

# **Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities' perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery**



Prepared for the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

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## Contents

Glossary of Acronyms .....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Executive Summary.....	5
Background .....	6
Relevant management measures .....	7
Consultation.....	8
Discussion.....	8
Impacts.....	8
Impact on other fisheries.....	9
Bycatch and Benthos.....	9
Operational impacts.....	10
Flow of benefits .....	10
Status of the community licenses .....	11
Indirect economic benefits .....	11
Opportunities for Indigenous traineeships/employment.....	11
Other matters .....	12
References .....	13
Attachments.....	14
Attachment 1 Letter to Torres Strait licence holders regarding mothership services .....	15
Attachment 2 Invitation to Torres Strait Regional Authority Board Meeting .....	16
Attachment 3 Poster - Consultation .....	17
Attachment 4 Flyer and invitation to a meeting about the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery .....	18
Attachment 5 Consultation timeline.....	19
Attachment 6 Consultation Meeting Report Erub Island .....	20
Attachment 7 Consultation Meeting Report Masig Island .....	25
Attachment 8 Consultation Meeting Report Poruma Island .....	36
Attachment 9 Consultation Meeting Report Ugar Island .....	42

Cover photo: Fish traps on Ugar Island

## Glossary of Acronyms

AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
AFZ	Australian Fishing Zone
AQIS	Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
BRD	Bycatch Reduction Device
CFG	Community Fisher Group
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAFF	Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
EFMA	Erub Fisheries Management Association
$E_{MEY}$	Effort at Maximum Economic Yield. The long term effort associated with $B_{MEY}$
$E_{MSY}$	Effort at Maximum Sustainable Yield. The long term effort associated with $B_{MSY}$
EPBC	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
ERA	Ecological Risk Assessment
HSP	Harvest Strategy Policy
IFAC	Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee
ITQ	Individual Transferable Quota
MAC	Management Advisory Committee
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973/78
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
PBC	Prescribed Bodies Corporate
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PZJA	Protected Zone Joint Authority
QBFP	Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol
QDAFF	Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
SEWPaC	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
TED	Turtle Excluder Device
TEP	Threatened, Endangered or Protected species
TIB	Traditional Inhabitant Boat
TRL	Tropical Rock Lobster
TSFA	Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984
TSFMAC	Torres Strait Fisheries Management Advisory Committee
TSIRC	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
TSPF	Torres Strait Prawn Fishery
TSPMAC	Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee
TSPZ	Torres Strait Protected Zone
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
TSSAC	Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee
TSTRLF	Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System

## Definitions

Finfish	A reference to Spanish Mackerel and Coral Trout, the two main species in the Finfish fisheries
TIB fisher	A Torres Strait Islander (also called Traditional Inhabitant) fisher. TIB refers to the name of the license issued to Islander fishers, the Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence.
TVH fisher	A non-Indigenous fisher. TVH refers to the name of the license issued to non-Indigenous fishers, the Transferrable Vessel Holder (TVH) licence.

## Acknowledgements

The consultation with the Erub, Masig, Poruma and Ugar communities was undertaken in the course of two visits to Torres Strait in May 2013. This followed postponements of planned visits in November 2012 and February 2013. We thank everyone involved for the patience and assistance in facilitating this consultation.

The assistance of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Board under Chair Mr Joseph Elu was pivotal to our work. We appreciated the invitation to meet with the Board on 1 March 2012, in the company of Dr James Findlay (AFMA CEO), to explain and answer questions about the consultation and research project. The Board's support for the consultation enabled us to engage directly with TSRA members from the communities.

We would like to formally acknowledge Mr Jimmy Joe Gela (PBC Chair Erub), Mr Francis Nai (PBC Chair Masig), Mr Frank Faud (PBC Chair Poruma) and Mr Noel Baker (PBC Chair Ugar) for their permission to visit their communities and for their interest in our work.

We learnt that many office bearers in the Torres Strait wear 'multiple hats' and serve their communities through their work with the TSIRC, the TSRA and community police as well as the broader Australian community through border protection, customs and bio-security roles with AQIS, Customs and Commonwealth DAFF. With this in mind we thank the following key contacts in the communities for making time to facilitate our visits and in securing good turnouts for the meetings.

Mr Amos Sipi – Erub Fisheries Management Association (EFMA), Torres Strait Ranger Program

Ms Hilda Mosby – Chair Yorke Island Fishers Association, TSRA Member Masig

Mr Francis Pearson – TSRA Member Poruma

Mr Rocky Stephen – President Kos and Abob Fisheries, Councillor Ugar

We would also like to thank the following individuals, who were off community when we visited, for their help and advice in the lead-up to our visits; Mr Kenny Bedford (Chair EFMA, TSRA Member Erub and Portfolio Member for Fisheries), Mr Jerry Stephen (TSRA Member Ugar), Councillor Fraser Nai (Masig) and Mr John Mosby (TSIRC Divisional Manager - Masig).

The high quality advice provided by Mr Shane Fava (AFMA) and his team on Thursday Island was much appreciated. Thanks also to TSRA officers Mr John Adams, Mr Steve Hall and Mr Brendon Wall for their help with scheduling and procedural matters. The professional support from Ms Fiona Hill and Ms Lisa Cocking from AFMA's Canberra office was appreciated.

Mr Clive Turnbull kindly supplied summary information based on aggregated fishery data and background information which supported our presentations. Thanks also to Mr Ron Earle (TSPF operator) for providing photos of two of his trawlers for use in our presentations.

Thanks finally to the residents of Erub (Darnley) Island, Masig (Yorke) Island, Poruma (Coconut) Island and Ugar (Stephens) Island for coming along to meet with us.

This project was conducted with the support of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee.

## Executive Summary

The Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF) is managed by the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA). The fishery is managed in accordance with the Torres Strait Treaty which provides Papua New Guinea with access to a 25% share of the resource in Australia's jurisdiction and Australia with reciprocal access to a 25% share of the resource in Papua New Guinea's jurisdiction.

All 61 licences in the Australia fishery are currently held by the non-indigenous sector. The TSPF abuts the Commonwealth Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) and the Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery (ECOTF). A number of operators have interests in these fisheries and in the TSPF. The TSPF is managed using input controls with temporal and spatial closures and tradeable units (days) being the key elements. The TSPF has similar restrictions on boat length (maximum 20 meters) and net size (combined headrope and footrope limit of 88 metres) to the Queensland ECOTF. The NPF does not share these boat and gear size restrictions.

The TSPF has experienced a decline in profitability in the last decade and an analysis by ABARES<sup>1</sup> suggests that this is mainly due to a drop in commodity prices and increases in fuel costs. Industry advice through the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSP MAC) supports this. Industry has indicated that falls in export prices coupled with increased operational costs (particularly diesel) and the cost of management were factors behind the significant decline in fleet activity.

The TSP MAC responded to an industry request to allow access to bigger boats and nets in the TSPF by proposing a trial in June 2011. Temporary relaxation of the vessel size and net requirements would have allowed operators of larger trawlers in the NPF to apply to operate in the fishery. In 2011 the PZJA Standing Committee indicated that further consultation with traditional inhabitants on the issues of boat and net size was needed before seeking support for a trial from the PZJA agency heads. The PZJA Standing Committee noted that the outcome of the consultation would be an important consideration for the PZJA.

Consultation with the communities on Erub, Masig, Poruma and Ugar islands was undertaken in May 2013. The communities are in close proximity to the main trawl grounds and operations of the TSPF.

The message from the community consultation was clear and consistent. The communities of Erub, Masig, Poruma and Ugar do not support relaxation of either the boat size limit (20 metres) or the trawl gear size restriction (88 metres combined headrope and footrope) which currently apply in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

The consultation confirmed that concerns about the impact of prawn trawling both direct and indirect raised by IFAC members in the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSP MAC) reflect wider concerns in the communities adjacent to the fishery. There were regional differences in the nature of these concerns but these are largely attributable to proximity to fishing grounds and anchorages. These are reported in the *Discussion* section and have been previously raised in the TSP MAC.

The lack of a formal flow of benefit from the TSPF to traditional inhabitants **was the fundamental issue that emerged from the consultation.**

The consultation suggests there is disconnect in the risk, management cost and catch relationship in the TSPF. From an industry perspective the review of input controls is a logical response to increasing costs of operation particularly given that the decline in activity is largely due to economic factors rather than stock problems. TSP MAC has identified the possibility of surrenders (recovery of

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<sup>1</sup> Skirtin, M and Viera, S 2012,



management levies from fewer concession holders) and potential loss of mothership services as major risks to the fishery's viability.

Traditional inhabitants emphasised that they receive no direct economic benefit from the prawn fishery but continue to bear the burden (risk) of its impacts. No one who attended the consultations supported an increase in risk (from their perspective) until it was recognised that there was a structural issue (resource sharing) that needed to be addressed.

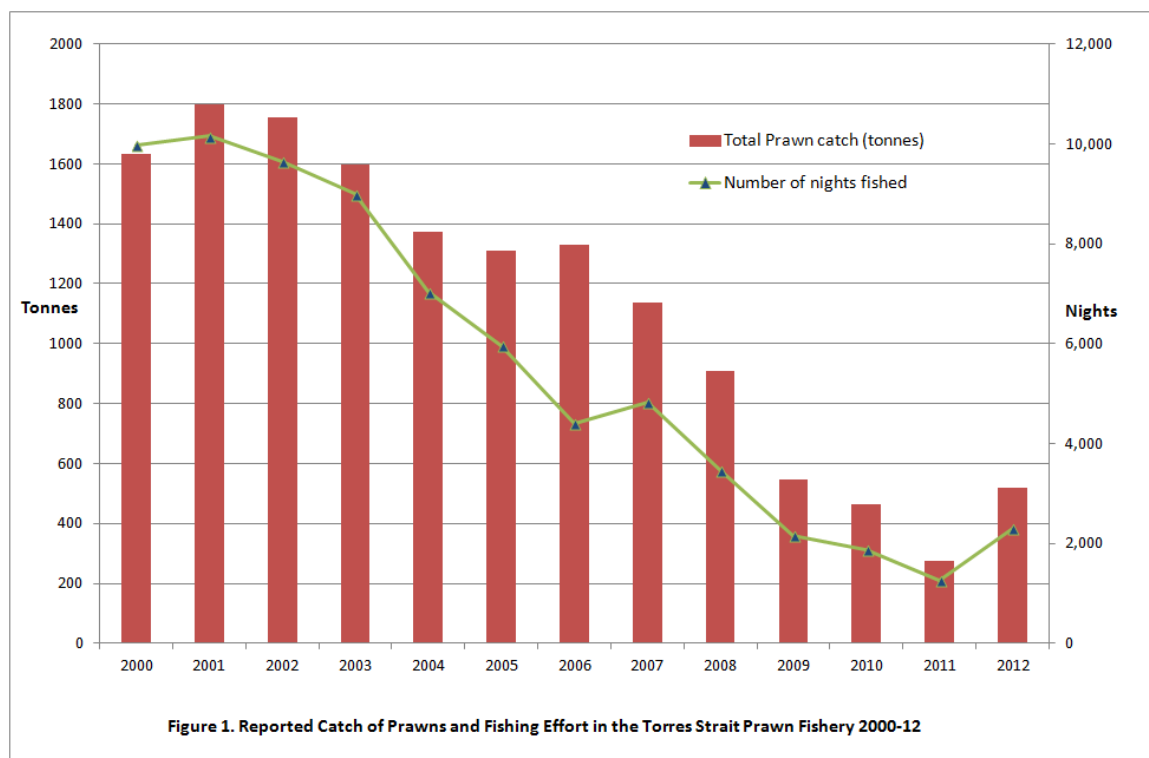
Community Fisheries Associations and Corporations were prominent in the consultations and their standing in the communities was such that their presence provided a 'quorum for the meetings'. These indigenous enterprises are seeking to build local fishing capacity in the Finfish fisheries and in the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery (TSTRLF). Their Directors indicated that the recent process which transferred ownership of the commercial access rights in the Finfish fisheries to traditional inhabitants had provided security and income which was being used to support local commercial fishing enterprises. The participants, noting that the PZJA was supporting a similar adjustment in the TSTRLF, considered that the same principles underpinning these processes should be applied to the TSPF.

It is our view that a mechanism for sharing the economic benefits of the prawn fishery with traditional inhabitants is needed to reconcile the economic objectives of the two main stakeholders in the fishery. If traditional inhabitants were to secure a share/income stream from the fishery they would then have an incentive to engage meaningfully in the consideration of management reforms.

## Background

In recent years the level of fishing effort in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery has declined to levels which have led to some operators and managers raising concerns about the fishery's future viability (Figure 1).

