

# FINAL REPORT



**Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram:  
facilitating the establishment of the  
Aquatic Animal Health Consultative  
Committee (AAHCC) as the primary  
industry/government interface for  
aquatic animal health**

**Eva-Maria Bernoth**

**June 2004**

**FRDC Project No. 2002/600**



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry



Australian Government  
Fisheries Research and  
Development Corporation



Eva-Maria Bernoth

Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram: facilitating the establishment of the Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC) as the primary industry/government interface for aquatic animal health.

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**Eva-Maria Bernoth**

**April 2004**

**FRDC Project No. 2002/600**

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## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

**2002/600 Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram: facilitating the establishment of the Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC) as the primary industry/government interface for aquatic animal health**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Eva-Maria Bernoth *Dr med vet*

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### OBJECTIVES:

1. To prepare a draft business plan for the suggested Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC).
2. To facilitate the stakeholder consultation process on the 'AAHCC package' including the draft business plan for AAHCC and the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System business plan.
3. To finalise the 'AAHCC package' including the final business plan for AAHCC and the AAHIS business plan, and submit it to the Primary Industries Standing Committee and key industry stakeholders for endorsement.
4. To facilitate the establishment of AAHCC.

### NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY:

#### OUTCOMES ACHIEVED TO DATE

The Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) at its meeting on 5 September 2002 endorsed the establishment of the new Aquatic Animal Health Committee (AAHC) as the primary industry/government interface – responsible to Primary Industries Health Committee and through it to PISC – for policy, communication and awareness related to aquatic animal health issues. The purpose of AAHC is to focus on aquatic animal health policy issues. This project contributed to the outcome by supporting the development of a business plan for AAHC and the stakeholder consultation and endorsement process.

The development and implementation of AQUAPLAN, Australia's National Strategic Plan for

Aquatic Animal Health 1998-2003, was overseen by an interim joint industry/government committee, the Fish Health Management Committee (FHMC). In November 2001, a working group established to review FHMC found that FHMC had fulfilled its terms of references, and that a new body, the Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC) should be formed. FHMC agreed with the working group's recommendations and suggested that a business plan for AAHCC be developed, which would, amongst others, incorporate the FHMC-endorsed plan for the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System (AAAHIS). Following a stakeholder consultation process, the AAHCC business plan was to be presented to the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) for endorsement at their in-session meeting in September 2002.

The aim of this project was to support a consultancy to develop the draft AAHCC business plan and to support the subsequent stakeholder consultation process.

The AAHCC draft business plan was developed through a consultancy that commenced in late December 2001 and finished in April 2002. It was conducted as a desk-top exercise. A 'draft AAHCC package' was endorsed by FHMC in January 2002 and submitted to PISC for consideration in February 2002. A comprehensive stakeholder consultation process commenced in April 2002. By the end of June 2002, feedback on the 'revised draft AAHCC package' was positive throughout. Requests for changes related to clarification on the reporting lines of AAHCC; to an expansion of membership to allow full State and Territory jurisdictional representation; and to minor budgetary changes. These requests were addressed, and a revised package submitted to PISC who at their meeting on 5 September 2002 endorsed the establishment of the new Aquatic Animal Health Committee (AAHC) as the primary industry/government interface – responsible to Primary Industries Health Committee and through it to PISC – for policy, communication and awareness related to aquatic animal health issues.

AAHC membership now comprises the major aquaculture sectors, the ornamental fish industry, the wild catch and the recreational fishing sectors, and representatives from the Australian Government and all State and the Northern Territory governments.

The purpose of AAHC is to focus on aquatic animal health policy issues. The National Aquatic Animal Health Technical Working Group (NAAH-TWG) was set up to advise AAHC on technical issues.

Although AAHC has held three face-to-face meetings since its inception and has progressed a number of aquatic animal health policy issues, a significant problem yet to be resolved is to obtain agreement from governments and the private sector regarding a sustainable, realistic funding basis for AAHC and NAAH-TWG.

A key issue with the developing aquatic sector is the diversity of industries that make up the aquatic sector, and the difficulty in obtaining a coordinated response. It is hoped that the AAHC will continue to provide a forum for the sector and an interface with government.

**KEYWORDS:** aquatic animal health; disease; aquaculture; consultation; policy development

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank the broad range of stakeholders including State and Territory governments and members of the aquaculture and fishing industries for their participation in the consultative process that led to the establishment of the Aquatic Animal Health Committee.

## BACKGROUND

As part of the response to the Nairn Review into Quarantine and the Report of the National Taskforce on Imported Fish and Fish Products, the Federal Government in 1997 allotted \$2.7 million over four years to the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (DAFF) to develop a comprehensive aquatic animal health plan for Australia, and to address aquatic animal disease emergency management procedures.

The Fish Health Management Committee (FHMC) was established by the then Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management (SCARM) in February 1998 and was tasked to 'examine and develop a comprehensive national fish health framework in close consultation with Commonwealth, State and Territory Government agencies and industry'.

In 1998, the drafting commenced of such an aquatic animal health plan (called 'AQUAPLAN') by governments and the private sector. During 1998/1999, government agencies and key members of the private sector signed on to 'AQUAPLAN', and work on priority projects commenced. In December 1999, the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Warren Truss formally launched 'AQUAPLAN'.

Since 1998, the refinement and implementation of AQUAPLAN has been overseen and coordinated by FHMC, a joint industry/government committee of approximately 15 members. FHMC was chaired by the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer (ACVO), and a secretariat was provided by staff within the Office of the ACVO within DAFF. There was no specific budget for FHMC, and members as well as the secretariat provided services 'for free'. When initially set up, FHMC reported to SCARM and the then Standing Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (SCFA) in parallel. This proved impractical, and since 1999, FHMC reported to SCFA only. Since SCARM and SCFA were disbanded in 2001, FHMC reported to the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC), however, these arrangements were never formalised.

Under AQUAPLAN, Program 8 – Resources and Funding, Project 8.1.1 required the "examination of the Australian Animal Health Council funding structures for the terrestrial animal industries as a potential model to be applied to the aquatic animal industries". In January 2001, EconSearch Pty. Ltd. was retained via FRDC project 2000/601 to conduct a survey of stakeholders and determine the best structure for an umbrella body to coordinate

aquatic animal within Australia. This consultation culminated in a stakeholder workshop in August 2001, where government and industry stakeholders considered the preferred options for an umbrella body. Virtually all organisations represented rejected the creation of a new independent umbrella body and supported the establishment of a Working Group to review FHMC and provide some options and recommendations for its future role, activities, structure and *modus operandi*.

## NEED

The report of the Working Group to review FHMC was considered by FHMC at its meeting on 29 November 2001. FHMC agreed with the Working Group's recommendation to reconstitute FHMC into a new body, named the Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC). Subsequently, a 2-page summary document was prepared, with the suggested Terms of Reference for the new AAHCC, its membership, *modus operandi*, and funding arrangements. FHMC also suggested that a business plan for AAHCC be developed, which would, *inter alia*, incorporate the FHMC-endorsed plan for the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System (AAAHIS). FHMC agreed that the 2-page summary document on the suggested AAHCC needed to be widely circulated to stakeholders, accompanied by an AAHCC business plan, by the FHMC Working Group Report, and by the revised AAAHIS Business/Operational Plan. This consultation process was planned for the second and third quarter 2002. Following endorsement by stakeholders, the AAHCC business plan was to be presented to PISC for endorsement at their in-session meeting in September 2002.

The project application sought funding for the consultancy to develop the draft AAHCC business plan and support the subsequent stakeholder consultation process.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To prepare a draft business plan for the suggested Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC).
2. To facilitate the stakeholder consultation process on the 'AAHCC package' including the draft business plan for AAHCC and the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System business plan.
3. To finalise the 'AAHCC package' including the final business plan for AAHCC and the AAAHIS business plan, and submit it to the Primary Industries Standing Committee and key industry stakeholders for endorsement.
4. To facilitate the establishment of AAHCC.

## METHODS

Objective 1 was to be achieved by the following method:

A draft business plan will be prepared via a consultancy as part of this project. The Terms of Reference for the consultancy are included in Appendix 3 of this report.



Objective 2 was to be achieved by the following method:

As per the consultation flow-chart (Appendix 4), the 'AAHCC package' including the draft business plan for AAHCC and the AAAHIS operational plan will be submitted to PISC for out-of-session consideration in February 2002. This process will be conducted by the PI on behalf of FHMC. After PISC's comments (if any) are received in April 2002, the full stakeholder consultation process on the 'AAHCC package' will commence and take approximately 60 days. Stakeholder consultation will be achieved by circulating documents to, and collating comments from, governments and the private sector as per the continuously updated FHMC stakeholder register. The PI will also approach those stakeholders and offer to hold face-to-face presentations to facilitate the process, e.g. at industry AGMs.

