

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017



Secretary  
Environment and Communications Reference Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Re: Inquiry into current and future impacts of climate change on marine fisheries and biodiversity -  
RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Dear Secretary,

Please find the following responses to the questions on notice from the Senate Inquiry hearing in Sydney on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if the Committee requires any further information.

Yours sincerely,

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**In response to Senator URQUHART's question:**

***“You mention that there was a difference in funding between marine and terrestrial NRM's. Can you tell me what the percentage difference is?”***

***...I am interested in the issues that you are dealing with.”***

In November 2014, the Commonwealth Government's Department of Environment and the Department of Agriculture announced the investment of “\$454 million in regional stream funding to manage NRM through Australia's 56 regional natural resource management organisations over the next four years.”<sup>1</sup>

Of the **\$454M** in funding to NRM organisation, the OceanWatch funding for Marine NRM was **\$2.4M**<sup>2</sup>, which was **0.52%** of the announced funding.

**Marine NRM SCOPE**

The OceanWatch operational scope is a national seascape level response to challenges influencing the health and productivity of Australia's marine environment.

The following is an excerpt from the OceanWatch National Marine NRM Plan - draft for comment.

Australia's marine domain is approximately double the Australian Landmass at 13.6 million square kilometres, and is central to the national identity and economy. Australians derive significant socio economic and cultural wealth from marine environmental assets. While for practical purposes the management of the marine environment rests with the Australian, state and NT governments, it remains a community owned asset and ultimate responsibility for its stewardship lies with the community.

Marine ecosystems are highly connected across geographical catchments, with many species utilising a variety of wetland, estuarine and marine habitats while migrating large distances as an integral part of their life cycle.

Historically, the regional NRM model is based on geographical catchments and generally focuses on land based issues and primary producers. Although some regional NRM organisations have programs that include marine activities, the regional NRM model is ineffective in addressing many marine challenges due to its innate inability to deal with seascape scale environmental, socio economic and cultural connectivity.

Consequently, marine NRM requires a wider scope that enables a single co-ordinated approach to marine challenges across a broad geographical range, and that enables connectivity across multiple, terrestrially focused regional NRM boundaries to be addressed. This is an unconventional (in terms of the historical regional NRM model) but necessary approach to optimise marine NRM planning and delivery.

In support of the above comments on scope, the following example illustrates how impacts on water quality, fish habitat and connectivity in a regional NRM catchment can have implications for ecosystems and regional economies far removed from that NRM region's jurisdiction.

*Eastern King Prawns occur on the eastern Australian coast between Hayman Island in Queensland and north-eastern Tasmania (20–42°S respectively), and the species exhibit strong stock connectivity throughout their range. Juvenile and sub adult king prawns leaving Tasmanian, Victorian, NSW and Queensland estuaries as part of their annual spawning migration can travel*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/hunt/2014/mr20141113b.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.richardcolbeck.com.au/2014\\_media\\_releases/supporting\\_australias\\_world\\_leading\\_fisheries\\_](http://www.richardcolbeck.com.au/2014_media_releases/supporting_australias_world_leading_fisheries_)

*through numerous regional NRM jurisdictions, and then be caught as far north as central Queensland.”*

## **Marine NRM STAKEHOLDERS**

In May 2014, and delivering on a 2013 election promise of further developing Australia’s sustainable fishing sector, the Minister for Agriculture, The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, announced that OceanWatch was recognised as the NRM organisation with responsibility for enhancing fish habitats and the marine environment.<sup>3</sup> OceanWatch defined its stakeholders based upon the Ministerial statement of (14/5/14), and the consequential National Landcare Programme – regional stream funding deed, which stated its aims, “to link seafood stakeholder (professional, recreational, Indigenous and aquaculture sectors) to the saltwater and NRM community to encourage better management of water and fish habitat.”

In order for the Senate Inquiry to understand OceanWatch’s NRM role, an excerpt from the National Marine NRM Plan – draft for comment, is included which identifies the stakeholders, as follows;

### The saltwater community

The saltwater community includes the 80 per cent of Australians who live within 50 kilometres of the coast<sup>4</sup>. In recent years, through the efforts of the Landcare movement and others, the Australian community in general has become increasingly aware and responsive to the need to protect, rehabilitate, restore and enhance natural aquatic resources (marine, estuary, river, wetland and other habitats) in order to maintain and promote biological diversity and processes.

Within the saltwater community there is a direct relationship between recreational and Indigenous customary fishers and seafood consumers to Australia’s publicly managed renewable marine resources, giving justification for these groups being separately described. These groups also generate important socio-economic and cultural value within coastal communities.

### Indigenous customary fishers

Indigenous people have developed a close, interdependent relationship with the land, water and living resources of Australia through customary fishing practices over tens of thousands of years. That relationship includes rights and responsibilities of particular Indigenous communities to areas of land and water. Indigenous people’s stories and dance tell of times when there was abundant sea life, and their knowledge of marine natural resource management is many thousands of years old. In many places around Australia, this knowledge is shared with those who manage marine environments.

