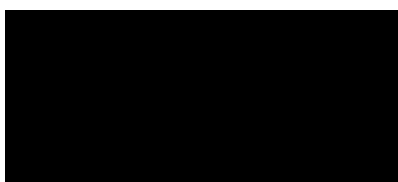




Department of
Agriculture and Fisheries

Our ref: CTS 02246/22

28 February 2022



Dear Ms Jensen

Thank you for your letter of 27 December 2021 regarding the complaint you sent to Ms Anne Barclay, Chair of the Vessel Tracking Working Group regarding information you are seeking from Fisheries Queensland on vessel tracking. I understand that Ms Barclay discussed the letter with you, and she has worked with Ms Elisabeth Manning, A/Director Reporting, Information and Digital Solutions, Fisheries Queensland and myself to follow up on the matters you have raised. I also appreciate you making the time to speak with me recently about these matters to better appreciate your perspective.

While we may not be able to agree on all matters, having an open dialogue is important to further understand and inform me about the impacts and issues you are experiencing.

Fisheries Queensland is working on specific requests in relation to vessel tracking, a lot of which are falling out of the review of the consultation Post Implementation Review (PIR). We have gathered some information to respond to some of your information requests (Attachment 1) and are still working on the others. We will aim to provide the remaining information to you in the coming weeks.

In addition, I note that Fisheries Queensland has shared a large amount of information (through briefs, presentations and in response to industry requests) to assist the Working Group in its advisory role, to seek improvements to the implementation and operation of vessel tracking.

Fisheries Queensland remains open to understanding industry concerns about how vessel tracking is working in practice and ways to address problems being raised in the Working Group to make the implementation as smooth as possible.

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In doing so, through the Working Group we have focused on issues raised by industry, issues raised through the Ombudsman, and consulting on the PIR of vessel tracking. Industry members have provided information directly to the PIR through Working Group discussions and one on one consultations with Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

Your letter refers to the scope and validity of the vessel tracking program. I want to take the opportunity to put into context the purpose, direction and benefits of the program.

The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027 is committed to implementing vessel tracking on all commercial fishing boats recognising various benefits for fisheries management.

The *Fisheries Act 1994* guides the work we do in fostering economically viable, socially responsible and ecologically sustainable fisheries resources for the benefit of the Queensland community. I believe industry shares these objectives and while at times, may have differing perspectives on how to best achieve these goals, there are many areas of common ground and mutual agreement.

The active monitoring of commercial fishing activities using vessel tracking contributes to better management of our fisheries resources. This information assists in validating catch and effort data provided by fishers. Validated data is used to assess the condition of fish stocks which in turns assist to identify what percentage of a stock can be harvested while maintaining a sustainable biomass.

This active monitoring and the resulting validated data are integral to Fisheries Queensland in assessing compliance levels and detecting possible fisheries offences such as by:

- monitoring compliance with area and seasonal closures (including marine park zones)
- providing intelligence and evidence for investigations
- providing data to assist in forward planning of compliance inspection programs
- providing near real time positional data to assist in day-to-day inspections and enforcement of fisheries requirements such as:
 - quota, effort and other catch reporting requirements
 - fishing apparatus use including attendance/servicing requirements, closures
 - appropriate authorisations are held for an operation (licencing)
 - targeted inspections associated with regulated fish provisions.

It is our view that vessel tracking is effectively a pre-requisite for commercial fishing access to public fisheries resources in Queensland. Fishers should consider vessel tracking as a cost of doing business, along with other commercial operating costs (e.g., boat registration and insurance; commercial fisher licence and symbol fees; mobile phone plans and internet plans etc).

You raise the future direction of vessel tracking and it is Fisheries Queensland's view that there is a continuing need that is increasingly shaped by international and domestic and environmental drivers, to collect and analyse data to assist in both fisheries management and compliance activities.

Fisheries Queensland continues to seek to work with industry members to make the operation of vessel tracking requirements as smooth as possible. I continue to be keen to engage with you and obtain your advice as to how Fisheries Queensland can, within its scope and authority, work with commercial fishers on this matter.

We propose to hold the next meeting of the Working Group as soon as we are able to share the consultation PIR paper with you. I am also hopeful that we can continue to work through the issues raised by industry in relation to technology and suppliers given the feedback provided about reliability of YB3i and Spot Trace units.

I am happy to talk further with you at any time and my offer to visit your operation remains open at a time that suits you.

Yours sincerely



Dallas D'Silva
Executive Director
Fisheries Queensland

Attachment 1: Responses to requests

Attachment 2: Template of vessel tracking trial participant survey (2018)