The total fishery effort cap was reduced in late 2005 to 9,200 nights which was the level of effort estimated to deliver catches near maximum sustainable yield (MSY). Of these nights 2,070 are set aside for Papua New Guinea leaving 6,867 nights for Australian vessels<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> The remaining 263 days are held in trust by the Australian Government.

The cap has not constrained operations since 2007 with trawl effort reaching about 70% of the Australian share of the cap in that year. Since then there has been a further decline in the level of fishing activity in Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. The most recent year (2012) saw a modest increase in fishing effort to 2,310 nights up from a low of 1,260 nights in 2011.

Industry advice through Torres Strait Prawn MAC and independent analysis by Skirtun and Viera (2012) attribute this decline mainly to the fall in prawn prices in recent years and to the rise in fuel prices. ABARES (2012) reports that the current catches of both the Tiger and Endeavour prawn stocks are below MSY which means there is scope for larger catches. The standardised catch rate of Tiger Prawns in recent years has been above the historic average (Cocking et al 2013).

The Torres Strait Prawn MAC, noting the good biological status of stocks, considered that the fall in the participation rate was largely driven by economics. The Committee noted that market factors (output prices) and fuel costs had also impacted adjacent prawn fisheries but recognised that the remoteness of the TSPF added additional cost pressures. The Committee identified two significant risks to the fishery's viability:

1. A further reduction in fleet activity could lead to the loss of the dedicated mothership service which supplies fuel, parts and supplies and ships frozen product out (refer to Attachment 1).
2. The surrender of concessions by operators no longer interested in maintaining a stake in the fishery will result in higher levies for remaining operators (management costs are recovered from operators).

In 2011 the TSP MAC received an industry submission from a NPF operator seeking the MAC's consideration of reforms to the 20 metre boat size requirement and the 88 metre<sup>3</sup> requirement for trawl nets as possible areas for reform. If supported such a reform would make it possible for larger NPF vessels to operate in the TSPF provided they bought or leased in the required entitlements. The TSP MAC recognised that operators who also fished in the ECOTF might not be as supportive of changes because similar vessel and net requirements applied in the state managed fishery.

The MAC also recognised strong concerns from traditional inhabitants about relaxation of input controls in the TSPF.

The Committee (with reservations) recommended a trial of larger boats and larger nets. The PZJA Standing Committee decided that additional consultation with traditional inhabitants in relation to boat and net size issues was needed before the proposal was formally tabled for consideration by the PZJA.

This project was commissioned by TSSAC in response to that request.

### Relevant management measures

The control of boat size and net size in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery is given effect by Fisheries Management Notices enacted under section 16 of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*:

No. 47 Torres Strait Fisheries (Restriction on size of boats) - September 1997

No. 71 Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (Restriction on net size) - February 2004

The restriction on boat size applies to all commercial fisheries in the Torres Strait whereas the restriction on net size is specific to the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Both requirements predate the *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2009*.

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<sup>3</sup> 88 metres refers to the combined headrope and footrope length

## Consultation

The consultation was conducted with regard for the TSRA Cultural Protocols (2011) and with reference to Nakata and Nakata (2009) - Report on Torres Strait fisheries research protocols.

Chairs of the Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) were contacted formally to seek permission to visit the communities for purposes of consultation. Once permission was obtained we then contacted the heads of the community fishing corporations to discuss scheduling.

We relied on the assistance of local Councillors and their officers in relation to organising meeting venues and accommodation. We were also required to submit *Prescribed Activity Permits* to each council office prior to our visits.

The opportunity to meet and brief the TSRA Board on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013 helped us better understand the sensitivities around the boat and gear size issue. We were able to indicate that as consultants, we were respectful of feedback already provided on these issues by traditional representatives on the TSP MAC and in other forums. A copy of the TSRA correspondence is provided at Attachment 2.

Posters and flyers were then sent to the communities to publicise our meetings (Attachments 3 & 4). Close consultation with the local fishing corporations and TSRA members was conducted in the lead up to the meetings.

Meetings were held in the following four communities:

Community	Venue	Date	Times	Attendance
Erub Island	Mall	6 May 2013	10:30 am – 12:30 pm	2
		7 May 2013	9:00 am – 11:00 am	3
Masig Island	Community Hall	7 May 2013	2:30 pm – 4:50 pm	11
		8 May 2013	11:40 am – 3:30 pm	8
Poruma Island	Gazebo	10 May 2013	9:30 am – 11:30 am	10
Ugar Island	Council Office	29 May 2013	10:30 am – 12:30 pm	13

A more detailed consultation timeline is provided as Attachment 5.

Draft reports were prepared following the meetings and circulated to the contact officers for comment. Agreed meeting reports are provided at Attachments 6 to 9.

## Discussion

The consultation with the Erub, Masig, Poruma and Ugar communities indicated concerns existed on two levels – impacts of the fishery and the absence of a flow of benefit to traditional communities in the vicinity of the fishery.

## Impacts

Feedback from the meetings confirmed that the concerns and issues related to the prawn fishery raised by traditional inhabitant members on TSP MAC were consistent with the views of the fishing corporations and associations and the broader traditional community. These included impacts and incidents arising from both fishing activity and associated vessel activity (anchoring, navigation). These concerns existed before the possibility of trialling of larger boats and nets was raised however in most cases traditional inhabitants considered that these impacts would be exacerbated if bigger boats and bigger nets were allowed into the fishery.



There was not much discussion about impacts of bigger boats and nets on the prawn stocks but the Ugar community noted that the Government had invested significant funds to reduce the number of licences in the fishery and should be very cautious about opening up the fishery to greater effort.

Specific concerns are described under separate sub-headings.

### Impact on other fisheries

The impact of trawl activity on Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) was raised at all the meetings.

There was broad understanding that the retention of TRL by trawlers was now prohibited and reasonable confidence that there was good compliance with this requirement. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of at sea surveillance following the rationalisation of the Queensland Boating and Fishing Patrol (QBFP) presence in the Torres Strait.

Several elders across the communities had spent time on prawn trawlers and were familiar with their operations, catch sorting and discarding of bycatch. They indicated that while there was no legal incentive for boats to retain TRL there was still a potential impact depending on what proportion of the discarded lobsters survive. We didn't have observer data at hand to gauge the extent of TRL bycatch in normal fishing operations. We expect this is an issue where data is available to inform discussions.

The remaining concern was raised by experienced TIB fishers that trawling changed the behaviour of TRL and made them harder to catch particularly close to the islands where trawlers work within line of sight. We note that assessments indicate that the TRL stock is in good shape with ABARES (2012) reporting that the Spawning Stock Biomass is above the target reference point. We also note that the ecological assessment by Turnbull and Rose (2007) found that the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery does not have a significant impact on the TRL stock.

We cannot however dismiss the proposition that trawling does affect the catchability of TRL in areas close to the trawl grounds and on 'home reefs' by TIB fishers and by traditional harvest. Stock and sustainability assessments are concerned with broader biological status and changes in animal behaviour are likely to be too subtle to detect.

Participants noted that there had been less trawl fishing activity in recent years and considered this to be a positive for the TRL fishery. They regarded the prospect of letting in bigger boats using bigger nets as an unnecessary risk particularly if the skippers were not experienced in working the tricky grounds in the Torres Straits and because they were likely to be unfamiliar with the migratory behaviour of TRL.

### Bycatch and Benthos

The TSPF, unlike the other fisheries in the Torres Strait, is characterised by a significant volume of bycatch (Turnbull and Rose (2007)). There was acknowledgement amongst attendees that the mandatory use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) and Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) had reduced bycatch and in particular that of protected species and large sharks and fish.

Participants were aware, from experience on trawlers, that significant amounts of fish and invertebrates were discarded and that a number of these were dead by the time they hit the water or were consumed by sharks and dolphins habituated to the trawl operations.

We presented the findings of the recent CSIRO *Environmental sustainability assessment update for habitats, assemblages and bycatch species* and attendees were receptive about the analysis. We consider that there is scope for extension work to provide a 'grass roots' explanation of how a fishery which discards a significant by volume of its catch can be as sustainable as a highly targeted fishery.

Traditional inhabitants were familiar with trawl gear and understood that trawlers avoided grounds with structure that would hook up their nets. Participants noted that most trawling was undertaken over sediments and that the recent CSIRO assessment had identified only one assemblage (habitat and associated organisms) which was potentially fully exposed to trawling. An experienced fisher from Masig Island noted that intensive trawling had occurred for many years prior to these environmental studies and that the seafloor in some areas may have less structure and diversity than existed prior to fishing.

Participants remained concerned about bycatch and bottom damage and considered that larger nets could lead to greater impacts and discarding.

### Operational impacts

Masig Island is central to the operation of the trawl fishery in geographic terms and the adjacent Kodall Island is the preferred anchorage for trawlers in the daytime and in bad weather. The consultation confirmed that the Masig people held similar concerns to the other communities about the impact of trawl fishing operations but also had concerns regarding ecological impacts arising from vessel transit and anchoring. The meeting there also noted workplace safety issues associated with vessel operations in the vicinity of the local marine enterprises. These local issues included:

- The long term pollution risk associated with sunken vessels (not many have been salvaged) due to fuel, oil and chemicals leaking out.
- The accumulation of rubbish on the seafloor around the 'Craypot' (anchorage off Kodall Island).
- Navigation incidents with divers and workers engaged in Kailig Enterprises Sponge Farm.

These concerns have been raised by indigenous members on TSP MAC and are documented in the [Committee's minutes and summaries](#) and in the Masig Island Report at Attachment 7.

The other communities were aware of the impacts around Masig Island and referred to the closure around Erub Island as a potentially useful tool for safeguarding their immediate environments and future aquaculture or ranching enterprises.

The meetings recognised that the NPF (Gulf of Carpentaria) fleet was the obvious source of 'entrants' if a trial of bigger boats was to proceed. The meetings reviewed the size structure of the NPF and noted the most common boat size was 23 metres with 84% of the fleet being between 20 and 25 metres.

We raised the proposition at the meetings that larger vessels operating more profitably might be less likely to suffer mishaps. The traditional inhabitants indicated that fishing in the Torres Strait was quite different to the open waters of the Gulf and considered that unless the skippers had experience in the Torres Strait the presence of bigger boats towing bigger gear might lead to greater environmental impacts and could cause more incidents.

### Flow of benefits

The overarching view from the community consultation was that despite the prawn fishery operating in their waters for over 30 years they had received very little economic benefit from it with product, employment and income essentially bypassing the communities. A number of attendees indicated that a commitment to establish a more equitable arrangement with traditional inhabitants was overdue and that a move in this direction would be seen as act of good faith (compensation) for years of resources going out.

The transfer of entitlements in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery from non-Indigenous sector to the traditional sector was seen as a positive development and one that was consistent with the objectives of *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.

(g) to have regard, in developing and implementing licensing policy, to the desirability of promoting economic development in the Torres Strait area and employment opportunities for traditional inhabitants.

We note the important role the Community Fishing Corporations and enterprises played in these consultations. The security provided by ownership of the access rights was crucial to capacity building in those fisheries within the communities and also capacity building amongst the fishers in terms of business training and engagement in research and management consultations.

Currently traditional inhabitants are recognised as key stakeholders in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery but adopt a risk averse approach in relation to the management of the fishery presumably because their communities do not benefit from increased effort and catches but are exposed to the fishery's impacts which would be expected to bear some relationship with the level of fishing effort.

### **Status of the community licenses**

A number of attendees recalled that three 'T' license packages had been set aside for the Masig, Poruma and Ugar communities in the 1990s. The meeting noted that current Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Handbook 2013 did not include the community licenses amongst the 61 Fishing Boat Licences.

A number of participants raised strong concerns over the fate of the licences and were not sure if the entitlements had been sold or surrendered under the 2007 buyback. There was general agreement that the relevant agencies needed to explain what had transpired in regard to these licences to the respective communities.

#### **Request – agency clarification**

That AFMA clarify the status of the three community license packages and detail how decisions relating to these licenses were made and report back to the relevant communities.

### **Indirect economic benefits**

The question of indirect economic benefits to the communities as a result of the operation of the TSPF was raised. We asked if the communities were concerned about the possible loss of mothership services should the fishery activity decline further.

Traditional inhabitant indicated that they were not concerned about the loss of mothership services or other indirect benefits the operation of the fishery might bring to the islands. Those involved in fishing enterprises indicated that their product was either air freighted out live or was transported in freezer containers on the regular barge services.

A number of participants commented that their TRL operations might improve as a result of a further decline in the prawn fishery.

