

# Evolution of the FRDC to 2018-19

A “corporate memory”  
of the activities of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation  
since its establishment in 1991, for reference  
by directors and other interested people.

*October 2019 edition*



Evolution of the FRDC  
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The FRDC acknowledges the invaluable creative input of Peter Dundas-Smith AM and John Wilson in the preparation of this document.

# Evolution of the FRDC to 2019

*The structure of this document is chronological. In the case of themes that have evolved over the years, to avoid repetitive listing the description of the inaugural activity is followed by a paragraph summarising subsequent developments. Such paragraphs are enclosed by square brackets and are coloured **indigo**. This does not apply in cases where subsequent developments are of significant note.*

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## Evolution of key corporate terminologies

Listed in this table are some key corporate terminologies that have evolved during the timespan of this document, including some that, although not in current use, have been important. The entries are in chronological order of first occurrence.

Term	Page number (first reference)
<p>FIRTA → FIRDC → FRDC</p> <p>Fishing Industry Research Trust Account → Fishing Industry Research and Development Council → Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.</p> <p><i>Nature of the entities:</i> FIRDC was one of the 18 rural industry research and development councils established in 1985; the FRDC was incorporated in 1991.</p>	9
<p>DPIE → AFFA → DAFF → DOA → DAWR → DA</p> <p>Department of Primary Industries and Energy → Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia → Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry → Department of Agriculture → Department of Agriculture and Water Resources → Department of Agriculture</p> <p><i>Role of the entity:</i> Australian Government's department responsible for agriculture</p>	7
<p>PIERD Act → PIRD Act</p> <p><i>Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act 1989.</i> In 2013 the Act was updated and energy was removed from the title to become the <i>Primary Industries Research and Development Act 1989</i>.</p> <p><i>Role of the legislation:</i> regulate activities of rural R&amp;D corporations.</p>	7

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AFIC → NFIC → ASIC → NAC+CFA (see note) → NSIA → SIA

Australian Fishing Industry Council → National Fishing Industry Council →

Australian Seafood Industry Council → (see note) → National Seafood Industry

Alliance → Seafood Industry Australia

*Role of the entity:* to act as the voice of the Australian seafood industry. It provides members, consumers, governments and other stakeholders with confident and united representation.

*Note:* From NFIC onwards it was a representative organisation to which the FRDC is required to report in accordance with the PIRD Act. When ASIC ceased trading in 2006–07, its place as a representative organisation was taken by the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (albeit the state and NT wild-catch sectors were then not represented) and the National Aquaculture Council. In 2011 the National Seafood Industry Alliance (whose membership includes state and NT wild-catch sectors) was declared a representative organisation. Seafood Industry Australia was launched in June 2017 and in 2018 was declared a representative organisation while at the same time NSIA was revoked as a representative organisation and became an informal body.

(The National Seafood Industry Alliance was incorporated after the Commonwealth Fisheries Association and National Aquaculture Council were formed; the latter two remain independent but were members of the Alliance. The Alliance was wound up after the formation of Seafood Industry Australia in 2018).

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ABARE + BRS → ABARES

10

Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics + Bureau of Rural Sciences → Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences.

*Role of the entity:* an Australian Government research bureau providing research, analysis and advice for government and private sector decision-makers on issues affecting Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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NSC and AUSEAS and SeaQual → SSA

15

National Seafood Centre + Australian Seafood Extension and Advisory Service + Seafood Quality → Seafood Services Australia Ltd.

*Role of the entities:* respectively, improve value-adding of seafood; help the commercial sector to take up leading-edge post-harvest technology; provide quality management and food safety guidelines for seafood processing; and enhance the profitability, international competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of the Australian seafood industry. SSA deregistered in 2013.

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IC → PC

13

Industry Commission → Productivity Commission.

*Role of the entity:* advise on economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians.

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NFITC → ASIEN → STA → AISC → ASA	16
National Fishing Industry Training Council → Australian Seafood Industry Education Network → Seafood Training Australia → Agri-Food Industry Skills Council → AgriFood Skills Australia → Skills Impact. <i>Role of the entities:</i> industry training for the commercial sector.	
CAC Act → PGPA Act	20
<i>Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 → Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.</i> <i>Role of the legislation:</i> the CAC Act enacted accountability arrangements for statutory authorities; the PGPA Act established a single system of governance and a performance framework across all Australian Government entities.	
Standing Council on Primary Industries (ScoPI) Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC), and the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC) → Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN) Primary Industry Standing Committee (PISC) → Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) AGSOC is supported by the Research and Innovation Committee	40
FRAB → RAC	11
<i>Role of entities:</i> To advise the FRDC of RD&E priorities for their respective jurisdictions	
Aquaculture CRC,	12
Aquafin CRC,	24
Seafood CRC	10
(not contiguous)	
Cooperative Research Centre for Aquaculture,	
Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture of Finfish,	
Australian Seafood Cooperative Research Centre.	
<i>Role of the entities:</i> respectively, develop emerging aquaculture species; add significant value to the FRDC's subprograms for Southern Bluefin Tuna and Atlantic Salmon; and drive a national approach to closing major gaps in the seafood industry value chain.	

## Pre-1991: Fisheries research before the FRDC's establishment

Australian Fisheries Services, an element within the federal Department of Primary Industries and Energy (DPIE), managed the Fishing Industry Research Trust Account. Similar trust accounts were managed within the department for other industries.

[The FRDC inherited and has stored all the reports on research undertaken by its predecessors since 1971.]

In 1984–85, following a study of rural research, the *Rural Industries Research Act* was enacted.

As a result, 18 rural industry research and development councils were established, including the Fishing Industry Research and Development Council (FIRDC). The councils were intended to provide greater transparency about funding of rural R&D and at the same time give the respective industries more say about how such funds were invested. Bernard Bowen was appointed as the first chair of FIRDC. He was assisted by an executive officer, Michael Walker. Both were based in Perth.

Alan Newton, a senior officer within DPIE, played a leading role in setting up the councils. Subsequently, in 1989, Alan produced the *Research Innovation and Competitiveness Statement*, which initiated an evolution in the way in which rural research was funded. It was substantiated in the enactment of the *Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act 1989* (PIERD Act), developed by the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, The Hon. John Kerin.

As a result, most councils soon afterwards evolved into new corporations under the PIERD Act. Fisheries, however, did not.

[In 2013 the Sugar RDC became an Industry Owned Corporation leaving only the Cotton RDC, FRDC, Grains RDC, Grape and Wine RDC, and Rural industries RDC as statutory corporations.]

The move towards formation of the FRDC was flagged in the Commonwealth Government Policy Statement of December 1989, *New Directions for Commonwealth Fisheries Management in the 1990s*. The statement established the framework for the FRDC and the Fisheries Resources Research Fund, and stipulated that the Commonwealth's funding was to be expended on "research which is directly management related and specific to a fishery be funded by those entitled to operate in that fishery, in proportion to the benefits received".

In late 1989, Alan Newton formed a committee within Australian Fisheries Services to develop new directions for Commonwealth fisheries management. The main item was the establishment of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. However, it did examine the case for fisheries to establish an R&D corporation. In implementing the recommendations, Alan and his committee liaised with the Australian Fishing Industry Council<sup>1</sup>, state industry councils and state governments.

Notwithstanding qualified support for setting up a fisheries RDC, the slow pace at which this happened reflected the states not wanting to lose control of the R&D agenda, which was mostly related to fisheries management, and industry not wanting to increase its contribution to fisheries management research. Hence, when the FRDC came to be established under the PIERD Act and related regulations<sup>2</sup>, the regulations specified how industry contributions were to be made to the FRDC but excluded provision for the compulsory R&D levy that was applied to other R&D corporations.

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<sup>1</sup> The executive officer of AFIC was Brian Jeffriess.

<sup>2</sup> The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Regulations 29 April 1991. They were amended on 31 January 1992, changing the definition of the fishing industry and adding the formula for industry sector contribution to AFMA.

Another major difference concerned the contribution that the Australian Government made to the revenue base of the FRDC. For most<sup>3</sup> other R&D corporations, the Australian Government matched industry contributions up to 0.5% of the industry's average gross value of production over three years (AGVP). However, for the FRDC the Australian Government provided unmatched funds equivalent to 0.5% of the AGVP in recognition of the federal and state governments' stewardship of the publicly owned natural resources on which the seafood industry depends. In addition, the Australian Government matched industry contributions, albeit up to a lesser amount — 0.25% of the industry's AGVP — in recognition of industry benefits deriving from the seafood industry's use of the natural resource.

For other industries, DPIE also provided infrastructural support for marketing and export, but no such support was afforded the seafood industry until 2013 when the objects of the rural R&D corporations were changed through an amended PIRD Act. [\[See 2013–14 New roles for the FRDC\]](#)

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<sup>3</sup> The two other exceptions were the Land & Water Resources RDC and the Rural Industries RDC.



## 1991–94: Formative years

From the Corporation’s inception until they were amended in 2013, the FRDC’s activities pursued, and were aligned with, the following objects specified in section 3 of the PIERD Act:

“The objects of this Act are to:

- (a) make provision for the funding and administration of research and development relating to primary industries with a view to:
  - (i) increasing the economic, environmental and social benefits to members of primary industries and to the community in general by improving the production, processing, storage, transport or marketing of the products of primary industries; and
  - (ii) achieving the sustainable use and sustainable management of natural resources; and
  - (iii) making more effective use of the resources and skills of the community in general and the scientific community in particular; and
  - (iv) improving accountability for expenditure upon research and development activities in relation to primary industries.”

On 2 July 1991 the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, The Hon. Simon Crean, established the FRDC under the provisions of the PIERD Act. Later in the year he appointed Henry Bosch to head a selection committee to select a chair and board for the FRDC. The committee commissioned TASA International, an executive search company, to assist with this process. As a result, Bill Widerberg was appointed on 16 March 1992 as chair of the board. Other directors appointed at the same time were Dale Bryan, Dr Brian Hickman, Dr Burke Hill, George Kailis, Dr Robert Kearney and Ted Loveday. Bruce O’Meagher was appointed as Government Director.

The Minister declared the National Fishing Industry Council — later called the Australian Seafood Industry Council (ASIC)<sup>4</sup> — a representative organisation to which the FRDC was required to report in accordance with the PIERD Act.

[For details of ASIC’s subsequent demise and the representative organisations that followed see [2006–07: Seafood Cooperative Research Centre established.](#)]

The FRDC established an interim office in the Kurrajong Hotel, Canberra, staffed by seven people on secondment from DPIE. Subsequently, permanent accommodation was obtained on the ground floor of Deakin House, 50 Geils Court, Deakin West. Peter Dundas-Smith was appointed as the inaugural Executive Director, and five other staff were recruited to replace the seven seconded from DPIE. Of these inaugural staff members Annette Lyons and John Wilson remained until 2019 and 2020 respectively.

[In 1997, the FRDC moved to the ground floor of 25 Geils Court, where it remains; subsequently the building was named Fisheries Research House. In 2016 the FRDC opened an office in Adelaide. See [2015–16: Major reform of advisory committees](#)]

Early on, the chair and the manager of the secretariat met with state government and industry representatives to explain the role of the FRDC and to seek agreement on operational arrangements. A common stumbling block was the expectation that (unlike with FIRTA) industry funds raised by jurisdictions be unconditionally forwarded to the FRDC and subsequently accessed through a competitive R&D funding round.

Such discussions were appeased by two measures. First, in May 1992 Minister Crean issued a direction under section 143(1) of the PIERD Act that the FRDC was to ensure that spending of industry contributions was to be of direct relevance, within a five-year period, to the fishery, region or state/territory in which funds were collected, based on advice from management

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<sup>4</sup> Previously the organisation’s title had been the Australian Fishing Industry Council.

agencies and industry sectors.<sup>5</sup> Second, the FRDC agreed to establish a trust fund within each state and Commonwealth (CSIRO-administered) jurisdiction and would pay into that trust fund the first year's Australian Government contribution of \$6.5 million in proportion to the AGVP of each jurisdiction. The FRDC guaranteed that it would support such funds being invested in R&D without competitive processes. In doing so the FRDC achieved expenditure of the Australian Government contributions in the inaugural year, 1991, in which there were no R&D project applications to fund.

Other significant inaugural activities were as follows:

- The first 5-year R&D plan was prepared. With a sole focus on the commercial sector, it identified four areas for its R&D investment: natural fish resources, aquaculture, harvesting and marketing.

[A table showing the evolution of the R&D program structure is at [Appendix A](#)]

- Tenders were requested through Department of Finance for a project management system — a process subsequently disbanded in favour of developing an in-house system based on Microsoft® Excel® software.

[The system subsequently migrated to Microsoft® Access® then .NET/SQL. In 2013 the FRDC moved to “out-of-the box” system solutions, including Microsoft® SharePoint® and Microsoft® Customer Relationship Management. Other agencies<sup>6</sup> purchased versions of the project management systems from the FRDC and used them to varying degrees.]

- The FRDC entered data into its project management system for 510 completed projects, worth \$54 million, that had been funded by its predecessors since 1971. The majority of final reports from 1971 to 1991 were also obtained and placed in the final report database.
- The FRDC adopted 51 current R&D projects from FIRDC and invested in 42 new projects.
- One such project was the commissioning of a national seafood consumption study aimed at providing a basis for the FRDC's investment in marketing, which found that Australians consumed 13.5 kilograms of seafood per year.

[The FRDC subsequently funded three smaller, city-based studies – in 1998 (Sydney), 1999 (Perth) and 2004 (Melbourne) – to update the original findings. These studies found that Australians consumed 15 kilograms of seafood per year. Later studies funded by the Seafood CRC (among those outlined at [2014–15: Seafood CRC leaves its mark](#)) focused on consumer attitudes and behaviours towards seafood purchasing and eating, and the influences of change. A major aim of the studies was to identify how the industry, through marketing, could influence seafood consumption.]

- Another project — funded by the FRDC in partnership with the Australian Tuna Boat Owners Association (later called the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association), SA R&D Institute (SARDI), and the Overseas Cooperative Foundation of Japan — was a trial of catching wild Southern Bluefin Tuna and growing them to market size. An ex-post analysis of this project revealed a benefit–cost ratio of 41:1.
- The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) was commissioned to develop a priority-setting process. As a consequence, the FRDC, in consultation with state and Commonwealth jurisdictions, established Fisheries Research Advisory Bodies

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<sup>5</sup> This is a summary of the original ministerial direction. The full text of the amended direction of 1995 is on page [11](#).

<sup>6</sup> AFMA, Australian Pork Limited, Condamine Alliance (a Queensland natural resources management group), CRC Reef, Forest and Woods Products R&D Corporation, NZ Ministry for Primary Industries, Seafood CRC, Sugar R&D Corporation, and Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute.

(FRABs) or made existing bodies relevant to the FRDC.<sup>7</sup> Their role was to ensure that R&D was directed to the needs of industry and other end-users.

[In 2016 the title FRABs changed to Research Advisory Committees (RACs). See **2015-16: Major reform of advisory committees**]

- The FRDC developed its corporate image and published *R&D News*, quickly achieving record circulation figures for a fishing industry periodical.

[A subsequent change in focus following a stakeholder survey and re-branding as *FISH* is described at **2004-05: Hand-over at the helm**]

- The FRDC collaborated with other RDCs in contributing to the maintenance of the Australian Rural Research In Progress database and the Australian Bibliography of Agriculture, both of which were established by the state governments to inform end-users and research providers of current and completed R&D.

[The initiatives subsequently developed into Australian Agriculture and Natural Resources On-line (AANRO — [www.anro.net](http://www.anro.net)), an integrated knowledge access tool for agriculture and natural resources management. Later, the states withdrew support for AANRO because of its resource needs; consequently, so too did the RDCs.]

- The FRDC also collaborated with other RDCs on a wide range of functions, including benefit–cost analyses (See **2008–09: People development ramped up**), communications, common project agreements, comparable approaches to risk management, and cost efficiencies.

[Such collaboration continues. Reviews relating to RDCs have also recommended that the RDCs combine their back office functions.]

- In its second year, the FRDC commissioned the National Fishing Industry Marketing Strategy, later called the Fishing Industry National Study (commonly referred to as FINS), aimed at identifying sustainable development and profitability challenges for the industry. It involved an unprecedented degree of consultation with industry and others, both in Australia and New Zealand.

[The study's report identified a number of strategic planks that were subsequently implemented through Seafood Services Australia Ltd, the Seafood CRC and other FRDC investments. Planks that were not implemented were a well-funded national peak body and a seafood promotion body. However, in 2013 the FRDC's enabling legislation was changed to give the Corporation the power, among other things, to undertake marketing activities. See **2013–14: New roles for the FRDC**. Further in 2017 a new peak body, Seafood Industry Australia, was established with a significantly more robust funding base than any of its predecessors.]

- A National Seafood Centre was established to improve value-adding of seafood. Innovation achieved by the Centre included packaging technology for export of live kuruma prawns, a machine to remove skin from small fish, and packaged UHT soup from processing waste. Later, the Australian Seafood Extension and Advisory Service was co-located to help the commercial sector to take up leading-edge post-harvest technology. Both initiatives were in partnership with the Department of Primary Industry, Queensland, and they were accommodated in the Department's Centre for Food Technology. The FRDC's contribution was to fund a Commercial Manager<sup>8</sup> to run the centre, 34 small

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<sup>7</sup> In 1995, Minister Beddall consequently amended the ministerial direction of 1992 to recognise the role played by FRABs in prioritising fisheries R&D.

<sup>8</sup> The inaugural Commercial Manager, John McVeigh, later became the Queensland Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and more recently moved into federal parliament. His successor, Deon Mahoney, later became the FRDC Programs Manager.

industry-driven projects and other value-adding activities.

[These initiatives later formed the basis for Seafood Services Australia, which commenced in unincorporated form in 1999 and as a not-for-profit industry development company in 2001. It wound up in 2013. See **2013–14: New roles for the FRDC**]

- The FRDC established managed subprograms so that when the scope of a particular R&D objective extended beyond that which could be achieved through a single project undertaken by a single researcher, strategic directions were developed and maintained, R&D was not duplicated, scientific methods were standardised, and results were extended. Originally there were three subprograms: Replacement of Fishmeal in Aquaculture Feeds, Abalone Aquaculture, and Effects of Trawling.<sup>9</sup>
- The Cooperative Research Centre for Aquaculture was established. The FRDC did not become a participant in this CRC but co-invested in related projects under an informal arrangement.

[In 2001, the FRDC became a formal participant in the CRC for the Sustainable Aquaculture of Finfish. In 2007 it became a participant in the Seafood CRC. See **2006–07: Seafood Cooperative Research Centre established**]

- The first FRDC-sponsored fishing industry participant in the Australian Rural Leadership Program, Peter Petersen, undertook the program.

[The FRDC has subsequently funded either one or two participants per year.]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was as follows:

- 1991–92: \$1.38 bn (\$1.13 bn wild-catch, \$0.25 bn aquaculture)
- 1992–93: \$1.49 bn (\$1.24 bn wild-catch, \$0.25 bn aquaculture)
- 1993–94: \$1.68 bn (\$1.42 bn wild-catch, \$0.26 bn aquaculture).

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<sup>9</sup> Respectively under the leadership of Dr Geoff Allan, Dr Patrick Hone and Dr Ian Poiner.

### 1994–95: Building researcher capacity

From the FRDC's initial experience, it became evident that there was a need to improve the experimental design of fisheries research. In partnership with the University of Sydney, the FRDC established and funded, until 2001, the Quantitative Fisheries Training Unit. Under Professor Tony Underwood fisheries scientists were trained in modelling and analysis of the population dynamics of fisheries. The FRDC also subsidised the salary of a population dynamicist in each state and Commonwealth (CSIRO-administered) jurisdiction to increase the expertise urgently needed for fisheries management. After three years of FRDC support these experts<sup>10</sup> were paid by their agencies. They made significant contributions to fisheries science.

Other significant activities in 1994–95 were as follows:

- New board appointments were Dr Russell Reichelt as Chair, new directors Dr Diana Day, Peter Shelley and Richard A. Stevens, and re-appointed directors Dr Burke Hill, George Kailis and Ted Loveday. Dr Alison Turner was appointed Government Director.<sup>11</sup>
- At the request of the Australian Prawn Promotion Association, the Australian Government enacted the *Prawn Export Promotion Act 1995*. Under this Act, funding in the order of \$700,000 per year was collected through a compulsory marketing levy on wild-catch prawn fishers. The initiative, the first of its kind for the seafood industry but similar to those of other primary industries, brought a number of benefits to the sector, including the capacity to successfully negotiate reductions in import tariffs.

