

Coalition Senators' additional comments

Marine research and industry collaboration

1.1 Coalition Senators note that the Australian Government already plays a significant role in funding and supporting connections between industry and research organisations.

1.2 The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, a statutory corporation, provides planning and investment advice and support in fisheries research, development and extension activities across Australian fisheries, including with respect to the impact of climate change on fishing activities.

1.3 Increased funding to support connections between the fishing industry and research organisations could help industry in meeting the challenges and opportunities of the effects of climate change on fisheries.

1.4 Any additional funding would need to be considered in the context of other budget priorities and should be outcomes focused.

Aquatic biosecurity and emergency response

1.5 Coalition Senators note that the Australian Government is currently working with state and territory governments and industry to develop a formal industry–government aquatic emergency animal disease response agreement, referred to as the 'Aquatic Deed'.

1.6 It is anticipated that the Aquatic Deed will include requirements around the distribution of information in responding to biosecurity challenges.

1.7 The development of the Aquatic Deed is expected to allow for rapid responses to emergency aquatic animal disease incidents, provide incentives for early reporting of disease occurrence and support the development of strong risk mitigation measures.

1.8 These measures would also support trade and market access.

Landcare and marine

1.9 Coalition Senators note that marine conservation in inshore waters is largely the responsibility of state and territory governments. Where the Commonwealth does invest in marine conservation, especially within the Commonwealth's jurisdiction, Coalition Senators point to the wide variety of conservation activities supported by the Australian Government. These activities include: regulatory measures aimed at safeguarding matters of national environmental significance; measures to improve onshore catchment management; marine debris clean-up; management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park; and management of Australia's network of Commonwealth Marine Parks.

1.10 In terms of the National Landcare Program, Coalition Senators highlight the continuing and longstanding commitment of the Australian Government to natural resource management, with more than \$1 billion invested for phase two of the Program, which will be delivered from July 2017 to June 2023, as announced in the 2017–18 Budget.

1.11 The phase two investment includes:

- \$450 million for the Regional Land Partnerships Program to deliver natural resource management at a regional scale;
- funding for additional biosecurity measures to support the eradication of the Red Imported Fire Ant;
- \$47.4 million for the management of our treasured World Heritage sites;
- \$24.7 million towards delivering the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*, in addition to the \$83 million already allocated under the Program to implement the Plan from 2018–19 to 2021–22;
- \$93 million for the ongoing support of existing Indigenous Protected Areas plus \$15 million in new funding;
- funding for the establishment of the \$20 million Centre for Invasive Species Solutions to drive research, development and extension activities to protect native ecosystems and habitats from pest animals and weeds; and
- \$5 million for an environment small grants program which local community and environment groups can access (up to \$50,000) for local natural resource management activities.

Engagement of Traditional Owners and Indigenous Protected Areas

1.12 Coalition Senators support appropriate and proportional consultation strategies for consulting with Indigenous fishers on relevant fisheries management matters.

1.13 Coalition Senators note that Indigenous fishing primarily occurs in state managed waters and, as such, there is limited intersection of Indigenous fishing issues with Commonwealth fisheries management, with the exception of the Torres Strait fisheries and the Northern Prawn Fishery.

1.14 Enhancing engagement between Traditional Owners, government and research agencies in relation to climate change can provide benefits toward management of the marine estate by Traditional Owners.

1.15 Consideration would need to be given to the appropriate models for engagement and resourcing requirements. Funding would need to be considered in the context of other budget priorities and should be outcomes focused.

1.16 Coalition Senators note that the rights of Indigenous fishers are already recognised in Torres Strait fisheries and are central to the management of fisheries in the Torres Strait under the Protected Zone Joint Authority. The Queensland Government also has a role in the management of fisheries under the Protected Zone Joint Authority.

Offshore Constitutional Settlement arrangements

1.17 Coalition Senators note that the Australian Government is working with jurisdictions to resolve all shared fisheries and fish stocks subject to inconsistent management arrangements through reforms to Offshore Constitutional Settlement (OCS) arrangements.

1.18 The Australian Government, in consultation with the state and Northern Territory governments, has identified priority issues that need addressing and will continue to consider inconsistent management arrangements between jurisdictions on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the costs and the net benefits of potential reforms.

1.19 Resolving some OCS matters can be very resource intensive. Priority issues are determined on the assessment of likely returns. Cross-jurisdictional cooperation is hampered by differing fisheries management objectives and approaches between jurisdictions.

1.20 Coalition Senators note that without significant efforts to harmonise or implement consistent harvest strategy regimes, including the use of output controls, such as individual transferable quota and individual transferable effort regimes, and resource allocation policies, efforts for greater cross-jurisdictional cooperation may have limited effectiveness.

State and territory recreational fisheries

1.21 Coalition Senators highlight that recreational fishing activity is not managed by the Commonwealth. Implementation of a harmonised licence is primarily a state and territory issue that would need to be driven by state and territory governments. Coalition Senators note that some jurisdictions and recreational fishers are strongly opposed to recreational fishing licences.

