

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP MEETING NO. 11

Tues 27th JUNE 2017

Followed by CSIRO HARVEST STRATEGY WORKSHOP

Wed 28th – Thurs 29th JUNE 2017

**TSRA Board Room (Torres Strait Haus)
Victoria Parade, Thursday Island**

HAND COLLECTABLE WORKING GROUP MEETING TIMES

Day 1, Tues 27th June - HCWG Meeting, **8:30am – 5:30pm**

Day 1, Tues 27th June – HCWG dinner, **6:30 pm** venue TBA

HARVEST STRATEGY WORKSHOP MEETING TIMES

Day 2, Wed 28th June - Harvest Strategy Workshop, **8:30am – 5:30pm**

Day 3, Thurs 29th June - Harvest Strategy Workshop, **8:30 am – Midday**

DRAFT AGENDA v.2

Day 1 – Hand Collectables Working Group Meeting No. 11

1. Preliminaries

- 1.1. Opening Prayer / Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners / Welcome / Apologies
- 1.2. Adoption of Agenda
- 1.3. Declaration of Interests
- 1.4. Action Items

2. Fishery Updates

- 2.1. AFMA Management and Foreign Compliance update
- 2.2. TSRA update
- 2.3. Native Title update
- 2.4. PNG – National Fisheries Authority update
- 2.5. Queensland Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries update
- 2.6. Domestic Compliance update
- 2.7. Torres Strait fisheries strategic issues including economic trends

3. Research

- 3.1. Research priorities

4. Management

- 4.1. Prickly redfish overcatch 2015 - options to mitigate overcatching
- 4.2. Black teatfish – community monitoring plans
- 4.3. White teatfish – survey outcomes and management priorities
- 4.4. Development of a public register of licence holders
- 4.5. Future management priorities
- 4.6. Crewing of Traditional Inhabitant Boats
- 4.7. Draft AFMA Hand Collectable Fisheries budget 2017/18
- 4.8. Grant of carrier licenses to non-traditional inhabitants

5. Other Business

Day 2 & Day 3 CSIRO Harvest Strategy Workshop

See separate agenda.

Individuals wishing to attend the meeting as an observer must contact the Executive Officer – Andrew Trappett (andrew.trappett@afma.gov.au)

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
PRELIMINARIES Meeting welcome	Agenda Item No. 1.1 For NOTING

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE:**

- an opening prayer;
- an acknowledgement of Traditional Owners;
- the Chairperson's welcome address; and
- apologies received from members unable to attend.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
PRELIMINARIES Adoption of the Agenda	Agenda Item No. 1.2 For Discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group consider and adopt the agenda.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
PRELIMINARIES Declarations of interests	Agenda Item No. 1.3 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

- **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on members' potential or direct conflicts of interest.
- **UPDATE** the standing list of declared interest at **APPENDIX A** as required.

KEY ISSUES

1. Consistent with the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 (FMP1), which guides the operation and administration of PZJA consultative forums, members are asked to disclose and declare any conflicts of interests.
2. Working group members are asked to confirm the standing list of declared interests (**APPENDIX A**) is accurate and provide an update to be tabled if it is not.

DISCUSSION

3. FMP1 recognises that members are appointed to provide input based on their knowledge and expertise and as a consequence, may face potential or direct conflicts of interest. Where a member has a material personal interest in a matter being considered, including a direct or indirect financial or economic interest; the interest could conflict with the proper performance of the member's duties. Of greater concern is the specific conflict created where a member is in a position to derive direct benefit from a recommendation if it is implemented.
4. When a member recognises that a real or potential conflict of interest exists, the conflict must be disclosed as soon as possible. Where this relates to an issue on the agenda of a meeting this can normally wait until that meeting, but where the conflict relates to decisions already made, members must be informed immediately. Conflicts of interest should be dealt with at the start of each meeting. If members become aware of a potential conflict of interest during the meeting, they must immediately disclose the conflict of interest.
5. Where it is determined that a direct conflict of interest exists, the forum may allow the member to continue to participate in the discussions relating to the matter but not in any decision making process. They may also determine that, having made their contribution to the discussions, the member should retire from the meeting for the remainder of discussions on that issue. Declarations of interest, and subsequent decisions by the forum, must be recorded accurately in the meeting minutes.

APPENDIX A – STANDING REGISTER OF DECLARED INTERESTS

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Anne Clarke	Chairperson	Nil
Andrew Trappett	FWG Executive Officer	Nil
Selina Stoute	AFMA Member	Nil
Tom Roberts	QDAF Member	Nil
Mariana Nahas	TSRA Member	Nil
Tim Skewes	Research Member	CSIRO/Independent Consultant. Previous principal scientist for TSSAC project to develop a harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery. Previous CSIRO researcher for TSSAC project investigating traditional take of finfish in Torres Strait.
Maluwap Nona	Industry Member	TIB licence holder. Chairperson Malu Lamar.
Patrick Mills	Industry Member	TIB licence holder. Chairperson, Torres Strait Fisheries Association.
Francis Pearson	Industry Member	TIB licence holder
Michael Passi	Industry Member	TIB licence holder
Kenny Bedford	*TSRA Board - Fisheries Portfolio	TIB licence holder. President - Erub Fisheries Management Association.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
PRELIMINARIES Actions Arising	Agenda Item No. 1.4 For Noting

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Hand Collectable Working Group (HCWG) **NOTE** the progress against Actions Arising from its 10th meeting held on 3 November 2016.

KEY ISSUES

Meeting record

1. The meeting record for the 10th Hand Collectable Working Group (HCWG) meeting was ratified out-of-session.
2. A draft meeting record was circulated to all HCWG members on 9 November 2016 with comments closing on 28 November 2016.
3. After receiving minor technical comments back from HCWG members the meeting record was closed out of session and emailed to members on 9 December 2016.

Actions arising

4. The last meeting of the HCWG in November 2016 noted progress against the Actions Arising from the 9th Working Group meeting. Additional updates on these actions are as follows:

Table 1: Progress against Action items from HCWG No. 9, June 2016

#	Action Item	Who	Status
1.	AFMA to review the size limits set for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery taking into consideration the size limits in place in Queensland and the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery.	AFMA	In progress. To be actioned as part of the Harvest Strategy Project.
4.	Noting the increase in Beche-de-mer catch seizures from illegal foreign fishing vessels but also recognizing the priority on compliance functions, the HCWG recommended AFMA to investigate the feasibility of seized catches to be used in research or re-stocking.	AFMA	Complete. Retention of seized catch is generally unfeasible. Standard operating procedure is for compliance to discard catch at sea once evidence is documented. Live BDM are returned to the water, processed BDM are discarded due to food safety concerns should they be contaminated during processing and enter the market.

5. While no action items were tabled at the HCWG Meeting No. 10, a number of recommendations were made to support current management projects as listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Recommendations made at HCWG No. 10 and status

Number	Recommendation	Status
1.	<p>Noting the workshop outcomes and the HCWG's previous advice (HCWG meeting No.9, June 2016) that the fishery not be opened until measures are in place to improve reporting, the HCWG recommended the following minimum requirements for allowing further fishing for black teatfish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development and implementation of community based catch monitoring arrangements (noting that in the short-term these systems would be voluntary); and • implementation of a regulatory-based catch monitoring/reporting tool. The preferred tool being a mandatory fish receiver system. 	(See next item for status update)
2.	<p>The HCWG considered progressing these initiatives as a high priority to ensure the PZJA may consider options to open the fishery as soon possible next year. Accordingly the Working Group recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community catch reporting plans be submitted to AFMA by 30 November 2016; and • AFMA progress the development of a fish receiver system as soon as practical noting AFMA advice that it may take 5-6 months. 	<p>Letter to license holders mailed 5 Dec 2016 seeking community views. Extension to submission of community catch reporting plans was given until 28 Feb 2017. Update at agenda item 4.2</p> <p>Fish receiver system under development. Estimated time for implementation is December 2017. Update at agenda item 4.5</p>
3.	<p>The Working Group recommended that a written survey be circulated to all beche-de-mer licence holders to canvass preliminary industry views on convening a trial designed to provide an economic opportunity for a select number of fishers to fish for white teatfish using hookah gear.</p>	<p>Letter to license holders mailed on 31 March 2017 seeking views of concession holders on hookah fishing for white teatfish and management priorities. Update at agenda item 4.3.</p>

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
FISHERY UPDATES AFMA Management	Agenda Item No. 2.1 For noting

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE** the reported fishing activity for the Torres Strait beche-de-mer, pearl shell and trochus fisheries and general updates from management and foreign compliance.

KEY ISSUES

Fisheries activity

1. Fishing activity in both the pearl shell and trochus fisheries remain negligible. There were no reports of trochus or pearl shell being harvested in 2015, 2016 seasons or the 2017 season to date, continuing the recent trend of low effort in those fisheries (Table 1, **APPENDIX A**). The low level of catch and effort is thought to be due to low market demand rather than a decline in stock availability.
2. Fishing activity in the beche-de-mer fishery has increased and is largely attributed to increased fisher interest associated with two trial openings for a limited amount of fishing for Black teatfish (Table 2, **APPENDIX A**).
3. At present (June 2017) there are the following number of fishing endorsements on Traditional Inhabitant Boat licenses (noting that TIB fishing licenses may have multiple fishery endorsements) that allow access to hand collectable fisheries:
 - a. Beche-de-mer = 103 fishing licenses
 - b. Pearl shell = 64 fishing licenses
 - c. Trochus = 61 fishing licenses

Catch reporting

4. Beche-de-mer catches reported through docket books remains low. Only two buyers returned docket books to AFMA in 2016. No docket book records have been submitted for the 2017 season (Table 3, **APPENDIX A**).
5. Beche-de-mer catches reported through logbooks remains low. To date only three fishers have reported catch through logbooks. No logbooks have been returned have been submitted for the 2017 season.
6. AFMA is aware fishing for beche-de-mer has been ongoing however due to the lack of catch reports the scale and extent of fishing is unknown.

AFMA FOREIGN COMPLIANCE OPERATIONS UPDATE

7. Illegal foreign fishing in Australian waters is considered a serious threat to Australia's marine resources and preventing such activity is a very high priority of the Commonwealth Government. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority and the Australian Border

Force are the leading agencies in protecting Australia's maritime borders against illegal foreign fishers.

8. Fifteen foreign fishing boats have been apprehended this financial year; eight Vietnamese, six Indonesian and one from Papua New Guinea. All Vietnamese boats were apprehended in the Coral Sea and had beche-de-mer onboard and hookah breathing apparatus. All matters were successfully prosecuted and the boats seized. None of these apprehensions occurred in the Torres Strait, however we remain vigilant with daily aerial surveillance and surface platforms patrolling the Torres Strait.
9. AFMA continues to work closely with our regional partners, particularly Papua New Guinea, in the fight against illegal foreign fishing.