Objective 3 was to be achieved by the following method:

The PI and her staff within the Office of the ACVO will, on behalf of FHMC, collate comments (if any) made by stakeholders on the 'AAHCC package' including the draft business plan for AAHCC and the AAAHIS business plan. FHMC will consider these comments at their July 2002 meeting. Support for this meeting is sought via this application. Following the FHMC meeting, the 'AAHCC package' will be finalized by the FHMC secretariat for submission to PISC in time for their in-session meeting in September 2002. Preparation and submission of the document to PISC will follow the PISC secretariat's standard operating procedures for in-session papers. Simultaneously, the package will be submitted to key industry stakeholders for endorsement.

Objective 4 was to be achieved by the following method:

The PI and her staff within the Office of the ACVO will, on behalf of FHMC, facilitate the establishment of AAHCC.

## **RESULTS/DISCUSSION**

As part of the 'AAHCC package', the AAHCC draft business plan was developed through a consultancy. In December 2001, the Terms of Reference for the consultancy were drafted and endorsed by FHMC. The full text is shown in Appendix 3. The consultancy commenced in late December 2001 and finished in April 2002. The AAHC business plan is included as Appendix 5 to this report.

The progress made on circulation of the 'draft AAHCC package' to, and consultation with, stakeholders is best outlined as a report against the steps identified in the flow-chart showing the consultative process (Appendix 4).

Step1: A 'draft AAHCC package' was compiled, consisting of:

- AAHCC 2 page summary
- AAHCC pre-Draft Business Plan (prepared via FRDC consultancy – January 2002)
- AAAHIS Operational Plan (revised after FHMC-13 by FHMC secretariat – December 2001)
- Working Group Report an a Review of FHMC (December 2001)

These documents were circulated to FHMC for comment by end of January 2002. There was no FHMC-external consultation at this stage. FHMC did not request major changes to the documents.

Step 2: After FHMC feedback, the 'revised draft AAHCC package' was submitted to the PISC for out-of-session consideration in February 2002, *inter alia* to note that the final version would be tabled in-session at their September 2002 meeting. PISC noted the paper.

Step 3: The wider stakeholder consultation process on the 'revised draft AAHCC package' commenced as planned the day after copies of the glossy version of the *AAHCC draft Business Plan* (Appendix 5) were received by the PI. During the reporting period (ie. by 30 June 2002), the 'AAHCC package' (including the brochure) was mailed out to the following stakeholders:

- FHMC
- 64 aquatic animal industry organisation and councils in Australia
- FRDC, FRDC Subprograms and FRABs
- Aquaculture Committee
- Veterinary Committee
- Primary Industries Health Committee (PIHC)
- Australian Fisheries Management Forum (AFMF)

Organising face-to-face stakeholder meetings proved more difficult. Despite interest by several aquaculture and fisheries/seafood councils, finding a suitable date within the suggested period (e.g. by mid-to-end of June) proved difficult, given that most councils has either just met, or were not to meet again until after the consultation period. The Aquaculture Committee had to reschedule their face-to-face meeting so that it subsequently fell outside the period. However, a face-to-face meeting with the Veterinary Committee was arranged and provided valuable feedback prior to formal submission of the papers as an out-of-session item to this Committee.

By the end of June 2002, feedback on the 'revised draft AAHCC package' had been positive throughout. Requests for changes related to clarification on the reporting lines of AAHCC (through PIHC to PISC); to an expansion of membership to allow full State and Territory jurisdictional representation; and to a change to the AAHCC budget to reflect that only industry members' travel costs to meetings will be covered whilst government members are expected to cover their own travel costs, and to a reduction in government contributions to the AAHCC budget to reflect the reduced travel expenditure. However, Veterinary Committee did not endorse the establishment of AAAHIS.

Step 4: The PI collated comments made by stakeholders and prepared a 'revised final draft AAHCC ' for sign-off by FHMC at their 24 July 2002 face-to-face meeting in Adelaide. This final FHMC meeting was the last step in the AAHCC stakeholder consultation process. FHMC endorsed the *AAHCC draft Business Plan* (April 2002 – Appendix 5 ) with the following modifications:

- Allow for full State and Territory jurisdictional representation on AAHCC;

- Establish AAAHIS as per *AAAHIS Operational Plan*; FHMC reconfirmed the establishment of AAAHIS as part of AAHCC as a high priority, and industry representatives reaffirmed their commitment to financially contribute to AAAHIS.
- Modify the role of AAHCC and its executive secretariat to reflect the now suggested full State and Territory jurisdictional representation;
- Change the AAHCC budget to reflect that only industry members' travel costs to meetings will be covered whilst government members are expected to cover their own travel costs; and
- Use the moving 3-year-average of total fisheries production (including aquaculture) as the basis to determine the States' and the Northern Territory's contributions to AAHCC and AAAHIS.

The FHMC meeting was supported with funds from this project.

At their face-to-face meeting in September 2002, PISC endorsed the establishment of AAHCC as the primary industry/government interface – responsible to PIHC and through it to PISC – for policy, communication and awareness related to aquatic animal health issues; endorsed the AAHCC draft Business Plan; agreed that AAHCC be initially chaired by the DAFF representative on PIHC; and requested AAHCC to give consideration to the establishment of AAAHIS and future funding arrangements and report back to PISC in March 2003.

On 6 February 2003, AAHC (the first 'C' for 'consultative' was removed from the Committee's name) held its inaugural meeting in Canberra. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify AAHC's Terms of Reference, set its agenda, and develop its work plan for the coming year. AAHC delegates agreed that their role would be to focus on overview, communication and coordination, with the aim to a) know what is going on in government and industry, and b) streamline the work on critical issues and avoid duplication. Initial priority issues were 1: Roles and operating procedures of AAHC; 2: Emerging species and emerging diseases; 3: Aquatic animal welfare; 4: International aquatic animal health and trade standards; and 5: Strategic and coordination role of AAHC. At their second face-to-face meeting in July 2003, AAHC resolved not to endorse the establishment of the AAAHIS.

AAHC membership now comprises the major aquaculture sectors, the ornamental fish industry, the wild catch and the recreational fishing sectors, and representatives from the Australian Government and all States and the Northern Territory governments. The purpose of AAHC is to focus on aquatic animal health policy issues. The National Aquatic Animal Health Technical Working Group (NAAH-TWG) was set up to advise AAHC on technical issues. AAHC has held three face-to-face meetings since its inception and has progressed a number of aquatic animal health policy issues. It has also convened three foresighting workshops the outcomes of which form the basis for the preparation of Australia's new Aquatic Animal Health Strategy 2005-2010.

## **BENEFITS AND ADOPTION**

The principal beneficiaries of the establishment of AAHC are the aquatic sector industries, including major aquaculture sectors, the ornamental fish industry, the wild catch and the

recreational fishing sectors. Because there is no aquatic equivalent to incorporated joint industry/government bodies such as Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia, and because AAHC's sister committee under PISC, the (terrestrial) Animal Health Committee, does not allow for industry membership, AAHC provides the only direct formal mechanism for industry to shape aquatic animal health strategy and policy development.

A key issue with the developing aquatic sector is the diversity of industries that make up the aquatic sector, and the difficulty in obtaining a coordinated response. It is hoped that the AAHC will continue to provide a forum for the sector and an interface with government.

The purpose of AAHC is to focus on aquatic animal health policy issues. NAAH-TWG was set up to advise AAHC on technical issues. NAAH-TWG has already proved to be of benefit in providing advice both to governments and to the AAHC as well as the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram on a range of issues, including the Subprogram's Strategy R&D Plan, and the new Aquatic Animal Health Strategy 2005-2010.

## **FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

Although AAHC has held three face-to-face meetings since its inception and has progressed a number of aquatic animal health policy issues, a significant problem yet to be resolved is to obtain agreement from governments and the private sector regarding a sustainable, realistic funding basis for AAHC and NAAH-TWG.

## **PLANNED OUTCOMES**

The planned outcome of this project was an endorsed framework to progress the management of aquatic animal health issues of national significance, as well as a mechanism for delivery. This project contributed to achieving this outcome by producing the plan (business plan) for the suggested management body as well as facilitating the consultation and endorsement processes.

## **CONCLUSION**

The project has met all its objectives. As the major output, the AAHCC business plan provided a focused document for stakeholder consultation on the framework to progress the management of aquatic animal health issues of national significance, as well as on mechanisms for delivery. The project successfully supported the consultation process on this framework and was instrumental in its endorsement at Standing Committee level.

