



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Annual Operational Plan

2016-17

Steering AFMA's Corporate Plan 2016-19 into action.

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AFMA values

We individually and collectively are:

- **Impartial** – we are apolitical and provide the government with advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on the best available evidence
- **Committed to service** – we are professional, objective, innovative and efficient, and we work collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and the government
- **Accountable** – we are open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of Ministerial responsibility
- **Respectful** – we respect all people, including their rights and their heritage
- **Ethical** – we demonstrate leadership, are trustworthy, and act with integrity, in all that we do.



Foreword

We are pleased to present AFMA's 2016-17 Annual Operational Plan (AOP). The plan describes the actions we intend to take to further the Australian Fisheries Management Authority's (AFMA's) goals in AFMA's [Corporate Plan 2016-2019](#).

The AOP provides a clear statement of how we intend to achieve our vision of sustainable and efficiently managed Commonwealth fisheries that also provide a net economic return to Australia.

As well as seeking to continuously improve Commonwealth fisheries management outcomes, this year's plan highlights activities to further protect marine habitats and non-target marine wildlife. AFMA will underpin improvements to fisheries management and secure the future of our fisheries through expanded protected species strategies, an updated ecological risk management framework, revised science standards, more effective data collection and high priority research.

We will also be continuing to support a more efficient and productive business environment in Commonwealth fisheries through better use of economic information fisheries management decision making, by trialling ways to create more value from catches and by further improving the administration of the quota management system.

Compliance remains an important element of our work to ensure that the rights of licensed operators are not diminished and that the community fully realises the benefits of a sustainable management regime. We will review penalty provisions in legislation that AFMA administers.

We will ensure our operations are well understood, appreciated and supported by stakeholders and that they contribute to addressing emerging issues. AFMA will also seek new opportunities to share information through various communication channels. We will continue to explore opportunities to reduce the regulatory burden of fisheries assessment processes under the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#).

Senior management and Commissioners will monitor progress with the implementation of the plan and we look forward to reporting on the outcome of AFMA's endeavours to our stakeholders.



Hon Norman Moore AM
Chairman, AFMA Commission



Dr James Findlay GAICD
Chief Executive Officer

AFMA's planning framework

Each year AFMA is required to prepare three planning documents:

Portfolio Budget Statements

The PBS informs Senators and Members of Parliament of the proposed allocation of resources to government outcomes, by agency, within a Ministerial portfolio. It describes the outcome sought by the legislation administered by AFMA, AFMA's strategic direction and the manner in which AFMA will measure performance over the next four financial years. The PBS also describes the financial resources that AFMA expects to use over the next four years.

Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan describes, in greater detail than the PBS, AFMA's corporate goals, the strategies proposed over the next four financial years to achieve these goals and the manner in which AFMA will measure performance over the next four years.

Annual Operational Plan

The Annual Operational Plan (AOP) explains the actions and operational activities that AFMA will undertake in 2016-17 to deliver on the goals and strategies identified in the Corporate Plan. The AOP identifies Plans of Management, if any, which AFMA intends to determine or implement in the year. The AOP also identifies performance measures that will assess how well we are delivering the strategies described in the Corporate Plan. AFMA must submit an AOP to the Minister by 1 June each year.

The AOP is prepared on the basis that the reader has access to, and is informed by, AFMA's Corporate Plan 2016-19.

AFMA will report against this AOP in its Annual Report for 2016-17. On occasions, new government directions may shift AFMA's resource effort from those intended actions during the year. If required, reasons for variance will be listed in the annual report. The reasons for variance from budget will be listed in the financial statements.

Actions for 2016-17

AFMA's Corporate Plan 2016-19 and the [Portfolio Budget Statements 2016-17](#) identify our corporate goals, strategies and the measures to be used to measure our success.

AFMA will continue to use its Management Advisory Committees and Resource Assessment Groups, along with other sector-specific bodies, as key ways to consult with stakeholders to address Commonwealth fisheries issues.

Monitoring of progress and accountability for delivering these outputs is a key responsibility for AFMA staff. Individual Performance Agreements and reviews of periodic reports by managers, committees, Senior Executives, the Commission and stakeholders will help ensure that we meet our targets.

