# Records Disposal Schedule - Context Statement

## Fisheries and Aquaculture Division

### Division History and Background

**1853-1919**

The first fisheries legislation was the *Oyster Fisheries Act 1853*. Apart from whaling, the native oyster fishery was the first fishery exploited by the early settlers of South Australia and by 1945, was the first destroyed by overfishing.

The first *Fisheries Act* was introduced in 1878 for the protection and preservation of fish and fisheries. All proceedings taken by the Inspector were to be in the name of the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration.

The first Inspector of Fisheries was William Searcy, Chief Inspector of Mounted Police, who was given the post on 25 March 1880. He resigned on 31 December 1880. The office was subsequently held by Charles Jonas Valentine, who was a member of the Agricultural Bureau and Chief Inspector of Stock and Brands. Valentine resigned on 20 November 1895 and was succeeded on 27 November 1895 by Thomas Noakes Stephens, Collector of H.M. Customs and President of the Marine Board.

By 1888, the legal minimum weights for many species were proposed and a closed season for rock lobster was introduced, followed soon after by the prohibition of the use of nets to keep commercial fishers away from jetties.

Following Stephens' resignation on 8 November 1901, the appointment of Inspector of Fisheries was given on 30 November 1901 to the Secretary to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Arthur Duffield. The title of the office was changed from inspector to Chief Inspector of Fisheries in the Blue Book for 1906, and thereafter until 1912. In 1904, licensing was introduced for those who wanted to sell their catch.

On 1 July 1912 the Secretary, Crown Lands Office ceased to be Chief Inspector of Fisheries. The Department of Fisheries under the control of the Minister of Irrigation came into operation. In August 1912 the Oyster Fisheries Branch, formerly administered by the Treasurer, became part of the Fisheries Department.[[1]](#footnote-2) In 1915 the Department was transferred to the portfolio of the Minister of Industry.

**1919-1965**

The Fisheries and Game Department (1919-1965) was created by proclamation on 4 December 1919 and replaced the discontinued Fisheries Department. The Chief Inspector of Fisheries was created as the permanent head of the new Department. The Game section of the Department of the Minister of Industry was amalgamated with this new Department which remained under the control of the Minister of Industry until 1925 when transferred to the Minister of Agriculture.[[2]](#footnote-3)

On 9 August 1934 a Royal Commission on the Fishing Industry was appointed to inquire into and report upon the operation of the fishing industry in S.A. At that time the fisheries were under the control of the Minister of Agriculture who exercised his responsibilities by means of the Fisheries and Game Department, The Commissioner's final report, presented on 8 October 1935, recommended that the *Fisheries Act* be amended to enable the proposed Fisheries Board to require all licensed professional fishermen to forward periodically statements of their catches and for regular inspection by the Board of the books of all wholesale fish dealers.[[3]](#footnote-4)

Research work began in the late 1930’s to determine the growth rate and migration patterns of species such as whiting, snapper, Murray cod and callop.

The Licensing Section was established by 1963 to manage the activity of issuing licences and maintaining the register of licence holders required under the legislation.[[4]](#footnote-5)

**1965-1972**

The Department of Fisheries and Fauna Conservation (1965-1972) was created by proclamation on 24 December 1964 following discontinuation of the Fisheries and Game Department and effective from 1 January 1965. The new Department acquired the functions of the former Department, and the permanent head became Director of Fauna Conservation and Chief Inspector of Fisheries.[[5]](#footnote-6)

As South Australia’s fishing industry matured, more emphasis was placed on directing the efforts of both departmental and industry participants to manage the State’s aquatic reserves jointly and in cooperation for the benefit of present as well as future users of the resource. The local branch of the Australian Fishing Industry Council was formed in 1967 with a membership of representatives from 10 fishing associations and 12 processing companies. This provided a forum for liaison between industry and Government to enable fisheries managers to recognise the value of practical input from fishers and processors. Fishers and industry organisations also realise the need for a thorough understanding of the biology of particular species, objectives of fisheries management and how different management philosophies can be applied to particular fisheries.[[6]](#footnote-7)