## **REFERENCES**

Not Applicable

## **APPENDIX 1: INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

This project has not developed any intellectual property that requires legal protection. The nature of the output of this project is a business plan needed to be publicly available as part of a stakeholder consultation process.

## APPENDIX 2: STAFF

Principal Investigator  
Consultant

Eva-Maria Bernoth  
Clive Huggan

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## APPENDIX 3: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CONSULTANCY

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### CONSULTANCY FOR THE PREPARATION OF A BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

#### 1. BACKGROUND

As part of the response to the Nairn Review into Quarantine and the Report of the National Taskforce on Imported Fish and Fish Products, the Federal Government in 1997 allotted \$2.7 million over four years to Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (AFFA) to develop a comprehensive aquatic animal health plan for Australia, and to address aquatic animal disease emergency management procedures.

The Fish Health Management Committee (FHMC) was established by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management (SCARM) in February 1998 and was tasked to ‘examine and develop a comprehensive national fish health framework in close consultation with Commonwealth, State and Territory Government agencies and industry’.

In 1998, the drafting commenced of such an aquatic animal health plan (called ‘AQUAPLAN’) by Governments and the private sector. During 1998/1999, Government agencies and key members of the private sector signed on to ‘AQUAPLAN’, and work on priority projects commenced. In December 1999, the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Warren Truss formally launched ‘AQUAPLAN’ (Attachment 1).

Since 1998, the refinement and implementation of AQUAPLAN has been overseen and coordinated by FHMC, a joint industry/government committee of currently 15 members. FHMC is chaired by the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, and a secretariat is provided by staff within the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (OCVO). There is no specific budget for FHMC, and members as well as the secretariat provide services ‘for free’. When initially set up, FHMC reported to SCARM and the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (SCFA) in parallel. This proved impractical, and since 1999, FHMC reports to SCFA only.

Under AQUAPLAN, Program 8 – Resources and Funding, Project 8.1.1 required the “examination of the Australian Animal Health Council funding structures for the terrestrial animal industries as a potential model to be applied to the aquatic animal industries”. In January 2001, EconSearch Pty. Ltd. was retained to conduct a survey of stakeholders and determine the best structure for an umbrella body to coordinate aquatic animal within Australia. This consultation culminated in a stakeholder workshop in August 2001, where government and industry stakeholders considered the preferred options for an umbrella body (Attachment 2). Virtually all organisations represented rejected the creation of a new independent umbrella body and supported the establishment of a Working Group to review FHMC and provide some options and recommendations for its future role, activities, structure and funding. The report of the Working Group (Attachment 3) was considered by FHMC at its meeting on 29 November 2001.

FHMC agreed with the Working Group’s recommendation to reconstitute FHMC into a new body, named the Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC). Subsequently, a 2-page summary document was prepared, with the suggested Terms of Reference for the new AAHCC, its membership, *modus operandi*, and funding arrangements (Attachment 4). FHMC also suggested that a business plan for AAHCC be developed, which would, inter alia, incorporate the FHMC-endorsed plan for the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System (AAAHIS) (Attachment 5).

## **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The following terms of reference define the scope of this consultancy:

1. To draft a business plan for the proposed Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee, for comment by members of Fish Health Management Committee.
2. To finalise the AAHCC business plan incorporating FHMC members' feedback.

*The Business Plan for the proposed Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee should include details of the following aspects:*

1. A business case for AAHCC, clearly demonstrating its benefits to industry and government stakeholders
2. The strategic approach and objectives of AAHCC
3. The desired outcomes of AAHCC
4. Membership of AAHCC
5. The *modus operandi* for AAHCC
6. A Work Program for AAHCC for its first twelve months of operation
7. A vision for AAHCC or a successor beyond its proposed three year term
8. An Evaluation Plan to determine the effectiveness of AAHCC
9. A Communication Plan to improve information flow to stakeholders
10. Funding arrangements for AAHCC
11. A Budget for AAHCC

## **3. MODUS OPERANDI**

This Consultancy is a high-priority issue for FHMC. In preparing the business plan, the consultant should be guided by the documents attached to this paper including:

1. AQUAPLAN (Attachment 1).
2. Summary report of the outcomes of the Resources and Funding Workshop (August 2001, Brisbane) (Attachment 2)
3. Report of the Working Group on a review of the Fish Health Management Committee (Attachment 3).
4. Suggested arrangements for AAHCC (Attachment 4).
5. Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System - Draft operational plan – 2002/03 – 2005/06 (Attachment 5).
6. Draft final report of EconSearch Pty. Ltd. on the consultancy to determine future directions for coordination of aquatic animal health in Australia (Attachment 6).

The consultancy is to be conducted as a desk-top exercise, and the consultant is to stay in close contact with the contact(s) identified below throughout the term of the consultancy.

## **4. TIMELINES**

Duration of consultancy

The consultancy is to commence by 28<sup>th</sup> December 2001 and provide the final report by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2002



## 5. CONSULTANCY SERVICES

	Service	Milestone	Performance Standard / Date for Completion
1.	Consultancy commenced	Signed Contract returned to AFFA	28 <sup>th</sup> December 2001
2.	Draft Business Plan	Submit draft plan to Fish Health Management Committee	9 <sup>th</sup> January 2002 (submitted to FHMC Secretariat – see below)
3.	Final Business/Operational Plan	<i>Final Business Plan submitted to FHMC Secretariat</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2002 FHMC comments (see above) incorporated into Business Plan Business Plan accepted by FHMC Secretariat

## 6. BUDGET FOR THE CONSULTANCY

The budget for this consultancy should stay within the \$5,000 - \$10,000 range. Expenses in excess of this budget need to be approved beforehand. The funds are to be provided under the FRDC-administered Federal Government's 'Building a National Approach to Animal and Plant Health' program.

## 7. CONTACT (S)

### Primary contact in AFFA (FHMC secretariat):

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### AFFA-external FHMC contacts:

Jim Gillespie

General Manager Fisheries, QDPI

Ph: 07 3225 1839 – FAX: 07 3229 8146 – e-mail: [Jim.Gillespie@dpi.qld.gov.au](mailto:Jim.Gillespie@dpi.qld.gov.au)

Ray Tynan

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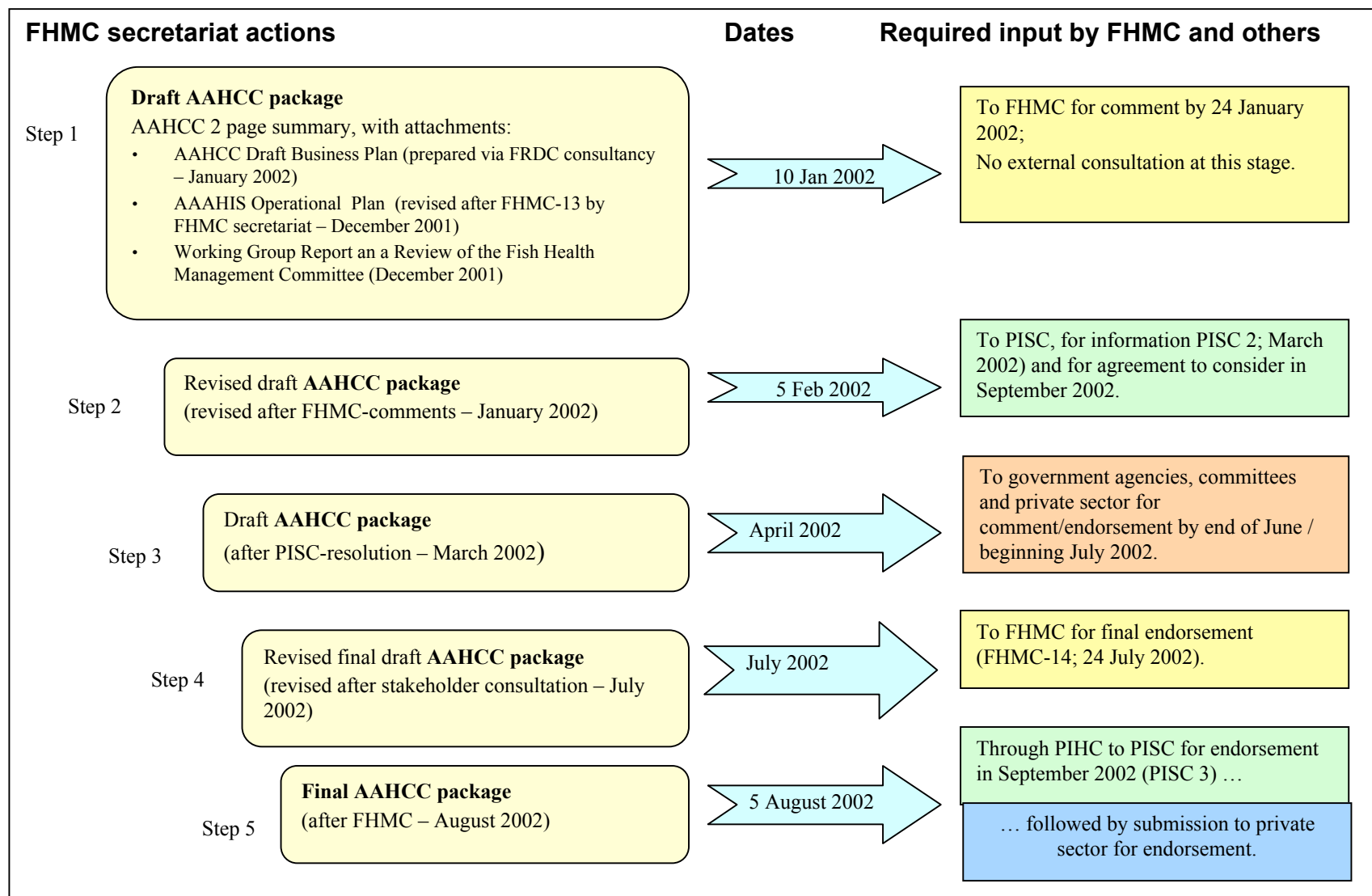
Ph: 02 6495 6398 – FAX: 02 6495 6398 – e-mail: [rtynan@asitis.net.au](mailto:rtynan@asitis.net.au)