### **Opportunities for Indigenous traineeships/employment**

A number of participants acknowledged the offer of traineeships in the original industry proposal. The meetings noted that younger people from the communities were interested in maritime professions but faced difficulties in securing sufficient sea-time on larger vessels to upgrade their tickets. It was noted that larger vessels might be better suited for training arrangements because they had more room and flexibility under survey manning requirements to take on trainees without having to stand down experienced crew.

The attendees recognised that training programs could help build bridges but considered that traineeships were a secondary consideration until the communities had secured rights to a share of income from the exploitation of those resources.

## Other matters

The consultation was conducted against the backdrop of the following case in the High Court of Australia:

*Leo Akiba on behalf of the Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim Group versus the Commonwealth of Australia and others.*

This case was concerned with whether native title rights are extinguished by fisheries legislation prohibiting, in the absence of a licence, taking of such resources for commercial purposes.

The High Court handed down their [judgement](#) on this case on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

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## Attachments

- Attachment 1 Letter to Torres Strait licence holders regarding mothership services
- Attachment 2 Invitation to Torres Strait Regional Authority Board Meeting
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- Attachment 8 Consultation Meeting Report Poruma Island
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30<sup>th</sup> January, 2012

**TO ALL TORRES STRAIT LICENCE HOLDERS**

Sea Swift has operated a mothership service for over 18 years servicing the fishing fleet of vessels operating in the Torres Straits. Our mothership provides northbound transportation of all supplies and fishing gear to the fishing fleet, fresh drinking water, removal and disposal of rubbish, re-fuelling and unloading and transportation of frozen seafood back to Cairns. We also provide transportation of crew from Cairns to the vessel and from the vessel back to Cairns.

Our mothership operates under an Approved Arrangement and our crew are very experienced in servicing the needs of the fishing fleet. The MV Endeavour Bay will be in operation during the 2012 season as the Emu Bay has now been decommissioned and will not be put back into service. The Endeavour Bay has deck space for 18 x 20 foot reefers and we have capacity to carry 520,000 litres of cargo diesel.

In the past several years, the number of fishing vessels operating in the Torres Straits fisheries has declined significantly. Sea Swift can only continue a mothership service to the Torres Straits with the support of trawlers and other fishing vessels wanting to use our mothership facilities.

Sea Swift have agreed to operate a mothership service this year to support the fishing industry, but in the future, without the support of trawlers and other fishing vessels who can fish in the Torres Straits, this service to the Torres Straits maybe withdrawn.

It would prove rather challenging to keep a trawler or fishing vessel working in this remote fishery without the support of a regular mothership service. Our Depot's at both Horn Island and Thursday Island have no unloading facilities for trawlers, nor the staff required.

Our mothership service to the Torres Straits can only continue with the business support of the fishing vessels. We welcome your support and look forward to doing business with you during 2012.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any details or assistance.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kerry Taylor", is written over the "Kind regards" text.

**KERRY TAYLOR**

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10 December 2012

Mr Anthony De Fries  
27 Saltair Street  
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Email – [adefries@bigpond.net.au](mailto:adefries@bigpond.net.au)

Dear Mr De Fries

**Invitation to Torres Strait Regional Authority Board Meeting  
Friday 1 March 2013**

The new Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Board held their first meeting in November 2012. At this meeting the Board were updated on the progress of a number of fisheries related matters relevant to the Torres Strait region.

The TSRA Board has requested that AFMA together with yourself as the Principal Investigator of the "Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait: gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery" project be invited to the next TSRA Board Meeting. The TSRA Board is seeking to gain a greater understanding of AFMA's perspective on the trial of larger vessels and gear in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and the consultation being undertaken.

I therefore cordially extend an invitation you to meet with the TSRA Members with AFMA at their next meeting from **09.30am – 10.00am on Friday 1 March 2013**. I have also written to Dr James Findlay at AFMA separately extending the invitation for AFMA to attend the meeting, a copy is attached for your information.

The meeting will be held in the Joey Nona Conference Room, TSRA Offices, Level 1, Torres Strait Haus, 46 Victoria Parade on Thursday Island.

It would be most appreciated if you could confirm your attendance at the meeting by contacting the TSRA's Governance and Leadership Program through Yoshi Hirakawa on Telephone No 07-4069 0724 or alternatively via email at [yoshiko.hirakawa@tra.gov.au](mailto:yoshiko.hirakawa@tra.gov.au).

I look forward to meeting with both yourself and AFMA at the TSRA Board Meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aven Noah", followed by a horizontal line.

Mr Aven Noah  
Deputy Chairperson

CC – Dr James Findlay  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Fisheries Management Authority



## CONSULTATION – TORRES STRAIT

# PRAWN FISHERY

### MASIG (YORKE) ISLAND COMMUNITY HALL

**TUESDAY 7TH MAY**  
**2:30 PM - 4:30 PM**

**WEDNESDAY 8TH MAY**  
**10:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

**CONSULTATION** - Anthony de Fries and Marshall Betzel are visiting Masig Island to listen to the community's views on boat length and net size used by trawlers operating in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. We are also holding similar meetings on Erub Island, Poruma Island and Ugar Island. Your feedback will form the basis of a report to the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee.

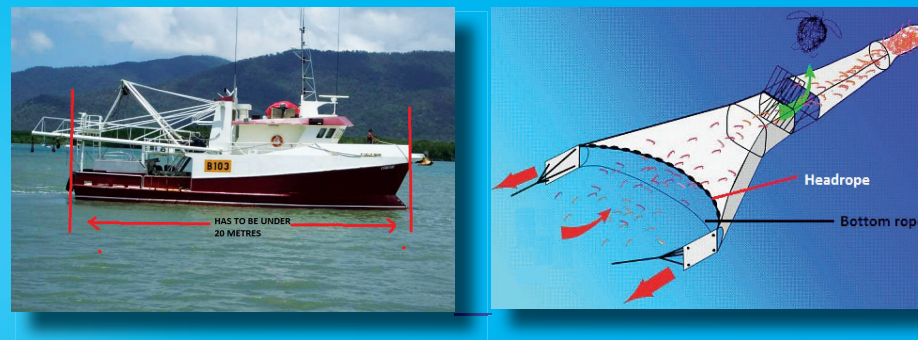
**FISHERY STATUS** - Scientific advice indicates that stocks of Tiger and Endeavour Prawns in the Torres Strait are in good shape – however fishing activity in the Fishery has been declining since 2001. Fewer boats are fishing due to the high cost of operating in the Torres Strait combined with lower prices for prawns generally. The chart below is based on logbook data.



Some operators would like to use bigger boats and bigger nets - The number of trawlers that can fish in the Torres Strait is limited to 61 and fishing effort is capped at 9,200 nights. In 2011 only 20 boats fished for a total 1,260 nights.

The Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MAC) is concerned about the decline in the fishery and recommended that limits on size of the boats and fishing gear be reviewed to support more profitable operations and hopefully stop the decline in the fishery.

A proposal to trial bigger boats and fishing nets was not supported by all three Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) agencies. Currently boats cannot be bigger than 20 metres in length and the combined length of the headrope and bottom rope on their nets is restricted to 88 metres.



The PZJA Standing Committee recommended seeking advice from Traditional Inhabitants in communities in the vicinity of the Fishery before further considering this issue. The Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee has since supported consultation with the Torres Strait Island communities on Erub, Masig, Poruma and Ugar islands.

**INVITATION** - We will provide a short presentation at the start of the meeting and then we hope to hear your views on the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and in particular if boat size and the size of nets are of concern to you. If you cannot attend the main meeting we would be happy to try and meet with you and others while we are on your island.

**AFTER THE MEETINGS** - We will provide draft meeting reports back to each community within 7 working days of our last visit. This is to let you check that we have recorded your views accurately and appropriately – and if not please let us know!

We will then prepare a final report summarising the feedback from the communities for the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee and the meeting reports from each island will be included.



**ANTHONY DE FRIES (BSc)**  
**0412 918 641**  
adequires@bigpond.net.au

Extensive at sea experience across a range of fisheries and in recent years has focused on providing independent reports of fishery meetings for both scientific and management purposes.



**MARSHALL BETZEL**  
**0408 202 089**  
nqtrawlers@bigpond.com

Trawl manager based in Cairns and is an industry member on the Torres Strait Prawn MAC. Marshall can answer your questions about vessel operations in the fishery.

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO REPORTING YOUR VIEWS ACCURATELY - PLEASE COME ALONG AND MEET US**

## Invitation to a meeting about the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery

### Ugar (Stephens) Island: Community Hall

10:00 am to 12:00 pm Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013

The Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee has supported visits to Erub, Masig, Poruma and Ugar islands to better understand Traditional Inhabitants' views on management measures which apply to prawn trawling around your islands. Consultation meetings on Erub, Masig and Poruma islands were held between 6 and 10 May 2013.

You may have noticed that there has been less trawl activity in recent years. Advice from industry is that less boats are willing to fish in Torres Strait because economic factors like high fuel prices and low prawn prices mean it is hard to operate profitably given the remoteness of your region.

Unlike many problems in fisheries this one is not due to the lack of prawns. Scientists tell us that the Tiger Prawn and Endeavour Prawn stocks are in good shape.

The Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MAC) (**advice giver**) has recommended that consideration be given to allowing the use of bigger boats and bigger nets in the fishery provided additional safeguards are put in place. The MAC proposed a trial to the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) (**the decision maker**).

The Protected Zone Joint Authority could not reach agreement on a trial noting concerns still existed about larger boats and larger nets. The Protected Zone Joint Authority Standing Committee then recommended consulting directly with affected communities on this matter.

#### How might this consultation help?

We recently met with the TSRA Board in relation to the planned consultation and appreciate their support for the consultation proceeding. We recognise and respect concerns raised by the TSRA and by indigenous representatives on the Prawn MAC about this matter. At present these concerns about bigger boats and nets in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery are spread across a range of meeting documents. It is difficult for those not involved in the process to get a handle on this issue.

**At a minimum** our consultation will pull together existing concerns along with views from the meetings into one straight forward report.

**Ideally** we will still pull together your views and concerns into one report but hopefully we can include possible areas identified by you, the Traditional Inhabitants, where your representatives could work with industry to improve efficiency in their commercial operations while still safeguarding your interests.

**Please come along and meet us - we are committed to reporting your views accurately.**



Marshall Betzel is a trawl manager based in Cairns and is an industry member on the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (MAC).

Mobile 0408 202 089

Anthony de Fries (BSc) has extensive at sea experience across a range of fisheries and in recent years has focused on providing independent reports of fishery meetings for both scientific and management purposes.

Mobile 0412 918 641



## Attachment 5. Consultation timeline

Date(s)	Component
15 August 2012	Letters sent to PBC Chairs seeking permission to visit communities
12 - 15 November 2012	Meetings postponed – too close to the first TSRA Board meeting following TSRA elections in mid-September 2012.
13 December 2012	Principal investigator and co-investigator provide an update to TSPMAC 13 (Cairns).
Late February/early March 2013	Meetings either side of the TSRA Board meeting postponed due to bereavements.
1 March 2013	Principal investigator attends TSRA Board Meeting (Thursday Island).
15 March 2013	Principal investigator provides an update to TSSAC 60 (Brisbane)
6 and 7 May 2013	Two meetings held on Erub Island
7 and 8 May 2013	Two meetings held on Masig Island
10 May 2013	Meeting held on Poruma Island
29 May 2013	Meeting held on Ugar Island
May and June 2013	Draft community meeting reports circulated
17-18 July 2013	Principal investigator and co-investigator provide a draft report to TSPMAC 14 (Cairns).
22 August 2013	All community meeting reports finalised
September 2013	Revised draft report provided to TSSAC.



## **Record – Community Meetings on Erub (Darnley) Island – May 2013**

*Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities' perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery*

### **Overview**

Two meetings were held at the Erub (Darnley) Mall. The first meeting was held between 10:30 am and 12:30 pm on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2013 with a follow-up meeting from 9:00 am to 11:00 am on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

A combined report from the meetings is provided. The meetings and discussions were relatively informal. Issues raised are reported under a series of sub-headings.

### **Opening remarks**

Mr Amos Sipi (Director Erub Fisheries Management Association (EFMA)) welcomed Mr Betzel and Mr de Fries to Erub Island and introduced Mr Arthur Naawi (Director- EFMA).

Mr de Fries thanked Mr Sipi for the welcome and indicated that both he and Mr Betzel were pleased to be able to visit Erub Island and acknowledged the Erub people as the traditional owners of land and sea.

Mr de Fries extended their gratitude to Councillor Jimmy Joe Gela (PBC Chair) for his support of the visit. Mr de Fries noted an apology from Councillor Gela who was in Cairns on council business.

