

RDC Inquiry Coordinator
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

RE: RDC INQUIRY

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the review of the Research and Development Commission. The Department of Fisheries in Western Australia offers the following comments.

Over the past two decades the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) has partnered our Department in the successful management of the marine natural resources of this State. Whilst their charter has been to promote the sustainability and development of the seafood industry within Australia, they have recognised the fundamental need to ensure the sustainability of the underlying resource base. Many of the resources that have been the focus of FRDC projects are also the target of recreational fishers, and many projects provide overall benefits to the general marine ecosystem with provides benefits to the whole community.

Such a large spillover of benefits from these projects provide a very significant level of public good and over 50% of FRDC funded projects could be classified as having a sustainability focus. In addition, the benefits to the wider community can be demonstrated by the significant level of coinvestment by the WA State Government on behalf of the broader community. This investment occurs from both in kind contributions of our staff working on these projects and additional cash contributions to the projects.

The research funded by the FRDC has often been a significant factor in the high management success of the marine resources in WA. Most of our key resources have benefited directly from one or more FRDC projects. This positive achievement is reported annually to the WA Parliament in our State of the Fisheries Report.

The administrative arrangements developed and used by the FRDC are, we believe, very lean and highly efficient. Their administrative processes have been ISO certified. Their small set of permanent executive staff is enhanced, where necessary, by the use of experts who head up sub-programs of related projects. These subprograms only continue whilst there are sufficient relevant projects to justify the increased costs. We believe this is a sensible way of moving with shifting priorities rather than establishing a larger executive that will not have the flexibility of detailed knowledge across all areas.

We see an ongoing need for the investment in the fisheries resources of Australia, and we propose that a focus must remain on those aspects related to effective natural resource management.

Should you require any further information please contact Dr Rick Fletcher on 08 92030113 or rick.fletcher@fish.wa.gov.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S.S.', written in a cursive style.

STUART SMITH
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

June 2010