<sup>1</sup> If unavailable (eg overseas from 11-28 Jan 2002), contact Iain East, 6272 3106; e-mail: [Iain.East@affa.gov.au](mailto:Iain.East@affa.gov.au)

## **8. ATTACHMENTS**

1. AQUAPLAN
  2. Summary report of the outcomes of the Resources and Funding Workshop (August 2001, Brisbane)
  3. Report of the Working Group on a review of the Fish Health Management Committee
  4. Suggested arrangements for AAHCC
  5. Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System - Draft operational plan – 2002/03 – 2005/06
  6. Draft final report of EconSearch Pty. Ltd. on the consultancy to determine future directions for coordination of aquatic animal health in Australia
-

## Appendix 4: 'AAHC-package' CONSULTATION FLOW-CHART



## **Appendix 5: AAHCC Business Plan**



# The 2002–05 Business Plan

for national consultative arrangements to guide  
the management of aquatic animal health



Department of  
AGRICULTURE  
FISHERIES &  
FORESTRY  
AUSTRALIA



FISHERIES  
RESEARCH &  
DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION



The FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram is an AQUAPLAN Initiative



# The 2002–05 Business Plan

for national consultative arrangements to guide  
the management of aquatic animal health

This plan describes the business environment and strategic directions of a permanent consultative body that will guide Australia's efforts to continue, and improve on, its excellent record of aquatic animal health management. It has been prepared for members of the aquaculture and commercial wild-catch sectors of the Australian fishing industry; the recreational and traditional sectors of the fishing industry; Commonwealth, state and territory governments; the research and development community; and other people who are interested in Australia's fisheries resources and aquatic animal health.

**An electronic version of this publication is available from  
<http://www.affa.gov.au>**

(go to "Animal and plant health" then "AQUAPLAN").

## The 2002–05 Business Plan for national consultative arrangements to guide the management of aquatic animal health

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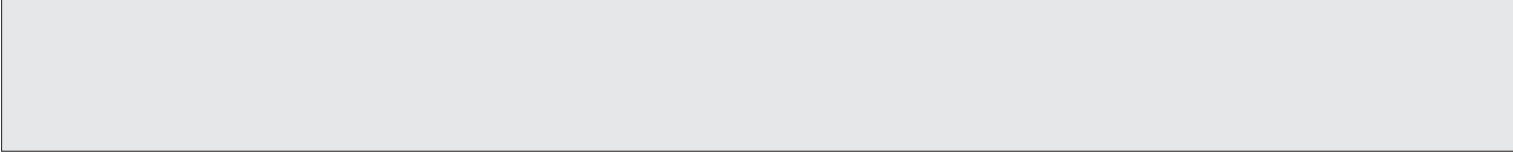
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# Business environment environment

## The importance of animal health

Australia's seafood industry (comprising the commercial wild-catch and aquaculture sectors) is the fourth most valuable food-based primary industry and the fourth most valuable in food export earnings. Its value of production is growing rapidly. Its economic performance, especially its influence on export earnings and job creation, is a vital element in our future prosperity.

Australia's capacity to produce "clean and green" seafood of superior quality has earned access to overseas markets, has enhanced competitiveness, and has provided value-adding through the capacity to attract premium prices.

In all areas of international food trade, exporting nations are required to substantiate claims of freedom from major diseases to support export certification and to comply with importing nations' quarantine policy. Aquatic animal health management is important in optimising Australia's position. Continual commitment to surveillance, monitoring and testing for aquatic animal diseases is essential.

An important element in achieving consistently high quality in seafood production and generating high levels of consumer confidence in Australia and overseas is the absence of many aquatic animal diseases that occur elsewhere in the world. This status provides a comparative advantage in both production and trade.

The full spectrum of animal health involves animals that are not eaten by humans; animals in the seafood supply chain well before they would necessarily be a consideration for consumption; and animals after harvesting, with implications for seafood safety — that is, the health of humans. In the commercial sector, the primary effect of disease outbreaks is reduced profitability: the disease affects or kills the animals or requires intervention to mitigate losses, which increases production costs.

A secondary effect of disease outbreaks in animals is the high potential for sudden, profound financial and social consequences for businesses and communities — including those not associated with the particular emergency. Although Australia has had relatively few large-scale aquatic animal health and seafood safety emergencies, repercussions from some past emergencies have been far-reaching, and those arising from future incidents are likely to be even more so. Any emergency is almost certain to significantly reduce demand not only for affected species from the outbreak area but also for the same species from other areas and for other types of seafood. In the longer term, lingering public concerns about widely publicised incidents can reduce the confidence of consumers in the safety of Australian seafood and depress longer-term demand.

Aquatic animal health is also significant for the 5 million Australians who fish recreationally or in accordance with their traditions for product that they intend to consume.

Industry and government alike agree that it is of the utmost importance that Australia have in place disease prevention strategies and response mechanisms to respond to disease emergencies.

## Present animal health management arrangements

Production, marketing and political environments are changing rapidly, requiring increased accountability for animal health and welfare. Seafood business enterprises alone cannot deliver effective aquatic animal health management. Nor can governments operating alone.

With growing awareness of the suddenness and extent of repercussions of food safety emergencies, the seafood industry has invested heavily in the past few years to improve food safety management (i.e., for the part of the seafood supply chain at which human health may be affected). Seafood Services Australia, under its SeaQual program, is developing a seafood emergency plan for the industry. However, such schemes only address matters capable of being managed by the commercial sector; they do not, for example, address fish caught recreationally or traditionally. The whole spectrum of aquatic animal health therefore needs to be addressed. Moreover, a finely tuned aquatic animal health system capable of supporting Australia's place at the premium end of the market by safeguarding our aquatic resources can only be achieved through strong, equal partnership between the industry and governments.

Despite the predominance of a regional and state focus in many sectors of the seafood industry, a national approach is essential (at present, aquatic animal health activities are not well coordinated across the states). Among other things, a national approach enables significantly better monitoring and surveillance of aquatic animal diseases and better management and handling of disease incursions. A national approach also safeguards the position of the seafood industry in the international market place. The industry's position in domestic and overseas markets is also improved by integrating the states' and territories' aquatic animal health responsibilities with the Commonwealth Government's role of maintaining quarantine, meeting international requirements for disease reporting, developing trade relationships and negotiating market access.

In addition to the foregoing advantages of a national approach to Australia and the industry, additional economies resulting from a national approach would arise from avoiding duplication between states, addressing cross-border issues consistently, and utilising expertise<sup>1</sup> that is not necessarily available in a particular state.

The importance of minimising health risks from the catch of Australia's 5 million recreational fishers, and from the catch of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fishers who follow traditional practices, is also recognised.

Given the national importance of the issue, the most effective approach to aquatic animal health management would inevitably consist of:

- a comprehensive strategic plan for aquatic animal health based on the best industry and government advice available; and
- a range of actions in accordance with the broad directions of the strategic plan, made effective through coordination by industry and specialist agency experts.