Many Indigenous people also participate in the commercial wild-catch and aquaculture sectors. The legal rights around Indigenous fishing are being refined over time and some aspects are now part of existing legislation and court decisions.<sup>5</sup>

### Recreational fishers

About 3.4 million Australians of all ages and backgrounds participate in recreational fishing and enjoy the benefits of a healthy marine environment. Australians fishing for recreational purposes contributes about \$1.8 billion to the Australian economy, and supports about 90,000 jobs.<sup>6</sup>

Approx.80 per cent of the recreational catch is from salt water – in estuaries, off beaches, jetties and from the ocean<sup>7</sup>.

### Australian seafood consumers

Seafood consumers desire access to a reliable and affordable array of seafood through retail and food service channels while also being concerned with the sustainability of wild-caught and farmed seafood both domestically and internationally. In some cases, this has led to industry and

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.richardcolbeck.com.au/2014\\_media\\_releases/supporting\\_australias\\_world\\_leading\\_fisheries\\_](http://www.richardcolbeck.com.au/2014_media_releases/supporting_australias_world_leading_fisheries_)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1301.0Feature%20Article32004>

<sup>5</sup> The Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey July 2003; FRDC Project No 99/158

<sup>6</sup> Australian Fisheries and Aquaculture Statistics, ABARES 2013.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

governments demonstrating their commitment to best production and management practices through independent assessment and third-party certification.

Seafood demand in Australia has steadily increased over the last decade. In 2012–13 Australians each consumed an average of 15 kilograms (processed weight) of seafood, compared with 13 kilograms in 2000-01.<sup>8</sup> . A key driver is the awareness of seafood’s prominent role in a healthy diet.

As direct beneficiaries of marine productivity and potential key influencers of sustainable development through purchasing choices, consumers can play a key indirect role in the stewardship of marine resources.

### The seafood industry

Seafood industry enterprises range from low technology single-owner-operators for whom the lifestyle is important, to large vertically integrated companies that operate largely for profit. In 2012-13 the industry employed 13,813 people in the wild-catch (5,050), aquaculture (3,558) and post-harvest sectors (5,205).<sup>9</sup>

The seafood industry accesses approximately 120 wild-catch fisheries from which over 600 finfish and shellfish species are commercially harvested from marine and freshwater. There are also a large number of aquaculture species produced or in various stages of development; prawns, Southern Bluefin Tuna, salmonoids, edible oysters and pearl oysters accounted for over 80 per cent of the value of aquaculture in 2012-13. In that year the industry produced 237,318 tonnes of seafood of which 34 per cent was farmed; and was valued at \$2.4 billion of which 43 per cent was derived from aquaculture.<sup>10</sup>

The industry’s production is low in volume but high in value; and Australia’s excellent international reputation for the quality, safety and environmental credentials of its exports of abalone, rock lobster, prawn, scallop, Southern Bluefin Tuna, tropical fish and pearls has maximised returns. In 2012-13 49 per cent of Australia’s production was exported and valued at \$1.65 billion.<sup>11</sup>

The seafood industry continues to seek social licence to undertake its core activities in public spaces. In a society that sees more and more people becoming coastal dwellers this pressure is set to increase. Furthermore, the seafood industry increasingly competes for access to resources with other primary marine NRM stakeholders. In this context, there is a stark difference between the seafood industry and other primary industries, and marine NRM and regional NRM.

### Landholders and industries impacting marine health and productivity

Landholders and industries impacting on receiving waters are core drivers of change in the marine environment. Some of these stakeholders are also a major focus of the other 55 regional NRM organisations.

## **In response to Senator Urquhart’s further question on adequacy of funding:**

In seeking to work towards OceanWatch’s vision of a healthy, productive, valued, and responsibly used marine environment, it has over 25 years of being “*highly effective at encouraging sustainable practices among commercial fishers and managing impacts on the marine environment in consultation with communities*” (Media Release - Senator Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture 14/5/14)<sup>12</sup>. OceanWatch has:

- the largest geographical area;
- a widely dispersed, high number of stakeholders;
- challenging environmental issues;

<sup>8</sup> Stephan, M & Hobbsbawn, P 2014, Australian fisheries and aquaculture statistics 2013, ABARES

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Australian Fisheries and Aquaculture Statistics, ABARES 2013

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.richardcolbeck.com.au/2014\\_media\\_releases/supporting\\_australias\\_world\\_leading\\_fisheries](http://www.richardcolbeck.com.au/2014_media_releases/supporting_australias_world_leading_fisheries).

- threats which transcend traditional NRM jurisdictional boundaries,
- impacts which can have consequences for ecosystems and economies far removed from the source;
- (to our knowledge) the smallest NRM organisation by FTEs;
- 0.52% of the funding.

OceanWatch would welcome the support of the Environment and Communications Reference Committee in seeking a more equitable NRM funding arrangement for its marine NRM role in line with the scope, stewardship activities and responsibilities.