terms-of-Reference for MACs (Research Subcommittees)

MACs, or their research subcommittees will tailor their Terms-of-Reference (TOR) according to their specific requirements. However, general TOR for MAC research-related activities are:

- i. Identify, recommend and document fishery objectives.**
- ii. Recommend reference points against which the achievement of objectives can be measured (these should include limit and target reference points), and decision rules to be used, taking account of the precautionary principle, when reference points are reached.**
- iii. Develop and update a strategic research plan for the fishery.**
- iv. Develop and initiate research programs to supply information needs of the fishery and relevant RAGs. This includes providing advice on appropriate levels of investment in research and monitoring.**
- v. Identify research and monitoring priorities for the fishery. Solicit research proposals and seek funding for these by providing ranked evaluations to the ARC/ComFRAB on an annual basis.**
- vi. Provide a forum for expert consideration of scientific issues and research requirements referred by the Board, relevant RAG, or raised by fishery stakeholders.**
- vii. Identify harvest strategy options and advise on acceptable levels of risk, consistent with the precautionary principle.**
- viii. Review reports and outcomes from completed projects.**

4.2 RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUPS (RAGS)

The main role of Resource Assessment Groups is to provide advice on the status of fish stocks, substocks, species (target and non-target species) and on the impact of fishing on the marine environment. Advice provided by the RAG should address biological, economic and wider ecological factors impacting on the fishery.

RAGs should also evaluate alternative harvest options proposed by MACs. This includes advising on the impact over time of different harvest strategies (for example, the time required



for a particular fish stock to reach a reference point), stock depletion or recovery rates, the confidence levels of the fishery assessments, and risks to the attainment of approved fishery objectives.

RAGs also have an obligation where relevant to evaluate and report on economic and compliance factors affecting the fishery. This may include but should not be limited to socio-economic consequences of the biological state of the fishery; identifying mechanisms for capturing the socio-economic impacts of new management strategies; identifying when significant changes in industry practices may or do impact adversely on the effectiveness of the management regime; identifying real or potential areas for criminal activity (eg black markets) or other risks of non-compliance with the management regime,

In considering the issues facing the fishery, RAGs must bear in mind that fisheries management is conducted within an over-arching international context established by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its implementing agreements. The UNCLOS provides the international basis for fisheries management in Australia, and places on fishery managers certain obligations and responsibilities as well as rights. In addition, individual fisheries also are influenced by the decisions taken by Regional Fishery Management Organisations, or by separate Treaties between Australia and other nations (eg the Torres Strait Treaty). As a result there is a hierarchy of obligations on fisheries management, with international and Treaty obligations taking precedence over domestic requirements.

All advice presented by RAGs will be given without bias and may be provided in the form of evidence-based hypotheses or options. Where dissenting views on an advice are held by members, this will be reflected in the written record.

RAGs are bodies appointed by the AFMA Board. The Board has a direct involvement in the funding and conduct of RAGs through the Board's research committee (known as the AFMA Research Committee). For the most part, AFMA management is responsible for ensuring that RAGs are adequately supported to carry out their functions. This includes ensuring that RAGs are comprised of the best available team of people (ie. fishery scientists of varying disciplines, economists and stakeholders with relevant skills and knowledge).

RAGs for large, multi-sectoral or multi-species fisheries may form expertise-based subcommittees or RAGs to advise on specific matters or sectors. These subcommittees report back to the overall fishery RAG .

RAGs report to both the Board and the MAC but are not controlled by the MAC . This is to ensure that the potential conflict of interest generated by the assessment roles of RAGs and management advisory roles of MACs does not impact on the quality of advice provided to the AFMA Board. MACs (including MAC subcommittees) and RAGs often have some common membership, therefore it is essential that their roles be recognised and differentiated by the respective chairs.

RAGs are partially government funded through the AFMA Research Fund (ARF) and partially industry funded through levies. The mix of government and industry funding is based upon the relative extent to which industry benefits from the assessments undertaken. AFMA's cost recovery impact statement (CRIS), was endorsed by the Board in February 2004 and states that RAGs will be 75% funded by government and 25% funded by industry. The AFMA Research Committee (ARC) uses guidelines on what costs can be included in RAGs, to ensure they are distinguished from fisheries management research and broader marine research.