[In 2001 the Act was repealed by the federal minister following a representation to a Queensland based MP with interests in the seafood industry by a minority of Queensland prawn exporters who regarded the initiative as a threat to their businesses.]

- The FRDC instigated scholarships with the Australian Maritime College, Launceston, to increase seafood industry members' skills in Management Advisory Committees.

[The FRDC subsequently funded scholarships for a further eight years.]

- The first comprehensive atlas of Australia's commercial fish and fisheries, *Australian Fisheries Resources*, funded with the Bureau of Resource Science, was launched.
- The *Australian Seafood Catering Manual* — a tool of trade for seafood suppliers, researchers, trainers, consultants and promoters published in conjunction with DPI Queensland — won a national award for marketing excellence. In *The Australian Financial Review*, food writer Stephen Downes judged it to be "the best publication of any sort I've seen on Australian food."

[In 2000 the manual was re-designed and published as the *Australian Seafood Users Manual*, which continued to be sold through outlets such as the *Seafood Services Australia* bookshop.]

- The Industry Commission Report No 44 of 15 May 1994, *Research and Development*, concluded that research and development corporations "have made significant changes in improving the interactions between the R&D process and industry, and in making R&D more responsive to industry needs".
- The FRDC's transition to an ecosystem focus was reflected in funding of a significant project, "A review and synthesis of Australian fisheries habitat research" through the Australian Institute of Marine Science.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> They included Dr Cathy Dichmont, Dr Rick McGarvey, Dr Malcolm Haddon and Dr James Scandol.

<sup>11</sup> Succeeded in 1997 by Mary Harwood.

<sup>12</sup> Led by Mike Cappel.

**Ministerial direction of 11 May 1995**

*by the Minister for Resources, the Hon. David Beddall, MP*

Pursuant to my powers under sub-section 143(1) of the *Primary Industries and Energy Research and Development Act 1989*, and replacing the Ministerial direction given to FRDC on 21 May 1992, I hereby direct that:

- (a) FRDC is to ensure that industry funds raised from a particular fishery, industry sector or State/Territory are spent within a five-year period starting from the year of receipt on research and development projects that are of direct relevance to:
  - (i) that fishery; or
  - (ii) industry sector; or
  - (iii) the State/Territory in which the funds were collected;
- (b) in determining the projects on which funds are to be spent under (a), FRDC is to have regard to the advice of the relevant management agency and industry sectors acting in collaboration through the relevant FRAB; and
- (c) FRDC is to recognise the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, operating in consultation with its Management Advisory Committees, as the FRAB relevant to Commonwealth-managed fisheries, including Joint Authority fisheries managed under Commonwealth law.

[As a consequence of amendments to the PIERD Act (renamed the PIRD Act) in 2013, the FRDC entered into a 2015–19 Funding Agreement with the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as a new basis for receiving Australian Government funding. In a letter of 28 May 2015, Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, referred to his signing of the Funding Agreement and set out a written direction to the FRDC, for the purposes of s143(1) of the PIRD Act, to the effect that in entering into the Funding Agreement the Ministerial direction issued in 1995 was no longer to apply, effective from 1 July 2015.]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$1.81 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.42 bn and aquaculture \$0.39 bn.

## 1995–96: A wider scope

*Investing for tomorrow's catch: the FRDC's research and development plan, 1996 to 2001* (its second plan), specifying the FRDC's strategic R&D priorities for the next five years, came into effect. It recognised recreational fishing, and customary fishing by Indigenous people, as principal sectors of the fishing industry. This significant change widened the scope of the FRDC beyond its previous focus on the commercial sector. The Minister for Resources and Energy declared the Australian Recreational and Sport Fishing Confederation (Recfish Australia) as the second representative organisation of the FRDC.

The R&D plan re-structured the FRDC's programs into Resources Sustainability, Ecosystems Protection and Industry Development to reflect Government and industry priorities, and specified indicators against which the FRDC could measure its performance.

[A table showing the evolution of the R&D program structure is at [Appendix A](#).]

### The industry

The three principal sectors of the fishing industry are commercial, recreational, and Indigenous customary.

The commercial sector, which is also commonly referred to as the “seafood industry”, comprises the wild-catch sector and the aquaculture sector. For practical reasons the “seafood industry” also includes other commercial non-food producing sectors such as pearling.

[The scope of the FRDC description of the industry's sectors has evolved over time. The original term used to describe the industry has changed from the “fishing industry” to “Australian fishing and aquaculture”, acknowledging that the FRDC invests heavily in public good research for which there may be little or no commercial outcome and:

- that many FRDC stakeholders are not commercial (eg recreational and Indigenous)
- the increasing importance of aquaculture.

A formal definition of the fishing industry is included in the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Regulations, Amendment 1992:

*Includes any industry or activity carried on in or from Australia concerned with: taking, culturing, processing, preserving, storing, transporting, marketing, or selling fish or fish products.*

Other significant activities in 1995–96 were as follows:

- The first national FRAB workshop was held to implement best practice in R&D planning and evaluation processes.

[FRAB/RAC workshops have continued, initially biennially then annually; they now include other stakeholder and program management groups.]

- A “whole of chain” emphasis in quality management and product quality was initiated through SeaQual, a joint initiative of the Australian Seafood Industry Council, DPIE and the FRDC managed by Jayne Gallagher. Early outputs of this initiative were *The seafood industry's strategic plan for achieving seafood excellence* and food safety guidelines for seafood processing, described by the Australia New Zealand Food Authority as “a model for others”.

[The SeaQual project was incorporated into Seafood Services Australia in 1999.]

- A book, *Marketing Names for Fish and Seafood in Australia*, was published with the aim of protecting consumers when purchasing seafood — part of longstanding efforts to use standardised names for more than 4500 marine species either harvested or available in



Australia. This was the first of a number of publications and posters resulting from the activities of the National Fish Names Committee, which by then was managed by the FRDC after being managed by DPIE for some 15 years.

[In 1999 the FRDC and CSIRO Marine Research, through the Fish Names Committee, which by then was managed by Seafood Services Australia (SSA), published a reference publication, the *Australian Seafood Handbook*. An identification guide to domestic seafood species, it proved to be one of the most popular and widely used publications. Subsequently a guide to imported species was published. In 2007 the National Fish Names Committee, led by Roy Palmer, achieved its goal when standardised Australian fish names were codified as Australian Standard® AS SSA 5300 – 2007: *Australian Fish Names Standard*. In 2013, management of the Fish Names Committee reverted to the FRDC following the wind-up of SSA.<sup>13</sup>]

- The Australian Government restructured industry training advisory bodies disestablishing the National Fishing Industry Training Council. The FRDC, in conjunction with the SA Skills Centre (Bob Miller), then established the Australian Seafood Industry Education Network (ASIEN).

[ASIEN later relocated to Canberra, was staffed by Ross Ord under the management of ASIC, and was renamed Seafood Training Australia (STA). Subsequently the Australian Government, under another restructuring of industry training, recognised STA as an industry training advisory body and provided funding for it. The FRDC's involvement with STA was then reduced. STA was disestablished in 2004 when the Government rationalised industry training and seafood came under the Agri-Food Industry Skills Council, later AgriFood Skills Australia. In 2015 the Australian Government introduced a contestable funding model, and oversight of the Seafood Industry Training Package was transferred to *Skills Impact* in January 2016. *Skills Impact* is one of six national Skills Service Organisations, funded by the Australian Government. The two members of Skills Impact are ForestWorks Ltd and the National Farmers Federation. Skills Service Organisations' core function is to support the operation of Industry Reference Committees. These committees develop industry competency skills standards and vocational qualifications for use by industry and the VET sector. The *Aquaculture and Wild Catch Industry Reference Committee* (IRC) has responsibility for overseeing the development of industry units of competency, skill sets, and qualifications relative to the following sectors: Aquaculture, Wild Catch, Seafood, Fishing]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$1.70 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.31 bn and aquaculture \$0.39 bn.

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<sup>13</sup> The chair of the committee is currently Gus Danoun, and project manager is Allan Snow.



### 1996–97: Continuous improvement starts to pay off

Several years of systematic improvement in the FRDC's R&D project management processes began to deliver results. Researchers were becoming more aware of FRDC funding processes and were responding positively to them, leading in turn to higher approval rates for projects and a record level of expenditure projected for the coming three to four years — within a continuing overhead cost constraint of no more than 8% of total FRDC expenditure, as determined by the board in framing its first budget. An increasing role was being played by the FRABs in setting priorities and communicating those priorities to the FRDC, other funding agencies and researchers.

Other significant activities 1996–97 were as follows:

- The week-long, FRDC-sponsored Second World Fisheries Congress, attended by more than 1200 participants from 62 nations, put a spotlight on the state of science and management across national and international fisheries. It provided an excellent opportunity to hear first-hand the challenges facing fisheries in Australia and overseas.
- A post-harvest symposium, 'Making the Most of the Catch', hosted in Brisbane by the Centre for Food Technology of the Department of Primary Industry, Queensland, was sponsored by the FRDC's National Seafood Centre.
- A two-day fisheries economic statistics workshop was held to identify economic statistics essential to sustainable development of the fishing industry. Subsequently a steering committee developed an implementation plan to improve fisheries economic statistics. The committee produced a "barbecue companion" booklet detailing the value of the seafood industry and in 2002 published a comprehensive book, *Valuing fisheries — an economic framework*, edited by Professor Tor Hundloe.
- The FRDC was involved in the Inquiry into Management of Commonwealth Fisheries conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Primary Industries, Resources and Rural and Regional Affairs.
- The FRDC set up a website to provide corporate information, including online access to the R&D Plan, *R&D News* and annual reports, and to enable electronic lodgement of funding applications.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$1.78 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.34 bn and aquaculture \$0.44 bn.

### 1997–98: Major gains in bycatch reduction

The Effects-of-Trawling Subprogram started to have a major impact on trawl fisheries around Australia. Uptake of bycatch reduction devices increased in the Northern Prawn Fishery, Torres Strait, Queensland East Coast Trawl and the prawn trawl fisheries of NSW and SA. Adoption of turtle exclusion devices increased, allowing confidence in setting targets for 100% adoption in northern prawn trawling fisheries by 2001. The SA prawn fishery became the first such fishery in Australia — if not the world — to have all operators voluntarily installing bycatch reduction devices. These initiatives were assisted by publication of a guide to bycatch reduction in Australian prawn trawl fisheries and the award of a \$10,000 travel grant to a prawn fisher for leadership in innovation and adoption of bycatch reduction.<sup>14</sup>

To encourage bycatch reduction, the FRDC and OceanWatch Australia Ltd published *Bycatch solutions*, a handbook for fishers in non-trawl fisheries.

Other significant activities in 1997–98 were as follows:

- Board appointments were new directors Simon Bennison, Dr Jim Penn, Bill Sawynok and Sandy Wood-Meredith, and re-appointed directors Dr Russell Reichelt (Chair), Dr Diana Day and Richard A. Stevens. Mary Harwood continued as Government Director.<sup>15</sup>
- The Australian Government, through a once-off regulation, reduced its contribution from the 0.5% component of the AGVP for the coming financial year by \$3.6 million. Minister for Resources and Energy, the Hon. Warwick Parer, at a meeting of the Ministerial Council for Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture, encouraged his state counterparts to maximise the Australian Government's matching contributions to the FRDC by ensuring that state industry contributions were at least 0.25% of the AGVP.
- The FRDC's quality management program was certified to international standard AS/NZS ISO 9002:1994 (later upgraded to AS/NZS ISO 9001:2008). This was tangible evidence of the FRDC's work ethic of continual improvement, giving further confirmation to stakeholders that their financial contributions to the FRDC were sound, beneficial R&D investments.
- The FRDC was seeking to influence the development, at appropriate levels and sectors within the fishing industry, of R&D plans that incorporate R&D priorities. To assist this process the FRDC started to commission reviews of wide-ranging crucial topics such as seagrass, fisheries habitat and wild-caught abalone to identify R&D priorities.

[In more recent years R&D plans, largely funded by the FRDC, have been developed for all major industry sectors and jurisdictions.]

- Complementing these FRDC reviews, the Australia–New Zealand Standing Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture, in collaboration with the FRDC, commenced an analysis of current and completed fisheries R&D. The aim was to form a picture of Australia's investment in fisheries R&D to help to identify key areas for investment.
- Outputs from some of the inaugural investments began to appear in the form of publications. Titles included *Seafood by season: a state-by-state pictorial guide to the availability of Australian seafood*; *Marketing into Asia: an analysis of Asian markets for seafood products*; *South East Fishery quota species – an identification guide*; *Fish Futures: individual transferable quotas in fisheries*; *The new rural industries: a handbook for investors in new fields of agriculture and aquaculture*; and a *Quality Chooser* developed under the SeaQual project.

<sup>14</sup> The inaugural winner was John Olsen.

<sup>15</sup> Succeeded in 1999 by Dr Derek Staples.

- The portfolio of managed subprograms was extended by 1998 to include Southern Bluefin Tuna aquaculture, Atlantic Salmon aquaculture, Rock Lobster post-harvest and, controversially, Rock Lobster enhancement and aquaculture.<sup>1617</sup>
- A major, multi-agency project commenced on the Huon River estuary to investigate the effects of sea cages on the aquatic environment and environmental factors (such as land-based run-off) on aquaculture production.
- The FRDC invested significant funds in live finfish export that involved a committee that worked with airlines.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$1.88 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.38 bn and aquaculture \$0.50 bn.

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<sup>16</sup> Subprogram leaders were, respectively, Steven Clarke, Dr Stephen Battaglene, Dr Bruce Phillips and Dr Robert van Barneveld.

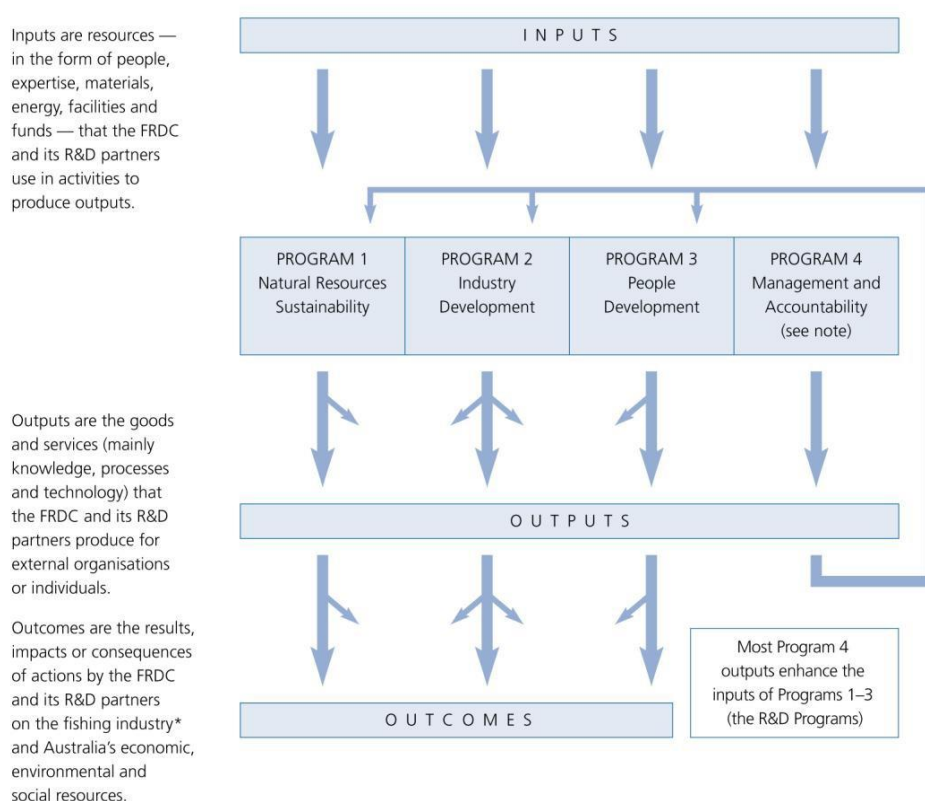
<sup>17</sup> The latter subprogram originally concerned aquaculture, albeit including re-stocking of the wild fishery. It was strongly opposed by many Rock Lobster fishers, particularly in WA, who saw it as a threat to their sector. Consequently 'Enhancement' was added to the title in allaying those concerns.

## 1998–99: New accountability measures

In January 1999, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator Judith Troeth, informed the FRDC of sweeping new accountability arrangements for statutory authorities. Under the new *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997* (CAC Act), which mirrored the *Corporations Act 1989*, the directors of the Corporation were to include a report of operations in their annual reporting. Soon afterwards, the department, by then known as Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia (AFFA) conducted a Report of Operations workshop to help R&D corporations to identify key requirements and processes in the new accountability arrangements. Other significant changes to accountability arrangements resulted from the Australian Government’s moves to an accrual-based “outcomes and outputs” budget framework, to be used first in the 1999– 2000 financial year. Accordingly, the FRDC developed a new strategic structure to focus on outcomes and encouraged outcomes-based priority setting through the FRABs and other entities. Figure 1 shows the essential elements in relation to the program structure at the time.

[The Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) replaced both the CAC Act 1997 and the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997. See 2014–15]

**Figure 1: The program structure as it was in 1998–99 and its focus on outcomes**



Other significant activities in 1998–99 were as follows:

- *World Aquaculture '99*, hosted by the World Aquaculture Society and the NSW Department of Primary Industries, was sponsored by the FRDC.

[This conference was, in part, a stimulus to the inaugural *Australasian Aquaculture* conference in 2004.]

- Public awareness of the health benefits of eating seafood was increased with the launch of *Seafood the Good Food*. The CSIRO Marine Research study on which it was based showed that most Australian seafood contains 10 to 100 times higher levels of certain omega-3 fatty acids than other protein sources such as beef, chicken and lamb, and lower levels of cholesterol”.

[The high demand for this publication necessitated a second large printing run of an updated edition. In 2001, furthering the

theme and culminating a long, rigorous study by Griffith University<sup>18</sup>, a guide for seafood marketers outlining the health benefits of eating seafood — *What's so healthy about seafood?*<sup>19</sup> — was published. A second edition was published in 2004 and two subsequent projects provided updates to the original work.]

- *Antarctica to the tropics: a snapshot of the Australian fishing industry* was published by the FRDC to provide easily accessible insights into the industry and its challenges.

[Two subsequent editions of the book were published. The need for this form of publication was overtaken by the availability of similar information on the FRDC website.]

In this year, the R&D and promotion arms of the meat and livestock industry amalgamated as Meat and Livestock Australia Limited (MLA). This was to be the first instance of a primary industry R&D corporation evolving to become independent of the PIERD Act; others followed. Levy arrangements for both R&D and promotion remained under a deed of agreement between MLA and AFFA.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.11 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.50 bn and aquaculture \$0.61 bn.

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<sup>18</sup> The principals of the study were Dr Shawn Somerset and Martin Bowerman.

<sup>19</sup> Many reviewers contributed to the book, among them Professor Mark Wahlqvist and Dr Naiyana Tikky Wattanapenpaiboon, who subsequently exhaustively examined the material and brought it up to date.

## 1999–2000: Measurement of ESD performance

Following an inaugural national workshop to engage all stakeholders in developing a national fisheries ESD framework, the FRDC — in conjunction with the Australia-New Zealand Standing Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture and with representatives of the fishing industry — established a suite of projects to speed the development of ESD criteria and indicators. They were expected to allow reliable measurement, over time, of the ESD performance of all Australian fisheries, and to be important in helping commercial operators to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth’s *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

[Subsequently the FRDC formed an ESD Reporting and Assessment Subprogram.<sup>20</sup> The Subprogram’s ESD and risk assessment processes have now been adopted by FAO as their model for fisheries assessment worldwide.]

Other significant activities in 1999–2000 were as follows:

- Dr Garth Newman reviewed the FRAB system and reported that the system “has materially improved the strategic directions of fisheries research [and] the focus of research funding”. He noted the change from a fisheries biology and assessment perspective to one meeting the wider information needs of resource managers and industry, and the involvement of stakeholders in research planning. The FRDC implemented the changes recommended by the review.

[In 2014 the FRDC commissioned Greg d’Arville to undertake a second review of the FRAB system, which provided wide-ranging recommendations focusing on the structure of the FRAB system with a view to making it more effective and cost-efficient. A further review was undertaken by Forest Hill Consulting in 2019. See **2015-16: Major reform of advisory committees**]

- The Western Rock Lobster fishery received Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification as a sustainable, well-managed fishery — the first such certification in the world, resulting from a \$5 million FRDC investment over several years.

[Since then other Australian fisheries have received MSC certification. In 2013 the WA Government endorsed the MSC certification process and provided \$14.5 million of funding for its fisheries to undertake preliminary certification. Over time there has been a national increase in the uptake of environmental management systems and third party certification schemes.]

