



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Annual Operational Plan 2019-2020

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AFMA Values

In all our relationships, AFMA staff are:

- **Impartial** – we are apolitical and provide advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on the best available evidence
- **Committed to service** – we are professional, objective, innovative and efficient
- **Accountable** – we are open and accountable to our stakeholders across the Australian community
- **Respectful** – we respect all people, including their rights and their heritage
- **Ethical** – we demonstrate leadership, are trustworthy, and act with integrity.

These values support our collaborative efforts with commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers and other stakeholders across the Australian community to ensure ecologically sustainable and economically efficient Commonwealth fisheries.

2019-2020 in focus

We are pleased to present the Australian Fisheries Management Authority's (AFMA) 2019-20 Annual Operational Plan (AOP). The plan sets out the actions AFMA will take to deliver AFMA's goals in line with our Corporate Plan 2019-2022.

In continuing to manage Commonwealth fisheries, including in the Torres Strait, for the maximum benefit of commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers and the Australian community, AFMA will be extending its understanding of the implications and application of an environmental, economic and social bottom line.

In seeking to minimise the impacts on the marine environment of Commonwealth fisheries and continue to enhance sustainability, AFMA is developing a Habitats and Communities Strategy to help manage the environmental impacts from Commonwealth commercial fishing on habitats and ecological communities, and identify priority actions and recommendations for key areas of focus. The Strategy will also broaden AFMA's ongoing implementation of the Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy and guidelines. Under AFMA's Ecological Risk Management Framework, a further five Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) will be completed. ERAs provide analysis of fishery specific impacts on the marine environment to inform AFMA's management arrangements. Working with the CSIRO to investigate the effects of climate change on Commonwealth fisheries will also enable these impacts to be integrated into ERAs.

Expanding our engagement with stakeholders across the Australian community will be pursued through actions identified in AFMA's recently released (April 2019) Position Statement on *How AFMA considers the social aspects of the ecologically sustainable development principles in the management of Commonwealth Fisheries* and associated *Actions for the statement*. This work is complemented by growing links with recreational fishers including through increasing recreational membership/expertise on those fisheries advisory committees that have an identified interest. Capacity building and training for recreational sector participants is also being developed. Progress with identifying Indigenous fishing interests has been slower. AFMA is seeking funding from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) to develop a fit-for-purpose Indigenous engagement framework to help AFMA work with relevant communities to identify and take into account Indigenous fishing interests that overlap with Commonwealth fisheries.

AFMA will continue to collect, review and use economic information relevant to the operation and value of fisheries and seek advice from our Economic Working Group to better understand the impacts of our management decisions and their influence on economic performance of Commonwealth fishers. Noting that catch levels in a number of our fisheries remain below harvest strategy levels, the finalisation of *Fisheries Management Policy 5 - Exploratory Fishing Policy* during 2019-2020 should potentially facilitate access to underutilised Commonwealth fisheries resources. AFMA will also work with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to develop a Commonwealth resource sharing policy, and engage with the States and Territories to review and negotiate agreed commercial catch shares under Offshore Constitutional Settlement arrangements.

In the Torres Strait, AFMA and the other members of the Protected Zone Joint Authority, will be pursuing implementation of the Tropical Rock Lobster Management Plan and a range of other policies to promote sustainability and economic returns for Indigenous and other Commonwealth commercial fishers.

Compliance remains important if AFMA is to ensure that the rights of licensed fishers are not eroded or diminished and that the Australian community fully realises the benefits from a management regime that delivers sustainability and profitability. AFMA will continue to encourage voluntary compliance but will take enforcement action against conscious non-compliance. In northern Australia, AFMA will seek to improve these efforts through engagement with Indigenous ranger groups to build monitoring, surveillance and reporting capabilities.

To counter pressures from illegal foreign fishing, AFMA will coordinate action with Australian and counterpart international agencies to address threats to the Australian Fishing Zone. AFMA will also continue to engage with international bodies to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Our participation in fisheries capacity building programs with neighbouring countries in the ASEAN region and the Pacific, and support of Australia's participation in key regional and international fishing bodies, will also enhance the level and quality of action against IUU fishing.