AMMENDMENTS TO TORRES STRAIT FISHERIES ACT

10. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources has recently given approval to draft amendments to the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* (the Act) and *Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985* (Regs). Approval was sought following PZJA agreement at its meeting on 5 August 2015, to develop legislative amendment priorities to provide immediate improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of fisheries administration in the Torres Strait.
11. The proposed amendments would enable:
 - a) capacity to require catch reporting across all licence holders;
 - b) capacity to provide electronic licensing and monitoring to licence holders;
 - c) capacity to delegate the powers to grant and vary scientific and developmental permits;
 - d) capacity to simplify the renewal of fishing licences;
 - e) capacity to delegate powers to contracted service providers;
 - f) simplified disclosure of fisheries information; and
 - g) the implementation of Fisheries Infringement Notices.
12. Importantly the approval provided is **only to draft the proposed amendments**. Amendments to the Act must be approved by the PZJA and tabled in Parliament (it is a disallowable instrument). Consultation with stakeholders, including Native Title notification, will be undertaken prior the PZJA making a decision on any proposed legislative changes.
13. This is the next step in the administrative process to enable the PZJA to implementing mandatory reporting for TIB licence holders. The HCWG has previously provided strong support for moving to mandatory catch reporting in the Beche-de-mer Fishery.

VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS

14. The PZJA decided that from 1 July 2017 a Vessel Monitoring System will be mandatory on all commercially licensed primary (vessels that tow tenders) and carrier vessels operating under the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.
15. AFMA is managing the implementation of VMS and has written to operators outlining the requirements for installing VMS on their vessels.
16. Part of the PZJA decision includes a VMS exemption for carrier boats six metres or less in length and freight shipping vessels.
17. The Working Group supported the implementation of VMS at its June 2016 meeting.

FISH RECIEVER SYSTEM

18. At its June 2016 meeting, the HCWG supported the proposal to replace the current Torres Strait Seafood Buyers and Processors Docket Book system with a mandatory Fish Receiver System for all the Torres Strait Fisheries, excluding Torres Strait Prawn Fishery by 1 December 2017 noting that the system will require:
 - a. all licence holders (including Traditional Inhabitants) to only dispose of commercially caught fish in those fisheries (not including fish caught during the course of traditional fishing) to a holder of a Fish Receiver licence; and
 - b. it will be mandatory for holders of Fish Receiver licences to comprehensively report details of all fish received (landed) for each fisher.
19. The PZJA has now agreed to implement such a system by 1 December 2017. AFMA will be consulting with industry on the development and implementation of a mandatory fish receiver system.

NOAA MARINE MAMMAL INTERACTION DATA

20. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has issued a “final rule” implementing import provisions of the *Marine Mammal Protection Act 1972* (MMPA).
21. These new regulations implement aspects of the MMPA that aim to reduce marine mammal bycatch associated with international commercial fishing operations, by requiring nations exporting fish and fish products to the United States to be held to the same standards as U.S commercial fishing operations. The rule comes into effect from 1 January 2017
22. AFMA has provided information on all Commonwealth fisheries and an overarching summary of marine mammal management to DaWR who is managing Australia’s response to NOAA. The summaries outline the individual impacts of each fishery on marine mammals.
23. For all Torres Strait fisheries there are negligible to zero impacts on marine mammals by virtue of the fact that the fishing activities are non-invasive.
24. NOAA will assess the information provided and may seek further information on fisheries they have concerns about.

AMMENDMENTS TO COMMONWEALTH FISHERIES LAW

25. Fisheries laws administered by AFMA that are used to managed all other Commonwealth fisheries are being amended provide that the AFMA must have regard to the objective of ensuring that the interests of commercial, recreational and Indigenous fishers are taken into account in the performance of its functions and require AFMA to try as far as practical to have memberships of commercial and recreational fishers on management advisory committees.
26. Current legislation does not have explicit regard for indigenous fishers.

2.1 APPENDIX A
Hand Collectable Catch Data and Effort Trends

Table 1: Torres Strait Trochus Fishery historical catch and effort (source: AFMA docket book database).

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Trochus catch (kg)	8,046	1,526	650	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of fishers	16	7	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2: Torres Strait Beche-de-mer fishery historical catch records (source: AFMA docket book database TDB01). *NB. There was no catch reported in 2006, 2008, 2009 or the 2017 season to date. Yellow cells represent TAC over-catches.*

Common Name	TAC (t)	Recorded catch (kilograms)								
		2005	2007	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Black teatfish	0 (15)				75	2001	138	16624	23303	
Prickly redfish	20	5564	128	146	11056	1255	5888	9173	28110	11211
Sand fish	0			5	31	2152	26	6		
Surf redfish	0						52	1		
White teatfish*	15	734			3179*	13294*	12633	16341	4200	990
Blackfish	80 t 'basket'	186	128		507	73	216	1960	3596	1098
Curry Fish					1118				6099	1085
Deepwater redfish				7			5024	4229	5546	
Elephant trunk fish					4	28	2		133	
Golden Sandfish							52	351	55	
Greenfish							1	1	14	
Stonefish				459						
'Basket' total		186	128	466	1629	101	5293	6541	15443	2183
Grand Total	115	6484	256	617	15939	18803	24030	48679	71056	14384

* NB: white teatfish catch data reported to AFMA is being reviewed.

Table 3: Number of fishers selling catch to buyers and recorded in docket books by year. Source: AFMA TDB01 docket books. *NB: these data do not include additional fishers reporting catch by other means (e.g. via phone) for the two black teatfish openings in 2014 and 2015.*

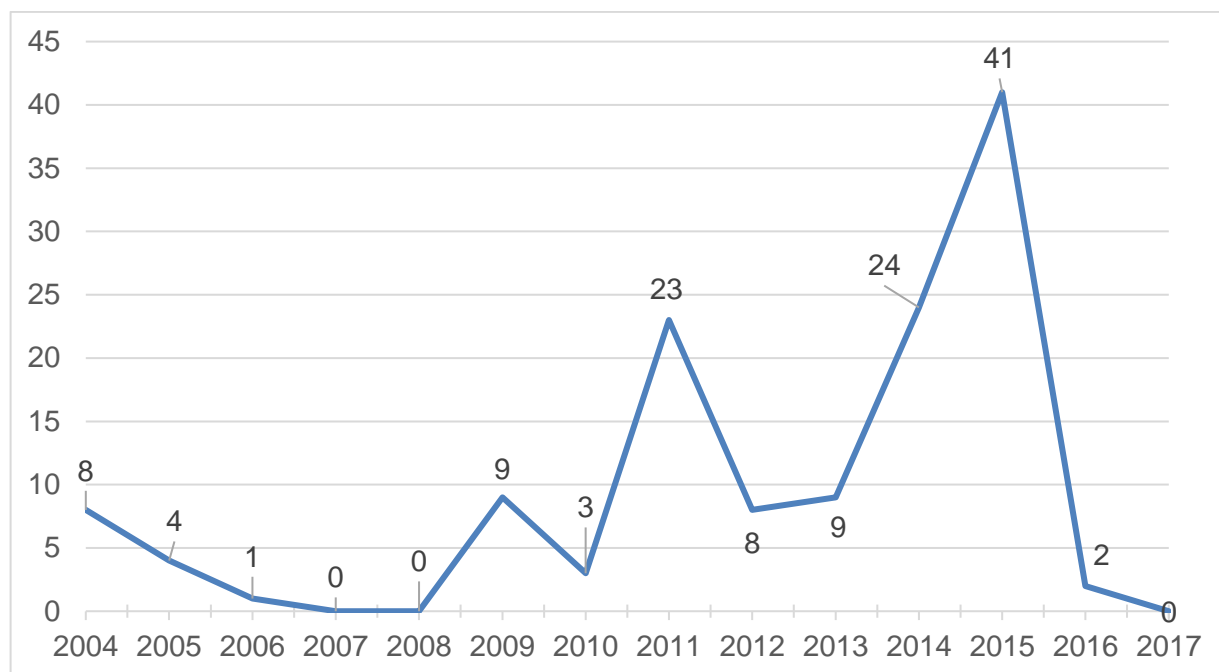
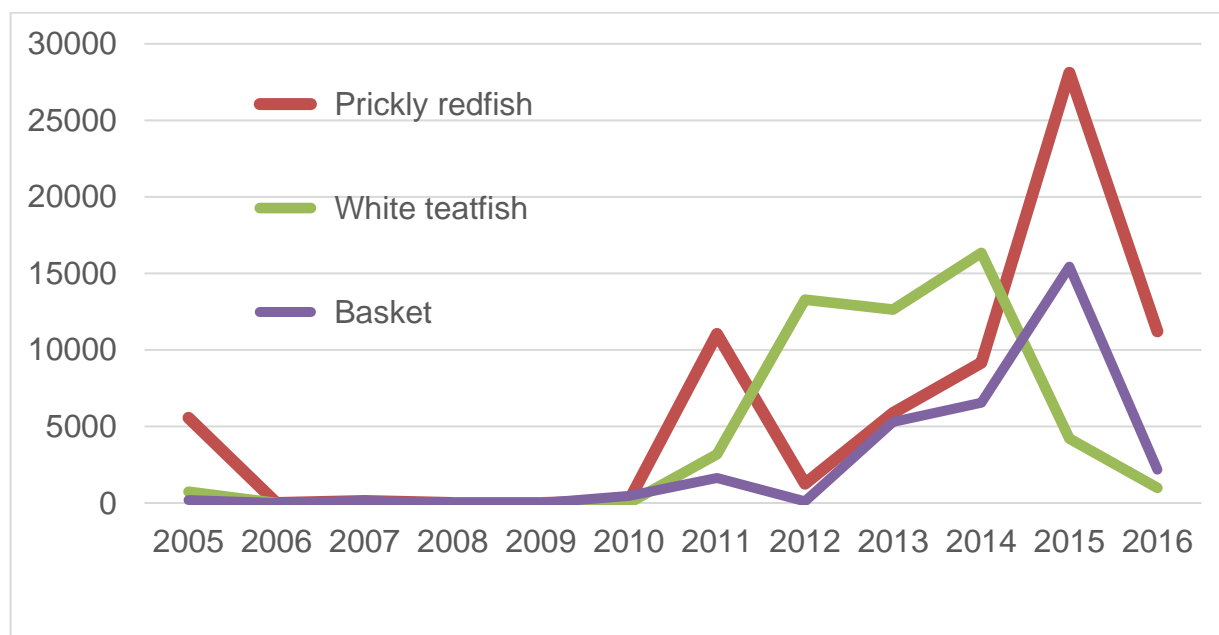


Table 4: Reported catches (kg) of key targeted species (spp. not subject to closures) by year. *NB: white teatfish catch data reported to AFMA is being reviewed.*



TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
FISHERY UPDATES Torres Strait Regional Authority Update	Agenda Item No. 2.2 For Noting

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE** the update to be provided by the TSRA member.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
FISHERY UPDATES Native Title Update	Agenda Item No. 2.3 For Noting

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE** any updates on native title matters from members, including the representative from Malu Lamar (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Malu Lamar).