Objective 1

Ensure the ecological sustainability of Commonwealth fisheries for the benefit of present and future generations of Australians (Corporate Goal 1)

Areas of focus

Areas of focus 2016-19 and related actions for 2016-17
Area of focus 1.1 Support and provide input to the government reviews of the Commonwealth Bycatch and Harvest Strategy Policies, and implement any new arrangements for commercial and bycatch species.
Action 1.1.1: Contributing to the development and implementation of a revised Harvest Strategy Policy and new Bycatch Policy and their guidelines to ensure they are practical and cost effective.
Area of focus 1.2 Work with scientific organisations and others to develop a methods for understanding and managing the impact of fishing on marine wildlife with focus on sea birds and mammals.
Action 1.2.1: Reviewing and updating of the Ecological Risk Assessment for the Effects of Fishing.
Action 1.2.2: Developing and promoting a Guide to AFMA's Ecological Risk Management (ERM) framework.
Action 1.2.3: Developing 'cross fishery' management strategies for mitigating the impacts of fishing on protected species groups (particularly seabirds, sea lions and dolphins).
Area of focus 1.3 Develop strategies for managing the impacts of fishing on biological habitats and communities that are consistent with government policy.
Action 1.3.1: Contributing to the development and implementation of Commonwealth habitats and ecological communities policies to ensure they are practical and cost effective.
Action 1.3.2: Finalising AFMA's ERM Guide to manage the impacts of fishing on habitats and ecological communities.
Area of focus 1.4 Implement science standards to help ensure high quality scientific advice is available on which to base fishery management decisions.
Action 1.4.1: Developing and implementing AFMA specific policy and standards based on scientific standards developed through FRDC sponsored research.

AFMA operations

Other actions conducted as part of AFMA operations in support of ecologically sustainable Commonwealth fisheries are shown below.

Operations and actions for 2016-17
1. Management of domestic commercial fisheries.
Developing and implementing improved bycatch programs and strategies.
Educating and advising fishing operators on fisheries management requirements and collaborating with science organisations to develop a better understanding of fish stocks, bycatch and the marine environment.
Appointing and administering Management Advisory Committees (MACs), Resource Assessment Groups (RAGs) and other sector specific bodies.
Assessing fisheries under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> including export approvals, developing Threatened, Endangered and Protected (TEP) species management strategies and Environmental Risk Management (ERM).
Working in partnership with key stakeholders including commercial, recreational and indigenous fishers to deliver effective fisheries management regimes that include harvest strategies, setting total allowable catch and effort, efficient fishery plan administration, regular fishery performance reporting and reviewing statutory compliance.
2. Management of traditional, indigenous and non-commercial fisheries activities.
Developing the annual research programme, administering the agreed research program and contracts and participating in the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation's ComRAC process by providing advice and priorities for the funding of projects.
3. Research management.
Administering research programs and contracts including administering the AFMA Research Committee, developing/reviewing research plans and reporting to the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences.
Managing AFMA's research funds to achieve cost effective results.

Objective 2

Improve the net economic returns of Commonwealth fisheries to the Australian community (Corporate Goal 2)

Areas of focus

Areas of focus 2016-19 and related actions for 2016-17
Area of focus 2.1 Revising the Exploration of Fish Resources Policy to facilitate access to underutilised Commonwealth fisheries resources.
Action 2.1.1: Following consultation, finalising the policy on exploration of fishery resources.
Area of focus 2.2 Collecting and using economic information including quota/effort unit prices to pursue AFMA's objectives.
Action 2.2.1: Reviewing collected quota Statutory Fishing Rights price data for information quality and as a baseline for future analysis.
Area of focus 2.3 Trialling individual accountability as an incentive to reduce discarding of quota species.
Action 2.3.1: Assessing the feasibility and cost effectiveness of individually accounting for discards of quota species from individuals' quota holdings with a view to performing 'on water' trials of individual accounting for quota species discards.
Area of focus 2.4 Reviewing undercatch and overcatch policy to ensure the efficiency of quota management arrangements.
Action 2.4.1: Reviewing and consulting with stakeholders about AFMA's undercatch and overcatch policy and implementing changes to improve the economic efficiency of the quota market.
Action 2.4.2: Working with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation to investigate why a number of total allowable catches are not being fully caught.
Area of focus 2.5 Developing a policy covering catch of quota species in overlapping and adjacent fisheries to improve the efficiency of quota management.
Action 2.5.1: Evaluating the costs and benefits of covering catch of quota species in overlapping and adjacent fisheries.
Area of focus 2.6 Reviewing the risk assessment for the domestic compliance program and implementing measures to address key threat areas.
Action 2.6.1: Conducting the biennial domestic compliance risk assessment (covering 2017/18 and 2018/19) by the end of May 2017.

