



Report on Operations

DEPARTMENT SERVICES

Regional Services

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REGIONAL SERVICES Branch

The Regional Services Branch is the largest service provider within the Department of Fisheries with more than 130 staff in five regional and 13 district offices located throughout Western Australia.

The safety of people fishing and operating in the marine environment has also become a focus of the Branch's activities in line with the Government's decision to enhance the efficiency of its marine operations. The transfer of the marine safety compliance function to the Department of Fisheries from the Department for Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) highlights the Department's capacity to deliver services on behalf of other Government agencies in the metropolitan region.

Compliance, both in Western Australian waters and within the Australian Fishing Zone on behalf of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, represent more than half of the activities of the Branch.

The Branch allocates staff and assets across the State to ensure compliance to fisheries legislation in recreational and commercial fisheries, the pearling and aquaculture industries and fish and fish habitat protection areas. The allocation of resources is achieved through a standardised risk assessment process that determines the likelihood and consequences of illegal activity occurring.

Compliance strategies are developed and resources are allocated to fisheries and areas of highest risk. A wide range of compliance tools is utilised such as land and sea patrols, aerial surveillance, covert operations, mobile patrols and education activities to ensure that industry and the public are complying with fisheries legislation.

Rationalisation of Boat Fleet

With the integration of at-sea compliance services between Fisheries and the DPI, the DPI fleet of vessels was transferred to Fisheries. The Department has met Government expectations of a rationalisation of these resources by reducing the fleet by 21 vessels and 30 outboard motors. Rationalisation has effectively removed \$3.85 million from the capital funding requirement for vessel replacements.

Mobile Patrols

The operation of the Department's two mobile patrol units over the past two years has shown that the delivery of compliance and education services to the recreational fishing community in this manner is an effective and efficient use of staff resources. The versatility of the units means that areas and fisheries of highest risk can be targeted during peak seasons and given the lack of administrative constraints placed on these officers, they can deliver far greater hours into recreational fishing and achieve far greater compliance and in particular, educational contacts.



DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES REGIONAL STAFFING 2004/05

Area	Offices	Regional Services Staff	Fisheries Managed	Regionally Based Policy Officers	Regionally Based Research staff	VFLOs	MACs
Southern Region	4	19.5*	10	1	1	41	3
Perth Metropolitan Region	5	37*	8	1	0	90	2
Gascoyne Region	3	17	7	1	1	2	1
Midwest Region	3	22**	5	1	0	11	1
Northern Region	2	17.2***	4	1	1	10	1

* Includes two-person recreational mobile patrol that can operate throughout WA.

** Includes one person hosted for Northern Agriculture Catchment Council for National Resource management.

*** Includes two International Operations staff based in Broome.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

Perth Metropolitan

- new Hillarys District Office established within Western Australian Fisheries and Marine and Research Laboratories and new Rockingham District Office opened;
- first stage of the rationalisation of patrol vessels achieved;
- Cockburn Sound Crab Fishery Agreed Arrangements progressed;
- VFLOs participated in a variety of research activities including abalone research and tailor research at Point Walter and Floreat Drain and the samson fish research held off Rottneest Island; and
- Brendan Mitchell (VFLO) recognised by a 'Commendation for Brave Conduct' for his actions rescuing a man caught in a rip during the 2002 abalone fishing season.

Northern

- new patrol vessels commissioned to provide improved at-sea servicing capability, improved employee safety, enhanced marine safety and response capacity;
- implemented the revised compliance program for the pearling industry shifting field inspection focus to first seeding operations and transport of quota;
- reviewed the Broome Tropical Aquaculture Park infrastructure needs and capital works expenditure to replace and improve agency assets. An Emergency Management Plan was developed to address agency and tenant risk and an ongoing analysis of seawater intake and improved water quality and supply volume was undertaken; and
- developed marine park service plans to deliver services to the Rowley Shoals, Montebello Islands and Barrow Islands, in consultation with the Department of Conservation and Land Management and other stakeholders.

