



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment**

Ref: D22/395769

Dr Chris O'Brien
Executive Secretary, Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
PO Box 1011
VICTORIA SEYCHELLES

Dear Dr O'Brien

I refer to your letter of 24 May 2022 about Australia's outstanding compliance issues in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Australia considers strengthening compliance with IOTC conservation and management measures fundamental for effective fisheries management and the integrity of the IOTC. Australia's responses to the matters are as follows:

Resolution 17/05 Submission of data regarding sharks – size frequency

As per previous advice, due to very low levels of effort in Australia's relevant fisheries, sampling is undertaken upon landing and is primarily focused on achieving effective sampling coverage for target species. Sharks are not a target species in these fisheries and Australia has a very low retained catch of sharks (many species cannot be landed and all live sharks must be released). Further, it is not practical to obtain size measurements of released sharks, as best practice guidelines for their release are to not remove them from the water. As a result, Australia is unable to meet the relevant sampling coverage and is unable to provide size frequency data for sharks. We also note that CoC16 recommended that the Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch and the Scientific Committee provide advice on the applicability of the IOTC requirement related to size frequency data on sharks when the fisheries do not retain sharks, and furthermore if CPCs should have to report any size data in such cases and this is yet to be addressed by the WPEB and SC.

Resolutions 17/05, 15/02, 12/04,13/04,13/05 Submission of data – catch and effort, nominal and interactions with sea turtles, whale sharks and cetaceans

Australia at the time of the compliance report was undergoing a transformational process to modernise and improve our different fisheries database systems. In the short-term, this process, which is occurring simultaneously in two separate government agencies, has resulted in challenges consolidating fisheries data to the required IOTC standard. Ultimately these changes will significantly improve the storage, management, use and transfer of our fisheries data in the long-term. Australia prepared a revised data submission and submitted this revision towards the end of May 2022 to the Secretariat that should have made Australia compliant at that time.

Resolution 15/02 size frequency- Longline, Coastal and Surface fisheries

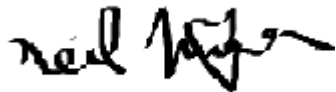
Australia's fishing effort is very low in the relevant fisheries making it difficult to meet the requirements for the relevant sampling coverage following the random sampling methodologies for by-product and bycatch species. Australia primarily focuses on achieving effective sampling coverage for target species, which is undertaken upon landing. Catches of relevant species for which size frequency was not reported were largely under one metric tonne. Australia notes that COC16 reiterated its recommendation that the Scientific Committee provide advice on the applicability of the IOTC requirements related to size frequency data (i.e. for each species measure one fish per metric tonne), and if required, provide possible alternatives to ensure representative sampling and this is yet to be addressed by the SC.

Resolution 12/04 purse seine requirements- dip nets

Australia has not imposed the requirement for purse seine vessels to carry dip nets on-board as currently there are no Australian purse seine vessels fishing within the IOTC Area of Competence. The purse seine vessels on the IOTC Register of Authorise Vessels were not active in 2020 (or in recent years).

My thanks to you, as well as the Compliance Committee Chair and members, for your ongoing efforts to strengthen compliance with IOTC measures.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Hughes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neil Hughes
Acting Assistant Secretary
Fisheries Branch

14 March 2023