Areas of focus 2016-19 and related actions for 2016-17

Action 2.6.2: Implementing the annual domestic compliance program to target quota evasion, compliance with electronic monitoring and VMS requirements and bycatch mistreatment.

Area of focus 2.7 Implementing strategies to deter and eliminate illegal, unregulated and unreported foreign fishing in Australian waters and on the high seas where Australia has an interest.

Action 2.7.1: Participating in government considerations to identify and address policy and legislative gaps which limit Australia's ability to combat IUU fishing.

Area of focus 2.8 Delivering the third year component of the Pacific Island capacity building program to enhance catch traceability and fisheries compliance regimes and improve fish stock sustainability and regional economic security.

Action 2.8.1: Finalising the development of options for catch traceability schemes for key species.

Action 2.8.2: Delivering monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) training to three Pacific island nations and assisting in delivering the FFA MCS Foundation Course.

Action 2.8.3: Delivering a minimum of four cooperative enforcement operations in targeted countries.

AFMA operations

Other actions conducted as part of AFMA operations to improve net economic returns of Commonwealth fisheries are shown below.

Operations and actions for 2016-17
1. Domestic fisheries compliance enforcement.
Undertaking compliance activities in accordance with AFMA's risk based approach, including vessel and fish receiver inspections. These activities also include assessment and investigations, data analysis, briefings and related prosecutions.
2. Foreign fisheries compliance enforcement and capacity building.
Participating in capacity building programs with neighbouring countries and supporting key regional and international fishing bodies.
Combating illegal fishing in the Australian Fishing Zone and PZJA fisheries. This involves engaging with Australian Border Force and other international bodies in Regional Plans of Action (RPOA) to prevent and deter illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. These activities also include caretaking and disposal of Foreign Fishing Vessels.
3. Data collection and management.
Collecting data and monitoring fishing industry operations with E-logs, log books and Catch Disposal Records (CDR) for the commercial fishing industry.
Managing data and analysis, providing data and reports to the public, the fishing industry, MACs or RAGs.
Administering and implementing the e-monitoring program.
Administering and implementing the observer program.
Southern Bluefin Tuna monitoring in the ranching sector.
Administering and implementing the vessel monitoring program for the commercial fishing industry.
Arranging independent fishery surveys to set a recommended biological catch and an annual Total Allowable Catch.
4. Input into defining international treaty standards and developing regulation activities.
Engaging with international fisheries management organisations such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna. This also includes attending bilateral treaty meetings to implement Australia's obligations to international agreements.

Objective 3

Deliver effective, cost efficient and transparent management and regulatory arrangements (Corporate Goal 3)

Areas of focus

Areas of focus 2016-19 and related actions for 2016-17
Area of focus 3.1 Reviewing the penalty provisions in legislation that AFMA administers and making fisheries management arrangements more uniform and understandable.
Action 3.1.1: Consulting with industry on minor amendments to the Fisheries Management Regulations to increase penalty units. Once finalised amendments will be submitted to the Executive Council and are intended to be in effect by Jan 2017.
Action 3.1.2: Working with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources on more substantive amendments to Fisheries legislation to update the penalty regime to incorporate civil penalties consistent with the Regulatory Powers (Standard Provisions) Act 2014 – intended to be in effect by 1 July 2017.
Area of focus 3.2 Continuing to explore opportunities to streamline fisheries assessment processes under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> .
Action 3.2.1: Working with the Department of the Environment to implement 10 year approvals under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> .
Action 3.2.2: Developing common fisheries management standards to promote accreditation of fisheries management systems under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> .
Area of focus 3.3 Establishing new co-management arrangements that encourage greater industry responsibility for fisheries impacts.
Action 3.3.1: Assessing and reporting on existing co-management activities with the fishing industry.
Action 3.3.2: Investigating the feasibility of co-management arrangements with the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association.

Areas of focus 2016-19 and related actions for 2016-17

Area of focus 3.4 Assessing the value of using shared service arrangements for corporate services that reduce costs.

Action 3.4.1: Undertaking Shared and Common Services Benchmarking to provide AFMA with greater transparency on the actual cost of corporate services.

Action 3.4.2: Reviewing the efficient allocation of corporately-managed costs to activities across the entity to deliver effective, cost efficient and transparent management and regulatory arrangements.

Area of focus 3.5 Exploring opportunities to extend contract monitoring and compliance services to external agencies.