Branch

Mid West

- appointed two additional Fisheries and Marine Officers for the Jurien Bay District Office to assist in service delivery to the Jurien Bay Marine Park;
- created the Abrolhos Islands Coordinator position;
- designed and constructed a suitable patrol vessel for operation mainly within the Dongara District;
- appointed an Abrolhos Islands Policy Officer to work on new legislation pertaining to the Abrolhos and a review of the Abrolhos Islands Management Plan; and
- delivery of an 8.7m catamaran for the Geraldton District and a 6.1m centre console for the Dongara District to assist Fisheries and Marine Officers carry out several projects including commercial rock lobster, recreational, fish habitat and marine safety.

Southern

- implemented a prohibition on commercial crab fishing in Geographe Bay and developed a compensation mechanism for affected fishermen;
- finalised a review of management arrangements for the South Coast crustacean fisheries and updated management arrangements for the South and South West salmon managed fisheries;
- implemented Margaret River marron recovery actions as identified in the Interim Recovery Plan;
- promoted increased VFLO recruitment over the entire Southern Region with three induction courses for 12 new VFLOs in the Bunbury, Busselton and Albany districts; and
- Fisheries and Marine Officers and Customs Officers conducted several at-sea compliance checks of Southern commercial fishers that resulted in a number of prosecutions.

Gascoyne

- implemented measures to assist in the oceanic Shark Bay pink snapper stock recovery through new management arrangements for the commercial Shark Bay Snapper Managed Fishery;
- commenced consultation and drafting of legislation for the implementation of Vessel Monitoring System for the Shark Bay Snapper Managed Fishery;
- provided input and membership for the Gascoyne Rangelands Committee and Whole of Rangelands Committee (Natural Heritage Trust NRM process);
- undertook planning in preparation for extensions to the Ningaloo Marine Park. Funding for a new two person mobile patrol and a new 8m boat was secured. Completed risk assessments for Ningaloo Marine Park and a generic risk assessment model for use in all marine parks; and
- gazetted the Quobba Fish Habitat Protection Area following public consultation.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

Perth Metropolitan

- VFLOs will work with the Fishers with Disabilities Association Incorporated in the launch of a vessel capable of taking people with disabilities fishing on the Swan and Canning rivers;
- further rationalisation of the region's larger patrol boat fleet;
- launch a new dual-purpose vessel to further enhance the effectiveness of at sea fisheries and marine safety compliance programs;
- implement a regional restructure to address rapid growth in the Southern District (Rockingham to Mandurah); and
- complete and implement the outcomes of the Cockburn Sound Crab Fishery Agreed Arrangements.

Northern

- complete and implement a new accord for the Barramundi (and Threadfin) Fishery in the Kimberley;
- continue the review of the pearling industry compliance program to improve client systems, monitor the introduction of vessel monitoring and assist the legislative development and review of the *Pearling Act 1990* and Regulations;
- complete business planning, emergency management planning and infrastructure replacement and development for the Broome Tropical Aquaculture Park;
- commence compliance patrolling of marine parks and facilitate joint servicing with the Department of Conservation and Land Management and other stakeholders for marine parks; and
- establish a temporary office in Kununurra to enhance community access to mobile patrol and other agency staff.

Mid West

- increase capacity at the Jurien Bay District Office to deal predominantly with the marine park;
- commence renovations to Geraldton Regional Office to accommodate additional staff and to provide a suitable conference room for Mid West staff; and
- submit funding applications to Northern Agricultural Catchment Council for research projects at the Abolhos Islands to support baseline data knowledge of the Abolhos System.

Southern

- coordinate the public consultation process regarding the future management of the South Coast Trawl Fishery;
- develop a management discussion paper for the consolidation of the South Coast Crustacean Fisheries;
- commence a landholder marron monitoring program in the upper Margaret River as part of the recovery program for "hairy" marron;
- target recruitment of VFLOs in areas of low participation in the Southern Region; and
- complete the redevelopment of the Bunbury and Busselton offices to improve accommodation for staff.