Costs of AFMA's operations potentially impact fishers' profitability. Accordingly, a key focus for AFMA in 2019-20 will be to identify and implement initiatives that deliver efficient and cost effective management. The next twelve months will see an expansion of AFMA's business capabilities to deliver services in a more agile and flexible manner, reducing costs and red tape and improving our operational performance. Improving our ability to capture fisheries data seamlessly and increasing systems integration will enable greater sharing of information and coordination with industry and across other relevant government agencies. This will support improved catch-cost-risk outcomes for Commonwealth fishers and the broader community.

Accountability to industry and increased community understanding of fishers' impacts will support AFMA operations and the social licence for Commonwealth fisheries. Our communications capabilities and engagement with all stakeholders will be enhanced as we further develop AFMA's social media and digital communication channels.

These and other actions identified elsewhere in AFMA's AOP for 2019-20 underscore our commitment to cost-effectiveness, stakeholder engagement and accountability, reflecting the importance of applying AFMA's resources to best effect.



Helen Kroger
Chairman, AFMA Commission



Wez Norris
Chief Executive Officer
Accountable Authority of AFMA

AFMA's Performance Framework

Each year AFMA is required to prepare three planning documents and a performance reporting document. In addition, AFMA undertakes an annual self-assessment of its regulatory operations and performance. This Annual Operational Plan (AOP) links with AFMA's Corporate Plan 2019-22 (the Corporate Plan) and the Portfolio Budget Statement 2019-20 (PBS) for the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio. The AOP details the actions that AFMA will undertake in 2019-20 to address the areas of focus in pursuing the corporate goals identified in the PBS and Corporate Plan.

