



**Australian Government**

**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**

# **Corporate Plan 2024–2027**

## **Including Annual Operational Plan 2024**

**Securing Australia's fishing future**

[www.afma.gov.au](http://www.afma.gov.au)

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## Introduction

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority's (AFMA) Corporate Plan 2024–27 updates the previous Corporate Plan and outlines how we intend to deliver against our purpose over the next four years (2024–25 to 2027–28).

The Corporate Plan is AFMA's primary planning document. It outlines our purpose, the environment in which we operate, our priorities and activities, and the performance measures by which we will be held to account by the Australian community.

The key activities (described in section 2) and performance information (described in section 7) apply generally across the life of the Corporate Plan. These activities are not expected to change significantly in the next four years but will be reviewed, continuously improved, and updated annually. Greater specificity of actions to be taken in 2024–25 to deliver against the Corporate Plan are included through the incorporation of the AFMA Annual Operational Plan for 2024 (see section 8).

## Statement of preparation by the Chief Executive Officer

I, Wez Norris, as the accountable authority of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, present the AFMA Corporate Plan for the periods of 2024–25 to 2027–28, as required under section 35(1)(b) of the [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013](#) (PGPA Act) and Division 7 of the [Fisheries Administration Act 1991](#) (the Act). In accordance with section 72(1) of the Act, I consulted with the peak industry body, the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA), prior to preparation of this Corporate Plan.



Helen Kroger  
Chairman, AFMA Commission



Wez Norris  
Chief Executive  
Officer, Accountable  
Authority of AFMA

# 1 Purposes

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) is established under the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991* (the FAA) to manage Australia’s Commonwealth fisheries on behalf of the Australian community in accordance with the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* (the FMA).

Our purpose is to pursue the ecologically sustainable development (ESD) of Commonwealth fisheries for the benefit of the Australian community.

## 1.1 Our outcome

Ecologically sustainable and economically efficient Commonwealth fisheries, through understanding and monitoring Australia’s marine living resources and regulating and monitoring commercial fishing, including domestic licensing and deterrence of illegal fishing.

## 1.2 Our values

In all our relationships, we uphold the Australian Public Service values. These are:

- Impartial – we are apolitical and provide advice that is frank, honest, timely, and based on the best available evidence.
- Committed to service – we are professional, objective, innovative and efficient.
- Accountable – we are open and accountable to our stakeholders across the Australian community.
- Respectful – we respect all people, including their rights and their heritage.
- Ethical – we demonstrate leadership, are trustworthy, and act with integrity.

These values support our collaborative efforts with commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers and other stakeholders across the Australian community.

## 1.3 Roles and responsibilities

As a regulatory authority and non-corporate Commonwealth entity, AFMA comprises the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Commission, and AFMA staff.

The Commission is responsible for performing and exercising the domestic fisheries management functions and powers of the Authority. The AFMA Commission oversees AFMA’s domestic fisheries management functions including the determination of total allowable catches (TACs) and total allowable (fishing) effort (TAEs), and domestic compliance and monitoring programs. The Commission comprises of six independent Commissioners and the CEO. Commissioners have expertise in public sector administration, natural resource management, economics, legal and governance matters, research, and fishing industry operations.

Our CEO is responsible for performing and exercising AFMA’s foreign compliance functions and powers and assisting the Commission, including giving effect to the decisions of the Commission.

Our staff are responsible for supporting the CEO to meet the CEO’s responsibilities under the FAA and the FMA, as well as AFMA’s accountable authority under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and the agency head for the purposes of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

AFMA also provides fisheries management and compliance services to the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority in respect of Torres Strait commercial fisheries. While these activities fall outside the purview of the AFMA Commission, they are undertaken under the budget, governance arrangements and performance measures in this Corporate Plan.

## 1.4 Corporate structure

AFMA is organised into four functional areas, with the following roles:

- Fisheries management teams: Deliver innovative, transparent, and flexible regulatory arrangements that ensure sustainability of fish stocks and the broader marine environment, while ensuring that barriers to commercial activity are appropriately mitigated.
- Fisheries operations teams: Deliver data-led, risk-based monitoring, control and surveillance and enforcement activities to support the integrity of regulatory measures.
- Fisheries information teams: Develop new and manage existing information products to inform regulatory practice in fisheries management and fisheries operations teams while administering industry-focussed client management.
- Corporate teams: Enable and expedite the work of technical fisheries branches through proactive delivery of supporting services and advice.

The AFMA Executive team, comprising the CEO, Deputy CEO, General Manager Fisheries Operations, and the Chief Operating Officer (COO), empowers the functional teams above through strategic leadership and relationship building within government and across industry, other fishing sectors and broader marine environment stakeholders.



## 1.5 Our objectives

We fulfil our purpose by actively pursuing, and having regard to, our objectives.

Act and section	Summary of objective <sup>1</sup>
<i>Fisheries Administration Act 1991 – section 6</i>	Implement efficient and cost-effective fisheries management.
	Ensure the utilisation of fisheries and related activities is consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. <sup>2</sup>
<i>Fisheries Management Act 1991 – section 3</i>	Where Australia has obligations under international agreements, ensure the utilisation of fish stocks and related activities in the Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ) and the high seas are carried out consistently with those obligations.
	To the extent that Australia has obligations under international law or agreements, ensure that fishing activities by Australian flagged vessels on the high seas are conducted consistently with those obligations. <sup>3</sup>
	Maximise net economic returns to the Australian community from the management of Australian fisheries.
	Ensure accountability to the fishing industry and the Australian community in the management of fisheries resources.
	Achieve government targets in relation to the recovery of AFMA's costs.
	Ensure that the interests of commercial, recreational, and Indigenous fishers are considered.
<i>Fisheries Management Act 1991 – section 3</i>	Ensure, through proper conservation and management measures, that the living resources of the AFZ are not endangered by over-exploitation.
	Achieve optimum utilisation of the living resources of the Australian fishing zone.

Note 1: Objectives that AFMA 'must pursue' are shaded blue. AFMA must 'have regard to' the unshaded objectives.

