

23 January 2012

Invasive Marine Species Program
Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858
Canberra City ACT 2601

To whom it may concern

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Re: Australian biofouling management requirements

As the peak conservation body for South Australia, the Conservation Council of South Australia (Conservation Council SA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Australian biofouling management requirements.

Conservation Council SA is an independent, non-profit and strictly non-party political organization representing over 50 of South Australia's environment and conservation organizations and their supporters. Conservation SA has developed a comprehensive view of environment policy in "South Australia in a Changing Climate: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Future"¹. This document sets out, at a strategic level, policy positions in six key environmental areas, including water, biodiversity, and planning and development issues.

We strongly support Option 1 – Commonwealth regulation of biofouling risks. Whilst this option is demonstrated to be more costly to vessel owners and managers, CCSA thinks that the potential benefits to Australian marine ecosystems far outweigh these impacts. Apart from the potential savings to government and industry through prevention of marine pest arrivals, there is the safeguarding of the intrinsic values of our unique marine environments.

CCSA believes that our marine ecosystems should not be exposed to the potential vagaries of a voluntary system. Although the cost benefit ratio was demonstrated as being higher for Option 2, this is based on an assumed level of uptake that may not eventuate.

Option 1 also provides a framework for penalising vessels of high or extreme risk, and for elevating the risk level for repeated non-compliance.

However, CCSA has some concerns with the application of the regulatory approach:

- 1) The model assumes that 'moderate' risk vessels will have no species of concern (SOCs). While we understand that a risk associated with marine pests

¹ <http://www.conservationsa.org.au/blueprint.html>

can never be completely eliminated, current information does not define the boundaries between risks (moderate, high and extreme). CCSA would like to see reassurance that 'medium' risk is suitably conservative.

- 2) We understand from the consultation that only 10 or 12 of the current list of SOCs have genetic (PCR) probes available. Such probes have a demonstrated capacity to detect marine pests across all phases of their life history (including microscopic). We strongly recommend that the Australian Government directs more funding to the development of gene probes for remaining SOCs as priority species, to support early and efficient detection.
- 3) The current information would appear to be solely targeted toward vessel operators. CCSA would like to see where the biofouling regulatory framework relates to facilities (marina and port facilities) in terms of operator's responsibilities in biofouling management.
- 4) CCSA would like to see a defined process for review of SOCs.

We recommend that an annual report should be included as part of a regulatory system. Apart from ensuring transparency and accountability, such a report would have a number of benefits in terms of broadening education of the various sectors as well as confirming with operators that biofouling management (and by extension the related expenses) are appropriate and effective.

Reporting could include a range of simple statistics that need not comprise commercial in confidence information, such as:

- the number of vessels assessed as high or extreme risk
- the number of vessels issued with warning letters
- number of vessels refused entry and the reasons why
- number of vessels inspected in Australia
- number of vessels where SOCs are found and which ones
- number of vessels that were treated in Australia

We strongly support the recommendation to include some accredited training as suggested by the member of the SA Aquaculture Committee present at the Adelaide consultation. This action should be included in either option, regardless of which one actually gets implemented.

Please contact me on 08 8223 5155 or email at tim.kelly@conservationsa.org.au if you have any questions or follow-up in relation to this letter.

Yours sincerely



Tim Kelly

Chief Executive