



## **POLICY FOR MANAGING TRANSLOCATIONS OF LIVE FISH INTO AND WITHIN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

### **Introduction**

The Department of Fisheries (the Department) is the authority responsible for regulating translocations of live fish<sup>1</sup> under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (FRMA)*.

The Department uses a risk-based assessment process to evaluate and regulate translocations of live fish in Western Australia (WA). In assessing translocation applications, the Department also takes into account other relevant legislation, such as the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, *Stock Diseases (Regulations) Act 1968*, *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, *Exotic Diseases of Animals Act 1993*, and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The deliberate or inadvertent translocation of live fish into or within WA can result in the establishment in the wild of significant pest fish, including pathogens. The introduction of these fish into an area with a different disease status, or containing distinct native fish populations, can create significant economic, social, environmental and biological costs to WA.

The risks associated with translocating fish into and within WA include; disease transfer (to wild populations or cultured stock), habitat degradation, and reduced biodiversity in native fish, due to competition, predation and loss of genetic diversity.

### **Objective**

The objective of this Translocation Policy is to protect and conserve fish populations, fish habitats and natural aquatic biodiversity in WA by minimising the risks associated with the translocation of live fish.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to translocations of live fish, as defined in the FRMA, into or within WA, including both deliberate translocations and the management of accidental introductions of fish. This policy applies to:

- movements of fish into aquaculture systems;
- introduction of non-endemic fish; and
- release of native fish.

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this policy, the term “fish” is used in accordance with its definition in the FRMA – see definitions section.



## Definitions

### *Acceptance criteria*

Standards and protocols associated with the purposes, species, sources, bioregions and containment of fish in respect to fish translocations. These standards and protocols are set by Departmental policy or translocation assessment to define some benchmarks of acceptable levels of risk. The acceptance criteria can also be used to identify which translocation applications are of a type likely to present an acceptable level of risk.

### *Acceptable level of risk*

A level of risk that is manageable in a given situation, as determined from: an analysis of threats and vulnerabilities; the sensitivity of data and applications; a cost/benefit analysis; and a study of the technical and operational feasibility of available controls. Acceptable levels of risk are determined during comprehensive translocation assessment or equivalent abbreviated translocation assessment, as defined in the guidelines for managing translocations of live fish in WA.

### *Approval*

Official written permission of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Fisheries to legally carry out the translocation of a white-listed fish in accordance with Departmental acceptance criteria.

### *Authority*

Official written authority of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Fisheries to legally carry out a translocation, as a legal warrant that establishes justification and permits a translocation. An authority can be granted to permit an applicant to legally carry out the translocation of a fish that is not a white-listed fish, in accordance with Departmental acceptance criteria.

### *Biosecurity Management Plan*

A scheme of action which provides a comprehensive set of procedures and facilities required to protect living organisms from biological threats including disease transfer, environmental degradation, and loss of genetic diversity or integrity.

### *Endemic*

Designates fish, as being exclusive in origin and restricted to a specific area, geographical region or water-catchment basin.

### *Fish*

An aquatic organism of any species (whether alive or dead) and includes the eggs, spat, spawn, seeds, spores, fry, larva or other source of reproduction or offspring of an aquatic organism and a part only of an aquatic organism (including the shell or tail), but does not include aquatic mammals, aquatic reptiles, aquatic birds, amphibians or (except in relation to Part 3 and Division 1 of Part 11 *Fisheries Resources Management Act 1994*) pearl oyster, *Pinctada maxima*. This policy only



considers live fish; however, it also applies to live pathogen and parasitic organisms in dead fish.

*Genotype* The entire set of genes in a fish, as distinguished from the physical appearance of an individual or sub-population of fish.

*Genetic diversity* The genetic variation within a population or species, as measured by the number of different genotypes in that population or species.

*Introduction* The release or establishment of a fish outside its historically-known native distribution.

*Native* Designates fish, as being indigenous to a specific area, geographical region or water catchment basin.

*Population* The number or group of individuals of a species that interbreed and live in a specific area at the same time.

*Translocation* The transfer of live fish from one place to another by humans.

*White-listed fish* Fish of a species, for which translocation is manageable at an acceptable level of risk, as shown by translocation assessment, approved in writing by the Chief Executive Officer of the Department.

### **Assessment process**

Under provisions of the FRMA, translocation requests (via application) of non-endemic fish into or within WA require the written approval or written authority of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department (CEO). This includes:

- any movement of fish which could increase the current or historic range of a species;
- any movement of fish to an area that contains genetically-distinct populations or to an area with a different disease status; and
- any movement of fish from an area in which a disease under the *Exotic Diseases of Animals Act 1993*, the *Stock Diseases (Regulations) Act 1968* or a disease or condition that can not be identified, is known or suspected to occur.

The Department will regulate the translocation of live fish into and within WA by using risk-based assessment (translocation assessment) defined and described in guidelines for managing translocations of live fish in Western Australia and based on the Australian/New Zealand risk management standards, Risk Management – principles and guidelines (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009). Translocation assessment is carried out by the Department's Translocation Officer and takes into account all significant factors relating to the benefits and risks to WA of the proposed translocation. This officer then recommends a course of action to the CEO regarding the proposed translocation.



Translocation of a white-listed fish species, in accordance with the Department's acceptance criteria for translocating that species, is considered to have undergone translocation assessment retrospectively.

For a fish species, which is not white-listed and is non-endemic to an area, translocation to that area will require the written authority of the CEO. The CEO will not approve or grant written authority for a translocation unless translocation assessment indicates that the application presents an acceptable level of risk to WA. At the discretion of the CEO, an authority or approval will additionally be required to adhere to a biosecurity management plan.

Some applications may involve the taking or releasing of fish into marine parks and reserves managed under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*. In these situations, the Department will consult with the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority about potential impacts of the translocation to determine if an approval or authority can be granted.

A proposal likely, if implemented, to have a significant effect on the environment must be referred to the Environmental Protection Authority by the Department of Fisheries.

### **Principles**

- i. The applicant shall provide evidence the translocation is consistent with the translocation principles of this policy and any relevant guidelines for managing translocations of live fish in WA.
- ii. A translocation authority or approval shall not be granted by the CEO unless a risk assessment by the Department confirms the translocation presents an acceptable level of risk.
- iii. The CEO shall be satisfied that the translocation is not in breach of other relevant legislation.
- iv. Translocation proposals involving the release of non-endemic fish into open systems will be referred to the Department of Environment and Conservation for advice on potential impacts on the biodiversity of natural ecosystems.
- v. Translocations should not significantly impact upon native populations or the natural ecosystems of the source environment.
- vi. Translocations should not significantly impact upon genetic diversity.
- vii. Consideration should be given to the risk of impact on natural environments and biodiversity by establishment and spread of non-endemic fish.
- viii. Consideration should be given to the risk of disease, including spread of pathogens and parasites.
- ix. Consideration should be given to cumulative risks associated with fish translocations.



- x. Translocation of fish should not damage natural ecosystems or compromise biodiversity, including either; populations of other species or a distinct population of the same species.
- xi. Translocation of fish should be undertaken using widely accepted and established methods, in consideration of the fish's health and welfare.
- xii. Consideration should be given to all significant factors (economic, social, environmental and biological) relating to the benefits and risks associated with the proposed translocation.
- xiii. Sound environmental management and in situ conservation are preferable to the relocation of fish for the purpose of maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health.

### **Contacts at the Department of Fisheries**

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This policy has been developed in conjunction with guidelines for managing translocations of live fish in Western Australia.