



Australian Government



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF MARINE SCIENCE

TOWNSVILLE

DARWIN

PERTH

18 September, 2020

The Honourable Karen Andrews MP
Minister for Industry, Science and Technology
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

AIMS Statement of Intent

Dear Minister Andrews,

Thank you for your letter of 24 February, 2020, providing your Statement of Expectations for the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).

On behalf of the AIMS Council, I am pleased to provide AIMS Statement of Intent in response.

As the Accountable Authority for the Institute under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act)*, the AIMS Council is committed to ensuring that 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.

AIMS welcomes your affirmation of the high importance the government places on science and innovation and is committed to continuing the valuable contribution it makes to Australia in these areas and to meeting the expectations you have identified. Through its world-leading science, AIMS seeks to realise three long-term benefits:

- Improve the health and resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems across northern Australia;
- Create economic, social and environmental net benefits for marine industries and coastal communities; and
- Protect coral reefs and other tropical marine environments from the effects of climate change.

Consistent with the AIMS Act, we will conduct research and deliver marine science and knowledge that will contribute to the economic and environmental wellbeing of Australians and support realisation of the Government's key objectives for Australia's tropical marine estate, including a healthy and resilient Great Barrier Reef (GBR), sustainable coastal ecosystems and industries across tropical Australia, and environmentally sustainable offshore oil and gas development.

We will achieve this by building on our legacy of outstanding science and by aligning our capabilities with national and international priorities, to improve the quality of our science and to deliver benefit to the nation. We will work with stakeholders and partners to turn our science into solutions, build effective, evidence-based decision-support systems, and embed new technologies and the latest data science into our core capabilities. We will continue to engage with Traditional Owners to build new knowledge and integrate Indigenous knowledge of sea country with other sciences.

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AIMS is strongly committed to continuing its key role in advancing the government's broader economic agenda by undertaking research and fostering a strong tropical marine science base that underpins industry in Australia's blue economy, which in turn, supports jobs and growth.

Resolving national challenges

AIMS plays a key leadership role in addressing a number of Australia's significant national and environmental challenges, notably the marine challenges identified in the National Marine Science Plan. Foremost among these is the national challenge to support the resilience, adaptation and restoration of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR), and other coral reefs around Australia.

AIMS will continue to lead research efforts and work with multiple partners in the research, government, industry, and not-for-profit communities in the search for solutions to the challenges facing Australia's GBR and other marine environments – solutions which will also benefit other marine ecosystems around the world suffering cumulative environmental stresses. AIMS will continue to conduct research that supports implementation of the Australian and Queensland government's Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan for the GBR (Reef 2050 Plan), working closely with its partners in government, industry, Traditional Owners, other research organisations and universities and the community.

AIMS will continue the role it commenced as a formative member of the National Marine Science Committee. AIMS will provide leadership within this forum, encouraging its efforts to advance the knowledge, technology, tools and innovation that will drive development of Australia's blue economy, and maximising its value as a body of experts speaking to government with a strong and unified voice for the Australian marine science community.

We will also continue to work closely with the Australian, state and territory governments, consolidating our position as a preferred research partner and as an expert provider of evidence-based, unbiased scientific advice.

Advancing the Government's policy priorities

AIMS places great value on the principles of relevance, collaboration, and communication.

Relevance

AIMS' research priorities and detailed underpinning work plans are developed to make a relevant and material contribution to the Government's science and innovation policy priorities.

Where these are set out broadly, such as in the 2017 National Science Statement, the 2016 National Research Infrastructure Roadmap and the 2015 National Science and Innovation Agenda, AIMS will deliver key marine science contributions to help ensure that Australia continues to have a strong scientific capability, and that the Government has relevant and informed advice to support its decision making on the management of Australia's marine estate.

Where these are set out specifically, such as in *Australia 2030: Prosperity through Innovation 2017*, the *National Marine Science Plan 2015* and the *Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*, AIMS will continue to deliver targeted research, information and decision-tools to its partners in government, industry, the research and education sectors and the broader community to help them achieve their planned goals.

AIMS also has an important role in contributing to revisions and updates of key national science planning documents, and will actively contribute marine science knowledge and expertise to help ensure that the Australian Government is strongly positioned to understand and respond to critical and emerging environmental management challenges.

AIMS will contribute to these outcomes through participation in public consultations, public parliamentary inquiries, expert groups (such as the Reef 2050 Reef Advisory Committee and Independent Expert Panel) and Departmental committees. We will work in consultation with Australia's Chief Scientist and will provide other requested contributions to government review and advice processes.

Participation in these processes – with their focus on nationally significant outcomes – reflects AIMS' approach to undertaking research that is relevant to, and used by, a broad base of end users including governments, industry and the public. Some of these stakeholders are engaged directly through collaboration, others less directly, through communication.

Collaboration

Collaboration is one of AIMS' core values. AIMS collaborates with partners in industry, universities, other research agencies, with Traditional Owners and the not-for-profit sector to create greater impact for Australia from its research.

AIMS will continue to collaborate on a commercial basis with the offshore oil and gas, mining and resource processing, ports and tourism sectors to provide the science that helps them to work in a way that protects the marine environment. We expect that our marine science will assist industry to invest in solutions that help support best practice environmental management and help ecosystems adapt to climate change (such as blue carbon mitigation solutions). Where practical and mutually beneficial, AIMS will facilitate and participate in researcher and technician exchanges with industry and other research organisations.

