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Industry Code of Practice for Responsible Disposal of Marine Debris

Torres Strait Prawn Fishery



An initiative of the
Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee

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INTRODUCTION

The Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF) is a multi-species prawn fishery which operates in the eastern part of the Torres Strait. Brown Tiger Prawn (*Penaeus esculentus*) and the Blue Endeavour Prawn (*Metapenaeus endeavouri*) are the key target species and the Red Spot King Prawn (*Penaeus longistylus*) is essentially a by-product species.

The fishery provides a valuable source of food, employment, trade and economic well-being for coastal communities and the wider Australian population, both for present and future generations. The fishers conduct their fishing operations in a responsible manner, but they also seek collectively to improve those fishing operations.

In Australia, fishing vessels are a significant contributor to pollution incidents reported to Australian marine authorities. Fishermen have an added responsibility not to pollute the resource that provides their livelihood. This document was developed as an initiative of the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC), after concern was raised regarding the amount of trawl rubbish present in some areas of the Torres Straits. Although only a component of this rubbish is likely to be associated with prawn trawling vessels, the TSPMAC agreed it would be worthwhile to develop a code of practice to further guide the industry in ways to minimise the risk of trawl rubbish and pollution at sea.

This document is designed to be clearly displayed and accessible in the wheelhouse of each vessel in the fishery. The guidelines will be distributed to all operators in the TSPF and will be available for downloading from the PZJA website www.pzja.gov.au.

The Codes of Practice are voluntary, except where parts of the Codes have been given, or may be given, binding

legal effect by means of agreements or legislation. The Code sets out some mandatory requirements under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) relevant to the TSPF. In addition, it outlines voluntary guidelines and standards of behaviour for responsible fishing practices to ensure the effective conservation, management and development of resources, with due respect for the ecosystem and biodiversity. As this document is a guideline only, it is the fishers' responsibility to understand the relevant legislation and other mandatory documents such as MARPOL. Any inconsistency between this document and any PZJA or Commonwealth Government legislation such as the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* or *Protection of the Sea (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Act 1983* should be resolved by reference to the Legislative Instruments. A list of instruments relevant to the TSPF can be found in the TSPF handbook on the PZJA website (www.pzja.gov.au).



Periodic updating of the code

As Industry practices evolve, the code will be updated accordingly. Monitoring of the Code will be conducted periodically by PZJA agencies through guidance provided by the TSPMAC. Operators are asked to cooperate with any surveys that may be undertaken when reviewing the code. Comments on the code are welcomed to be sent to AFMA at the addresses provided at the end of this document.

LAWS AND CONVENTIONS CONTROLLING MARINE POLLUTION IN AUSTRALIA

MARPOL

Pollution of the marine environment by ships of all types, including fishing vessels, is strictly controlled by the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (known as MARPOL 73/78). Australia is a signatory to this convention, which is now enforced in over 100 countries. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) administers the Convention. Its regulations are implemented through Commonwealth and State/NT legislation. Penalties for not complying with the law are up to \$200,000 for individuals and \$1 million for companies.

The Australian MARPOL regulations apply to Australian fishing vessels wherever they are operating. Australian laws can be applied against foreign fishing vessels operating anywhere within Australia's 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone.

Other legislation

Marine pollution within Australia is also regulated through the Commonwealth *Protection of the Sea (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Act 1983*, and in QLD through the;

- *the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995*;
- *the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulations 2008*;
- *the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994*; and
- *the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulations 2004*.

Shore facilities

If mothership or shore facilities are not adequate for the disposal of your oil or garbage, let the marina owner or port authority know. You should also notify State/Territory and local officials of the inadequate facilities to allow the relevant bodies to consider if there is a need to upgrade *the* facilities.



REPORTING POLLUTION

Under the laws, pollution or potential pollution incidents should be reported to the authorities. Vessels may avoid prosecution where an accident has occurred, yet everything has been done to minimise the pollution. Not reporting a pollution incident may result in a fine. Reporting pollution may eliminate your vessel as a suspect.