**1972-1992**

The Department of Fisheries (1972-1975) was created by proclamation on 23 November 1972 and was a change of name from the former Department of Fisheries and Fauna Conservation. Functions of the new Department were essentially those of its predecessor, minus the conservation function which was transferred to the Department of Environment and Conservation.[[7]](#footnote-8)

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (1975 – 1979) was formed by the amalgamation of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Fisheries on 2 October 1975. The office of Director of Fisheries was abolished and the Director of Agriculture became Director of Agriculture and Fisheries.[[8]](#footnote-9) The intelligence activities relating to the surveillance and monitoring of individuals, groups or entities have occurred from approximately 1978 onwards.

In 1979, the Fisheries Division of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries became the Department of Fisheries (1979-1992). The powers, functions and officers of the former Fisheries Division were taken over by the new Department.[[9]](#footnote-10)

**1992-2017**

On 8th October 1992, the Department of Fisheries was merged with other government agencies servicing primary industries to create the Department for Primary Industries South Australia (DPI). This department was more commonly referred to as Primary Industries South Australia (PISA). The proclamation abolished the Department of Lands, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Fisheries and the Department of Woods and Forests. The Department's goal was to assist in the achievement of prosperity for primary industries in South Australia. It was structured into the following nine program areas: Field Crops, Fisheries, Forestry, Horticulture, Livestock, Rural Finance and Development, Sustainable Resources, Strategic Services and Corporate Services.[[10]](#footnote-11) The October 1992 change included formation of a specialised research arm, the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI).[[11]](#footnote-12) The formation of PISA and SARDI split the research and management functions of the former Department of Fisheries.

During the 1992-93 financial years, the formation of Industry/Government Management Committees for the major fisheries gave commercial and recreational fishing interests a greater role in the utilisation of the State’s fisheries resource. A successful agreement was also reached for the commercial fishing industry to contribute towards recoverable costs associated with each fishery with full recovery in 10 years. The Fisheries Division also coordinated the development of the Port Lincoln Aquaculture Management Plan resulting in the production of Southern Bluefin Tuna with an estimated value of $6 million.[[12]](#footnote-13) In 1993 the FishWatch program was established to enable fishers to report illegal fishing activity.

The FishCare volunteer program was established in 1994 to raise awareness among fishing communities of the need to protect and preserve our resources for future generations.

From 1997 to 2011 the organisation was known as the Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) which was an amalgamation of the former departments of Mines and Energy, Primary Industries, Office of Energy Policy and the Rural Communities Office, and had a focus on agriculture and fisheries (primary industries) and minerals, energy and petroleum (resources).

In October 2010, PIRSA’s Fisheries and Aquaculture Divisions merged to form the PIRSA Fisheries and Aquaculture Division.[[13]](#footnote-14)

The Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) was formed on 21 October 2011, following a substantial portfolio change on the appointment of a new Premier.

**Prepared by**: Rita Novia, Senior Consultant Records Management, PIRSA.

**Date**: Prepared in 2017 and published in April 2019

1. <http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/> GRG81 Fisheries Department description [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/> GA6 Department of Fisheries (l) description [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/>GA37 Royal Commission 1934-1935 description [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. GRG 81/8 applications for registration of fishing boats, ND-1963 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/GA4 Department of Fisheries and Fauna Conservation description [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. PISA Annual Report 1992-1993 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/GA3 Department of Fisheries (ll) description [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. *South Australian Government Gazette*, Adelaide, the Government Printer, 1975, vol.213, p.1819 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/GA1 Department of Fisheries (lll) description [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. <http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/> GA606 Department for Primary Industries description [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. <http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/aghistory> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. PISA Annual Report 1992-1993 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. PIRSA Annual Report 2010-2011 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)