AIMS' Strategy 2025 identifies one of our recently expanded core objectives: to work with Traditional Owners to create new shared research that integrates Indigenous knowledge of sea country with other sciences. To achieve this, we will build our internal cultural competence to develop meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and individuals across northern Australia, to co-design and co-deliver impactful research for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

To supplement AIMS' strong national partnerships, we will continue to collaborate with international universities and research agencies to exchange information and bring broader expertise to bear on global challenges facing the marine environment, particularly those associated with the recovery, restoration and adaptation of coral reef ecosystems. AIMS' international collaborations represent an important mechanism for the promotion and export of Australia's marine science capability. They are also a means of advancing national foreign and trade policy objectives, helping to strengthen relations with a range of countries of importance to Australia, notably in the Asia-Pacific region and those facing similar marine challenges.

AIMS has a proud history of innovation. We will continue to strive to ensure that we remain a world leader through continuous improvement and the development and application of novel technologies, including potential commercialisation opportunities.

Communication

Central to the promotion of AIMS' successes through research collaboration, output and impact, is our communication.

AIMS' Communication Policy states: 'As a publicly funded research agency, AIMS has a statutory requirement to facilitate the application or utilisation of the results of its research and enhance the nation's scientific capabilities. AIMS also encourages promoting activities and achievements that provide scientific solutions to demonstrate value to the nation'.

AIMS places high value on the accurate, timely and accessible communication of its research. We will continue to publish our research findings in reputable scientific journals, alert readers to our work through our AIMS webpage and social media channels, and provide access to AIMS' research data through our on-line data portal.

As part of our ongoing focus on effective communication we will:

- keep you and your Ministerial office informed, in a timely and accurate way, of significant issues relating to public commentary - in particular of significant announcements, media releases and events that are likely to attract parliamentary interest or media attention;
- accommodate the different communication needs, information preferences and expectations of our wide range of stakeholders; and
- coordinate with relevant research partners/funders before information pertaining to partnerships and science collaborations is released via the media and other publicly available channels.

Organisational performance

AIMS Strategy 2025 provides a clear description of AIMS' research and development priorities. Each element of the strategy is accompanied by a specific strategic target. We will continue to report progress against these targets and work with your department to ensure that our strategic goals and your priorities align.

Safe, inclusive and diverse

The success of AIMS' strategy is built on its people. This means we must provide a safe, inclusive and sustainable work environment. Safety is one of our core values. We care for ourselves and others in all that we do. AIMS has a strong safety record. We will continue to work hard to improve our culture, procedures and infrastructure to make it even stronger.

AIMS is committed to being an employer of choice in the research sector. Our strong safety record contributes to this, as does our commitment to equity and diversity. AIMS is working to achieve balanced gender ratios in all areas of the organisation. We employ Indigenous Australians in our workforce and will continue to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion. We will continue to strive to attract, support, retain and celebrate an inclusive and diverse workforce, and where we see imbalances in our staffing profiles, we will look for ways we can further encourage a diversity of applicants into these areas.

We are proud of our staff diversity, and the work of the AIMS Equity, Diversity and Gender (EDGE) team, and will continue to work with your Department and the Women in STEM Ambassador on our pathway to achieve and maintain Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) accreditation. We will update you on our efforts and our successes as an employer of choice.

Sustainable

AIMS is a world-leading scientific research institution that is ranked in the top three institutions in the world in the field of marine and freshwater biology. While this is due to the quality of our science, produced by some of the very best talent from Australia and around the world, it is only possible through the strategic and disciplined utilisation of our two coastal research vessels, the

world's most advanced marine research aquarium (SeaSim) and the laboratories and specialists that support our operations. We will continue to manage our resources efficiently and effectively.

Our sustainability is also influenced by how well we adopt and lead technological and operational change in our marine monitoring and research work. AIMS will continue working towards its Strategy 2025 goal of delivering 'twice the information in half the time at half the cost'. We will do this by applying breakthrough technology, harnessing technological advances in marine monitoring systems, deploying linked autonomous systems, and developing and employing automated analysis techniques.

Maintaining our overall financial viability and long-term operational sustainability is a critical strategic issue for AIMS. We will continue to work closely with your department to ensure that AIMS is appropriately financed over the long-term to meet the current and emerging challenges in Australia's marine environment, and is able to manage financially the short-to-medium effects of significant external events, such as extreme weather events, global pandemics and climate change.

Working with the Government

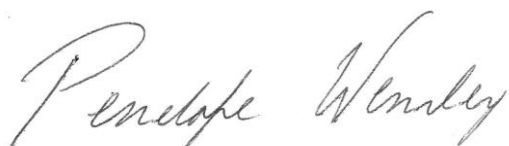
AIMS will continue to work with the Australian Cyber Security Centre to ensure we have appropriate and up-to-date ICT security systems and procedures, and we will continue to work with our people to ensure that our procedures are supported by a culture of security awareness.

The AIMS Council and the AIMS Leadership Team will provide you with annual Corporate Plans and Annual Reports (including performance statements) in accordance with the requirements of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. This will ensure you are fully informed on how AIMS is meeting its statutory obligations. In the course of developing these documents we will consult you and your department to ensure we are aware of the latest priorities and policies of the Government and can continue to be an exemplar of the Government's commitment to effective governance and performance in scientific research.

AIMS will continue to maintain a close relationship with your department and your office and will provide direct briefings to you through regular meetings. AIMS will also keep you informed in advance of significant announcements and events, and as we complete the quantification and assessment of the full impact (economic, social and environmental) of our marine science research, we will provide you with AIMS' impact stories. AIMS places great value on your role in promoting the scientific work of AIMS and the value of evidence-based decision making.

We look forward to working with you and your department to deliver the objectives laid out in this Statement of Intent.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Penelope Wensley".

The Hon Penelope Wensley AC
AIMS Council Chairman