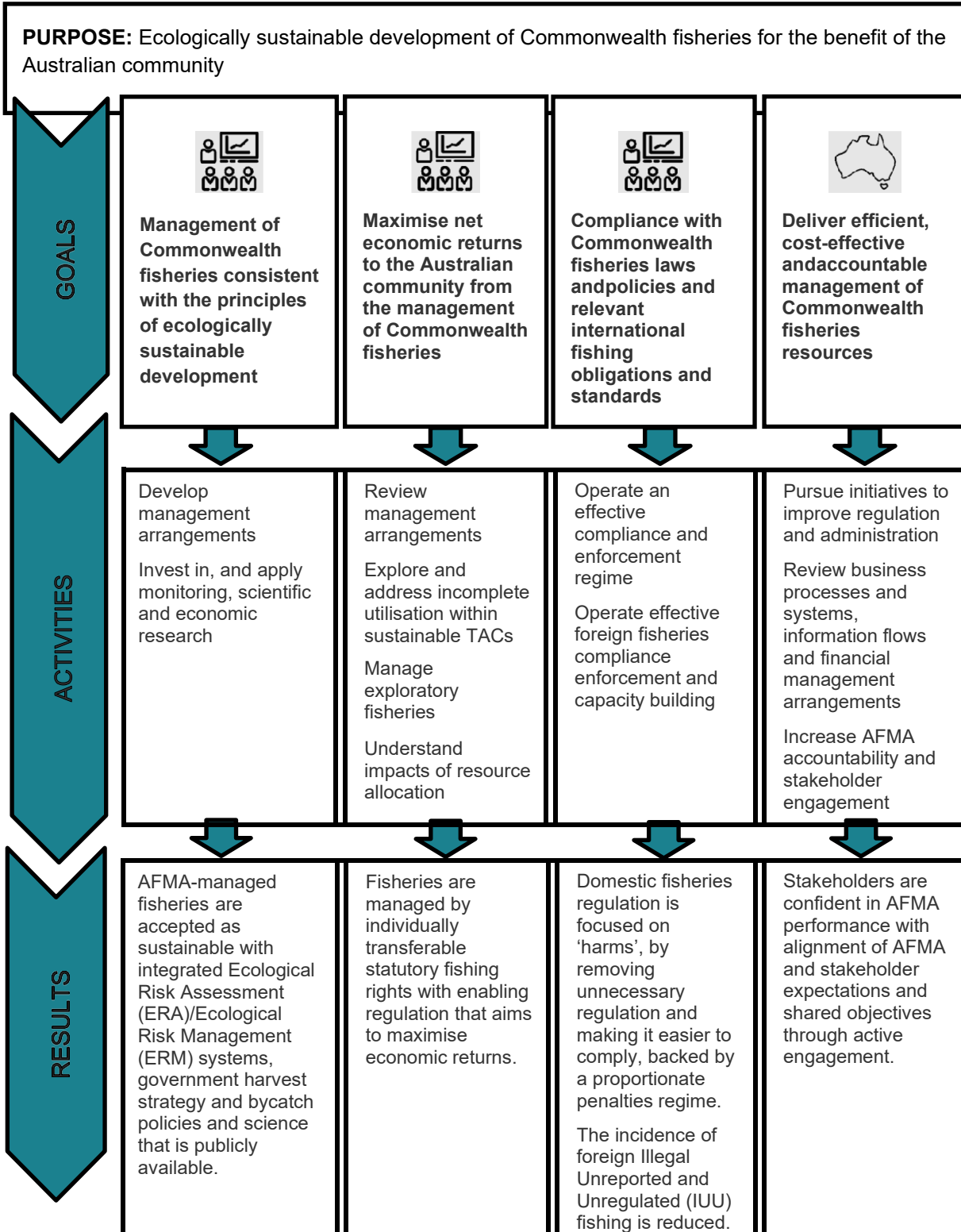
Note 2: The principles of ecologically sustainable development are detailed in section 6A of the FAA.

Note 3: This objective is listed as one that AFMA must pursue in the FAA and as one that AFMA is to have regard to in the FMA.

In pursuing our objectives, we must ensure, as far as practicable, that measures adopted must not be inconsistent with the preservation, conservation, and protection of whales.

## 2 Key activities

We undertake key activities to achieve our purpose.



### 3 Operating context

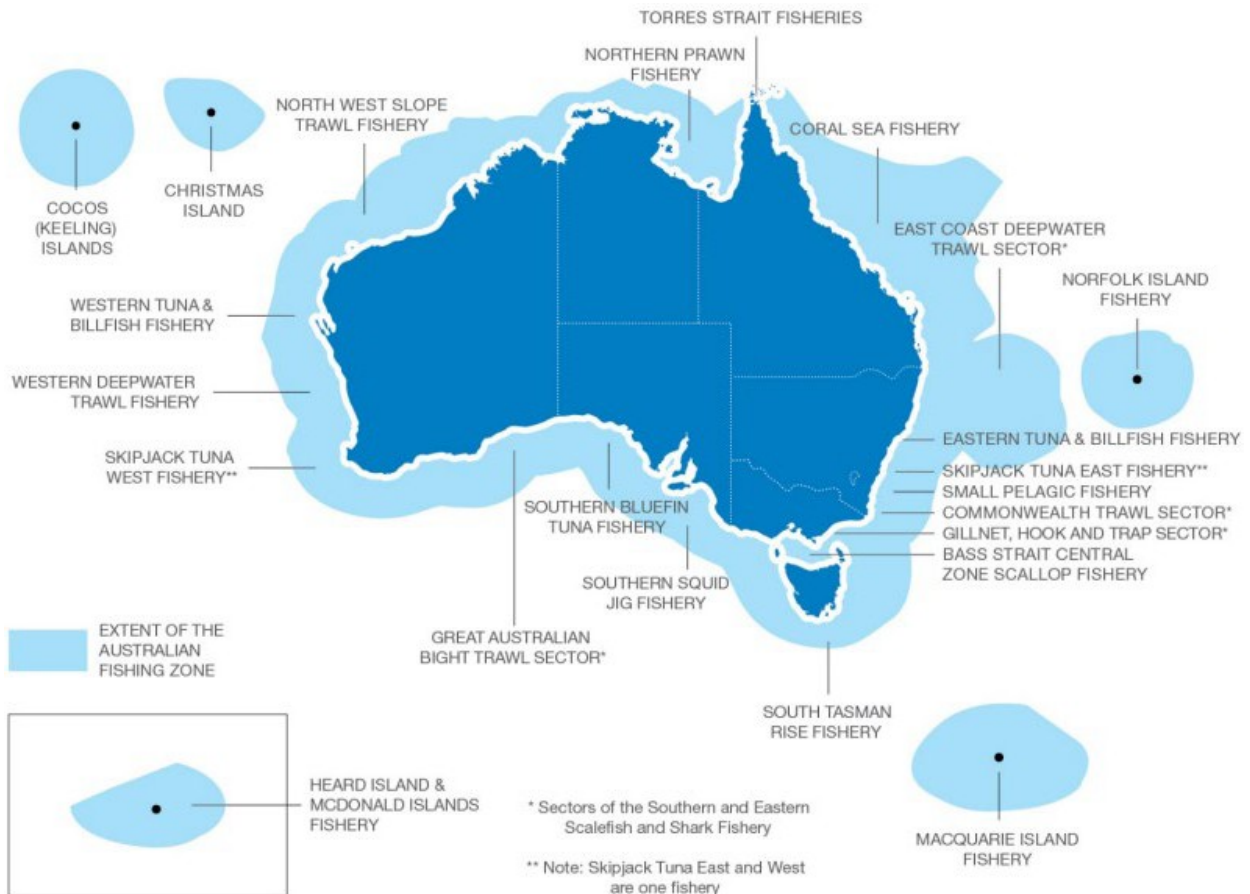
This section sets out the nature of AFMA’s operating context over the four-year period of this corporate plan. It outlines how factors and changes in the operating environment may affect and influence AFMA’s achievement of its purpose.

#### 3.1 Operating environment

We operate in fisheries from the northern-most waters of Australia to Antarctica. We manage the majority of commercial fisheries from three nautical miles from shore to the extent of the Australian Fishing Zone. This includes commercial fisheries that form part of international regional fisheries management arrangements (for example tuna). The States and the Northern Territory manage recreational, traditional indigenous, coastal commercial fisheries, as well as inland fishing and aquaculture. Responsibility for management of fisheries is set out within the Offshore Constitutional Settlement arrangements between the Commonwealth and each State or Territory.

Through our foreign compliance functions, we work together with other Australian Government agencies and our international counterparts to deter illegal fishing in the Australian Fishing Zone.

Map of AFMA managed Commonwealth fisheries





Our regulatory activities are undertaken in an increasingly complex geostrategic environment in the Indo-Pacific. International competition for maritime supremacy increases activities to secure energy supply, sea lines of trade and communication and naval vessel access, which can compete with regulatory and regular fishing activities.