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<sup>1</sup> Typically in the fields of health, epidemiology, food safety, economics and disease emergency management.

This approach was reflected in the Commonwealth Government’s Response to the “Nairn Report” and the *Report of the National Taskforce on Imported Fish and Fish Products* in 1997. The Response recognised that “there should be a national approach [to fish health] jointly developed by the Commonwealth, states and industry that includes quarantine, research and education and public awareness as key components”.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the Commonwealth Government allocated a total of \$2.7 million over four years to the national approach and repeated that commitment for another four years in 2001–02.

## Strategic plan for aquatic animal health

In 1995, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (SCFA) reported to the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA) that priority should be given to developing a national response mechanism for fisheries and aquaculture emergencies. In 1996, the Commonwealth Government instigated the *Report of the National Task Force on Imported Fish and Fish Products* and the “Nairn Report”: *Australian Quarantine: A Shared Responsibility*, to which it responded in 1997 with funding to develop a comprehensive aquatic animal health plan for Australia, and to address management procedures for aquatic animal disease emergencies.

In 1999 the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture endorsed the resulting national strategic plan for aquatic animal health — AQUAPLAN — after it had been developed jointly by Commonwealth, state, territory and governments and a wide range of fishing industry sectors.

AQUAPLAN is a broad, comprehensive strategy that outlines objectives and projects to develop a national approach to emergency preparedness and response and to the overall management of aquatic animal health in Australia.

The plan lays out eight key programs under which industry and government have identified priority projects, namely:

- international linkages;
- quarantine;
- surveillance, monitoring and reporting;
- preparedness and response;
- awareness;
- research and development (R&D);
- legislation, policies and jurisdiction; and
- resources and funding.

<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth Government also noted that “... it is also important to ensure that our priorities are correct and that the burden of resources is shared equitably among the beneficiaries”. Specifically, the Response accepted the Taskforce’s Recommendation No. 36: “That consideration be given to the establishment of an Aquatic Animal Health Management Sub-committee or, more appropriately, a Task Force reporting to SCFA and FEHC, with terms of reference to include development and implementation of a ten-to-fifteen-year strategic plan for research and diagnostic services for the aquatic animal health sector”.

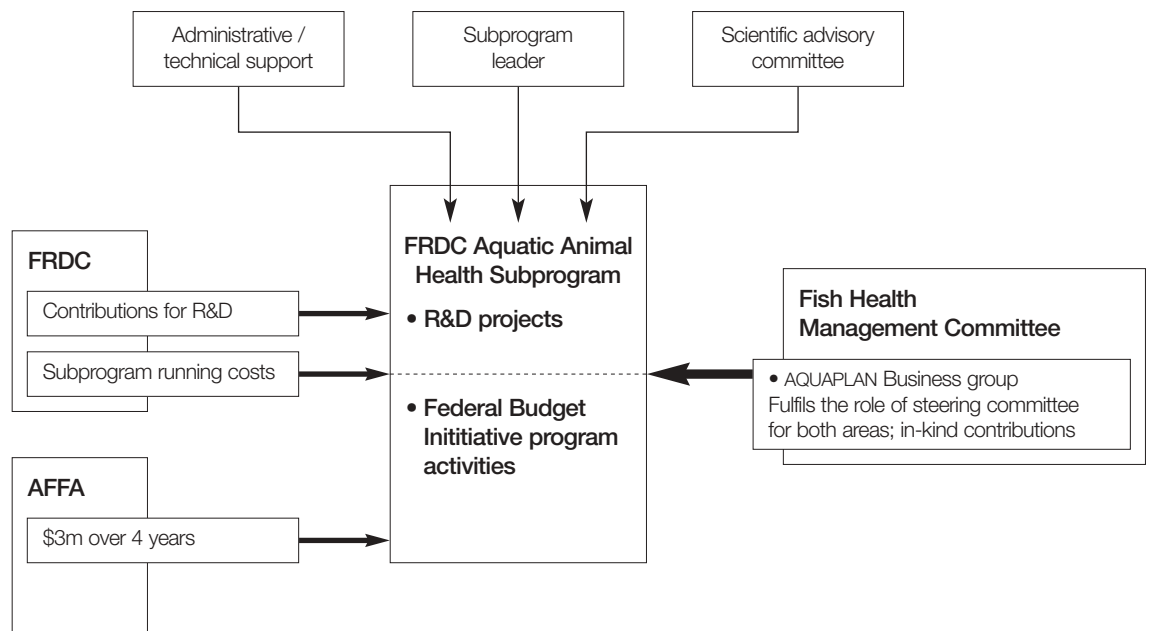
The programs are directed to maximising Australia’s ability to control aquatic animal disease outbreaks, maintain market access, support quality assurance and improve the productivity and sustainability of Australia’s aquatic animal production industries.

AQUAPLAN has been developed in a manner consistent with existing arrangements in the terrestrial animal sector. Wherever possible, it links into existing arrangements for health management by state and territory governments and the seafood industry. Industry and government have recognised the importance of an integrated and planned approach on aquatic animal health.

An electronic copy of AQUAPLAN is available at [www.affa.gov.au](http://www.affa.gov.au) (from which there are links to “Animal and Plant Health” then “AQUAPLAN”).

### Organisational elements

Elements currently involved in invoking the Federal Budget Initiative and AQUAPLAN, and their relationships, are as follows:



### AQUAPLAN activities

Each year, the Fish Health Management Committee (FHMC — described on page 7 under the heading ‘Interim consultative body’) convenes a major national stakeholder workshop to review progress made on AQUAPLAN projects in the last year and determine priorities for the next one. These priorities are translated into an annual AQUAPLAN Work Plan that is endorsed by FHMC and its parent body, the Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Before 2001–02, the parent body was the SCFA.

Many stakeholders contribute to the implementation of such priority projects: the Commonwealth Government with its various groups within AFFA (AQIS, Biosecurity Australia, the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer — the latter also provides the secretariat), state and territory governments, educational institutions, the commercial fishing and aquaculture sectors, and the wider public — for example, through increased disease vigilance on the recreational fishing front.

Projects completed over the last years include development of an Australian Aquatic Animal Diseases Field Identification Guide; conducting disease simulation exercises for governments and industries; production of manuals for AQUAVETPLAN (Australia's Aquatic Animal Disease Veterinary Emergency Plan); publication of Disease Zoning Policy Guidelines; review of current surveillance and monitoring programs for aquatic animal diseases and subsequent drafting of a business/operational plan for an aquatic animal health information system; writing of Australian Standard Diagnostic Techniques for prioritised diseases; establishment of a chapter for aquatic animal health with the Australian College for Veterinary Scientists; and provision of training in aquatic animal health management to tertiary students (veterinary medicine, aquaculture). Full details are given in the 'AQUAPLAN projects update' document on the AFFA website ([www.affa.gov.au](http://www.affa.gov.au)).

### FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram

To implement AQUAPLAN's R&D program (Program 6), an Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram<sup>4</sup> was set up in 2001 within the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). The subprogram is responsible for coordinating research projects funded under the following separate components:

- *“Traditional” FRDC research and development projects.* These are health-related projects submitted to the FRDC, excluding those for which a species-specific subprogram already exists.<sup>5</sup>
- *The 2000 Federal Budget Initiative ‘Building a National Approach to Animal and Plant Health’.* This comprises projects relating to aquatic animal health research into the following four program areas:
  - diagnostics,
  - emergency management planning,
  - emergency management training and incident simulation, and
  - establishment of a joint industry–government body for aquatic animal health management.

<sup>4</sup> The FRDC customarily establishes a managed subprogram when it becomes evident that a planned R&D outcome could be achieved more successfully if a number of related projects were managed more intensively by employing higher levels of coordination, integration and communication than for individual projects. Formation of a managed subprogram provides a higher level of service in project management. More information is on pages 139–140 of *Investing for tomorrow's fish: the FRDC's research and development plan, 2000 to 2005*. FRDC, Canberra, 2000, and the FRDC website ([www.frdc.com.au](http://www.frdc.com.au)).

<sup>5</sup> In those cases, the pertinent subprograms (e.g. Atlantic salmon, tuna, abalone, rock lobster) would have prime carriage for health research projects specific to their species, and the Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram would ensure cross-linkage and provide advice where necessary.

## Advice from industry and specialist agency experts

To be effective, it is crucially important that management actions be shaped by the best available advice from the fishing industry and specialist government agencies. One of the first actions of the Commonwealth Government was the Ministerial approval of a forum in which expert opinion could be applied in a timely way.

### Interim consultative body

The body that oversaw the development of AQUAPLAN was the Fish Health Management Committee (FHMC), a joint industry-government committee currently of 15 members. It was established as an interim body pending a decision on long-term administrative arrangements.