KEY ISSUES

1. On 7 August 2013 the High Court of Australia confirmed coexisting native title rights, including commercial fishing, in the claimed area (covering most of the Torres Strait Protected Zone). This decision gives judicial authority for Traditional Owners to access and take the resources of the sea for all purposes. Native titles rights in relation to commercial fishing must be exercisable in accordance with the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.
2. Traditional Owners and native title representative bodies have an important role in managing Torres Strait fisheries. It is important therefore that the Working Group keep informed on any relevant native issues arising.
3. At the 8th meeting of the Hand Collectable Working Group (30 April 2015) it was agreed for a standing agenda item to be included in future HCWG meetings to allow a representative from Malu Lamar to provide a native title update.
4. AFMA has extended an invitation to Malu Lamar to attend this meeting as an observer and is investigating longer term arrangements for representation in consultation with PZJA agencies.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
FISHERY UPDATES Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority Update	Agenda Item No. 2.4 For Noting

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE** the fishery update to be provided by representatives from the PNG National Fisheries Authority.

KEY ISSUES

1. Attendance by officials from the PNG National Fisheries Authority (NFA) is strongly welcomed at the PZJA Hand Collectable Working Group. If in attendance, NFA officials will provide an update on the PNG hand collectable fisheries at the meeting. Of particular interest is the lifting of the PNG beche-de-mer fishing moratorium and outcomes of recent beche-de-mer surveys conducted to date.

BACKGROUND

2. PNG-NFA has recently lifted the 2010 moratorium on beche-de-mer fishing on 1 April 2017. Annual Total Allowable Catches were set for each province under the National Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan 2016. See PNG-NFA update at **APPENDIX A**.
3. PNG media recently reported the fishery is likely to generate approximately K50 million (~\$20 million AUD) (The National, 17 May 2017) and had already generated K13 million (~\$5.5 million AUD) within the first six weeks of the season.
4. Following this opening, three provincial closures were gazetted in the Post-Courier on 17 May 2017 (to come into effect 24 May 2017) following TACs being reached (**APPENDIX B**). The closures were:
 - a. Autonomous Region of Bougainville - 28 tonnes
 - b. New Ireland Province – 43 tonnes
 - c. West New Britain Province – 15 tonnes
5. Another closure was gazetted in the Post-Courier on Friday 16 June 2017 (to come into effect 23 June 2017, **APPENDIX C**) to close the Western Province to selling and buying of BDM following the TAC of 8 tonnes being reached.



NATIONAL FISHERIES AUTHORITY

PO Box 2016, Port Moresby, National Capital District, Papua New Guinea
Telephone: 309 0444/321 2643, Facsimile: 320 2061, Email: nfa@fisheries.gov.pg

PNG BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY - GOLD OF THE SEA

Coastal and Island Fishermen throughout the country are reaping the benefits of the 7 year closure of the beche-de-mer fishery. An estimated 13 million kina has been paid already directly to the coastal and island communities throughout PNG for the 6 week period that the fishery has been open in 2017. By the time all provincial Total Allowable Catch (TAC) have been reached and the open season ends this year, we estimate that a total of 18 to 36 million **kina** would have been earned by the coastal and island fishermen and fisherwomen. Whole families especially women have been the main beneficiaries. Disadvantaged and isolated island communities in the coastal provinces are earning a very high income from this fishery. **The value quoted in above does not include the benefits accrued to the people who are indirectly engaged in this fishery especially those who are employed by licensed exporters.**

The beche-de-mer fishery is projected to generate 40 to 53 million kina in foreign revenue in the 2017 fishing season because all the beche-de-mer are being exported to overseas markets, mainly to Hong Kong and China. This is a fishery where the coastal and island communities are directly involved to generate foreign revenue for PNG. About half a million people, from the coastal and island communities benefit from the fishery.

The fishery was closed for 7 years since 2010 because there was extensive overfishing and populations of sea cucumber were severely depleted. NFA has been monitoring the recovery of the sea cucumber populations through provincial sea cucumber annual stock assessments when the fishery has been closed. NFA also consulted extensively and revised the beche-de-mer fishery management plan. Results of the annual sea cucumber surveys indicated that full recovery of the sea cucumber populations has not been achieved yet. NFA wanted to give something back to the coastal and island fishermen for the 7 year investment of no fishing and test the revised plan. The NFA Board approved the plan in 2016 and the fishery was opened on the first of April in 2017. Copies of the Beche-de-mer Fisheries Management plan can be obtained from NFA.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The approved Beche-de-mer Fisheries Management Plan allows for the joint management by the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), Provincial Government, Local Level Government (NFA) and communities. Roles for NFA, provinces, LLG and communities are defined in the plan. This means the management of beche-de-mer is decentralized with the communities responsible for the day to day management of the fishery. To enable joint management, the plan establishes a National Management Advisory Committee (NMAC), Provincial Management Committees (PMAC) and Local Management Advisory Committees (LLGMAC) which is optional. Communities can also establish committees to manage the fishery at the community level. NMAC and

PMAC are functional meaning that they have regular meetings and make decisions. PMACs have been involved in the decision making process to screen and approve export and buyers licenses for the 2017 open season.

Since the opening of the fishery some communities have formulated bylaws to help them manage the day to day management of the fishery under the jurisdiction of the community. Some example of community bylaws include controlling the days to harvest, the species to harvest and the areas where no fishing is allowed in order to protect undersizes or the spawning population. NFA is encouraging other communities to create community bylaws to help manage the fishery at the community level. During the course of the year and leading to the 2018 open season, NFA will work with the provinces, LLGs and communities to formulate provincial and community beche-de-mer fishery management plans **especially for those communities who wish to apply such bylaws.**

SEASONAL OPENING AND CLOSURE

Under the new Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan the fishery is scheduled to open every year for six months from the 1st April to the 31st September 2017. However if the TAC for the province is reached early the fishery for the province must close. The fishery is closed from the 1st October to the 31st March for a compulsory 6 month closure. The 6 month closure is necessary to help protect the spawning population and help the sea cucumber population grow into adults before the fishery is opened.

The fishery in a specific province is closed early if the TAC for the province is reached. Three provinces, New Ireland (TAC=43 tonnes), West New Britain (TAC=15 tonnes) and AROB (TAC= 28 tonnes) have already reached their TAC after 6 weeks of harvest. Fishing for sea cucumbers in these provinces is now closed on **Wednesday 17th May 2017**. Selling and buying for the three provinces will cease on **Monday 24nd May 2017**. Fishermen in these three provinces are allowed to sell their dried products for 7 days between Wednesday 17th May and Wednesday 24nd May. This is to ensure that the dried products for the fishermen in isolated and distant coastal and island locations are sold.

Other provinces are also approaching their TAC. Milne Bay province has the highest TAC of 118 tonnes and has already reached 53% of its TAC. The current rate of production for Milne Bay is 10 tonnes per week and is projected to close in mid-June 2017. MOMASE provinces have low TAC and are expected to reach their TAC soon. The current rate of harvest for the provinces vary from province to province but indicate that the fishery will be closed for most of the provinces by July 2017.

TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH

The beche-de-mer fishery is managed using a number of strategies including a minimum size limit to protect the immature individuals and allocation of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for each maritime province to control how much sea cucumber can be harvested from each province. The TAC for each province are calculated for each year based on the harvestable sizes present on the waters and reefs of each province (see table). In order for the beche-de-mer fishery to be open every year so the coastal and island communities continue to earn an annual income, 30% of the estimated harvestable biomass (weight) is allowed to be harvested and forms the TAC for the province. Seventy percent of the biomass must remain on the reefs to repopulate and grow.

TAC for the Provinces

PROVINCE	2017 TAC (tonnes)
Milne Bay	118
Central	58
Manus	53
New Ireland	43
AROB	28
West New Britain	15
Northern	15
Morobe	9
Western	7
East New Britain	7
Madang	5
East Sepik	2
Sandaun	2

NFA is appealing to the fishermen and fisherwomen not to harvest all the sea cucumbers on the reef especially on the reef flats and shallow areas. At the end of the open fishing season a lot of sea cucumbers must still be seen on the reef.

It has taken only 6 weeks for some provinces such as New Ireland, West New Britain and Bougainville to reach their TAC. The big rush to harvest sea cucumbers from the reefs was expected because most of the sea cucumbers live in shallow waters. Fishermen and fisherwomen only have to walk on the reefs to harvest the sea cucumbers.

To ensure that the TAC is not exceeded, NFA trained and placed Compliance Monitors in all the provinces to help monitor the TAC. NFA has established an information system to monitor the TAC in all the provinces. The information system is designed to monitor the TAC in near real time and involves collection of data from the buyers and exporters on a weekly basis, data is entered and data is analyzed and summarized immediately.

SIZE LIMITS

Size limits have been set for 30 species of sea cucumbers to protect immature sea cucumbers and a portion of the recently mature young sea cucumbers. This is also the portion of the population that is harvested the following year as they grow into harvestable sizes. It is important that fishermen and fisherwomen don't take undersizes if they want to continue to earn an income from the fishery every year.

Because the largest portion of undersizes of sea cucumbers are located on the reef flat which is the shallow areas (see graph) they are easily targeted by the fishermen and fisherwomen. Harvesting of undersizes has been a major issue that was expected by NFA when the fishery opened. It was a major issue in the past leading up to the closure of the fishery in late 2009 when a large portion of the products was exported including as much as 100% undersizes for some species. NFA is appealing to the fishermen and fisherwomen not to harvest the undersizes as they are worth more if they are left for harvesting the following years.

Penalties apply to the Buyers and Exporters if they buy or export undersize beche-de-mer. The penalties include loss of the Buyers and Export licences. NFA is appealing to the Buyers and Exporters to comply with the size limits.

LICENSING

A licence is required in order to participate in the buying, storage and export of Beche-de-mer. This is necessary in order to control the trade of beche-de-mer in the country. There are three main types of licences required, Buyers, Storage Facility and Export. A Buyers licence is issued to individuals, normally those working for a Beche-de-mer exporter company. The Buyers licence allows the individuals to buy sea cucumbers from the fishermen and fisherwomen. A Buyers licence is like a drivers licence. It cannot be transferred and the licensed Buyer must always have in his or her possession the licence. He or she must also be present at all times in the buying of the beche-de-mer products. A Beche-de-mer export company is allowed to have a maximum of 5 buyers licence.

A Storage Facility licence is issued to the company for the use of a Storage Facility to store and process beche-de-mer. Before the Storage Facility licence is issued it must be inspected by NFA staff to ensure that it meets requirements for the storage of beche-de-mer which is a perishable food product.

An Export licence is issued to the company to allow it to export beche-de-mer to overseas markets. Companies must meet export requirements as specified in the beche-de-mer fisheries management plan before the company is allowed to export.

REVIEW OF THE BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN


NFA is committed to ensuring the Beche-de-mer Fishery benefits the coastal and island Communities, Buyers and Exporters as key stakeholders in the long term. This will be achieved through the effective implementation of the beche-de-mer fishery management plan. The plan must maintain the sustainable of the sea cucumber populations through effective control measures of the fishery. At the moment there are no examples of a tropical beche-de-mer fishery that is effectively managed around the world. NFA is challenged but is fully committed to be effective in the management of the PNG Beche-de-mer fishery and is therefore initiating the review of the current plan.

As part of the management plan review process NFA is identifying key issues affecting the implementation of the management plan including elements of the plan that are working and those that are not are not working. NFA will consult stakeholders initially in the provinces that have reached their TAC and are closing the fishery, to identify areas of the plan that can be improved. An intensive consultation workshop to review the plan will be conducted in October 2017. NFA is confident that revision of the beche-de-mer fishery management plan will significantly improve implementation in the 2018 open season.