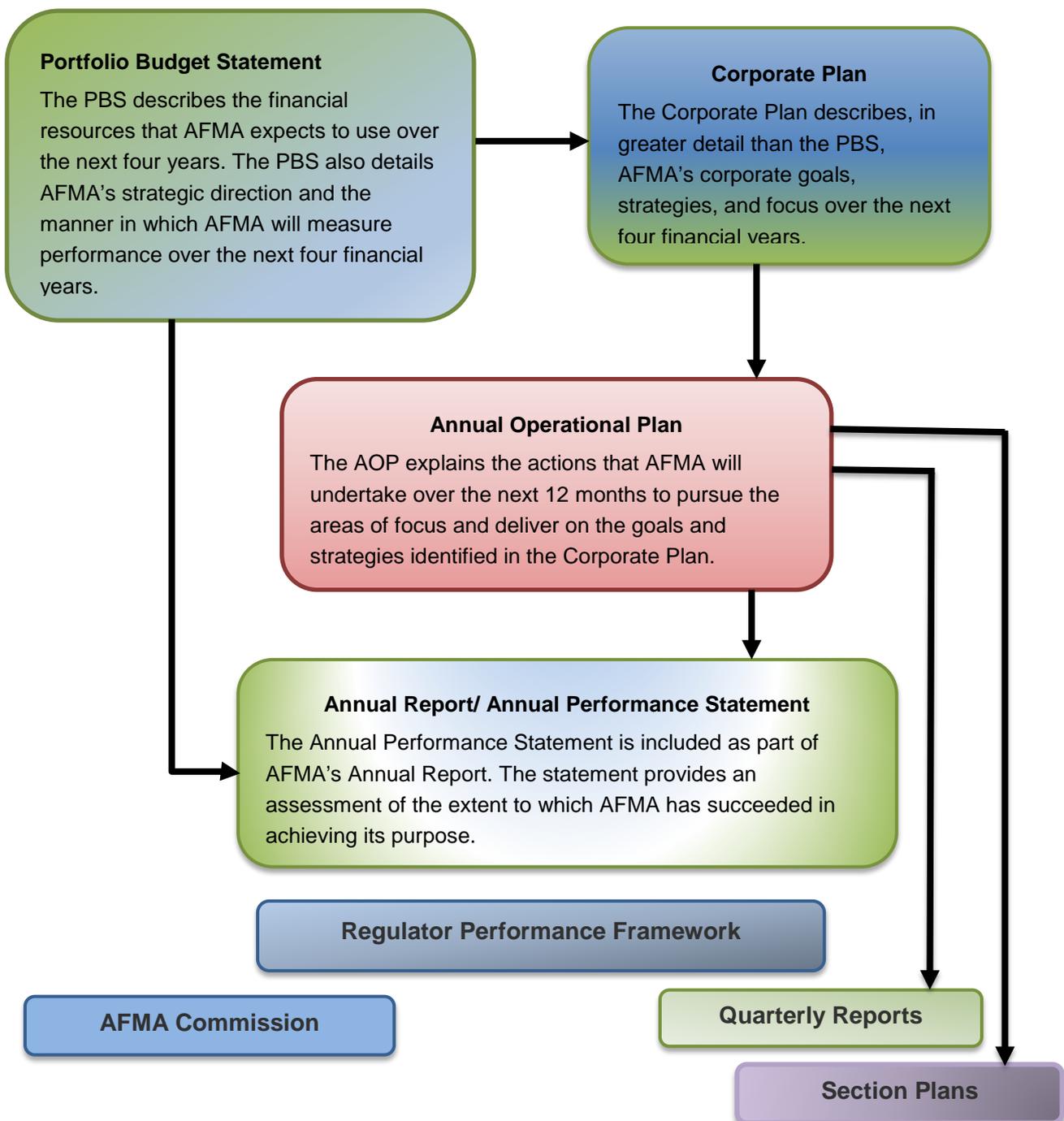


Figure 1 AFMA's performance framework
Securing Australia's fishing future

Resources and Performance Monitoring

Budget

In the delivery of these actions as well as undertaking more regular business in 2019-20, AFMA has budgeted for a total expenditure of \$43.944 million, comprising \$38.356 million in Departmental expenditure and \$5.588 million on Administered activities (primarily but not exclusively for the caretaking and disposal of illegal foreign fishing vessels). Of the Departmental expenditure, approximately \$15.3 million (40 per cent) is expected to be recovered from the fishing industry, under a levy or fee for service basis. Annual fishery budgets will be cost recovered budgets for AFMA's fisheries management and are discussed with industry.

Staff Resources

During 2019-20, AFMA will focus attention on developing an integrated workforce plan to address the challenges of an aging workforce and changing demands in the delivery of services as a result of more automated service delivery and advances in ICT applications. We will continue to operate within the Government's maximum average staffing level (ASL) of 177. This ASL, together with external service providers, will support our operations and strategic activities as outlined in this AOP. Of those 177 ASL, 121 are located in AFMA's central office in Canberra. ASL located outside Canberra includes our Thursday Island office (7 ASL), the Darwin office (24 ASL), and Lakes Entrance office (7 ASL), as well as a number of at-sea observers located around the country to perform data collection on commercial fishing vessels.

Performance Monitoring

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 all help ensure that we remain on target.

Each quarter the AFMA Commission receives a report on progress against the strategic actions contained in the AOP. To improve transparency and business performance in delivering our AOP targets, AFMA will also develop a range of internal business metrics that will inform decisions by the Senior Executive and drive AFMA's operating performance.

In undertaking the actions listed in this AOP, we will continue to use Management Advisory Committees (MACs) and Resource Assessment Groups (RAGs), along with other sector-specific bodies, as key ways to consult with stakeholders and obtain scientific, economic and other expert advice to address Commonwealth fisheries issues.

Corporate Goal 1: Management of Commonwealth fisheries consistent with principles of ecologically sustainable development

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
1.1 Development of management arrangements that enable fishers to harvest sustainably	1.1.1 facilitating the implementation of relevant government policies including the Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy (CFHSP) and the Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy	Review and update harvest strategies to ensure they are consistent with the revised CFHSP Assist CSIRO in developing methodology for cumulative fishery impacts
	1.1.2 implementing AFMA's revised Ecological Risk Management (ERM) Framework	Complete 5 Ecological Risk Assessments (ERA) and 2 Fishery Management Strategies ERM Steering Group will meet twice to monitor implementation
	1.1.3 developing strategies for managing the impacts of fishing on the broader marine environment	Review and update existing bycatch management strategies in-line with Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy 2018 and guidelines Consider global best practice and future trends of the impact of fishing on the broader marine environment
	1.1.4 developing and implementing fishery-specific harvest strategies that avoid overfishing and rebuild stocks that are overfished	Implement Fishery Harvest Strategies in-line with revised CFHSP and guidelines Commission relevant fishery stock assessments and implement catch and/or effort limits to ensure biomass is at levels to avoid overfishing and/or allow rebuilding of stocks