FHMC has developed a detailed framework for the management of fish health in Australia in the form of AQUAPLAN, which forms the basis for fish and aquatic animal health programs being developed in all jurisdictions. Further, it has worked on the development, awareness and implementation of AQUAPLAN.<sup>6</sup> The committee has provided advice on strategic issues related to implementation of AQUAPLAN,<sup>7</sup> operational aspects of emergency management response being outside its role. It was instrumental in setting up the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram, through which it now advises on investment of Federal Budget Initiative funds through its AQUAPLAN Business Group.

The FHMC comprises representatives from Commonwealth, state and territory governments; the peak aquaculture industry bodies of Australia; the Australian Seafood Industry Council; recreational fisheries (Recfish Australia); and CSIRO Livestock Industries.<sup>8</sup> It is chaired by the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer.

A secretariat is currently provided by staff within the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer. There is no specific budget for the FHMC; the costs of committee members' and secretariat staff members' services are not recovered.

When initially set up, FHMC reported in parallel to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management and SCFA. When this proved impracticable, FHMC reported only to SCFA; and since SCFA was superseded, to the new PISC.<sup>9</sup>

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**6** Activities have been focused mainly on the aquaculture sector so far, reflecting the fact that non-farmed aquatic animals are less amenable to management actions because they grow in the wild. Nevertheless, some parts of the commercial wild-catch, recreational and ornamental fish production chains are affected by aquatic animal health factors.

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**7** Activities have included development of emergency outbreak management arrangements for the wild-catch and aquaculture sectors and, in particular, activities relating to jurisdictional responsibilities, scientific expertise and resources (e.g. researchers, diagnostic capacity), monitoring and surveillance, contingency planning and response activities, exploring funding arrangements (including compensation and cost-sharing) and raising community awareness.

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**8** Previously CSIRO Animal Health.

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**9** Reporting to PISC has not yet been formalised.



### Permanent consultative body

Reflecting a widely acknowledged priority, AQUAPLAN recognises a need for “examination of the Australian Animal Health Council funding structures for the terrestrial animal industries as a potential model to be applied to the aquatic animal industries”.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, in 2000 a review was instigated to explore options for a permanent management mechanism for aquatic animal health. Relevant to the timing of the review was the fact that funding for the Federal Budget Initiative program to facilitate the establishment of a joint industry-government consultative body ceases on 30 June 2002, i.e. at the end of two years into the four-year funding period. Further, key stakeholders were aware that the Commonwealth Government is unwilling to fund the AAHCC exclusively, in keeping with Recommendation No. 46 of the *Report of the National Taskforce on Imported Fish and Fish Products* (1997), namely: “appropriate resources be made available by the Commonwealth, states and industry to enable implementation of the recommendations of this report within five years”.

As part of the review, a survey of key stakeholders, and key stakeholder meetings, were conducted to determine the best structure for such a body.

There was no support for the immediate establishment of a stand-alone national aquatic animal health body along the lines of Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia. Rather it was preferred that the consultative committee be serviced by a low-cost secretariat operating under the aegis of an existing organisation such as the FRDC or Animal Health Australia.

At a workshop in August 2001, government and industry stakeholders then considered the preferred options for a coordinating body. Virtually all stakeholders:

- did not want to create a new independent umbrella body, and
- agreed to set up a working group to review FHMC and provide recommendations for its future role, activities, structure and funding.

Participants from several states and territories expressed concern about their ability to maintain and fund existing AQUAPLAN activities at the state level and were reluctant to commit additional funding for new activities.

The working group set up in response to the August workshop presented its report to FHMC in November 2001.<sup>11</sup> FHMC agreed with the working group’s wish to reconstitute FHMC into a new body, named the Aquatic Animal Health Consultative Committee (AAHCC), and recommended approval by PISC. Subsequently, suggested terms of reference for the new AAHCC, its membership, modus operandi, and funding arrangements were prepared.

FHMC also resolved that a business plan (herewith) for AAHCC be developed which, among other things, would incorporate the budget for the FHMC-endorsed plan for the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System.

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**10** Under Program 8 — Resources and Funding. Project number 8.1.1.

**11** ‘Working group report on a review of the Fish Health Management Committee’, December 2001.

### **An impediment to implementation: difficulty in obtaining contributions from industry**

Some financial support of the AAHCC by industry is highly desirable until 30 June 2004, when Federal Budget Initiative funding ends. Beyond 30 June 2004, financial support by industry will be even more important if AQUAPLAN activities are to continue.

Without doubt, support from the fishing industry for more effective aquatic animal health management is very high. However, translating that enthusiasm into financial support is another matter. Of all food-based primary industries, the fishing industry has by far the poorest record in relation to compulsory levies — the mechanism that would avoid “free-riders” deriving benefit from aquatic animal health improvements without contributing. In the 1990s, for example, the industry opposed a levy to contribute to the National Residue Survey which was to undertake regular surveys of heavy metals in fish. The prawn sector successfully lobbied for discontinuance of the levy to fund the Australian Prawn Promotion Association’s activities, despite its success in marketing product overseas.

The situation is further complicated by the widely differing approaches taken by state and territory governments to collecting levies, which has led to contributions to the FRDC under the PIERD Act being about 30% short of the maximum amount that is matchable by the Commonwealth Government. The gross value of aquaculture production is now about 30% of the total industry figure, but few aquaculturists contribute to the FRDC under the PIERD Act.<sup>12</sup> This under-achievement is significant for the AAHCC, because aquaculturists are the principal beneficiaries of animal health management activities; consequently, commercial wild-catch fishers have voiced reservations about contributing in this situation.

As a separate issue, recreational fishers are in no position to contribute because state-based political imperatives dominate the spending of licence fees in some states; in other states, no licence fees are paid.

Given this situation, three things are clear:

- Collecting any form of industry contributions to fund the AAHCC for the duration of the Federal Budget Initiative will be impossible.
- To collect contributions after 30 June 2004 will require extensive negotiation with industry in the intervening period.
- Setting up an incorporated entity to achieve some comparability with Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia, as envisaged in some of the organisational options suggested by the AQUAPLAN resources and funding consultancy undertaken in 2001, is out of the question before 30 June 2004 and will be a major challenge after then.

In setting out an achievable basis for funding AAHCC activities up to 30 June 2005, the cheapest possible option, building on a currently operating structure, has therefore been chosen.

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**12** Southern bluefin tuna and Atlantic salmon aquaculturists contribute to the Cooperative Research Centre for Finfish Aquaculture, which includes arrangements under a memorandum of understanding with the FRDC. Prawn aquaculturists recently initiated payment of a compulsory R&D levy to the FRDC.

### Basis for 2002–05 funding

The requirement is to provide funding for the operation of the AAHCC from 1 January 2003 to 30 June 2005.<sup>13</sup> There are three alternatives, as follows:

- The first (which has been chosen as the basis for this business plan) is joint funding by the Commonwealth and state governments of extra staffing and associated activities in conjunction with those of the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram, effecting considerable economies by utilising (free of charge) FRDC office facilities, information systems and expertise already in place.
- The second is joint funding by the Commonwealth and state governments of a structure independent of the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram, without contribution by industry, perhaps on the initiative of PISC.
- The third is the high-risk option already discussed, namely to continue with attempts to achieve industry contribution within the next year or so. It should be noted that not only is this option unlikely to be achieved; continued industry refusal may lessen the chances of contribution after 30 June 2005, with very serious consequences.

### Collocation with FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram

Currently the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram employs a 0.4 full-time equivalent staff member to coordinate the subprogram's activities. Managing the AAHCC brings a requirement for a 0.6 full-time equivalent staff member. Although the subprogram's focus is R&D and the AAHCC's focus does not involve R&D, the Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram currently administers non-R&D components of the Federal Budget Initiative; and other FRDC subprograms (such as the ESD Reporting and Assessment Subprogram, characterised by extensive involvement of its steering committee) involve management of non-R&D matters. Therefore, coexistence of these two functions is not expected to be problematic.

If the FRDC meets infrastructure costs under collocation with the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram, the cost associated with the 0.6 full-time equivalent staff member for AAHCC duties between January 2003 and 30 June 2005 is:

	Jan–Jun 03	2003–04	2004–05
Salary	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Travel	\$16,150	\$32,300	\$32,300
Operating expenses	\$18,850	\$37,700	\$37,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>

**13** The start date is determined by the necessity to present a final AAHCC business plan to PISC and its Primary Industries Ministerial Council for their September/October 2002 meetings after a process of wide and open consultation with stakeholders, including governments and industry sectors. Therefore, October 2002 is the earliest time for ministerial endorsement of the AAHCC and consequent allocation of funding. Until the AAHCC is established and funded (probably January 2003), AFFA departmental funds will continue to pay for FHMC activities.