Some fisheries have determined that it is not cost-effective to support both a RAG and a MAC research subcommittee. In these fisheries, a single body undertakes both the RAG and MAC research subcommittee functions and reports to both the MAC and the Board. It is important that the dual roles are recognised and distinguished in the different advisory and reporting functions. The chairs of these committees have an important role in this regard.



4.2.1 Terms-of-Reference for Resource Assessment Groups

RAGs should tailor their Terms-of-Reference (TOR) according to their specific requirements. However, general TOR for RAGs are:

- i. Analyse, assess, and report on the fishery status against agreed reference points, including target and non-target stocks, impacts on the marine environment from fishing, and the economic efficiency with which stocks are fished.**
- ii. Analyse, assess and report on the fishery socio-economic status, including, economic and compliance risks associated with the biological status of the fishery and current or proposed management strategies**
- iii. Identify improvements and refinements to assessment methodology.**
- iv. Evaluate alternative harvest strategies or TAC settings . This includes providing advice on confidence limits or risk levels associated with particular management / harvest strategies.**
- v. Assist the MAC(s) to develop, test, and refine sustainability reference points and performance indicators for the fishery. Advise on stock status and trends relative to these reference points and indicators.**
- vi. Identify and document fishery assessment and monitoring gaps, needs and priorities. These should be incorporated in MAC strategic research plans.**
- vii. Provide advice and recommendations to the ARC on issues consistent with RAG functions.**
- viii. Facilitate peer review of assessment outputs.**
- ix. Maintain awareness of current issues by promoting close links with relevant MACs, AFMA Management and other RAGs. Liaise with other researchers, experts and key industry members.**

4.3 RAG / MAC INTERACTIONS

Although RAGs and MACs have different functions and the advisory roles are distinct, there are occasions on which the two bodies should interact. In particular, the RAG may have expertise that can assist a MAC in the development of reference points for consideration by the Board. The scientific members of RAGs should be involved in advising on whether it is feasible to set and report against reference points for specific fishery parameters, taking into account the levels of available knowledge.

RAGs and MACs should also interact in the development of performance indicators for fisheries. The validity and measurability of performance indicators is a matter that requires considerable expertise. There is no point in MACs recommending reference points or performance indicators if the RAG cannot report against those measures. MACs may also need to seek fresh advice from RAGs to enable both bodies to pursue their respective responsibilities, but must recognise that RAGs have the right to provide independent advice and not do so merely because the original advice is not palatable.

In order to meet responsibilities, RAGs require information on which to conduct assessments and report on status and trends. An important role of RAGs is to identify information gaps and to advise on the relative priorities for filling those gaps. It is the role of MACs (generally through their respective subcommittees) to put in place monitoring and research programs to generate the information required by RAGs.



Another important area of RAG/MAC interaction is the securing of independent reviews of fishery assessments. Such reviews may cover the range and quality of data collected; the methodology of analysis and modelling; and the conclusions drawn and reported. The AFMA Board has determined that external peer review is an essential element in the management process. It is necessary to ensure rigour in the methodology applied to stock assessments, to engender confidence in the management decisions. RAGs and MACs should view independent reviews as a facility available to them for validating their work.

As a matter of good practice, it is proposed that the RAG and MAC associated with each designated fishery meet jointly at least once a year. Holding a joint meeting will make it easier for respective chairs to identify areas of common interest and to identify and ensure the separation of those functions that should be kept separate. Ensuring that each body maintains a suitable record of business that is distributed to their colleague committees would also facilitate the separation of functions.

5. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

5.1 RAGS AND MAC RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEES – ROLES AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

A stock assessment that engenders a strong management response may bring the RAG into conflict with sectors of industry or attract political attention. Therefore, members of the RAG must be credible, expert and impartial in undertaking their assessments.

