

23 April 2024

The Honourable Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for the Environment and Water
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

AIMS Statement of Intent

Dear Minister Plibersek,

Thank you for your letter of 13 December 2023 providing your Statement of Expectations for the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS).

On behalf of the Council of the Institute of Marine Science (the AIMS Council), I am pleased to respond with AIMS' Statement of Intent.

As the Accountable Authority for the Institute under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the 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* (the AIMS Act) and in line with the expectations of the Australian Government and wider community.

AIMS welcomes the Government's commitment to a nature-positive approach and is committed to making valuable contributions for the benefit of all Australians. 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 marine ecosystems from the effects of climate change.

Consistent with the AIMS Act, we conduct research and deliver marine science and knowledge that contributes to the economic and environmental wellbeing of Australians and advances the Government's policy priorities. This includes protecting the Great Barrier Reef, conserving our oceans and marine parks, partnering with First Nations people, and supporting a stronger Pacific family.

We achieve this through our focus on innovation to improve the quality of our science to deliver benefit to the nation. We partner with First Nations people to weave Traditional Knowledge with western science, creating genuine opportunities and positive outcomes for the Traditional Custodians of the land and sea Country on which we work. We are collaborating 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.

Applying marine science to advance our national interests

AIMS welcomes the Government's \$163.4 million investment for our infrastructure remediation program and operating expenses. The ongoing increase of AIMS' appropriation will deliver on the Government's priorities in line with our Strategy 2030. We have developed a plan for the necessary staging of the work on upgrading AIMS' critical infrastructure, and will report on the completion of each major section of the work, including emerging opportunities for you to join us in the

celebration of key infrastructure restoration and readiness for hosting ongoing and future marine science. Our partners and stakeholders rely on AIMS to lead research efforts in the search for solutions to the challenges facing Australia's tropical marine estate, including the world heritage listed Ningaloo and Great Barrier Reefs.

AIMS engages closely with all relevant Government stakeholders, providing and sharing our research and knowledge for the benefit of all Australians. I am proud of the strong relationships we maintain with Australia's Chief Scientist, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and other Government science and research agencies, and reaffirm our commitment to supporting the development and implementation of the National Science and Research Priorities and National Science Statement. AIMS is fully committed to its representational roles on the National Marine Science Council and the Government Scientists Group.

Advancing the Government's policy priorities

AIMS is a committed contributor to the Government's policy priorities, which share close alignment with our Strategy 2030 and research goals.

Protecting the Great Barrier Reef

Although our work today extends to all of Australia's tropical coral reefs, our work on the Great Barrier Reef has formed a core part of AIMS' activities since the agency's creation in 1972. Our Long Term Monitoring Program has measured the status and trend of reefs in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area since the mid-1980s, and provides the longest unbroken data set of its type in the world. This critical program will continue to provide important qualitative data that enables informed Government decision making on reef investments and interventions as we deliver our planned improvements to the data collection methods and analyses

As the Managing Entity and a major delivery partner, AIMS plays several key roles in the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program, prioritising this work in the search for transformational methods to breed heat tolerant coral, and development of new cooling, shading, and stabilisation mechanisms to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the threat of climate change.

Conserving our oceans and marine parks

Australia's \$118 billion blue economy is a key economic driver and an area of predicted future growth. AIMS is well placed to support this, enabling decision makers to maximise economic growth while achieving nature positive outcomes.

The Sustainable Ocean Plan for Australia is an exciting opportunity to shape the future of this country's activities and engagement in an area of great strategic importance. AIMS remains committed to supporting the development of the Plan through comprehensive engagement with your department. We look forward to engaging in the Plan's implementation when it is finalised, as we currently do with the Threatened Species Action Plan and Saving Native Species program.

We are energised by the goal of Australia achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and are actively investigating innovative methods of carbon sequestration in support of this, most notably through our blue carbon initiatives. We are improving the energy efficiency of our sites and assets with a view to further carbon emission reductions in line with our emissions reduction target in Strategy 2030. We will achieve this through future investments in renewable energy sources, including solar, and leveraging the recently announced hydrogen facility near our primary site in Townsville.