Gascoyne

- commence the Ningaloo Marine Park patrol, complete compliance and operational plan, establish joint servicing arrangements with the Department of Conservation and Land Management and construction and delivery of purpose built Rigid Inflatable Boat;
- create compliance and operational plans for all major trawl fisheries;
- establish VMS operating and compliance environment for Gascoyne Snapper Fishery;
- review compliance delivery processes for the Shark Bay Marine Park in light of new operating environment in Ningaloo Marine Park; and
- finalise the review of the Shark Bay Beach Seine and Mesh Net Managed Fishery.

INTERNATIONAL Operations

The Department of Fisheries is responsible for delivering fisheries compliance operations in six Commonwealth fisheries programs, within the 200 nautical mile Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ) through service delivery arrangements with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA).

These involve, but are not limited to, areas of the AFZ adjacent to mainland Western Australia, the external territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos/Keeling group of islands, and Heard and McDonald Islands situated in the sub-Antarctic region.

The compliance operations programs managed by the International Operations Group were the Heard and McDonald Islands; Southern and Western Tuna and Billfish; Southern Bluefin Tuna; Northern Prawn Fishery; Australian Fishing Zone Programs; and Apprehensions and Prosecutions.

Stationed in Perth and Broome, International Operations officers monitor domestic and foreign fishing activities in all areas of the AFZ. They carry out sea patrols aboard Royal Australian Navy patrol vessels, Australian Customs services vessels and civil charter vessels and aerial surveillance flights aboard Coastwatch aircraft.

In terms of foreign fishing, officers focussed their field activities on Indonesian fishermen operating adjacent to Western Australia including the outer areas of Ashmore Reef, Seringapatam Reef, Scott Reef and Browse Island, and patrols to the Heard and McDonald Islands in the sub-Antarctic region of the Southern Ocean.

The Department of Fisheries has maintained a dedicated team of 10 specialised staff to carry out these duties. However, the Commonwealth Government has decided to withdraw from the current service delivery arrangements for the foreign fishing compliance program that it has with State governments around Australia.

Under the new arrangements, AFMA will directly employ Fisheries Officers to undertake all foreign compliance services and base the group in Darwin.

AFMA has indicated that the foreign fishing compliance program delivered by Western Australia will be progressively “wound-down” and finalised during 2005/06. Some International Operations group officers may transfer to the new Darwin-based team. Others, however, will transfer to positions within the domestic compliance program. These officers will be an asset to the domestic program because of their high level of skill.



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- apprehended 15 Indonesian fishing vessels and one vessel was dealt with at-sea by administrative seizure. Actual numbers are down considerably due to a significant reduction in the level of access to vessels by International Operations officers;
- involvement in Operation Clearwater to the north of Darwin and the Gulf of Carpentaria due to large increases in illegal, unregulated and unreported activity in the area. The Operation was a joint task involving a number of agencies. A total of 29 vessels were apprehended over a two-week period and escorted to either Darwin or Gove for investigation;
- appeals brought by the owner of the Patagonian Toothfish longliner, Volga, were dealt with in the Criminal and Federal Courts of Australia after three and a half years. These resulted in finding in favour of the Commonwealth. The Volga, its catch and equipment were ordered to be forfeited to the Crown;
- conducted 36 vessel inspections for logbook compliance and catch composition in the Southern and Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery. Seven processor inspections were also conducted and surveillance flights were undertaken to ensure compliance with permit conditions;
- undertook net measuring checks prior to equipment being deployed to sea in the Northern Prawn Fishery; and
- trained selected members of the Australian Customs Service Southern Ocean Marine Patrol Response unit in sub-Antarctic foreign fishing vessel boarding and investigation techniques continued.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- development and implementation of a strategy to increase compliance of illegal, unlicensed and unregulated fishing in Australia's sub-Antarctic regions;
- review and assess illegal foreign fishing activities with regard to Indonesian fishers and future changes to their operations;
- upgrade and implement strategies to address issues of non-compliance by foreign operators in the Christmas and Cocos Island regions of Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone;
- promote formal in-country discussion with respect to alternative fisheries-based livelihoods for Indonesian fishers;
- review and develop training needs for core client groups; and
- develop and establish strategies to efficiently address monitoring, control and surveillance needs arising from the implementation of international fisheries management legislation.

