Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

National Compliance and Enforcement Program

NCEP 2025–2027

Securing Australia's fishing future
www.**afma**.gov.au

Contents

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
AFZ	Australian Fishing Zone
AFV	Australian Fishing Vessel
BaU	Business as usual
BSCZSF	Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery
CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CCTV	Closed circuit television, also known as video surveillance
CDRs	Catch Disposal Records
CRMT	Compliance Risk Management Team
CTS	Commonwealth Trawl Sector
EM	Electronic Monitoring System
ETBF	Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery
ETP	Endangered Threatened and Protected Species
FRP	Fish Receiver Premises
GD	General Deterrence
GHaT	Gillnet Hook and Trap Fishery
HIMI	Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery
MRAI	Multiple Risk Aggregation Index
NCPU	AFMA's National Compliance Planning Unit
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NIU	AFMA's National Intelligence Unit
NPF	Northern Prawn Fishery

Abbreviation	Explanation
OMC	AFMA's Operational Management Committee
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
SBTF	Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery
SFR	Statutory Fishing Right
SMP	Species Management Plan
SPF	Small Pelagic Fishery
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TAE	Total Allowable Effort
The FM Act	*Fisheries Management Act 1991*
The FMR 2019	Fisheries Management Regulations 2019
The TSFA Act	*Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*
The TSFR 1985	Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985
The Policy	National Compliance and Enforcement Policy
TSF	Torres Strait Fisheries
TSO	Temporary Switch Off
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WDTF	Western Deepwater Trawl Fishery
WTBF	Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery

Introduction

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) National Compliance Operations and Enforcement Policy (the Policy) aims to:

'Effectively deter illegal fishing in Commonwealth fisheries and the Australian Fishing Zone'
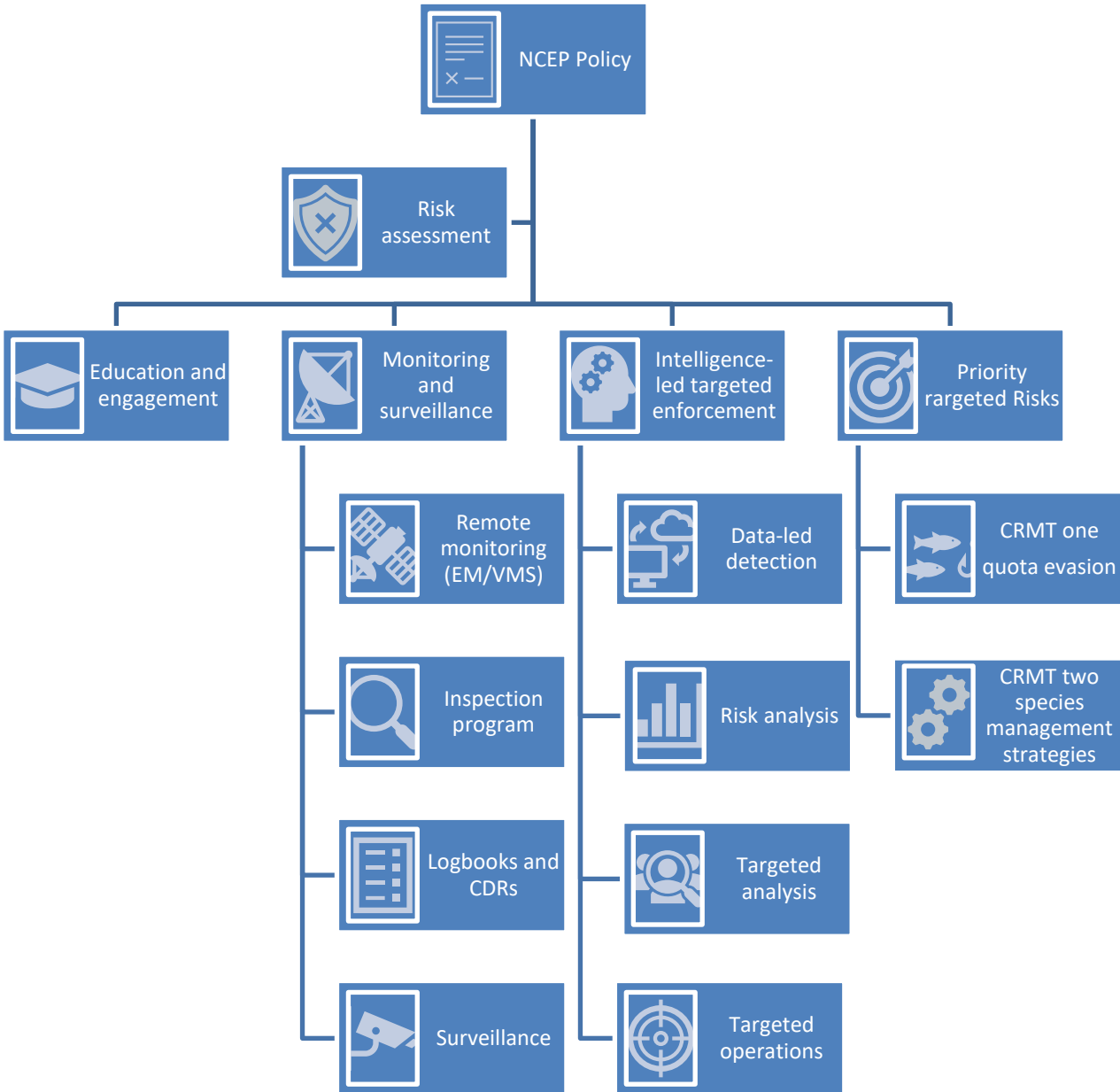
To achieve this objective, AFMA uses a risk-based and intelligence-led National Compliance and Enforcement Program (NCEP) to deliver cost effective and efficient compliance services.