## 3.2 Regulatory landscape

To achieve our regulatory outcomes, we must maintain a contemporary understanding of the public sector and regulator performance. We are actively committed to minimising the regulatory burden of management and compliance, while continuing to ensure that our legislative requirements are met. We implement practical initiatives and reforms that advance deregulation efforts, including incorporating the principles of the Regulator Performance Framework (RPF) that took effect from 1 July 2021. We ensure appropriate cost recovery of all regulatory functions.

Our regulatory context is informed by the Ministerial Statement of Expectations (SOE). On 1 May 2024, Senator the Honourable Murray Watt, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries issued a revised SOE to AFMA. The SOE is published on AFMA’s website ([www.afma.gov.au](http://www.afma.gov.au)). The key intent of the RPF is the three principles of Regulatory Best Practice – continuous improvement and building trust, risk-based and data-driven, and collaboration and engagement. This Corporate Plan and Annual Operating Plan, including the performance measures described below, responds to those three principles.

AFMA has commenced preparation of a Statement of Intent that will set out how we intend to deliver upon the Minister’s expectations within the strategic environment that is shaping Commonwealth fisheries and related public policy. This will also be published on our website.

We are funded by a combination of government appropriations, cost-recovered levies, fee-for-service charges, revenue for the delivery of services to other government agencies, research and development grants and other administered revenue.

The AFMA Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS) outlines the cost of activities that we undertake, the attribution of those costs and how they are recovered. We review the CRIS annually to reflect any changes to AFMA’s cost recovery model and to provide updated revenue and financial estimates. For 2024–25, approximately 36 per cent of our budgeted revenue is expected to come from cost recovered regulatory and research activities.

We seek to optimise cost recovery charges, consistent with the *Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines*, through the efficient implementation of cost recovered activities. Our cost recovery framework is underpinned by the application of the following three principles across all stages of the cost recovery process:

- efficiency and effectiveness
- transparency and accountability, and
- stakeholder engagement.

### 3.3 Competition for marine space – ‘spatial squeeze’

Commercial fisheries face significant pressure on retaining and securing access to space across Australia’s marine estate. For the Commonwealth fishing industry, the main sources of pressure come from the offshore renewable energy sector (wind farm proposals), petroleum acreage release and seismic surveys, and consideration of new, expanded or rezoned Marine Protected Areas.

The Commonwealth fishing industry is concerned about the loss of current, productive fishing grounds at the same time as pressure mounts on its ability to adapt to future changes brought about by climate change (see 3.4 below).

Competing non-fishing marine activities that result in the exclusion of established commercial fishing activities have the potential to devalue Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) that are the financial basis for most AFMA fisheries.

We are increasing our efforts to engage with proponents and regulators of non-fishing activities to ensure greater understanding of the prospective impacts of proposed activities on the existing fishing industry and promote consistency in approach between users to ensure we can continue to pursue our legislated objectives.

### 3.4 Climate change

Climate change is affecting Australia’s marine life from individual species to entire ecosystems. Valuable species that are sensitive to climate change are found in all AFMA fisheries and there is increasing evidence that climate change has already affected several commercially important fish stocks. We recognise the risks that climate change poses to Australia’s Commonwealth fisheries and we will continue ensuring our management activities respond to these risks.

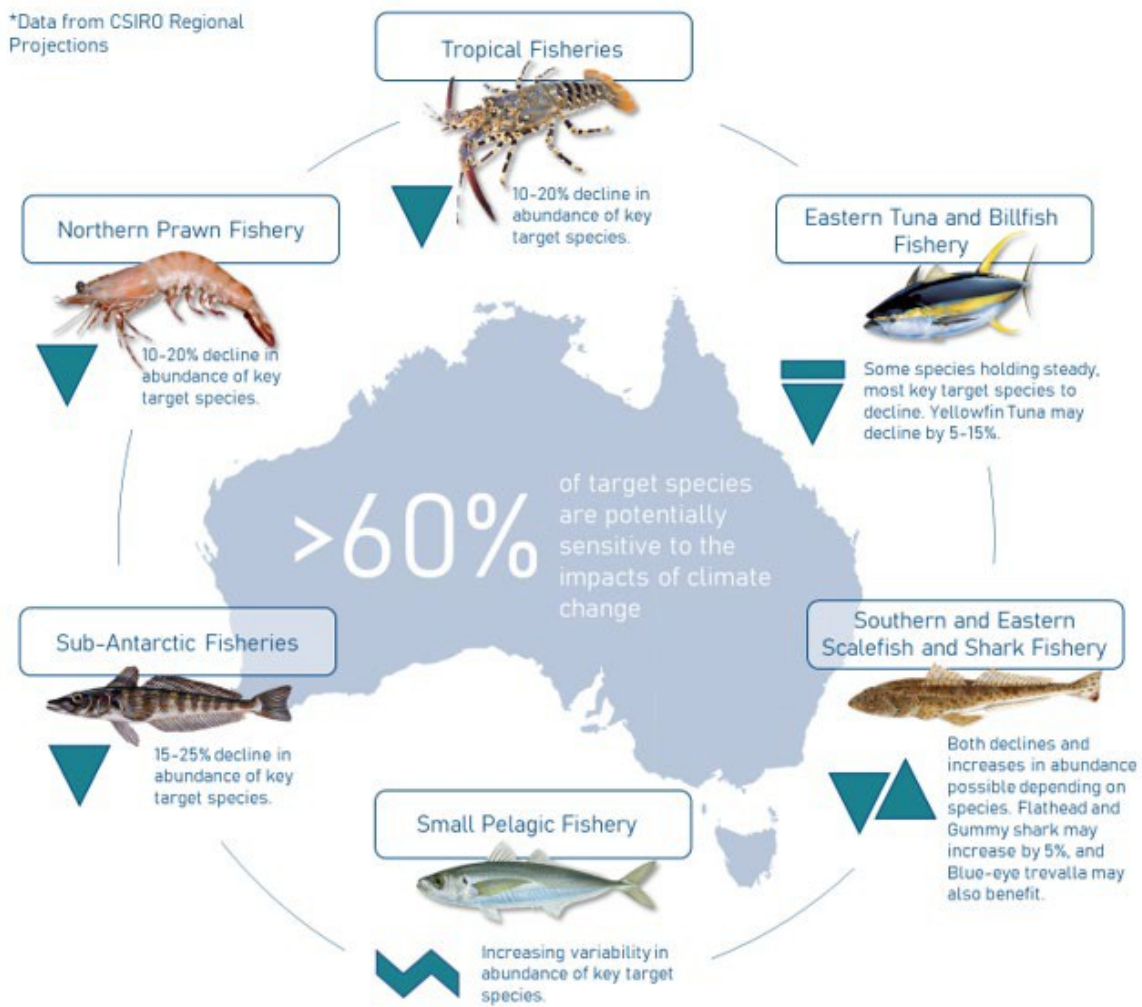
At the same time, we are mindful that fisheries management decision making alone cannot mitigate changes to the marine ecosystem where they are driven by external environmental change. There is growing evidence that, even with no fishing mortality, at least some stocks will decline (or not rebuild) because of climate change. AFMA is engaging in policy discussions across government to pursue a regulatory environment that is sensitive to non-fisheries changes to species and ecosystems to ensure that AFMA’s objectives remain achievable.

Our Climate Adaptation Program aims to ensure information on climate impacts is being incorporated into fisheries management across AFMA fisheries, and that operational and management adaptation options are being developed and implemented. We are already building climate considerations into our decision-making processes, including into our Commission meetings, and our management advisory committees and resource assessment groups. Throughout 2024, AFMA will be trialling a draft Climate Risk Framework that seeks to explicitly incorporate climate risks into the advisory and decision-making process for Commonwealth-managed fisheries.