RESEARCH Division

The Research Division provides quality scientific knowledge and advice to support the conservation and sustainable utilisation of the State's aquatic resources. Research to support the management of the State's marine ecosystems, which underpins our major fish resources, is also a core focus of the division.

In 2004/05 development of a new \$16 million leading-edge fisheries and marine research laboratory was completed. This facility also contains a significant public education interface including an exhibition hall, training and activity areas for school groups and volunteers along with viewing access to working laboratories and research aquarium areas. This new complex is the first in Australia to combine research laboratories and education facilities to provide direct community access to the scientific basis for the conservation and management of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems.

The Research Division's 120-plus staff members are structured in four expertise-based branches. Research projects are carried out through multi-disciplinary teams.

The major categories of research output provided by the Research Division are:

- scientific knowledge for the sustainable management of the State's wild fish stocks and associated commercial and recreational fisheries;
- maintenance of long-term databases to support scientific assessments of fish stocks and their habitats;
- research and development information to assist the expansion of the State's aquaculture industry;
- strategic research knowledge on aquatic species and their environments for managing aquatic environments and ensuring quality of the State's fish products; and
- development of new techniques and basic knowledge to add to the community's understanding of aquatic resources and their environment.

A more detailed description of the functions of the Research Division is available from the publication *State of the Fisheries Report*, which forms part of the Department's reporting process of the Department. This publication provides to Parliament and the WA community a detailed summary of the scientific and other information supporting key management and aquaculture development activities of the Department. The document's fishery status reports also incorporate the Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) reporting and assessment framework necessary to meet State and Federal legislative requirements.

The four branches of the Research Division and their work are described below.

Invertebrate Fisheries

The Invertebrate Fisheries Branch undertakes research to assess and monitor the crustacean and mollusc stocks that support the State's major commercial fisheries. These include rock lobsters, prawns, pearl oysters, scallops, abalone and crabs.

In addition, the Branch carries out biological research and stock monitoring projects for recreational fisheries involving rock lobsters, abalone and crabs. It also undertakes environmental/bycatch research, as well as a number of collaborative projects with universities, the WA Museum and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).



Finfish Fisheries

The Finfish Fisheries Branch undertakes research to underpin management of the State's diverse finfish resources and facilitates fisheries chemistry projects to support finfish research and environmental management. Stocks researched include the tropical shallow and deep-

water snappers, sharks, salmon and herring, pelagic stocks (pilchards, whitebait, mackerel) and coastal embayment and estuarine stocks.

These are harvested by commercial fishers supplying local markets, the recreational fishing sector and the newly-managed recreational charter sector. Much of this research work relates to stocks that are the focus of the Department of Fisheries' Integrated Fisheries Management Strategy.

The Finfish Fisheries Branch supports a significant proportion of the Research Division's external projects at Murdoch and other universities. These collaborative projects involve a considerable number of postgraduate research students.

Aquaculture Development and Fisheries Environment

The Aquaculture Development and Fisheries Environment Branch undertakes a wide variety of research to support aquaculture development, fisheries pathology services, fisheries-related environmental management, freshwater fisheries monitoring, and stock enhancement. Research projects include developing specialist aquaculture technology for marron, yabbies, trout, abalone, marine finfish and brine shrimp.

