



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

AFMA Annual Operational Plan

2017-18



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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.



Figure 1 Southern Bluefin Tuna tow cage.

Photo Credit: Matthew Daniel

Foreword

We are pleased to present the Australian Fisheries Management Authority's (AFMA) 2017-18 Annual Operational Plan (AOP). The plan describes the actions we intend to take to further AFMA's goals in our [Corporate Plan 2017-20](#).

This year's AOP highlights activities we will undertake to improve ecological sustainability and management efficiency for the benefit of the Australian community.

Through implementation of AFMA's revised Ecological Risk Management Framework, we will carry out Ecological Risk Assessments and develop new Fisheries Management Strategies for a number of fisheries to further mitigate the impacts of fishing on the broader ecosystem including target and non-target species, habitats and communities.

We will continue to support a more productive business environment in Commonwealth fisheries through improved management arrangements that allow fisheries to operate in a more efficient way. These management arrangements will be underpinned by a review of the quota management system administration, better utilisation of catch and improved reporting through increased use of economic performance indicators. We will also continue to explore opportunities to reduce the regulatory burden of fisheries assessment processes under the [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#).

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 continue the review of penalty provisions in legislation that AFMA administers.

We will ensure our operations are well understood, appreciated and supported by stakeholders. Their contributions through extensive engagement are vital to achieving AFMA's goals and to addressing emerging issues.

Senior management and Commissioners will monitor progress with the implementation of the AOP 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 Performance Framework

Each year AFMA is required to prepare three planning documents and a reporting document. In addition, AFMA undertakes an annual self-assessment of its regulatory operations and performance.