A RAG should be composed of sufficient members with the expertise to carry out its functions. In addition to scientific members, a RAG must have an AFMA management member and industry membership to ensure that different perspectives and knowledge sources are recognised. Normally a minimum number of members would be a chair, an AFMA member, an industry member and at least two scientific members providing biological and economic expertise respectively. It is preferable that RAGs include a conservation member with a good knowledge of ecology where required.

Appointments to AFMA RAGs must be formalised. Appointments to RAGs will be expertise based, usually by selecting from nominations provided by the MAC or similar body, although members may be drawn from outside the MAC. The AFMA Managing Director, in consultation with the RAG Chair, appoints members. The normal appointment period will be three years. Subsequent re-appointments will be permitted.

5.1.1 RAG Chairs

5.1.1.1 Role

The RAG Chair has a key role in ensuring thorough, effective discussion about implementation of ESD factors affecting, and impacts of management strategies on, the particular fishery. The Chair is the primary communication link between the RAG and the AFMA Board and the relevant fishery MAC, and accordingly must:

- Have good national standing as a scientist in a field relevant to fisheries;
- Be independent of commercial or other interests with the particular fishery, including industry association(s);
- Have a demonstrated capacity to chair meetings, including a sound understanding of the meeting procedures and practices necessary for the efficient conduct of meetings;



- Be able to identify strategic goals and objectives, and facilitate their achievement through the RAG process;
- Have a demonstrated capacity to communicate clearly and concisely to a wide cross-section including the AFMA Board, MACs, industry; and
- Not be a member of the AFMA Board.

The roles and responsibilities of the RAG Chair include:

- Ensuring timely availability of agenda papers and other relevant documentation prior to a meeting, and preparation and dissemination of records of discussion after a meeting;
- Formal communication of RAG meeting outcomes, recommendations and matters for information to the AFMA Board and MAC;
- Ensure RAG members remain aware of and consider AFMA's legislative objectives in the deliberations of the RAG;
- Ensure RAG members are aware of their responsibilities under this FAP and under FAP7.
- Ensure that discussion documents are not used for any purpose not related to the business of the RAG;
- Summarising outcomes for each agenda item during the course and at the end of a meeting;
- Ensuring that minutes and other material arising from RAG deliberations clearly and accurately describe RAG recommendations, including dissenting views where they are expressed;
- Ensure that annual work plans are developed and that applications for funding are submitted in an accurate and timely fashion; and
- Advise the AFMA Managing Director on appointment of other members of the RAG.

5.1.1.2 Selection/appointment procedure

The chair of the RAG will be offered to an expert of high standing with independence and objectivity.. Where a vacancy for a RAG Chair arises, a shortlist of nominees considered to have relevant expertise and attributes may be drawn up and presented to the ARC for consideration.

With advice from the ARC, the Managing Director will formally appoint RAG Chairs. The RAG Chair normally would be expected to be the scientific member on the MAC.

5.1.2 RAG Scientific Members

5.1.2.1 Role

The roles of scientific members are to:

- Contribute impartial scientific and/or economic expertise to RAG deliberations; and
- Provide advice to the RAG on the latest scientific or economic issues of relevance to the fishery;



5.1.2.2 Appointment/selection process

Appointment of scientific members will be done by the AFMA Managing Director in consultation with the RAG Chair. Appointments will be expertise based and will address upon the following requirements:

- One of the following:
 - Seniority and good standing in biological and/or fisheries science relevant to the particular fishery; OR
 - Seniority and good standing in an economics field relevant to fisheries;

AND

- Experience in liaison with major Commonwealth and State fisheries research organisations at a high level; and
- The absence of any direct or indirect interests in the particular fishery (ie members should not have, or be employed by an entity having or representing entities having, interests in the particular fishery).

Scientific members are not appointed as representatives of particular sector or interest groups and, once appointed, must act in the best interest of the fishery.

5.1.3 RAG AFMA Member

5.1.3.1 Role

The role of the AFMA member is to:

- Participate in general RAG discussions;
- Contribute fisheries management expertise to RAG deliberations; and
- Provide advice on relevant Government policy, AFMA Board policy and AFMA's obligations under governing legislation.

5.1.3.2 Appointment/selection process

AFMA will appoint the AFMA member to the RAG. Usually the AFMA member will be the manager of the fishery.