The Aquaculture Development and Fisheries Environment Branch is involved in the development of fish feeds, fish disease identification and testing, trout and trochus stock enhancement, monitoring of the recreational marron stock and its environment and Aboriginal aquaculture development. Staff also maintain a database of aquaculture production statistics, and manage the Department's marine aquarium and scientific workshop facilities.

The Aquaculture Development and Fisheries Environment Branch has staff based at a number of sites around the State, including Hillarys research and education centre, Department of Agriculture laboratories (fish pathology), Challenger TAFE in Fremantle (mariculture group), Broome TAFE and the Department's major freshwater research centre at Pemberton.

Joint research facilities are also maintained with industry at Albany and Lake Argyle and with the University of WA at Shenton Park. Close liaison with universities has led to a significant number of research students being supervised within the branch.

Stock Assessment and Data Analysis

The Stock Assessment and Data Analysis Branch provides support for the Research Division in the fields of statistical design and analysis; population dynamics and stock assessment; library services; and research information systems and information technology. It assesses the status of all fish stocks in Western Australia.

This group maintains the Department's extensive commercial fisheries databases and undertakes leading-edge research into the development of fisheries stock assessment models and sustainability reporting techniques.

In addition, the Branch carries out major recreational fishing and community and stakeholder attitude surveys, the results of which are added to the comprehensive recreational fishing database maintained by the Research Division.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- submitted successful applications for external funding for priority research from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) and other sources worth about \$2.7 million;
- completed the following externally funded research studies which are now being utilised in the Department's management and development processes:
 - the implementation and assessment of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) in the Shark Bay and Exmouth Gulf trawl fisheries;
 - the age, growth, reproductive biology and stock assessment of grass emperor, *Lethrinus laticaudis*, in Shark Bay;
 - the biology and stock assessment of the thickskin (sandbar) shark, *Carcharhinus plumbeus*, in Western Australia;
 - replacement of Artemia (brine shrimp) in larval rearing of marine finfish;
 - nutritional management of barramundi;
 - scientific input to the development of a range of aquaculture projects for indigenous communities in the Kimberley; and
 - assessment of improving indigenous trochus fisheries through relocation of broodstock in the Kimberley.
- developed an ESD Assessment Manual for wild capture fisheries and an ESD Framework for aquaculture;
- successfully re-established marron and other freshwater stocks in the refurbished Waroona Dam, in collaboration with the Water Corporation;
- completed a blue swimmer crab recreational survey in the South West;
- coordinated with industry partners the first commercial-scale marine prawn farming harvest in Western Australia;
- developed and marketed an automated larval finfish feeds dispenser; and
- organised an international workshop on hatchery feeds and systems.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- a new study to determine the most cost-effective method for undertaking recreational fishing surveys in the West Coast bioregion;
- collaborative research with Murdoch University to develop methods of assessing the ecosystem impacts of fishing using data collected by commercial fishers;
- a joint project with Edith Cowan University on space-time analysis of prawns and scallops in Shark Bay for fisheries management;
- a new research project on the management of bio-eroding sponges in wild stocks of pearl oysters;
- scientific input into national forums aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of shark stocks to meet Australian and international objectives;
- a program of captive breeding of the endangered 'hairy' marron sub-species from the Margaret River area; and
- a series of new fish health projects dealing with translocation and biosecurity issues in relation to aquarium fish.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND Policy Branch

The Strategic Planning and Policy Branch is responsible for ensuring the preparation and periodic review of the Department's Strategic Plan and supporting business and operational plans in consultation with relevant divisions.

It is also responsible for the development of policy advice on a wide range of issues that have implications for fish resources management in WA and the Department's capacity to deliver stated outputs and outcomes. In addition, the Branch has an overview role in relation to the Department's budget planning process and financial settings, and is responsible for management of the internal audit function.



MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- developed a Sustainability Action Plan in accordance with the State Sustainability Strategy;
- managed Phase 2 of the Australian Seafood Strategy for Export Growth project on behalf of the National Food Industry Strategy Ltd;
- finalised reports on the nature and extent of rights to fish in Western Australia and the development of a unit register of fishing entitlements;
- implemented an upgraded Risk Register and internal policies for its management;
- developed a Department of Fisheries Pricing of Goods and Services Policy;
- provided advice to the Commonwealth/State bilateral negotiations regarding indigenous service delivery;
- facilitated the development of a strategic plan for the Fishers with Disabilities program; and
- assisted with the planning and development of a "changing community perceptions" initiative in conjunction with the commercial fishing industry

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- finalise a review of fees and charges in the pearling industry in consultation with industry;
- develop a new Fish Resources Management Bill and Pearling Management Bill and regulations;
- implement approved recommendations arising from the Aboriginal Fishing Strategy and development of customary fishing arrangements on a regional basis;
- publish a final report on fish welfare following stakeholder responses to a discussion paper on the subject;
- liaise with the Commonwealth National Oceans Office through the Department of Premier and Cabinet to provide input into the regional marine plan for the southern coast of Western Australia;
- assist in the development of legislative training course for fishing industry participants; and
- finalise processes to enable clients to access and interact on an online basis with the existing licence register.

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CORPORATE AND Community Relations

The Corporate and Community Relations Branch (CCRB) aims to encourage the knowledge, values and attitudes that reinforce sustainable community behaviour in the aquatic environment. The Branch plays a strategic communications role in all the Department's programs, keeping the Western Australian community and key stakeholders abreast of developments in fisheries management, research and compliance, and engaging the community in policy and planning processes.

Key activities during the year focused on the delivery of targeted communication strategies to more than 45 per cent of the WA community with a direct interest in fishing and the aquatic environment, and the planning and development of a series of innovative community education programs primarily targeting recreational fishers.

Activities included media liaison, advertising, coordination of launches for various initiatives, attendance at key public and community events, coordination of the Volunteer

Fisheries Liaison Officer (VFLO) program, community education activities and the delivery of a significant popular and technical publishing program through print and e-media.

Major programs during the year included the planning and delivery of communication and education strategies to support:

- changes to marine recreational fisheries management in the Gascoyne and West Coast bioregions;
- management of the licensed marron, rock lobster, abalone, southern freshwater finfish and recreational net fisheries;
- management of pink snapper fisheries in Cockburn Sound and Shark Bay's inner gulfs;
- management of recreational barramundi fishing in the Kimberley region;
- changes to management of the State's commercial wetline fishery;
- management of the State's major commercial fisheries including rock lobster, abalone, and Shark Bay and Exmouth Gulf prawn trawl fisheries;
- the State Government's shark safety program;
- the Department's statutory reporting, strategic planning and staff communications programs;
- the Fishing Gear Tsunami Appeal;
- the State Government's regional fishing clinic initiative;
- Fishwatch initiative and compliance activities;
- science communication activities for Department of Fisheries research programs and projects;
- commencement of the first phase in the Integrated Fisheries Management (IFM) initiative;
- National Volunteer Week; and
- more than 100 community education activities including workshops, fishing clinics and public events across the State.

The Branch also moved its base of operations from head office to the new fisheries research and education facility at the Western Australian Fisheries and Marine Research Laboratories, and continued the development of plans for a new marine discovery centre and associated suite of environmental education activities.