Action 3.5.1: Investigating, via market testing, the provision of the AFMA Scientific Observer Program by an external provider.

Area of focus 3.6 Reviewing our approach to e-business to ensure cost effective and efficient use of electronic systems for logbooks, monitoring and licensing.

Action 3.6.1: Reforming the Catch Disposal Records system to reduce the time required to record the weights of landed fish.

Area of focus 3.7 Continuing to improve access to AFMA fisheries information through data.gov.au, the AFMA website and other media provisions in the legislation AFMA administers.

Action 3.7.1: Publishing additional appropriate datasets on data.gov.au, including building links to data already published on the AFMA website to enhance accessibility and coverage of publicly available fisheries information.

Action 3.7.2: Assessing additional digital and online channels for communicating with stakeholders as part of revising AFMA's communications strategy for the 2016-17 financial year.

AFMA operations

Other actions conducted as part of AFMA operations to deliver effective, cost efficient and transparent management and regulator arrangements are shown below.

Operations and actions for 2016-17
1. Policy support
Providing and developing advice and policy in accordance with the Fisheries Management Act 1991 , the Fisheries Administration Act 1991 , and other relevant legislation.
Advising Parliament and Ministers, providing and developing policy including technical and governance policies. This includes publishing corporate governance reports, public data, performance indicators such as the Regulatory Performance Framework (RPF) and compliance performance. It also includes liaison with state agencies and other organisations on broader marine resource policies and management.
2. Licensing / registration and revenue collection.
Processing and administering licenses, licence administration, licensing system maintenance, issuing and reconciling levies and recovering levies.
Developing and maintaining of the licensing system with a focus on increasing fee for service arrangements where it is cost-effective to do so.
3. Other contributors to effective, cost efficient and transparent management and regulatory arrangements.
Supporting operational activities by delivering effective and cost efficient services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• financial management• human resource management• legal services• corporate governance support (including risk management services)• property and security• information and communications technology and support services• executive secretariat support• communications and• other related services.
Identifying and implementing opportunities to reduce our regulatory burden on those we regulate and to improve internal operations.
Implementing the Regulatory Performance Framework to ensure that we are meeting government expectations.
Implementing an Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS) to streamline and improve our information management processes.

Plans of Management

AFMA managed fisheries

Management plans for fisheries are established under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*. They provide the rules which often include; how much fish can be caught, what fishing gear can be used and where you can fish. The rules aim to keep fish species, and the marine ecosystem as a whole, in good health into the future.

AFMA does not intend to determine or otherwise institute additional plans of management during 2016-17 for fisheries solely managed by AFMA. However changes are expected to be made to the [Northern Prawn Fishery Management Plan 1995](#) which include amendments to improve structural adjustment in the fishery.

Jointly managed fisheries

AFMA develops management plans for fisheries on behalf of the Protected Zone Joint Authority under the [Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984](#).

In 2016-17 a plan of management is expected to be determined for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery. The plan will support the objectives of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* through implementing a quota management system for the fishery.

Proposed amendments to the [Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2008](#) in 2016-17 will seek to incorporate a change to the season date providing more flexibility and surrender and cancellation powers for fishing units.

Performance

AFMA will measure the success of the actions undertaken by monitoring the quality, timeliness, financial management and stakeholder acceptability of outputs produced from actions described in this plan.

AFMA's performance measures against the corporate goals are described in the Corporate Plan 2016-19.

Available resources

Resources provided to deliver the Annual Operational Plan are described below.

Financial resources

AFMA is funded by a combination of government appropriations, industry levies and fee for service. It collects levies via regulations under the [Fishing Levy Act 1991](#), in accordance with the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*, the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991*, Australian Government Cost Recovery Policy and AFMA's Cost Recovery Impact Statement 2010. Costs relating to foreign fishing compliance are fully funded by government. AFMA expects to maintain a balanced budget position over the forward years.

AFMA's funding for 2016-17

AFMA has budgeted for total expenditure in 2016-17 of \$45.640 million, comprising \$40.286 million in Departmental expenditure and \$5.354 million on Administered activities (for the caretaking and disposal of illegal foreign fishing vessels). Of the Departmental expenditure, approximately \$15.0 million is expected to be recovered from the fishing industry and other third parties provided a service by AFMA, under a levy or fee for service basis. Levies and licence fees remain the subject of final industry consultation.