1.22 Coalition Senators recognise that a harmonised low-cost recreational fishing licence across all Australian jurisdictions could assist in implementing mechanisms to enhance data collection arrangements for recreational fishing and support better management of the resource for all users.

1.23 However, Coalition Senators recognise the varying licence programs implemented by states and the Northern Territory and the differing reasons for and roles these programs play.

1.24 Coalition Senators further note that the collection of national recreational fishing data requires the cooperation of state and territory governments, including financial and in-kind support, and the resolution of a range of technical issues to capture appropriate information from a highly diverse and fragmented sector.

1.25 The implementation of a comprehensive national survey was costed at \$6.8 million. State and territory governments have indicated they are not in a position to co-fund a national recreational fishing survey.

1.26 The Australian Government has agreed to a national survey of recreational fishers in 2018, which will collect information on social and economic contribution.

Greenhouse trigger

1.27 Coalition Senators hold concern for the recommendation that a greenhouse trigger be considered for inclusion in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Emissions management needs to be on a landscape scale, either national or international, rather than at a project scale. Coalition Senators regard other instruments as more appropriate mechanisms to deal with emissions than the EPBC Act.

National Oceans Commissioner

1.28 The Coalition Senators support the longstanding roles of dedicated Commonwealth agencies which manage our marine environment including, but not limited to, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Parks Australia, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Australian Antarctic Division and Geoscience Australia.

Marine Protected Areas

1.29 Coalition Senators support the existing regulatory arrangements that give effect to management of Commonwealth marine reserves. Within this existing regulatory framework, the Australian Government has committed to maintaining the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas.

1.30 Coalition Senators note that an extensive consultation process, supporting a review, for Australia's network of Marine Parks in the South-west, North-west, North and Temperate East Networks and the Coral Sea was completed in September 2017.

1.31 It is intended that the draft management plans for these parks will seek to balance protecting important marine habitats and features, while providing opportunities for people to continue to use and enjoy these unique areas. The draft plans also propose a targeted approach to zoning in marine parks that would appropriately protect conservation features (like canyons, seamounts and reefs) while enabling economically important activities like fishing and tourism to continue.

1.32 Final management plans for these five regions will set out the approach Parks Australia will take in managing the marine parks over the next ten years. Provisions in the plans will protect important marine habitats and features, while providing opportunities for people to continue to enjoy these unique areas.

1.33 The Government has committed \$56.1 million over four years to develop and implement these plans once finalised, including to support management, research, user engagement and industry assistance for commercial fishers directly affected.

Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan

1.34 Coalition Senators share the commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef, a World Heritage site, for future generations and note that the Australian Government is doing this through sound policy, substantial direct investment, and world-class marine park management.

1.35 The Australian and Queensland governments developed the Reef 2050 Plan, a 35-year blueprint to improve the health and resilience of the Reef. Together with the Queensland Government, more than \$2 billion will be invested in the health of the Reef over the coming decade.

1.36 It is acknowledged that climate change is a threat to reefs worldwide and Coalition Senators note the strong action already taken by the Australian Government to address the global threat of climate change and the ratification of the Paris Agreement. This ratification confirms Australia's ambitious and responsible target to reduce emissions by 26–28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and to play its part in achieving zero net emissions in the second half of the century. Australia's target is amongst the strongest of any G20 country on a per capita basis.

1.37 The Great Barrier Reef Ministerial Forum met on 28 July 2017 and agreed to the early, immediate commencement of the Reef 2050 Plan mid-term review to identify and accelerate priority actions for managing the health of the Reef. They also charged the Independent Expert Panel with developing problem statements for an Innovation Challenge to encourage new ideas to protect the Reef. The problem statements have been prepared and the Australian and Queensland governments are now examining options for undertaking an Innovation Challenge.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

1.38 Coalition Senators point out that the Australian Government is already fully funding the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and, alongside the Queensland Government, is investing \$2 billion over the next decade to ensure the health of the Reef. Coalition Senators recognise that every effort needs to be made to mitigate the threats to the Great Barrier Reef and are committed to its long-term protection and best practice management.

1.39 Coalition Senators also note that the Australian Government announced on 20 December 2016 a \$124 million funding boost to the Authority over the next ten years to augment its position as the lead Authority in Reef management.

1.40 Further, to ensure the Authority's resources are being put to the most efficient use, in March this year, the Australian Government commissioned an independent review to determine whether the current arrangements continue to be the best fit to support the Authority's important and challenging work over the coming decades.

1.41 The Australian Government has released the review's report which outlines governance recommendations to further strengthen the Authority.

1.42 Coalition Senators note that the Australian Government is currently considering these recommendations and will soon provide a response to the report.

Senator Jonathon Duniam
Deputy Chair
Senator for Tasmania

Senator Linda Reynolds CSC
Senator for Western Australia