5.1.4 RAG Industry Member

5.1.4.1 Role

The role of the industry member is to:

- Contribute to RAG deliberations knowledge and experience relevant to the particular fishery and the fishing industry generally;
- Contribute fisheries expertise to achieve the best resource assessment outcomes for the fishery; and
- Regularly and impartially report to and liaise with other operators in the fishery on the RAG's activities.



5.1.4.2 Appointment/selection process

Appointment of RAG industry members will be done by the AFMA Managing Director in consultation with the RAG Chair, usually by selecting from nominations made by the MAC. Industry members will be selected on the basis of their ability to fulfil the role outlined above.

Industry members are not appointed as representatives of particular sector or interest groups and, once appointed, must act in the best interest of the fishery.

5.1.5 RAG Conservation Member

5.1.5.1 Role

The role of the conservation member is to:

- Contribute ecological knowledge and expertise to RAG deliberations;
- Advise the RAG on environmental or conservation developments of relevance to the particular fishery; and
- Advise on any implications that RAG deliberations and recommendations may have in relation to ecological considerations

5.1.5.2 Appointment/selection process

Appointment of RAG conservation members will be done by the AFMA Managing Director in consultation with the RAG Chair, usually by selecting from nominations made by the MAC. Conservation members will be selected on the basis of their ability to fulfil the role outlined above.

Conservation members are not appointed as representatives of particular sector or interest groups and, once appointed, must act in the best interest of the fishery.

5.1.6 Membership of MAC Research Subcommittees

In accordance with AFMA's Fisheries Management Paper (FMP) No 1, the chair of a MAC research subcommittee is usually the scientific member on the MAC. The MAC chair appoints all other members of a MAC research subcommittee.

It is recommended that the MAC chair exercise judgement in appointing a small group of subcommittee members whose collective expertise is sufficient to enable them to undertake the required functions of the subcommittee. There will be an AFMA member and at least one industry member.

Appointments should normally be for a period of two years. Subsequent re-appointments will be permitted.

5.1.7 Responsibilities and obligations of members of RAGs and MAC research committees

Obligations and responsibilities of members of research subcommittees are set out in companion papers FMP No. 1 and FAP No. 7. FAP 7 provides information and advice for industry members on AFMA committees. It includes advice on the following areas: the role of industry members; their obligations and responsibilities; procedural matters for industry members (eg meeting attendance, alternate members, conduct); remuneration and travelling allowance; conflict of interest; indemnities; resignation.



Although FAP No. 7 makes reference only to industry members, for the purposes of this paper FAP No. 7 applies to all members of RAGs and MAC research subcommittees.

5.2 CONDUCT

Procedural matters for members and chairs of RAGs and MAC subcommittees are described in FAP No. 7 and FMP No. 1. These matters include attendance at meetings, conduct in meetings, alternate or deputy members, observers, the agenda and responding to minutes or reports.

RAG Members should perform all duties associated with their positions diligently, impartially, conscientiously, in a civil manner and to the best of their ability.

In the performance of their duties they should:

- act in such a way, at RAG meetings, in the field and at official functions that will be held in high regard by the community and by industry;
- treat other RAG Members and stakeholders with courtesy and sensitivity; and
- not take, or seek to take, improper advantage of official information gained in the course of their membership.



In undertaking official duties, RAG Members have an obligation to be aware of the specific responsibilities placed upon them by AFMA's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and by administrative and employment law. RAG Members are not permitted to discriminate against or harass any colleague, client or member of the public. Behaviour, which is shown to be discriminatory, or which constitutes harassment will not be tolerated.

Whilst RAG Members, as members of the community, have the right to make public comment¹ and to enter into public debate on political issues, there are some circumstances in which public comment is inappropriate, in particular where there is an implication that the public comment, although made in a private capacity, is in some way an official comment of the RAG. RAG Members should avoid making private statements about matters relating to the RAG unless it is made clear that they are speaking as a private citizen.