AFMA's approach

Aligned with the objectives set out in the Policy, the NCEP 2025–2027 encompasses four key components:

1. **The education and engagement strategy** aims to establish AFMA's approach to industry engagement, help industry understand its obligations and highlight AFMA's actions to safeguard Australia's fisheries resources.

2. **Monitoring and surveillance** will include remote monitoring programs (VMS and EM), vessel and receiver inspections, fish receiver audits, catch and effort returns and covert and overt surveillance measures.

3. **Intelligence-led, targeted enforcement** will focus on leveraging intelligence from community, industry and technological sources, including the Monitoring and Surveillance and Targeted Risk programs, to identify illegal operations and direct enforcement action(s).

4. **Targeted risk programs** will involve the creation of Compliance Risk Management Teams (CRMT) who will devise and implement multifaceted strategies to assess, manage and mitigate risks to acceptable levels.

Together, the components of the NCEP 2025–2027 will form a robust framework to implement an effective, intelligence-led, risk-based compliance and enforcement program for Commonwealth and Torres Strait Protected Zone (domestic) fisheries.

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NCEP Policy
    │
Risk assessment
    │
    ├─────────────┬─────────────────┬─────────────────┐
Education and   Monitoring and   Intelligence-led   Priority
engagement      surveillance     targeted           targeted Risks
                                 enforcement
                    │                │                │
                Remote           Data-led          CRMT one
                monitoring       detection         quota evasion
                (EM/VMS)
                    │                │                │
                Inspection       Risk analysis     CRMT two
                program                            species
                                                   management
                                                   strategies
                    │                │
                Logbooks and     Targeted
                CDRs             analysis
                    │                │
                Surveillance     Targeted
                                 operations
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1 Education and engagement

1.1 Aims

Consistent with AFMA's objectives and functions, the 2025–2027 National Compliance Education and Engagement Strategy aims to:

- highlight to industry and the broader public the risks being targeted in 2025–27
- demonstrate AFMA's commitment to enforcement of fisheries regulations
- eliminate perception amongst wrongdoers that they won't be caught
- educate industry, indigenous groups, other direct stakeholders, and the public about the impact of non-compliance on fisheries sustainability and industry viability
- increase industry's willingness and capacity to comply with relevant requirements
- reduce the number of minor incidences of non-compliance detected via EM.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 AFMA media feature / Facebook posts

AFMA's website and Facebook will be the central point for stakeholders seeking information about AFMA's fisheries and compliance framework and activities.

In addition to publishing the biennial National Compliance and Enforcement Program, articles will be published on the website and promoted on Facebook and will detail compliance focus activities.

1.2.2 Targeted SMS

SMS messaging will be used for targeted campaigns to remind concession holders and skippers of their obligations, promote good fishing practices, advise of any emerging risk or compliance targets and maximise voluntary compliance.

1.2.3 National compliance education and engagement activities

Fisheries officers will use the opportunity during in-field inspections to reinforce AFMA's areas of focus, including technical advice and support to operators to ensure they are aware of their obligations under fisheries legislation.