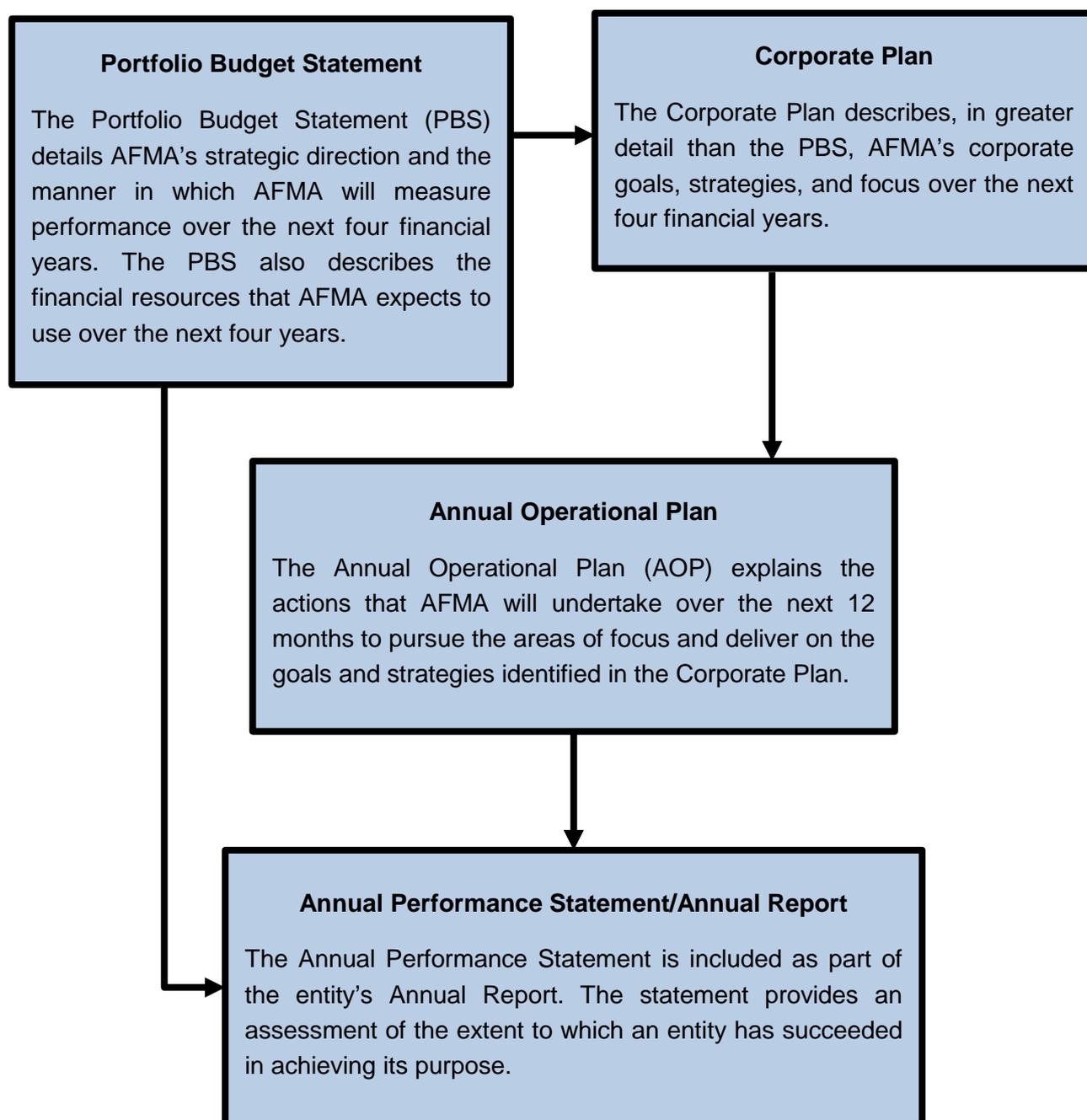


Figure 2 AFMA's performance framework

AFMA's Annual Operational Plan 2017-18

This Annual Operational Plan (AOP) is prepared on the basis that the reader has access to, and is informed by, AFMA's Corporate Plan 2017-20 (the Corporate Plan) and the Portfolio Budget Statement 2017-18 (PBS) for the Agriculture and Water Resources portfolio.

The Corporate Plan and the PBS identify our corporate goals, strategies and the performance indicators to be used to measure our success. The following tables show the actions that will be undertaken in 2017-18 to address the areas of focus in pursuing the corporate goals identified in the Corporate Plan. The resources and capability of the agency to deliver these actions are also described in these documents.

Budgets

In the delivery of these actions as well as undertaking more regular business in 2017-18, AFMA has budgeted for a total expenditure of \$44.297 million, comprising \$38.873 million in Departmental expenditure and \$5.424 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. Annual fishery budgets will continue to be subject to industry consultation.

Resources

During this coming reporting period, we expect average staffing levels (ASL) to be approximately 177. This ASL will support operations and strategic activities outlined in this AOP. Of those 177 ASL, 126 are located in AFMA's central office in Canberra. On Thursday Island, in the Torres Strait, four staff undertake fisheries management functions and two perform foreign compliance functions while the Darwin office has 29 ASL undertaking compliance functions. AFMA also employs a number of observers located around the country to perform data collection on commercial fishing vessels.

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

Reporting

AFMA's performance measures against the corporate goals are described in the Corporate Plan 2017-20.

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 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 2017-18 have contributed to the goals set out in this AOP.

The Annual Report for 2017-18 will include:

- a statement of our performance for 2017-18, including analyses of 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.

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 will all help ensure that we meet our targets.

Corporate Goals

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

Strategy	Area of Focus 2017-20	Actions 2017-18
1.1 Development of management arrangements that allow the fishery operators to operate in the most sustainable way	1.1.1 Supporting the implementation of relevant government policies	Consult and develop streamlined management arrangements across all Commonwealth fisheries
	1.1.2 Implementing the revised Ecological Risk Management Framework	Five fisheries to be assessed under the new Ecological Risk Assessment methodology and Fisheries Management Strategies developed during 2017-18
	1.1.3 Developing strategies for managing the impacts of fishing on biological habitats and communities that are consistent with government policy	Ecological Risk Assessment Technical Working Group to examine alternative approaches to the assessment and management of habitats and communities
1.2 Investing in and applying scientific research to decision making on fish stocks, sub stocks, species (target and non-target species) and the impact of fishing on the marine environment	1.2.1 Implementing science standards to help ensure high quality scientific advice is available on which to base fishery management decisions	Finalise AFMA Science Standards Policy and promote application across AFMA and its committees
	1.2.2 Working with scientific organisations and relevant others on investigating the potential impacts of climate change on Commonwealth fisheries	Undertake FRDC funded projects to examine decadal scale projections of impacts of climate change to fisheries and adaptation of Commonwealth fisheries management to climate change

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 ecological sustainability of Commonwealth fisheries:

Regular activities for 2017-18	Associated actions
Management of domestic commercial fisheries	Development and implementation of bycatch programs and strategies
	Education of fishing operators on fisheries management requirements
	Collaboration with science organisations in understanding fish stocks, bycatch and the marine environment better
	Appointment and administration of Management Advisory Committees (MACs), Resource Assessment Groups (RAGs) and other sector specific bodies
	Assessment of 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
Management of traditional, indigenous and non-commercial fisheries activities	Consult with Indigenous and recreational fisheries and other stakeholders in the management of Commonwealth fisheries to ensure their interests are taken into account
Research management	Administer AFMA's research program and contracts including the AFMA Research Committee, developing/reviewing research plans and participating in the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation's COMRAC process by providing advice and priorities for potential funding
	Management of AFMA's research funds to achieve cost effective results

Corporate Goal 2: Maximise the net economic returns from Commonwealth fisheries to the Australian community

Strategy	Area of Focus 2017-20	Actions 2017-18
2.1 Development of management arrangements that allow the fishery operators to operate in the most efficient way	2.1.1 Reviewing quota management arrangements to ensure optimal efficiency is pursued	Finalise the review of the undercatch and overcatch arrangements. Update AFMA management arrangements on undercatch and overcatch as required
	2.1.2 Collecting and utilising economic information including quota prices to pursue AFMA's objectives	Implement mandatory reporting of quota and gear statutory fishing right prices on transfer.
2.2 Providing incentives to fishers to comply with AFMA requirements	2.2.1 Investigating incentives to minimise discarding of commercial species	Consult stakeholders and evaluate options to implement where it is cost effective to do so
2.3 Managing the setting up of exploratory fisheries (potentially underutilised fisheries)	2.3.1 Facilitating access to underutilised Commonwealth fisheries resources	Following consultation, finalising the policy on exploration of fishery resources