Other items being progressed through the Climate Adaptation Program include climate and ecosystem status reports and updates, incorporating climate sensitivity and species projections into management discussions, and collecting climate research relevant to our fisheries. Figure 2 presents generalised projections for some fisheries over the period 2020 to 2040. The Climate Adaptation Program will ensure that AFMA is positioned to detect and respond to changes as they arise.

In 2021, AFMA and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation teamed up to develop the *Adaptation of fisheries management to climate change handbook*. This handbook is designed to help fisheries managers and operators identify effective responses to climate change by working through an evidence-based process. We are using this handbook to develop and implement operational and management adaptation options for our fisheries, in close consultation with the fishing industry and other fishery stakeholders.

**Projected climate change footprint in Commonwealth Fisheries 2020–40**



## 3.5 Global and national economy

Our ability to maximise net economic returns to the Australian community from the management of Australian fisheries is impacted by global and national factors. Consumer demand for seafood, both locally and internationally, is continually changing. This was evidenced during the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic when there was a reduction in demand for high end quality seafood for the restaurant market, but domestic sales in Australia grew. Other factors, such as downturns in tourism, as occurred in Indonesia, led to economic pressures on their population and a subsequent rise in the incidence of illegal fishing in Australian waters.

Fisheries margins are being affected by rising costs of fuel, crew payments and availability, bait, freight, and marketing expenses. Some of these costs correlate with total seafood catch as crew may be paid as a proportion of catch, and freight and marketing expenses are related to the volume of catch.

Australia's economic performance impacts AFMA's two funding sources—the Australian Government contribution and the fishing industry through cost recovery levies. Increased pressure on industry-related costs results in an expectation on AFMA to limit increases in these fees and levies. The Australian Government budget is also subject to continual review against national priorities. It is likely the pressure on AFMA's budget will continue.

## 3.6 Assessment and monitoring

Spatial squeeze, climate change, affordability, and global trends all impact our ability to undertake routine monitoring and assessment of fisheries. Fishery dependent data (that is, catch and effort information reported by fishers) is becoming less useful for assessment as it is less comparable due to changing management arrangements (such as closures in areas where fishing used to occur). We are actively looking for more independent ways to provide assurance of fishery sustainability. This is a multifaceted effort, including substantial investment into trialling Electronic Monitoring systems in additional fisheries, collection of broader environmental data, routine implementation of new methods such as genetic stock assessment tools and use of ecosystem models, rather than single species assessment models.

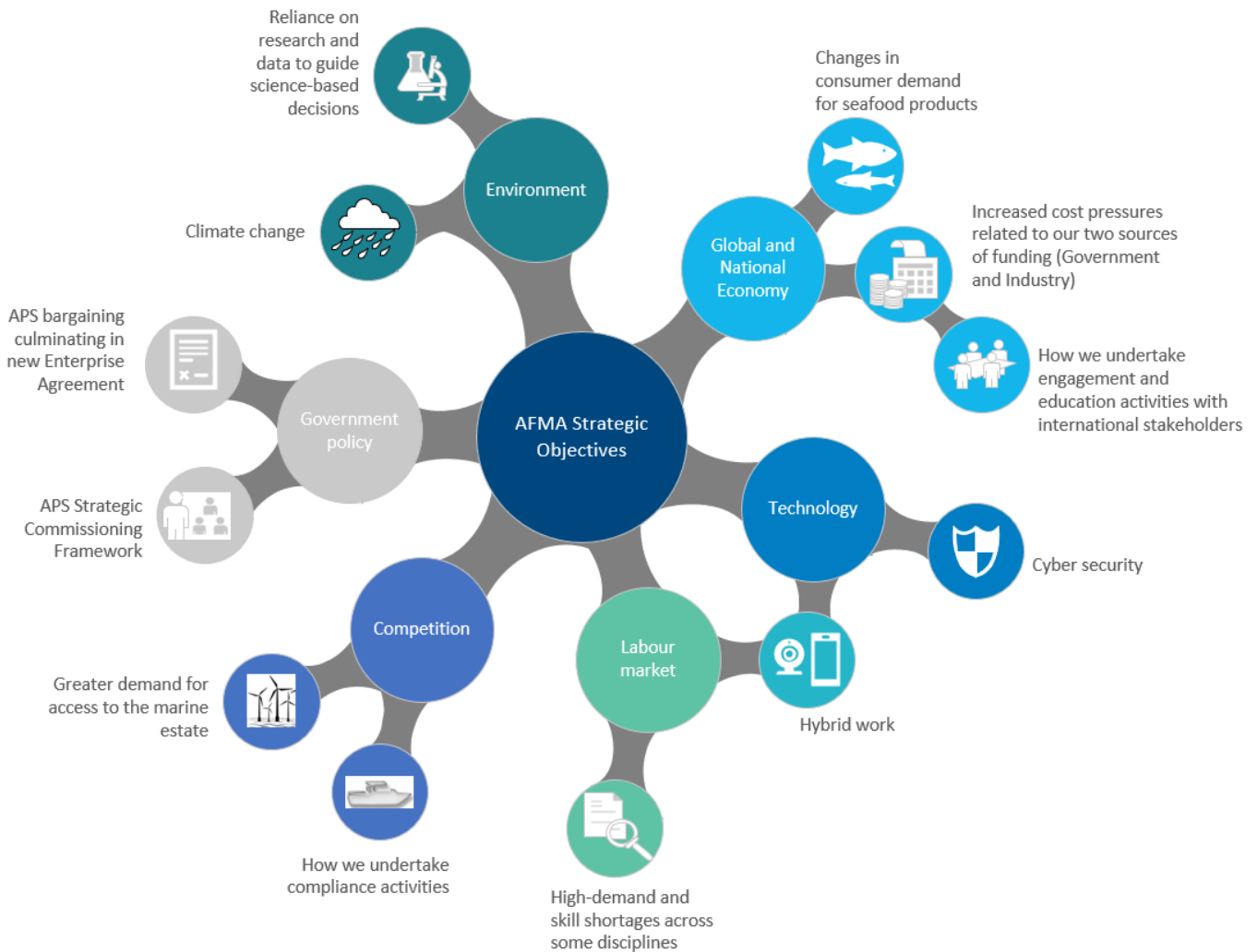
## 3.7 Labour market trends

The rise of the contingent workforce and increasing demand pressures across government sectors and industries has created a patchwork labour market that is increasingly difficult for employers, including AFMA, to navigate. The demand for digital, data, and cyber skills is cutting across the economy with consequent impacts on labour affordability and scarcity. This demand is in part driven by the whole of government digital and data agenda with multiple agencies competing for the same pool of talent. This challenge is amplified for small agencies, such as AFMA to effectively compete with larger agencies and industries. Our default position is to engage Australian Public Service (APS) employees wherever possible, and almost all our core roles are filled in that way.

AFMA’s reliance on contractors, consultants and labour hire companies is relatively low, with almost all functions suitable for APS employees being filled as such. However, contractors and labour hire companies are used in limited circumstances where APS employees are not available or suitable, such as in time-bound capability needs and/or specialised skills that cannot be attracted and hired by government due to less competitive pay rates in the APS. Almost all contractors in AFMA are in the ICT Job Family (17), with a small number also in the Administration (3), Finance and Accounting (1), and Communication and Marketing (1) Job Families. In 2024–25, AFMA will reduce outsourcing of core work in line with the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework. Our targets for 2024–25 are under development and will be reported by 30 June 2024. They will focus on reduced outsourcing in the ICT Job Family, with an expected reduction of approximately \$150,000 in 2024–25 in outsourcing expenditure.