5.2.1 Conflict of Interest

RAG members may, from time to time, face potential or direct conflicts of interest. Conflict of interest may arise where a member has had prior business dealings and/or working relationships with a researcher who has submitted an application for funding being considered by the RAG. Members should recognise the potential for conflict to occur and be aware that, in cases of direct conflict, the operations of the RAG will be affected by an undisclosed conflict of interest. Accordingly, a commonsense approach should be taken and, if there is any doubt, a conflict of interest should be declared and recognised in the RAG's discussions. The processes for declaring and dealing with a conflict of interest is as follows:

1. Where a member:

-  has a direct or indirect financial interest in a matter being considered, or about to be considered, by the RAG; and
-  the interest could conflict with the proper performance of the member's duties in relation to the consideration of the matter



¹ Public comment includes public speaking engagements, comments on radio and television and expressing views in letters to newspapers or in books, journals or notices or where it might be expected that the publication or circulation of the comment would spread to the community at large.



the member must, as soon as practicable after the relevant facts have come to the member's knowledge, advise the RAG, at the meeting, of the nature of the interest. Such a disclosure must be recorded in the minutes/report of the meeting.

2. To ensure the smooth operation of the meeting, it is suggested that RAGs deal with conflict of interest at the start of each meeting. Members will have papers and the agenda prior to the meeting and should be able to make a disclosure of a potential conflict of interest and its nature at the start of the meeting. The RAG should then decide the nature of the interest and what action should be taken.

If the RAG decides that a direct conflict of interest exists, and that this conflict is likely to interfere with the RAG's consideration of a particular issue or issues, the RAG may:

-  decide that the member who has disclosed his/her interest should participate in the discussions concerning the issue but not in formalising the decision (in such cases, the Member may be asked to retire from the meeting while the decision is made); or
-  ask to hear the member's views on the issue and then ask him/her to retire from the meeting while it is discussed by the other members and a decision is formalised.

In deciding how to treat instances where a direct conflict of interest exists, the RAG should take a more inclusive approach in view of the role and function of RAGs in terms of making use of the expertise of members. As a guide, it is suggested that members declaring a direct conflict of interest should only be excluded from decision making if the matter being considered only affects the individual member rather than all persons involved in the fishery.

If members subsequently become aware of a potential conflict of interest during the course of a meeting they must immediately disclose the conflict of interest and the RAG must consider how the disclosure is to be dealt with at this point.

3. At the start of the meeting, the RAG should also decide how each interest is to be recognised in the RAG outcomes aside from recording it in the minutes/report of the meeting. For example, it may be appropriate to refer to an interest in documenting the discussion on some items.

The Chair should then ensure that the minutes/report of the meeting reflect the RAGs decision(s) in regard to the conflict of interest and that these are put into effect at the appropriate point(s) in the meeting.

5.2.2 Confidentiality and non-disclosure

Members of both RAGs and MAC research subcommittees may sometimes require access to confidential fishery catch and effort data and will have access to draft reports, materials or working papers that are unready or not intended for wider circulation.

The chair should warn members when matters of a confidential nature are tabled, and ensure that discussion documents are not used for any purpose not related to the business of the RAG or subcommittee. Exceptions should only occur with the written consent of the RAG or subcommittee chair. However, all members are obliged to have regard to AFMA's standards of confidentiality and non-disclosure. Note that industry members, non-government organisation personnel, recreational fishers and other fishery stakeholders may not be given access to confidential data.

Scientific members who are custodians of data for the purposes of analyses, must apply best practice to ensure security, confidentiality, and non-disclosure of the data. This includes prevention of loss, theft, corruption and unapproved duplication. All data that is the property of AFMA is to be returned to AFMA following completion of the analyses, unless otherwise agreed by AFMA.



It is the responsibility of the chair to ensure that data contained in all public documents, assessment reports or other publications is aggregated sufficiently to preserve commercial confidentiality and privacy. AFMA's confidentiality standards should be used as the benchmark for this purpose.

5.3 REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

5.3.1 Reporting arrangements for RAGs

RAGs should report formally to the AFMA Board. This reporting process should provide the Board with details about the status and trends for stocks and the fishery, including economic developments and compliance risks. RAGs will also inform the AFMA Research Committee (ARC) of work on stock assessments in progress, alert the ARC/Board to problem issues, and provide the necessary accountability for RAG expenditure. The ARC will monitor quality and cost-effectiveness of reports to the Board.