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
	1.1.5 ensuring available recreational and Indigenous fishing information is used in decision making	Continuing to build our understanding of indigenous fishing interests related to Commonwealth fisheries Increasing recreational fishing representation on MACs and RAGs Interests of recreational and Indigenous fishing sectors where known are taken into account in AFMA decision process (eg MACs and RAGs processes and other forums) Complete appointment processes for recreational and Indigenous fishing members on identified MACs and RAGs
	1.1.6 co-management to promote industry accountability and compliance	Develop an AFMA policy on co-management Enter into formal co-management arrangements with at least one industry association
1.2 Investing in and applying science to decision making on fish stocks, sub stocks, species (target and non-target species) and the impact of fishing on the broader marine environment.	1.2.1 implementing science standards to support the provision of high quality scientific advice on which to base fishery management decisions	Implement the Science Quality Assurance Policy
	1.2.2 working with scientific organisations and other relevant groups to investigate the effects of climate change on Commonwealth fisheries and implementing responses as required	Hold further Climate Change workshops to review fishery governance and finalise outputs and actions for implementation

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
		Support work by CSIRO on integrating climate change into ecological risk assessment methodology
	1.2.3 conducting research on the economic and social aspects of harvesting Commonwealth fisheries	AFMA Economic Working Group propose priorities for Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) funded research and consider results Implement relevant objectives from 5 year Strategic Research Plan 2017-2022
1.3 Social aspects of ecologically sustainable development (ESD)	1.3.1 providing a public statement on how AFMA takes the social aspects of ecological sustainable development principles into account when managing fisheries and undertaking Commission endorsed future actions to implement that statement	Undertake actions to advance understanding and application of the social aspects of ESD

In addition to the actions and areas of focus identified in the table above, the table below highlights regular activities that AFMA undertakes which also pursue the corporate goal of ensuring ecologically sustainable development of Commonwealth fisheries:

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
Management of domestic commercial fisheries	Implementing bycatch programs, strategies and monitoring activities
	Educating fishing operators on fisheries management requirements

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
	Collaborating with science organisations in better understanding fish stocks, bycatch and the marine environment
	Administering MACs, RAGs and other sector specific bodies and taking their advice into account when making decisions
	Assessing fisheries under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 including export approvals, developing Threatened, Endangered and Protected (TEP) species management strategies and Environmental Risk Management (ERM)
	Working with key stakeholders 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
	Administering Economic Working Group and ERM Steering Group
Research management	Administering AFMA's research program and contracts including the AFMA Research Committee, developing/reviewing research plans and participating in the FRDC's COMRAC process by providing advice and priorities for potential funding
	Managing AFMA's research funds to achieve cost effective results
Communication	Produce a range of communication and media material associated with AFMA's programs, strategies, consultations, research and activities, to promote understanding and recognition by industry, stakeholders and the general public of AFMA continuing effectiveness in pursuing the sustainability of Commonwealth fish stocks

Corporate Goal 2: Maximum net economic returns to the Australian community from the management of Commonwealth fisheries

Strategy	Areas of Focus	Actions 2019-20
2.1 Reviewing management arrangements to take into account commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishing interests when maximising net economic returns from the commercial sector	2.1.1 reviewing relevant AFMA policies and fishery harvest strategies	Review ERM Framework to incorporate the interests of recreational and Indigenous sectors
	2.1.2 collecting and utilising economic information including quota prices to pursue maximising net economic returns	Continue to collect, review and use economic information when making and reviewing fisheries management decisions Develop and utilise economic key performance indicators Obtain fisheries economic advice from AFMA's Economic Working Group
	2.1.3 reviewing relevant OCS arrangements, developing shared harvest strategies and negotiating agreed commercial catch shares	Work with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to develop a Catch Sharing Policy
2.2 Managing exploratory fisheries (potentially underutilised fisheries)	2.2.1 revising current policy to better facilitate access to underutilised Commonwealth fisheries resources	Finalise review of Fishery Management Policy (FMP) 5 – Exploratory Fishing Policy

Strategy	Areas of Focus	Actions 2019-20
2.3 Understanding impacts of resource allocation between commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers	2.3.1 working with Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to develop Commonwealth resource sharing policy	Support the activities of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to operationalise the Commonwealth resource sharing policy

In addition to the actions and areas of focus identified in the table above, the table below highlights regular activities that AFMA undertakes which also pursue the corporate goal of maximising economic returns:

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
Data collection and management	Data collection and monitoring of fishing industry operations with the use of e-logs, log books and Catch Disposal Records (CDR)
	Managing data and analysis, providing data and reports to the public, the fishing industry, MACs or RAGs
	Implementing and administering e-monitoring across the Commonwealth commercial fishing fleet
	Administering the observer program
	Administering the vessel monitoring program across the Commonwealth commercial fishing industry and some State managed commercial fishing vessels
	Arranging independent fishery surveys as an input to setting recommended biological catches and TACs
Management of traditional, Indigenous and non-commercial fisheries activities	Consulting with Indigenous and recreational fishers and other stakeholders in the management of Commonwealth fisheries to ensure their interests are taken into account

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
Input into defining international treaty standards and developing regulation activities	Engaging with international fisheries bodies and implementing Australia's obligations to international agreements
Communication	Publishing data to data.gov.au with links via the afrma.gov.au website, and communicating its public availability via AFMA news stories and social media channels Promoting AFMA operational activities to raise public awareness of sustainability of Australian wild-caught seafood

Corporate Goal 3: Compliance with Commonwealth fisheries laws and policies and relevant international fishing obligations and standards

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
3.1 Operating an effective domestic compliance regime using measures that are proportionate to the risks involved	3.1.1 reviewing the risk assessment for the domestic compliance program and implementing measures to address key threat areas	<p>Review and update the 2019-21 Risk Assessment with agreed annual compliance priorities and targets</p> <p>Implement the 2019-20 National Compliance and Enforcement Program</p> <p>Deliver the domestic compliance program in the Torres Strait</p> <p>Continue to apply program logic and business maturity methodologies to assist in evaluating compliance program effectiveness</p>
	3.1.2 reviewing the penalty provisions in legislation that AFMA administers and making fisheries management arrangements more uniform and understandable	Progress second phase of the penalty review in consultation with key stakeholders and support consideration through parliamentary processes to enable finalisation of amendments
3.2 Operating effective foreign fisheries compliance enforcement and capacity building	3.2.1 implementing strategies to deter and eliminate IUU foreign fishing in Australian waters and on the high seas where Australia has an interest	<p>Provide the fisheries focus into Australia's civil maritime surveillance and response program</p> <p>Engage with international bodies on effective governance and deterrence strategies for IUU fishing</p>

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
		Engage with Indigenous ranger groups in northern Australia to build monitoring, surveillance and reporting capabilities
	3.2.2 participating in capacity building programs with neighbouring countries and supporting key regional and international fishing bodies	<p>Deliver the third year component of the DFAT funded capacity building program focusing on the Pacific</p> <p>Deliver the fisheries capacity building components under Australia’s strategy to enhance engagement within the ASEAN region</p> <p>Provide neighbouring countries access to domestic fisheries management styles and practices</p> <p>Participate in and actively engage in providing a qualitative approach to IUU issues identified by key regional and international fishing bodies</p>

In addition to the actions and areas of focus identified in the table above, the table below highlights regular activities that AFMA undertakes which also pursue the corporate goal of compliance:

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
Domestic fisheries compliance enforcement activities	Undertaking compliance activities in accordance with AFMA’s risk based approach, including boat and fish receiver premises inspections in port and at sea. These activities also include surveillance and investigations, data analysis, pre-season briefings, education sessions and related prosecutions

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
Foreign fisheries compliance enforcement and capacity building	<p>Combating illegal fishing in the Australian Fishing Zone and Torres Strait Protected Zone. Activities include the planning of surveillance activities, deployment of officers on patrol, investigation of suspected breaches of Australian law and where appropriate, the prosecution of offenders. Activities also include the caretaking and disposal of confiscated fishing vessels</p> <p>Delivering capacity building programs with neighbouring countries and supporting Australia's engagement in key regional and international fishing fora</p>
Communication	Monthly planned communications via website, SMS and Facebook targeting specific compliance messages

Corporate Goal 4: Deliver effective, cost efficient and accountable management of Commonwealth fisheries resources

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
4.1 Improving regulation and administration	4.1.1 simplifying fishery access rights in the Gillnet, Hook and Trap sector to give fishers flexibility to catch their quota in the most efficient way consistent with AFMA's one fishery approach	Engaging in consultation with stakeholders to develop a preferred AFMA position
	4.1.2 implementing new Fisheries Management Strategies which address the new Harvest Strategy and Bycatch policies with a focus on improving fishery management performance	Finalise 2 Fisheries Management Strategies Implement the remade Fisheries Management Regulations
4.2 Reviewing business processes and systems, information flows and financial management arrangements	4.2.1 expanding boat-level arrangements that encourage greater industry responsibility for fishing impacts on the marine environment	Continue use of individual accountability for protected species management
	4.2.2 implementing further business system and process improvements to improve business efficiency and quality outcomes	Review and implement AFMA's finance system (Technology One Cloud) functionality to streamline AFMA's business processes and improve connectivity with other Commonwealth entities