- The FRDC established the South East Fishery Industry Development Subprogram<sup>21</sup> to change a narrow focus on R&D to underpin stock assessment to one that reflected whole-of-chain processes in the fishery, which at the time supplied 60% of fish for the domestic market.
- A memorandum of understanding was signed with the Australian Tuna Boat Owners Association — the first of a number of memoranda with industry entities providing for a guarantee of revenue to the FRDC for a period of up to five years, in return for delivery of a sector-specific R&D program.

[The following year a similar memorandum was signed with the Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association and in 2001–02 the FRDC continued to develop strategic alliances with industry through signing a memorandum with the Northern Prawn Fishery and Australian Prawn Farmers Association. From 2005 these arrangements were superseded by Industry Partnership Agreements. See **2005-06: Chefs and consumers engaged** and **Appendix B**]

- At the *Aquaculture beyond 2000* conference sponsored by AFFA and FRDC, participants resolved, after recognising that more than 90 per cent of aquaculture value was derived from five species, that public investment in aquaculture R&D should focus on species that have a high potential for commercialisation. The Australian Government announced it would support an Aquaculture Action Agenda to facilitate aquaculture development.
- As a result of this Agenda, the National Aquaculture Council was formed with Australian Government

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<sup>20</sup> Led by Dr Rick Fletcher.

<sup>21</sup> Led by Dr Ian Knuckey.

seed funding. Further, the conference resolution was embraced by the FRDC as its future aquaculture investment strategy. The potential to use inland saline water for aquaculture was identified in a national R&D plan funded by the FRDC.

[This initiative proved to be difficult to manage on a national basis, largely because of the limited funds available. In 2007, the NSW component was included in the portfolio of the Seafood CRC; however, it disbanded largely because of the lack of water from the River Murray that could be assigned to the project.]

- Following a comprehensive review of people development within the industry the FRDC, in conjunction with ASIC, sponsored the inaugural *Seafood Directions* conference to encourage the seafood industry to become more strategic and proactive in shaping its future.

[The FRDC has continued to sponsor the conference biennially, alternating with *Australasian Aquaculture* conferences until 2014 when the latter ceased. The Corporation also sponsors the biennial recreational fishing conference. *Seafood Directions* conferences started in 1999 and have included an important acknowledgement of exceptional contributions by industry people: the National Seafood Industry Awards. The awards recognise and celebrate professionalism and commitment, at individual and organisation levels, to a sustainable and profitable industry. From 2013, the awards categories included inductees to the “Hall of Fame”.]

- Based on improved understanding of the importance of sea mounts to the deep-sea environment, industry and fisheries managers agreed to protect a proportion of the Tasmanian sea mounts as a marine protected area.

[This project was the start of the significant role that FRDC-funded research played in the development of marine protected areas. For a further example see **2005-06: Hand-over at the helm**]

- The FRDC collaborated with the National Land and Water Resources Audit; Australian Geological Survey Organisation; CSIRO; Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone, Estuary and Waterway Management; the University of Queensland; Environment Australia; and state and territory agencies to audit the health status of 970 of Australia’s estuaries. The audit concluded that there was more to be gained initially in investing in the protection of healthy estuaries rather than the restoration of damaged estuaries.

[Much momentum was lost in this project when the Coastal CRC was disestablished. See **2003-04: Where river meets sea**]

- The Institute of Public Administration Australia awarded the FRDC a High Commendation in its 1998–99 Annual Report Awards, commenting that a particularly strong point was the coverage of corporate governance.

[This was to be the first of a series of national reporting awards by the Institute and the Australasian Reporting Awards, including an ARA gold award.]

The seafood industry’s determined AGVP was \$2.34 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.66 bn and aquaculture \$0.68 bn.

## 2000–01: Industry response to ESD

An Environmental Management Systems (EMS) initiative between the FRDC and industry placed an EMS facilitator in each state to help the industry to implement environmental management systems and address the national fisheries ESD framework. A decision support methodology<sup>22</sup> provided a template for sector-specific EMS documentation. The aim of the initiative was to help commercial fishers and farmers to manage their operations sustainably principally through improving environmental outcomes but with consideration of economic and social factors.

[Based on FRDC's initial funding, many fisheries and farmers subsequently put in place EMSs supported by Seafood Services Australia and/or OceanWatch Australia; many large sectors moved from EMSs to third-party accredited standards.]

Other significant activities in 2000–01 were as follows:

- Board appointments were new directors Ian Cartwright and David Newton, and re-appointed directors Dr Russell Reichelt (Chair), Simon Bennison, Dr Diana Day, Bill Sawynok and Sandy Wood-Meredith. Dr Derek Staples continued as Government Director.<sup>23</sup> In appointing the new FRDC board, the Parliamentary Secretary varied the term of the appointments in order to have directors appointed before the start of the annual evaluation of FRDC R&D applications, thus giving new appointees adequate time for familiarisation.
- *Investing for tomorrow's fish: the FRDC's research and development plan, 2000 to 2005*, the FRDC's third five-year R&D plan, came into effect. It contained the most comprehensive available description of the Australian fishing industry and its future challenges, based on the changes in the FRDC's business environment envisaged for the following 20 years. The plan modified the previous program structure with the three R&D programs becoming Natural Resources Sustainability, Industry Development and Human Capital Development.

[A table showing the evolution of the R&D program structure is at [Appendix A.](#)]

- The Women's Industry Network Seafood Community (WINSC)<sup>24</sup> was initiated to empower women to take a greater role in seafood industry development.
- The Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture of Finfish (Aquafin CRC) was established, with the FRDC a major participant, to add significant value to the FRDC's subprograms for Southern Bluefin Tuna and Atlantic Salmon. The CRC attracted \$16.5 million of investment by the Australian Government and more than treble that amount from other CRC participants. It wound up in 2008.
- AFFA appointed the FRDC to project-manage the aquatic animal health components of the Australian Government's initiative, 'Building a national approach to animal and plant health', with a budget of \$3.1 million over four years, to be invested in accordance with AFFA's strategic plan for aquatic animal health, Aquaplan.

[Subsequently, the FRDC instigated an Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram.<sup>25</sup>]

- The FRDC co-funded an Aboriginal fishing strategy in WA to incorporate subsistence fishing practices in a framework of sustainable use of fish and fish habitat, and to increase Aboriginal people's involvement

<sup>22</sup> The methodology, called the "Green Chooser", was at first solely an SSA activity and evolved into a collaborative activity with OceanWatch Australia, which eventually took it over.

<sup>23</sup> Succeeded in 2002 by Glenn Hurry.

<sup>24</sup> In October 2018 WINSC changed its name to Women in Seafood Australasia (WISA)

<sup>25</sup> Led by Dr Eva-Maria Bernoth and subsequently Dr Mark Crane; and re-named the Aquatic Animal Health and Biosecurity Subprogram at the start of the 2015-20 RD&E Plan



in commercial fishing, charter operations and fisheries management.

- The Parliamentary Secretary approved a national R&D levy for the prawn farming sector. This levy process — new for the FRDC but commonplace in all other R&D corporations — has resulted from the prawn farming sector’s realisation of the benefits of funding and managing R&D within the aegis of the FRDC.

[The prawn farming sector Commonwealth levy remains the only FRDC R&D levy.]

- The FRDC commenced negotiations with appropriate state governments to have a component of recreational licence revenue provided to the FRDC for investment in R&D related to the recreational sector. The FRDC funded a workshop of recreational fishing representatives and fostered the subsequent development of a recreational sector R&D plan.

[No untied contributions to the FRDC remain from the recreational sector, except from WA starting 2011-12.]

- The first pilot course of what was to become the Australian Seafood Industry Leadership Program was conducted.

[The FRDC has subsequently funded the course annually.]

The seafood industry’s determined AGVP was \$2.44 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.73 bn and aquaculture \$0.71 bn.

## 2001–02: Major initiative for industry development

Despite the industry's many success stories, market and institutional failure in the seafood supply chain continued to impede the industry's ability to identify and capitalise on many of its opportunities. Increasingly sophisticated global markets require prompt, efficient access to the best knowledge, processes and technology if the Australian seafood industry is to be globally competitive. Seafood Services Australia Ltd (SSA), until then a series of joint-venture R&D projects, had sufficiently demonstrated its potential to deal with those challenges for the FRDC and ASIC to incorporate it as a company limited by guarantee. The inaugural Managing Director of SSA was Ted Loveday.<sup>26</sup>

[ASIC ceased to be a company member of SSA when ASIC was wound up in 2006. The FRDC withdrew as a company member of SSA in 2007, acting on legal advice. By 2009 the company members were the National Aquaculture Council Inc., Seafood Experience Australia Ltd and Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd. Details of SSA's winding up in 2013 and its legacies are at **2013-14**]

[To avoid duplication, SSA and FRDC partnership projects are not referenced year by year but are summarised in the description of SSA's legacies.]

### *Seafood Services Australia Ltd*

The company was established with a mission “to enhance the profitability, international competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of the Australian seafood industry”.

SSA activity areas were:

- cost-efficient production and processing
- environmental management
- trade and market access
- capitalising on seafood health benefits
- seafood incident response planning
- standards development and implementation
- certification and branding
- networks, alliances and information.

These activity areas were achieved through many relationships with industry associations and other industry entities; agencies of the federal, state and territory governments; international entities; research providers and other service providers.

Other significant activities in 2001–02 were as follows:

- A new Chair, Denis Byrne, was appointed.
- The FRDC celebrated its tenth anniversary during the year. During a celebratory dinner, FRDC achievements were acknowledged by many industry leaders. Inaugural Chair Bill Widerberg recalled that the fishing industry remained unattracted to the idea of contributing financially to the FRDC:

The problem was that research had been used against industry — to take away access or quota — or for researchers to investigate their areas of special interest. It was the inaugural board's aim to assist industry to find solutions and remove barriers to progress.

Dr Russell Reichelt, upon retiring as FRDC Chair, commented that statutory authorities such as the FRDC were often confronted with the need to satisfy government and industry stakeholders in ways that may conflict, even to the point of having legal consequences. So far, the FRDC had managed these tensions well and to the satisfaction of all stakeholders. FRDC chair Denis Byrne emphasised that the message from the largest investor in fisheries R&D — the Australian Government — was that R&D corporations must increasingly focus on delivering good outcomes to the wider community, not just immediate stakeholders, and that communication of research results to all potential end-users is essential.

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<sup>26</sup> Succeeded in 2013 by Michelle Christoe.

Noted Sydney restaurateur Peter Doyle said:

*The seafood industry owes the directors and staff of the FRDC a vote of thanks for your tremendous efforts. Congratulations!*

- DAFF initiated an amendment to the PIERD Act to change the way in which the AGVP was calculated, without consulting with or advising the FRDC.

[The consequence of the way in which this change was handled was that DAFF overpaid the FRDC for some six years, accruing a debt of \$1.9 million that was paid off over a further six years.]

- The board determined the activities in which the FRDC would not invest, consistent with the FRDC's legislative and policy underpinnings.

#### **Activities in which the FRDC will not invest**

- routine stock assessment or other routine management activities
- fisheries re-stocking
- exploratory fishing
- direct marketing of fish and fish products
- direct promotion of the fishing industry
- environmental or quality certification of fisheries or enterprises
- training when other funding sources are more appropriate
- capital, unless related directly to the marginal costs of undertaking R&D
- venture capital.

[In more recent years the FRDC has taken a more discretionary approach to activities in which it will not invest.]

- The FRDC played a major role in helping the Tasmanian oyster industry to incorporate Australian Seafood Industries Ltd to commercialise the results of selective breeding of Pacific Oysters.

[This was the culmination of years of FRDC investment in the genetic improvement of Pacific Oysters. In a similar vein, the FRDC later worked with the NSW oyster sector to form the Select Oyster Co. Ltd to commercialise the Sydney Rock Oysters breeding program.]

- In pursuing its R&D plan, the FRDC worked with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission to develop a cost-effective consultative framework with the aim of having the Minister appoint an Indigenous body to join with ASIC and Recfish Australia as a representative organisation. In parallel, the FRDC wrote to each FRAB requesting the appointment of a suitably qualified Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person on each FRAB, as was the case on the NSW FRAB. In a similar vein, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Warren Truss, wrote to all RDCs seeking support for the Government's advance towards Indigenous reconciliation. In particular, the Minister encouraged the RDCs to ensure their programs were responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that they considered how the corporations' activities might affect them.

[After several efforts proved unsuccessful, an Indigenous Reference Group was formed in 2011. See 2011-12. However, no Indigenous body has yet been appointed as a representative organisation.]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.43 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.70 bn and aquaculture \$0.73 bn.

## 2002–03: Increased focus on R&D outcomes

In an address to the chairs of rural R&D corporations, Senator Judith Troeth, Parliamentary Secretary, stated that:

Many research organisations measure performance on the basis of the number of patents, or level of commercialisation, as an indicator of performance. However, demonstrating that research is actually being adopted by rural end-users is fundamental to the rural R&D corporation model.

She added that the R&D corporations had to provide hard evidence of success and the value delivered to the nation through the funding partnership between government and industry. To this end, the FRDC asked the Australian Fisheries Management Forum, comprising directors of Australia's fisheries management agencies, to help it in quantifying R&D outcomes — i.e., what happens when the results of R&D are implemented — of FRDC's investment in projects related to fisheries management. Such involvement of fisheries managers was significant, because they were the end-users of the 60 per cent of the FRDC's R&D budget that was invested through the Natural Resources Sustainability Program.

Until 2002, the FRDC had expressed its R&D investment priorities in a very broad way to allow researchers and end-users of R&D to respond more freely than they would have been able to do if the priorities had been highly prescriptive. However, the board decided that if R&D were to achieve significant, measurable outcomes from FRDC investment, a higher degree of prescription was needed. As part of its own activities in line with the Australian Government's increased focus on outcomes, the board held a workshop with the FRABs and other stakeholders to identify more explicit R&D priorities within the FRDC's program structure. The priorities (listed in the panel overleaf) took particular account of key elements of the nine challenges concerning the fishing industry and fisheries natural resources identified in the R&D plan, and issues identified by the Australian Fisheries Management Forum.

Other significant activities 2002–03 were as follows:

- For some years, state governments had queried why they had a role in collecting industry contributions to be passed to the FRDC for fisheries R&D, in contrast with other industries, which were sustained by a Commonwealth R&D levy that did not involve state governments. The FRDC therefore obtained legal advice, which was that there was no obligation on the Commonwealth to match industry payments that were made directly to the FRDC, rather than through a state or territory, and that in order for an obligation to be imposed on the Commonwealth to rectify this anomaly, an amendment would need to be made to the PIERD Act regulation.

[The lack of Commonwealth R&D levies required the collection mechanism to continue and to remain a point of contention between the FRDC and some jurisdictions. It also occasionally resulted in the contributions from some jurisdictions being less than the maximum that would be matched by the Commonwealth. The 2013 amendments to the Act provided for a fishery to be declared a "separately levied fishery", and for levies collected by Commonwealth processes to be matched without state or territory government involvement. A separately levied fishery is yet to be created.]

### Priorities for FRDC investment

- Develop alternative fisheries management structures and methods that:
  - provide for ecosystems-based fisheries management
  - are based on the precautionary principle<sup>27</sup> and appropriate risk management

<sup>27</sup> The precautionary principle, sometimes erroneously cited contrary to its intent (i.e., as a rationalisation for postponement of action), is defined in clause 3.5.1 of the [Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment 1992](#) as follows:

Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:

1. careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and
2. an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options.

strategies

- provide for maximisation of economic and social returns from fisheries through robust resource allocation methods
- provide for effective management of recreational fishing
- recognise the varying levels of need for government involvement in fisheries management (i.e., as reflected by large self-managed fisheries, full-cost-recovered fisheries, small fisheries, data-rich fisheries and data-poor fisheries)
- recognise varying levels of property rights
- are cost-effective.
- Develop ways of increasing the quality and numbers of new industry leaders to accept increased responsibility for fisheries management and industry development.
- Assess Australia's potential to address its likely 80,000-tonne seafood deficit in 2020 through high-volume, low-value aquaculture and improved use of wild-catch resources.
- Australia's first national research priorities were announced by the Prime Minister in December 2002, dealing with an environmentally sustainable Australia; promoting and maintaining good health; frontier technologies for building and transforming Australian industries; and safeguarding Australia. Subsequently, the Parliamentary Secretary issued updated Australian Government priorities for rural R&D in the light of the new national research priorities. The FRDC responded quickly to both sets of new priorities, incorporating them into its reporting processes.
- As a result of the FRDC working with potential industry shareholders, Australian Seafood Co-products Pty Ltd was incorporated to commercially utilise the many thousands of tonnes of fish waste thrown away each year by the processing and retail sectors of Australia's seafood industry.

[The company is still operating but has not had the national impact that was envisaged.]

- The National Strategy for the Survival of Released Line Caught Fish examined the mortality rate of fish caught on lines and released by Australia's four million recreational fishers and commercial fishers.<sup>28</sup> The project employed the reverse of the usual science-directed approaches. First, surveys conducted by the Roy Morgan polling company determined which sources of information recreational fishers most trusted and how amenable they were to change. The information gained was then used to focus the science on "the art of the possible" in influencing the fishers to modify their practices.
- The FRDC collaborated with the Kondinin Group, Primary Industries and Resources SA and the fishing industry to develop a high-quality educational book, *The Story of Seafood in Australia*, for children of primary school age. A comprehensive teacher's resource kit applied the material across all subject areas, including mathematics. The project won one of *The Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing*.

[This Perth-based initiative achieved varying levels of success, particularly in the eastern states, and was overtaken by other activities such as the *Seafood Industry Partnership In Schools Program* funded by the FRDC and undertaken by OceanWatch Australia. The program opened new channels of communication between the seafood industry and the community, starting in Tasmania and expanding to include the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Fifty-eight partnerships were created, involving a total of 39 schools, 1,700 students and 113 teachers. The program used commercial fishers, aquaculturists and other workers as educators and advocates for the seafood industry.]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.43 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.73 bn and aquaculture \$0.70 bn.

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<sup>28</sup> Led by Bill Sawynok.

## 2003–04: Where river meets sea

Estuary health is key to the productivity of most Australian fisheries; and key to ecosystem resilience in the face of climate change.

In developing the *Natural Resources Land and Water Audit* (1997 – 2002) its Executive Director, Colin Creighton, specifically added two issues to those natural resources issues to be assessed by the Audit; namely soil health and estuaries. These additions received approval from the then Ministers for Agriculture and the Environment (Minister John Anderson and Senator Robert Hill respectively). Both these additions have proven to be particularly important to Australia’s terrestrial and marine productivity and profitability. These approvals cleared the way for an Australia-wide assessment of estuary condition lead by the University of Queensland in collaboration with all states and territories. One of the summary outputs was the 2004 *Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone, Estuary and Waterway Management* (Coastal CRC) publication *Where river meets sea*. This publication, and the extensive work underpinning it, was funded by the *National Land & Water Resources Audit (Natural Heritage Trust)* and, to a smaller extent, the FRDC. The Audit spatially referenced and assessed all Australian estuaries (over one thousand); and aimed to enhance estuary literacy among Australians and to champion the cause of estuary protection and management.

The Audit had been preceded by many decades of draining wetlands for farming, urban or flood mitigation in Australia. For example, the Clarence is the largest NSW coastal catchment and has the largest NSW floodplain. The Clarence supports the largest estuarine-based fishery in NSW. The onset of ostensibly “flood mitigation” activities in the 1970’s co-funded by Australian and state governments led to major wetland losses, blocks to fish passage, and exposure of acid sulphate soils. Fish kills and diseases such as red spot resulted from low dissolved oxygen and very acidic discharges to the estuary following floods. These impacts on estuary productivity are substantial, and have grossly impacted on the school prawn, king prawn and scale fish fisheries dependent on estuaries.

FRDC funded work in the early 1990s on wetlands, acid sulphate soils and floodgates around the Clarence and Richmond rivers.

[In 2005 OceanWatch Australia, a national marine natural resource management organisation, commenced a program entitled “Tide to Table”. Tide to Table was adopted to reinforce the message that actions on land affect the productivity of fisheries, specifically fish habitat and water quality. The program integrated the seafood industry’s needs into local natural resource management, actioning \$8 million in on-ground works between 2005 and 2013 in Queensland and New South Wales. The program’s success was due to its ability to engage local farmers and seafood producers, businesses, communities and government agencies in a common cause; to rehabilitate a river system or estuary and improve its water quality, fish and seafood habitat and rebuild the health of the immediate environment. OceanWatch continues to invest in blue green innovations such as living shorelines (a softer alternative for foreshore erosion), whale entanglement mitigation, shellfish reef repair, threatened, endangered and protected (TEP) species education, and foster a number of marine community of practices to extend research to practical implementation.]