For further information, please contact Mr Leban Gisawa, Executive Manager, Fisheries Management Unit on Phone: 3090444 or Email: lgisawa@fisheries.gov.pg

Authorized by:
Mr. John Kasu
Managing Director

2.4 APPENDIX B



NATIONAL FISHERIES AUTHORITY

NOTICE

National Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan 2016

BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY CLOSURE NOTICE FOR THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF BOUGAINVILLE

This Notice is issued in accordance with the requirement under Clause 8 (f) of the National Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan 2016 (G657) to fishermen and fisherwomen, buyers and exporters, and the general public engaged in the Beche-de-mer fishery in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARoB).

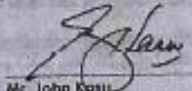
The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 28 tonnes for ARoB has been reached and the fishery must now be closed. All harvesting, collecting and or fishing for sea cucumber must cease as of the date of this publication which is **Wednesday the 17th of May 2017**.

Fishermen and fisherwomen who have in their possession Beche-de-mer are given 07 days grace period from **Wednesday 17th May 2017 (inclusive)** to **24th May 2017** to sell all Beche-de-mer products they have in their possession to a licensed Exporter before the 24th May 2017.

ALL SELLING AND BUYING OF BECHE-DE-MER MUST ALL STOP ON WEDNESDAY 24th MAY 2017.

Any Fishermen and fisherwomen, harvesting, collecting, after the 17th May 2017 and selling after the official closing date on Wednesday 24th May 2017 and any buyers and exporters buying after the official fishery closure date which is 24th May 2017 will be deemed as illegal and perpetrators will be prosecuted and may lose their license as a consequence.

For further information, please contact Mr. Leban Gisawa, Executive Manager, Fisheries Management Unit on ph: 3090444 or email lgisawa@fisheries.gov.pg.


 Authorized by: **Mr. John Kasu**
 Managing Director

BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY CLOSURE NOTICE FOR THE NEW IRELAND PROVINCE

This Notice is issued in accordance with the requirement under Clause 8 (f) of the National Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan 2016 (G657) to fishermen and fisherwomen, buyers and exporters and the general public engaged in the Beche-de-mer fishery in the New Ireland Province (NIP).

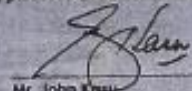
The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 43 tonnes for NIP has been reached and the fishery must now be closed. All harvesting, collecting and or fishing for sea cucumber must cease as of the date of this publication which is **Wednesday the 17th of May 2017**.

Fishermen and fisherwomen who have in their possession of Beche-de-mer are given 07 days grace period from **Wednesday 17th May 2017 (inclusive)** to **24th May 2017** to sell all Beche-de-mer products they have in their possession to a licensed Exporter before the 24th May 2017.

ALL SELLING AND BUYING OF BECHE-DE-MER MUST ALL STOP ON WEDNESDAY 24th MAY 2017.

Any Fishermen and fisherwomen, harvesting, collecting, after the 17th May 2017 and selling after the official closing date on Wednesday 24th May 2017 and any buyers and exporters buying after the official fishery closure date which is 24th May 2017 will be deemed as illegal and perpetrators will be prosecuted and may lose their license as a consequence.

For further information, please contact Mr. Leban Gisawa, Executive Manager, Fisheries Management Unit on ph: 3090444 or email lgisawa@fisheries.gov.pg.


 Authorized by: **Mr. John Kasu**
 Managing Director

BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY CLOSURE NOTICE FOR THE WEST NEW BRITAIN PROVINCE

This Notice is issued in accordance with the requirement under Clause 8 (f) of the National Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan 2016 (G657) to fishermen and fisherwomen, buyers, exporters and the general public engaged in the Beche-de-mer fishery in the West New Britain Province (WNBP).


The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 15 tonnes set for WNBP has been reached and the fishery must now be closed. All harvesting, collecting and or fishing for sea cucumber must cease as of the date of this publication which is **Wednesday the 17th of May 2017**.

Fishermen and fisherwomen who have in their possession of Beche-de-mer are given 07 days grace period from **Wednesday 17 May 2017 (inclusive)** to **24th May 2017** to sell all Beche-de-mer products they have in their possession to a licensed Exporter before the 24th May 2017.

ALL SELLING AND BUYING OF BECHE-DE-MER MUST CEASE ON WEDNESDAY 24th MAY 2017.

Any Fishermen and fisherwomen, harvesting, collecting, after the 17th May 2017 and selling after the official closing date on Wednesday 24th May 2017 and any buyers and exporters buying after the official fishery closure date which is 24th May 2017 will be deemed as illegal and perpetrators will be prosecuted and may lose their license as a consequence.

For further information, please contact Mr. Leban Gisawa, Executive Manager, Fisheries Management Unit on ph: 3090444 or email lgisawa@fisheries.gov.pg.


 Authorized by: **Mr. John Kasu**
 Managing Director

Post-Courier, Wednesday, May 17, 2017 37



NATIONAL FISHERIES AUTHORITY

NOTICE

National Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan 2016

BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY CLOSURE NOTICE FOR THE WESTERN PROVINCE

This Notice is issued in accordance with the requirement under Clause 8 (f) of the National Beche-de-mer Fishery Management Plan 2016 (G657) to fishermen and fisherwomen, buyers and exporters and the general public engage in the Beche-de-mer fishery in the Western Province.

The Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 8 tonnes for Western Province has been reached and exceeded by 700 kilograms based on the data received by NFA. Based on the above assessment, NFA has declared that fishing, harvesting and collecting of sea cucumber in the provinces will cease by **Friday 16th June 2017**.

Fishermen and fisherwomen who have in their possession of Beche-de-mer are given 7 days grace period from **Friday 16th June 2017** (inclusive) to **23rd June 2017** to sell all Beche-de-mer products they have in their possession to a licensed Exporter before the **23rd June 2017**.

ALL SELLING AND BUYING OF BECHE-DE-MER MUST ALL CEASE ON FRIDAY 23rd JUNE 2017

Any fishermen and fisherwomen, harvesting, collecting after the 16th June 2017 and selling after the official closing date on Friday 23rd June 2017 and any buyers and exporters buying after the official fishery closure date which is Friday 23rd June 2017 will be deemed as illegal and perpetrators will be prosecuted and may lose their license as a consequence.

For further information, please contact **Mr. Leban Gisawa, Executive Manager, Fisheries Management Unit** and **Maunoa Karo, Acting Manager-Sedentary** on phone: 309 0444 or email lgisawa@fisheries.gov.pg and mkaro@fisheries.gov.pg respectively.

Authorized by:

Mr. John Kasu
Managing Director

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
FISHERY UPDATES Queensland Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Update	Agenda Item No. 2.5 For Noting

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE** the fishery update to be provided by the QDAF member regarding the Queensland Governments *Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027*.

Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017–2027

Where we are in 2017

- Data gaps
- Poor engagement
- Slow decision-making
- Low economic benefits
- Some stocks under pressure
- No clear, predictable management actions when there are sustainability concerns

Where we want to be in 2027

- Improved monitoring and research, including new technologies
- Best practice fisheries management
- Effective engagement
- Clear harvest strategies with trigger points for action
- No overfished stocks
- Improved satisfaction and maximise economic benefits

Reforming fisheries management in Queensland. How we will get there?

Feedback

11,800 responses to Green Paper on fisheries management reform in 2016

We want:



Snapshot of actions

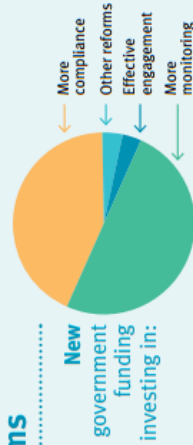
- ✓ More monitoring
- ✓ Satellite tracking on all boats
- ✓ Harvest strategies for all fisheries
- ✓ 20 more compliance officers
- ✓ Cultural liaison officers
- ✓ Fishery-specific working groups
- ✓ Independent expert advice
- ✓ Regionally specific fishing rules
- ✓ New technologies, such as cameras on boats and apps
- ✓ Partnering with industry, universities and the community

Our vision
“A modern, responsive and consultative approach to fisheries management ensures fishing is a low risk to Queensland’s aquatic resources, and these are used in a way that optimises benefits to the community.”



Kickstarting reforms

\$20 million over 3 years
New government funding investing in:



Implementation



TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
FISHERY UPDATES Queensland Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Domestic Compliance Update	Agenda Item No. 2.6 For Noting

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE** the domestic compliance update to be provided by the QDAF representative.

KEY ISSUES

1. QBFP aims to achieve an average of five days at sea per month to target compliance with fisheries rules and regulations. The QBFP officers also visit island communities to encourage voluntary compliance by clarifying licensing arrangements, networking with community members and gathering intelligence.
2. The QBFP Compliance Risk Assessment process outlines high priority areas for each fishery. The priority compliance risks for the Beche-de-Mer fishery are unlicensed fishing (including Papua New Guinea nationals taking Beche-de-Mer within the TSPZ) and the take of species closed to fishing such as Sandfish, Surf Redfish and Black Teatfish. The priority compliance risk for the Pearl Shell Fishery is unlicensed fishing activity.
3. In the current financial year a total of 71 patrol days have been completed in the Protected Zone this consists of;
 - a. Fifty nine (59) sea days on board the police vessel,
 - b. Fifteen (15) days completed in Cairns and other centres on an ongoing investigation in relation to the tropical rock lobster fishery and Beche- de-mer.
 - c. Inspection of coral reef fin fish (Torres Strait product) being unloaded in Cairns.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
FISHERY UPDATES Strategic overview and update on the fisheries (including economic trends)	Agenda Item No. 2.7 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

1. **NOTE** any fishery updates provided by Industry and Research Members;
2. **DISCUSS** and provide **ADVICE** on key issues affecting the fishery.

KEY ISSUES

3. It is important that the Working Group develops a common understanding of any relevant matters within adjacent jurisdictions and what issues if any, are having the greatest impact on industry and the management of the fishery. Such understanding will ensure proceedings of the Working Group are focused and may more effectively address each issue.
4. Working group members are asked to provide any updates on trends and opportunities in global markets, processing and value adding. Industry is also asked to contribute advice on economic and market trends where possible. Research members are asked to contribute advice on any broader strategic research projects or issues that may be of interest to the Torres Strait in future.

BACKGROUND

5. At its June 2016 meeting the HCWG noted the following updates by members and observers on recent fishery performance, trends, activities and issues occurring in the Torres Strait beche-de-mer and relevant fisheries:

Prior to commencing the agenda item, a vote was taken by industry members to not allow Beche-de-mer the invited processors/buyers to participate in the meeting. On the basis of this vote the HCWG recommended that the processors/buyers who were initially invited to attend the meeting as observers would not be permitted to attend. AFMA subsequently relayed the recommendation to the processors/buyers who had accepted the initial invitation and were waiting to join the meeting.

