



17th July, 2026

Mr Luke O'Sullivan
A/Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Fisheries Authority
GPO Box 2392, Melbourne VIC 3001

Cc: Nick Gall, Abalone Fishery Manager, VFA
Craig Fox, Chair, Abalone Council Victoria; Co-Chair, Abalone Scientific Working Group
Megan Njoroge, VFA | Melissa Schubert, Senior Manager Commercial Fisheries & Science, VFA

RE: AVCZ SUBMISSION — DRAFT FISHERIES (ABALONE DATA LOGGING SYSTEMS) NOTICE 2026

Dear Mr O'Sullivan

This week, the United Kingdom's fisheries regulator closed a scheme to fund the removal of the Succorfish SC2 unit from its inshore fleet, after the device's own supplier stopped transmitting the safety-critical data it was mandated to provide. In the same week, VFA is closing consultation on a Notice that would mandate the same device across the Victorian abalone fleet. AVCZ cannot reconcile these two facts, and asks VFA to explain how it can.

AVCZ is not opposed to collecting data on this fishery. Abalone Victoria (Central Zone) Ltd (AVCZ) has a long history of doing exactly that, having invested more than \$700,000 in data collection over the past 15 years. What matters to AVCZ is that any data collected has a clear purpose, is securely stored and owned by the fishers who create it and can actually be used in the resource management of this fishery.

This submission follows AVCZ's letter of 29 June 2026 to you, Mr Gall and Mr Fox, which asked four foundational questions, requested a briefing, requested an extension of the 17 July deadline, and asked for written answers by 10 July 2026. AVCZ has received no response to any of it. This submission is lodged because the deadline requires it, not because those questions have been resolved.

What This Consultation Has Not Provided

This process has not been clear, open or transparent, as section 3A requires. Section 3A of the Fisheries Act 1995 sets out the consultation principles that apply to a decision to make a Fisheries Notice under section 152(1), which this is. Section 3A(1)(a) requires that the purpose of consultation, and the consultation process itself, be clear, open, timely and transparent. That is a right industry holds under the Act, not a courtesy VFA extends at its discretion. A number of basic things should have been settled and disclosed before this draft Notice was ever released: what problem it is meant to solve, what it will cost and who is paying for it, who will hold and access the data it collects, why it is needed, and why only one supplier was ever considered. None of that has been provided

1. It looks more like notice of a decision already made: Central Zone divers being told, at the last minute, that they must now carry a device and direct their data to a recipient not yet disclosed to them. If units have been purchased or installed ahead of this consultation closing, the section 3A right to a genuine process has been removed, not merely diminished. AVCZ asks VFA to confirm or deny this directly.
2. Who is driving this, and why. VFA's letter of 22 June 2026 describes this Notice as developed in partnership with the Abalone Industry and confirms that installation costs will be funded jointly by VFA and Abalone Council Victoria (ACV). AVCZ, which represents 42% of the state's quota owners, is not a member of ACV, and was not consulted on it. AVCZ is entitled to know whether ACV played a role in designing this mandate, whether it, or any person or entity involved in designing this mandate, stands to receive any financial benefit from it, and whether any of them will have access to Central Zone divers' data.
3. **There is no actual proposal.** Despite considerable correspondence and communication with VFA and ACV on this point, AVCZ understands a proposal does not exist. A proposal would normally include a problem statement, a business case, a cost-benefit analysis, costings, evidence that a tender process was run or that other Australian suppliers were considered, and a clear statement of what success looks like, what failure looks like, and why this needs to be resolved now rather than through a properly scoped process. These are ordinary questions any business answers before committing to a cost, and AVCZ does not understand why this mandate should be different. More importantly, VFA has not explained how the data collected will feed into the Harvest Strategy, TACC-setting, and, most importantly, the Fishery Management Plan's objectives to rebuild the biomass of this fishery.
4. **This is diver tracking data, and how it will be stored and accessed has not been properly explained.** The SC2 and GIGO units generate the location of individual divers, in the water, at short intervals, compiled into a heat map of exactly where each diver works. That is among the most commercially sensitive information in this fishery. VFA's letter of 22 June 2026 states that data from these loggers "will be securely stored and managed by the VFA." That statement does not reflect how this technology actually works. Under the Succorfish model, data is stored offshore, and it is the account holder, the party paying for the airtime, who controls access to the data, not the regulator that mandates the device. AVCZ knows this from direct experience. Between 2016 and 2024, AVCZ was a Succorfish client, and had ongoing difficulty accessing its own data throughout that period. When AVCZ asked Succorfish in 2025 to explain who had accessed its account and when, Succorfish's own response, provided in December 2025, confirmed no unauthorised access to the account, though it also confirmed it held no record of who had been authorised to access AVCZ's account, or did access it, for the entire 2019 to 2024 period. AVCZ separately notes that data generated by these divers has recently appeared (2026), credited to a third party, and this is a matter that will need to be resolved. AVCZ raises this only as a worked example, inside this fishery, of the same ownership and attribution confusion this Notice now proposes to create at ten times the scale. VFA's own letter also confirms that ACV, not VFA alone, is funding part of this mandate. If ACV, or any other party, is a paying account holder under this arrangement, VFA's assurance that VFA will securely hold this data does not match the model it is proposing to use. This is exactly the kind of detail that should have been resolved and disclosed before the draft Notice was issued, alongside the problem statement, not left for industry to uncover after a failure. AVCZ asks VFA to confirm, in writing, who the paying account holder will be in each zone, what access controls will apply, and who will be able to see the tracking data of divers other than themselves.

