

NEW ZEALAND MARINE SCIENCES SOCIETY

TE HUNGA MĀTAI MOANA O AOTEAROA



17 April 2014

Environmental Reporting Bill Select Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington.

Submission on the Environmental Reporting Bill

This submission is from the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society (NZMSS).

This submission is made in good faith in my role as President of NZMSS on behalf of the membership and in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Rules of the Royal Society of New Zealand.

Please contact me for any further information regarding this submission.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Livingston".

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1. The New Zealand Marine Sciences Society

The New Zealand Marine Sciences Society, known as “NZMSS”, was formed in 1960 as a constituent the Royal Society of New Zealand, to encourage and assist marine science and related research across a wide range of disciplines in New Zealand and to foster communication among those with an interest in marine science

NZMSS is a professional science body and a non-profit organization that provides access to and within the marine science community. We identify emerging issues through annual conferences, annual reviews, a listserv and our website www.nzmss.org. NZMSS membership covers all aspects of scientific interest in the marine environment and extends to the uptake of science in marine policy, resource management, conservation and the marine business sector. We speak for members of the society on matters of interest on marine research in New Zealand and we engage with other scientific societies as appropriate.

Our submission is consistent with the Royal Society of New Zealand Code of Ethics and Rules, in particular principals 2.1 Integrity and professionalism, 4.1 Compliance with the law and relevant standards, and 10.1 Protection of the environment (www.royalsociety.org.nz/organisation/about/code).

2. Submission

NZMSS support the intent of this bill. This bill will ensure there is national level reporting of environmental data that have undergone statistically robust analyses with the results of the analyses then presented in Synthesis and Domain reports.

There are two further parts to this NZMSS submission. The first part addresses the actual bill. The second part lists concerns about the processes that will be put in place once the bill has been passed.

The draft bill

- a. For the freshwater domain the description is ‘(a) means the domain composed of water in all its physical forms’. It does not include freshwater habitats. Habitats are an important component of the freshwater domain and human activities can result in increased sedimentation, altered margins, loss of natural waterways, etc. NZMSS recommends that habitats are included in this domain.
- b. For the marine domain the description is ‘(a) means the domain bounded on the landward side mean high-water mark, and on the seaward side by the outer limits of New Zealand’s exclusive economic zone and continental shelf; and (b) includes estuaries, the sea, the seabed, subsoil, and the air space above the area described in paragraph (a). The description does not explicitly state water in all its physical forms and it does not explicitly state habitat. For consistency with the freshwater domain NZMSS recommends that water and habitat need to be stated in the marine domain description.

- c. In section 7 it states 'Each synthesis report must describe' and in section 10 it states 'Each domain report must describe'. The dictionary definition of the word describe is 'give a detailed account in words'. NZMSS recommends that the word 'describe' should be replaced by the word 'document'. The Dictionary definition of the word document is 'record in written, photographic, or other form'.
- d. In section 7 **Content of synthesis reports** it states:
 - (1) Each synthesis report must describe, in relation to the topics for the time being prescribed in regulations made under section 18,—
 - (a) the state of New Zealand's environment as a whole:
 - (b) the pressures that may be causing, or have the potential to cause, changes to the state of New Zealand's environment as a whole:

NZMSS has concerns about the reporting on the state of New Zealand's environment as a whole. Reporting at this level will diminish the reporting of region specific changes as the population is not evenly distributed nor are the environmental pressures. For example, if there is reporting on effects of urbanisation on the marine environment or effects of increase in dairy farming on water quality in streams and rivers. NZMSS recommends the addition of

"(c) use of the environment, when relevant, and provide region specific information where relevant. "

- e. In section 7 (c) it states:
 - the impacts that the state of the environment and changes to the state of the environment may be having on the following:
 - (i) ecological integrity:
 - (ii) public health:
 - (iii) economic benefits derived from utilising natural resources:
 - (iv) culture and recreation.

NZMSS recommends that a definition of each of these terms is provided in the bill. This will provide clarity for those undertaking the reporting and allow for consistency in reporting across the different domains.

The processes when the bill has been passed

- a. The process to determine topics needs to be clarified as there is potential for problems. Topics need to be selected and then the relevant data sourced nationally to address the topic. If insufficient or inadequate data are available nationally, a plan then needs to be put in place to allow for the collection of data over adequate spatial and temporal scales to allow for reporting on the topic. NZMSS considers that it would be unfortunate if data sources were investigated first and if insufficient or inadequate data are available then the topic is not considered further.
- b. The reports will include information on trends over time. Consideration needs to be given to the temporal baseline for the reporting of trends over time in biodiversity, ecosystem, ecological integrity as well as physical and chemical trends.

- c. The topics initially reported on should be retained over time. However, new topics should be added when initially unforeseen issues arise.