The consultants noted an apology from Mr Kenny Bedford (President – EFMA) and acknowledged his assistance with the consultation. The consultants also acknowledged the support provided by Council officers Ms Mary Waigana and Ms Daisy Ketchell with the organisation of the visit.

Three members of the Erub community attended the meetings. A list of the participants is provided in Attachment 1.

### **Background**

Mr de Fries explained that the consultation in the four communities formed part of a research project supported by the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) designed to assess Indigenous communities' views on the size of trawlers operating in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and also about the size of the nets they used.

Mr de Fries then briefed the meeting on recent trends in the fishery. The group reviewed charts which showed a significant decline in the fishing effort in the prawn trawl fishery since 2001.

Mr Betzel noted that vessel activity in the current season had been limited to about six to eight boats with a few additional vessels fishing in the early part of the season. Mr Betzel observed that operating trawl vessels in a remote area like Torres Strait had become less profitable in recent years for the following reasons:

- Increases in the price of diesel fuel
- Decline in the price received for prawns
- Impact of the high Australian dollar (on exports)
- Competition with farmed prawns in the domestic market.



Mr Betzel indicated that all concession holders (including inactive licences) pay management levies on their boat licenses and effort entitlements (nights) and it was getting to a point where some were considering handing in their licenses (surrenders). Mr Betzel indicated that the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MAC) was concerned because the cost of management would then be recovered from fewer concession holders (their fees would rise) and that this might lead to more surrenders (snowball effect).

Mr Betzel noted that the MAC also considered it was important to arrest the decline in activity as companies which provided support to the prawn fleet like motherships might decide to withdraw their services on economic grounds.

Mr Betzel then explained that, in 2011, a fishing company active in the Northern Prawn Fishery, A. Raptis and Sons Pty Ltd, had submitted a proposal to the Torres Strait Prawn MAC seeking the Committee's support for changes to management arrangements which would allow bigger boats to operate in the fishery and to use larger nets.

Mr Betzel noted that allowing bigger boats in would mean vessels larger than 20 metres which were currently operating in the Northern Prawn Fishery (Gulf of Carpentaria) could consider fishing in the Torres Strait. Mr Betzel indicated that trawl vessels currently endorsed to fish in the Queensland Fishery were also restricted to under 20 metres and noted that a proportion of these operators did not support changes to boat size limits in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

The consultants explained that the second aspect of the proposal was to allow the use of bigger nets. The meeting clarified that the *Fisheries Management Notice No. 71* limited the size of nets used to 88 metres which was the combined length of headrope and ground rope which determined the size of the opening (mouth) of the net. Mr Betzel explained with the help of a net diagram that boats towed a number of smaller nets which were joined together (tri or quad gear).

Mr Betzel noted that it wouldn't be economic for bigger boats to use nets restricted to 88 metres. Mr Betzel added that allowing the existing boats (under 20 metres) to use bigger gear could potentially increase their efficiency.

Mr de Fries noted that as consultants they were not promoting increases in the vessel size rules or the length of trawl nets but considered it was important to set out the background to the trial proposal as it helped explain why the consultation had been commissioned.

## **Issues raised**

### Possible loss of motherships due to declining participation in the fishery

Mr Arthur Naawi suggested that if one of the concerns with the lack of vessel participation was losing the mothership service, then perhaps the Torres Strait prawn fishers should look again at placing a fuel barge at Yorke Island and utilizing the existing freezer facility there to unload and store their catch until the weekly barge from Horn Island arrived at the island. Mr Naawi noted that the freezer had been constructed to assist fisheries production although it may need some refurbishment to meet current AQIS standards.

The meeting noted there had been international interest in upgrading the freezer facility on Masig Island to facilitate exports to Hong Kong.

### Indigenous participation in commercial fisheries

Mr Naawi and Mr Sipi observed that the island communities adjacent to the prawn fishery received no real economic benefit at all from the fishery and this was in contrast to the other commercial fisheries which operated in their waters. Mr Naawi noted that the Government had managed a successful transition from non-Indigenous to traditional ownership in the line fisheries (Spanish Mackerel and Coral Trout) and was part way through a similar process in the Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery.

Mr Naawi explained that the income from leasing arrangements in the finfish fisheries had been beneficial to the communities. The meeting noted that former concession holders were now able to lease quota and this allowed them to maintain their fishing enterprises while the communities built up their fishing capacity and expertise.

Mr Naawi noted that EFMA had recently used income obtained from these fisheries (administered by the TSRA) been able to purchase a Mackerel troll boat (FV Blue Mist). Mr Naawi added that the distribution of the funds from lease arrangements was managed through the TSRA.

Mr Naawi indicated that if consideration was given to establishing an income stream from the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery then the communities would probably respond more positively to management processes and reforms.

### Environmental impacts

Mr Sipi and Mr Naawi both noted that the Erub Community did not experience the level of nearshore impacts like Masig Island but were concerned with impacts of trawling on Tropical Rock Lobster and possible impacts on aquaculture projects. The consultants noted that there was interest in establishing a Coral Trout farm off Erub Island.

Mr de Fries presented a summary of the recently CSIRO environmental assessment<sup>1</sup> of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Mr de Fries reported that CSIRO found that there were no unsustainable impacts at current levels of fishing effort however noted that the analysis identified a number of fish species and one assemblage which might need management attention if fishing activity returned to levels experienced around 2005.

Mr de Fries provided a hard copy of the CSIRO report to Mr Sipi.

### Training opportunities for indigenous men and women

Mr Naawi recalled that a number of older community members had experience in trawling and vessel operations from working on FV Kusi (a training vessel). The meeting noted that locals, like other fishers, needed to hold maritime certificates to operate commercial vessels larger than dories. This was an important consideration for communities if they wanted to develop enterprises bigger than smaller scale operations.

Mr Betzel noted that the original proposal from Raptis included scope for traineeships for indigenous men and women interested in the fishing industry. Mr Naawi and Mr Sipi indicated that there was strong interest in marine employment opportunities in the communities. Mr Naawi noted that it was then difficult for younger indigenous students to then accumulate sufficient seadays (on larger vessels) to upgrade to Coxswain certificates or Master Class 4 certificates after

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<sup>1</sup> Pitcher, C. R. (2013) Environmental sustainability assessment update for habitats, assemblages and bycatch species in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Scientific Technical Report. CSIRO, Australia.

completing initial training courses. Mr Betzel noted that one advantage of allowing larger boats into the fishery might be their enhanced capacity to support training initiatives. The meeting noted that larger boats could take on extra crew (new chums) without having to lay off experienced crew (not enough bunks, over survey limits).

Mr Naawi noted that it was applicants usually had to travel to Cairns to undertake accredited maritime certification courses. The meeting noted that there also were Government programs active in the Torres Strait like the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program which could possibly assist with traineeship programs in the fisheries sector.

Ms Amina Ghee noted that there was strong interest in marine vocations in the communities and advised that a number of young men from the Erub, Ugar, Masig, Poruma and Warraber communities had recently completed their Marine Certificate 1 courses.

#### Boat and net size

Mr Naawi and Mr Sipi considered that the communities near the prawn fishery would be more interested in specific management arrangements for the fishery if the communities' share of the prawn resource was recognised formally. The meeting noted this might involve a statutory arrangement which would secure an income from the fishery for traditional inhabitants particularly those communities affected by the presence of trawlers within their respective domains. Those present realised this would require a restructure.

Mr Naawi and Mr Sipi were not supportive of a trial while the issue of resource ownership was overlooked but indicated that if a trial was to proceed then the net size should be kept at 88 metres because they considered allowing larger nets in could increase damage to the bottom and have negative impacts on Tropical Rock Lobsters.

#### Close (Tuesday)

Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel thanked Mr Sipi and Mr Naawi for the interest and contributions.

Mr Sipi and Mr Naawi speaking in their capacities as EFMA Directors thanked the consultants for coming to the community to seek their views.

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Draft report prepared by Anthony de Fries and Marshall Betzel circulated on 24 May 2013.

Report finalised on 28 June 2013.

Attachment 1 – Attendees at Erub Meetings (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2013)

<b>Attendees</b>
Mr Arthur Naawi (Director Erub Fisheries Management Association)
Mr Amos Sipi (Director Erub Fisheries Management Association)
Ms Amina Ghee (attended part of the second meeting)
<b>Apologies</b>
Councillor Jimmy Joe Gela (PBC Chair)
Mr Kenny Bedford (Chair Erub Fisheries Management Association)
Mr Bert Matysek (Deputy Chair Erub Fisheries Management Association)

## **Record – Community Meetings on Masig (Yorke) Island – 7 and 8 May 2013**

*Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities' perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery*

### **Overview**

Two meetings were held in the Masig (Yorke) Island Community Hall. Separate meeting reports are provided for both sessions. Both meetings were opened and closed formally however the structure of the discussions was relatively informal.

The meetings were not tape recorded so this report is not a 'he said, she said' document. Matters raised are reported under a series of sub-headings and attributions are provided when a participant initially raised a particular issue and/or provided specific information.

### **Meeting 1 - Masig (Yorke) Island Community Hall**

**2:30 pm to 4:50 pm Tuesday 7 May 2013**

#### **Opening remarks**

Mr John Morris (Deputy Chair Masigalgai (TSI) Corporation) welcomed Mr Betzel and Mr de Fries to Masig Island and expressed the wish that the consultation would be productive and help improve the opportunities and wellbeing of the Masig community.

Mr Rocky Gela then led the group in an opening prayer.

Ms Hilda Mosby (Chair Yorke Island Fishers Association) introduced the consultants and briefed the meeting on the consultation.

Mr de Fries thanked Mr Morris for the welcome and indicated that both he and Mr Betzel were pleased to be able to visit Masig Island and acknowledged the Masigalgai people as the traditional owners of land and sea. Mr de Fries extended their gratitude to Mr Francis Nai (PBC Chair) for his support of the visit.

The consultants thanked Ms Hilda Mosby for her assistance with meeting arrangements and publicity and also acknowledged the assistance of Councillor Fraser Nai and council officers Mr John Mosby and Mr Desmond Billy with the planning and organisation of the visit.

Those present noted that a second meeting was scheduled for Wednesday morning and agreed that the initial meeting be conducted as an introductory discussion with the opportunity to revisit and refine feedback on the Wednesday.

The meeting was opened and closed formally. The consultants made introductory remarks but after that the discussion was free flowing.

Eleven members of the Masig community attended the first meeting. A list of the participants is provided in Attachment 1.

### **Background**

Mr de Fries explained that the consultation in the four communities formed part of a research project supported by the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) designed to assess

Indigenous communities' views on the size of trawlers operating in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and also about the size of the nets they used.

Mr de Fries then briefed the meeting on recent trends in the fishery. The group reviewed charts which showed a significant decline in the fishing effort in the prawn trawl fishery since 2001.

Mr Betzel noted that vessel activity in the current season had been limited to about six to eight boats with a few additional vessels fishing in the early part of the season. Mr Betzel observed that operating trawl vessels in a remote area like Torres Strait had become less profitable in recent years for the following reasons:

- Increases in the price of diesel fuel
- Decline in the price received for prawns
- Impact of the high Australian dollar (on exports)
- Competition with farmed prawns in the domestic market.

Mr Betzel indicated that all concession holders (including inactive licences) pay management levies on their boat licenses and effort entitlements (nights) and it was getting to a point where some were considering handing in their licenses (surrenders). Mr Betzel indicated that the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MAC) was concerned because the cost of management would then be recovered from fewer concession holders (their fees would rise) and that this might lead to more surrenders (snowball effect).

Mr Betzel noted that the MAC also considered it was important to arrest the decline in activity as companies which provided support to the prawn fleet like motherships might decide to withdraw their services on economic grounds.

Mr Betzel then explained that, in 2011, a fishing company active in the Northern Prawn Fishery, A. Raptis and Sons Pty Ltd, had submitted a proposal to the Torres Strait Prawn MAC seeking the Committee's support for changes to management arrangements which would allow bigger boats to operate in the fishery and to use larger nets.

Mr Betzel noted that allowing bigger boats in would mean vessels larger than 20 metres which were currently operating in the Northern Prawn Fishery (Gulf) could consider fishing in the Torres Strait. Mr Betzel indicated that vessels currently endorsed to fish in the Queensland Fishery were also restricted to under 20 metres and noted that a proportion of these operators did not support changes to boat size limits in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

The consultants explained that the second aspect of the proposal was to allow the use of bigger nets. The meeting clarified that the *Fisheries Management Notice No. 71* limited the size of nets used to 88 metres which was the combined length of headrope and ground rope which determined the size of the opening (mouth) of the net. Mr Betzel explained with the help of a net diagram that boats towed a number of smaller nets which were joined together (tri or quad gear).