All RAGs are to provide periodic reports to the ARC. It is expected that there will be three types of reports – meeting reports, technical working papers and fishery assessment reports:

- i. Meeting reports are minutes or the record of a RAG meeting. These are to be provided to the ARC Secretariat following meetings.
- ii. Technical working papers are reports tabled and considered during meetings of the RAG. These are important resources that underpin an overall assessment of the fishery. Technical working papers might not become public documents, but do need to be retained and archived. These documents should be series numbered identifying the RAG involved, the year produced and the meeting when they were considered. Copies must be provided to the ARC Secretariat for lodgement in the AFMA research library.
- iii. RAG assessment reports are AFMA publications that are produced annually or periodically, and provide an assessment of the fishery. These assessment reports should generally adopt a standard reporting format for fishery assessment reports. The reports should carry an AFMA logo, be series numbered and be made available for public circulation to stakeholders. Authorship of assessment reports, if any, should be determined by consensus among RAG members.

RAG reports and meeting minutes also will be provided to relevant MACs. Similarly, RAGs should be provided with relevant reports generated by MAC subcommittees. Wherever possible RAG advice to the Board should be accompanied by the MAC response or comment on the RAG report.

5.3.2 Reporting arrangements for MACs (Research subcommittees)

The primary reporting responsibility of MAC research subcommittees is to their MAC. The MAC should prescribe the manner of reporting.

The MAC, drawing on advice from its research subcommittee and from the relevant RAG, will need to recommend to the AFMA Board fishery goals, harvest strategies, reference points and decision rules for the fishery. It is suggested that MACs prepare an annual operational plan documenting these. The MAC should also advise on an acceptable level of risk associated with the recommended harvest strategies and reference points.

MACs need to prepare and publish a strategic research plan for the fishery. The ARC will provide a five-year AFMA Strategic Research Plan as a background resource against which the fishery research plan should be framed. MACs will advise the ARC on the annual evaluation and ranking of research proposals against the fishery strategic research plan. Strategic research plans and ranked research proposals should be provided to the ARC according to the annual research timetable and format advised by the ARC secretariat.



5.3.3 Annual work planning and budget preparation for RAGs

It is an obligation of all RAG members to assist in developing an annual, costed work plan for the RAG. The relevant MAC should be consulted and provide comment on whether the budgeted work plan best meets the assessment needs for the fishery. The AFMA Board must approve the annual work plans and accompanying budgets. Budgets and work plans can be for a period of up to three years. Application for funding to conduct the annual work plan must be made to the ARC secretariat according to the timetable and format prescribed by the ARC. The application proforma can be obtained from AFMA's website.

Fisheries management research and collection of verified data will be 20% funded by government and 80% funded by industry. The CRIS indicates that broader marine research includes research projects that have significant spillover benefits for the general public or involve significant innovation; and research into collapsed fisheries, by-catch and resource allocation to non-commercial sectors. Broader marine research will include the cost of RAGs.

5.4 REMUNERATION AND TRAVELLING ALLOWANCES FOR MEMBERS

5.4.1 Travelling expenses

In accordance with sub-section 67(4) of the Fisheries Administration Act 1991, MAC members travelling on MAC business are entitled to receive a per diem allowance (to cover accommodation, meals and incidentals) at a rate determined by the Remuneration Tribunal. Members engaged on MAC business, are entitled to reimbursement of airfares at the economy airfare rate. Where a member engaged on MAC business elects to use a higher class of air travel or to incur costs above the per diem allowance, these additional costs are to be met by that member.

MAC subcommittee members who are not also full MAC members are not entitled to receive per diem allowances. These members, whom have not been appointed by the AFMA Board, may be paid travel expenses reasonably incurred in connection with MAC subcommittee business. Normally, this is reimbursement of airfares at the economy class rate, reimbursement of receipted expenditure for accommodation costs, meals and incidental expenses as prescribed for AFMA staff.