In 2012 the FRDC invested in:

- documenting the decline in fisheries productivity due to habitat loss Australia-wide and estimating the productivity opportunities of repair. For example, with over 1500 blockages estuary channels / loss of habitat on the Burdekin floodplain and over 5500 barriers to connectivity in the wet tropics between Ingham and Port Douglas, fisheries productivity has been significantly lost.
- developing a business plan aimed at revitalising estuaries and wetlands for carbon sequestration, biodiversity, fisheries and the community. The Ozfish initiative (reference below), focussing on recreational fishers, grew out of this work. See page 68.

Over time a number of states have invested in small scale and very useful habitat repair. Examples include restoration of shellfish reefs (oysters and mussels) in Port Phillip Bay in 2014 (led by the Albert Park Fishing Club in partnership with The Nature Conservancy). The methods have since been applied to reefs in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland. The South Australian initiative (refer [https://pir.sa.gov.au/fishing/recreational\\_fishing/windara\\_reef](https://pir.sa.gov.au/fishing/recreational_fishing/windara_reef)) was supported by \$1m from the Australian Government’s Department of Infrastructure – its first natural infrastructure investment.

In 2018-19 The National Habitat Strategy building on multiple collaborative initiatives and FRDC projects was completed, and will be used in future to inform large scale rehabilitation programs (refer <https://ozfish.org.au/national-fish-habitat-strategy/> )]

Australia is still missing the major investments and the major repair opportunities with the greatest long-term impact. To address this gap would require significant Australian Government leadership building on strong support from both recreational and commercial fishers.

Other significant activities in 2003–04 were as follows:

- Board appointments were new directors John Harrison, Professor Tor Hundloe, Dr Nick Rayns and Stuart Richey, and re-appointed directors Simon Bennison and Ian Cartwright. Denis Byrne continued as Chair and Glenn Hurry as Government Director.
- For the first time, voluntary contributions to the FRDC exceeded the maximum levels that were matchable by the Australian Government. Although this matching incentive for industry to contribute to the FRDC softened, contributions have continued to exceed the maximum matchable due to several factors that include confidence that the industry has in FRDC's governance arrangements; and cash contributions tied to specific projects. Refer Appendix D *Voluntary contributions as a percentage of the maximum matchable* for the history through time.
- Two surveys — spanning five years, more than 100 projects and more than 300 end-users conducted as a PhD project by Alex Wells, a former FRDC staff member, showed that “the vast majority of end-users considered the FRDC's R&D projects to be valuable in terms of results, to be of high priority and to be meaningful for the fishing industry and/or the community”. A majority also reported that objectives were achieved, and results were adopted. At the same time, they identified areas where improvements may be warranted, such as in communication between end-users and researchers, and in participation by industry.
- The FRDC had recognised that the seafood industry, unlike other primary industries, had little capacity, through a marketing authority or otherwise, for generic promotion. The higher value of the Australian dollar, the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and the strengthening of competition in overseas markets had increased the need for the seafood industry to do more product promotion at the industry sector level — as distinct from enterprise level. Several sectors shared this view and looked at ways to fund promotion. In response, the FRDC took the first steps towards gaining legislative capacity to receive and manage sector levies for such promotion activities, much as it did for the sea-caught prawn sector under the former *Prawn Export Promotion Act*. The FRDC received strong support for the initiative from industry; however, further action depended on a Government response that was not to be forthcoming for six years.

[The response came in a letter dated 6 July 2010 from the minister responsible for fisheries, the Hon. Tony Burke, who sought advice from industry leaders about support for a compulsory marketing levy and whether it should be applied at sector level or whole-of-industry level. The resulting amendment to the Act in 2013 enabling the FRDC to undertake marketing activities was in keeping with the Productivity Commission's recommendations about best-practice science investment in its 2011 report, *Rural Research and Development Corporations* (page 36).]

- Elements of the FRDC annual report were singled out as examples of good practice in a review by the Australian National Audit Office and the Department of Finance and Administration, and were extensively featured in the resulting book, *Better practice in annual performance reporting*.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.21 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.48 bn and aquaculture \$0.73 bn.



## 2004–05: Hand-over at the helm

Peter Dundas-Smith, Executive Director of the FRDC since its establishment, retired. His successor was Dr Patrick Hone, previously Programs Manager. Reflecting the increasing focus on developing people in the industry and those who support it, and with a reference to the strong personal theme of Dundas-Smith's tenure, the board instigated the Peter Dundas-Smith Leadership Scholarship. It provided personal mentoring and \$10,000 towards "an activity that will improve [winners'] ability to contribute as leaders in their chosen field".

[The scholarship ceased in 2016 after an internal People Development Program review.]

Other significant activities in 2004–05 were as follows:

- John Harrison resigned from the board with effect from 30 April 2005: on becoming an executive of a representative organisation he ceased, in accordance with s.18 of the PIERD Act, to hold office as a director. David Bateman, whose expertise was in recreational fishing, began attending board meetings as an observer until the next board was appointed in 2007.
- The FRDC's first stakeholder survey was conducted. It revealed that the FRDC had a very high level of recognition by the industry and was well regarded. Areas for increased investment were identified. Responses supported a view that the best partnerships for future investment were with industry councils.

[The FRDC now commissions regular stakeholder surveys. See [http://frdc.com.au/research/market\\_research/Pages/default.aspx](http://frdc.com.au/research/market_research/Pages/default.aspx) See also 2014-15 regarding a significant uplift in the number of indicators of stakeholder awareness.]

- The stakeholder survey also revealed that *R&D News*, the FRDC's magazine, needed a revamp: many people thought there was too much focus on researchers and that more content should focus on the interests of industry people. The magazine adopted a new focus in February 2006, before being significantly re-branded as *FISH* in June 2007.

[In 2016 the FRDC started sending extracts from *FISH* in the form of Fish E-Newsletter to food service and retail operators.]

- In conjunction with the National Aquaculture Council and the Tasmanian Aquaculture Council, the FRDC sponsored the inaugural *Australasian Aquaculture* conference.

[The FRDC continued to sponsor the conference biennially until 2014, alternating with *Seafood Directions* conferences.]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.09 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.45 bn and aquaculture \$0.64 bn.



## 2005–06: Chefs and consumers engaged

In a closer focus on consumers, the FRDC set out to educate many of the next generation of opinion leaders in the food sector. It did so by engaging with chefs, who are uniquely positioned to provide advice on the best way to prepare and eat seafood. Chefs influence consumers hugely, especially through the print media and television food programs. As end-users of large volumes of seafood, chefs can also help producers to understand trends in the marketplace, including changes in consumer tastes, the need for quality and consistency, and appropriate ways in which seafood should be sold.

Other significant activities in 2005–06 were as follows:

- *Investing for tomorrow's fish: the FRDC's research and development plan 2005–2010*, the FRDC's fourth five-year plan, came into effect. Like its predecessor, the plan was based on forecast changes to the FRDC's business environment and redefined the Corporation's strategic challenges. The FRDC's program structure was further enhanced, as shown in **Appendix A**.
- Following a wide review of Australian Government statutory authorities' corporate governance by John Uhrig, the Government announced that R&D corporations would remain in place under the CAC Act, with their own boards. The Government ratified the rural R&D corporation model as the preferred mode for engaging in government–industry partnerships. The PIERD Act would be amended to discontinue the position of government director<sup>29</sup> and expand the range of desired expertise for selection of directors to include government policy processes and administration. The review clearly identified that the FRDC board's role was to establish strategy, manage risk and opportunity (entrepreneurial), and monitor and respond to performance from its R&D investment.

[Subsequently the FRDC prepared a Statement of Intent required by the Government, incorporated it into the 2007–08 annual operational plan, and started to integrate it into its reporting framework. The FRDC also increased communication with the Minister and DAFF through monthly reporting.

The Parliamentary Secretary also suggested that RDCs improve their level of collaboration, implement a quantitative impact assessment and reporting framework between them, and improve their level of investment in people development.]

- The Productivity Commission issued a report, *Public Support for Science and Innovation*. It made no RDC-specific recommendation but commented on what it saw as best-practice science investment. It reinforced the collective need of the RDCs to measure the benefits of the Australian Government's investment. Further, its commentary on spill-over benefits shifted the emphasis of public good funding to include measures of community benefit since in recent years public good funding had focused more on direct industry or commercial benefits. The Commission acknowledged that government funding could be seen as industry subsidy and that taxing powers could be considered as being used to give private benefit. It concluded that the Australian Government needed to focus more on public good research.
- A new FRDC funding framework was implemented, with five key areas:
  1. an annual competitive open round that focused on the public good
  2. a tactical research fund to invest \$1.75 million on small projects (less than \$75,000 and fewer than 18 months maximum duration) through four rounds a year (subsequently three)
  3. national strategic investment (in which the board would initiate partnerships to fill nationally applicable R&D gaps that it identified in the interests of public good)
  4. increased partnership with large industry sectors (such as Southern Bluefin Tuna, Southern Rock Lobster and Atlantic Salmon) through Industry Partnership Agreements (IPAs), replacing memoranda of understanding

[Subsequently, additional IPAs were signed with major sectors and sectors with growth potential. The status of IPAs is in **Appendix B**]

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<sup>29</sup> The reasons were that appointment of government directors was inconsistent with a skills-based approach and that discontinuance would remove potential conflicts of interests in responsibilities to the department and the minister and responsibilities to the board and the R&D corporation.

5. further increased focus on people development, reflected in allocation of 10 per cent of the FRDC R&D budget to people development.

- A review and assessment of the impacts of the proposed broad areas of interest for Marine Protected Area (MPA) development in the South East Region was concluded. Professor Colin Buxton and an expert team examined 14 proposed MPAs in a way that could be substantiated by science; the Australian Government accepted a majority of the recommendations. In a win-win outcome for the industry and the environment, the final agreed MPAs provided a marginally improved set of conservation and biodiversity outcomes compared with those originally proposed. The impact on the commercial wild-catch sector and its infrastructure and associated communities was expected to be far less than what may have been the case under the original proposals. The project brought a benefit-cost ratio of 959:1 for its \$37,500 cost.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.17 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.42 bn and aquaculture \$0.75 bn.

## 2006–07: Seafood Cooperative Research Centre established

Cooperative research centres relating to the seafood industry had existed alongside the FRDC since 1993 and co-invested significant Australian Government funds into many FRDC-managed projects. The need for a new CRC stemmed from recognition that the Aquafin CRC was due to wind up in 2008–09: without a follow-on entity, significant increased demand would be put on FRDC funding. Previous CRCs had focused on aquaculture development, so the challenge was to find a theme for a new CRC that would meet the Australian Government’s criteria and not to be, nor appear to be, “more of the same”. Many of the major sectors of the seafood industry, both wild-catch and aquaculture, had benefited from the millions of dollars that the FRDC and previous CRCs had invested in ensuring the sustainable development of their production, and were now shifting their R&D priorities further along their supply chains. Consequently, at an initial workshop of industry and research leaders, it was decided that any new CRC should be built around the R&D needs of the “big end of town” as this would afford the CRC most opportunity to realise the significant economic outcome required by the CRC programme criteria.

Spurred by the urgent need for a national approach to closing major gaps in the seafood industry value chain, during 2005 and 2006 the FRDC and key industry entities developed a case for investment by the Australian Government’s Cooperative Research Centres programme.

In December 2006, the Australian Government approved the Australian Seafood Cooperative Research Centre with an investment of \$37 million, making it the second-largest of all Australian CRCs until then. In 2007 the Seafood CRC Company Ltd was formed; the CRC board, Chaired by Peter Dundas-Smith, was elected by participants; and associated governance arrangements were put in place.<sup>30</sup> The FRDC’s investment of \$24 million over seven years was the largest in the CRC. Total Australian Government and industry investment was \$140 million.

### *The Seafood CRC’s planned outcomes*

- Substantial increase in the production and profitability of selected wild-harvest and aquaculture species.
- Increased demand and access to premium markets for Australian seafood; fulfilment of consumer demands for safe, high-quality, nutritious seafood products; and increased profitability throughout the value chain.

The scope of the CRC’s research (both pre-harvest and post-harvest activity) spans the entire value chain from production to consumer. The economic benefits of the CRC are estimated to add \$445 million to gross domestic product in Year 5 and more than \$520 million in Year 10.

[The Australian Government approved a non-funded extension to the Seafood CRC to take it to June 2015. Details of the Seafood CRC’s winding up in 2015, and its legacies are at [2014–15 Seafood CRC leaves its mark](#)]

[To avoid duplication, Seafood CRC and FRDC partnership projects are not referenced year by year but are summarised in the description of Seafood CRC’s legacies.]

Other significant activities in 2006–07 were as follows:

- Board appointments were new directors Dr Ray Johnson, Dr Paul McShane, Frank Prokop, Richard A. Stevens and Richard N. Stevens, and re-appointed director Stuart Richey. Denis Byrne continued as Chair and Glenn Hurry as Government Director.
- ASIC ceased trading because of lack of financial support from the state industry councils. This had wide ramifications, particularly for the FRDC because ASIC was — together with Recfish Australia — a representative organisation under the PIERD Act, and because it was a company member of Seafood Services Australia Ltd.

<sup>30</sup> The Seafood CRC’s agreement with the Australian Government took effect on 1 July 2007.

[In 2015 the Australian Government provided the National Seafood Industry Alliance a grant to develop a national seafood peak body - Seafood Industry Australia]

- The Minister declared the National Aquaculture Council and the Commonwealth Fisheries Association representative organisations under the PIERD Act.

[The Minister declared the National Seafood Industry Alliance Inc. a representative organisation in 2011 and revoked the declaration in 2017 in favour of Seafood Industry Australia.]

- In the absence of an Australian Government response for the FRDC to manage a levy for seafood promotion, Seafood Experience Australia Ltd was incorporated by some industry leaders. The FRDC contributed to the establishment cost of the company in its endeavour to have seafood promotion legislation and an associated levy enacted.

[The SEA initiative was overtaken by a number of events including the role undertaken by the Seafood CRC in market development; the collection of voluntary funds from the Abalone and prawn sectors for marketing; and the amendment to the FRDC enabling legislation to provide 'for the funding and administration of marketing relating to products of primary industries'.]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.22 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.41 bn and aquaculture \$0.81 bn.

## 2007–08: People development ramped up

For some years, the board had been disappointed by the relatively low numbers of applications for funding under the People Development (previously Human Capital Development) Program: they were inadequate, in number and focus, to meet the challenges identified in the R&D plan. In 2006, they totalled less than 5% of R&D expenditure. The board therefore commissioned a review of the People Development Program to assess how far it met the current needs of industry and how it could be re-oriented to meet future needs. The review found that although the FRDC had demonstrated a long-standing commitment to investing in people development, its investment had lacked a strong strategic focus and had been confined largely to sponsoring leadership development programs and research scholarships.

In response to the review's recommendations, in May 2007 the FRDC recruited a manager to implement recommendations of the review through a more focused program. An advisory group was appointed to guide the initial activities.

Other significant activities in 2007–08 were as follows:

- Peter Neville was appointed as FRDC Chair.
- The FRDC commenced R&D focused on the needs of the recreational fishing sector under the guidance of a new working group.
- The FRDC joined the new Council of Rural Research & Development Corporations charged with instigating high-level reports to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry concerning, for example, national rural RD&E strategy and priorities and assessment of current delivery mechanisms.
- Following a board review of its functions, the board issued its first corporate plan to guide its own activities. The aim was to make the FRDC more effective as a successful business delivering outcomes to its stakeholders. It included seven corporate strategies:
  1. Demonstrate the rate of return on R&D investment.
  2. Evaluate options for alternative business models and implement the preferred model.
  3. Conduct a business efficiency review.
  4. Build and maintain effective industry and government partnerships.
  5. Develop an effective communication plan.
  6. Establish a national investment allocation framework for public-good R&D.
  7. Develop mechanisms to deliver better adoption of fisheries R&D results.
- Changes were introduced to reduce the time spent by the board evaluating R&D projects and devolving more of that function to experts in industry and government. More emphasis was to be placed on thematic development of R&D<sup>31</sup>.
- The FRDC launched *Co-management: Managing Australia's fisheries through partnership and delegation*, a report of the FRDC's national working group<sup>32</sup> on fisheries co-management. Since fisheries managers cannot manage wild fish — only the behaviour of fishers and, to a severely limited extent, some aspects of the ecosystems on which they depend — it is known that far closer collaboration is needed for "total ecosystem" management of fisheries. Genuine interaction and partnerships are at the heart of co-management, but practical ways of achieving it have proved exasperatingly difficult. This practical "How to" guide provided a flexible framework to be applied at various levels of co-management. It was widely hailed by industry and fisheries managers.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.21 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.34 bn and aquaculture \$0.87 bn.

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<sup>31</sup> This FRDC board further devolved RD&E investment decision making in 2019. See page 69.

<sup>32</sup> Led by Peter Neville.

## 2008–09: World breakthrough in innovation

The huge progress made by Australian fisheries research since the 1990s was exemplified by a world scientific coup: the raising of juvenile Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) in captivity.

Since 1992, SBT caught off the SA coast had been fattened for about 12 months in sea cages for the Japanese sashimi market, now worth about \$250 million a year. Clean Seas Tuna Ltd, with the support of the FRDC, Seafood CRC and other agencies, selected some of those fish as broodstock and transferred them to a purpose-built onshore facility. Their spawning in spectacular fashion was an exciting development: spawning had been notoriously difficult to induce in this species because it resulted not from biological inevitability but from environmental cues during migration from the Great Australian Bight to spawning grounds in the Java Sea. These cues of the sea migration route were mimicked in a tank in which variables such as water quality, light, temperature and feed were assiduously controlled. The breakthrough presented huge potential for Australian aquaculture to help to materially fill the growing gap between world demand for premium seafood and its supply.

[In 2013, Clean Seas Tuna made the business decision to suspend its SBT breeding program.]

Other significant activities in 2008–09 were as follows:

- The FRDC funded the University of Tasmania to build economic capability to improve the management of marine resources in Australia.

[FRDC funding ceased in 2011, however, the University of Tasmania continues to deliver courses in fisheries economics.]

- The FRDC established its Social Sciences Research Co-ordination Program to work with industry, researchers, and government agencies to increase awareness and develop tools to help them incorporate people considerations into their work.

[In 2017 the FRDC renamed the program *Human Dimensions Research (HDR) Subprogram*.]

- The FRDC implemented a formal RD&E Investment Evaluation Framework that included:
  - an agreed national plan
  - key performance indicators and targets for measuring success
  - an investment framework that ensured investment against priorities where research can contribute to a significant improvement
  - total portfolio evaluation based on RDC evaluation methodology
  - ongoing review by the board of planning and investment framework based on performance against KPIs.
- In conjunction with the National Aquaculture Council the FRDC, at the 2008 *Australasian Aquaculture* conference, proposed an annual target for aquaculture production of 100,000 tonnes by 2015. Production, at that stage about 56,000 tonnes, was expected to increase particularly through Atlantic Salmon, Barramundi, Yellowtail Kingfish, oysters and abalone.

[In 2015 the aquaculture tonnage was 89,217 tonnes. See **2018-19 Is kingfish the new salmon**.]

- Following a decision to unify the processes for evaluating cost–benefits across the entire RDC portfolio, the FRDC started to evaluate 18 clusters of R&D projects conducted between 2003–04 and 2007–08 that would produce statistically valid results. The clusters were aggregated from 34 projects in which the FRDC had invested \$96 million. The return on FRDC investment across three programs during the previous five years was found to average 5.6:1.

[This process continued: see **2012-13**. *Evaluation of non-economic benefits remains difficult*.]

Land and Water Australia, the R&D corporation that received funding from the Australian Government for

public good activities, was abolished. This was the second R&D corporation to be abolished, the first having been the Energy R&D Corporation in 1997.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.21 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.35 bn and aquaculture \$0.87 bn.

## 2009–10: New national strategy for RD&E

*Working Together: the national fishing and aquaculture research, development and extension strategy 2010* was approved by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) as a component of the new National Primary Industries Research, Development and Extension Framework.<sup>33</sup> Its intent was to encourage collaboration and promote continual improvement in national investment in primary industry RD&E. Developing the strategy involved unprecedented collaboration between fishing and aquaculture industry leaders, the RD&E community and other key stakeholders. It was considered to potentially move fishing and aquaculture RD&E towards greater integrated planning — particularly for addressing national priorities — leading to more cost-efficient, effective delivery of RD&E.

[Implementation of the first edition of the strategy was varied. Little evidence ensued that it had made a measurable difference to the extent of collaboration between research providers or to the quality of research beyond that achieved through extant FRDC processes. There was evidence of greater commitment to the development and implementation of the second edition of the strategy with the Australian Fisheries Management Forum taking on the role of chair of the governance committee. See 2015–16].