Mr Betzel noted that it wouldn't be economic for bigger boats to use nets restricted to 88 metres. Mr Betzel added that allowing the existing boats (under 20 metres) to use bigger gear could potentially increase their efficiency.

Mr de Fries noted that they (the consultants) were not promoting changes to vessel size limits or gear limits but considered it was important to set out the background to the trial proposal as it helped explain why the consultation had been commissioned.



## Issues raised at the first meeting

### Why was this consultation needed?

A number of attendees sought clarification on why the consultation was needed because they considered feedback from the Indigenous communities through established consultative frameworks had made it clear that there was no support (from traditional inhabitants) for relaxation of current boat length and net length restrictions in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

Mr Gavin Mosby advised the meeting that while he was an indigenous member of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery MAC he was attending this consultation as a member of the Masig community. Mr Mosby emphasised that he had raised concerns from the traditional sector about prawn trawling including those issues specific to Masig Island consistently and clearly in the MAC.

Mr Betzel stated that he was a MAC member and while he wasn't here in that capacity he supported Mr Mosby's statement. Mr de Fries indicated that he had reviewed a range of TSP MAC Chair's Summaries and minutes in relation to this issue and confirmed that the concerns raised by Mr Mosby in relation to the TSP were clearly reflected in those documents.

Mr Mills indicated that he was skeptical about the consultation and questioned if a decision to allow larger boats and larger nets had essentially been made. The consultants understood that this was not the case and indicated that the proposed trial of larger boats and nets was not supported by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and consequently was not supported by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PJZA).

Mr Mills then asked why was the concept still being pursued through consultation?

Mr Betzel noted that the PJZA Standing Committee had recommended that additional consultation with indigenous communities focusing on the vessel and gear length input controls be undertaken

Mr de Fries noted that it was difficult to reconcile some issues against fisheries management objectives and when key stakeholders held differing views or expectations consultation and discussions tended to continue until a consensus or resolution was reached.

The consultants acknowledged concerns about external consultation and recognised that it put indigenous fisheries representatives in a difficult position. The consultants emphasised that their role was to listen to views of traditional inhabitants and report them accurately. Mr de Fries considered that pulling together the views from the four communities would complement existing advice by consolidating it into one report. Mr de Fries added the independent nature of consultation allowed for discussion of higher order concerns (like resource allocation) which were generally outside the terms of reference for MACs.

The issues raised by traditional inhabitants are reported under a range of sub-headings.

### Lack of a flow of benefits to traditional inhabitants

The discussion was greatly assisted by the contributions of a number of Masig elders who had worked on prawn vessels, spent time on trawl training vessels and associated maritime enterprises. A number of these gentlemen indicated that they maintained enduring friendships with a number of non-indigenous skippers and crew from the early days of the trawl fishery.

While noting goodwill existed at the personal level towards the trawl fishers the overwhelming concern expressed by attendees was that there was no formal flow of benefit to the adjacent communities from the operation of the prawn trawl fishery.

Mr Gabriel Nai noted that the prawns occurred in our waters and recalled that in the 1990s three 'T' license packages had been set aside for the Masig, Poruma and Ugar communities. Mr Nai observed that the opportunity to take a share of the fishery had been prioritised however nothing had eventuated.

Mr Mills noted that currently the indigenous sector had no stake in the prawn fishery and recalled that an individual who had tried to activate one of the three licenses 10 years ago had bureaucratic walls put in front of him. Mr Mills raised strong concerns over the status of those license packages and indicated that it wasn't clear to him if they had been sold or were indeed surrendered under the 2007 buyback.

Mr Mills indicated that if the three licenses were now 'gone' that the affected communities may well feel aggrieved about the lack of appropriate consultation associated with a decision of that magnitude.

**Request – agency clarification**

The meeting requested that the consultants raise this concern and recommend that AFMA clarify the status of the three license packages and how decisions relating to these licenses were made and report back to the relevant communities.

Mr Mills suggested that if the prawn licenses and training pathways for indigenous communities had been clearer it was unlikely that this sort of consultation would be needed because industry and the indigenous sector would now be working in partnership.

Mr Mills referred to the freezer facility which had been constructed on Masig Island (in the 1980s) to encourage trawlers to fish the region and offload their catch but noted that vessels had not taken up the opportunity to use the facilities and consequently the initiative had not provided significant benefits to the Masig community.

Mr Simon Naawi indicated that traditional inhabitants understood well the cost pressures faced by the prawn operators as they also faced the same problems - high fuel and freights costs in their daily life and in relation to their fishing enterprises. Mr Naawi observed that the community had borne the impacts of the trawl fishery for many years without benefit and respectfully suggested that the government agencies and industry needed to offer training and income. Mr Naawi suggested that if a more equitable arrangement could be established then the communities would be empowered to engage in meaningful discussions as genuine stakeholders.

Ms Hilda Mosby supported the views of Masig elders and noted that without a legitimate benefit (income stream) from the fishery there was no incentive for traditional inhabitants to consider reforms or changes which could restore profitability and revitalise the trawl fishery. Ms Mosby noted that the Masig people lived here and would always live here whereas the fishers come and go. Ms Mosby observed that the broader Torres Strait community welcomed the transition in the ownership of access rights in the Spanish Mackerel and Coral Trout fisheries and noted that leasing arrangements now generated an income stream through the TSRA.

Those present agreed that the Prawn Trawl Fishery had operated as a separate entity for over 30 years and that the income from the resources had largely bypassed the communities. Ms Mosby noted that a commitment to establish a more equitable arrangement with traditional inhabitants was overdue. Those present agreed that a move in this direction would be seen as act of good faith (compensation) for years of resources going out.

### Impacts of the Torres Strait Prawn Trawl fishery

Mr de Fries advised that the CSIRO had recently completed an environmental assessment<sup>1</sup> of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Mr de Fries reported that CSIRO found that there were no unsustainable impacts at current levels of fishing effort however noted that the analysis identified a number of fish species and one assemblage which might need management attention if fishing activity returned to levels experienced in 2005 (which was about four times current activity).

Attendees expressed interest in the updated assessment but raised three views:

1. That given very high levels of effort in the 1990s it was likely that some of the habitats had been transformed by the effects of repeated trawl operations and recent surveys, while scientifically sound, may be investigating altered habitats.
2. That the impact of trawl activity on the behavior of Tropical Rock Lobster (and its subsequent availability to local fishers) is unlikely to be picked up in these sorts of analyses. A number of participants indicated that trawling did affect their access to rock lobster.
3. That the assessment was limited to the effects of trawling operations and did not cover impacts arising from vessel generated pollution, sinkings and maritime incidents which were of particular concern to the Masig community.

Participants raised concerns about catches of Tropical Rock Lobster by prawn trawlers. Mr Betzel acknowledged that there had been catches in the past (migrating lobsters) but emphasised that retention of Tropical Rock Lobster was now prohibited and that skippers and owners faced license suspension if they were found to be in breach of that rule.

The meeting also noted that there had been a reduction in bycatch of both protected species and general bycatch due to mandatory use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) and Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs).

Those attending were comfortable that the retention of Tropical Rock Lobster by the prawn fleet had largely been addressed but reiterated the views that the conduct of the fishery did alter rock lobster behavior and on this basis were not supportive of letting bigger trawlers and nets into the fishery.

Mr Naawi and Mr Nai pointed out the Queensland had rationalised its compliance operations and that there were now no resources permanently stationed on Thursday Island.

### Associated impacts

Mr Gavin Mosby outlined the following concerns associated with trawl vessel operations:

- Nine sinkings in twenty years (not many successful recoveries)
- A significant accumulation of trash on the seafloor around the 'Craypot' (anchorage off Kodall Island)
- Navigation incidents with divers and workers engaged in Kailig Enterprises Sponge Farm

Mr Mosby acknowledged the sadness associated with the loss of lives when FV Dynasty sank. Mr Mosby explained that Masig community nevertheless remained concerned about pollution near

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<sup>1</sup> Pitcher, C. R. (2013) Environmental sustainability assessment update for habitats, assemblages and bycatch species in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Scientific Technical Report. CSIRO, Australia.

their home and in particular the potential for persistent chemical pollution from sunken vessels generally.

Mr Betzel recognised the community's concerns about sunken vessels and noted that the depth a vessel came to rest in at sometimes prevented salvage (over 30 meters) and noted in one case that the bodies of two crew members were not recovered.

The meeting reflected on this situation before resuming discussions.

Mr Mosby reiterated that he had spoken in formal committees about these concerns and now advised the Masig community that their consideration of calls for allowing larger vessels with bigger nets into the fishery should be premised on the past performance of the fishery against community concerns. Mr Mosby indicated that the history of the trawl sector was analogous to a resume for a job where an employer would place a lot of emphasis on a person's accomplishments before employing them.

Mr Mosby concluded by noting that if industry came forward with proposals for clean-ups etc then he considered that the community may respond more positively.

The meeting noted that since there have been less vessels working in the fishery, there had been fewer incidences of crew coming ashore when there were disagreements on vessels. Mr Ned Mosby noted cheerfully that on occasions crew had come ashore without sufficient funds to find their own way back home. The consultants recognised that due to the remoteness and limited accommodation on the island that vessel's problem could become the island's problem. Mr Betzel was pleased to hear that the community handled these situations positively and suggested it would be worth raising the matter with the MAC along with the need for some cultural awareness training for crew so when they came ashore to use the shop or meet people they dressed to community standards etc.

#### **Action**

Mr Betzel to raise the need for cultural awareness training or handouts for non-indigenous crew working in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery with the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery MAC.

#### Concerns about past and current trials

Participants raised concerns about existing trials. Mr Mills raised concerns about recent a survey for Bêche-de-mer on Warrior Reef and suggested the survey vessel had been allowed to take commercial quantities while the fishery was closed to TIB licence holders.

Mr Naawi, while not supportive of trials of bigger vessels or nets, indicated that should circumstances change and trials be proposed again that detailed consideration be given to enacting trawl closures around the various islands. Participants noted that trawlers could fish very close to Masig Island whereas there was a significant trawl closure around Erub Island which the meeting understood was there to protect Pearl Shell beds.

## **Meeting 2**

### **Masig (Yorke) Island Community Hall**

**11:40 am to 3:30 pm Wednesday 8 May 2013**

#### **Opening remarks**

The meeting got underway following relaxed informal discussions over tea and coffee. Ms Hilda Mosby introduced the consultants to the new faces in attendance.

Mr de Fries thanked Ms Mosby and thanked the attendees for their interest. Mr de Fries speaking on behalf of himself and co –investigator, Mr Betzel, acknowledged the Masigalgal people as the traditional owners of land and sea.

Elder Mr Moses Mene then formally welcomed the consultants on behalf of the Masig Community.

The meeting commenced at about 11:40 am. Eight members of the Masig community attended the second meeting. A list of the participants is provided in Attachment 2.

Ms Mosby indicated that, subject to local participants' wishes, that the consultants might like to step outside the meeting while the locals caucused particular issues. Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel supported this suggestion.

#### **Background**

Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel provided a similar introduction to the opening meeting and explained why the consultation was being undertaken.

Mr Betzel firstly provided some follow-up on questions raised at Tuesday's meeting:

##### Trawl closure around Masig Island

Mr Betzel advised that there was no formal closure which prevented boats trawling close to Masig.

##### Status of community trawl license packages

Mr Betzel indicated that informal advice (obtained after office hours) was that these licenses had been relinquished as part of the 2007 buyback process which also involved finfish licences.

Mr Naawi indicated that if this was the case then the consultation around this decision had been unsatisfactory. Mr Naawi emphasised that any consultation to do with the allocation or adjustment of access rights needed to be handled very carefully. Mr Naawi noted that all three agencies needed to be aware of this and in particular the TSRA given it was their responsibility to represent the traditional inhabitants.

Mr de Fries noted that the consultants had agreed to recommend that AFMA circulate a more detailed explanation to the communities involved.

##### Boat size and net size

Mr Betzel then provided more detail on the original request from A. Raptis and Sons Pty Ltd in response to questions from participants.

Mr Betzel indicated that the company was hoping to be able to deploy some of its boats which operated in the Gulf of Carpentaria (Northern Prawn Fishery) into the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Mr Betzel explained that the Torres Strait Prawn MAC had considered the proposal, and despite opposition from some members the Committee had recommended a trial of larger boats and larger

nets be undertaken. Mr Betzel noted that the MAC was an advisory body and that its recommendation was not supported by the PZJA. Mr Betzel indicated that the PZJA Standing Committee recommended that additional consultation with the traditional sector be undertaken.