Glen Jakovich (second from left) promoting volunteering in the field, with a group of VFLOs.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- coordinated the Department's award-winning stand at the "WA on Show" exhibition in August 2004;
- successfully staged the Minister's Industry Reward and Recognition program and event;
- relaunched a revitalised *Western Fisheries Magazine* with a greater emphasis on science communication and environmental education;
- received another 'Lonnie Award' (for transparency and accountability) for the Department's 2003/04 Annual Report;
- completed an overhaul of the design, content and architecture of the Department's web site to present a more flexible, faster and more user-friendly information resource; and
- restructured the Branch role and functions to meet the joint challenges of a developing Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) and IFM agenda along with a new approach to community education and the management of a major public tourism and education facility.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- finalise an overall community education strategy for the Department, integrating current and proposed volunteer programs, the marine discovery centre at Hillarys and opportunities presented by the State's new schools curriculum framework;
- review, develop and support volunteer programs and education activities to support overall community education and participation objectives;
- further develop *Western Fisheries Magazine* as a key science communication strategy and educational resource;
- coordinate the Department's involvement in key public events such as launches for major initiatives, the Perth, Mandurah and Hillarys boat shows, regional expos and relevant conferences;
- complete stage one in the implementation of the Naturaliste Marine Discovery Centre including educational resources, displays and activity programs; and
- continue with planning and delivery of communication strategies to support key departmental initiatives and fisheries management.

REGISTRAR AND General Counsel

Registrar

A primary function of the Registrar is to keep a register of authorisations, exemptions and aquaculture leases, pursuant to Part 12 of the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (FRMA)*. Day-to-day registry operations are performed by officers of the Licensing Branch under the authority of the Registrar.

Appendix 3 of this report outlines the relevant provisions of the Act and lists the activities that have taken place under those provisions during the reporting period.

From 1 July 2005, the Manager, Legal and Registry Services will also be appointed as the Registrar.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- assist with the development of a unit register for commercial fisheries;
- undertake a review of fees for extracts from the register;
- audit the use of names on register and manage resulting issues (for example, related to deceased estates, family trusts and use of business names); and
- coordinate development of an online register service.

General Counsel

The General Counsel had three main functions:

- provide strategic and operational legal advice and legal policy to the Minister, Executive Director and officers of the Department of Fisheries on a range of matters concerning the legislation administered by the Department and legislation and other law affecting the Department's activities;
- manage litigation in which the Department is the defendant or plaintiff; and
- manage the Fisheries Objection Tribunal process and represent the Executive Director in tribunal matters.

Due to a restructure of legal, drafting, licensing and Registrar functions, there will be no General Counsel from 1 July 2005.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT FOR 2004/05

- continued work on development of leases at the Abrolhos Islands.

State Administrative Tribunal

The Fisheries Objection Tribunal was replaced on 1 January 2005 by the State Administrative Tribunal. This is a general standing tribunal which has jurisdiction to deal with a wide variety of matters, including the review of fisheries licensing decisions. A number of associated changes were made to the *Fish Resources Management Act* including a move from "proposed" decisions to decisions.

A significant number of Fisheries Objections Tribunal matters were transitioned to be dealt with by the State Administrative Tribunal. Twelve of these matters have been completed in the first six months of the State Administrative Tribunal.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT FOR 2004/05

- prepared papers for the transition of a significant number of outstanding Fisheries Objections Tribunal matters to the State Administrative Tribunal.

MAJOR INITIATIVE FOR 2005/06

- resolve outstanding matters transitioned from the Fisheries Objections Tribunal.

Legislation And Drafting Unit

The Legislation and Drafting Unit is a specialised branch that provides a number of services to the Minister, Executive Director, Director of Fisheries Management Services and other Department staff.

These services include:

- advising on matters relating to Offshore Constitutional Settlement arrangements as well as legislative power and jurisdictional matters;
- drafting of 'fishery specific' management plans (and plan amendments);
- drafting orders prohibiting fishing activities;
- drafting a range of other fisheries instruments under the relevant primary legislation;
- instructing Parliamentary Counsel in relation to new fisheries regulations;
- preparing drafting instructions for Bills and Act amendments;
- providing advice in respect of amendments to relevant primary legislation that may be consequential to legislation being proposed by another department; and
- providing advice in respect of policy matters and Ministerial Policy Guidelines.

Following an external review in 2004/05 of the delivery of legal services within the Department, the Legislation and Drafting Unit will be merged with the Department's Licensing and Registrar areas to form a Legal and Registry Services Unit operational from 1 July 2005.