Pollution incidents must be reported to the Australian Search and Rescue Centre which operates 24 hours (see table 1) or the local port/marine/transport authority, so the incident can be investigated if necessary. Please provide relevant details of the incident such as when and where incident occurred, name of the vessel, type and extent of pollution and any other information.

Pollution report messages via a Telstra Maritime Communications Station are free of charge. For further information on the legislation, contact:



Marine Environment Protection Services

Australian Maritime Safety Authority
GPO Box 2181

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Telephone: (02) 6279 5000

Facsimile: (02) 6279 5866

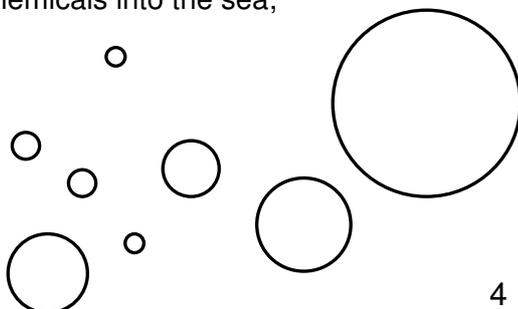
Email: meps@amsa.gov.au

or visit the Australian Maritime Safety Authority at www.amsa.gov.au

MANDATORY MARPOL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TSPF

When adhering to the Code of Practice for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery we advise to note that the following key elements of MARPOL are **mandatory for TSPF operators to comply with:**

- A total ban on the disposal of plastics at sea;
- A ban on any disposal of garbage within 12 nautical miles of land, or 500m of a floating platform;
- A ban on the discharge of oil or chemicals into the sea;
- All vessels of 12 metres or more in length are required to display placards setting out the disposal requirements of MARPOL 73/78. (For further details see Marine Notice 6/1997 and 6/1998.);
- The only allowable discharge of an oily mixture is at a rate of 15 parts of oil to one million parts of water; and
- Any other waste oil and oily residues must be stored on board for disposal at port waste disposal facilities including bilge water with any concentration of oil.



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR DISPOSAL OF MARINE WASTE AND TRAWL RUBBISH

As well as abiding by MARPOL and other regulations, TSPF operators will adhere to the following code of practice in relation to marine debris or garbage disposal and oil spills/pollution.

Rubbish

1. Minimise the taking aboard of potential garbage such as excess packaging;
2. all rubbish should be returned to home port or the mothership, i.e. minimise rubbish being taken to Torres Strait
3. Store all rubbish retained in suitable secure containers for return to port;
4. Not dispose of rags, glass, metal, bottles, crockery and similar refuse at sea;
5. Not dispose of material that will float, regardless of the distance from land;
6. As far as practical, collect and stow all plastic and floating garbage disposed by others and found at sea for disposal on land;
7. Cut all plastic waste which forms a continuous loop to minimise impact should these be accidentally lost at sea;

8. Where possible, pass on waste / oil etc to mother ships to avoid having large amounts of waste on the vessel which would be at risk of loss or spillage.
9. When waste is in port, use product specific waste disposal facilities (oil, sewerage) where provided.

Gear

10. Make all attempts to recover any lost gear.
11. Report any unrecovered gear to the PZJA and search and rescue authorities (table 1).
12. Utilise products packaged in or made of materials other than disposable plastic to replenish ship supplies unless a reusable plastic alternative is available.

What are considered plastics?