Table 1 - Programme Expenses

Table 2.1.1 Programme Expenses

Outcome 1: Ecologically sustainable and economically efficient Commonwealth fisheries, through understanding and monitoring Australia's marine living resources and regulating and monitoring commercial fishing, including domestic licensing and deterrence of illegal foreign fishing.

	2015-16 Estimated actual \$'000	2016-17 Budgeted \$'000	2017-18 Estimated estimate \$'000	2018-19 Estimated expenses \$'000	2019-20 Estimated expenses \$'000
Programme 1.1: Australian Fisheries Management Authority					
Administered expenses					
Ordinary annual services (Appropriation Bill No. 1)					
Illegal Foreign Fishing Vessel					
Caretaking and Disposal	5,392	5,354	5,446	5,534	5,627
Departmental expenses					
Departmental appropriation ¹	22,943	23,438	23,637	23,424	23,467
Special account					
AFMA Special account	12,939	14,704	13,715	13,817	14,116
Expenses not requiring appropriation in the Budget year ²	2,244	2,144	2,145	2,045	1,965
Total expenses for programme 1.1	43,518	45,640	44,943	44,820	45,175

Outcome 1 Totals by appropriation type

Administered expenses					
Ordinary annual services (Appropriation Bill No. 1)	5,392	5,354	5,446	5,534	5,627
Departmental expenses					
Departmental appropriation ¹	22,943	23,438	23,637	23,424	23,467
Special account	12,939	14,704	13,715	13,817	14,116
Expenses not requiring appropriation in the Budget year ²	2,244	2,144	2,145	2,045	1,965
Total expenses for Outcome 1	43,518	45,640	44,943	44,820	45,175

	2015-16	2016-17
Average staffing level (number)	174.6	176.2

1. Expenses funded from both 'Ordinary annual services (Appropriation Bill No. 1)' and 'Revenue from independent sources (s 74)'.
 2. Expenses not requiring appropriation in the Budget year are made up of depreciation expenses, amortisation expenses, and audit fees.

Note: Departmental appropriation splits and totals are indicative estimates and may change in the course of the budget year as government priorities change.

Our people

During 2016-17, AFMA expects average staffing levels (ASL) to be approximately 176 ASL. This ASL will support operations and strategic activities outlined in this plan, with the majority of those staff located in AFMA's central office in Canberra (133 ASL). There are two regional offices in Australia (Thursday Island and Darwin).

On Thursday Island, in the Torres Strait, four staff undertake fisheries management functions and two perform foreign compliance functions. AFMA's Darwin office has 29 ASL undertaking compliance functions within the Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ). AFMA employs a number of observers on commercial fishing vessels.

The organisational structure and staffing provides for the delivery of AFMA's intended actions, deliverables and services, and the internal supporting services that contribute to them.

Figure 1 - Organisational structure

Fisheries Management Branch	Fisheries Operations Branch	Corporate Services Branch
Demersal and midwater fisheries	Compliance operations (Darwin)	Legal
Tuna and international fisheries	National compliance strategy	Workplace
Northern fisheries	Foreign compliance policy	Business
Policy, environment, economics, co-management and research		Executive
Service one		Communications
		Service delivery

AFMA strives to be a flexible, learning organisation. We employ appropriately skilled and motivated staff committed to ongoing improvement in managing the Commonwealth's fisheries resources and to achieving AFMA's objectives and goals.

AFMA recognises that the performance and commitment of our staff is central to our success as an innovative fisheries management organisation and we seek to provide an environment in which staff can reach their full potential.

AFMA's performance management scheme focuses on providing fair and accurate performance feedback to staff, with remuneration and professional development tied to annual performance reviews. We have prepared our workforce strategy to plan for development and attraction/retention of skilled staff, transition to retirement, workplace health and to minimise risks associated with the workplace, public service policy and business continuity.

Reporting

Internal

Each quarter the AFMA Commission receives a report on progress against the strategic actions contained in the AOP. The report also shows performance against the AOP and the Corporate Plan performance targets.

External

AFMA is required under the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991* to prepare an Annual Report that provides an assessment of the extent to which the operations of AFMA during 2016-17 have contributed to the objectives set out in this annual operational plan.

The Annual Report for 2016-17 will include:

- a statement of our performance for 2016-17, including analyses of actual results compared with our performance targets
- an explanation of developments in managing each fishery
- financial statements
- appendices that address specific parliamentary requirements including details on our organisational capability and our approach to risk management.

Contact us

For further information about our national, international and regional activities, functions and services, please:

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