



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Mr John Williams
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Dear Mr Williams

I am writing following the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation's (FRDC) annual performance meeting with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) held on 16 August 2022.

The meeting was the first held under the strengthened accountability framework for Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) introduced in late 2021. These include the development of an overarching *Best Practice Guide to Stakeholder Consultation*, which has been published online by FRDC, and a final measurement framework for demonstrating achievement of the key performance indicators (KPIs) contained in the *Guidelines for Statutory Funding Agreements*.

At the performance meeting, FRDC was required to demonstrate performance over the preceding 12 months against 5 performance principles. I am pleased to confirm that the department considers the FRDC has performed well across these principles for the 2021-2022 period.

During the assessment cycle, the department obtained feedback from FRDC's representative organisations. The feedback emphasised FRDC's strong commitment to the sector and how it delivers value for stakeholders. FRDC's approach to engagement with First Nations stakeholders, its evolution over time and strong commitment to continuous improvement were highlighted as key strengths. Special mention was made of FRDC's talented staff providing thought leadership and agility.

I would like to acknowledge the significant challenges faced by the industry in the last financial year, including ongoing impacts of COVID-19, extreme weather events, supply chain disruptions and high input costs. In this context, I acknowledge the progress and achievements made by FRDC and FRDC's continuous improvement mindset.

In line with a commitment to continuous improvement, the department and FRDC noted areas where FRDC can consolidate the improvements achieved to date and make further progress to enhance outcomes for stakeholders. Based on our joint assessment at the performance meeting and informed by feedback from stakeholders, the following areas of focus were identified:

- increased in-depth consultation: ensuring stakeholders understand the overarching objective and rationale for the path taken to achieve it, highlighting outcomes up front and continued strong engagement with stakeholders to ensure they are informed of progress on key activities
- increased focus on post-project delivery: connecting industry and project leaders to maximise benefits and to support further innovation
- First Nations engagement: providing opportunities for broader engagement beyond the Indigenous Reference Group in the longer term and providing additional time for consultation with First Nations stakeholders, and
- improving project timeframes from concept stage to on-the-ground delivery, where possible.

I also note an independent review of FRDC's performance is scheduled for 2023–2024. At the performance meeting, it was agreed the department and FRDC would discuss a tailored approach and terms for the review.

Thank you for your leadership of FRDC and FRDC's efforts over the preceding 12 months, which is continuing to deliver strong research, development and extension outcomes for stakeholders. As advised during the performance meeting, we welcome feedback on any further support the department can provide to FRDC as it takes forward its significant work program in collaboration with stakeholders.

Yours sincerely

Emma Cully

A/g First Assistant Secretary

25 / 10 / 2022