The modern career is also evolving, with much higher levels of job mobility and non-linear careers in the market, including people switching not only jobs but occupations. Australian workplaces are also seeing profound shifts in the way a ‘working life’ is understood and positioned.

**External drivers impacting AFMA’s workforce**





## 3.8 Technology: innovating while managing risk

We are continually looking for opportunities to embrace emerging technologies and assess their potential across our business operations, including testing usability and digital literacy with our users.

Cyber-attacks are growing in number, speed, and sophistication. Australia’s Cyber Security Strategy 2023–2030 sets out the action needed across the Australian economy to create a more secure online world for Australians, their businesses, and the essential services on which they all depend. AFMA continues to implement a range of strategies to ensure the protection of our systems, industry data, and information.

# 4 Capability

Our people are our greatest asset. We will build on our ongoing development of our capability ensuring that we can continue to achieve our purpose and proactively contribute to whole of government priorities. Investments in capability support us in upholding public sector principles and values, while building a workforce that is equipped to meet future priorities and demands.

## 4.1 Workforce

AFMA has developed a *Strategic Workforce Plan 2022–25* which:

- Describes the strategic context the agency operates within and how this impacts the workforce now and in the future.
- Describes the desired future state of our workforce.
- Identifies the key characteristics, strengths, and risk areas related to the current workforce and the gap between these and the desired future state of the agency.
- Proposes the priority areas and actions that can be put in place to secure our workforce demands and strategic goals going forward.

Over the next four years, to address the priority areas for focus to support the capability of our workforce and people, we will:

- Understand the requirements, opportunities, risks, and barriers related to evolving the current hybrid workplace and evolving flexibility and mobility practices and innovative ways of working.
- Identify where processes and procedures can be documented to support business continuity and knowledge transfer.
- Mature our program of strategic workforce analysis and reporting that captures and reports on workforce data that is relevant to business delivery.
- Progress our recruitment plan which outlines our strategic approach to attraction and hiring activities.
- Embed our employee value proposition which clearly articulates why someone would want to work with AFMA.
- Refresh our employee onboarding approach including development of learning content activities for new starters.

- Develop a succession planning model which identifies and develops employees for critical and leadership roles within AFMA.

Our annual Corporate Training program delivers contemporary training solutions to support our people's development. Our essentials mandatory training suite and induction ensure our people understand their responsibilities and obligations as APS employees. All our training encompasses the principles of safety and integrity.

This approach is informed by the Strategic Workforce Plan 2022–25 which identifies the skills and capabilities needed to deliver on strategic outcomes for the agency. We have an ongoing need to maintain and leverage the traditional skills relied on for compliance and regulation, corporate operations and policy work.

There is also an emerging need to develop and grow core technical and soft skills capabilities in stock assessments, digital and analytics, leadership engagement and partnership, ICT, project management, and strategic human resources.

This will be achieved by implementing workforce approaches which:

- ensures AFMA is bringing in and building the skills the agency requires through strategic recruitment and employee development activities, and
- re-thinks the traditional role profiles of the agency and ensures AFMA's workforce composition reflects the right balance and mix of skills.

We are continuing to facilitate graduate programs and partner with local and international universities to upskill students and attract talent.

## Skills we need to maintain and build

AFMA will have an ongoing requirement to maintain and leverage existing skills related to:

### Compliance and regulation

Intelligence, investigation, inspection, enforcement and supporting the judicial process.

### Policy

Policy design and development, policy analysis, governance, provision of policy advice.

### Science

Natural resource management, marine biology, and environmental science.

### Corporate operations

Accounting and finance, administration, human resources, legal, IT, and corporate governance.

### Leadership and management

Managing teams, strategic leadership, influencing, representation, and fostering productive working relationships.

Along with the existing skills there is a need to grow:

### Data analytics

Structured Query Language (SQL), statistical programming, machine learning, data visualisation, data management, and data mining.

### Business intelligence

Research, analytics, evaluation of information and data, and problem solving. As well as the use of Business Intelligence technology i.e., ESRI, and PowerBI.

### Engagement and partnership

Interpersonal skills, communication, negotiation and influential communication, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence.

### International capacity

Cross-cultural sensitivity and communication, understanding and application of legislation, geopolitical understanding, risk analysis, collaboration, networking, adaptive thinking, resilience.

Skills we need to maintain and build	
<p><b>Stakeholder engagement</b></p> <p>Stakeholder management and engagement, collaboration, facilitation, and education.</p> <p><b>Administration</b></p> <p>Reporting, contract management, information management, editing and proof-reading, minute taking, and scheduling.</p>	<p><b>Information and communications technology (ICT)</b></p> <p>Strategy and architecture, change and transformation, development and implementation, and delivery and operation.</p> <p><b>Project management</b></p> <p>Planning, resource management, reporting, and risk management.</p> <p><b>Strategic human resources</b></p> <p>Human Resource data analytics, strategic recruitment, employee development, future ways of working, and workforce planning.</p> <p><b>Social sciences and economics</b></p> <p>Logical reasoning and critical evaluation, analytical and research skills, economic modelling, understanding the relationships between variables (such as policy, social impact and economic factors).</p>

## 4.2 Infrastructure

We have offices in Canberra, Darwin, Waiben (Thursday) Island, and Lakes Entrance. Continual evolution of remote working arrangements will necessitate a review of office footprints in most locations. Over the next four years, we will continue to maintain owned residential and commercial property on Waiben Island to support regional staff in achieving their objectives. Significant upgrades to these properties will be undertaken using capital expenditure to extend the life of these assets and maintain a suitable work and living standard for staff. Office fit out projects will also be undertaken for regional AFMA offices utilising capital funds to modernise and consolidate workspaces.

## 4.3 ICT capability

Our ICT infrastructure must remain modern, functional, and secure, to enable our staff to effectively engage, communicate, and interact with a broad and diverse range of internal and external individuals, groups, organisations, and government departments.

To support modernisation and address several key ICT support, performance, and operational issues we will replace and upgrade most of our core ICT infrastructure and networking equipment across AFMA, its data centres, and its regional offices.

We have interrelated ICT projects that will replace aging and legacy technology, equipment and hardware with modern contemporary and supportable ICT systems and services. This is a multi-year technology uplift program of work. This will deliver a modern enterprise architecture design that provides robust business continuity, improved cybersecurity, and disaster recovery capability.

The broader digital transformation within AFMA (which includes technology uplift, and our Data Transformation and Electronic Monitoring projects) will deliver significant improvements, enhancements, and tangible benefits to functionality and performance to support the way we operate and deliver our legislative, regulatory, and research services and obligations to industry, academia, and government.

In addition, the expected deliverables and success of the Data Transformation and Electronic Monitoring program will significantly improve the quality, usability, and accessibility of AFMA's substantial data holdings. New data architecture and reporting tools will help to improve the analysis and decision-making capabilities for our staff and our partner agencies.

## 5 Risk oversight and management

To ensure we can achieve our objectives and support our purpose over the life of this plan, we are committed to effective risk management and oversight. Our internal control measures identify, assess, monitor and manage material risks related to our business activities, and help ensure that our risk posture is both appropriate and fit for purpose.

