



Minister for  
Environment and Climate Change

**SUBMISSION NO. 37**  
**Inquiry into the Role of Science**  
**for Fisheries and Aquaculture**

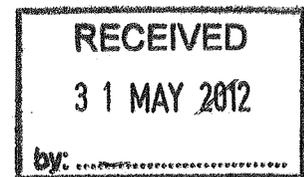
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25 MAY 2012

Dear Mr Adams

**INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF SCIENCE FOR FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE**

Thank you for your letter of 29 March 2012 regarding the Inquiry into The Role of Science for Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Healthy fish and fisheries are the results of a healthy environment. In Victoria, the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has portfolio responsibility for fisheries management and biosecurity policy. The exceptions to this include marine pests and the maintenance and restoration of the river catchments that underpin sustainable fish stocks, which are the responsibility of the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The policy to enable the maintenance and restoration of river catchments is Victoria's River Health Strategy.

The Inquiry should give consideration to the following matters relevant to river health:

- Given the recent emphasis on the use of Australia's water resources, particularly in the Murray Darling Basin, future decisions about the provisions of environmental flows will rely more on evidence that demonstrates the benefits or otherwise of these water allocations. There is a need for more information on the benefits of environment flows to key environmental assets such as fish.
- Similarly, logic models are required to set priorities for research by targeting areas where there is low knowledge or low confidence in the relationships between management actions and waterway health outcomes that support fisheries.
- There is an opportunity to more closely align the governance of fisheries management to conservation, water management and habitat management.

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- Presently, there are limited funds to undertake key research tasks that would enable managers to improve the management of the fisheries resource. In particular, there are gaps in our knowledge about stock size, recruitment, success of stocking programs and harvest by recreational and commercial fishers. As noted previously, DPI has the lead role and should be consulted and advised further on this matter.
- There is limited information available relating to the impacts on freshwater and estuarine species following catastrophic events, such as low dissolved oxygen levels and acidification. These events have implications for both fisheries and conservation managers, and often cause concern in the wider community.
- Stocking programs can confound the results of monitoring programs designed to assess the effectiveness of costly catchment restoration programs.
- There are difficulties in translating research outcomes into management and policy, especially where different government departments, both at a state and national level, are involved.

Victoria is a signatory to two intergovernmental agreements related to biosecurity: the 2005 *Intergovernmental Agreement on a National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions* (the National System) and the 2010 *National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA)*. Some of the requirements outlined in the National System agreement are part of ongoing negotiations regarding roles and responsibilities between the state and Commonwealth.

The key issues for the Victorian contribution, relevant to this inquiry, are the need for:

- an agreed approach to developing a list of marine pests that may be eligible for cost sharing under the existing NEBRA;
- a national diagnostic capacity to identify serious marine pests;
- systematic monitoring and surveillance related to marine pests in major commercial shipping ports; and
- a coordinated national approach to addressing gaps in freshwater biosecurity.

While the Commonwealth has implemented laws to regulate the management of ballast water from international sources, Victoria is the only jurisdiction to legislate the management of ballast water taken up within Australian waters. As yet, most jurisdictions have not attempted to implement legislation for a nationally consistent regime for the regulation of ballast water.

In general, both marine and freshwater biosecurity related sciences would benefit from additional Commonwealth investment.

For further enquiries, please contact Kylie White, Executive Director, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely

**THE HON RYAN SMITH MP**  
Minister for Environment and Climate Change