



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

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Mr Philip Weickhardt
Commissioner
Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2
Collins Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003

Dear Mr Weickhardt

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment with regards to the Productivity Commission's *Rural Research and Development Corporations (RRDCs) Draft Inquiry Report*. On the whole, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) supports the draft findings and recommendations pertinent to Commonwealth fisheries research.

In particular, AFMA notes draft recommendations 5.2 and 5.3, regarding public funding principles and the need for improved data collection and policy and program coordination mechanisms. AFMA agrees that understanding funding flows and improving coordination is critical to transparency, assessing the performance and improving the effectiveness of the Australian Government investment in rural research and development (R&D). AFMA supports the recommended approach, noting this is outside AFMA's role. Notwithstanding, AFMA will facilitate implementation where appropriate, including the provision of relevant data on AFMA's research program.

As previously provided (submission no. 41), given the stewardship role the Australian Government performs in managing for the sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources, common property considerations and facilitation of cross-sectoral R&D, AFMA believes the current funding model for fisheries R&D is appropriate. In line with this, AFMA agrees with draft recommendations 6.1 and 7.1 regarding the retention of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation's (FRDC) funding formula and research functions, in particular the administration of government funds for public good research.

The effective administration of government funds is, to a large part, reliant on the effective communication of government R&D priorities. Rather than simply providing general high level direction, government R&D priorities could and should be communicated more clearly in terms of specific requirements and expected outcomes. A more explicit process to communicate specific government requirements on R&D should be developed, giving consideration to the use of priority-setting workshops.

Canberra Office

PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
Phone 02 6225 5555
Fax 02 6225 5500
ABN: 81 098 497 517

Darwin Office

GPO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
Phone 08 8943 0333
Fax 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island Office

PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
Phone 07 4069 1990
Fax 07 4069 1277

In this context, AFMA strongly supports draft recommendation 8.4 and believes the consensual appointment of a government director on statutory RDC boards would promote the communication of government R&D priorities, requirements and expectations. Given AFMA's role as the management agency for Commonwealth fisheries and primary user of research outcomes, it has the relevant skills and knowledge to make a significant contribution in this area and would strongly encourage the FRDC to adopt this recommendation.

Yours sincerely


Dr James Findlay
A/g Chief Executive Officer
Australian Fisheries Management Authority