Members of RAGs travelling on RAG business will also be paid travel expenses reasonably incurred in connection with RAG business. Normally, this is reimbursement of airfares at the economy class rate, reimbursement of receipted expenditure for reasonable accommodation costs, meals and incidental expenses as prescribed for AFMA staff.

To claim reimbursement for expenses incurred while on MAC subcommittee, or RAG business, members must provide AFMA with a tax invoice with any relevant supporting documentation such as airline ticket, boarding pass, and receipts for accommodation, meals, taxis and parking vouchers etc.

5.4.2 Remuneration for inter-sessional work

Members of RAGs or MAC subcommittees cannot normally claim sitting fees. However, it is expected that a significant amount of RAG work will be conducted between formal meetings. AFMA will consider claims for reimbursement of such inter-sessional work where it can be demonstrated that a member's contribution to RAG inter-sessional work is outside the normal business of the member's agency providing the services. This is a matter for consideration by the ARC when determining budgets for RAGs. Remuneration provision for inter-sessional work will be specified in member contracts at the time of appointment where appropriate.

Claims for inter-sessional work benefiting a RAG should be budgeted, and reasonable. Remuneration can be claimed by lodgement of a tax invoice with AFMA and should be



supported by a documentary record of the actual staff time inputs to RAG work. AFMA reserves the right to inspect such records, before approving payment of claims for inter-sessional work.

5.4.3 Remuneration of RAG Chairs

AFMA accepts that the duties of RAG chairs require high-level skills and carry obligation and responsibility. In order to attract and retain suitable chairpersons for RAGs, AFMA may consider remuneration for chairperson's duties. The level of remuneration is not fixed, but may be negotiated between AFMA and the chairperson. Agreed remuneration for chairperson's services will require approval by the AFMA Board following consideration by the ARC when approving budgets for RAGs. Approved chair remuneration will be specified in chair contracts at the time of appointment.

5.4.4 Consultancies

In order to accomplish work plans, RAGs may from time to time require the specialist skills or services of people not already members of the RAG. In these instances and for specific defined tasks, the RAG chairperson may engage consultants. RAG work plans must anticipate these needs and budgets need to provide for any consultancy fees to be paid.

Consultants should be engaged under an AFMA contract. Preparation of such a contract is the responsibility of the AFMA Research Manager in consultation with the RAG chairperson. (for further information on contracts refer to the AFMA Research Manager).

5.5 INDEMNITY OF MEMBERS

AFMA's Directors and Officers Liability Insurance covers members of MACs. Liability insurance does not cover members of RAGs or MAC subcommittee members as they are not regarded as officers of AFMA for the purposes of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997. Therefore, liability insurance is regarded as not necessary as it is improbable that members of these groups and sub-committees could be held liable for actions taken or statements made in their capacity as a group or sub-committee member.

5.6 RESIGNATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Members of a RAG may resign at any time by giving a signed notice of resignation to the Managing Director. Upon receipt of such a written resignation, AFMA will, unless otherwise agreed, initiate action to fill the vacancy left by the resigning member.

Members of MAC subcommittees may resign at any time by giving notice of resignation to the MAC chair. Upon receipt of such notice, the MAC will determine, in consultation with the research subcommittee, whether replacement of the member will be initiated.

5.7 CANCELLATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership of either RAGs or MAC subcommittees may be cancelled at any time for misconduct or non-performance.

Misconduct includes, non-observance of confidentiality eg. disclosure of data, results or other materials prior to an agreement to circulate, conflict of interest, misleading or misinforming, and making fraudulent travel or expense claims.



Non-performance includes excessive unexplained absences from meetings, repeated non-performance of assigned tasks or failure to participate in discussions in an objective, impartial and constructive manner.

The AFMA Managing Director (in the case of RAG members) or the MAC chair (in the case of MAC subcommittees) may cancel membership upon receipt of a written recommendation from the RAG or MAC subcommittee chairperson setting out reasons. Cancellation of membership may be appealed. The AFMA Board will consider any appeals. These appeals must be addressed to the AFMA chair and lodged, in writing, within 21 days after receiving notice to stand down.

*Australian Fisheries Management Authority
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