



**SENATOR THE HON MURRAY WATT
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY
MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

MS23-001442

Mr Wez Norris
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Fisheries Management Authority
PO Box 7051 Canberra BC
CANBERRA ACT 2610

wez.norris@afma.gov.au

Dear Mr Norris *Wez*

I am writing to set out my expectations of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) in managing and regulating Commonwealth fisheries. This Ministerial Statement of Expectations is a requirement under the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide 128 (RMG 128) administered by the Department of Finance.

I recognise AFMA's important role in managing and monitoring commercial Commonwealth fishing to ensure Australian fish stocks and our fishing industry are viable now and into the future. I provide my full support to AFMA in delivering the strict fisheries management practices required, including appropriate compliance activity.

This Ministerial Statement of Expectations outlines my expectations for how AFMA is to deliver these responsibilities and I ask that you respond with a Statement of Intent providing advice on the approach your agency will take to deliver against these expectations.

Ministerial Statement of Expectations

I recognise AFMA's responsibility for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fisheries resources for the Australian community. I expect AFMA to maintain Australia's high regulatory standards. In doing so I expect AFMA to adhere to the three principles of best practice described in RMG 128 – continuous improvement and building trust, risk-based and data-driven and collaboration and engagement. I also expect AFMA to respond to independent reviews and audits as part of a program of continual regulatory practice improvement.

As the responsible Minister, I will work with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to ensure policy and legislation governing AFMA and the broader fishing industry remain effective and fit for purpose. I expect AFMA to continue to provide timely advice to Government and DAFF regarding the legislative and policy framework, including scope for reform and improvement. I expect this advice to be informed by ongoing consultation and collaboration with industry and other stakeholders.

With respect to its regulatory responsibilities, I expect AFMA to:

- maintain and continue to strengthen its engagement with relevant stakeholders, including strategic engagement with the Commonwealth Fisheries Association as the legislated peak body, including on issues such as climate change and competition for marine space
- strengthen engagement with First Nations peoples to understand and take into account indigenous fishing interests in the regulatory process. Particularly in the Torres Strait, I expect AFMA to continue to harness opportunities for First Nations communities with respect to both undertaking regulatory activities and benefiting from their outcomes
- review cost recovery arrangements regularly to ensure they reflect changes to the Department of Finance Cost Recovery Guidelines and optimise cost recovery charges through efficient implementation of cost recovered activities
- continue to build capability across technology, workforce and infrastructure and effectively manage and escalate any associated risks.

In the context of the above expectations, I ask that particular attention be given to:

- continuing implementation of Commonwealth fisheries policy, in particular the Harvest Strategy Policy (HSP) and Bycatch Policy. I also expect that AFMA will participate proactively in the review of these policies
- ensuring the interests of commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers are taken into account
- increasing AFMA's accountability and stakeholder engagement through appropriate membership of management advisory committees and resource assessment groups
- continuing to implement measures to prevent overfishing and allow for the recovery of overfished stocks with a primary focus on stocks solely managed by AFMA in accordance with the HSP
- working with DAFF to build a more formal framework for cooperation with states and the Northern Territory for the management of straddling and shared stocks, especially those that are depleted or declining
- ensuring that Total Allowable Catch (or Effort) levels ensure sustainability for all AFMA managed stocks and also maximise net economic returns from fisheries
- providing fisheries advice and data in respect of proposals for alternative uses of the marine estate
- integrating information, data and research on climate impacts into fisheries management decision-making processes
- expanding electronic monitoring (EM) across all major Commonwealth fisheries to collect independent at sea fishing data. In particular, I expect current EM trial phases in the Northern Prawn Fishery, Great Australian Bight Trawl Sector and the Commonwealth Trawl Sector fisheries to be completed by January 2025, and for AFMA to expeditiously prepare and publish outcome reports including, where appropriate, implementation plans for roll-out
- continuing to strengthen compliance and enforcement measures to maximise voluntary compliance, deter and eliminate illegal foreign fishing as well as build capacity and support fisheries bodies in the region

- providing fisheries focus within the Australian Government Civil Maritime Surveillance and Response Program, including through engagement with DAFF and Maritime Border Command.

Regulator Performance

The Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide requires you, as the Accountable Authority, to report AFMA's regulatory performance in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. This applies for the 2023-24 planning and reporting cycle.

I ask that this Ministerial Statement of Expectations and your Statement of Intent be available on afma.gov.au and transparency.gov.au and in the AFMA Annual Report.

I look forward to working cooperatively on these important priorities.

Yours sincerely



MURRAY WATT

1 / 5 / 2024