The HCWG noted the strategic overview and update from industry members and observers with the key focus being the Beche-de-mer fishery, including:

- there has been a steady increase in interest by fishers to target other Beche-de-mer species since the second trial opening of black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmae*) in November 2015;
- beche-de-mer is now a popular talking point within and amongst Torres Strait communities;
- trials to improve the processing of curry fish (*Stichopus herrmanni*) continue following recent success on the QLD east coast fishery. There has been some

mortality of curry fish during the trials that were not reported by fishers therefore not recorded in docket books completed by fish receivers;

- there are concerns amongst industry that there are large numbers of prickly redfish and curry fish being caught and not recorded;
- industry are eager to utilise the full 130t TAC (combined across all species). There is a need to consider licencing arrangements necessary to support the demands of a professional industry. For example, there is increasing support amongst the industry fishers for an allocation model where the allowable catch of Beche-de-mer is allocated either between communities or the TIB sectors (i.e. full-time/part-time/weekend operators);
- some industry fishers believe fishers are not getting decent prices for their product; and
- at the moment the industry is made up of several independent operations all negotiating different prices amongst many buyers. A co-operative/centralised model for setting/negotiating prices may be beneficial in increasing the return for product.

The HCWG noted the following market/economic updates from the Research Member:

- when considering investment in the fishery industry should keep in mind the overall value of the fishery. Whilst some Beche-de-mer species are highly value it is unlikely the Torres Strait fishery (stocks) is large enough to sustain many full-time operations (businesses). Rather a more sound approach may be to consider Beche-de-mer just one part of diversified fishing business (i.e. inclusive of other interests – for example TRL & finfish). Based on a crude beach price average across species of \$5/kilo, the combined 130 tonne allowable catch of Beche-de-mer would be worth approximately \$650,000 which equates to 10 operators earning about \$65k per year. Diversification may minimise the risk of over investment/over capitalisation. Over capitalisation of a fishery (i.e. too many operators/fishing effort from over investment in boats) can increase the risk of overfishing and result in bad fishing practices by fishers (e.g. through increased incentive to underreport catches); and
- a new processing approach for some medium and low value species such as burrowing blackfish have been developed by Australian processors which may increase the value and demand on these species;
- China's aquaculture sector is now producing around 200,000 tonnes of Japanese sea cucumber a year in old prawn farm ponds. It is high intensity farming;
- Sandfish is the best tropical species for aquaculture grow-out however work has been ongoing for 15 years and the process is still not proven to be economically viable for commercial operations. Sandfish beach price is approximately \$10 per kilogram (however some industry members and observers reported prices of \$20+ per kg)]
- White teatfish seeding trials have commenced in Kirabati on a trial basis.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
RESEARCH Research priorities	Agenda Item No. 3.1 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

1. **NOTE** the identified research priorities for PZJA Hand Collectables fisheries.
2. **DISCUSS and PROVIDE ADVICE** on any changes to research priorities.

KEY ISSUES

3. This is a standing item for the HCWG. Having agreed research priorities aims to achieve a more efficient management process.
4. Generally, the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) makes an annual public call for funding applications to conduct research to support fisheries management decisions. The call for research identifies research priorities to be addressed. AFMA seeks advice from the PZJA fishery consultative forums on fishery specific research priorities.
5. The HCWG is asked to note the table outlining budget commitments for the next financial years (**APPENDIX A**) and note that due to research funding being almost fully committed for the next two financial years, the next public call for funding applications for research will be for the 2019/20 financial year.
6. There may be opportunity to fund small tactical research projects with any potentially unspent research funds.
7. At its June 2016 meeting the HCWG agreed that future research priorities would be guided by the Harvest Strategy to be developed over the coming 18 months.

3.1 APPENDIX A Current research commitments

Funding Years	Project code	Torres Strait Research	Project Budget	2016/17 FY Total Research (Budget \$410,716)	2017/18 FY Total (Budget \$410,716)	2018/19 FY Total (Budget \$410,716)
13/14 - 14/15 15/16	RR2012/0809	Smartphone - data collection (PI Haartmann) - COMPLETED	\$186,000.00			
13/14 - 14/15	RR2013/0803	2014 TRL Stock Assessment and TAC (PI Plaganyi- Lloyd)	\$627,615.97 (13/14 & 14/15 FY) Additional \$336,881 - 15/16 FY	\$16,000 final payment ended up out of 16/17 FY		
14/15- 15/16	RR2014/0823	Defining the aggregating and movement behaviour of Spanish Mackerel to inform future fisheries allocation and sustainable fishing - COMPLETED	\$245,590.00	\$40,853*		
15/16	No project number	Production of a Sea Cucumber product processing training video for Torres Strait Communities COMPLETED	\$17,000			
15/16	RR2015/0824	Consultative and administrative processes for scientific research in the Torres Strait Islands (Dr Nakata)	\$16,500 (TSRA funding, not TS research funding)			
15/16 16/17	RR2015/0823	Monitoring the traditional take of finfish in the Torres Strait Protected Zone	\$199,802 (TSRA funding, not TS research funding)			
15/16 16/17	RR2016/0823	Bêche De Mer Fishery Harvest Strategy	\$52,710	\$37,224	\$15,486	
16/17 17/18 18/19	RR2016/0822	TRL fishery surveys, stock assessment, HCR and RBC	\$759,855	\$239,030	\$243,348	\$277,476
16/17 17/18	RR2016/0824	Finfish Fishery Harvest Strategy	\$200,961	\$32,580	\$123,662	\$44,719
16/17 17/18	RR2017/0816	TRL environmental influences	\$49,292	\$21,332	\$27,960	
		Total costs of proposed projects per financial year		\$365,687	\$382,496	\$322,195
		Remaining un allocated funding		\$45,029	\$28,220	\$88,521

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT Prickly redfish overcatch and options to mitigate overcatching	Agenda Item No. 4.1 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

1. **NOTE** an overcatch of prickly redfish that occurred in 2015.
2. **DISCUSS** and provide **ADVICE** on the likely impacts of the overcatch of stocks and options to mitigate the risk of further overcatches.

KEY ISSUES

3. Recently received late catch returns for the 2015 season indicate an 8 tonne overcatch of the prickly redfish 20 tonne Total Allowable Catch (TAC). The previous estimate of what was caught in the 2015 season was 16.4 tonnes. The revised total catch reported is 28 tonnes.
4. AFMA is currently assessing additional logbook returns received which contain 2015 prickly redfish catches. If the catches from this log are not duplicated by docket books received the amount of the overcatch may further increase.
5. At its June 2016 meeting the HCWG noted the following industry advice in relation to prickly redfish catches:
6. concern that catches may be exceeding the TAC and resulting in depletion of stocks as prickly redfish are now the most targeted species (outside of the black teatfish opening) and fishing pressure is increasing;
 - a) speculation that more than the reported 16 tonnes was caught in 2015; and
 - b) observations that prickly redfish have been harder to find over the last few years. Fishers are travelling further out.
7. The Research member advised it is of concern from a stock status point-of view if the catches are exceeding the 20 tonne TAC.
8. AFMA has received anecdotal reports from fishers advising prickly redfish stocks in fishing grounds around Don Cay and certain island home reefs are depleted. Fishers are reportedly having to fish further afield or for longer periods.
9. Unfortunately very few catch reports have been submitted since 2015 (Agenda Item 2.1). This is despite industry advice that fishing is occurring. Without timely data returns it is difficult to determine the true amount of stock being harvested or to undertake a basic fishery assessment.
10. The HCWG has previously raised strong concerns over the poor reporting rate of fishers from recent seasons. Based on recent reporting rates (Agenda item 2.1) there is no evidence that industry has made any tangible changes to improve catch data for the fishery. It is increasingly difficult therefore to have confidence in any voluntary catch reporting system for the fishery.
11. The HCWG Research Member has provided advice on the likely impacts of overcatching on prickly redfish (**APPENDIX A**).

12. The HCWG is asked to discuss and provide **ADVICE** on the likely impacts of the overcatching and possible options to mitigate further overcatching.
13. Possible options include but are not limited to:
- Prohibiting fishing until reliable catch reporting systems are in place and/or a fishery assessment can be undertaken;
 - Reducing the TAC;
 - Improving the enforceability of current input controls to mitigate the risk of unreported fishing effort. For example:

The hookah ban

The current hookah ban is enforced as a prohibition on fishing for beche-de-mer with the use of a hookah apparatus. Wording from *Torres Strait Fisheries Management Notice No. 64* on BDM is as follows:

GEAR RESTRICTIONS

8. Pursuant to paragraph 16(1)(c) of the Act, the taking of sea cucumbers in the area of the Torres Strait Sea Cucumber Fishery with the use of any underwater breathing apparatus or by any method other than collection by hand, is prohibited.

This could be changed to a prohibition on the possession of hookah apparatus and beche-de-mer. This would be consistent with how the hookah ban is applied in the Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery and is more easily monitored. Example wording from *Torres Strait Fisheries Management Instrument No. 9* is as follows:

PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF CERTAIN METHODS FOR TAKING TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTERS

10. Pursuant to paragraph 16(1)(c) of the Act a person is prohibited from taking tropical rock lobster in the area of the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery:
- by any method other than collecting by hand or with the use of a spear, scoop net or other implement held in the fishers' hand at all times during the fishing operation; or
 - while using any kind of equipment used for breathing underwater other than hookah gear; or
 - while using any kind of mechanical equipment that provides underwater propulsion.

PROHIBITION ON THE CARRIAGE OR USE OF HOOKAH GEAR

11. Pursuant to paragraph 16(1)(c) of the Act, the taking or carrying of tropical rock lobster while using, or in the possession of, hookah gear, is prohibited in the area of the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery during the period commencing 1 October each year and ending 31 January the following year.

Carrier licences

Carrier C licences are able to operate in the beche-de-mer fishery. Carrier C licences allow operators to carry and process beche-de-mer taken by other

licenced vessels. Carrier C licences do not allow for the towing of tenders to and from the fishing grounds or to accommodate crew from other vessels. PZJA licencing policy currently allows vessels to be dual endorsed with multiple carrier class licences (i.e. A, B and C). Carrier A and B licences permit towing of tenders.

It is important to ensure that the difference in these licensing conditions can be easily understood, complied with and monitored in a way that minimises the administrative requirements for licence holders. Accordingly AFMA is investigating the potential to establish a system whereby licence holders may nominate and denominate a vessel to their carrier licences at any time.

Importantly, under such a system, a person may still hold multiple classes of carrier licences (A, B and C) however licence holders would not be able to nominate the same vessel to a Carrier C licence if it is already nominated to a Carrier A or B licence. Licence holders would need to arrange vessel nominations on their carrier licences according to their fishing plans.

HCWG Technical Paper June 2017: Analysis of the impacts of over-catching prickly redfish from research member Dr Tim Skewes

The estimated population biomass for Prickly redfish during the 2002 full scale surveys was 568.9 t (landed weight), with most of the stock located in the Don Cay and Southern Barrier zones. Given the uncertainty around the stock estimate, the fishery biomass estimate for setting the TAC was reduced to 342.5 t (the lower 90% confidence interval). An annual TAC as then calculated as half the estimated maximum sustainable yield (MSY) using the surplus production model; $MSY = 0.2 MB_0$. This resulted in a TAC of 20 t – or about 6% of the fishery biomass estimate. Recent global reviews of sustainable exploitation rates for sea cucumbers have suggested that annual catches be in the order of 2–4% of unfished biomass per year (Purcell et al., 2012), though this conclusion is based on very few empirical examples.