Other significant activities in 2009–10 were as follows:

- FRDC board appointments were new directors Heather Brayford, Renata Brooks, Brett McCallum, Dr Daryl McPhee and Professor Keith Sainsbury, and re-appointed directors Stuart Richey and Richard A. Stevens.
- To coordinate national investment and encourage adoption, the FRDC worked with the industry, DAFF, fisheries managers and the Department of Climate Change to develop a national climate change program, following several reports on the likely effects of climate change on marine and freshwater environments. The FRDC committed a minimum of \$2.7 million to this \$6 million program.

[The resulting program, which concluded in 2013–14, enhanced the industry's capacity to adapt, mitigate against, and take advantage of further climate change.]

- Sequencing of the genome of AbHV and development of sensitive molecular techniques to diagnose viral ganglioneuritis in Abalone led to improved biosecurity and, in turn, better management and reduced impacts on the fishery.

[The research team subsequently won several science achievement and seafood industry awards.]

- Atlantic Salmon rickettsia vaccine developed
- Higher production volumes of tiger prawns (*Penaeus monodon*) resulted from previous research into domestication.
- Assessment of current fisheries management approaches identified the potential for substantial triple-bottom-line benefits to Australian wild-catch fisheries and annual gains, without increasing catch volume, of more than \$350 million under “best use” compared with current performance.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.20 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.31 bn and aquaculture \$0.89 bn.

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<sup>33</sup> A significant component of the National Framework was a concept of major, supporting, and linking roles in RD&E — initially termed “major–support–link” and later “major–support”. The concept was to conduct national *R* with regional *D&E*, recognising that basic and strategic research could be provided from a distance but that regional adaptive development and local extension was required to improve industry's uptake of innovation.



## 2010–11: Productivity Commission recognises RDC benefits

Following the Minister’s request to the Productivity Commission to consider the effectiveness of the RDC model in improving competitiveness and productivity and whether other models could address policy objectives more effectively, the Commission concluded that the Australian Government should continue with the RDC model since the research sponsored by RDCs had, in aggregate, significantly benefited the rural sector and the wider community. The Commission noted that while much of this benefit came from research-induced productivity improvements, there had also been positive environmental and social impacts. The Commission also suggested mechanisms for increasing cross-sectoral R&D and recommended permitting statutory RDCs to undertake industry-funded marketing and promotion activity, thereby removing the difference between those corporations and the industry-owned corporations.

Other significant activities in 2010–11 were as follows:

- A new FRDC Chair, the Hon. Harry Woods, was appointed.
- *Investing for tomorrow’s fish: the FRDC’s research, development and extension plan 2010– 2015*, the FRDC’s fifth five-year plan, came into effect. The plan’s five programs and 14 themes mirrored those of the *National fishing and aquaculture research, development and extension strategy* released earlier in 2010. A shift in emphasis, to which the FRDC’s stakeholders contributed substantially, resulted in the three principal R&D programs being named “Environment”, “Industry” and “Communities”, and two enabling programs being instituted to add value to them: “People Development” and “Extension and Adoption”. The renewed emphasis on extending R&D outputs to end-users also resulted in “extension” being added to the title of the plan.

[A table showing the evolution of the R&D program structure is at [Appendix A](#)]

- The transaction costs of applying for FRDC funding were substantially reduced by introducing a two-page expression of interest. In a related move, the role of the FRABs was changed from ranking long lists of applications to supporting only projects within an allocated budget for the jurisdiction.
- The FRDC established the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) to develop a nationally focussed and better way of addressing Indigenous RD&E needs.

[In 2011–12 the group established 12 principles to guide Indigenous fishing and aquaculture, mapped to the five strategic research areas of: primacy for Indigenous people; acknowledgment of Indigenous cultural practices; self-determination of Indigenous rights to use and manage resources; economic development opportunities and rights for Indigenous people; and enhancement of capacity-building opportunities for Indigenous people. In 2014-15 the FRDC created an Indigenous Subprogram managed by the IRG to drive its Indigenous RD&E investment.]

- Blood fluke was identified as the key factor in Southern Bluefin Tuna mortality and the intermediate host identified as a polychaete worm in sediment. In a treatment trial, mortality declined from about 13% experienced in the previous growing season to about 1% for the subsequent season. Growth also improved as a result of the animals’ health not being compromised.

[The results of the project were subsequently adopted by industry, saving about \$20 million per year.]

- With FRDC assistance, the Australian Mussel Industry Association was formed to unify the industry under a national peak body covering production in five states. The association committed to implementing both an R&D levy and a marketing and promotion levy.

[Neither of these levies have eventuated.]

- Research by the FRDC Pearl Research Consortium resulted in a significant increase in productivity per hectare and reduced time between seeding oysters and harvesting pearls.

- Commercial production of *Artemia* commenced following FRDC investment in utilising salt ponds in the production of cysts. Subsequently the FRDC, jointly with Cognis Australia Pty Ltd and the WA Department of Fisheries, won an award in the 'Developing the Economy' category of the WA Premier's Awards.
- Following adoption of FRDC research by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the Patagonian Toothfish fishery was acknowledged as one of the world's leading sustainable fisheries.
- In the Commonwealth gillnet fishery, fisheries scientists had identified sea-lion interactions as a major problem. A partnership of the FRDC, fisheries management agencies, environment departments and NGOs in on-boat research led to the interactions being significantly reduced.
- A \$1.9 million investment in targeted recreational fishing research resulted from DAFF engaging the FRDC to manage the Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy. Building capacity in the recreational sector and acquiring data to support decision-making in recreational fisheries management were the strategy's two main priorities.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.25 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.29 bn and aquaculture \$0.96 bn.

## 2011–12: Telling the story: science for the community

Previously, the FRDC had focused most of its extension and communication efforts on industry, managers and scientists, generally at project level. Responding to increasing public concerns about the sustainability of fishing and aquaculture, FRDC increased its promotion of factual, science-based information to the community through four linked strategies:

- industry unity – developing consensus on fishing and aquaculture through unified messages on key science issues
- media relations – providing the FRDC’s science outputs in a format that is better suited for utilisation by the media (included developing a whole-of-industry media science strategy and “science ambassadors” who would ensure a professional approach to presenting science)
- community relations – engaging with regional and urban communities about positive science stories
- stakeholder advocacy “influencers” – working with both allies and detractors to develop an agreed “common language” on issues where there is differences of opinion about the science evidence.

Related to these FRDC strategies, the extension working group of the [Success through innovation: The National Fishing and Aquaculture Research, Development and Extension Strategy 2016](#) developed a draft national extension strategy and six extension and adoption principles. A new Research Provider Network finalised major–support– link allocations for delivering research.

[These strategies have been absorbed into the FRDC’s core business practices.]

Other significant activities in 2011–12 were as follows:

- The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry called an [Inquiry into the Role of Science for Fisheries and Aquaculture](#). The holding of the inquiry coincided with the FRDC’s assessment that a rethink was needed on how science was informing the needs of ministers, the community, industry and managers.
- The FRDC contributed to DAFF’s development of a [National Food Plan](#), highlighting opportunities for seafood, Australia’s reputation, health benefits and the importance of RD&E in addressing future challenges and opportunities.
- The *Seafood Directions 2011* conference highlighted the need to establish third-party environmental certification for fishing and aquaculture. Subsequently the WA Government budgeted \$14.5 million to certify all WA fisheries and aquaculture activities, with the preferred certifier being the Marine Stewardship Council. The FRDC board supported further work on establishing an Australia Fisheries Management Standard.
- Western Rock Lobster became a quota-managed fishery and both the Spencer Gulf Prawn Fishery and the Antarctic Patagonian Fishery achieved MSC certification. A large body of FRDC science contributed to the certifications.
- Oysters Australia (which evolved from the oyster consortium that facilitated the oyster sector to participate in the Seafood CRC) was established as the peak body for all oyster- producing states.

The seafood industry’s determined AGVP was \$2.31 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.27 bn and aquaculture \$1.04 bn.

### 2012–13: Status of key Australian fish stocks released

More than 80 scientists of the FRDC, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), and state and territory fisheries management agencies collaborated to produce the first *Status of key Australian fish stocks* (SAFS) report and an associated website ([www.fish.gov.au](http://www.fish.gov.au)). The report is a major step forward for transparency and reporting of fish stock health and sustainability for policy makers, industry and the general public.

Forty-nine key wild-catch fish species (representing more than 80 per cent of the value and 70 per cent of the volume of Australian wild-caught species) were assessed across Australia. In total, 150 stocks were assessed across the 49 key species, with 98 stocks (which contribute 90.6 per cent of the total catch of the species assessed) being classified as sustainable. Eight stocks were classified as transitional–recovering, three as transitional–depleting, and two as overfished: Southern Bluefin Tuna and School Shark, which have management plans in place.

[Subsequent editions of the SAFS report were produced in 2014 (68 species), 2016 (83 species) and 2018 (120 species). From 2016 the overall management of SAFS was undertaken by the FRDC guided by a multi-agency advisory group. Refer the 2018-19 SAFS update on page 67]

The arrival of a large factory freezer vessel (FV *Margiris*) to fish the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery<sup>34</sup> put the spotlight on the fishery’s sustainability and gave rise to concerns by some stakeholders, widespread negative media attention, and campaigns by people opposed to its operation. Amendments were promptly made to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to allow the temporary prohibition of certain declared fishing activities. There followed a two-year ministerial prohibition of large factory-freezer vessels from mid-water trawling or in trans-shipment operations in the Small Pelagic Fishery, to allow an expert panel to conduct an assessment to determine the environmental impacts of the declared commercial fishing activity, particularly on species protected by Australia’s national environment law.

The Department of Agriculture then worked with AFMA and the FRDC to identify research needs for the fishery. One activity was a review by CSIRO of the harvest strategy used in the fishery which inferred that key predators were not as reliant on the target species of the fishery as had been expected and that the Commonwealth fisheries harvest strategy was sufficiently precautionary. Other research activities initiated included the estimation of spawning biomass for Jack Mackerel, Sardines and Blue Mackerel, which are target species for the fishery, using the daily egg production method as well as an expert workshop to review the Daily Egg Production methodology used. To assist in the coordination of this research, the FRDC developed a Small Pelagic Fishery Research Coordination Program.

[The expert panel reported in late 2014, when at-sea sampling commenced. In April 2015 the 95-metre trawler *Geelong Star* started fishing the Small Pelagic Fishery; subsequently, marine mammal deaths led to AFMA imposing further restrictions on the way in which it could fish. This vessel left the fishery in 2017.]

Other significant activities in 2012–13 were as follows:

- Board appointments were new directors Dr Bruce Mapstone, Dr Peter O’Brien and David Thomason; Heather Brayford, Renata Brooks and Brett McCallum were reappointed. Dr Daryl McPhee, Stuart Richey, Dr Keith Sainsbury and Richard A. Stevens retired.
- Following a series of consultative meetings held by DAFF nationally, a ministerial Rural Research and Development Policy Statement supporting the current RDC model was issued in response to the Productivity Commission’s inquiry into the rural RDCs. The statement also commented that some changes should be made to the PIERD Act to broaden the FRDC’s role to manage investment of levies raised by industry for purposes other than R&D, such as product marketing.

<sup>34</sup> This fishery extends from just north of Perth, through the Great Australian Bight to southern Queensland.

[Many of the issues identified in the policy statement were reflected in amendments made to the PIRD Act in 2013–14.]

- The FRDC commissioned an independent economic analysis of a further eight clusters of 173 R&D projects following the evaluations of 2009–10 (page 34). Most benefits identified were economic, although significant numbers of environmental and social benefits were also identified. The major beneficiaries were the fishing and aquaculture industry (56 per cent); 44 per cent of identified benefits were public good. The results demonstrated the significant spill-over of these benefits to the Australian public. When all eight clusters were aggregated, the benefit–cost ratio for the \$99.3 million investment (FRDC and partners) was 2.5:1, with present value benefits of \$251.7 million and net present values of \$152.4 million. The FRDC’s component comprised \$32.9 million in present value terms, with a net present value of \$48 million.

[The results of the analysis are available on the FRDC website.]

- Participants in the Seafood CRC, including the FRDC, unanimously agreed to seek from the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education a one-year extension to improve the impact of legacy projects proposed to extend beyond the CRC’s closure in June 2014. The Australian Government approved the extension.

[The Seafood CRC attempted to gather industry support for an application to continue the CRC for another term of three years or more, largely to continue its marketing-related activities while industry and the FRDC developed strategies for implementing long-term marketing capacity. Although there was strong support from the industry sectors that were undertaking market development under the CRC — abalone and wild-catch and farmed prawns — overall support was insufficient to warrant proceeding with an application. This turned out to be the right decision, albeit for the wrong reason, in that the timing coincided with an Australian Government decision not to approve new CRCs for that year and to reduce funding for the following years. See 2014–15: Seafood CRC leaves its mark for a summary of the CRC’s legacies.]

- The FRDC reviewed its 2008–13 People Development Program, focusing especially on integrating it with existing program areas of environment, industry, communities, and extension and adoption. The conclusions were incorporated into a new [People Development Plan 2013–15](#), which among other things supported the Australian Government’s capacity-building priorities. Although the goal was to integrate people development with the FRDC’s other planning structures, evidence showed that a dedicated program was still needed, consistent with the findings of other RDCs.
- The Climate Change Coordination Program concluded after being initiated in 2009–10 to enhance the fishing industry’s capacity to adapt, militate against and take advantage of further climate change. It provided knowledge to help marine users and managers to adapt; reinforced the need to rethink marine management paradigms; equipped inshore fisheries for increased productivity and resilience to more extreme shock events; fostered multi-objective marine resilience; fostered climate-informed action through shared knowledge; and contributed to smarter energy use. Funding for climate-related research during 2009–10 to 2012–13 exceeded \$10 million through co-investment from DAFF<sup>35</sup> and the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.<sup>36</sup>
- The FRDC funded R&D to ensure the Australian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program provided the foundation for internationally acceptable protection of public health and market access, following a biotoxin outbreak in which Tasmanian mussels were affected by a bloom of naturally occurring algae, leading to rejection of an export shipment and consequent economic cost of about \$8.5 million to \$10.5 million. Other shellfish were also affected.

The seafood industry’s determined AGVP was \$2.38 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.35 bn and aquaculture \$1.03 bn.

<sup>35</sup> DAFF was re-named as the Department of Agriculture in 2013–14.

<sup>36</sup> Formerly the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, later Department of Industry and Science.

Many other significant activities that would normally have been recorded against this year have been included in the Seafood CRC legacies section (page [45](#)) as the result of these FRDC–CRC joint partnership projects having been realised and adopted.

## 2013–14: New roles for the FRDC

### *Amended legislative objects*

In 2013, the objects of the rural R&D corporations specified in section 3 of the PIERD Act (listed on page 8) were supplemented following an amendment to the Act, which was renamed the *Primary Industries Research and Development Act 1989* (PIRD Act). The added provisions were contained in sub-sub-clauses iv, v and, in respect of the FRDC, sub-clause b — delineated in blue in this panel.

“The objects of this Act are to:

- (a) make provision for the funding and administration of research and development relating to primary industries with a view to:
  - (i) increasing the economic, environmental and social benefits to members of primary industries and to the community in general by improving the production, processing, storage, transport or marketing of the products of primary industries; and
  - (ii) achieving the sustainable use and sustainable management of natural resources; and
  - (iii) making more effective use of the resources and skills of the community in general and the scientific community in particular; and
  - (iv) supporting the development of scientific and technical capacity; and
  - (v) developing the adoptive capacity of primary producers; and
  - (vi) improving accountability for expenditure on research and development activities in relation to primary industries; and
- (b) make provision for the funding and administration of marketing relating to products of primary industries.”<sup>37</sup>

The RDCs’ new legislative objects provided a very important authority for a number of changes in addition to those listed above, including:

- the requirement for the FRDC to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Department of Agriculture
- the ability to declare a part of the fishing industry as a “separately levied fishery” and for its contributions to the FRDC to be matched by Australian Government up to the 0.25% AGVP cap
- a requirement for the FRDC to spend funds raised from a particular jurisdiction or industry sector on RD&E activities relevant to that jurisdiction or sector
- a requirement for board selection committees to create a “reserve list” that can be used to fill unplanned vacancies over the following twelve months
- preparation for an independent review of FRDC operations and consistent benefit–cost analysis of projects
- improvement in collaboration and cross-sector investment, and reporting on it annually.

Seafood Services Australia, which had commenced in unincorporated form in 1999 and as a not-for-profit industry development company in 2001, was wound up. During its 13 years of operation, SSA had invested more than \$7.32 million in seafood industry development initiatives: a leverage of an additional \$3.07 million over the \$4.25 million that the FRDC had invested in its projects. The SSA board concluded that the company’s future was financially unsustainable in light of the inability to attract industry support and alternative funding and after the FRDC introduced a new project-by-project funding arrangement. Some of SSA’s major legacies are outlined in the panel overleaf.

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• <sup>37</sup> A drafting oversight prevented the FRDC from using voluntary marketing contributions for marketing purposes. The Department of Agriculture undertook to amend the legislation to remedy it. On 16 August 2018, the Primary Industries Research and Development Amendment Bill 2017 was passed by both houses of parliament. This Bill amended the PIRD Act to allow the FRDC to use voluntary marketing contributions to invest in marketing activities. It allowed a more flexible approach to deliver marketing services for Australian fishing and aquaculture. It also opened the doors for FRDC to work with other research and development corporations, such as Wine Australia, to deliver integrated Australian marketing activities.

On SSA's winding up, the FRDC took over three SSA functions to ensure they were maintained for the benefit of the seafood industry, by continuing to:

- develop and promote the Australian Fish Names Standard (the FRDC gained approval from the Accreditation Board of Standards Development Organisations as a Standards Development Organisation in lieu of SSA)
- conduct trade and market access activities
- convene the Common Language Group.

## **Seafood Services Australia's major legacies**

### **Seafood trade and market access**

The Seafood Trade and Market Access Forum was established to provide an inclusive, transparent mechanism to identify, prioritise and action critical trade and market access issues faced by the Australian seafood industry (the initiative, and associated activities, was the first by the Australian seafood industry that took a coordinated, strategic approach to these issues; the Seafood CRC's market development research also achieved significant outcomes — see [2014-15 Seafood CRC leaves its mark](#)).

The online Seafood Trade and Market Access Database was re-ignited to provide industry and government with up-to-date, comprehensive technical data and other crucial information on the trade and market access requirements of all of Australia's key seafood trading partners (this was a collaborative activity involving the Seafood CRC and its participants, including with SARDI on the provision of technical data for the database — see [2014-15 Seafood CRC leaves its mark](#)).

### **Standards**

SSA was accredited as a Standards Development Organisation (SDO) under the stringent requirements of Standards Australia (SSA one of only five SDOs in Australia and the only SDO in Australia with seafood industry standards development capacity)

### **Australian fish names**

The Australia Fish Names Standard — the definitive document on common and scientific names for seafood that resolved longstanding confusion about marketing names and improved consumer confidence in seafood purchasing was developed

The online Fish Names Database extended the Fish Names Standard nationally and internationally (it is now utilised on a daily basis by the scientific community and seafood wholesalers, retailers and consumers to clarify marketing and scientific names)

### **National Seafood Incident Response Plan**

An enlarged plan was developed that included how to deal with incidents that could be detrimental to the seafood industry; additionally, SSA coordinated a national biennial trial of the plan to evaluate the responsiveness of industry to a major incident and the level of interaction between industry and government agencies

[The seafood industry did not take responsibility for the plan after SSA's demise; however, Safefish was established to provide consolidated technical advice and risk assessment to support Australian seafood safety standards and market access negotiations. See [2014-15 Seafood CRC leaves its mark](#). The plan has remained non-operational, albeit Seafood Industry Australia in partnership with Safefish expressed interest in reviving it in 2019.]

### **"Seafood for Life"**

A "Seafood for Life" campaign was conducted aimed at increasing consumer awareness of the health benefits of seafood with a view to increasing per-capita seafood consumption

[This continued under the Seafood CRC see [2014-15 Seafood CRC leaves its mark](#).]

### **Common Language Group**

The Common Language Group forum was established for stakeholders to agree on terminology and



definitions relating to the fishing and aquaculture industry.

### **National Seafood Industry Environmental Management Systems**

The National Seafood Industry Environmental Management Systems (EMS) program was carried forward by SSA to help commercial fishers to manage their fisheries towards sustainability, principally through improving environmental outcomes but with consideration of economic and social factors (although this was not an active role for SSA at the time of its winding up, having been assumed by OceanWatch, the program is included here because it remains a good example of how SSA's intervention in the face of market failure achieved much faster adoption by industry).

