

Department of Primary Industries and Water

WILD FISHERIES

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Mr Gary Banks
Chairman
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
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3 January 2007

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Dear Mr Banks

I write to provide comment in response to certain issues raised in the report prepared by the Productivity Commission on *Public Support for Science and Innovation*. In particular, I would like to comment on the need for continued Government support to industry-centred Research and Development Corporations, in this case the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).

I understand that the Commission has received a number of submissions arguing that such levels of support should be continued, and I wish to support that argument. I do believe that continued support for research in this sector does provide a significant spillover of 'public good' that provides benefit to the wider community. In some other sectors this benefit may be considered to be captured by private enterprise, however, I would contend that this is not the case in rural and fisheries research.

In contrast to some other sectors, the fishing industry is a wild capture enterprise based upon a community resource. In Tasmania for example, the *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995* explicitly determines that these resources belong to the State. Research to underpin sustainable harvesting, and through the chain of supply, provides benefit to the community, industry and to consumers of this resource.

Research is currently conducted by a combination of funding sources and institutions at both State and Federal level. The FRDC is a vitally important part of that research mix and provides rigour and direction to ensure that community funds are directed to maximise the benefit of that funding, and of the industry, to the community. A reduction in such funding would have a significant impact on the vibrant R&D activity in this area.

Yours sincerely

Wes Ford
GENERAL MANAGER
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES DIVISION