

REVIEW OF THE FISHERY STOCK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

The Ministry of Fisheries has the legal responsibility for the administration of the Fisheries Act 1996.

The Ministry's Chief Executive is accountable to Ministers for the integrity of the systems and processes that underpin the administration of the Act.

The systems and processes that support statutory decision-making by the Minister of Fisheries are central to the sound administration of the Fisheries Act 1996.

As part of my governance responsibilities, I want to assure myself and the Minister of Fisheries that the systems and processes that support his sustainability decisions (Part III of the Fisheries Act 1996) are fit for this purpose and have the highest level of integrity.

In particular, I want to be satisfied that the Minister is provided with the best available information and any credible alternative analyses of the best available information, and is advised of all known risks and uncertainties relating to that information.

Accordingly, I have decided to commission a review of the Ministry's systems and processes commonly referred to as the "stock assessment process" and the "sustainability round".

Reviewers

I have appointed a multi disciplinary team of three experts to undertake the review;

- * Dr Robin Allen
- * Robert Buchanan
- * Peter Murray

Focus of review

The reviewers will examine the systems and processes that support the provision of advice to the Minister on sustainability measures, including:

1. The systems and processes for planning and undertaking stock assessments, including;
 - the methods for gathering, testing and analysing relevant information, and
 - obtaining, evaluating and assessing input from properly qualified scientists, fisheries managers, tangata whenua and stakeholders;
2. The roles and responsibilities within those systems and processes, having particular regard to the need for objectivity, independent peer review, quality assurance and accountability around the stock assessment process.

3. The structural and process relationships between the Ministry's Science team, Fisheries Operations personnel, contract research providers, tangata whenua and stakeholders who participate in the stock assessment and ministerial advice processes.

Access to information and administrative support

The reviewers will have full access to Ministry personnel and records. The reviewers will be authorised to consult with key stakeholders (including contract services providers).

Administrative support for the review will be provided through Peter Murray, the Ministry's General Manager Corporate Services.

Report

The reviewers will report the results of the review to the Acting Chief Executive by Friday, 30 November 2007 and may make such recommendations as they think fit – including, but not limited to:

- a) The prerequisites for ensuring the integrity and independence of the systems and processes that support the Minister's sustainability decisions;
- b) What, if any, are the underlying impediments to providing sound stock assessment advice to the Minister;
- c) How any identified weaknesses in the existing systems, processes and governance arrangements should be addressed; and
- d) What, if any, new or additional structures, processes and controls are required to ensure the stock assessment information and management advice to the Minister supports sound statutory decision-making.

GT (Stan) Crothers
Acting Chief Executive

5 October 2007