Other significant activities in 2013–14 were as follows:

- To counter the diminished social licence of NSW commercial fishers, the FRDC funded two projects, respectively to scope the development of a fisheries management standard with the Sydney Fish Market and the Seafood CRC, and to develop a Master Fisherman's Certificate with OceanWatch Australia. Under the latter project, 54 estuary fishers in NSW were recognised as OceanWatch Master Fisherman; information on their activities and the sustainability of their catches was made available at the point of sale through Quick Response Codes.
- Two new subprograms were created: Recfishing Research and Indigenous. Unlike earlier subprograms, these have an allocated investment budget. In addition to the usual role of subprograms, Recfishing Research is working towards the Australian Government's agreeing to the determination of an AGVP for the sector and matching its contributions as it does for the commercial sector. The Indigenous subprogram is supported by the FRDC's Indigenous Reference Group.
- In her FRDC-funded project "Let's Talk Fish", Nicki Mazur tackled the challenge of identifying how perceptions about the sustainability of the wild-catch sector are formed and underpin the community's "social licence to operate". She recommended that industry improve its engagement with the public and with stakeholders, especially those who have significant influence in decision-making contexts and the ability to galvanise parts of society with similar interests. Another recommendation was that industry establish a strategic vision, consistent with predominant social values, demonstrating a commitment to environmental sustainability.
- FRDC research led to the doubling of Yellowtail Kingfish hatchery production, with more high-quality fingerlings being produced more cost-effectively. Larvae and juvenile deformity and survival rates materially were improved through altered hatchery practices based on earlier Striped Trumpeter work. Having to cull more than 30 per cent of stock at 50–60 days after hatching was almost entirely eliminated by changes to tank design, management and colour.

[See [2018-19 Kingfish the new salmon?](#)]

- The Atlantic Salmon industry, the Tasmanian Government, and the FRDC jointly funded the creation of the Centre of Excellence for Aquatic Animal Health and Vaccines in Launceston. The Centre works on virology, diagnostics, and infectious diseases relevant to the Atlantic Salmon industry.
- The FRDC boosted investment to mitigate the impacts of Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome that has devastated oyster-growing industries throughout Europe and Asia since 2008. The FRDC funded research to understand the virus and its vectors, to develop diagnostic capabilities, and to develop farm management practices. Breeding for genetic resistance to the disease was undertaken in parallel to this work through the Seafood CRC.

[See [2015-16 for further developments](#)]

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.45 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.57 bn and aquaculture \$.89 bn.

Many other significant activities that would normally have been recorded against this year have been included in the Seafood CRC legacies section (**2014-15 Seafood CRC leaves its mark**) as the result of these FRDC–CRC partnership projects having been realised and adopted.

## 2014–15: Seafood CRC leaves its mark

The Seafood CRC was incorporated in June 2007, was anticipated to wind up in 2014 and in practice wound up in 2015. During this eight-year period, the 39 participants in the company conducted 540 projects that produced benefits to aquaculture, fisheries, domestic and export markets. The value of the benefits was estimated to be \$529 million net present value over the 15-year period from 2007 to 2022.

Financially, the CRC exceeded expectations. Against the cash contribution of \$73.5 million specified in the Commonwealth Agreement, the actual contribution was \$82.5 million, of which \$30 million was invested by the FRDC (\$6 million more than envisaged in the Commonwealth Agreement).

[Although the CRC ceased operating under the auspices of the Commonwealth CRC program on 30 June 2015, the underlying legal entity, the Seafood CRC Company Ltd, continued operating until 2017 to assist in voluntary marketing arrangements established with the prawn and abalone sectors.]

Throughout the life of the CRC there was a strong collaborative relationship with the FRDC. The FRDC continues to drive some of the major CRC legacy activities and has retained copies of all CRC materials for future reference and archiving.

[The CRC website, [www.seafoodcrc.com](http://www.seafoodcrc.com), which encompasses all CRC project outputs and is the best source of information for anyone interested in the products of the Seafood CRC, will be maintained by the FRDC for the foreseeable future.]

### The Seafood CRC's major legacies

#### Aquaculture

The Yellowtail Kingfish sector expanded through improved genetics and nutrition, with Clean Seas Tuna Ltd in SA tripling its production in three years. Production was expected to reach 6,000 tonnes with a farm gate value of \$90 million by 2020. [See 2018-19 Kingfish the new salmon? (work in progress)]

Cobia, a tropical marine finfish new to Australian aquaculture, was successfully produced in commercial quantities over two seasons in prawn ponds by Pacific Reef Fisheries Pty Ltd in North Queensland, in 2015 winning the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW President's Medal recognising outstanding achievement in Australia's food, wine and dairy industries.

Use of microbial floc pond management reduced water usage by 70% and nitrogen discharge by 77% on prawn farms. It also produced a 50% increase in harvest yields, resulting in \$65,000 per hectare increase in value of production.

Genetic selection of oysters over the life of the CRC resulted in improved growth rates, saving the \$100 million industry at least \$6 million per annum.

Pacific Oysters genetically resistant to the disease Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome were selectively bred and were expected to be commercially available through the industry-owned company ASI Ltd in 2018.

The expected saving for the sector was \$65 million, based on a scenario of 30% of the sector going out of production for two years if the disease were to recur.

A 9% improvement in growth rate of abalone was achieved by modifying protein: energy ratios according to the season and age of the abalone. A 15:1 return on the additional feed input costs resulted for farmers. Three feed companies incorporated the findings into the formulations of their commercially available diets.

Sea Cucumber ranching technology was developed by Tasmanian Seafoods Pty Ltd in conjunction with the Aminjarringa Enterprises Indigenous Corporation on Groote Eylandt. In 2014, 100 tonnes were produced for export to China — expected to rise to 2,000 tonnes by 2022, valued at \$20 million.

An innovative instrument was developed, and subsequently commercialised by Ridley Aquafeeds, for early detection of *Heterosigma* toxic algae in prawn ponds. The instrument allowed early intervention that prevented total loss of prawn crops through algal growth.

Research and modelling into expansion options for the Atlantic Salmon industry in Tasmania found that moving production into deep-water offshore sites was the best option to achieve the sector's strategic production growth objectives.

Two natural treatments for Barramundi production ponds were developed to remove geosmin from the water, eliminating the muddy taint sometimes found in these fish.

### **Wild harvest**

Tasmanian fishers' translocation of low-value, small, pale Southern Rock Lobsters from deep-water fisheries to shallow waters, where the lobsters grow faster and turn redder, was proven to be commercially successful. The process can double the value of each lobster in the Chinese market. Translocation of 160,000 lobsters over two seasons resulted in increased revenue of \$6 million for a total outlay of \$250,000.

Bio-economic models were developed to identify harvest strategies and changes in fisheries management to improve profit from fisheries without affecting sustainability. Fisheries regulators in SA and Tasmania incorporated model outputs into decision settings.

A new refrigeration design standard was developed: estimated savings of \$3.5 million in replacing obsolete freezer systems were expected to accrue to the fishing fleet across northern Australia during 2015–18.

### **Market development**

Under the CRC's auspices, the industry conducted research into the detail of consumer preferences for a wide range of seafood types, individual species, product formats, dining occasions, retail preferences and physical characteristics of seafood. The results, a basis for future market development activity in Australian and Asian markets, are on the dedicated website managed by the FRDC:

[www.seafoodconsumerresearch.com](http://www.seafoodconsumerresearch.com).

In a historic collaboration, prawn farmers and fishers combined to use CRC consumer research to implement the Love Australian Prawns® market development strategy. This national campaign across supermarkets and retailers was funded directly by industry contributions. Evaluation showed that it increased sales volumes by 30% to 50%, with prices remaining strong.

Three years of consumer research resulted in the Australian Barramundi Farmers Association launching a national branding strategy under the theme of Gold Tick Certified Barra and agreeing to develop and implement a voluntary contribution scheme similar to that of the prawn sector.

Using CRC research results, Australia's major abalone exporters established the Australian Wild Abalone™ market development program in China. Consumer research, quality standards, an industry trademark approved by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and a distributor education campaign in China all contributed to maintaining Australian abalone as a high-priced, luxury product against competition from other countries. The estimated yearly benefit to the industry was \$12 million.

### **Processing technologies and practices**

A large-scale Mud Crab recovery unit was developed to operate at Sydney Fish Market to reduce crab mortalities caused by the stress of transport. The unit consistently returned a recovery rate of more than 50%, saving more than \$250,000 a year.

A new value-added crab product was developed with Abacus Fisheries in WA using an accelerated product development approach developed by CRC scientists. The product was very successful, with more than 1.5 million crab cakes sold by 2015.

Sardines caught in Australia are normally sold for bait, but they are highly nutritious. Following research with chefs, Cape Le Grande Australian Sardines started to sell raw, frozen Sardine fillets and lemon-flavoured, crumbed frozen fillets to supermarkets, seafood retailers and food service outlets in Perth and Melbourne.

### **Supply chain improvements**

The CRC investigated seafood supply chains in detail across Australia and made improvements using Quality Index manuals and predictive microbiology. One company saved \$150,000 by introducing improved cold-chain management.

Quality assurance and traceability systems were developed with the prawn and abalone industries.

### **Food safety**

The SafeFish advisory committee was established to provide consolidated technical advice and risk assessments to support Australia's seafood safety standards and market access negotiations. Significant outcomes were achieved in negotiations on oyster transport, marine biotoxins, *Vibrio*, cadmium and parasites in fish.

### **International trade**

The Seafood Trade Advisory Group, established to represent seafood exporters, demonstrated the importance of unified industry representation, consistent communication with government and well-researched data to support negotiating positions. It successfully contributed to negotiations on Free Trade Agreements and technical issues concerning exports.

### **Consumer health benefits**

More than 20,000 tests on 20 of the most popular fish species determined that chemical and heavy metals levels in seafood are consistently below regulatory limits. High levels of nutrients such as omega-3 oils and iodine were also confirmed in most species.

Downloadable resources for seafood processors were at [www.superseafood.com](http://www.superseafood.com) and a booklet, *Super Seafood*, was available for consumers.

Curtin University established the Centre of Excellence in Seafood Science and Health as part of the CRC. The centre produced a range of research-based information resources for the community, schools and health professionals on the role of seafood in a healthy diet and in managing chronic conditions.

An App based on the Seafood Quality Index Manual was developed to enable consumers and businesses to determine the freshness of fish by comparing images to actual fish.

### **Education and training**

The CRC supported 44 PhD students, 9 MSc students and 17 Honours students. More than half of these "industry ready" graduates are now working in the seafood industry.

More than 1,000 people attended 13 CRC master classes designed to meet the specialist training needs of CRC Participants. Thirty international experts were brought to Australia to participate in the classes.

Research results from the CRC were provided to update 15 existing units of competency and 10 new ones for the National Seafood Industry Training Package managed by AgriFood Skills Australia.

Education for chefs in the preparation of seafood was dramatically updated with the production of high-quality training videos that have been distributed nationally.

### Industry structure

The CRC contributed to the creation or further development of several entities that are likely to receive ongoing investment, thus establishing legacies for the seafood industry.

They included a nationally coordinated seafood marketing capability, the South Australian Research and Development Institute SafeFish food safety specialist group, the Seafood Trade Advisory Group, the University of Tasmania Experimental Aquaculture Facility, the Curtin University Centre of Excellence for Seafood Science and Health, the Australian Centre for Marine Biotoxin Testing, the oyster breeding company Australian Seafood Industries Ltd, and the two industry associations: Oysters Australia Ltd and Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries Ltd.

Other significant activities in 2014–15 were as follows:

- The Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) replaced both the CAC Act and the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997. The Act introduced a number of new performance-related tasks.

Other changes included:

- The FRDC became a 'corporate Commonwealth entity' (CCE).
  - As a CCE, the FRDC board became the 'accountable authority'.
  - FRDC employees became 'officials'.
- The FRDC and DAWR signed a Funding Agreement (foreshadowed at **2013-14 New roles for the FRDC**) that sets out the expectation for FRDC performance, transparency and accountability to stakeholders, the government and the community. It defines and governs key aspects of the relationship between the FRDC and the Department. The Agreement is part of a more consistent framework supporting the government's relationship with all rural RDCs, both statutory and industry owned. The Agreement incorporates directions previously outlined in a letter from former Minister for Resources, the Hon. David Beddall which required the FRDC to spend funds raised from a particular fishery on projects relevant to that fishery sector or state/territory and to consult through the relevant industry sectors in that state or territory. The completion of the first year of this Agreement was reported to the Department and covered in the FRDC's 2015-16 Annual Report. A copy of the funding agreement is available at [http://frdc.com.au/about\\_frdc/corporate-documents/Pages/default.aspx](http://frdc.com.au/about_frdc/corporate-documents/Pages/default.aspx).
  - The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Senator Richard Colbeck, hosted the first Fisheries Ministers meeting in over a decade. Ministers and senior officials from Australian, state and Northern Territory governments including the FRDC met to discuss a collaborative approach to the management of wild-catch commercial, recreational and Indigenous customary fisheries and aquaculture. The meeting provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships, and to ensure effective and coordinated management of Australia's fish stocks. There was a focus on the streamlining of regulations, with the goal of reducing the fishing industry's compliance costs.
  - The Minister for Agriculture announced the results of the first round of the "Rural R&D for Profit" grants programme. The FRDC and its industry partners were successful in obtaining \$3 million from the programme towards the \$6 million project: *Growing a profitable, innovative, collaborative Australian Yellowtail Kingfish aquaculture industry: bringing 'white' fish to the market*. This was a collaboration between FRDC, Clean Seas, SARDI, Indian Ocean Fresh, Challenger TAFE, NSW Fisheries and its commercial partner, Huon Aquaculture. A steering committee was formed involving all the partners to coordinate the research programme which is centred on nutrition and feeds with the primary aim of reducing the feed conversion ratio and subsequently cost of production.

[See **2015-16** for the results of the second of the programme]

- The 2014 stakeholder survey (the fifth undertaken by the FRDC) showed that there had been a significant uplift in several indicators over the past three years, and in particular with respect to:
  - acknowledgement from stakeholders that they have visibility of, and contact with, the FRDC — both direct contact (in person or at events) and indirect contact (communications and through the digital channels)
  - “top of mind” awareness by stakeholders of FRDC, disposition (attitudes) towards FRDC, acknowledgement of the importance of the FRDC to the industry, and satisfaction with how the FRDC invests and deploys its levies

The research also confirmed that the different channels and approaches to stakeholder engagement delivered different impacts. The more indirect channels (such as *FISH*, the FRDC website and social channels) were likely to have less impact than direct, one-on-one personal contact and interaction.

The seafood industry’s determined AGVP was \$2.75 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.73 bn and aquaculture \$1.02 bn.

## 2015–16: Major reforms of advisory committees

The earlier referenced review of the FRAB system by Greg d'Arville resulted in wide-ranging recommendations aimed at making it more effective, cost efficient and accountable.<sup>38</sup> The recommendations were considered by the FRAB chairs at a FRDC workshop<sup>39</sup> in 2015, and received varying levels of endorsement. Specifically, the chairs did not endorse the structural option to consolidate the FRABs to reduce their number in preference to retaining the jurisdictional model because of the link that they had with their respective jurisdictional governments; they did endorse the need for FRDC to take on the capacity to provide the FRABs with greater levels of operational management; and they had varying opinions on the FRDC providing administrative support of FRABs.

The FRDC responded to the review by renaming the FRABs, research advisory committees (RACs) and internalising the RAC system. It employed two programs managers to each manage four RACs with respect to, inter alia, meetings, RD&E prioritisation, project management and extension. The programs managers are each supported by a part time project officer.

The reform of the advisory committees coincided with a request from Minister for Agriculture for the FRDC along with other Canberra-based RDCs to consider relocating their offices to regional centres. This was the start to a lengthy process that culminated in a request from the Minister that the FRDC board consider relocating its office to Hobart with a cost estimate of \$4 million to be met by the FRDC. As a compromise the Minister agreed to a proposal by the FRDC to open and staff a regional office in Adelaide at the Adelaide Wine Centre while maintaining its head office in Canberra.

These two occurrences – the internalising of the RAC system and the opening of the Adelaide office – converged to provide a highly satisfactory outcome for all parties. All RAC support staff were located in Adelaide.

[Inaugural RAC Chairs and members were appointed in September 2016; with subsequent appointments being on a needs basis. As a consequence of the Commonwealth Performance review of the FRDC (see **2019-20 Government Reviews the FRDC's performance**) in 2018-19 Forest Hill Consulting undertook a review of the FRDC's partnership models. This review resulted in further changes to the FRDC's structure as reflected in the 2020-25 RD&E Plan (see **2020–21: Major changes to the delivery of primary industries research, development and extension?**)

Other significant activities in 2015–16 were as follows:

- Board appointments were new directors Dr Colin Buxton, John Harrison, Dr Daryl McPhee, Dr Lesley McLeod, John Susman; Renata Brooks was reappointed. Heather Brayford, Dr Bruce Mapstone, Brett McCallum and Dr Peter O'Brien retired. The FRDC and its stakeholders were saddened by the death of director David Thomason.
- *Knowledge for fishing and aquaculture into the future: FRDC's research, development and extension plan 2015-20*, the FRDC's sixth five-year plan, came into effect. The Plan focusses on the three national priorities:
  - Ensuring that Australian fishing and aquaculture products are sustainable and acknowledged to be so.
  - Improving productivity and profitability of fishing and aquaculture.
  - Developing new and emerging aquaculture growth opportunities.
- The FRDC used three approaches to implement the RD&E Plan: lead, collaborate and partner. Under these approaches RD&E planning, prioritisation and funding occur in the following ways:
  - Lead: FRDC allocates a significant portion of the Australian Government's public good funding it

<sup>38</sup> Hitherto the FRABs were largely independent with ill-defined accountability

<sup>39</sup> In 2016 the annual workshop was renamed 'FRDC - National Lead Collaborate Partner Workshop', and has since been renamed as the 'FRDC stakeholder annual planning workshop'.



receives and take the lead in priority setting for RD&E with a national focus.

- Collaborate: FRDC provides mechanisms and incentives for those under partnership agreements to leverage their funding where there is alignment with priorities at the national level.
- Partner: Greater responsibility is given to the end users of RD&E to set priorities under partnership agreements for both sectors and jurisdictions. Funding for this RD&E comes from industry contributions, the matching contribution from the Australian Government, and some additional funding from the jurisdictions.

- The Minister of Finance the Senator the Hon. Mathias Cormann approved a change to the FRDC outcome statement on 15 March 2016 to incorporate the changes to the *PIRD Act (1989)*, allowing Research and Development Corporations to fund marketing activities, as well as placing a greater emphasis on extension and adoption activities. The new outcome statement was:

*Increased economic, social and environmental benefits for Australian fishing and aquaculture, and the wider community, by investing in knowledge, innovation, and marketing.*

- A new National Marine Science Plan (NMSP) was launched by the Hon. Ian Macfarlane, Minister for Industry and Science and National Marine Science Committee, on 11 August 2015 at Australian Parliament House. It drew together the knowledge and experience of more than 23 marine research organisations including the FRDC, universities and government departments and more than 500 scientists. It outlined the science needed to provide the knowledge, technology and innovation cornerstones that will grow a sustainable blue economy. The Plan identifies seven critical challenges facing Australia and provided recommendations about how, in a coordinated way, marine science can support Australia in meeting those challenges. The FRDC was a principal driver for the development of the food security challenge. For further details see [www.marinescience.net.au](http://www.marinescience.net.au).
- The second edition of the National Fishing and Aquaculture RD&E Strategy 2015-20 was implemented with evidence during its developmental phase of greater commitment to the process than with the first edition. The governance committee that oversaw its development is now chaired by the Australian Fisheries Management Forum and will oversee its implementation. Also important is that a major element of this document is the roles each partner will undertake, with respect to “lead” or “support” in the various areas of RD&E covered by the Strategy. The FRDC continues to provide secretariat support to the governance committee.
- More detail can be found on the FRDC website:  
[http://frdc.com.au/research/RDEPlanningandPriorities/Pages/nat\\_framework.aspx](http://frdc.com.au/research/RDEPlanningandPriorities/Pages/nat_framework.aspx).
- The Hon. Senator Anne Ruston announced that the FRDC and its Seafood CRC and industry partners were successful in obtaining \$236,000 in the second round of the “Rural R&D for Profit” grants programme to investigate the use and commercialisation of an automated oyster opening system.