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 2017-18	Associated actions
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.
Foreign fisheries compliance enforcement and capacity building	<p>Participation in capacity building programs with neighbouring countries and supporting key regional and international fishing bodies</p> <p>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.</p>
Data collection and management	<p>Data collection and monitoring of fishing industry operations with the use of E-logs, log books and Catch Disposal Records (CDR)</p> <p>Managing data and analysis, providing data and reports to the public, the fishing industry, MACs or RAGs</p> <p>Implementation and administration of e-monitoring across the Commonwealth commercial fishing fleet</p> <p>Administration of the observer program</p> <p>Implementation and administration of the vessel monitoring program across the Commonwealth commercial fishing industry and some State managed commercial fishing vessels</p> <p>Arranging independent fishery surveys to set a recommended biological catch and an annual Total Allowable Catch</p>
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.

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

Strategy	Area of Focus 2017-20	Actions 2017-18
3.1 Pursuing ministerial directives and government initiatives to improve regulation and administration generally in the Federal government sector	3.1.1 Continuing to explore opportunities to streamline fisheries assessment processes under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	Work with the Department of the Environment and Energy to pursue additional 10 year approvals for Commonwealth fisheries
3.2 Operating an effective compliance regime	3.2.1 Reviewing the risk assessment for the domestic compliance program and implementing measures to address key threat areas	Operationalise the 2017-18 national compliance and enforcement program Strengthen strategic alliances with other law enforcement and regulatory agencies Review risk profiling for the domestic fishing fleet to target inspection activity <i>Risk assessment reviews occur biennially with the next scheduled for 2018-19.</i>
	3.2.2 Reviewing the penalty provisions in legislation that AFMA administers and making fisheries management arrangements more uniform and understandable	Progress second phase of the review of penalty provisions in consultation with key stakeholders Reducing the types of fishing permits in the Gillnet, Hook and Trap Fishery Continue to simplify the fisheries management system as a whole while ensuring sustainable harvesting and protecting access rights.
	3.2.3 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	Participate in Interdepartmental forums to identify and rectify legislative, policy and operational inhibitors to the delivery of the illegal foreign fishing program Deliver education and outreach programs, including a public information campaign in Vietnam, to prevent illegal fishing at source Deliver capacity building programs in the Pacific and other countries where appropriate.

Strategy	Area of Focus 2017-20	Actions 2017-18
3.3 Reviewing business processes and systems, information flows and financial management arrangements	3.3.1 Establishing new co-management arrangements that encourage greater industry responsibility for fisheries impacts	Developing the co-management arrangements with the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association, including through the newly approved Trawl Advisory Group
	3.3.2 Assessing the value of using shared service arrangements for corporate services that reduce costs	<p>Undertaking Shared and Common Services Benchmarking to provide AFMA with greater transparency on the actual cost of corporate services</p> <p>Reviewing the efficient allocation of corporately-managed costs to activities across the entity to deliver effective, cost efficient and transparent management and regulatory arrangements.</p>
	3.3.3 Exploring opportunities to extend contract monitoring and compliance services to external agencies	<p>Collaborate with states/NT governments to expand usage of AFMA Vessel Monitoring services</p> <p>Collaborate with the Queensland government to enhance the effectiveness of the domestic compliance program in the Torres Strait.</p>
	3.3.4 Implementing AFMA's Information and Communication Technology Strategy	<p>Develop a detailed program plan for implementation</p> <p>Undertake a detailed analysis of AFMA's business, data and information needs and environment</p> <p>Design and develop architecture that will meet AFMA's business, data and information needs into the future.</p>
	3.3.5 Continuing to improve access to AFMA fisheries information through data.gov.au, the AFMA website and other media	<p>Publish updated summaries of logbook data on data.gov.au</p> <p>Publish additional types of logbook datasets on data.gov.au.</p>
	3.3.6 Developing an e-business plan that considers cost effective and efficient use of electronic systems for logbooks, monitoring and licensing	AFMA policy statement on future of fisheries electronic data capture systems needs developed and publicised

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 transparent management and regulatory arrangements:

Regular activities 2017-18	Associated actions
Policy support	<p>Providing and developing advice and policy in accordance with the Fisheries Management Act 1991, the Fisheries Administration Act 1991, and other relevant legislation</p> <p>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.</p>
Licensing / registration and revenue collection	<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:</p> <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. <p>Identifying and implementing opportunities to reduce our regulatory burden on those we regulate and to improve internal operations</p> <p>Implementing the Regulatory Performance Framework to ensure that we are meeting government expectations</p> <p>Implementing an Electronic Document and Record Management System (EDRMS) to streamline and improve our information management processes</p>

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 keep fish species, and the marine ecosystem as a whole, in good health into the future.

During 2017-18, 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 2017-18, 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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