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
		<p>Implement a mobile self-service application to improve access and flexibility for staff to meet governance requirements</p> <p>Streamline business processing capability and increase opportunities to collect and report on key business performance data metrics Review the efficient allocation of corporately-managed costs to deliver effective, cost efficient and transparent management and regulatory arrangements</p>
	<p>4.2.3 exploring opportunities to extend contract monitoring and compliance services to external agencies</p>	<p>Continue to facilitate and expand VMS hosting services to State, Territory and Commonwealth agencies</p> <p>Enhance our role, responsibilities and coverage on the provision of compliance and monitoring services to NT fisheries</p> <p>Continue to work with other Commonwealth agencies in responding to marine debris in Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone</p> <p>Explore the feasibility of operating more closely with other government agencies with an interest in the marine domain</p>

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
	4.2.4 continue implementing AFMA's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy with a focus on the data programs	<p>Design and deliver the mobile phone outlook email and Microsoft Teams applications to AFMA staff, improving access to mobility solutions</p> <p>Design and develop a data strategy and architecture that aligns with AFMA's objectives, systems and processes</p> <p>Design and develop an architecture for linked fisheries data</p> <p>Design and implement a range of performance data metrics to monitor AFMA business performance</p>
	4.2.5 implement the Agency Data Capture project to improve AFMA's ability to integrate with industry providers and capture data into source systems	Expand the design, application and delivery of AFMA's Agency Data Capture outcomes
	4.2.6 continuing to improve access to AFMA fisheries information through data.gov.au, the AFMA website and other media	<p>Continue to expand and update the AFMA datasets published on data.gov.au</p> <p>Complete review of FMP12 – Information Disclosure and AFMA's Privacy Policy</p>

Strategy	Area of Focus	Actions 2019-20
	4.2.7 utilising solutions to deliver cost effective and efficient systems for agency data capture and administration	Design and develop Application Programs Interfaces (APIs) to allow easier consumption and sharing of data
4.3 Increase AFMA accountability and stakeholder engagement	4.3.1 expanding membership and capability development for recreational and Indigenous members on relevant MACs and RAGs	Conduct MAC and RAG capability development workshop
	4.3.2 improving surveys/feedback mechanisms	Undertake third stakeholder perception survey (third quarter) Receive feedback through AFMA's social media and digital channels and store it according to records management legislation

In addition to the actions and areas of focus identified in the table above, the table below highlights regular activities that AFMA undertakes which also pursue the corporate goal of effective, efficient and accountable management and regulatory arrangements:

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
Policy support	Providing and developing advice and policy in accordance with the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1991</i> , the <i>Fisheries Administration Act 1991</i> , and other relevant legislation

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
Licensing / registration and revenue collection	<p>Advising Parliament and Ministers, providing and developing policy including technical and governance policies including 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</p> <p>Processing and administering licenses, licence administration, licensing system maintenance, issuing and reconciling levies and recovering levies</p> <p>Developing and maintaining of the licensing system with a focus on increasing fee for service arrangements where it is cost-effective to do so</p>
Other contributors to effective, cost efficient and transparent management and regulatory arrangements	<p>Supporting operational activities by delivering effective and cost efficient services including financial management, human resource management, legal services, corporate governance support (including risk management services), and property and security</p> <p>Identifying and implementing opportunities to reduce our regulatory burden on those we regulate and to improve internal operations</p> <p>Implementing the RPF to ensure that we are meeting government expectations</p>

Regular activities for 2019-20	Associated actions
	Driving increased usage of the Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS), including an increased usage of Digital Forms aligning to the Digital 2020 strategy to streamline and improve our information management processes
Communications	Communicate AFMA’s projects and innovations, latest updates to fisher applications and services and opportunities for stakeholder engagement through AFMA’s digital communication channels

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 quotas are determined, what fishing gear can be used and where you can fish. The rules aim to maintain the sustainability of fish species and the marine ecosystem as a whole.

During 2019-20, AFMA does not intend to determine or otherwise institute additional plans of management for fisheries solely managed by AFMA.

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 2019-20, AFMA will continue to work towards implementing a plan of management 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.

Contact Us

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

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