In 2024–25 our key enterprise risks, and the primary way, but not only way, that they are being managed are:

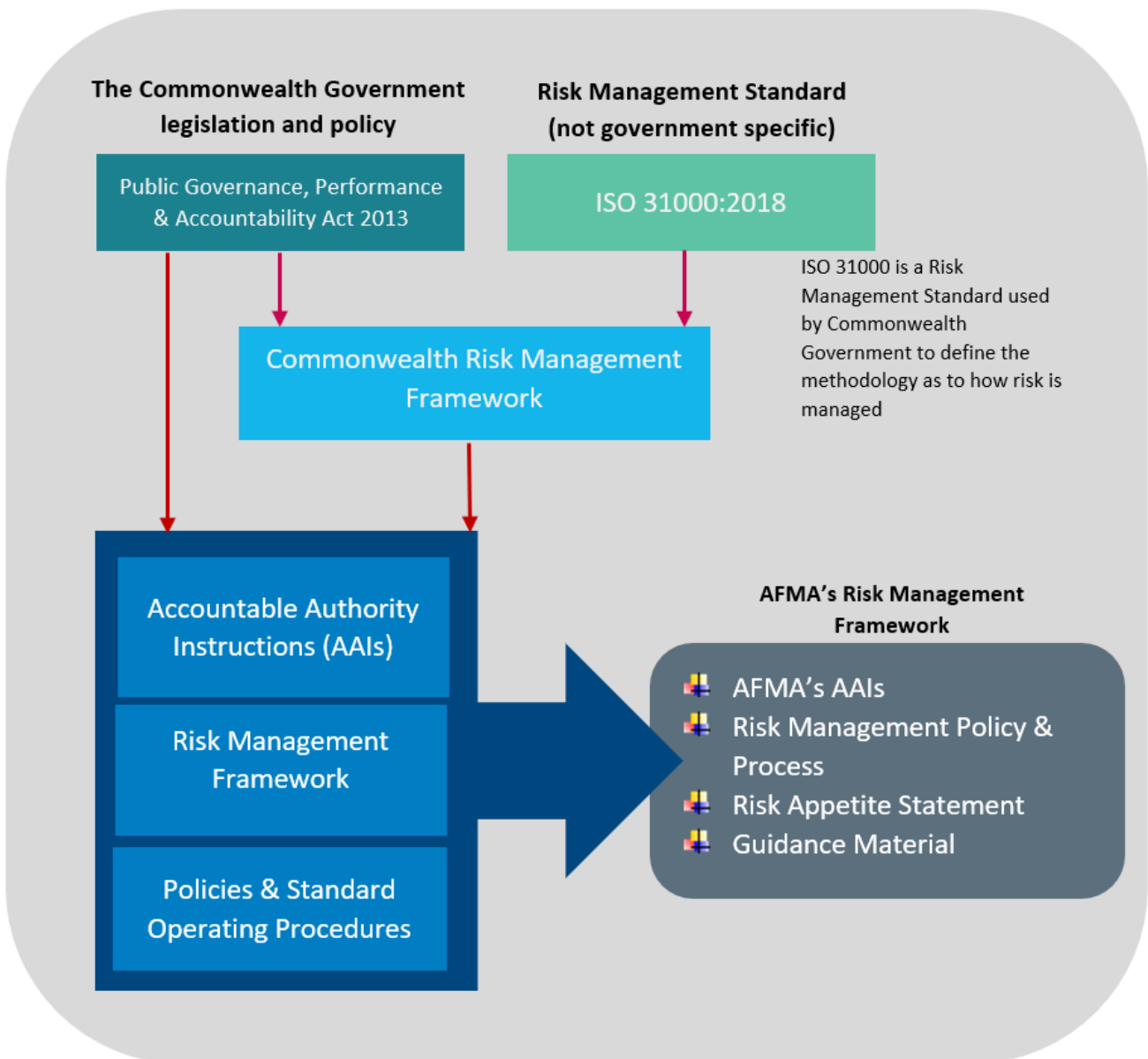
- Climate change adaptation and impact: The Commission has adopted a climate risk framework to better ensure these impacts are incorporated in fisheries decision making.
- Illegal foreign fishing: AFMA participates in the whole of government civil maritime security strategy and engages in operational response in collaboration with Maritime Border Command and Australian Border Force. New resources have been secured to increase these efforts in 2024–25.
- Decreasing quantity and quality of fishery dependent data for stock assessment: AFMA is investigating new monitoring tools, such as ecosystem models and genetic methods, while also seeking to increase independent data collection, through systems like electronic monitoring.
- Cyber security resilience: A comprehensive cyber security review is underway to ensure compliance with the essential eight model.
- IT cost sustainment due to accrued technology debt: The data transformation program focuses on reducing technical debt and providing a modernised basis for AFMA systems. Ongoing sustainment costs are specifically considered in solution design.
- Declining economic viability of commercial fishing fleet with associated risk to capacity to pay levies. AFMA continually reviews its regulatory approach to minimise undue barriers to viability.



We manage these and other risks through the AFMA Risk Management Framework. Our internal risk appetite is addressed in this framework. We have also developed a Risk Forum that will meet quarterly to discuss strategic and enterprise risks, including fraud risks and business continuity plans. These measures are consistent with the Commonwealth Risk Management Framework.

AFMA’s Audit and Risk Committee provides independent advice to our CEO on our risk management arrangements and systems of internal control.

**AFMA’s Risk Management Framework**



## 6 Cooperation

To ensure a sustainable, productive and profitable fishing industry, we engage with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). This cooperation ensures our regulation is consistent with government policy and that our Minister is informed about our activities and performance in the portfolio. It also ensures that Australia's policy positions on international fisheries are informed by AFMA, and that our implementation of international measures is best practice.

AFMA also works closely with State and Northern Territory fisheries regulators to ensure that shared stocks are appropriately managed to and to seek management efficiency where possible.

We work closely within Maritime Border Command, a multi-agency taskforce led by Australian Border Force, and supported by relevant agencies, to coordinate the surveillance of, and responses to, civil maritime threats including illegal foreign fishing. We work directly with neighbouring governments to improve their ability to monitor and control fishing activities in their own waters. We also collaborate with international partners to implement and strengthen regional fisheries frameworks and exchange information to address illegal fishing on a larger scale.