Two subsequent surveys of Prickly redfish were carried out in 2005 and 2009. The fishery stock estimate for Prickly redfish in 2009 survey was 308 t, however the survey did not sample the Don Cay or Southern Barrier zones. The average density of Prickly redfish since 2002 appeared to be stable and the average size of animals was larger in 2009 than previous years (**Figure 1**).

Prickly redfish are found in depths to 40 m, which affords some protection to the stock from exploitation - though it is unknown what proportion of the stock is found at depth.

Given the conservative nature of the 20 t TAC, a moderate overshoot of the TAC would not be considered to put the stock at a high risk. However, this presumes that the overshoot is not greater than about 1.5 times the TAC and that catches in other years have been below the 20 t TAC.

The approach to managing the sea cucumber fishery in Torres Strait was based on conservative TACs and ongoing reporting of catch, effort and animal size to make regular (annual if possible) assessments of the status of the stock. This information has been lacking since the most recent survey in 2009.

This is concerning given the indications of catch non-reporting and reports from some fishers that prickly redfish have been harder to find recently and that fishers are having to travel further to find good stocks.

Sea cucumber populations are susceptible to overexploitation, and their recovery period can be prolonged. Therefore, the recent evidence of targeting of Prickly redfish in the Torres Strait fishery, coupled with the lack of basic information with which to assess current stock status presents a high risk to the status of this population in Torres Strait.

I would recommend a cessation of fishing until catch recording and fishery monitoring is sufficient to control fishing to the agreed TACs, and provide information to assess stock status.

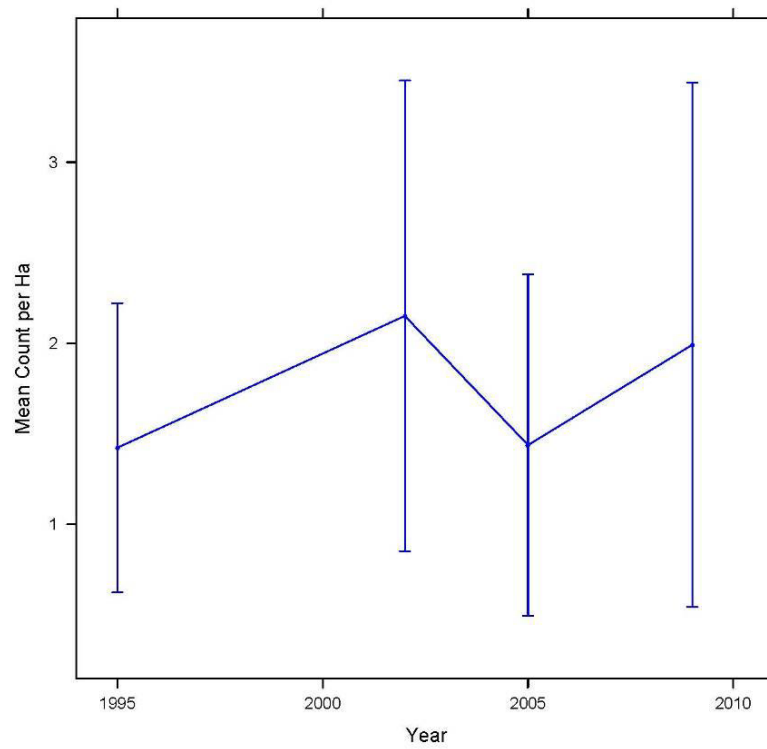


Figure 1. Stratified density of *Thelenota ananas* (Prickly redfish) in repeated strata (Cumberland's, Don Cay and Darnley) for four survey years. (Error bars are bootstrapped 95% CI). (Skewes et al., 2010)

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT Black teatfish management	Agenda Item No. 4.2 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

NOTE that the PZJA has agreed that fishing for black teatfish will remain closed until the risk of exceeding the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) set for the species is substantially reduced through cost-effective management tools;

NOTE an update on Community Monitoring Plans and community positions received from Erub, Mer and Ugar communities; and

DISCUSS and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on management priorities for black teatfish in the context of these updates.

KEY ISSUES

4. The PZJA has agreed out of session that fishing for black teatfish will remain closed until the risk of exceeding the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) set for the species is substantially reduced through cost-effective management tools.
5. The PZJA noted that the HCWG, in consultation with broader fishery stakeholders is currently working to develop management measures to improve catch reporting in the fishery and therefore mitigate the risk of future overcatching.
6. Noting the outcomes of the Erub industry workshop and the HCWG's previous advice (HCWG meeting No.9, June 2016) that the fishery not be opened until measures are in place to improve reporting, at its meeting in November 2016, the HCWG **recommended** the following minimum requirements for allowing further fishing for black teatfish (summary of recent HCWG advice at **APPENDIX A**):
 - a) development and implementation of community based catch monitoring arrangements (noting that in the short-term these systems would be voluntary); and
 - b) implementation of a regulatory-based catch monitoring/reporting tool. The preferred tool being a mandatory fish receiver system.
7. The HCWG considered progressing these initiatives as a high priority to ensure the PZJA may consider options to open the fishery as soon as possible next year. Accordingly the Working Group **recommended** that:
 - a) community catch reporting plans be submitted to AFMA by 30 November 2016; and
 - b) AFMA progress the development of a fish receiver system as soon as practical noting AFMA advice that it may take 5-6 months.
8. AFMA wrote to all licence holders, Erub workshop participants and industry associations on 5 December 2016 advising communities to submit their monitoring plans by 30 January 2017.

DISCUSSION

9. Community views on black teatfish management were received from Erub, Ugar and Mer communities (**APPENDIX B, C and D** respectively). No community monitoring plan or views have been received from Masig or Poruma communities.
10. All three plans recommend a centralised catch reporting system (catch to be recorded at a single location). Two of the plans recommend restrictions on who may fish in the fishery (fishing to only be carried out by the five eastern islands, catch to be allocated between the five eastern islands only (5t each), traditional boundaries to be applied, PBC approval required for fishers to fish) and registration of fishers who will fish. The Erubam le have called for a closure to the BDM Fishery unless:
 - there are effective, mandatory catch monitory systems in place for all species.
 - all species have their own individual TAC.
 - that there is an adequate level of compliance to ensure the future sustainability of BDM
11. While the plans from three Industry Associations from Erub, Ugar and Mer are welcomed, the plans alone are unlikely to substantially reduce the risk of exceeding the TAC in the immediate term. Reducing this risk of exceeding the TAC is the prerequisite set by the PZJA for reopening the fishing for the species.
12. Consistent with the HCWG recommendation (meeting November 2016), implementation of a regulatory-based catch monitoring/reporting tool (the preferred tool being a mandatory fish receiver system) should be the minimum requirement for allowing further fishing for black teatfish. A mandatory system is being developed and will apply to all fishers not just those in the eastern islands.
13. Based on recent reporting rates (Agenda item 2.1) there is no evidence that industry has made any firm changes to improve catch data for the fishery. Therefore it is increasingly difficult to have confidence in any future voluntary catch reporting system for the fishery.
14. In the longer-term formal allocation of beche-de-mer catch among communities and/or fishers may be an important basis in which to build effective community-based management of the fishery. In order to do so however the PZJA would need to have regard for the PZJA policy and procedural framework for the allocation of fishing concession where fisheries management arrangements change significantly. The PZJA is yet to make a decision to allocate catch shares within the Torres Strait beche-de-mer fishery.
15. At the Erub Workshop (October 2016) participants recommended that in addition to developing community catch monitoring arrangements, other community based management arrangements (i.e. catch allocations, control over who can fish, cultural protocols) be developed and adopted by industry agreement. Industry members from Mer, Ugar and Erub can advise at the current meeting whether communities have consulted with each other on their plans. In particular the broader community-based management arrangements such as catch allocations and control over who can fish.

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Prior HCWG meeting record excerpts on black teatfish

APPENDIX B - Erub Community Position and recommendations to the PZJA consultation in relation to the Torres Strait beche-de-mer fishery.

APPENDIX C - Kos and Abob views on Black Teatfish (Ugar Island)

APPENDIX D - Mer Island (MDW) Black Teatfish Community Monitoring Plan

4.2 APPENDIX A

Prior HCWG meeting record excerpts on black teatfish

HCWG Meeting June 2016 (Meeting No. 9)

At its June 2016 meeting The HCWG noted the following advice from the Research member regarding overcatch of Black teatfish:

- the sustainable harvest of black teatfish is still likely to be 25t despite the time elapsed since the last survey (2009). The risk of natural overall stock level decline since 2009 was low although densities may be variable at the reef level. The natural carrying capacity for black teatfish is estimated to be 12.5 per hectare;
- the sustainable harvest estimate (i.e. 25t) is based on a conservative yield target (6 percent yield of the bottom 90 percent confidence limit biomass estimate of 395 tonnes). A 6% yield target is also used to set the east coast burrowing blackfish TAC. East Coast black teatfish depletion was reported to be at less than 10% - which lead led to overfishing, so caution is required. Purcell *et al.* (2015) have recommended 3-4% for the Queensland east coast fishery but the scientific member considered that this was very conservative; and
- determining whether or not the fishery is or will be sustainable into the future is largely dependent on whether or not the estimates of catch are accurate and management responses to overruns of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC).

At its June 2016 meeting noting the 2015 TAC overcatch of black teatfish and the risk of a future overcatch, the HCWG recommended:

- that the fishery not be opened until measures are in place to improve reporting;
- AFMA, with support from TSRA, convene a workshop including HCWG industry members and up to two fisheries representatives from Erub, Masig, Ugar, Mer lama, Poruma and Warraber to consider immediate options to improve catch reporting;
- the workshop to have regard to the short and medium/long term management options to improve catch reporting as detailed in **APPENDIX A, Table 1**. These are the preliminary options canvassed by members and observers; and
- the workshop outcomes to be considered by the HCWG.

HCWG meeting and harvest strategy workshop November 2016 (Meeting No. 10)

At its November 2016 the HCWG considered the outcomes of the October 2016 Erub industry workshop as follows:

Members noted the HCWG recommended a workshop be convened to gain broader industry views on possible options for improving black teatfish catch reporting.

The HCWG noted there was majority support for keeping the fishery closed until catch reporting was improved and moving towards greater community-based management control. Members noted that workshop participants from Mer had recommended the fishery to be opened in December.

The HCWG noted that workshop participants, having regard for the differing views held and noting that AFMA would continue to work towards developing a mandatory fish receiver system, recommended:

- a) each community develop their community catch monitoring arrangements in detail;

- b) other community based management arrangements (ie catch allocations, control over who can fish, cultural protocols) be developed and adopted by industry agreement; and
- c) that these proposals to be submitted to the Hand Collectable Working Group and PZJA.

Noting the workshop outcomes and the HCWG's previous advice (HCWG meeting No.9, June 2016) that the fishery not be opened until measures are in place to improve reporting, the HCWG **recommended** the following minimum requirements for allowing further fishing for black teatfish:

- development and implementation of community based catch monitoring arrangements (noting that in the short-term these systems would be voluntary); and
- implementation of a regulatory-based catch monitoring/reporting tool. The preferred tool being a mandatory fish receiver system.