Mr Betzel explained that the original proposal included a mechanism for balancing effort by reducing nights for boats using larger gear – such that a bigger boats towing bigger nets would have to work to a different formula for translating their Units of Fishing Capacity (UFCs) to nights such that:

- 1 UFC = 1 night (current setup)
- 1 UFC = 0.7 night (bigger boat/bigger net) (CONVERSION RATE HYPOTHETICAL)

Mr de Fries circulated a chart which showed the size range of trawlers operating in the Northern Prawn Fishery. Mr Betzel advised that the Gulf boats which were interested in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery were mostly those between 20 and 25 metres.

Mr Betzel indicated that the bigger boats were only economic if they used larger nets (up to 128 metre combined head rope and footrope). The meeting noted the second aspect of the proposal recognised that not all operators could/would be able to use bigger boats notably the dual endorsed Queensland operators (also under a 20 metre size limit). It was proposed that all boats could elect to use bigger nets so that these operators had an option available to increase their efficiency.

Mr Betzel concluded by noting that the company which put forward the proposal had indicated a willingness to engage indigenous fishers on traineeships.

Mr Ned Mosby acknowledged the proposal's good intentions with respect to traineeships however indicated that the big issue was that the fishery had been operating for over 28 years with nothing coming back to the traditional inhabitants' communities. Mr Mosby's position was that the Masig community didn't need big trawlers here to cause additional damage to the seabed and that they should remain in the Gulf.

Mr Betzel put forward a hypothetical scenario where there was no trial, the motherships withdrew after a few more marginal seasons and the remaining trawlers stopped fishing in the Torres Strait. Mr Betzel asked if this would have an impact on the Masig Community.

Mr Mosby indicated that the cessation of trawling would have no negative impacts on the Masig community. Mr Mosby noted that most product landed by the TIB sector was either air freighted or taken out on regular barge services so the loss of motherships wasn't a big concern.

Mr Dan Mosby did not support relaxation of boat length restrictions because he believed bigger boats carried a higher risk of incidents and would create more environmental damage if they were wrecked.

Mr Mosby agreed that the lack of compensation from trawlers to the communities was viewed unfavorably by traditional inhabitants. Mr Mosby suggested that allowing existing trawlers to try larger nets might be acceptable but stressed that he firmly opposed opening the fishery to bigger trawlers.

Mr Mosby then raised the issue of bycatch of Tropical Rock Lobster by trawlers. Mr Betzel considered that things had changed since years ago and the remaining crews were fairly responsible and hoped to be here for the longer run. Mr Betzel advised that there were heavy



sanctions if boats were caught with lobsters on board and noted that the use of Bycatch Excluder Devices (BRDs) had also reduced catches of byproduct species like squid and bugs.

Mr Ned Mosby asked if the views of the owners of smaller boats (like those currently fishing) had been taken into account. Mr Betzel indicated that the MAC was avenue for the trawl operators to have their say and noted that not all concession holders (including some active operators) supported the relaxation of the current input controls (boat size and net length restrictions).

Mr Mosby reiterated that, under current arrangements, there was no benefit to the community from the prawn fishery and that this inequity would not improve if bigger boats with bigger nets were allowed in. Mr Mosby noted that the community did experience a downside from the fishery and indicated that others had already outlined the impacts on the environment and community enterprises associated with the fishery and vessel activity around anchorages.

#### Generic concerns about the conduct of trials

Mr Naawi raised more general concerns about fishing trials and asked how effectively they would be monitored particularly given the withdrawal of the Queensland Fisheries and Boating Patrol from Thursday Island to Cairns.

Mr Naawi's experience was that you only saw officers infrequently like at the start of the season. Those present also noted that loss of administration services also meant payments for licenses etc were more problematic for traditional inhabitants.

Mr Naawi considered that direct consultation on things like trials was needed so those involved could appreciate firsthand community concerns. Mr Betzel agreed that while it would be more expensive it would be beneficial if the Torres Strait Prawn MAC could organise an occasional meeting on Masig Island given its close proximity and association with the fishery. Mr Thomas Mabo supported Mr Naawi's suggestion adding that it was very helpful to have the key people come together to discuss significant matters and noted that Masig Island was central to the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

Mr Naawi recalled Mr Mill's concerns about the recent Beche de-Mer trials as an example of a trial where it appeared insufficient consultation had been undertaken with communities and TIB fishers. Mr Naawi understood that the participating vessel had used hookah gear and took catches over certain amounts.

Ms Hilda Mosby asked the attendees if they were comfortable with the discussions and if they wanted to ask the consultants to step outside while they finalised any closing advice. Those present were comfortable with how things had been discussed. On this basis Ms Mosby asked the consultants to stay in the room, and with the support of the elders present made a closing statement (summarised below).

Your report will carry the Voice of the Masigalgal (traditional owners and peoples) and convey our concerns about the Prawn Fishery. This fishery has operated around our home since 1971 and we hold concerns about the future direction of the fishery and its relationship with our community and our aspirations. Will our voice be heard?

Management needs to know the Voice of the Masigalgal People, and that it should be heard and respected.

Ms Mosby then spoke in her capacity as Chair of the Yorke Island Fishers Association. Ms Mosby asked that, with respect to the other communities, that the consultants recognise that the Masig is

the community with the strongest alignment with the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and bears a significant proportion of the impacts of the fishery's operations.

Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel acknowledged Masig Island's central location with respect to the main trawl grounds and recognised the near shore impacts associated with vessel traffic and use of the lee shore as an anchorage.

Mr de Fries advised that they would provide a draft report of the meetings to attendees for review and comments.

Mr de Fries thanked everyone for their interest and input. Mr de Fries then addressed Mr Mene and on behalf of himself and Mr Betzel indicated that it had been a pleasure to come and meet the Masig community and discuss fisheries matters with its people who had a strong bond with the sea and a tradition of sustainably harvesting its resources for food and income.

Mr Mene then closed the meeting at 3:30 pm and thanked the consultants for coming to talk to the community.

Pastor Ned Mosby then led the group in prayer and provided a blessing for afternoon tea.

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Draft report prepared by Anthony de Fries and Marshall Betzel - 20 May 2013

Report approved by the community members who attended the meeting - conveyed by TSRA Member – Masig Ms Hilda Mosby - 17 July 2013.

Attachment 1 – Attendees at Tuesday’s meeting (7<sup>th</sup> May 2013)

<b>Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013</b>
Mr John Morris (PBC Deputy Chair)
Mr Rocky Gela
Mr Thomas Mabo
Mr Ned Mosby
Ms Hilda Mosby (President Yorke Island Fishers Association, TSRA Member – Masig)
Mr Moses Mene
Mrs Nancy Mene
Mr David Mosby
Mr Patrick Mills (Torres Strait Fishermen’s Association)
Mr Simon Naawi
Mr Gabriel Nai
<b>Apologies</b>
Mr Francis Nai (PBC Chair)
Councillor Fraser Nai
Mr John Mosby

Attachment 2 – Attendees at Wednesday’s meeting (8<sup>th</sup> May 2013)

<b>Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013</b>
Mr Willy Gamia
Mr Rocky Gela
Mr Thomas Mabo
Mr Moses Mena
Mr Dan Mosby
Ms Hilda Mosby
Mr Ned Mosby
Mr Simon Naawi

## **Record – Community Meeting on Poruma (Coconut) Island – 10 May 2013**

*Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities' perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery*

### **Overview**

The meeting was held at the Poruma Gazebo between 9:30 and 11:30 am on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013. The meeting and discussion was relatively informal. Issues raised are reported under a series of sub-headings.

### **Opening remarks**

Mr Francis Pearson (TSRA Member Poruma) welcomed Mr Betzel and Mr de Fries to Poruma Island and introduced the other eight attendees.

Mr de Fries thanked Mr Pearson for his assistance in organising the consultation. Mr Frank Faud (Chair Porumalgal (TSI) Corporation) then joined the meeting. Mr de Fries thanked Mr Faud for his support for the visit and indicated that both he and Mr Betzel were pleased to be able to visit Poruma Island and acknowledged the Poruma people as the traditional owners of land and sea.

The consultants also acknowledged the support provided by Councillor Phillemon Mosby and the help of council officers Ms Mokathani Lui, Ms Renee Pearson and Ms Thamey Pearson with the arrangements.

Ten members of the Poruma community attended. A list of the participants is provided in Attachment 1.

### **Background**

Mr de Fries explained that the consultation in the four communities formed part of a research project supported by the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) designed to assess Indigenous communities' views on the size of trawlers operating in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and also about the size of the nets they used.

Mr de Fries then briefed the meeting on recent trends in the fishery. The group reviewed charts which showed a significant decline in the fishing effort in the prawn trawl fishery since 2001. Mr de Fries added that recent scientific assessments indicated that Tiger and Endeavour prawn stocks were in good shape and that recent catch rates for Tiger Prawns were very good.

Mr Betzel noted that vessel activity in the current season had been limited to about six to eight boats with a few additional vessels fishing in the early part of the season. Mr Betzel observed that operating trawl vessels in a remote area like Torres Strait had become less profitable in recent years for the following reasons:

- Increases in the price of diesel fuel
- Decline in the price received for prawns (particularly the export market for Tiger Prawns)
- Impact of the high Australian dollar (on exports)
- Competition with farmed prawns in the domestic market.

Mr Betzel indicated that all concession holders (including inactive licences) pay management levies on their boat licenses and effort entitlements (nights) and it was getting to a point where some were considering handing in their licenses (surrenders). Mr Betzel indicated that the Torres Strait

Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MAC) was concerned because the cost of management would then be recovered from fewer concession holders (their fees would rise) and that this might lead to more surrenders (snowball effect).

Mr Betzel noted that the MAC also considered it was important to arrest the decline in activity as companies which provided support to the prawn fleet like motherships might decide to withdraw their services on economic grounds.

Mr Betzel then explained that, in 2011, a fishing company active in the Northern Prawn Fishery, A. Raptis and Sons Pty Ltd, had submitted a proposal to the Torres Strait Prawn MAC seeking the Committee's support for changes to management arrangements which would allow bigger boats to operate in the fishery and to use larger nets.

Mr Betzel noted that allowing bigger boats in would mean vessels larger than 20 metres which were currently operating in the Northern Prawn Fishery (Gulf of Carpentaria) could consider fishing in the Torres Strait. Mr Betzel indicated that trawl vessels currently endorsed to fish in the Queensland Fishery were also restricted to under 20 metres and noted that a proportion of these operators did not support changes to boat size limits in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

The consultants explained that the second aspect of the proposal was to allow the use of bigger nets. The meeting clarified that the *Fisheries Management Notice No. 71* limited the size of nets used to 88 metres which was the combined length of headrope and ground rope which determined the size of the opening (mouth) of the net. Mr Betzel explained with the help of a net diagram that boats towed a number of smaller nets which were joined together (tri or quad gear).

Mr Betzel noted that it wouldn't be economic for bigger boats to use nets restricted to 88 metres. Mr Betzel added that allowing the existing boats (under 20 metres) to use bigger gear could potentially increase their efficiency. Mr Betzel noted that however some of the smaller boats may not have sufficient power to tow nets much bigger than the ones they are currently using.

Mr de Fries noted that as consultants they were not there to promote a trial of larger boats or nets but considered it was important to set out the background to the trial proposal as it helped explain why the consultation had been commissioned.

Mr Cedric Pearson asked the consultants if, after holding discussions with other island communities (Erub and Masig), they had a good feeling by now as to how the communities felt about the concept of larger vessels. Mr Betzel noted that the message so far was consistent and that there was little support for allowing larger trawlers into the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Mr Betzel noted that there was some recognition that larger vessels (22 to 25 metres) might be better equipped to take on indigenous trainees which was promoted by the company seeking to deploy larger vessels.

## **Issues raised**

### Has a decision already been made?

Mr Cedric Pearson noted that some in the community were concerned that a decision to provide flexibility for bigger boats and nets in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery may have already been made. Mr de Fries explained that the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery MAC had recommended a trial of bigger boats and nets be undertaken however emphasised that the MAC was only an advisory body and the recommendation (which was not unanimous) had not been endorsed by the PZJA. Mr de Fries added that the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) had not supported the proposed trial and

that it was also important to note that not all concession holders in the fishery supported opening it up to bigger boats.

Mr de Fries mentioned that he and AFMA's CEO, Dr James Findlay, had appreciated an invitation to meet with the TSRA Board on 1 March 2013 and appreciated the TSRA Chair, Mr Joseph Elu, confirm that the Board supported the consultation proceeding. Mr de Fries added that this did not mean that the TSRA Board supported a trial of larger boats and nets.