2 Monitoring and Surveillance

2.1 Aim

To detect and deter non-compliance through a comprehensive monitoring and surveillance program.

2.2 Objectives

1. To remotely monitor vessel activity using VMS, E-monitoring, and CCTV surveillance.
2. To conduct a comprehensive program of inspections with particular focus on high-risk boats and fish receiver premises (FRP).
3. To conduct routine catch and effort audits (logbook and CDR) with a particular focus on high-risk fisheries, boats and FRP.
4. To maximise voluntary compliance through the application of innovative compliance approaches and education.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Remote monitoring of vessel activity

- Utilising VMS and EM to undertake closure monitoring, high seas (EEZ) entry and exit checks, RFMO area entry and reporting for Commonwealth fishing vessels.
- Utilising EM health statement data integrated with the VMS to monitor EM non-compliance relating to units being turned off while at sea.
- Utilising EM to monitor and detect untoward behaviour incidents.
- Utilising Customs CCTV and physical surveillance.

2.3.2 Inspection program

- Desktop, in-port and at-sea inspections will be undertaken during 2025–27 targeting the high-risk operators. This will also ensure AFMA maintains a visible presence at each of the 30-plus ports used by the Commonwealth and Torres Strait fleet.
- Ensure that vessels and FRP operators with adverse inspection outcomes are subject to rapid re-inspection.

2.3.3 Catch and effort records

- Routine review and audits of catch and effort returns (CDRs and Logbooks) to identify inaccurate, late and/or non-returns.

3   Intelligence-led, targeted enforcement

3.1 Aims

To implement an intelligence-led program to identify operations or activities and target them for compliance and enforcement action(s).

3.2 Objectives

- To undertake catch and effort-based, data-led analyses to routinely identify potential illegal activity.
- To undertake risk-based assessments to identify high-risk operators and/or activities.
- To undertake targeted intelligence assessments on identified high-risk and/or suspected illegal operators.
- To undertake targeted, intelligence driven operations on identified high-risk and/or suspected illegal operators.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Data-led analyses

AFMA will undertake data-led analyses, utilising catch and effort records, VMS and EM, to routinely identify potential illegal activities.

3.3.2 Risk-based analysis

In addition to the biennial risk assessment, AFMA will undertake regular and routine risk analyses to identify high-risk operators and/or activities. These risk assessments will be undertaken:

- on a full-fleet and/or fishery basis, and
- in relation to identified priority risks.

3.3.3 Targeted analysis

Where operators are identified as high-risk, or where information is received identifying suspected illegal activity, AFMA will undertake a detailed, targeted intelligence assessment to identify any potential illegal activity.

3.3.4 Targeted, intelligence-driven operations

Utilising the results of data, risk-based and/or targeted analyses, AFMA will conduct targeted surveillance and compliance operations. This will include desktop audits and boat profiles.

- Operations targeting identified high-risk Commonwealth or Torres Strait fish receivers believed to be involved in quota evasion or breaching permit conditions.
- Regular operations targeting identified high-risk fishers believed to be involved in quota evasion or breaching permit conditions.

4 Targeted risk programs

In accordance with the National Compliance and Enforcement Policy, AFMA has adopted a risk-based compliance approach. This approach enables AFMA's resources to be deployed to target areas when required and where they are most effective. It involves a series of steps to identify and assess non-compliance risks and then applies appropriate actions to mitigate these risks.

The methodology used for risk analysis is detailed in AFMA's National Compliance Risk Assessment Methodology 2025–27.

Compliance Risk Management Teams (CRMTs) are formed in response to risks identified by the biennial risk assessment and prioritised for action (in the National Compliance Program) by the Operational Management Committee (OMC).

The 2025–27 domestic compliance risk assessment identified risks across Commonwealth fisheries that were assessed as moderate and moderate/high. The identified risks were further discussed by the OMC with two risks prioritised for treatment.

The targeted risk programs for 2025–27 are focused on:

- Quota evasion.
- Compliance with species management strategies (including SMPs, offal discharge, tori lines, and Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species).

4.1 Quota evasion

4.1.1 Background

Quota evasion involves deliberately misreporting or failing to report catch of fish. It is a serious issue that undermines sustainable fishing and can have a negative impact on fish populations.

All Commonwealth fishers are required to accurately report their catch to AFMA through Catch Disposal Records (CDRs). Quota evasion is the deliberate misreporting, or non-reporting, of the weight and species of catch that is caught in Commonwealth waters.