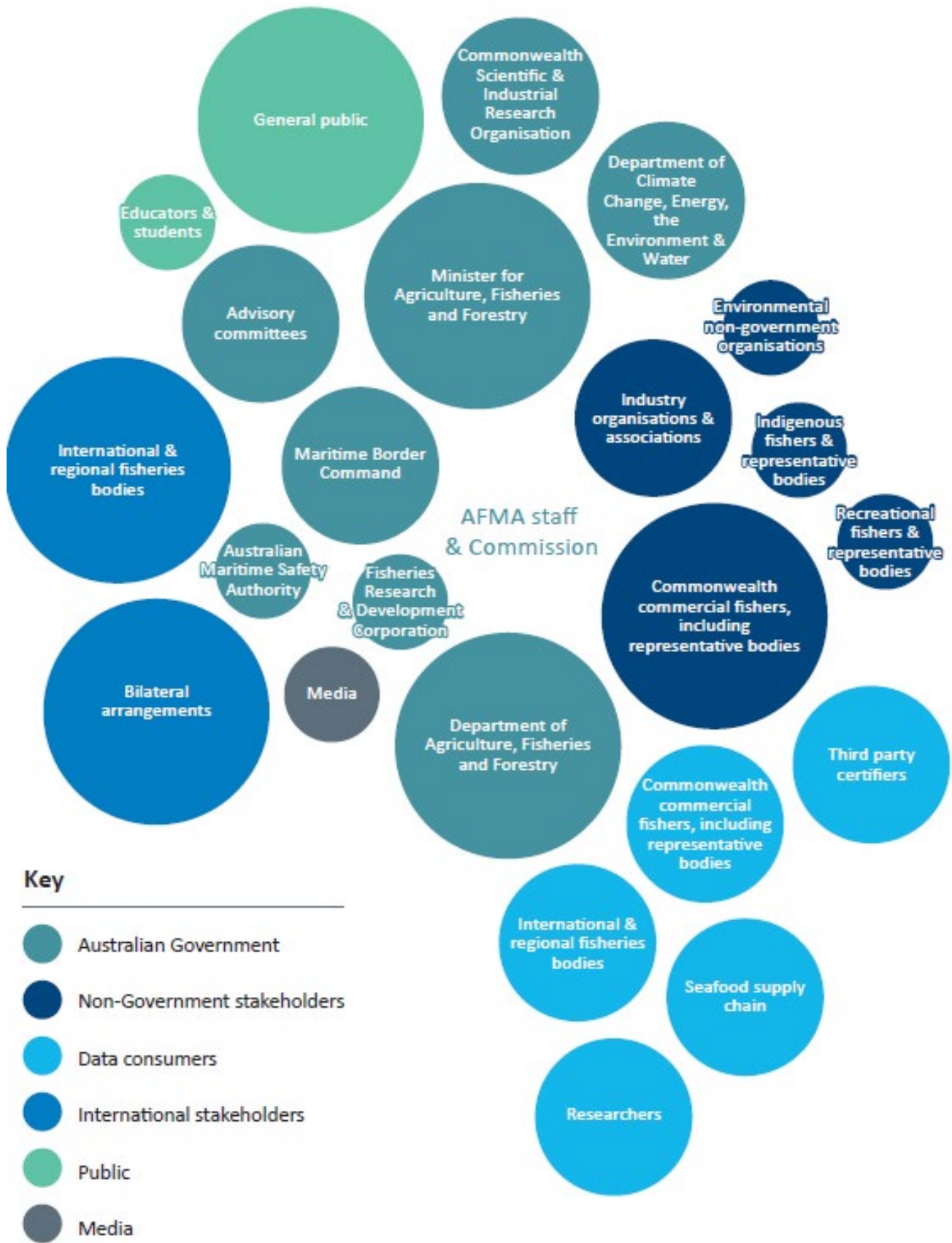
We engage with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to ensure Commonwealth fisheries data and impacts inform the department's policy and regulatory decision making, as well as on matters relating to environmental accreditation, such as Wildlife Trade Operation requirements.

We provide fisheries management, licensing and domestic compliance services for the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) under the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*. Decisions under this legislation are made by the PZJA, which includes the Commonwealth Fisheries Minister (Chair), the Queensland Fisheries Minister and the Chair of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

We maintain regular contact with the Chair and Board of the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA) as the peak body prescribed under the FAA. We also regularly interact with the fishery-specific members of the CFA both on an informal basis and through formal consultative structures such as Management Advisory Committees (MACs).

We engage with stakeholder groups through MACs, Resource Assessment Groups (RAGs), scientific panels, working groups, commercial fishing representatives, Indigenous communities, recreational and charter fishing representatives, researchers, environment/conservation organisations using contemporary digital, web, and social media communication channels.





Our stakeholders



## 7 Performance

Our performance measures for 2024–25 are presented in the table below. Our targets are the same for each of the reporting periods covered by this Corporate Plan. We plan to continue our incremental improvements of these measures and targets over the next four years. In particular, we plan to review performance measures for which we depend on timely third-party information (3, 6, 10 and 11) or are expecting policy changes (5).


AFMA has developed and implemented Standard Operating Procedures that set out the rationale and basis for each measure above, as well as the information and method that AFMA will use to report performance in its Annual Report.

	<i>Measure (Budget Year 2024-25)</i>	<i>Target</i>
 <p><b>Management of Commonwealth fisheries consistent with principles of ecological sustainable development</b></p>	1. Percentage of TAC determinations, or comparable measures, that are based on scientific assessments by resource assessment groups/ management advisory committees.	Greater than or equal to 95 per cent.
	2. The number of regulated fisheries assessed in accordance with AFMA's published ERA schedule.	As per published assessment schedule. <sup>1</sup>
	3. The number of stocks identified as overfished that have specific rebuilding actions in place.	100 per cent of stocks identified as overfished have a specific rebuilding action in place.
	4. Fisheries that maintain accreditation through compliance with legislative requirements.	100 per cent of fisheries maintain accreditation.
 <p><b>Maximise net economic returns to the Australian community from the management of Commonwealth fisheries</b></p>	5. The number of stocks with target reference points based on MEY, an agreed proxy thereof, or a multi-stock harvest strategy.	No change or increase.
	6. Net Economic Return as assessed in the ABARES Fishery Status Reports.	Positive trend over rolling three-year average.
 <p><b>Compliance with Commonwealth fisheries laws and policies and relevant international fishing obligations and standards</b></p>	7. Identification of priority national compliance risks and development of treatment programs for those priority risks.	100% of published national compliance risks <sup>2</sup> have treatment programs in place.
	8. Investigation of illegal foreign fishing in Australian waters to support prosecutions.	90 percent of briefs referred to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions for illegal foreign fishing offences proceed to prosecution.
	9. Compliance rate with Australia's international fisheries obligations that AFMA implements as assessed by IFMOs.	Greater than 90 per cent.
 <p><b>Deliver efficient, cost-effective and accountable management of Commonwealth fisheries resources</b></p>	10. Cost recovery budget.	At or below 2005–06 once adjusted for CPI.
	11. Engagement with legislated peak body.	Commonwealth Fisheries Association is satisfied that meaningful opportunity is given to contribute to planning, delivery, and reporting.

Note 1: The Environmental Risk Assessment schedule is available at: <https://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-management/management-tools/ecological-risk-management-strategies>

Note 2: The national compliance risks are available at: <https://www.afma.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/2023-25-National-Compliance-and-Enforcement-Program-FINAL.pdf>

