



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

27 September 2016

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

**Supplementary submission to the Senate Inquiry into large capacity fishing vessels  
(with particular reference to the Small Pelagic Fishery)**

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a supplementary submission to the Senate Standing Environment and Communications References Committees' inquiry into *'the environmental, social and economic impacts of large-capacity fishing vessels commonly known as 'super trawlers' operating in Australia's marine jurisdiction'*.

Outlined below is information provided in addition to AFMA's submission to the Committee dated 20 November 2015.

**Bycatch interactions with protected species**

The *FV Geelong Star* has fished in the Small Pelagic Fishery for over 18 months. Reported protected species interactions in the SPF over that time are as follows.

Species/Group	Wildlife logbook identification	Dead	Alive
Dolphin	Common dolphin	9	
Albatross	Shy albatross, 'albatrosses'	11	
Seal	Australian Fur Seals, New Zealand Fur seals, and 'Seals'	47	2
Shortfin mako <sup>1</sup>		16	14
Whale Shark			1

<sup>1</sup> In Australia, mako sharks (all species) are only protected species in commercial fisheries such as the SPF. Recreational fishers are exempt from protected species requirements for mako sharks.

## Vessel Management Plan for the *FV Geelong Star*

AFMA's review of the Geelong Star's current Vessel Management Plan (VMP), which includes protected species mitigation requirements, is in the final stages of review. This detailed review considered all observer and other fishery data as well as the latest science and the revised draft VMP has been subject to expert and public consultations. AFMA plans to release this revised VMP in the coming weeks.

### Current research and scientific knowledge

The latest Daily Egg Production Method (DEPM) survey results for blue mackerel and sardine off the east coast were publically released in December 2015. A new DEPM survey of the western stock of jack mackerel is scheduled to be undertaken during 2016-17.

Research to inform changes to the SPF Harvest Strategy is being undertaken by CSIRO and will be reviewed by the SPF Scientific Panel and stakeholders in late 2016. The work includes a stock assessment for eastern Jack Mackerel and robustness testing to ensure the SPF Harvest Strategy continues to meet sustainability objectives.

AFMA is working with CSIRO to update the Ecological Risk Assessments (ERA) for all major Commonwealth fisheries. The methodology has been revised and two fisheries, the SPF and Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery are being put through the revised method to test the new ERA process. The results are expected to be finalised late in 2016.

On 20 September 2016, the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) released the report *Critical knowledge gaps: estimating potential maximum cumulative anthropogenic mortality limits of key marine mammal species to inform management*. The report assesses relevant information about a range of marine mammals such as seals, sea lions and dolphins that occur in the area of the SPF.

AFMA will be considering this report consistent with its use of the latest available science to inform decision making about Commonwealth fisheries. In particular, AFMA will seek advice from its Marine Mammal Working Group on the outcomes from the report, and how to continue to minimise and avoid Commonwealth fisheries interactions with marine mammals.

### Social and economic impacts, including effects on other commercial fishing activities and recreational fishing

The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture released its draft report in August 2016. The draft report specifically refers to public concerns about the *FV Geelong Star* (see box 7.3). The final report is due to be released in December 2016.

There is no evidence that the fishing operations of the *FV Geelong Star* are affecting the catch of species targeted by recreational fishers or other commercial fishers. Recent research has shown that harvesting of SPF species at the level set by AFMA has minimal

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impacts on predator populations, including popular recreational species, or ecosystem function.<sup>2</sup>

To alleviate any perceived impact on the recreational fishing sector, the operators of the *FV Geelong Star*, Seafish Tasmania, has made an offer to avoid key recreational areas and fishing tournaments and publically report any gamefish species caught. AFMA has agreed to monitor and report on Seafish Tasmania's adherence to the offer and report this quarterly. The first report was released on 16 September 2016.

Commercial fishers in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery and the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery have not expressed any significant concerns to AFMA regarding the operations of the *FV Geelong Star*.

### **Any other related matters**

In August 2016 the Commonwealth Ombudsman released the findings of its investigation into AFMA's administration of the Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group (SPFRAG) during 2012-2015. The report found no evidence of defective administration by AFMA.

Since it began operations, Seafish Tasmania has complied with the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and quota limits set by AFMA.

The SPF is now amongst Australia's largest exporting fisheries by tonnage. This reflects the recent operations of the *FV Geelong Star* which is able to provide small pelagic fish at a high standard to the international market for human consumption.

AFMA would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Senate Committee and/or clarify any matters raised in this or its earlier submission, or in relation to AFMA's management of Commonwealth fisheries more generally.

Yours sincerely

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Acting Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, A., Ward T, Hurtado F, Klaer N, Fulton E, and Punt A. (2015). Review and update of harvest strategy settings for the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery - Single species and ecosystem considerations. Hobart. Final Report of FRDC Project No. 2013/028.