Plastic materials used at sea include synthetic materials such as:

- trawl and fishing nets
- bait gaskets
- synthetic rope
- paints
- plastic sheeting
- electrical / electronic
- "six pack" holders
- disposable eating utensils
- fibreglass



REDUCING THE LIKELIHOOD OF OIL SPILLS

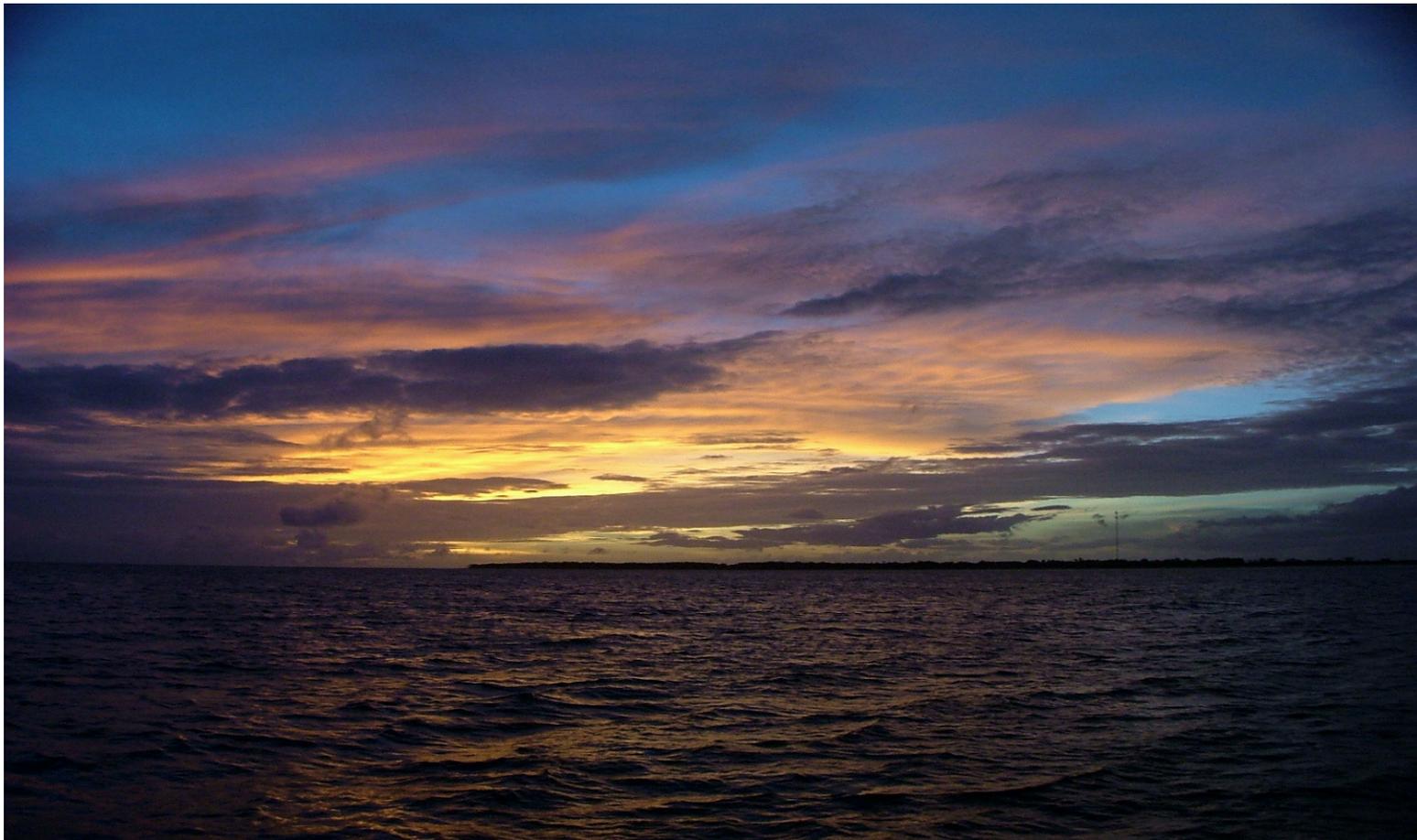
To reduce the likelihood of an oil spill:

- All leakage of fuel oil, lubricating oil and cooling water should be dealt with immediately once it is detected. If the crew cannot carry out repairs at sea, they should be done as soon as the vessel reaches port;
- Where possible utilise and install equipment in the engine room which will minimise the likelihood of oil leakages. This includes:
 - a) a drip tray under all engines with suitable drainage to a holding tank or drum for disposal ashore;
 - b) ensuring that engine rooms and other machinery spaces are fitted with simple sump plumbing so that any leakage is collected in the sump instead of the bilge;
 - c) ensuring propeller shaft gland has not deteriorated;
 - d) fitting high efficiency bypass oil filters that can extend the life of the engine oil and decrease the need for frequent oil changes.
- Where possible fishers will use biodegradable products in the engine and for cleaning both above and below deck;
- Cleaning of the vessel and equipment should be undertaken prior to arrival in port to avoid polluting coastal waters and harbours; and
- Operators should take care to ensure refuelling is done in a safe manner and that fuel is not spilt on the deck or into the water.

Emergency spill response kits

NOTE: in case of an emergency regarding fuel or oil spills, emergency spill response kits are available at:

- all Seaswift mother ships.
- State Emergency Services station Yorke Island. Contact Dan Mosby ph: 0400 920 357 or Ned Mosby on 0447 075 860.



RESPECTING THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

It is important that all fishers operating in the Torres Strait have some understanding of the culture and lifestyle of the Torres Strait Islanders and respect this while fishing in this area. The Islanders are a proud people who have both respect for the sea and the people who make a living from it. Ensuring the impact of fishing on their way of life is minimised is of utmost importance.

The Torres Strait is culturally distinct within Australia, being home to Australia's indigenous Melanesian people - the Torres Strait Islanders. It is estimated that 8,000 Islanders live within the Torres Strait, including 3,500 living in the major commercial and administrative centre of Thursday Island.

Food and livelihood

The sea provides a basis of Islanders livelihoods and food source. The average rates of consumption of seafood in the Torres Strait are amongst the highest in the world. This is reflected in their myths and legends that contain many references to fish, turtle, dugong and shellfish. Marine resources, particularly dugong and turtle, are important in community ceremonies such as weddings and tombstone openings.

Use of the marine environment as a source of income is increasing in the Torres Straits with developments such as the Kalieg Enterprises Sponge Aquaculture farm. This farm is important for bringing revenue into the area. It is important that fishers and other resource users respect the traditional way of life, and these infrastructures when in the area to ensure they are preserved for the future benefit of the communities.



Visiting Islands and communities

The communities are managed by elected Chairpersons and councillors in the same way as local councils are on the mainland.

Visitors to communities are reminded that resources on communities are limited. Water, telephone services and food stores are designed for community use only. When visiting a community for medical help or to connect with an airline service, visitors are asked to respect community standards and remember that you are on someone else's home or property.

There are accepted protocols for visiting island communities. The correct approach is to first visit the council office and speak to the Chairperson, councillor or clerk, explain why you are on the island and how long you will be staying.

Remember that some of the islands have a complete ban on alcohol.



CONTACTS

Industry

Queensland Seafood Industry Association	Relevant Industry Representative	Ph: (07) 3262 6855 Fax: (07) 3262 7650 gsia@gsia.com.au
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Fisheries Management

Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol	Compliance	District Officer – Thursday Is Ph: (07) 4069 1772
Australian Fisheries Management Authority	Fisheries Management	AFMA TSPF fisheries Manager Ph: (02) 6225 5555
Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries	Fisheries Management	QPIF senior fisheries management officer Ph: (07) 3225 1851

Protected Species

Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	Reporting all listed species interactions	Ph: 1800 641 806 protected.species@deh.gov.au
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Safety and Pollution

Australian Maritime Safety Authority	Commonwealth Environmental laws. Discharges of sewage. Plastic disposal placards	Ph: (02) 6279 5000 Fax: (02) 6279 5866 www.amsa.gov.au
Rescue Coordination Centre Australia	Report pollution at sea (beyond 3 nm)	Ph: 1800 641 792 Fax: 1800 622 153 rccaus@amsa.gov.au