Mr de Fries confirmed that he and Mr Betzel were mindful that indigenous representatives on the MAC and in other forums had provided clear feedback on community concerns about bigger boats. He added that, as consultants, they weren't seeking to overturn those views but consolidate them and report on any other views put forward in relation to the size of trawl vessels and the gear they used.

Mr Betzel noted that he thought it was worth the effort to talk to communities and acknowledged that in an ideal world the trawl industry would have an association that could liaise directly with affected communities on issues of concern and try to identify how industry and the communities could improve outcomes for both parties. Mr Betzel noted one concession holder was now looking to establish some shore based capacity (net repairs etc) at Masig Island which would provide work and income for the locals.

#### Impacts on Tropical Rock Lobster (crays)

A number of attendees advised that, in their experience, the trawl fishery had a detrimental effect on Tropical Rock Lobsters particularly the success rates for divers who worked closer inshore. Mr Cedric Pearson observed that crays moved through and across the channels and many considered that trawl activity contributed to some of the western side communities missing out on crays.

Mr Betzel noted that trawl vessels faced big penalties for retaining crays and the use of Bycatch Excluder Devices (BRDs) has reduced the catch of squid and bugs and maybe crays. Mr Pearson acknowledged the improvements in regulation and bycatch reduction but was still concerned about the level of discard mortality for crays returned after capture.

Mr Olandi Pearson indicated that the TIB fishers were concerned that larger vessels and nets would have a greater chance of interacting with crayfish and as such would have a detrimental effect on the species and therefore reduce local fishers' profitability. Other participants suggested it wasn't just trawlers catching crays which caused concern but the presence of them working seemed to affect the cray's movement patterns.

#### Environmental impacts

Mr de Fries advised that the CSIRO had recently updated their environmental assessment<sup>1</sup> of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Mr de Fries reported that CSIRO found that there were no unsustainable impacts at current levels of fishing effort however noted that the analysis identified a number of fish species and one assemblage which might need management attention if fishing activity returned to levels experienced around 2005.

The meeting looked some of the fish species identified as being at medium risk by the CSIRO and attendees indicated that they were not significant species in terms of local consumption. A number

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<sup>1</sup> Pitcher, C. R. (2013) Environmental sustainability assessment update for habitats, assemblages and bycatch species in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Scientific Technical Report. CSIRO, Australia.

of long time fishers indicated that the trawl gear with tickler chains had the capacity to modify the bottom and indicated that intense fishing earlier in the fishery may have changed habitats in heavily fished areas.

Mr de Fries provided a hard copy of the CSIRO report to Mr Francis Pearson.

#### Possible economic impacts (on communities) if the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery continues to decline

The attendees noted that the viability of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery was been impacted by the decline in the price received for Tiger Prawns against a backdrop of increasing operational costs particularly the price of diesel fuel. Those present also faced similar cost pressures in their fishing operations and noted that the current price of fuel on Poruma was \$2.60 per litre for unleaded petrol and \$2.45 per litre for diesel.

Mr Betzel asked what impacts the local community might feel if activity in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery continued to decline or actually came to a halt, noting that the latter might happen if the company who provided mothership services to the trawl fleet withdrew that service from the Torres Strait.

Mr Cedric Pearson considered that there would be no real change to Poruma's economic circumstances if the fishery concluded although it was possible that fishing for crays might improve. The local fishers indicated that the community did not rely on the motherships for provisions or to get their product to market.

A number of attendees suggested that the lack of a flow of benefits from the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Torres to communities adjacent to the trawl grounds for many years was the fundamental barrier to positive islander engagement in the prawn fishery's management settings. Those present emphasised that the fishery operated in their home waters and apart from the existence of three licenses set aside in the 1990s there didn't seem to have been much attention given to securing a share of the fishery's proceeds for Torres Strait communities. Mr Betzel advised that the issue of the three licenses was raised during the meetings on Masig Island and the consultants would recommend to AFMA that they write to the relevant communities about the status of the three community licenses.

Mr de Fries noted that the lack of flow of benefits from the fishery to indigenous communities was probably the key issue in the consultation thus far.

Attendees appreciated that there was scope for improving indirect benefits like cooperative ventures (landing catch, net repairs) and indigenous traineeships but the general view was that these were secondary considerations to a formal arrangement which would provide 'resource rent' to the communities. Mr Cedric Pearson added that if a more equitable arrangement could be established then the distribution of income between communities was then a matter for the TSRA and the communities. The attendees noted that the Government supported restructure in the line fisheries (ownership reallocated to the Torres Strait islanders) had been welcomed by the traditional sector. The meeting also considered that the transition appeared to have been managed in a reasonable manner for both the communities and the former (non-Indigenous) license holders.

#### Boat and net size

The attendees understood the rationale behind operators seeking access for bigger boats particularly if companies could then utilize their Gulf of Carpentaria boats in the Torres Strait before the season opened in the Gulf. Mr Betzel also noted that it would give them additional options

when conditions weren't that favorable like this season where low rainfall had lead to lower Banana Prawn catches.

Those present explained that letting in bigger boats with bigger nets could create an influx of boats less familiar with the Torres Straits, particularly its more confined trawl grounds and trickier currents and this could exacerbate environmental impacts and lead to more incidents.

The overall comment from the group at the meeting was that there is no support for the proposed trial in any form.

A number of participants suggested respectfully that was unrealistic to expect the communities to endorse more flexible access arrangements for an industrial fishery on their doorstep when for the last 30 years they had received no benefit from the fishery but continued to absorb its impacts.

#### Close

Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel thanked the attendees for their interest and contributions. Mr de Fries indicated that they would circulate a draft report from the meeting through Mr Francis Pearson and urged those present to have a look over it to makes sure they were happy with the way their advice was reported.

Mr de Fries then addressed Mr Faud and thanked him for the opportunity to come and have this discussion with the Poruma community.

Mr Faud thanked both consultants for coming to hear views of the Poruma community and wished them a safe journey back to their homes.

The meeting closed at 11:30 am

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Draft report prepared by Anthony de Fries and Marshall Betzel - 24 May 2013

Report approved by the community members who attended the meeting - conveyed by TSRA member Mr Francis Pearson - 20 August 2013.



Attachment 1 – Attendees at Poruma Meeting (10<sup>th</sup> of May 2013)

<b>Attendees</b>
Mr Frank Faud (PBC Chair)
Mr Francis Pearson (TSRA Member Poruma)
Mr Dick Billy
Mr Jackson Ahwang
Mr Jerry Faud
Mr Harry Ketchell
Mr Cedric Pearson
Mr Jack Pearson
Mr Jeffrey Pearson
Mr Joseph Pearson
Mr Olandi Pearson

## **Record – Community Meeting on Ugar (Stephens) Island – 29 May 2013**

*Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities' perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery*

### **Overview**

The meeting was held at the Conference Room at the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) Office on Ugar Island between 10:30 and 12:30 pm on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013. The meeting was opened and closed formally and after introductory remarks the discussions were relatively informal. Issues raised are reported under a series of sub-headings.

### **Opening prayer**

Mr Victor Morris delivered the opening prayer.

### **Opening remarks**

Mr Noel Baker (PBC Chair) welcomed Mr Betzel and Mr de Fries to Ugar Island.

Mr de Fries thanked Mr Baker for his support of the visit and indicated that both he and Mr Betzel were pleased to be able to visit Ugar Island and acknowledged the Ugar people as the traditional owners of land and sea.

The consultants also acknowledged the support provided by Councillor Rocky Stephen and the help of Divisional Manager Mr John Armitage with the arrangements.

Mr de Fries recognised the central role Kos and Abob Fisheries occupied in regard to the community's fishing enterprises and was pleased that ten members of the Corporation were in attendance. Mr De Fries thanked Mr Rocky Stephen, in his capacity as head of Kos and Abob, for helping with scheduling of the visit to maximise input from members.

In all, thirteen members of the Ugar community attended the consultation. A list of the participants is provided in Attachment 1.

The consultants noted an apology from Mr Jerry Stephen (TSRA Member - Ugar).

### **Introductions**

Mr Rocky Stephen briefed the meeting on the consultation and asked if the consultants would mind providing a bit of background about their work and relationship to the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

Mr De Fries noted that he started working in fisheries as a field scientist with CSIRO in 1983 and had spent a fair bit of time at sea on a range of fishing boats including prawn trawlers and tuna boats. Mr de Fries joined AFMA in the mid 1990s and worked in the observer and environment sections and since 2002 had been working as an independent consultant. Mr de Fries advised that his recent work had focused on fisheries consultation and providing independent reports for stakeholder meetings.

Mr de Fries advised that he had no pecuniary interest in any commercial fishery and was being paid in accordance with a research contract by the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) to undertake the consultation (with Mr Betzel) and report on Indigenous communities' views on the size of trawlers operating in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and also about the size of

the nets the boats used. Mr De Fries concluded by noting that Ugar Island was the last of the four communities he and Mr Betzel were visiting as part of the research project.

Mr Betzel advised that he had been involved in the fishing industry for 25 years and was now in business as a fish wholesaler and provider and had no commercial interest in fishing boats and did not hold any rights in the Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery, Torres Strait Prawn Fishery or the Northern Prawn Fishery. Mr Betzel noted that he was an industry member on the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee but advised that he wasn't here in that capacity. Mr Betzel explained that his role was to provide an industry perspective and indicated that he didn't have an opinion either way about the boat and net size issue. Mr Betzel advised that he was being paid under contract as co-investigator for the project.

Mr de Fries indicated that he and AFMA's CEO, Dr James Findlay, had appreciated an invitation to meet with the TSRA Board on 1 March 2013 and appreciated the TSRA Chair, Mr Joseph Elu, confirm that the Board supported the consultation proceeding. Mr de Fries emphasised that this did not mean that the TSRA Board supported a trial of larger boats and nets. Mr de Fries noted that Mr Jerry Stephen (TSRA Member - Ugar) was present at the meeting and, in Mr de Fries's opinion, had put forward firm views which were consistent with the message the consultants were hearing on their visits.

## **Background**

The consultants briefed the meeting on recent trends in the fishery. The group reviewed charts which showed a significant decline in the fishing effort in the prawn trawl fishery since 2001. Mr de Fries added that recent scientific assessments indicated that Tiger and Endeavour prawn stocks were in good shape and that recent catch rates for Tiger Prawns had been good.

Mr Betzel commented that between six and eight boats vessel had fished in the current season with some just fishing the early part of the season. Mr Betzel indicated that the decline in participation in the Torres Strait was in part due to its remoteness and higher costs associated with working far from port but added in recent years the situation had got tougher because of:

- Increases in the price of diesel fuel
- Decline in the price received for export Tiger Prawns in the Japanese market which had weakened during the Japanese recession and not fully recovered
- The impact of the strong Australian dollar (on exports)
- Competition with farmed tiger prawns from Taiwan, the Philippines and Malaysia

Mr Betzel noted that there were currently 61 concession holders (including inactive licences) and all were required to pay management levies on their boat licenses and effort entitlements (nights) even if they elected not to fish. Mr Betzel explained that it was getting to a point where some operators were considering handing in their licenses (surrenders).

Mr Betzel indicated that the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MAC) was concerned because the cost of management would then be recovered from fewer concession holders (their fees would rise) and that this might lead to more surrenders (snowball effect).

Mr Betzel agreed to forward Mr Rocky Stephen a list of the current MAC Membership in response to interest from the group on the make-up of the Committee.

**Action**

Consultants to forward details of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery to Councillor Stephen.

Mr Betzel noted that the MAC had held long discussions on how the fishery might be revitalised but recognized that some factors were outside the government and industry's control. The meeting noted that one particular concern was that the company which provided motherships which serviced the prawn fleet like might decide to withdraw their services on economic grounds.

Mr Betzel then explained that, in 2011, a fishing company active in the Northern Prawn Fishery, A. Raptis and Sons Pty Ltd, had submitted a proposal to the Torres Strait Prawn MAC seeking the Committee's support for changes to management arrangements which would allow bigger boats to operate in the fishery and to use larger nets.

Mr Betzel noted that if bigger boats were allowed in then owners of trawlers larger than 20 metres which were currently operating in the Northern Prawn Fishery (Gulf of Carpentaria) might consider fishing in the Torres Strait. Mr Betzel indicated that trawl vessels currently endorsed to fish in the Queensland Fishery were also restricted to under 20 metres and noted that a proportion of these operators did not support changes to boat size limits in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

The consultants explained that the second aspect of the proposal was to allow the use of bigger nets. The meeting clarified that the *Fisheries Management Notice No. 71* limited the size of nets used to 88 metres which was the combined length of headrope and ground rope which determined the size of the opening (mouth) of the net. Mr Betzel explained with the help of a net diagram that boats towed a number of smaller nets which were joined together (tri or quad gear).