The HCWG considered progressing these initiatives as a high priority to ensure the PZJA may consider options to open the fishery as soon possible next year. Accordingly the Working Group **recommended** that:

- community catch reporting plans be submitted to AFMA by 30 November 2016; and
- AFMA progress the development of a fish receiver system as soon as practical noting AFMA advice that it may take 5-6 months.

Mer Island fishers proposal – black teatfish opening: Mer only, 7 tonnes

The HCWG noted the proposal by Mer Island fishers for Mer fishers to be permitted to fish for up to 7 tonnes of black teatfish with black teatfish only being permitted to be 'exported' from Mer. Under this arrangement Mer fishers advised that they will take on the responsibility to properly report catches. The industry member for Kemer Kemer Meriam further advised that there was agreement for all black teatfish to be recorded by a single operator and that the catch reporting proposal currently only applied to black teatfish.

The AFMA member noted that whilst the Working Group is not asked to advised on matters of allocation, it is relevant to note that central to the Mer proposal is a catch allocation to a select group of fishers which has not been subjected to any formal stakeholder consultation.

Whilst the HCWG welcomed the Mer fishers initiative to develop improved catch reporting, confirmation of the exact reporting arrangements was sought (for example the industry members verbal advice that all catches would be reported by a single operator). The scientific member advised that he would be more inclined to support the Mer catch reporting arrangement if the fishers could first demonstrate regular reporting and for the reporting to cover all Beche-de-mer species (Industry members confirmed that significant volumes of prickly redfish and other species were currently being harvested). The HCWG reiterated the importance to report catches of all species.

The industry member for Kemer kemer Meriam requested that the Mer Fishers proposal be provided to the PZJA. Whilst the HCWG did not endorse the Mer Fishers proposal it noted that AFMA would provide the proposal to the PZJA as requested.

Erub Community position and recommendations to the PZJA consultation in relation to the Torres Strait Beche de Mer Fishery

The following position and recommendations are the outcomes of a local meeting of Erubam le on the 17th of October, 2016 that concentrated on providing advice to the regional workshop at Erub, designed to improve future Black Teatfish catch reporting.

This follows advice already provided to AFMA and the TSRA in relation to this fishery.

Erubam le are calling for a closure to the Torres Strait BDM fishery unless:

- there are effective, mandatory catch monitory systems in place for all species.
- all species have their own individual TAC.
- that there is an adequate level of compliance to ensure the future sustainability of BDM

For the future sustainable harvest of Black Teatfish, Erubam le offer the following solutions:

- That Traditional sea boundary protocols be respected and adhered to.
- A respective 5 tonne allocation of Black Teatfish quota to the communities of Erub, Mer, Ugar and Masig.
- A 5 tonne allocation to an agreed area outside of the economic zone of the 4 named islands above.
- For the Black Teat species to be limited to DYI, MDW, STN and YKE licences only
- For a restriction to primary vessels in the agreed 7m dory economic zones of above stated communities, unless authorised by local community PBC.
- For the period of access to **not** be November.
- For the period of access to **not** be during the closure of the Torres Strait TRL season.
- For the period of access to **not** be during know spawning time of the species.
- That there be a PBC approved register of vessels, by community, permitted to harvest before any Opening.
- That there be an agreed local, central point of contact to log all daily catches by registered vessels.
- That all BDM product leaving the community during the fishery opening be registered at the same central point of contact before it is permitted to leave the island.
- That the fishery is accessed only by residents of the above mentioned communities ie. fishers must be able to demonstrate they have lived in the community for a period agreed by that respective community.
- That any levels of over fishing the allocated community quota be subtracted from the following annual allocation.

“If we can’t account for every single aber being picked up and shipped out of here, shut it down until we can.”

Kos and Abob views on the Black Teatfish

Meeting on 17th October 2016 at Ugar Island – Endorse by Members of Kos and Abob Fisheries

Short Term Views

1. Our views are the opening date of the black teatfish should remain in the month of November 16 but would support to be open in December 16. Our only concern of having it open in December is we believe that those people who will dive for crayfish will also dive for black teatfish. Our concern is people will probably use hooker during the crayfish opening even though hooker is closed. We would like this to be taken into consideration.
2. Our views are that we believe there should only be a one way in and out and that is to have the trail done through the Five Islands of Ugar, Erub, Mer, Masig and Poruma. Everyone who wants to fish must come through these Islands.
3. Our views are that there should be one representative responsible to complete the docket book for all fishermen and this is why we strongly believe the trial should be done through the 5 Island communities.
4. Our views that the 10 Nautical Miles Boundary should be respected by Fishermen entering into the waters of each Island Community during the trail process.
5. Our views are that prior to the opening of the Black Teatfish, everyone fishermen who is going to participated in the fisheries should be made know of the number of fishermen that is going to fish black teatfish.

Long Term Views

1. Our views are that the AFMA Record Docket book should be made Mandatory for all fishermen to complete their catch so if they don't there should be penalty.
2. Our vies the quota should be divided into the 4 Communities of Ugar, Erub, Mer and Masig but if others agree for Poruma then it should be included because the species is only fished in our waters and this is why we would like to see this process happening in the near future.
3. Our views also for the 10 Nautical Miles should be put into a policy for everyone to abide with when fishing in the waters of each community.
4. Our views that there should be 100% of quota allow for all Fishermen and not to be divided into different categories.
5. Our views we would like to support our Industries buyers to attend any Hand collectable working meeting if permission is requested for them to attend.

MDW views on black teatfish

10/02/2017

To Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Torres Straits Fisheries.

In regards to your request to work with Mer Community regarding the upcoming season of Black Teat harvesting. Mer Community has nominated our senior fisherman Mr Dennis Passi's residence as a drop off point for this year's Black Teat season. Mer fishermen have come to an agreement that all Black Teat catch will be processed and stored for shipment at Mr Passi's home. Mer fishermen have advised that the day's catch will be held overnight and early the following morning, catch will be weighed, recorded on data sheets as required and forwarded to AFMA. Hope this information is what you require.

Mr Passi's address is 108 Marou St, Mer Island, 4875.

Regards

William Bero

Chairperson MDW Fisheries

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT White teatfish – survey outcomes and management priorities	Agenda Item No. 4.3 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

NOTE the results from the survey on industry views on amending hookah ban for a limited number of fishers to target white teatfish; and

DISCUSS and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on whether further assessing the potential to amend hookah ban for a limited number of fishers to target white teatfish should be a high management priority.

KEY ISSUES

1. At its November 2016 harvest strategy meeting the HCWG noted that it remains a high priority for some industry members to have the current hookah ban revised to allow more effective targeting of white teatfish. Some industry members recommended that another trial be undertaken to allow a limited number of fishers to use hookah to fish for white teatfish. The objective of the trial being to provide an economic opportunity for fishers and in doing so reduce fishing pressure on other species (meeting record is at **APPENDIX A**).
2. The HCWG agreed that further consideration of the following issues would be necessary if a trial were to be recommended:
 - a. catch monitoring standards;
 - b. potential impacts of increased effort on other species;
 - c. industry members recommendation to establish a 10nm exclusion zones from communities to protect the values/aspirations of community fishers;
 - d. broad industry concern and low confidence in current management arrangements and catch reporting (as reported at the black teatfish catch reporting workshop held on Erub, 19 October 16);
 - e. access: who should be able to participate in the trial;
 - f. timing (when, season length);
 - g. size limits – relevance to maximise economic returns;
 - h. overall fishery risks. Current initiatives to improve management effectiveness are yet to be completed. Notably the development of a harvest strategy and medium and long-term management arrangements for black teatfish.
3. The HCWG recommended that a written survey be circulated to all beche-de-mer licence holders to canvass preliminary industry views on convening a trial designed to provide an economic opportunity for a select number of fishers to fish for white teatfish using hookah gear.
4. A survey was sent to all beche-de-mer licence holders on 31 March 2017 (**APPENDIX B**) and one formal reply was received via phone. The respondent did not support a trial (see Background).
5. Any expansion in effort in the beche-de-mer fishery must be supported by reliable catch reporting and necessary monitoring to enable adequate assessment of fishery. As detailed under Agenda Items 4.1 and 4.2 reporting rates remain poor across the fishery. Work is underway to develop a mandatory fish receiver system for the fishery which is aimed at improving catch data for the fishery. Given the susceptibility of bech-de-mer species to overfishing AFMA is of the view that at the very minimum, catch reporting rates

must be improved prior to recommending the removal of any input controls in the fishery (temporarily, in-part or completely). Improving catch reporting together with developing a harvest strategy should remain the highest priority.

6. With reliable catch data and a harvest strategy in place to guide decisions on sustainable harvest rates and data needs for the fishery, management and industry can work towards options for sustainable expansion of the fishery.

BACKGROUND

Survey results

7. A single reply was received from a Yorke Island community member via phone on 20 April 2017. The response stated a number of points as follows:
 - a. they were not supportive of another trial for using hookah to target white teatfish;
 - b. did not want to see a new sector of the fishery established using hookah;
 - c. more science was needed and must be understood at the community level before a decision could be made on allowing deeper water fishing using hookah (growth rates, spatial management, consideration of night closures etc.)
 - d. felt that the fishery as it stands does have the potential to yield good profits in future with a focus on species such as curryfish;
 - e. had concerns over sustainability in the fishery and stressed consideration of the past depletion of sandfish on Warrior Reef and the poor stocks of surf redfish remaining;
 - f. allowing only a few people to fish white teatfish using hookah will be an issue and the access issue needs to be addressed;
 - g. raised concerns over how the fishery is changing to an industrial single-fishery focus rather than the traditional rotational/seasonal take that fishers had traditionally where they would fish different species at different times of the year giving them a break from harvesting pressure.
 - h. stressed the need for community education on the impacts of overfishing.

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Meeting record regarding white teatfish from November 2016 HCWG meeting

APPENDIX B – Letter to Beche-de-mer licence holders 31 March 2017

Meeting record regarding white teatfish from November 2016 HCWG meeting

The HCWG noted that it remains a high priority for some industry members to have the current hookah ban revised to allow more effective targeting of white teatfish. Members noted that several management issues would need careful consideration prior to recommending any adjustments to the current effort controls in the fishery, including the hookah ban. The AFMA member noted that improving current catch reporting and monitoring standards is a priority and is a likely prerequisite for expanding effort in the fishery.

Some industry members recommended that a trial be undertaken to allow a limited number of fishers use hookah to fish for white teatfish. The objective of the trial being to provide an economic opportunity for fishers and in doing so reduce fishing pressure on other species. The Working Group noted that catch data could also be collected during the trial which might inform future fishery assessments. Data collection however was not in itself, a reason to convene a trial. The Working Group noted that data collected from a trial may be used to inform future fishery assessments and alternative Harvest Strategy options.

The Working Group agreed that further consideration of the following issues would be necessary if a trial were to be recommended:

- catch monitoring standards;
- potential impacts of increased effort on other species;
- industry members recommendation to establish a 10nm exclusion zones from communities to protect the values/aspirations of community fishers;
- broad industry concern and low confidence in current management arrangements and catch reporting (as reported at the black teatfish catch reporting workshop held on Erub, 19 October 16);
- access: who should be able to participate in the trial;
- timing (when, season length);
- size limits – relevance to maximise economic returns;
- overall fishery risks. Current initiatives to improve management effectiveness are yet to be completed. Notably the development of a harvest strategy and medium and long-term management arrangements for black teatfish.