Partnering with First Nations People

Establishing and maintaining meaningful partnerships with the Traditional Custodians of the land and sea Country on which we work is an integral part of the way AIMS operates. From requiring Free Prior and Informed Consent for all projects we conduct on Country, to enshrining Indigenous Partnership targets in our Strategy 2030, our work is designed from the beginning to weave Traditional Knowledge with western science for the benefit of all Australians. As we develop these partnerships we contribute to Closing the Gap through access to opportunities, jobs, and training for First Nations people.

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Supporting a stronger Pacific family

Our global leadership in marine science is well recognised. We hold the Global Coordination role of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), and support our Pacific neighbours with training and technology that helps them map, understand, and protect their coral reefs as we do our own. Our ongoing enhancements and improvements to our ReefCloud system enable this work.

We strongly support efforts to enhance Australia's international environmental leadership, working with your department, and engaging with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to ensure future success. We are developing our collaborations with international universities and research agencies to exchange information and bring broader expertise to bear on the global challenges facing the marine environment, particularly those associated with the recovery, restoration, and adaptation of coral reef ecosystems. Our international collaborations represent an important mechanism for the promotion and export of Australia's marine science capability, and our engagements in this context are advancing national foreign policy and trade policy objectives.

Managing research infrastructure and national facilities

We are privileged to be the custodians of the National Sea Simulator (SeaSim), the only research aquarium of its type and scale in the world. Following recent investments from the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, we are looking forward to opening the SeaSim's expansion and commencing its operation as a National Facility, enhancing its availability to scientists, the quantity of its outputs, and its contributions to nature positive outcomes.

Our research vessel fleet is performing strongly, with the RV *Solander* and the RV *Cape Ferguson* ranking as two of the top three most utilised research vessels in the world. The replacement for the RV *Apollo* funded through the 2023-24 Budget will ensure we continue to have a high-quality near-shore capability when it enters service.

Promoting and sharing AIMS's science and research

We place a high value on the accurate, timely, and accessible communication of our research. We deliver open data for public good, publishing our research findings in reputable scientific journals, promoting our work through our webpage and social media channels, and providing access to our research data through our online data portal. Our leadership team is focused on research translation for impact, and we routinely monitor our reputational and impact standings in relevant, reputable international rankings against our peers.

Driving the agency's performance

Legislative Requirements

We will provide you with our annual Corporate Plan and Annual Report (including performance statements) in accordance with the requirements of the PGPA Act. This will ensure you are fully informed about how we are meeting our statutory obligations and delivering on the Government's budgetary investments in the agency. In the course of developing these documents we will consult with you and your department to ensure we are aware of the latest priorities and policies of the Government. The AIMS Council members will at all times remain cognisant of their legal duties, and will engage with the relevant areas of your department to ensure security clearances are obtained and maintained at the appropriate level.

Operations, agency staff and health

Our success is built on our people, which means we must provide a safe, inclusive, and sustainable work environment for the benefit of our staff, partners, collaborators, and visitors. Safety is one of our core values, and we are working hard to further improve our culture and procedures. The Government investment in the 2023/24 Budget is enabling us to repair and upgrade our infrastructure, ensuring we work safely now and into the future.

We are committed to being an employer, collaborator, and partner of choice. Our strong safety record contributes to this, as does our commitment to equity and diversity. We maintain balanced gender ratios in all areas of the organisation, and we employ First Nations people and culturally and linguistically diverse people across our organisation. We strive to attract,

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support, retain, and celebrate an inclusive and diverse workforce, and where we see imbalances in our staffing profiles, we actively seek ways we can further encourage a diversity of applicants into these areas.

We are proud of our staff diversity, the work of our Equity, Diversity and Gender (EDGE) team, and our Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) accreditation. We are sharing our experience with others through our participation in the Government's Diversity in STEM review.

Working with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and across Government

We maintain a close relationship with your department and your office, and will provide direct briefings to you through submissions, reports, and meetings where required. We will also keep you informed in advance of significant announcements and events as we place great value on your role in promoting the scientific work of AIMS and the importance of evidence-based decision-making. We will maintain current, and develop new relationships across Government, ensuring that AIMS is known throughout the public sector as a trusted scientific advisor and partner.

We look forward to our ongoing work with you, your office, and your department, to deliver the objectives laid out in this statement of intent.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Elizabeth Woods OAM
Chair
Council of the Institute of Marine Science

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