Before industry's refusal to contribute was voiced at the August 2001 workshop, expectations were that the cost of the AAHCC would be met by a three-way split between the Commonwealth Government, state and NT governments, and the industry. Therefore, the annual \$120,000 cost under collocation with the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram (albeit this option was not actively considered at that time) would have been met by payment of \$40,000 per annum from each of these three contributor groups. The \$40,000 from the state and NT governments would comprise seven payments averaging \$5715.<sup>14</sup>

A two-way split that results from industry not contributing would see the \$120,000 cost shared between the Commonwealth and state and NT governments — that is, Commonwealth expenditure would be \$60,000 per annum and the \$60,000 from the state and NT governments would comprise seven payments averaging \$8572.

Expenditure over the 30 months would be:

	Jan–Jun 03	2003–04	2004–05
Commonwealth Government	\$30,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
State and NT governments (7 @ \$4286)	\$30,000	—	—
State and NT governments (7 @ \$8572)	—	\$60,000	\$60,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>

Carriage of a proposal for this increase in expenditure would be from the AAHCC to PISC, then via PISC to the Ministerial Council for implementation by the Commonwealth, states and NT. Albeit that anticipation of such approval may be presumptuous, the budget at page 22 assumes this operating model in the absence of an apparent alternative at this stage.

<sup>14</sup> Individual states' contributions to national programs may vary from the average if they are calculated on the basis of, for example, gross value of aquatic animal production.



# Strategic elements

Strategic elements

## Role of the committee

The AAHCC is the primary industry-government interface for policy, communication and awareness related to aquatic animal health issues.

The role of the AAHCC is to:

- consider national policies and management of aquatic animal health in Australia;
- advise PISC and other stakeholders on those issues;
- advise and report on strategic issues relating to AQUAPLAN and its implementation to PISC and other stakeholders; and
- advise on communication and awareness-building on aquatic animal health issues, and help to facilitate those processes through committee members' networks.

With the establishment of the AAHCC, the FHMC is disbanded. The FHMC's AQUAPLAN Business Group will continue to exist, named as the 'FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram Steering Committee'. It will not concern itself with AQUAPLAN business outside the subprogram; that will be the responsibility of the AAHCC.

## Stakeholders

Stakeholders in the AAHCC are:

- Australian aquaculturists (including ornamental fish farmers);
- Australian wild-catch fishers (commercial, recreational and traditional);
- Commonwealth, state and territory governments, their agencies and food industry organisations concerned with food safety;
- people with an interest in the fishing industry<sup>15</sup> and the natural resources on which it depends;
- consumers of Australian seafood, both in Australia and overseas; and
- the Australian public.

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**15** The fishing industry includes any industry or activity conducted in or from Australia concerned with: taking, culturing, processing, preserving, storing, transporting, marketing or selling fish or fish products.

There are three principal fishing industry sectors:

- *The commercial sector* comprises enterprises and individuals associated with wild-catch or aquaculture resources and the various transformations of those resources into products for sale. It is also referred to as the "seafood industry", although non-food items such as pearls and ornamental fish are included among its products.
- *The recreational sector* comprises enterprises and individuals associated — for the purpose of recreation, sport or sustenance — with fisheries resources from which products are derived that are not for sale.
- *The traditional sector* comprises enterprises and individuals associated with fisheries resources from which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people derive products in accordance with their traditions.

## Membership

AAHCC has 12 members, providing representation of a very wide range of interests: the Commonwealth, states and territories, and aquatic animal industry entities (encompassing the wild-catch, aquaculture, recreational and ornamental fish sectors). Membership is reviewed annually.

AAHCC is chaired by a member of the Primary Industries Health Committee, the committee that reports to PISC.

Constituency	No.	Agency / constituency
PIHC (chair)	1	
Commonwealth Government	2	Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia (Office of the Commonwealth Chief Veterinary Officer)
State and territory governments	3	Aquaculture and fisheries policy (2 members) Aquatic animal health
Commercial aquaculture (including ornamental fish) and commercial wild-catch	5	Finfish aquaculture Crustacean and mollusc aquaculture (2 members) Commercial wild-catch sector (Australian Seafood Industry Council) Ornamental fish sector (Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council)
Recreational fishing	1	Recfish Australia

## Roles of committee members

*[It is expected that members representing industry sectors will seek input from, and report back to, their constituencies.]*

### Chair

Direct the activities of the committee and foster a climate in which the committee operates by consensus.

Ensure that AQUAPLAN is included as a key element in the national policy process concerning management of fisheries and aquaculture, and to that end ensure that strategic aquatic animal health issues are considered by PISC.

Ensure that appropriate proxies are identified to provide for full meetings of the committee.



### Commonwealth Government members

Take part in committee management processes and contribute expertise, especially that related to Commonwealth Government functions.

Inform and coordinate across Commonwealth agencies — for example, Biosecurity Australia, AQIS, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and the CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory.

### State and territory government members

Take part in committee management processes and contribute expertise, especially that related to state or territory government functions.

Inform and coordinate across state and territory government agencies — for example fisheries, agriculture and natural resource departments.

Provide high-level scientific and technical expertise representing aquatic animal health practitioners across Australia.

Provide high-level policy advice on fisheries and aquaculture management.

### Aquaculture members

*[To ensure a balance of interests on the committee, these persons will normally be appointed after consultation with the National Aquaculture Council, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council and other aquaculture bodies.]*

Take part in committee management processes and contribute expertise, especially that related to finfish (including ornamental fish) and mollusc / crustacean aquaculture.

Seek input from, and report back to, all aquaculture sectors.

### Commercial wild-catch member

*[This person will normally be nominated by the Australian Seafood Industry Council.]*

Take part in committee management processes and contribute expertise, especially that related to wild-catch fisheries around Australia.

Seek input from, and report back to, all wild-catch sectors.

### Recreational member

*[This person will normally be nominated by Recfish Australia.]*

Take part in committee management processes and contribute expertise, especially that related to recreational fishing.

Seek input from, and report back to, all recreational interests.

## **Role of the Executive Officer**

The Executive Officer reports to the Chair.

The Executive Officer's administrative role is to help to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the committee's activities. Part of that role includes:

- organising all AAHCC meetings and workshops;
- preparing minutes and action agenda;
- circulating out-of-session papers; and
- collating responses to out-of-session papers.

The Executive Officer's important role in optimising the AAHCC's external communications includes:

- developing a communication and extension plan;
- identifying and preparing AAHCC news issues for submission for inclusion in other organisations' newsletters (such as the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram's *Health Highlights*); and
- proactively identifying and using cost-effective opportunities for face-to-face stakeholder contacts, such as through attendance at industry AGMs.

One of the key roles of the Executive Officer is to draft the annual AQUAPLAN work plan, described under the following heading. The Executive Officer may also be tasked by the Chair to undertake project implementation tasks on a case-by-case basis.

## **Method of operating**

Generally the committee is to hold two face-to-face meetings per year. Between those meetings, committee business will be developed through electronic and telephone contacts, including teleconferences when necessary.

The AAHCC will continue to hold annual national stakeholder workshops to review progress made on AQUAPLAN projects in the last year and determine priorities for the next one. These priorities will be translated by the Executive Officer into an annual AQUAPLAN work plan for endorsement by AAHCC and PISC. The work plan is to be developed in a timeframe that allows PISC and industry sectors to endorse it before the start of a new financial year.

The AAHCC needs to ensure close consultation with the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram, advise the Subprogram on R&D needs and liaise with the Subprogram on projects funded out of the Federal Budget Initiative. Importantly, this will avoid duplication of efforts, as for the next three years (until 30 June 2004) the Subprogram will administer the Federal Budget Initiative funds on behalf of AFFA. In this way the AAHCC will be fulfilling its role by providing strategic and operational guidance on the development of aquatic animal disease diagnostics, disease emergency management planning, and disease emergency management training and incident simulation.

Individually, members liaise widely with their constituencies to ensure vigorous two-way communication that will help to ensure that the committee concentrates on high-priority animal health issues.

### Work program for year 1

A high priority will be to refine the gap analysis that was instigated at the August 2001 workshop<sup>16</sup> and to develop — and, if possible, start implementing — strategies to fill those gaps (the August 2001 gap analysis is at appendix 1, page 27).

Also of high priority is to continue to develop arrangements for quantifying and collecting contributions to cover the cost of the AAHCC's operations.