4.1.2 Aim

To decrease the incidence of quota evasion, and therefore the associated risk, through a series of targeted treatment programs.

4.1.3 Objectives
The key objectives of the targeted risk programs are to:

- develop and implement data analysis tools or mechanisms to identify targets of interest for quota evasion
- conduct regular surveillance program(s) to provide indicators of the current level of quota evasion and identify targets of interest for quota evasion

- continue to deliver targeted education and communication items focusing on the risk of quota evasion.

4.2 Compliance with species management strategies

4.2.1 Background

Compliance with species management strategies requires specialised management arrangements designed to minimise interactions with Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) Species, rebuilding strategies, and failure to fit/carry or use bycatch reduction devices across all Commonwealth fisheries.

All Commonwealth fishers must accurately report any interactions with ETP species, adhere to the conditions outlined in their fishing concessions and abide by management plans that are implemented.

4.2.2 Aim

To mitigate the impact of commercial fishing on non-target species, ETP species, discards and bycatch. These strategies may be specific to a fishery, sector or species (which form part of a fishery management strategy).

4.2.3 Methodology

The targeted risk programs for 2025–2027 have several key objectives:

- Conduct regular surveillance program(s) to provide indicators of the current levels of bycatch, interactions and/or retention of species. Further roll-out of E-monitoring will assist with data collection for analysis for future measures and controls to be implemented.
- Continue to deliver targeted education and communication items focusing on behaviours and impacts within each fishery.
- High-risk fisheries, boats and or new skippers to be provided with a Vessel Management Plan (VMP) that sets out additional rules that apply and includes measures primarily aimed at reducing impacts to marine life and fishing.

5 Program targets

Due to the nature of compliance programs, it is inherently difficult to assess their effectiveness in terms of outcomes. As a result, the effectiveness of the program (that is, how well the program is meeting its aims and objectives) will be assessed using multiple outcome targets wherever possible, as well as input and output targets where a suitable outcome target cannot be identified. It is recognised and expected that not all performance targets or thresholds will be met due to the changing nature of risks and changes in fisheries practices.

In addition, and in recognition of the flexibility required to ensure effective targeting of prioritised risks (and the impact that required flexibility has on the resources available for other programs), an acceptable 'threshold band' has also been set for each target.

5.1 Program targets

Target	Description	Target	Threshold
Education and engagement			
AFMA website	2025–2027 Compliance and Enforcement Program published on website	July 2025	August 2025
Media releases	Media releases issued for all 'Major Operations', 'Targeted Programs', and 'Compliance Focus' items and court outcomes (convictions, other).	100%	80%
Monitoring and surveillance			
98% of boats fully compliant with VMS requirements	100% of nominated boats are fitted with VMS units, and 98% of these units are reporting at a rate greater than 12 polls per day or have a valid Temporary Switch Off (TSO) approval.	>=98%	95–98%
Nil incidents of boats non-compliance with EM reporting requirements	Less than fifteen (15) confirmed instances of EM non-reporting that have been referred to compliance for action	<15/year	<30/year
To inspect 100% of high-risk boats (on one or more occasions) annually	Identified high-risk boats identified through MRAI (top 20 boats) to be inspected	100% (20 boats)	75–100% (15–20 boats)

Target	Description	Target	Threshold
Intelligence-led, targeted enforcement			
Conduct MRAI on Vessels and receivers annually	The Multiple Risk Aggregation Index (MRAI) analysis on non-compliance risk of boats and receivers completed	Annually	Annually
Undertake targeted Intelligence assessments on fishing enterprises	Data analysis conducted on fishing enterprises identified as high-risk	10/year	7/year
Targeted operations	Undertake targeted, intelligence driven operations.	3/year	1/year
Quota evasion CRMT			
Monitor unloads	Monitor the unloads / offloads to report strategies and risk indices of quota evasion (either presence in field or CCTV)	16 per quarter	12 per quarter
Quota evasion detection analysis techniques regularly reviewed	A review of the data will be used to identify/detect quota evasion	Identified monthly	Identified annually
Species management strategies CRMT			
Compliance with vessel management plan's ETP mitigation plans	Inspect vessels to verify compliance with existing vessel ETPs mitigation management plans	10 per quarter	8 per quarter
Inspection of mitigation devices	Inspect vessels to verify compliance of mitigation devices	10 per quarter	8 per quarter
100% of boats to have an appropriate ETP mitigation plans in place	Fisheries Management Branch to audit existing vessels to ensure appropriate ETP plans in place.	90–100%	85%