Mr Betzel noted that it wouldn't be economic for bigger boats to use nets restricted to 88 metres. Mr Betzel added that allowing the existing boats (under 20 metres) to use bigger gear could potentially increase their efficiency as well. Mr Betzel noted however that some of the smaller boats may not have sufficient power to tow nets much bigger than the ones they were currently using.

Mr de Fries confirmed that he and Mr Betzel were mindful that indigenous representatives on the MAC and in other forums had provided clear feedback on community concerns about bigger boats. He added that, as consultants, they weren't seeking to overturn those views but consolidate them and report on any other views put forward in relation to the size of trawl vessels and the gear they used.

Mr Betzel noted that he thought it was worth the effort to talk to communities and acknowledged that in an ideal world the trawl industry would have an association that could liaise directly with affected communities on issues of concern and try to identify how industry and the communities could improve outcomes for both parties. Mr Betzel noted one concession holder was now looking to establish some shore based capacity (net repairs etc) on Masig Island which would provide work and income for the locals.

Mr Betzel was asked about the capacity of the trawlers. Mr Betzel indicated that, on average, they could hold 10 tonnes of frozen product (2,000 x 5 kilogram cartons). A number of those present considered that 8 boats capable of fishing to this sort of capacity was too many.

Mr Betzel indicated that there were still 61 licences and that if a trial of bigger boats were to proceed they would have to buy/lease one of the existing licences and sufficient nights.

Mr Betzel noted that the message from the communities so far was consistent and that there was little support for allowing larger trawlers into the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Mr Betzel noted that there was some recognition that larger vessels (22 to 25 metres) might be better equipped to take on indigenous trainees which was promoted by the company seeking to trial larger vessels.

The meeting also noted that the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery was subject to an international treaty with Papua New Guinea and that vessels could be cross endorsed to fish in the other countries waters. Mr Betzel advised that there hadn't been much activity on the PNG side in recent years and a number of factors suggested it was unlikely to pick up in the near future.

## **Issues raised**

### Level of frustration of question coming back to communities about bigger boats

Mr Rocky Stephen indicated that there was a level of community frustration that Indigenous representatives had raised concerns about prawn trawling impacts and confirmed general opposition to any relaxation of the boat size requirements yet the issue continued to be pursued.

Mr William Stephen advised that he had formerly served as a Community Fisher Group (CFG) representative however advised that this forum had now been replaced by Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC). Mr Stephen and a number of the attendees were less confident that specific concerns were being communicated as effectively through the IFAC process because there was not a representative from every community on the IFAC.

Mr William Stephen noted in relation to the prawn fishery that they see the boats working nearby but the community received nothing and emphasised that 'the saltwater is where we live' and its resources were the communities' bread and butter. Attendees noted that in busy periods the trawl areas near the islands looked like a highway with all the lights out there.

Mr William Stephen referred to Mr Betzel's earlier comments about the potential for hosting indigenous trainees on bigger boats. Mr Stephen noted that earlier traineeship initiatives, while commendable, had not delivered longer term prospects. Mr Stephen suggested this was because the traditional inhabitants did have ownership of the resources in their waters. The meeting considered that traineeships would only lead somewhere when the communities could exercise some control over how the resources were harvested and had a secure income stream from the exploitation of those resources.

Mr Rocky Stephen observed that there were genuine community concerns about the current consultative model (IFAC) and less confidence that advice from the communities was getting through to the TSRA Board where policy decisions were made and positions were developed for the matters before the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA). Mr Stephen indicated that, having registered this concern, the community nevertheless welcomed consultation at the community level. Mr Stephen considered direct consultation helped agencies could see where communities stood on issues and emphasised that it was important to hold consultation on significant issues face to face with communities.

Mr de Fries acknowledged the concerns and indicated that both he and Mr Betzel appreciated the in-principle support for consultation at the community level but remained respectful of views on this issue had been raised by indigenous representatives in various meetings. Mr de Fries observed that a lot of the discussion around this issue had occurred in the Torres Strait Prawn MAC and similar forums. Mr de Fries noted that these Committees were focused on management

and environmental outcomes and were not the appropriate forums for discussing resource ownership or allocation matters. Mr de Fries indicated that as consultants they were given broad terms of reference and were able to accept all views and were committed to reporting them accurately. Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel indicated the key issue emerging was that the communities were not willing to consider more flexible arrangement for a fishery on their doorstep without some formal recognition of their right to a share of the benefits.

Mr William Stephen expressed caution about consultation where communities were visited separately and suggested it would be better to arrange a get together of with 3 to 4 from each of the affected communities meeting on a central spot, perhaps Masig (Yorke) Island, to discuss such matters. Mr Stephen indicated that this had been undertaken for the finfish sector and had been very helpful.

There was broad support for such an approach particularly given the Ugar TSRA member Mr Jerry Stephen was off community for the current meeting.

Mr Baker (PBC Chair) noted that the process being discussed was to inform further discussions and was not an endpoint. Mr Baker indicated that the TSRA and other agencies would be provided with copies of the report.

Mr De Fries and Mr Betzel both agreed that proposed round table consultation could be the right approach for significant fisheries matters but did not think additional consultation would be needed to clarify the communities' views on larger boats or nets on the basis that the feedback received so far was consistent.

#### Bycatch concerns

Mrs Florianna Bero asked Mr Betzel how many species were caught in trawl nets. Mr Betzel advised that the target species were Tiger, Endeavour and to a lesser extent Red Spot King Prawns and the main byproduct species were squid and bugs. Mr Betzel observed that catches of the latter species had declined since the introduction of Bycatch Excluder Devices (BRDs).

Mrs Janny Morris noted that she had spent time on prawn trawlers and had seen them catch lots of Blue Swimmer Crabs and considered that they had destroyed this resource. Mrs Morris expressed concerned about the fate of other discarded species and impacts on other local fisheries and on this basis preferred smaller boats.

Mrs Morris advised that her experience on prawn trawlers indicated that they damaged all kinds of things and by the time a lot of the bycatch was returned to the water it was dead. Mrs Morris recalled seeing with dolphins under the lights hanging around consuming the discarded fish.

Mr de Fries acknowledged the observations and indicated that CSIRO had recently updated its environmental sustainability assessment<sup>1</sup> on the fishery and their findings was that there were no species at high risk under current levels of fishing activity. Mr de Fries added that a lot of the small fish species discarded by trawlers were short lived and quite productive species.

Mr William Stephen noted that a lot of research had being undertaken on Tropical Rock Lobsters and indicated that he was concerned about the impact of prawn trawling on lobsters migrating to

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<sup>1</sup> Pitcher, C. R. (2013) Environmental sustainability assessment update for habitats, assemblages and bycatch species in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Scientific Technical Report. CSIRO, Australia.

and from Yule Island. Mr Betzel noted that trawl vessels were not allowed to retain Tropical Rock Lobsters and faced big penalties if they were found to have them onboard. Mr Morris was not confident that the current monitoring arrangements could ensure impacts on lobsters were minimised (see next section).

#### Monitoring of the trawlers

Mr William Stephen noted that virtually all the product headed south to Cairns and questioned the adequacy of monitoring arrangements in relation to what was being retained and shipped out. Mr Stephen was particularly concerned that the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol had withdrawn their operational capacity to Cairns.

Mr Stephen also expressed concern that some Gulf trawlers may have fished in the Torres Strait last year without the proper endorsements. The consultants noted this and mentioned that some Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) boats were dual endorsed (held both NPF and Torres Strait licenses). Mr de Fries noted that it was mandatory for all Commonwealth vessels (including the NPF) to have Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) fitted.

Mr Betzel noted that most of the product was transported south on motherships and this facilitated monitoring in Cairns.

Mr Stephen noted firstly that the way the product was transshipped meant there was no benefit to the communities and secondly the communities were effectively 'blind' to what was being exported from the region. Mr Stephens emphasised that regardless of most people doing the right thing that it was important to maintain an appropriate monitoring presence in the actual fishery.

Mr Baker noted that resourcing was tight for field services and considered that better communication between the departments could help improve the monitoring of activity in the fishery.

Mr Betzel indicated that there were inspections of product landed into Cairns. Mr Stephen noted this but still considered that at sea monitoring in the area of the fishery was inadequate.

#### Boat and net size

The attendees recalled that there had been a significant investment by the Commonwealth Government in the last decade to reduce the number of licenses in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and those present didn't want to see a repeat of history with changes opening the door to bigger boats towing bigger nets.

Mr Betzel reiterated that boats were limited to 61 licenses although observed that most were inactive in recent seasons. The consultants explained that there was also a mechanism in the management plan to restrict fishing effort (nights) and this could be calibrated to take the increased efficiency of bigger boats and nets into account.

A number of participants indicated that they would be more comfortable consulting directly with the boats that were currently operating in the fishery before opening the door to bigger boats because once 'the door was opened it was hard to shut'.

#### Lack of a flow of benefits to the communities (traditional inhabitants)

Mr Rocky Stephen suggested that the restructuring of the line fisheries (Spanish Mackerel and Coral Trout) had provided traditional inhabitants with resource security and the access rights

which would allow the Fisheries Corporations to encourage and support local enterprises. The meeting also noted that in these fisheries traditional inhabitants could now engage in management discussions from a position of security. Participants noted that mechanisms to lease quota back to non-Indigenous sector were supported and this improved economic returns for the non-Indigenous fishermen who could still utilise their vessels' capacity. Mr Stephen noted that the communities received a share of the income from the lease arrangements and this helped them develop their commercial capacity.

Mr Rocky Stephen highlighted the line fisheries as a good example of how a transition could be managed and noted that fair outcomes were achieved for the communities and previous license holders. The attendees agreed that for prawn trawling to continue in the Torres Strait that a direct and cooperative relationship between traditional inhabitants and the industry was needed. Those present suggested that fundamental to this was the establishment of an arrangement which recognised and secured the traditional inhabitants' right to a share of the resource.

### Conclusion

Mr Rocky Stephen sought confirmation from both the consultants and attendees that all were satisfied that all issues of concern or questions had been raised. Mr De Fries and Mr Betzel indicated that they were happy with the feedback and offered to absent themselves from the meeting if the community members wanted to review their input or check there were no outstanding matters.

Mr Stephen thanked the consultants and asked them to step outside briefly while the community members discussed the issue.

Mr Stephen called back Mr Betzel and Mr de Fries after about ten minutes and indicated that the Kos and Abob members and community attendees were comfortable with the discussions and requested the consultants record an agreed resolution from the group.

Mr Betzel thanked Mr Stephen for his assistance in chairing the meeting and accepted the community statement as provided:

#### **Resolution from the Ugar community**

The community members of Ugar do not support the proposal for larger vessels (or any increase in gear size) to work in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

Moved: Mrs Janny Morris

Seconded: Mr Daniel Bero

Outcome: All in favour - Resolution supported

### Close

Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel thanked the attendees for their interest and contributions. Mr de Fries indicated that they would circulate a draft report from the meeting through Councillor Rocky Stephen and urged those present to have a look over it to make sure they were happy with the way their advice was reported.

Mr de Fries then addressed Mr Baker (PBC Chair) and, on behalf of Mr Betzel and himself, thanked him for the opportunity to come and have this discussion with the Ugar community.



Mr Baker thanked both consultants for coming to hear views of the Ugar community and wished them a safe journey back to their homes.

Councillor Stephen thanked everyone for their input and meeting closed at 12:30 pm.

Closing prayer

Mr Daniel Bero led the meeting in the closing prayer.

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Draft report prepared by Anthony de Fries and Marshall Betzel - 15 June 2013

Report approved by the community members who attended the meeting - conveyed by Councillor Rocky Stephen - 22 August 2013.

Attachment 1 – Attendees at Ugar Meeting (29<sup>th</sup> of May 2013)

<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Mr Noel Baker(PBC Chair)	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr Rocky Stephen (Councillor Ugar)	President Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr Daniel Bero	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mrs Florianna Bero	Community
Mr Kari Dai	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr Timothy Ghee	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr Kenny Jobi	Community
Mr Robert Modee	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mrs Janny Morris	Community
Mr Victor Morris	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr Daniel Stephen	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr Pau Stephen	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr William Stephen	Member Kos and Abob Fisheries Corporation
Mr Marshall Betzel	Consultant - Cairns
Mr Anthony de Fries	Consultant - Caloundra
<b>Apologies</b>	
Mr Jerry Stephen (TSRA Member - Ugar)	