



SENATOR THE HON MURRAY WATT
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

MS25-001511

Dr Elizabeth Woods OAM
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Dear Dr Woods

The Australian Government is committed to protecting, repairing and managing our natural environment for the benefit of all Australians. The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), as Australia's tropical marine science agency, is uniquely placed to deliver world-class tropical marine science to inform environmental management, protection and adaptation.

Australia is lucky to be home to some of the best marine scientists in the world, it is important that they are supported. That is why the Australian Government provided an additional \$163.4 million in the 2023-24 Budget to provide long term financial sustainability. I look forward to hearing about the outcomes the AIMS is achieving with this increased funding and ongoing implementation of the AIMS' Financial Sustainability Plan.

I would like the AIMS to be a collaborator, partner and employer of choice by providing a workplace environment, culture and opportunities that attract and retain the very best talent from around Australia and the world. The AIMS should place a high priority on being a safe and inclusive workplace and employer of choice.

I expect the AIMS to engage closely with all relevant departments on tropical marine science issues and to support the implementation of Australia's National Science Statement (2024) and revitalised National Science and Research Priorities (August 2024).

Advancing the Government's policy priorities

Australia's social and economic prosperity depends on a thriving environment. Science and research underpin informed policy and decision-making to protect, repair and manage our tropical marine and coastal ecosystems, and support sustainable communities, marine and coastal industries and healthy Country.

Aligning with National Science and Research priorities

The AIMS should ensure its activities align with Australia's revitalised National Science and Research Priorities and, in particular:

- Support Australia's Transition to a net zero future (Priority 1) by contributing to our understanding of blue carbon sequestration. The AIMS' research can support emerging blue economy industries such as offshore renewable energy to ensure they are developed in an environmentally sustainable manner. I expect the AIMS to deliver on its goal to reduce carbon emissions consistent with the targets in its

corporate plan, noting the Australian Public Service goal of net zero emissions by 2030.

- Play a strong role in elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems (Priority 3) in line with the Australian Government commitment to stronger and meaningful engagement with our First Nations. This includes continuing to bring together Traditional Knowledge of sea Country and western marine science. The AIMS should continue to strengthen its relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.
- Deliver science and research to inform efforts to protect and restore Australia's environment (Priority 4) with regard to tropical marine ecosystems under the effects of climate change.

Protecting Australia's tropical coastal and marine ecosystems

The AIMS will continue to play a critical role informing the implementation of the Great Barrier Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. This includes analysing and disseminating important tropical marine data collected through the agency's Great Barrier Reef (GBR) Long Term Monitoring Program and the GBR Marine Monitoring Program (coordinated by the Reef Authority) to track the health of the Reef. These data and analyses are also foundational in supporting a wide range of other research including the AIMS' work across Northern Australia from the GBR in the East to Ningaloo in the West, as well as supporting international partners.

I expect the AIMS to continue to improve our ocean science and technology in support of advancing restoration of Australia's tropical coastal and marine ecosystems. As part of this, I expect the AIMS to support the development and deployment of innovative solutions for reefs threatened by climate change. This may include the AIMS' work with other partners in the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program. I expect the AIMS to utilise its research expertise as part of reciprocal and balanced partnerships to deliver impact through reef restoration and resilience programs.

Supporting a stronger Pacific family

The AIMS is well placed to maximise its existing national, regional and global networks by collaborating with peers, cross-sector leaders and industry on tropical marine issues. This includes engaging with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to build the tropical marine science capability of our Pacific and Asian neighbours.

Managing national research infrastructure and research vessel fleet

The Australian Government wants our major public research infrastructure and national facilities hosted by our national science agencies to be well utilised, benefit the community and lead to strong outcomes. This will enable investment in these infrastructure facilities to support broader economic, environmental and productivity strategies, as well as innovation in the wider economy. I expect the AIMS to increase access to the National Sea Simulator, following the Australian Government's \$42.7 million investment in the facility's expansion.

Consistent with the AIMS' Financial Sustainability Plan, it is important that the AIMS takes a financially responsible approach to the management of its research vessel fleet, including with regard to renewal of ageing /end of design life vessels and supporting infrastructure.

Promoting and sharing the AIMS' science and research

The AIMS is a trusted source of expert scientific advice to the Australian and international community. I expect the AIMS to uphold the high standards and regard in which it is held, as expected of a trusted advisor and collaborator, by ensuring research projects are independent of commercial interests; the science is impartial and objective; and the findings are publicly accessible and provide benefit to the broader community. I expect the AIMS to continue to be active in the community to communicate its activities and achievements. I also expect the AIMS to continue to work with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to identify opportunities for me to promote tropical marine science.

Additionally, the AIMS should continue to demonstrate its high international standing with reference to relevant international rankings based on science publication metrics and national and international peers.

Driving the agency's performance

I expect the AIMS to be an exemplar of the Australian Government's commitment to the effective governance and performance of its agencies, in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) and the *Australian Institute of Marine Science Act 1972*.

In developing its annual report and corporate plan in accordance with the PGPA Act, I expect the AIMS to take into account the priorities and policies of the Government, and to include reporting against the matters articulated in this statement. I encourage the AIMS to work closely with the Department on plans to track and report targets and objectives in its corporate plan and associated strategy documents and on its plans for long-term asset and infrastructure renewal.

I expect the AIMS Council members to adhere to relevant legislation in the execution of their duties, including maintaining any security clearances as appropriate.

It is important that the AIMS takes a strategic and disciplined focus on the delivery of its core responsibilities, driving enhancements to safety performance, financial management and the delivery of essential projects that support legislative functions. The AIMS works closely with partners across government, universities, industry, Traditional Owner groups and philanthropy and its success is underpinned by effective engagement and strong collaborations. I would like to see the AIMS continue to be a high performer in these areas.

Yours sincerely



MURRAY WATT

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