

20 August, 2015

Your Ref: MSI5-00789

The Hon Ian Macfarlane MP
Minister for Industry and Science
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister Macfarlane,

Thank you for your letter of 4 June, 2015, providing your Statement of Expectations for AIMS.

As the Accountable Authority for the Institute under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act)*, AIMS' Council is committed to ensuring AIMS delivers the highest standards of performance and accountability, consistent with its functions under the *Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972 (AIMS Act)* and in line with the expectations of the Australian Government and wider community.

On behalf of the Council, I am pleased to respond to your letter with AIMS' Statement of Intent.

Policy Context

AIMS supports the directions and ambitions set out in the Government's Industry, Innovation and Competiveness Agenda and welcomes particularly its focus on fostering a strong national science and research base as the foundation for a competitive Australia.

AIMS' Strategic Plan 2015-2025, released earlier this year, aligns closely with the principles and priority initiatives underpinning the IIC Agenda.

- A key focus of the Strategic Plan is generating the knowledge base, tools and practical solutions needed to support the sustainable development of energy, mineral, tourism, food, and other valuable resources in and under Australia's oceans. As part of its implementation, AIMS will be working to reshape its capability and investment to place increased emphasis on the data synthesis and decision support tools which can assist industry to better manage ecological and business risk and thereby enhance its productivity, profitability and social license to operate.
- The priority research focus and action areas outlined in the AIMS Strategic Plan will contribute directly to six of the Government's National Science and Research Priorities; Food, Soil and Water, Transport, Environmental Change, Energy and Resources. AIMS has played a lead role in the process to identify the practical challenges underpinning these areas, through chairmanship of the Soil and Water working group (AIMS CEO), and is actively supporting the exercise underway to map national capacity and capability against projected needs and opportunities. This work will enable the identification of potential areas for targeted investment both within AIMS and on a national scale.

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- The Plan's focus on enhanced skills development to meet the changing needs of AIMS and the wider marine science and industry workforces will contribute to advancing the goals of the Government's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) agenda. Through targeted recruitment, training and development, and collaborations with Australia's leading universities (for example, through co-funded postdoctoral positions and PhD scholarships), AIMS will be seeking to build multi-disciplinary capability and strengthen skills and expertise in emerging demand areas, such as mathematical and statistical modelling, ecological risk assessment, data and information systems, and technology development.
- Finally, the Plan's core, guiding principles of excellence and innovation are designed to ensure that AIMS continues to deliver the very highest quality science in the service of the nation and remains a recognised world leader in marine science and marine technology. AIMS already consistently ranks in the top one per cent globally in relevant research areas, publishes the greatest proportion of publications in the most influential scientific journals of any Australian research institution, and has established a strong reputation as a source of impartial, accurate advice to government, industry and the community. Actions under the Plan to reshape AIMS' capability, upgrade its infrastructure, and extend its research footprint will preserve and build on these credentials into the future.

AIMS has been working closely with your department and other publicly funded research agencies (PFRAs) within, and external to, the industry and science portfolio, on the actions required to maximise the dividends from Australia's national research infrastructure. A key recent outcome from this process was the position paper "Securing the Future of Australia's National Research Infrastructure Portfolio: Aligning National Investment in Research Infrastructure with National Benefit", which covers a range of issues affecting effective infrastructure investment decisions and management. AIMS is currently working collaboratively with relevant departments and agencies to develop further aspects of this work (in particular, depreciation expensing, long-term planning and budgeting) and stands ready and willing to assist in the development of any future funding initiatives identified in response to the report to be presented by the Research Infrastructure Review Panel, chaired by Mr Philip Clark AM.

Partnerships and collaboration

AIMS recognises that strengthened partnerships and collaboration are essential for addressing the many large-scale and complex challenges facing Australia and the global community. It also recognises its central role in securing application and uptake of research results within industry and the broader community.

- AIMS has a strong track record in partnering nationally with PFRAs, universities, and government, both at the researcher to researcher/end-user level and as part of joint-venture arrangements such as the Western Australian Marine Science Institution, Indian Ocean Marine Research Centre, North Australia Marine Research Alliance, and National Environment Research Program hubs. It has furthermore developed linkages with a number of international institutions and governments, including the Institute of Oceanography in China, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia and Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology in Japan.
- Over the last decade, AIMS has worked particularly hard and with some success to extend and deepen its relationships with maritime industries. The offshore oil and gas, resources, ports/shipping and tourism sectors are now both major end-users of AIMS' research and



contributors to its strategic directions. This is an evolving relationship, in which AIMS has been playing a progressively value-adding role, ranging from assistance in meeting regulatory requirements and minimising environmental risk (thereby reducing costs and providing greater investment certainty to industry) to optimizing engineering design and operational practices (contributing not only to individual company/organisation productivity benefits, but growth on a sectoral scale).

