

Science Benchmarking: Fisheries

Governing authority: Cost Recovery Implementation Committee (CRIC)

Agency: Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA)

Agency responsibility: Executive Director Fisheries and Aquaculture (PIRSA)

1. Background

The **Cost Recovery Implementation Committee (CRIC)** was formed to implement the recommendations of the Independent Cost Recovery Review Panel. Science benchmarking was a recommendation of this review to ensure that science activities (i.e. stock assessment and monitoring) and costs are transparent, risk-based and aligned with best practice.

The **South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI)** serves as the government's science provider for statutory stock assessment and monitoring services across all South Australian fisheries.

Science is critical in ensuring fisheries are managed based on the best available scientific data. The costs associated with this must be fair, risk-based and transparent.

Section 7(3) of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* sets out that the fisheries resources of the State are to be managed in an efficient and cost effective manner.

The Terms of Reference sets out the objectives, scope, and deliverables of the science benchmarking process for fisheries within South Australia.

The goal is to ensure SARDI delivers efficient and cost-effective services without compromising science quality.

2. Objectives

This benchmarking exercise seeks to ensure the appropriateness and cost-effectiveness of science services across commercial fisheries as a whole, and at the individual fishery level.

The primary objectives of the Fisheries Science Benchmarking process are to:

1. **Evaluate current science frameworks** and cost structures within the fisheries sectors to determine if these are appropriate, risk-based and effective.
2. Ensure science costs are **transparent** and aligned with best practice.

3. **Identify efficiencies** in current activities and future opportunities for modernisation, particularly through innovation and new approaches to stock assessment and monitoring.
4. **Ensure Compliance with Legislation.** Confirm that SARDI service provision aligns with the requirements of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*, where the aquatic resources of the State are to be managed in an efficient and cost effective manner.

3. Scope and Process

The Fisheries Science Benchmarking will include:

- **Sector Review:** The following fisheries will be reviewed:
 - Abalone – Central Zone
 - Abalone – Southern Zone
 - Abalone – Western Zone
 - Blue Crab
 - Charter Boat
 - Lakes and Coorong – Finfish
 - Lakes and Coorong – Pipi
 - Marine Scalefish
 - Miscellaneous – Giant Crab
 - Prawn – Gulf St Vincent
 - Prawn – Spencer Gulf
 - Prawn – West Coast
 - Rock Lobster – Northern Zone
 - Rock Lobster – Southern Zone
 - Sardine
 - Vongole.
- **Review of Current Science Program:** Assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and cost structure of existing fisheries science programs delivered by SARDI, including stock assessments, environmental monitoring, and supporting science. Determine if the current science activities are appropriate, risk-based and effective across fisheries.

- **Technology Integration:** Identifying opportunities to integrate modern technologies into science activities to improve outcomes.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Where required, consulting with key stakeholders, including fisheries licence holders, commercial industry bodies, science organisations, and PIRSA, to identify science priorities, and improvements without compromising scientific integrity or sustainability goals.
- **Benchmarking with External Jurisdictions and Peers:** Comparing science frameworks with other jurisdictions and international standards to ensure competitiveness, adoption of best practices, and cost-efficiency.

In achieving this task, the Contractor will be required to:

- Engage with PIRSA, including SARDI, to identify the data, information, reports and policies necessary to undertake the review and analysis.
- If deemed necessary by the Contractor, undertake consultation with technical experts familiar with science cost recovery models used for fisheries.
- Provide options that align with the principles of risk-catch-cost that promote best practice and identify opportunities for improvement to both industry and PIRSA within the current regulatory framework.
- Consult (online or face-to-face) with the commercial fisheries sectors and relevant government agencies, as required.
- Maintain full records of all activities undertaken by the Contractor.
- Regular updates will be required by the Contractor to the CRIC.

PIRSA will provide relevant background information, any additional relevant information requested by the Contractor where such information exists, and access to PIRSA's files regarding relevant matters.

A draft report to be presented to the CRIC by 14 March 2025, subject to all necessary data and information being provided to the Contractor in a timely manner.

Following CRIC feedback on the draft report, a final report to be provided by 11 April 2025.

4. Confidentiality

All documents and other materials used and produced by the Contractor in the course of its activities remain the property of PIRSA.