[A prototype was developed and tested during 2018. Consumer testing showed the Easy-Open oysters produced by the machine were very appealing. Also, the shelf life of treated Easy-Open oysters was tested and found to be identical to untreated oysters. Operation of the machine in a commercial environment identified several program faults and areas for design improvement. It was returned to the manufacturer for modifications during 2019 for further evaluation.]

- There was a significant biosecurity and disease incident: an outbreak of Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome (POMS) in Tasmania. The first POMS event in Australia occurred in late 2010, when high mortalities occurred in two estuaries in NSW - Botany Bay and Port Jackson - and subsequently in the Hawkesbury estuary. In January 2016 POMS was identified in Tasmania, and by the end of February there were six marine growing areas confirmed as POMS infected. This is a major issue as Tasmanian hatcheries supply around 90% of Australia’s Pacific Oyster spat. The FRDC, Seafood CRC, state governments and industry provided funds to address this emergency. Subsequently the Australian

Government provided a further \$1.47 million, and in June it approved an additional \$3 million through the approval of CRC- P application that leveraged an additional \$8 million of industry and partnership funding to rebuild and grow Australia's oyster industry, and develop collaboration between industry and researchers nationally.

[Australian Seafood Industries (a company selectively breeding oysters) was the recipient of much of this funding and had anticipated the Australia-wide risk based on its experiences in NSW. Having selective bred oysters for POMS resistance, it was able to progressively commercialise the outcomes of its research to the point where commercial Tasmanian stock losses in 2018-19 are minimal. In general Tasmanian growers have returned to pre-POMS stocking and employment levels. Although South Australia is still classified as POMS free, its dependence on imported Tasmanian spat meant the industry was hit just as hard as Tasmania in 2016. The two major Tasmanian spat suppliers have set up hatcheries in South Australia using ASI stock, and ramped up production with the help of the South Australian Aquatic Sciences Centre. Without the ASI breeding program, the Tasmanian oyster industry would still be decimated by POMS, and growers in other states would not have access to POMS resistant stock.]

- Community perceptions surveys have been undertaken since 2003, with the FRDC moving to undertake the surveys annually in 2015 as part of evaluation for the RD&E Plan 2015-20. FRDC continues to have a program to understand stakeholder needs and perceptions. The surveys seek to understand and track the perceptions held by the community on fishing and aquaculture in Australia in achieving sustainability. This survey extends to look at total responsibility (fishers, managers, researchers and community) and what activities are being undertaken to improve their views. In the most recent survey (conducted in 2017) the community perceptions held in relation to the sustainability of the Australian fishing industry commercial wild catch sector increased from 24% to 32%. The FRDC's 2015-20 RD&E Plan outlines targets positive perceptions of the commercial fishing industry to have increased from 28 per cent to 40 per cent by 2020 as measured through the independently-commissioned FRDC stakeholder surveys.
- The FRDC contributed to a DAWR project aimed at developing a strategy for improving public understanding of the seafood industry and fisheries management. The final report was launched by the Assistant Minister at the Seafood Directions Conference in Perth, in October. At present it is uncertain who will take carriage of this strategy as industry is focusing on a related process to reignite its national peak body - Seafood Industry Australia. The FRDC will continue to assist with the implementation of the strategy where appropriate.

[Seafood Industry Australia was launched in Adelaide in June 2017.]

- In 2014 the Australian Government proposed an amendment to the PIRD Act that would have enabled it to have the FRDC pay its costs of membership of a number of regional fisheries management organisations. The amendment passed through the House of Representatives but was subjected to an Inquiry when it reached the Senate. The legislation has been stalled in the Senate for some time and lapsed at prorogation 17 April 2016. Had the amendment to the PIRD Act passed into law, the FRDC would have needed to provide \$1,146,000 annually for these memberships.
- The Senate referred the existing arrangements for agricultural sector R&D levies to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and reporting. Following extensive consultation, the Committee completed its review and tabled its report on 30 June 2015. The inquiry has the potential to impact on the FRDC's operations should the recommendations be endorsed by Government.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.93 bn, of which wild-catch was \$1.90 bn and aquaculture \$1.03 bn.

## 2016–17: 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary

The FRDC reached its 25-year milestone this year, and in a story he wrote for *FISH*, Executive Director Patrick Hone reflected on the major changes over his time with the Corporation.

Many of the changes are recorded in this *Evolution of the FRDC* and are summarised as follows:

- Developing a quality management systems approach to all aspects of business
- Developing a custom-built real-time integrated accounting and project management system
- Moving from a 'grant' mentality to an 'investment' mentality in funding RD&E
- Improving planning processes aimed at clearly defining commercial outcomes
- Leading a national approach to ecological sustainable development
- Driving the need for a collaborative approach to RD&E planning and investing
- Adopting a more flexible investment framework
- Acquiring income from sources outside the Commonwealth- industry matching model
- Taking on a service provider role including marketing

Dr Hone attributed a lot of industry's successes to the role that FRDC has played in people development and particularly in leadership.

Projects Manager Annette Lyons, who remains the FRDC's longest-serving employee, also wrote the following story (unedited) for *FISH*:

*I started at the FRDC in 1992 when there were only five employees – the executive director, the business manager, office and quality manager, program manager and one project manager. I started as an office assistant. They sat me down in front of a computer, I asked what it was and was told that was how I had to work. I had never worked on a computer. At that stage, we had inherited 51 projects from the Fishing Industry Research and Development Council, and then invested in an additional 42 projects, bringing it to a total portfolio of 93. We now have in excess of 400 projects.*

*With a small staff there were always things to do and everyone did everything, even the executive director. You always felt valued, you actually felt like everything made a difference and you gained a lot of knowledge. All final reports were stored in a cupboard with a maroon ribbon around them. At one point we even charged for the final reports based on weight. Now we don't receive hard copies and we have been evolving to a paperless office – almost. Some sayings come to mind, such as "join the dots", "the big end of town", "hit the ground running", "peaks and troughs", "think quality", "don't do things twice, avoid rework" – these seem to define the FRDC.*

*I have seen many changes over the years: three iterations of our project management systems, from keying in applications to an online system; the expansion of the FRDC (now with an Adelaide office); a small newsletter that has grown into a national magazine; two office locations; and various chairs, boards, Fisheries Research Advisory Bodies and Research Advisory Committees (so much paperwork). My reason for sticking it out for so long is loyalty, and an ever-changing environment. I have really appreciated that the FRDC has always been very supportive of family, allowing me to attend school activities or be home with sick children. I hold close to my heart all the relationships and friendships I have made with many stakeholders throughout my time at the FRDC and many ex-staff and board members.*

*Congratulations FRDC on 25 years. It is an honour to serve.*

[Annette Lyons retired 02 January 2019. She had been with the FRDC since 1994 and had been involved in the many changes that made up the evolution of the FRDC to this point in time. On her retirement the inaugural FRDC Executive Director, Peter Dundas-Smith (with whom she had worked in their former careers) said: "You excelled in whatever position you held, be it administration, quality management or programs management. Even so, I don't think your capacity for learning and working has ever been fully realised...You can leave FRDC knowing you have made a significant contribution to an organisation which is highly regarded by all its stakeholders; a regard for which you can take a lot of credit.]

Other significant activities in 2016–17 were as follows:

- A new FRDC Chair, the Hon. Ron Boswell, was appointed.
- Seafood Industry Australia was incorporated 12 May 2017 and launched in Adelaide 09 June 2017.
- From 22 November 2016 until February 2017 a hepatopancreatitis (white spot disease) outbreak spread across seven farms in close proximity to each other along the Logan River (south Queensland) culturing black tiger prawns (*Penaeus monodon*). All ponds on these farms were treated with chlorine following a decontamination protocol and a progressive discharge procedure. After the detection of white spot on prawn farms, it was subsequently confirmed in wild prawns collected from the Logan River on 08 December 2016. Subsequently white spot was detected at a number of sites in the Logan River and northern Moreton Bay. A Biosecurity Control Program was established for the area surrounding all farms within a Control Zone established by Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and a Movement Control Zone was established around the farms. Subsequently, movement restrictions were imposed across Moreton Bay. As part of the strategy to eradicate white spot all decontaminated prawn farming ponds were dried and fallowed until 31 May 2018. The Queensland Government has spent some \$20 million on its white spot eradication program. FRDC funded research on the extent of the pathogen occurrence, and to better understand the epidemiology of the outbreak. Testing of uncooked prawns purchased from retail outlets around southern Queensland during the outbreak identified a very high incidence of white spot syndrome virus suggesting that the most likely introduction pathway was recreational fishers using retail prawns for bait. Following the outbreak FRDC assisted the Australian Prawn Farmers Association to develop National Biosecurity Guidelines for prawn farming. Biosecurity Queensland managed the response to the outbreak and, partnering with Queensland Seafood Industry Association, continued to communicate the threat posed by white spot through a multitude of platforms.

[All states and territories in Australia are currently undergoing proof of freedom surveillance for the virus that causes white spot disease. At present, all crustacean samples collected outside of Moreton Bay along the east coast of Queensland between Caloundra to Cairns, have tested negative for white spot. No positive detections have been recorded in Moreton Bay during the March 2019 surveillance sampling program. Due to the detection of white spot in wild crustacean samples from in the northern part of Moreton Bay as recently as March 2018, surveillance will need to continue at least until March 2020 as the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) requires that targeted surveillance be undertaken for two years without detection of the disease.

In response to the white spot outbreak the Australian Government is conducting an import risk assessment for raw prawns and has imposed new import conditions on breaded, battered and crumbed prawns effective 28 Sep 2018.

During the 2018-19 season three of the farms impacted by white spot recommenced prawn production. All farms implemented additional biosecurity measures include water filtering systems, crab fencing, modified farm layouts and fishing restrictions imposed around the farms. All farms successfully harvested prawns without any occurrence of white spot.]

- The Productivity Commission released its draft report on Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture. The report can be found at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/fisheries-aquaculture/report>
- Minister's Morrison and Ruston announced a Productivity Commission inquiry into the regulation of the Australian marine fisheries and aquaculture sectors. A summary of the recommendations can be found at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/news-media/pc-news/pc-news-november-2016/fisheries#key>
- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources commissioned the FRDC to manage the development of the National Carp Control Plan (NCCP) to be finished by December 2018, and costing some \$10m. To ensure preparedness for possible release of the Carp herpesvirus, this investment will facilitate:
  - national coordination of planning and communication activities
  - delivery of stakeholder education and consultation activities
  - completion of research to address remaining knowledge gaps
  - completion of risk assessment activities

For more information see:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/pest-animals-and-weeds/national-carp-control-plan>

<http://www.pestsmart.org.au/pest-animal-species/european-carp/clearer-waters/>

[In September 2018 the Department of Agriculture extended the NCCP contract to 30 December 2019 with a reduced scope. The NCCP will be complete a report to government in December 2019. FRDC will maintain its contract with the Australian Government to complete additional non target species experiments in early 2021 to inform a final decision on feasibility of the virus release by the Australian Government]

- The FRDC was successful in bidding for a CRC-P grant titled “Future Oysters”. The application for the CRC-P was developed by Oysters Australia and Australian Seafood Industries Pty Ltd. The Department of Industry, Innovation and Science entered into a CRC project funding agreement with Australian Seafood Industries Pty Ltd., and Participants agreements were finalised. Future Oysters CRC-P has a total cash budget of \$5,011,040 of which the FRDC contributed some \$417k.

The Future Oysters CRC-P focusses on three R&D programs:

1. Better Oysters - Advance genetic selection and progeny testing to accelerate availability of disease resistant Pacific and Sydney rock oysters Outcomes - High POMS resistant Pacific oysters - Improved disease resistant Sydney Rock oysters
  2. Healthy Oysters - Employ novel methods to assess oyster health and manage diseases – Identify environmental factors implicated in oyster diseases Outcomes - Better farm management strategies - Improved profitability
  3. More Oysters - Assess commercial potential of alternative species to diversify production - Develop and assess new technologies to increase production and profitability Outcomes – More resilient farming systems - Increased production to supply new domestic and global markets.
- Seismic testing and its impacts on fisheries becomes a high priority for research. FRDC has invested in a number of related projects, and has informally coordinated industry discussions around seismic testing impacts on the marine environment, facilitating conversations between jurisdictions and the fishing and aquaculture industry. Discussions included how to best engage with petroleum companies as they prepare their Environmental Plans as part of the broader submission process to the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environment Management Authority (NOPSEMA). Seafood Industry Australia has nominated seismic testing as a high priority national issue.
  - FRDC commenced a trial of risk-based reporting on 20 domestic species. The trial of 20 species, managed by Sevaly Sen, was to observe how a risk based reporting tool will consider bycatch, habitat and fisheries management [this is similar to the UK Seafish RASS tool (see: <http://www.seafish.org/rass/>).

[This work lead to the development of *Whichfish* (see [www.whichfish.com.au](http://www.whichfish.com.au) ) in conjunction with Seafood NZ ([www.openseas.org.nz](http://www.openseas.org.nz)) to assist businesses in rapidly screening wild-caught for their relative environmental risks and other performance measures based on publicly available information.]

- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources commissioned the FRDC to manage work on technical non-tariff barriers to trade affecting Australia’s highly-traded or trade-ambitious agricultural commodities across key markets. This involved collaboration with other Rural Research and Development Corporations and focussed on a small number of highly-traded or trade-ambitious primary industry commodities as case studies. The project focused on the countries negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which include China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and ASEAN member states.
- FRDC asked Dr Len Stephens to undertake an intellectual property and commercialisation audit, and the board agreed to take a more proactive approach to intellectual property management.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$2.92 billion, of which wild-catch was \$1.68 billion, aquaculture was \$1.24 billion.

## 2017–18: Underutilised fish still on the plate

Since the FRDC established the National Seafood Centre in 1993 (see 1991-94) it has made varying levels of investment in RD&E aimed at ‘making the most of the catch’<sup>40</sup> through product and market development, and utilisation of undervalued fish, discarded fish and processing waste. Investment in this area increased significantly between 2007 and 2015 through the Seafood Cooperative Research Centre. (See 2006-07: Seafood Cooperative Research Centre established and 2014–15: Seafood CRC leaves its mark.)

Notwithstanding a reasonably high level of investment, but an overall low success rate in terms of getting products to market or making a difference to fishers’ profits; such value-adding remains a high priority for industry as evidenced through the priority setting processes of the Research Advisory Committees. The challenge for the FRDC, therefore, is how to improve the success rate of such projects. Consequently, this year the FRDC commissioned Dr Len Stephens, former Managing Director of the Seafood Cooperative Research Centre, to undertake a comprehensive analysis of underutilised species projects, with a view to developing a set of success criteria to be used as guidance for the development and evaluation of such future projects.

His analysis revealed that only seven of 30 randomly selected and completed projects were successful in that they achieved a commercial outcome, or are likely to achieve one, defined as significant volumes of fish being regularly harvested and sold into a market consistently. All the successful projects had substantial involvement of a seafood wholesaler, and used a whole supply chain approach.

The report stated that the fundamental problem with underutilised species is lack of demand for the product. Therefore, the decision to attempt exploitation of an underutilised species in the domestic or export market is a business one, likely to be based on low profit margins that must be made by a commercial operator using their own data and networks.

In view of the low success rate of these projects, Dr Stephens developed a checklist of 34 success criteria, and recommended that in future FRDC only support projects of this nature that are led by a commercial entity and meet most of the success criteria. However, he noted that underutilisation may just be a stage in a decades-long continuum of development of any fishery. For example, the West Australian octopus and Patagonian Toothfish fisheries were undeveloped or nonexistent thirty years ago, however, are now thriving.

At a national policy level, Dr Stephens noted that the volume of underutilised seafood produced in Australia each year exceeds 50,000 tonnes. The seven commercially successful projects had an impact on a scale of hundreds of tonnes of fish, rather than thousands of tonnes. They reflected successful commercialisation of a niche opportunity, however, are unlikely to produce a transformative impact on underutilised species at a national scale.

Therefore, he also suggested that the FRDC might have a role in investigating fisheries management policy options that drive better utilisation of underutilised species. Such policies have been implemented by the European Union and are the subject of considerable debate.

Other significant activities in 2017–18 were as follows:

- The Hon David Littleproud MP was appointed Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources 20 December 2017.
- On 14 September 2017 Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, The Hon Anne Ruston, declared Seafood Industry Australia a representative organisation in relation to the FRDC and revoked

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Making the Most of the Catch’ was the title of a 1996 post-harvest symposium hosted in Brisbane by the Centre for Food Technology of the Department of Primary Industry, Queensland, and sponsored by the National Seafood Centre. See 1996–97.



National Seafood Industry Alliance (NSIA) as a representative organisation. In February 2018 NSIA deregistered as an incorporated association.

- The FRDC partnered with X-Lab Ventures to foster innovation to solve challenges in the fisheries and aquaculture sector by helping seafood businesses realise their innovation ideas. This entrepreneurial training has two core innovation streams: hands-on workshops where innovators are trained in the 'Lean Start-up' approach to better understand their business and test de-risking business models; and a three-month business accelerator program where teams are mentored through a disciplined process to explore new growth opportunities.
- The FRDC, in partnership with state and territory industry councils, initiated the national Fish and Chips Awards. The aim of the awards was to engage with consumers, and deliver key messages on the sustainability that underpins Australia's fisheries management. It involved two award categories – people's choice and judge's choice. Over 75,000 votes were received for some 900 fish and chips shops. The inaugural awards were presented at the biennial National Seafood Industry Awards.

The seafood industry's determined AGVP was \$3.03 billion, of which wild-catch was \$1.68 billion and aquaculture \$1.35 billion.



## 2018–19: Kingfish the new salmon?

The rapid development of Yellowtail Kingfish (YTK), *Hiramasa S. lalandi*, aquaculture in Australia over the past two decades can largely be attributed to three factors. First, farming of the species proved to be biologically and commercially viable overseas; second, appropriate infrastructure and industry capability pre-existed; and third, a robust partnership formed between industry and researchers from the outset. This is illustrated by the following stories:

### ***In South Australia***

In the early 1990s interest in marine finfish farming on the Eyre Peninsula resulted in the formation of the Northern Spencer Gulf Aquaculture Alliance by the Whyalla Industry Development Enterprise. The Alliance, comprising a group of interested local business owners and enthusiasts, originally pursued Snapper aquaculture in collaboration with the South Australian Research and Development Institute. The Alliance constructed a rudimentary hatchery at Port Augusta, and some members subsequently formed the company South Australian Aquaculture Management. While holding Snapper within the warm seawater outlet channel of the adjacent Northern Power Station, technicians observed groups of large YTK; and during the spring of 1997 captured about twenty 15–30-kilogram fish in a nearby bay and held them in broodstock holding tanks. Within four months spontaneous spawning commenced, and continued every 4–5 days. Larval rearing was conducted that produced a few thousand fingerlings in early 1998, and these were transferred to sea cages in Fitzgerald Bay.

Following the interest in Snapper farming in northern Spencer Gulf, a local farmer in southern Eyre Peninsula established another private hatchery on the coast near Arno Bay, and proceeded to produce Snapper, Mulloway and Black Bream. In 2000 the Southern Bluefin Tuna grow-out company, Stehr Group, founded the company Clean Seas Tuna Ltd (Clean Seas), and subsequently purchased and further developed this hatchery. In 2005 Clean Seas became a publicly listed company that was producing 400 tonnes per annum of YTK. A year later, Clean Seas acquired South Australian Aquaculture Management, which included the aforementioned hatchery in Port Augusta, and more grow-out leases in Fitzgerald Bay; leaving Clean Seas as the only company producing YTK in SA.

In 2007, fingerling production increased to 600,000 from 150,000 in the previous year. Grow-out production in 2008 was 3,280 tonnes (combined YTK and Mulloway) from 1.25 million fingerlings produced at the Arno Bay hatchery. While the production targets for 2009 and 2010 were 4,600 and 5,300 tonnes respectively, they were not achieved.

Beginning in 2010, performance began to decline further, with poor growth and high mortality. As a result of these production problems, and associated financial issues, production declined to about 500 tonnes per annum. In 2012, following a wide-scale review and assistance from experts in Japan and elsewhere, the cause of the poor performance was identified as a taurine deficiency in the feed. Once remedied, mortality stopped, and growth rates improved. Following the resolution of these problems, a major company restructure, and its decision to discontinue R&D into Southern Bluefin Tuna hatchery production, Clean Seas switched its business focus to solely YTK production with the aim of increasing production back to 3,000 tonnes per annum in the next five years; currently at 2,350 tonnes in 2017–18.