As AIMS implements its Strategic Plan it will be seeking to enhance and diversify these relationships further:

- Targeted business plans have been developed for each of AIMS' four research programs to ensure strong end-user focus in and uptake of AIMS' research. These plans will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain aligned with areas of genuine business need and opportunities for growth.
- An international engagement strategy is currently being finalised to focus AIMS' international partnerships on where they can most make a difference – in extending AIMS' science and its impact, contributing to the Government's diplomacy objectives and building capability in the region.

AIMS acknowledges and supports the role of the Commonwealth Science Council (CSC) in improving connections between government, research organisations, universities and business and will be pleased to assist you, as CSC Deputy Chairman, and the Chief Scientist, through rotating membership of the National Science, Technology and Research Committee.

Science Assets and staff

AIMS welcomes the Government's focus, as part of the Boosting the Commercial Returns from Research initiative, on the provision and maintenance of world-class research infrastructure and effective, widespread dissemination of publicly-funded research results.

- AIMS has a strong track record in the collaborative establishment, management and use of research infrastructure. The Institute has played a lead role in the Integrated Marine Observing System over the past decade; a capability that exemplifies the principle of distributed use and benefits through involvement of multiple partners to meet a diversity of data needs across the research, government and industry sectors. In the past year, it has opened up fifty percent of the capability of AIMS' National Sea Simulator to use by external individuals and organisations working collaboratively with AIMS; an approach which is expected to see the facility applied to some of the most complex, multi-disciplinary challenges facing Australia's marine estate. As a world leading facility, the Sea Simulator is uniquely placed to address a number of the global challenges associated with oceans in a high CO₂ world, and we will target collaborations with international leaders addressing these challenges.
- AIMS is committed to the principle of open access to its research publications as the best means to support maximum uptake and application that benefits as wide a user base as possible. All research conducted by AIMS using public funding is made publicly available although AIMS retains the right to utilise all intellectual property generated through its commercial research partnerships for research purposes and to publish and publicly represent all research findings.



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As part of the implementation of its Strategic Plan, AIMS expects to build on and extend these achievements in the future.

- A communication plan has been developed to increase widespread awareness of the National Sea Simulator's unique capacity for controlled experimentation and maximise its use by both the public research sector and industry.
- As a partner in several major, collaborative data sharing and data visualisation initiatives such as eReefs and eAtlas, AIMS will be pushing the boundaries of the information accessibility goal through provision of real-time data collected through its research programs and the development of tools which support its integration into comprehensive decision support systems.

AIMS is committed to the translation of its research into real benefits for industry and the wider economy. Consistent with its legislative functions, much of this work is focused on the protection of goods and services (for example, healthy coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems) which are reflected in the market economy (for example, tourism and fisheries industries) through influence on demand and productivity and in the reduction of environmental risk for industry. Where the opportunity has arisen, however, AIMS has worked with companies to commercialise its research and innovations and, in line with your expectations, will do so wherever viable in the future. Further, in addition to reshaping progressively its staff capability around skills areas needed by industry, AIMS will be implementing a new leadership program focused specifically on developing the enterprise skills of staff to support their effective engagement with industry.

Communication with your Office and the Department / Support for your Parliamentary Secretary

The Council notes your expectations regarding communications with you, your Office, the Parliamentary Secretary and the Department of Industry and Science.

You may be assured that you and your Office will be informed in a timely manner of all significant issues relating to the Institute and that AIMS will maintain regular contact with the Department to ensure there is a mutual awareness and understanding of operational issues and priorities. As requested, a similar level of support and advice to your Parliamentary Secretary and her Office will be provided through regular briefings and contact.

In accordance with the PGPA Act, AIMS is currently finalising its 2015-16 Corporate Plan, which will establish priorities and performance indicators in accordance with the directions outlined in this letter. I look forward to discussing this and other matters with you further, when the first of the meetings you have suggested we should hold at regular intervals, can be scheduled. Following our meeting, I would propose also to arrange an introductory meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary, The Honourable Karen Andrews MP, and thereafter maintain a regular schedule of meetings with her, consistent with her portfolio support responsibilities in relation to AIMS.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Penelope Wensley AC
AIMS Council Chairman

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