Other activities (in addition to the four bullet points under 'Role of the committee', page 14) will be to:

- oversee development and implementation of the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System (AAAHIS) in accordance with the AAAHIS operational plan (accordingly, the budget on page 22 includes AAAHIS activities);<sup>17</sup>
- comment on priorities for action during the year proposed by the Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram leader; and
- develop a communication and awareness strategy, and build relationships, to raise the profile of aquatic animal health, generally using existing channels (e.g. the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram) rather than creating new ones.

### Strategic focus

The strategic elements of this plan are based on concepts of outcomes, outputs, inputs and strategies.<sup>18</sup>

The following planned outcome for the AAHCC is consistent with the AFFA portfolio outcome of “more sustainable, competitive and profitable Australian agricultural, food, fisheries and forestry industries”.

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### Planned outcome for the AAHCC

Improved health of Australia's aquatic animals.

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**16** The gap analysis identified AQUAPLAN implementation gaps in all AQUAPLAN programs except 1 and 2 (coverage by the Commonwealth) and 6 (coverage by the FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram).

**17** Further information is available in the *Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System Operational Plan, 2002–03 to 2005–06*.

**18** Outcomes are the *results, impacts or consequences* of activities on the fishing industry and Australia's economic, environmental and social resources. Outputs are the *goods and services* (mainly knowledge, processes and technology) that entities associated with aquatic animal health produce for other organisations or individuals. Inputs are *resources* — in the form of people, expertise, materials, energy, facilities and funds — used in activities that produce outputs. Strategies focus activities to produce outputs.

### **Inputs**

Planned inputs to the activities in which AAHCC has an interest are the cash and in-kind contributions to approved projects. Further details are in the AAHCC budget (page 22) and project applications. It is expected that each year, information on explicit planned inputs will be provided in the annual operational plan.

### **Outputs**

Planned outputs for the activities in which AAHCC has an interest are knowledge, processes and (as applicable) technology that contributes to achieving the planned outcome for the AAHCC. It is expected that each year, information on explicit planned outputs will be provided in the annual operational plan.

### **Strategies**

The AAHCC will base its consultative activities on AQUAPLAN and on the strategies specified for the Federal Budget Initiative and the Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram.

The AAHCC will also work towards its planned outcome by pursuing the following strategies for its internal processes:

- consider national policies and management of aquatic animal health in Australia;
- advise PISC and other stakeholders on those issues;
- advise and report on strategic issues relating to AQUAPLAN and its implementation to PISC and other stakeholders; and
- advise on communication and awareness-building on aquatic animal health issues, and help to facilitate those processes through committee members' networks.



Budget,  
January 2003 to June 2005

The narrative concerning the funding basis (pages 10–11) should be read in conjunction with the budget.

Item	Jan–Jun 2003	2003–04	2004–05
Income for AAHCC:			
Commonwealth Government	30,000	60,000	60,000
States and NT governments	30,000	60,000	60,000
Income for Aust Aquatic Animal Health Info System:			
Commonwealth Government	2,500	7,500	10,000
States and NT governments	2,500	7,500	10,000
Industry*	2,500	7,500	10,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>67,500</b>	<b>142,500</b>	<b>150,000</b>
Salary and on-costs:			
Executive Officer: 0.6 full-time equivalent = 3 days/wk (FRDC pays other 0.4 FTE for AAH Subprogram duties)	<b>25,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>
Travel expenses:			
AAHCC face-to-face meetings (assumes 2 meetings/yr; 9 out of 12 members are “out of town”; \$750 fares + \$200 accommodation):	8,550	17,100	17,100
Executive Officer communication activities (assumes 16 overnight journeys per year @ \$750 fares + \$200 accommodation)	7,600	15,200	15,200
<b>Total travel expenses</b>	<b>16,150</b>	<b>32,300</b>	<b>32,300</b>
Operating expenses:**			
telephone (includes fax, e-mail, teleconferences)	5,500	11,000	11,000
office consumables	1,000	2,000	2,000
work plan, communication plan, annual report etc	3,000	6,000	6,000
venue hire for 2 face-to-face meetings	1,000	2,000	2,000
catering for 2 face-to-face meetings	300	600	600
trade show etc materials	2,000	4,000	4,000
launches of AAHCC outputs	2,000	4,000	4,000
members’ networking incidentals	1,250	2,500	2,500
contingencies	2,800	5,600	5,600
<b>Total operational costs</b>	<b>18,850</b>	<b>37,700</b>	<b>37,700</b>
Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System	7,500	22,500	30,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>67,500</b>	<b>142,500</b>	<b>150,000*</b>

\* In contrast to its response to requests to fund AAHCC, the industry has not indicated reluctance to contribute to the Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System. Contribution may be by sector on the basis of “beneficiary pays”. Further information is available in the *Australian Aquatic Animal Health Information System Operational Plan, 2002–03 to 2005–06*.

\*\* Infrastructure expenses met by the FRDC are not included in this budget.

In 2003–04 and 2004–05, CPI increases will be absorbed by the contingencies item.

### Note concerning restraints

Until / unless the severe budgetary limitations are resolved, it would be counter-productive to plan for a level of activity that could not be sustained beyond 30 June 2005. Therefore, the budget provides for a level of activity and costs below which the AAHCC would cease to function in an effective, efficient form. The scenario includes:

- no form of incorporation as an independent or affiliated entity;
- employment of a 0.6 full-time equivalent Executive Officer, albeit that this will constrain the AAHCC's outputs;
- collocation of the Executive Officer with the FRDC at minimum cost, equivalent to the marginal cost to the FRDC of an extra staff member;
- limitation of costs of report production and of communication activities not involving networking with industry members; and
- no travel other than AAHCC members to face-to-face meetings twice a year and the Executive Officer to meetings and workshops in accordance with the AAHCC communication plan.





Future directions

Future directions

## **Preparedness for change**

The physical, social, economic, policy and R&D factors in Recfish Australia's business environment are characterised by continuous change.

Government funding cycles are usually three years long, but priorities can change more quickly. Moreover, new information will often require management actions to be adjusted. And in everyday operations, unpredictable events require flexible management. The AAHCC must therefore anticipate and respond quickly to change in seeking always to maximise the effectiveness of its actions.

## **Review of the AAHCC**

In addition to continual improvement processes that it may adopt, the AAHCC will be formally reviewed before 30 June 2004 to ascertain its performance, to formalise necessary improvements and to ensure a smooth transition to effective, efficient aquatic animal health consultative management after funding of the Federal Budget Initiative expires.

## **Review of this plan**

This plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains totally relevant to the AAHCC's desired strategic directions.

# Appendix 1:

## Gaps in the implementation of AQUAPLAN

Program	Issues	Notes on gap
1. International linkages		Structures in place.
2. Quarantine		Structures in place.
3. Surveillance, monitoring and reporting	Zoning and translocation guidelines	Commonwealth role in developing guidelines. State responsibility for implementation.  Gap: Coordinating consistent implementation of guidelines across states/territories (C'wealth role?)
	Monitoring and surveillance	States responsible with industry for undertaking monitoring and surveillance on an as required basis.  Gap: Coordination and funding of additional monitoring and surveillance.  Gap: Coordination of state-based databases useful in market access context. Terrestrial animals have benefited from this type of coordination undertaken by AHA.
	Diagnostics	Mechanisms/processes exist for gaining approval of Australian standard techniques.  Through NATA, possible for laboratories to become certified to undertake diagnostics.  Gap: Authority to advise on most appropriate techniques.  Gap: Means to address the shortage of diagnostic capacity Australia-wide that is becoming worse.

Program	Issues	Notes on gap
4. Preparedness and response	Manuals and protocols	Commonwealth has developed many manuals but no resources to continue outside the budget initiative.  Gap: Prioritising and coordinating the work to be done.
	Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD)	Gap: Coordination to ensure that state/territory arrangements to manage disease emergencies comply with, and operate within, the CCEAD structure.
5. Awareness	Communication	Gap: There is a communication deficiency with many of the projects in other program areas — projects are “completed” but extension is lacking (need more than newsletters).  Gap: Similarly, many projects are undertaken by states but are not completed in a coordinated way.
	Training	Gap: Sharing the burden of preparing training materials between sectors and jurisdictions.
6. R&D		Structures in place.
7. Legislation, policies and jurisdiction	Consistent legislation and policy development	Gap: Coordination of consistent legislation and policy development across jurisdictions.
8. Resources and funding	Compensation for compulsory destruction of stock	Gap: Bringing together industry, government and insurance sector to develop framework for determining funding and compensation for compulsory destruction of stock and coverage of crop loss.



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The FRDC Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram is an AQUAPLAN Initiative