# 8 Annual Operational Plan

 <b>Australian Government</b> <b>Australian Fisheries Management Authority</b>		<h2>Annual Operational Plan 2024-25</h2>		
<b>Regulator Performance Guide principles</b>	Continuous improvement, building trust	<b>AFMA activities to meet Regulator Performance Guide principles</b>	Fisheries outcomes are independently assessed and published annually, creating transparency, accountability, and a basis for improvement.	
	Risk based and data driven		Decisions and regulatory implementation are underpinned by best available science and operational information and analysis of risk and uncertainty.	
	Collaboration and engagement		Decisions are supported by expertise and stakeholder-based collaboration through formal and informal processes.	
<b>Deliver regulatory services according to applicable fisheries legislation</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>	<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Area</b>
	<b>Management of Commonwealth fisheries consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development</b>	Developing management arrangements that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the implementation of Commonwealth fisheries policies including the Harvest Strategy and Bycatch Policies</li> <li>- Implement AFMA's Ecological Risk Management Framework</li> <li>- Recover overfished stocks and prevent overfishing</li> <li>- Ensure commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishing information is used to the extent possible in decision making.</li> </ul> Investing in and applying monitoring, scientific and economic research to decision making on fish stocks, sub-stocks, species (target and non-target species) and the impact of fishing on the marine environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invest in different science.</li> <li>- Integrate research efforts and findings.</li> <li>- Trial and implement a Climate Risk Framework across Commonwealth fisheries.</li> <li>- Implement a new multi-species harvest strategy for key south-eastern fisheries.</li> </ul>	FMB FMB FMB  FMB
	<b>Maximise net economic returns to the Australian community from the management of Commonwealth fisheries</b>	Reviewing management arrangements to take into account commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishing interests when maximising net economic returns from the commercial sector. Increasing catch levels within sustainable total allowable catches (TACs) by conducting and considering implementation of research focussed on under caught TACs. Managing developmental fisheries (potentially underutilised fisheries). Understanding impacts of resource allocation between commercial, recreational, and Indigenous fishers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase fisheries profile in broader marine discussions.</li> <li>- Continually review domestic regulatory footprint.</li> </ul>	Exec, FMB, FISB
	<b>Compliance with Commonwealth fisheries laws and policies and relevant international fishing obligations and standards</b>	Operating an effective compliance and enforcement regime encompassing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Measures to maximise voluntary compliance.</li> <li>- Risk-based, intelligence driven, and targeted domestic operations.</li> <li>- Building and maintaining strategic links and relationships with relevant law enforcement agencies.</li> </ul> Operating effective foreign fisheries compliance enforcement and capacity building by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementing strategies to deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) foreign fishing in Australian waters and on the high seas where Australia has an interest.</li> <li>- Delivering capacity building programs internationally and providing technical input to support key regional and international fishing bodies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase detection and actions; decrease prevalence of illegal foreign fishing vessels; mitigate risk.</li> <li>- Re-task administrative funding.</li> </ul>	FOB  FOB, CSB
<b>Deliver efficient, cost-effective and accountable management of Commonwealth fisheries resources</b>	Pursuing initiatives to improve regulation and administration generally in the Australian Government sector including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exploring opportunities to streamline fisheries assessment and management processes.</li> <li>- Implementing revised fisheries policies for harvest strategies and bycatch.</li> </ul> Reviewing business processes and systems, information flows and financial management arrangements through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessing and mitigating high financial and operating risks.</li> <li>- Trialling new and cost-effective methods of collecting essential data.</li> </ul> Increasing AFMA accountability and stakeholder engagement through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanded membership of management advisory committees (MACs) and resource assessment groups (RAGs).</li> <li>- Capability development for recreational and Indigenous stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technology repair and sustainment, to enable data transformation and electronic monitoring program.</li> <li>- Implement Workforce Plan and Enterprise Agreement to ensure staff recruitment and retention.</li> <li>- Pursue efficiencies in AFMA business processes and physical footprint.</li> <li>- Continued implementation of recommendations from the Advisory Committee review.</li> <li>- COMRAC research priorities for Indigenous and recreational interests.</li> </ul>	CSB  CSB  CSB, All  FISB, CSB  FOB, CSB	
Consistent with section 77 of the <i>Fisheries Administration Act 1991</i> , this Annual Operational Plan relates to the reporting period commencing on 1 July 2024. It sets out the particulars of the action that we intend to take in order to give effect to, or further, the goals in the Corporate Plan relating to this period. We do not intend to determine, or otherwise institute, a plan of management during 2024-25.				





**SENATOR THE HON MURRAY WATT  
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY  
MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

MS23-001442

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Dear Mr Norris *Wez*

I am writing to set out my expectations of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) in managing and regulating Commonwealth fisheries. This Ministerial Statement of Expectations is a requirement under the Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide 128 (RMG 128) administered by the Department of Finance.

I recognise AFMA's important role in managing and monitoring commercial Commonwealth fishing to ensure Australian fish stocks and our fishing industry are viable now and into the future. I provide my full support to AFMA in delivering the strict fisheries management practices required, including appropriate compliance activity.

This Ministerial Statement of Expectations outlines my expectations for how AFMA is to deliver these responsibilities and I ask that you respond with a Statement of Intent providing advice on the approach your agency will take to deliver against these expectations.

Ministerial Statement of Expectations

I recognise AFMA's responsibility for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fisheries resources for the Australian community. I expect AFMA to maintain Australia's high regulatory standards. In doing so I expect AFMA to adhere to the three principles of best practice described in RMG 128 – continuous improvement and building trust, risk-based and data-driven and collaboration and engagement. I also expect AFMA to respond to independent reviews and audits as part of a program of continual regulatory practice improvement.

As the responsible Minister, I will work with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to ensure policy and legislation governing AFMA and the broader fishing industry remain effective and fit for purpose. I expect AFMA to continue to provide timely advice to Government and DAFF regarding the legislative and policy framework, including scope for reform and improvement. I expect this advice to be informed by ongoing consultation and collaboration with industry and other stakeholders.

With respect to its regulatory responsibilities, I expect AFMA to:

- maintain and continue to strengthen its engagement with relevant stakeholders, including strategic engagement with the Commonwealth Fisheries Association as the legislated peak body, including on issues such as climate change and competition for marine space
- strengthen engagement with First Nations peoples to understand and take into account indigenous fishing interests in the regulatory process. Particularly in the Torres Strait, I expect AFMA to continue to harness opportunities for First Nations communities with respect to both undertaking regulatory activities and benefiting from their outcomes
- review cost recovery arrangements regularly to ensure they reflect changes to the Department of Finance Cost Recovery Guidelines and optimise cost recovery charges through efficient implementation of cost recovered activities
- continue to build capability across technology, workforce and infrastructure and effectively manage and escalate any associated risks.

In the context of the above expectations, I ask that particular attention be given to:

- continuing implementation of Commonwealth fisheries policy, in particular the Harvest Strategy Policy (HSP) and Bycatch Policy. I also expect that AFMA will participate proactively in the review of these policies
- ensuring the interests of commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers are taken into account
- increasing AFMA's accountability and stakeholder engagement through appropriate membership of management advisory committees and resource assessment groups
- continuing to implement measures to prevent overfishing and allow for the recovery of overfished stocks with a primary focus on stocks solely managed by AFMA in accordance with the HSP
- working with DAFF to build a more formal framework for cooperation with states and the Northern Territory for the management of straddling and shared stocks, especially those that are depleted or declining
- ensuring that Total Allowable Catch (or Effort) levels ensure sustainability for all AFMA managed stocks and also maximise net economic returns from fisheries
- providing fisheries advice and data in respect of proposals for alternative uses of the marine estate
- integrating information, data and research on climate impacts into fisheries management decision-making processes
- expanding electronic monitoring (EM) across all major Commonwealth fisheries to collect independent at sea fishing data. In particular, I expect current EM trial phases in the Northern Prawn Fishery, Great Australian Bight Trawl Sector and the Commonwealth Trawl Sector fisheries to be completed by January 2025, and for AFMA to expeditiously prepare and publish outcome reports including, where appropriate, implementation plans for roll-out
- continuing to strengthen compliance and enforcement measures to maximise voluntary compliance, deter and eliminate illegal foreign fishing as well as build capacity and support fisheries bodies in the region

- providing fisheries focus within the Australian Government Civil Maritime Surveillance and Response Program, including through engagement with DAFF and Maritime Border Command.

#### Regulator Performance

The Regulator Performance Resource Management Guide requires you, as the Accountable Authority, to report AFMA's regulatory performance in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. This applies for the 2023-24 planning and reporting cycle.

I ask that this Ministerial Statement of Expectations and your Statement of Intent be available on [afma.gov.au](http://afma.gov.au) and [transparency.gov.au](http://transparency.gov.au) and in the AFMA Annual Report.

I look forward to working cooperatively on these important priorities.

Yours sincerely



MURRAY WATT

1 / 5 / 2024