The items of the legislation completed and instruments gazetted during the year are set out in *Appendix 4*.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- developed drafting orders to prohibit fishing activities in areas of the Ningaloo Marine Park;
- drafted and gazetted the South Coast Estuarine Fishery Management Plan 2005;
- development Statewide "filleting at sea" regulations in connection with the management and protection of special and high-risk finfish stocks;
- reviewed and approved statutory forms for various licensing and other applications;
- conducted training seminars throughout the State to assist Department staff understand fisheries legislation; and
- continued to play a lead role in access to legislation issues and assisted the improvement of public and internal access to current and unofficially consolidated subsidiary fisheries legislation. The unit also reviewed and repealed obsolete legislation.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- prepare and implement further Marine Reserves legislation and develop Cocos and Christmas Island legislation;
- develop and implement regional recreational regulations for the South Coast and Pilbara / Kimberley regions;
- develop and introduce a legislative scheme of entitlement into the *Mackerel Fishery (Interim) Management Plan 2004*;
- provide further training seminars for Department staff involved in the development of legislation, to assist them understand the legislation process;
- continue to review access to legislation issues with a view to improving public and internal access to current and unofficially consolidated fisheries legislation as well as continuing the review and repeal of obsolete legislation; and
- develop and implement a range of legislation for the protection and management of shark stocks, and provide advice relating to relevant Joint Authority matters.

Licensing

The Licensing Branch is responsible for the management of licensing services in Western Australia for aquaculture, pearling, commercial fishing and recreational fishing.

In 2004/05 the Branch continued to explore more efficient ways to manage its service delivery. Work has been taking place to enable recreational fishing licences to be purchased on-line through the Department's website from October 2005. This will not only lead to a reduction in licensing costs, but also provide greater access to licensing facilities for Fisheries clients.

Recreational Fishing

More than 62,500 varying combinations of recreational fishing licences were issued during 2004/05.

In 2001 the renewal of recreational fishing licences went live on the Department of Fisheries website in conjunction with WA Fast Pay. In 2004/05 a total of 6,915 licences were renewed on the Internet, compared to 5,536 in the previous reporting period.

Commercial Licensing

The Licensing Branch continues to manage the commercial licensing renewal program by sending out renewal notices for a multitude of commercial fisheries in a timely manner.

At 30 June 2005, there were 1,539 Fishing Boat Licences.

Amendments to managed fishery plans and fisheries legislation are ongoing. It is therefore necessary to modify internal computer programs and re-assess application forms and the way the Licensing Branch conducts its business with the commercial fishing industry.

Aquaculture Licensing

In 2004/05 there were 353 freehold licences and 115 non-freehold licences issued. This is made up of 288 marron licenses and 65 others (including yabby, silver perch, trout, ornamental fish). This represents a decrease of only one aquaculture licence from the previous reporting period of 2003/04.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2004/05

- installed an internal tracking system to monitor commercial licence applications. The new system should lead to a reduction in application processing times and enable Licensing Officers to monitor the progress of applications under consideration;
- work continued on the development of the issue process for recreational fishing licences to be granted on-line through the Department's website. It is anticipated that the new system will go live in October 2005;
- continued to manage the licensing renewal program by sending out renewal notices for a multitude of recreational and commercial fishery licences and aquaculture licences in a timely manner; and
- the Fisheries Licensing and Management system (FLAMS) continued to be modified and enhanced to incorporate changes brought about through the advancement of fisheries and aquaculture management.

MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR 2005/06

- establish a Licensing and Register service area at the new Western Australian Fisheries and Marine Research Laboratories at Hillarys;
- introduce the granting of Recreational Fishing Licences on the Department's website;
- record pearling and aquaculture leases to be recorded on the Fisheries Licensing and Management System;
- develop an on-line register inspection facility; and
- develop an on-line renewal process for Commercial Fishing Licences.