5. Let AVCZ's experience, and the United Kingdom's, be the lesson here. This is understood to be an annual airtime fee, not a fixed-term contract, and AVCZ understands Succorfish has offered the first year free. AVCZ asks VFA to consider carefully what happens once that first year ends. From that point, it is the supplier, not VFA and not the diver, who sets the terms on which the service continues. That is exactly what has played out in the UK. Succorfish had been forwarding vessel position data to the UK's Marine Management Organisation (MMO) as part of its service, at its own cost. On 11 August 2025, in a dispute over who should pay for that forwarding, Succorfish stopped, leaving UK fishers in breach of their own regulatory monitoring obligations through no fault of their own. By January 2026, six months on, the MMO admitted it had been unable to agree a way forward, and stated plainly that it does not have sight of, and is not party to, the contractual arrangements between Succorfish and individual fishers. A UK Member of Parliament separately asked the National Audit Office to review the whole rollout as a substantial waste of public funds, on the basis that the service agreement should have been settled at the outset within a proper procurement process, the identical failure AVCZ raises at point 3 above. In June 2026 the MMO confirmed it would fund the outright replacement of the SC2 fleet with a competing device, at no cost to fishers, with registrations closing on 12 July 2026, five days before VFA closes consultation on making the same device compulsory here. AVCZ cannot identify a single fisheries regulator anywhere that is presently adopting this device. One is currently paying to remove it. This is not a story from somewhere else. It is what this Notice proposes to repeat in Victoria.
6. The deckhand and diver compliance burden has not been properly assessed. As currently proposed, the logging unit must be switched on at least 15 minutes before the vessel leaves the boat ramp, and the draft Notice fixes a penalty of 50 penalty units against the diver personally for failing to have the device in their possession and operating during that period. This adds a compliance task, and a compliance risk carrying a personal fine, at exactly the point when attention should be on safely preparing the vessel and the diver. AVCZ has raised separately that no workplace health and safety risk assessment appears to have been done for this change, and asks again that one be provided before the Notice proceeds.
7. Succorfish was named as sole supplier with no competitive process. Best practice, and the proper use of public and industry money, call for more than one quote. AVCZ has seen no evidence that any other supplier was invited to tender before Succorfish was selected, or that extracting equivalent tracking data from the Orbcomm VMS units already fitted to Central and Eastern Zone vessels was ever assessed as an alternative.
8. Scielex and Orbcomm were not considered and should have been. AVCZ has a long and positive working relationship with Scielex, a Tasmanian developer already trialling an in/out logger designed to integrate with the Orbcomm VMS units already fitted to Central and Eastern Zone vessels, with data stored in Australia. VFA's own commissioned science already describes Scielex loggers as in use by both industry and government in Victoria and most other states. This option was not scoped. It would materially reduce the cost of this mandate to industry, and would keep the data on Australian, not overseas, servers. AVCZ asks VFA to explain why it was not considered.

AVCZ is not opposed to mandatory data logging in principle. Our members have spent 15 years and more than \$700,000 collecting exactly this kind of data, and understand its value when it has a clear purpose. AVCZ's concern is that this Notice, as drafted, cannot say what problem it solves, has not disclosed who will own or access the data it collects, and appears to have already been decided before consultation began. None of that is what section 3A of the Act requires, and none of it is what good regulatory practice requires either.

AVCZ asks that this Notice not be made in its current form, that VFA withdraw it, and that consultation be re-run on a genuine basis: with a published problem statement, evidence of a proper competitive tender, and a clear, written explanation of who will own and access the data this mandate would collect, before any Notice is issued.

AVCZ remains ready to meet and work through a way forward that serves both the fishery and VFA's data needs and is available at any time in the fortnight from 20 July 2026.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Alcock

Chief Executive Officer

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