Clean Seas (now Clean Seas Seafood Limited) developed a strong market for YTK, both domestically and internationally. In 2008 it was reported that approximately 60 % of production was exported, with the remainder sold domestically. However, significant proportions of its markets were lost when production fell to 500 tonnes. The company has since been rebuilding its market presence with a high cost, new branding and market activation program planned for 2017 onwards. Export markets include Europe, North America and Asia. Its YTK have been endorsed by Euro-Toques International, an association of more than 4,000 of Europe's finest chefs, and have won many industry awards for quality. Demand has been strong, and farm gate prices continue to rise (currently >\$15–16/kg whole). Recent reports from the company show that about 45% of production is exported, with the remainder being sold domestically.

### ***In Western Australia***

YTK aquaculture commenced in Jurien Bay 200 kilometres north of Perth in 2007 after Western Kingfish Ltd raised \$8 million in a public share offering on the Australian Stock Exchange. The company's aim was to utilise the warmer waters off the mid-west coast to provide a competitive advantage over the SA industry. The company aimed to produce 500 tonnes per annum within three years of its capital raising; and 10,000 tonnes in the long term. While the concept of growing YTK in this region was sound, the company folded in 2009 due to a number of different factors, including fish health and funding issues.

Meanwhile Erica Starling, through her company Indian Ocean Fresh Australia Pty Ltd (IOFA), had been pursuing her family (Boschetti and Newbold) interest in the licensed 800-hectare site in the Zeewijk Channel at the Abrolhos Islands. This site was originally approved in 2003 for the grow-out Yellowfin Tuna. This never eventuated. However, in 2007, due to changes in the tuna market, this licence was varied to provide for finfish production focusing on hatchery available species such as YTK and Mulloway. In 2008 IOFA trialed a near shore, Geraldton site with a batch of Mulloway. This was successfully completed in 2010.

In 2010 IOFA joined with the Mid West Development Commission (MWDC) to conduct R&D into YTK, with MWDC providing some operating funds, and IOFA providing the infrastructure, capital equipment and expertise. The first trial (YTK1) encountered a number of significant challenges, due to the extreme warm water event off the coast of WA; but was successfully completed in late 2011. MWDC brought together a team to address the challenges, and a project reference group was formed to provide a body of expertise and capability that would assist in determining the viability of the species in the region.

A second trial (YTK2) was commissioned in 2014 to examine the potential economic benefits to the State and the mid-west region of a sea-cage aquaculture industry. The trial was completed in 2016, and as a result IOFA commenced transitioning its business from an R&D phase to a commercialisation phase. In late 2016 it received approval to expand its aquaculture licence and is now in commercial production.

### ***In New South Wales***

In NSW the Department of Primary Industries established a 20-hectare marine aquaculture research lease off Port Stephens in 2013 and sought a commercial partner. In 2014 Huon Aquaculture (a large salmon producer in Tasmania founded by Peter and Frances Bender) was accepted as the commercial partner. Shortly after, Huon Aquaculture purchased a 30-hectare unused lease adjacent the research site that was originally established to grow out Snapper. In 2016, approval was granted to move the two leases further offshore into 40 meters of water. The new location was 6 kilometers offshore in Providence Bay. The move allowed the use of larger cages and provided the potential to increase the maximum possible stocking density from 998 to 1,200 tonnes on each lease. The relocation also saw the leases increase to 62 hectares, largely to accommodate the longer mooring lines needed for deeper water. The first fingerlings were stocked in October 2016, and three subsequent batches of fingerlings were deployed.

The aim of the project was to prove the suitability and commercial viability of the area for farming YTK over a period of five years; with an overall aim of contributing to the development of sustainable marine aquaculture along the coast of NSW. There were two major challenges. First, there was excessive fouling through the presence of new forms of barnacle fouling that posed challenges for cleaning equipment. Second, high sea swells and rough seas with waves of over 11 metres accounted for one major incident when about 20,000 fish escaped from damaged nets; about 5,000 were recaptured and a further 3,000 were taken by commercial fishers, with an unknown quantity recovered by recreational fishers.

Despite these challenges two sea pens were successfully harvested using a specially developed on-board harvesting system, and the market acceptance had been positive.

The project clearly demonstrated the biological feasibility of YTK farming in NSW. Environmental monitoring found no significant impacts on the surrounding ecosystems. The fish grew well, and the quality was exceptional. However, the aforementioned physical damage to the lease infrastructure hastened the removal of cages that required structural modification and the remaining tenure period precluded lease re-establishment. The information gained through the project paved the way for further aquaculture development in NSW coastal waters.

### ***The future***

The combined YTK industry produced about 2,700 tonnes in 2017-18 worth about \$43 million<sup>41</sup>. Based on current forecasts<sup>42</sup> by 2028 this could increase to 34,000 tonnes worth \$440 million.

Other significant activities in 2018–19 were as follows:

- On 28 August 2018 Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck was sworn in as the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and made responsible for fisheries and aquaculture.
- On 29 May 2019 Senator Bridget McKenzie was sworn in as federal Minister for Agriculture (Australia's first female agriculture minister); and Senator Jonathon Duniam was sworn in as Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries.
- Board appointments were Dr Kate Brooks, Professor Colin Buxton (reappointed), Katie Hodson-Thomas, Mark King, John Lloyd, and Dr Lesley MacLeod (reappointed). Renata Brooks, John Harrison, Professor Daryl McPhee, and John Susman retired.
- At its April 2019 meeting the FRDC board approved an Investment Fund approach to approving funding of RD&E. This entails the board annually approving investment in RD&E against partners key planning documents. The board delegated the assessment of individual applications deemed to be medium to low risk to the FRDC Managing Director.
- In March 2019 Senator Richard Colbeck launched the *2018 Status of Australian Fish Stock (SAFS) Reports*. They are at <http://www.fish.gov.au> ; via the app <http://fish.gov.au/app> and on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/ZUoolBUYGtk>). In total, 120 species made up of 406 stocks were assessed in this Report, including 37 new species. The reports comprise the most comprehensive review of the status of Australian fish stocks ever undertaken, and show that the majority of Australia's fish stocks are well managed and healthy. They also assist in highlighting priorities for research and management to address species and stocks of concern. FRDC also partnered with the Dietitians Association of Australia to share information on the reports. At the same time FRDC released the Report Card of Australia's Sharks. This report undertook an assessment of 194 species of sharks (and rays with shark like bodies).
- FRDC established the *National RD&E Seafood Industry Safety Initiative* overseen by a Steering Committee, comprised of national seafood industry leaders and representatives from the [Australian Maritime Safety Authority](http://www.maritime.gov.au). The Strategy broadly focuses on the integration of previous and new investments made in the area of workplace health and safety, and mental health and culture. A key component of the Strategy is project "SeSAFE – Delivering Industry Safety through Electronic Learning" ([www.sesafe.com.au](http://www.sesafe.com.au)). The FRDC, with eight other RDCs, also joined the Rural Safety and Health Alliance (RSHA; <https://www.rsha.com.au/>). The RSHA aims to improve Australia's primary production safety record by investing in practical RD&E solutions informed by industry input on work, health and safety risks.

<sup>41</sup> Currently separate estimates are not published for YTK, and therefore are not included in ABARES Australian Fisheries Statistics

<sup>42</sup> Taken from the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources grant application, Growing a profitable, innovative and collaborative Australian Yellowtail Kingfish aquaculture industry: bringing white fish to the market

- The FRDC partnered the global FISH 2.0 Program (refer <https://www.fish20.org/about/overview> ) to run the first Australian seafood innovation series. The first event ran at the Melbourne Business School in October and drew 16 groups of seafood entrepreneurs and innovators. In addition, over 40 investors and seafood experts attended an investor pitch session. The second and larger Australia–Asia-Pacific regional event run in Brisbane in March 2019, saw FRDC partner with the US State Department. The event brought together another 20 teams of innovators from Australia and the Pacific to work on and share ideas. The event also drew investors from Australia, the Pacific Islands and South-East Asia to listen to the teams pitch their ideas.
- The National Habitat Strategy was completed and will be used in future to inform large scale rehabilitation programs (refer <https://ozfish.org.au/national-fish-habitat-strategy/> ). See **2003-04: Where river meets sea.**

The seafood industry’s determined AGVP was \$3.14 billion, of which wild-catch was \$1.7 billion and aquaculture \$1.4 billion. (Tasmania became the first jurisdiction to exceed \$1bn AGVP.)

## Appendix A: Evolution of the FRDC's programs in successive R&D plans

### 2016 to 20

Environment	Industry	Communities	People (an enabling program)	Adoption (an enabling program)	Management, Communications and Accountability
RD&E that supports natural resource sustainability in managing fishing and aquaculture activities in Commonwealth, state and territory waters.	RD&E that assists the production and value of seafood. It could be in the form of business profitability, international competitiveness, opportunities for productivity increases, resource access, and experience or wellbeing benefits. This program aims to help all sectors improve their overall performance.	RD&E that maintains the long-term sustainability of the commercial sector by understanding the interactions and co-dependence between fishing and aquaculture, and the wider community. It is enhanced by knowledge about the social importance of fisheries.	RD&E that is needed to attract and advance people who will lead fishing and aquaculture towards a sustainable and profitable future. The FRDC has taken a strong role in this area, from employing and developing young researchers, through to facilitating access to leadership development for all sectors of fishing and aquaculture.	How project outputs are delivered so they can be easily adopted and support stakeholder decision making and practices. The FRDC continually works with researchers and end users to determine and implement the best way of extending these results. In addition, the FRDC is continuing to develop its systems to ensure its 'knowledge bank' is widely accessible.	

## 2011 to 2015

Environment	Industry	Communities	People development (Enabling program)	Extension and adoption (Enabling program)	Management, Communications and Accountability
<p><i>Theme 1:</i> Biosecurity and aquatic animal health.</p> <p><i>Theme 2:</i> Habitat and ecosystem protection.</p> <p><i>Theme 3:</i> Climate change.</p> <p><i>Theme 4:</i> Ecologically sustainable development.</p>	<p><i>Theme 5:</i> Governance and regulatory systems.</p> <p><i>Theme 6:</i> Resource access and allocation.</p> <p><i>Theme 7:</i> Production, growth and profitability.</p> <p><i>Theme 8:</i> Consumers, products and markets.</p> <p><i>Theme 9:</i> Value from aquatic resources.</p>	<p><i>Theme 10:</i> Resilient, supportive communities.</p>	<p><i>Theme 11:</i> Leadership development.</p> <p><i>Theme 12:</i> Workforce development.</p> <p><i>Theme 13:</i> Innovation skills.</p>	<p><i>Theme 14:</i> Extension and adoption.</p>	

## 2006 to 2010

Natural Resources Sustainability	Industry Development	People Development	Management and Accountability
<p><i>Challenge 1:</i> Natural resources sustainability.</p> <p><i>Challenge 2:</i> Resource access and resource allocation.</p>	<p><i>Challenge 3:</i> Response to demand; profitability.</p>	<p><i>Challenge 4:</i> People development.</p> <p><i>Challenge 5:</i> Community and consumer support.</p>	<p>Strategies for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing leadership in fisheries R&amp;D</li> <li>• investing in high-priority R&amp;D that has the potential to deliver the highest benefits</li> <li>• making R&amp;D results widely known, and facilitating their adoption and (if appropriate) commercialisation</li> <li>• expanding the FRDC revenue base to increase investment in fisheries R&amp;D</li> <li>• developing and maintaining effective, efficient, open and accountable management procedures and systems.</li> </ul>

## 2001 to 2005

Natural Resources Sustainability	Industry Development	Human Capital Development	Management and Accountability
<p>Fish biology.</p> <p>Interactions between fish and their ecosystems.</p> <p>Effects of fishing activities on fish and their ecosystems.</p> <p>Effects of non-fishing activities, pests and pollution on fish and their ecosystems.</p> <p>Health of fish and their ecosystems.</p> <p>Rehabilitation and enhancement of fisheries and their ecosystems</p> <p>Legislative, institutional, compliance and policy arrangement and their impacts.</p> <p>Access to fisheries resources. Stock assessment.</p> <p>Fisheries and Ecosystems.</p>	<p>Economic and social values of the industry and its impacts.</p> <p>Fishing technology.</p> <p>Legislative, institutional, compliance and policy arrangements and their impacts.</p> <p>Market development.</p> <p>Health and safety associated with fishing activities.</p> <p>Quality, food safety and consumer health.</p> <p>Value-adding.</p>	<p>Leadership development.</p> <p>Vocational development.</p> <p>Consumer education.</p> <p>Community education.</p> <p>Community involvement.</p>	<p>Fisheries R&amp;D leadership.</p> <p>Strategic investment.</p> <p>Effective, efficient management.</p> <p>Communication and extension of results.</p>

## 1996 to 2000

Resources Sustainability	Ecosystems Protection	Industry Development
Resources status. Fisheries management Improvement.	Ecosystems status. Ecosystems maintenance and improvement. Ecosystems management improvement.	Aquaculture development. Health and safety. Information delivery. Market development. People development. Quality. Technology. Value adding.
		[Operational, communication and management objectives were included, but not within a separate program]

## 1993 to 1995

Natural Fish Resources	Aquaculture	Harvesting	Marketing
Knowledge of fisheries resources. Fisheries resource maintenance and improvement. Management of fisheries Fisheries habitat – the ecosystem.	<i>Aquaculture:</i> Growth and survival. General biology and genetics. Management and the environment.	<i>Harvesting:</i> Production handling and preservation. Marine environment. Processing.	<i>Marketing:</i> Customer needs analysis. Competitor analysis. Industry analysis.



## Appendix B: Status of Industry Partnership Agreements

Industry partner	First signed	Expiry date of current IPA
Abalone Council of Australia	04 July 2013	30 June 2023
Australian Abalone Growers Association	30 June 2015	30 June 2020
Australian Barramundi Farmers Association	04 March 2015	30 June 2020
Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries	16 March 2016	30 June 2020
Australian Prawn Farmers Association	Compulsory levy in place	
Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association	1999-2000 (MOU with the Australian Tuna Boat Owners' Association)	30 June 2018
Oysters Australia	01 July 2014	30 June 2019
Pearl Consortium	29 Aug 2011	30 June 2021
Southern Rock Lobster Limited	13 December 2005 (MOU)	30 June 2020
Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association	01 June 2006 (MOU)	30 June 2020
Western Rock Lobster Council Limited	08 June 2006 (lapsed 30 June 2010-14 March 2014)	30 June 2019

*Note: "MOU" indicates Memorandum of Understanding, the precursor to Industry Partnership Agreement.*

## Appendix C: Commonwealth Fisheries Ministers

From	To	Minister	Assistant Minister (Parliamentary Secretary)
29 May 2019	Current	Senator Bridget McKenzie Minister for Agriculture (the first woman to serve in this role)	Senator Jonathon Duniam Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism  <i>The Hon David Littleproud continues his linkages with fishing and aquaculture via retaining responsibility for water (Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, Natural Disaster and Emergency Management)</i>
20 Dec 2017	29 May 2019	The Hon David Littleproud Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources	<a href="#">Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</a> Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
27 Oct 2017	18 Dec 2018	The Prime Minister	<a href="#">Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</a> Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
21 Sep 2015	26 Oct 2017	<a href="#">The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</a> Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources	<a href="#">Senator the Hon Anne Ruston</a> Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources
18 Sep 2013	21 Sep 2015	The Hon. Barnaby Thomas Gerard Joyce Minister for Agriculture (Deputy Leader of the Nationals) <a href="#">The Hon Barnaby Joyce MP</a>	Senator Richard M Colbeck Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture
01 Jul 2013	18 Sep 2013	The Hon. Joel Andrew Fitzgibbon Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	PS Sidebottom Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
27 Jun 2013	01 Jul 2013	Senator the Hon. Joseph William Ludwig Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	PS Sidebottom Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
14 Sep 2010	27 Jun 2013	Senator the Hon. Joseph William Ludwig Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	From 14 Dec 2011 PS Sidebottom

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Assistant Minister (Parliamentary Secretary)</b>
			Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  To 14 Dec 2011 Mike Kelly Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
03 Dec 2007	14 Sep 2010	The Hon. Anthony Stephen Burke Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	
06 Jul 2005	03 Dec 2007	McGauran, PJ (NP) Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	From 27 Jan 2006 Senator Eric Abetz Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation  From 27 Jan 2006 The Hon. Susan P Ley Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  The Hon. Senator Ian D Macdonald Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation Senator Richard M Colbeck Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  To 27 Jan 2006 Senator Richard M Colbeck Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
26 Oct 2004	06 Jul 2005	The Hon. Warren Errol Truss (NPA) Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	To 27 Jan 2006 Senator Ian D Macdonald Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation  To 27 Jan 2006 Senator Richard M Colbeck

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Assistant Minister (Parliamentary Secretary)</b>
			Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
26 Nov 2001	26 Oct 2004	The Hon. Warren Errol Truss (NPA) Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	<p>Senator Ian D Macdonald Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation</p> <p>Senator Judith M Troeth Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</p>
20 Jul 1999	26 Nov 2001	The Hon. Warren Errol Truss (NPA) Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	<p>Tuckey, CW Minister for Forestry and Conservation</p> <p>Senator Judith M Troeth Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</p>
21 Oct 1998	20 Jul 1999	The Hon. Mark Anthony James Vaile MAJ (NPA) Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	<p>Tuckey, CW Minister for Forestry and Conservation</p> <p>Senator Judith M Troeth Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry</p>
11 Mar 1996	21 Oct 1998	The Hon. John Duncan Anderson (NPA) Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	<p>Senator the Hon. Warwick Parer Minister for Resources and Energy</p> <p>To 09 Oct 1997 Brownhill, Senator DGC (NPA) Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy</p> <p>From 9 Oct 1997 Senator Judith M Troeth Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy</p>
23 Dec 1993	11 Mar 1996	Senator the Hon. Robert Lindsay Collins Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	<p>From 23 Dec 1993 The Hon. David Beddall, MP Minister for Resources</p> <p>Senator the Hon. Nick J Sherry</p>

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Assistant Minister (Parliamentary Secretary)</b>
			Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy
4 Jun 1991	23 Dec 1993	The Hon. Simon Findlay Crean Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	To 23 Dec 1993 MJ Lee Minister for Resources  Blewett, N Minister Assisting the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy
4 Apr 1990	4 Jun 1991	The Hon. John Charles Kerin Minister for Primary Industries and Energy	

Refer:

[http://www.aph.gov.au/about\\_parliament/parliamentary\\_departments/parliamentary\\_library/parliamentary\\_handbook/current\\_ministry\\_list](http://www.aph.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/parliamentary_handbook/current_ministry_list)

## Appendix D: Voluntary contributions as a percentage of the maximum matchable

Year	APFA %	Common -wealth %	New South Wales %	Northern Territory %	Queensland %	South Australia %	Tasmania %	Victoria %	Western Australia %	TOTAL %
2018-19	63	140	196	99	160	133	122	89	126	130
2017-18	71	114	169	119	143	106	123	103	116	119
2016-17	92	104	161	124	121	119	108	151	100	113
2015-16	83	98	196	150	121	92	103	183	100	109
2014-15	114	122	195	141	111	80	120	156	101	115
2013-14	93	112	194	322	98	163	135	214	105	136
2012-13	84	95	193	187	70	194	99	335	105	128
2011-12	100	104	113	287	83	208	109	292	125	135
2010-11	106	189	105	440	121	179	108	365	133	153
2009-10	125	195	111	418	94	139	96	231	121	138
2008-09	103	322	74	517	90	199	104	110	164	169
2007-08	103	195	134	476	94	145	105	108	89	133
2006-07	107	120	122	197	100	183	109	131	116	129
2005-06	117	117	106	105	99	165	135	96	136	128
2004-05	167	168	117	89	94	111	100	94	102	114
2003-04	166	153	100	105	106	110	82	81	99	109
2002-03	94	101	81	43	100	81	67	83	80	84
2001-02	42	100	88	38	92	76	101	87	51	79
2000-01		90	76	33	81	69	70	100	55	72
1999-00		90	63	29	65	83	48	98	58	68
1998-99		88	78	31	86	88	51	95	60	72
1997-98		86	70	25	51	80	11	100	49	59
1996-97		99	78	20	59	100	6	23	43	57
1995-96		104	82	15	48	78	45	21	37	57
1994-95		122	97	11	59	65	96	20	45	71
1993-94		77	57	10	66	84	79	14	50	62
1992-93										34
1991-92										20

*A thought for FRDC directors:*

### ***Custodianship***

*By the time you reach this final page, the huge strides the FRDC has made since 1991 on behalf of all sectors of the fishing and aquaculture industry and the people of Australia will be very apparent.*

*As with directors past and present, I have been deeply conscious of the responsibility and privilege to be charged with the custodianship of the FRDC and with continually — sometimes radically — striving to improve the way it goes about achieving its mission.*

*As you in turn meet this responsibility, I know that you will find much satisfaction in contributing to our great cause through your wise directorship.*

*Ron Boswell  
Chair*

*October 2019*