The Working Group recognised that access is still likely to be a key consideration for the Torres Strait communities should the PZJA convene a trial designed to provide an economic opportunity for a select number of fishers to fish for white teatfish using hookah gear. The Working Group further noted that it was beyond its term of reference to be provide advice on the allocation of access within the fishery. Noting that the PZJA would likely require significant consultation to inform any decision on access, there was benefit in having preliminary broader industry views on convening a trial as proposed by the industry members.

The Working Group **recommended** that a written survey be circulated to all beche-de-mer licence holders to canvass preliminary industry views on convening a trial designed to provide an economic opportunity for a select number of fishers to fish for white teatfish using hookah gear.



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

31 March 2017

Dear Beche-de-mer Fishery Licence Holder,

RE: Industry views on amending hookah ban for a limited number of fishers to target white teatfish

I am writing on behalf of the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) Hand Collectable Working Group (HCWG) to seek your views on a ***proposal to convene a trial designed to provide an economic opportunity for a select number of fishers to fish for white teatfish using hookah apparatus.***

As you may know, the use of underwater breathing apparatus, such as hookah, to take beche-de-mer is banned in the Torres Strait. The HCWG has previously considered proposals to lift the hookah ban to allow targeting of deeper water beche-de-mer species like white teatfish. The potential risks and benefits of lifting the hookah ban have been identified and a trial was run in 2011 (key outcomes of the trial and issues identified by the HCWG are in **Attachment A**).

At its 3 November 2016 meeting, the HCWG identified a range of issues that would need to be considered prior to recommending a further hookah trial (meeting record is attached). Issues identified centred on:

- how access to participate in a trial should be determined. There are currently 127 licences in the Torres Strait Bech de mer Fishery and the white teatfish TAC is just 20 tonnes;
- catch monitoring standards;
- potential impacts of increased effort on other deep-water species;
- broad industry concern and low confidence in current management arrangements and catch reporting (as reported at the black teatfish catch reporting workshop held on Erub, 19 October 16); and
- HCWG industry members recommendation to establish 10nm exclusion zones from communities to protect the values/aspirations of community fishers;

Additionally, the HCWG is working on initiatives to improve the effectiveness of management arrangements for the fishery. These are yet to be completed and include the development of a harvest strategy and a mandatory fish receiver system to strengthen catch reporting. Communities are also working to develop community based catch monitoring plans. At a meeting held at Erub on 19 October 2016, community members identified a range of medium to long-term priorities for community-based management including:

- broad community support for moving towards greater community-based management and control underpinned by community catch share allocations and community economic zones. Catch allocations were generally considered for five communities only (Erub, Masig, Mer, Poruma & Ugar). While the proposed approach within communities was variable greater community control was sought over:

- catch share allocations;
 - where fishers may fish (based on community economic zones);
 - who may fish in the fishery (proposals varied from having a register managed by the PBC and with fishers living on the island having priority of access (Erub) to no big boats and access to be limited to the current active operators with any new fishers having to work with them (Mer, noting there a four active fishing businesses recognised in the community);
 - catch monitoring approaches ('full time fishers logbooks, everyone else centralised reporting system or combination of the two approaches); and
 - cultural protocols to access areas.
- strong support for introducing mandatory logbook reporting for fishers;
 - general recognition that the fishery cannot support everyone (or an unlimited number of fishers) – the fishery is too small to sustain a large number of fishers;
 - some recognition that the fishery was based on a wide range of species from which a living could be made, not just black teatfish
 - differences in views between those fishers wanting the fishery opened as soon as possible (a 1 December 2016 season open date was proposed) and those wanting to continue to develop catch reporting and a full range of community-based management arrangements.

Seeking your views on an additional hookah trial

Given the wide range of issues identified, the HCWG is seeking your views to help determine how important the proposed additional trial of hookah to take white-teatfish is compared to other management priorities for the fishery.

I encourage you, as a licence holder in the Beche-de-mer Fishery, to contact me via phone or email to have your say on this issue. Your responses will greatly assist the HCWGs discussions.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact me on (07) 4069 1990 or by email at andrew.trappett@afma.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Trappett
Senior Fisheries Management Officer
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT Public register development	Agenda Item No. 4.4 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on the implementation of a Public Register for Fishing & Carrier Licences for all Torres Strait Fisheries.

KEY ISSUES

1. AFMA is seeking Working Group advice on the PZJA making a register (or list) of licence holders across Torres Strait Fisheries available to the public (a public register).
2. A public licence register would allow for:
 - a. Fish receivers (Licenced carrier vessels and other buyers) to more easily identify product taken by licenced fishing vessels;
 - b. Fishers to more easily identify licenced carrier vessels and, in the event that a mandatory fish receiver system is implemented, fishers to more easily identify licenced fish receivers (land based or vessel based);
 - c. Improved voluntary compliance through increased transparency of licence holdings.
 - d. Parties interested in buying or leasing licences (or quota / effort units) to verify the ownership status
3. It is proposed to make the following details of each licensee available publicly on a register:
 - a. Company or individual's name
 - b. Licence type (Fishing licence (TIB, TVH), Sunset, Carrier A, B or C)
 - c. Licence Number
 - d. Vessel identifying number (the boat mark), or "No Boat" status
 - e. Licence expiry date
 - f. Fishery endorsements (TRL, CT, SM, Prawn, BDM, Treaty endorsement)
 - g. Catch or Effort allocation where applicable (Prawn effort, sunset catch allocation)
4. The register would **not** include contact details for licensees.
5. The register would be made available on the PZJA website and updated at least monthly.
6. Public registers are in place for all Commonwealth fisheries managed under plans of management.

BACKGROUND

7. Torres Strait fisheries are governed by the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* (TSFA). Section 10 of the TSFA empowers the Minister to create a register and to make part or all of the register available to the public (Section 10, p.10). The *Torres Strait Finfish Management Plan*

2013 also has provision for a public register Part 6, Section 6.2, p.22), as does the exposure draft of the *Tropical Rock Lobster Management Plan 2017* (Part 4, Division 2, Section 30 & 31, p.19), and the *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2009* (Part 6, Section 6.1, p.23).

8. For example, the relevant section of the *Torres Strait Finfish Management Plan 2013* is:

6.2 Register

(1) As well as the matters mentioned in section 10 of the Act, the Register must show particulars of:

- (a) transfers or temporary transfers of TSFF licences, sunset licences and units of fishing capacity; and
- (b) boats nominated under section 4.5; and
- (c) any other information that the PZJA determines.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT Future management priorities	Agenda Item No. 4.5 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on future management priorities for the fishery.

KEY ISSUES

1. This is a standing item for the HCWG. Having agreed management priorities (management issues to focus on) and a work plan aims to achieve a more efficient management process.
2. At its meeting in June 2016 the HCWG recommended a list of management priorities (detailed below).
3. Based on discussions convened in the meeting and / or advice from individual members the Working Group is asked to review the standing management priorities and provide advice on any changes.
4. Where necessary, the Working Group should aim to assign an order of priority to items and a desired timeline.
5. Importantly the Working Group will need to have regard for resourcing. AFMA's budget for hand collectable fisheries is tabled under Agenda Item 4.8 for information.

BACKGROUND

6. At its July 2016 meeting the Working Group identified the following future management priorities:
 - development of a harvest strategy and recovery plans for overfished species;
 - future management arrangements for black teatfish and white teatfish;
 - review the size limits set for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery taking into consideration the size limits in place for the Queensland and the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery;
 - review weight conversion ratios for gutted and dried Beche-de-mer species; and
 - develop communication materials to assist industry members.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT Crewing of Traditional Inhabitant Boats	Agenda Item No. 4.6 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on the proposal from the Torres Strait Fishers Association Inc. (TSFA) to allow for more non-indigenous fishers to be employed as crew on Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licenced vessels.

KEY ISSUES

1. Mr Patrick Mills, Chair of the TSFA wrote (on 25 May 2015) to The Hon. Bill Byrne MP Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and to the then Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture **APPENDIX A**.
2. The letter outlined TSFA concerns with the current condition on TIB licences that vessel must be operated only by traditional inhabitants. The TSFA acknowledge that the restriction was probably put in place to protect employment opportunities for Traditional Inhabitants however advise it has a negative effect on indigenous fishing businesses.
3. The response from The Hon. Bill Byrne MP Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and the then Hon. Richard Colbeck Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture is provided at **APPENDIX B** and **APPENDIX C** respectively.
4. AFMA is seeking comment from all PZJA Working Groups on the TSFA proposal. The Tropical Rock Lobster Working Group noted the proposal at its meeting on 27-28 August 2015 and advised:
 - consultation with industry, communities, Traditional Owners and Prescribed Body Corporates will be critical to support any changes; and
 - both the TIB and TVH sector have similar difficulties employing crew.
5. The Working Group should consider its advice in line with objectives of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*, in particular to have regard to the management priority to:
 - a. manage commercial fisheries for optimum utilisation;
 - b. 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.
6. The Finfish Working Group considered the proposal at its meeting on 16-17 March 2017 and minuted the following advice:

Noting that the general level of support from the industry members and in-principle support for removing impediments to traditional inhabitant participation in the fisheries, the FWG recommended consultation with the broader industry and communities be undertaken to develop possible management options for further consideration.

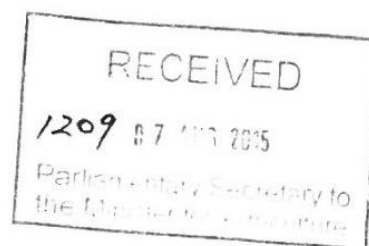
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APPENDIX A – Letter from Mr Patrick Mills to Minister Byrne

APPENDIX B – Response letter from Minister Byrne

APPENDIX C – Response letter from Parliamentary Secretary Colbeck

The Hon. Senator Richard Colbeck
Senator for Tasmania
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture
Parliament of Australia
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Re: Skilled workers for Torres Strait fishery

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you as an Indigenous fisherman and the Chair of the Torres Strait Fishers Association, a non-profit organisation established to develop our industry. It has become increasingly obvious to myself and our members that there are some discrepancies and inequalities inherent in our Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licensing legislation that need to be addressed. The TIB licence allows the employment of Indigenous only fishermen, in contrast with the commercial licence (TVH) who can employ whomever they choose. Therefore, we see this as discriminative nature of our licence. Although we realise this has probably been put in place to protect employment opportunities for Indigenous people, it has had a negative effect on Indigenous fishing businesses. The Torres Strait population is a relatively small one and so we are limited by numbers alone. Add to this, the fact that many Indigenous people are choosing to remain close to home and rely on a mixture of government benefits and self-employment in the fishing industry via an individual ABN, it makes it increasingly difficult to find skilled workers to fish off a primary vessel in Torres Strait.

Torres Strait fishing industries have a rich history of development by foreign workers, for example the Japanese and Malays with the pearling and trochus industries, and Papua New Guineans who later came in the 1970s to bolster our crayfish industry.

Against this background, we are requesting serious consideration to amending the TIB license to allow the employment of a limited number of non-Indigenous fishermen for the sake of the industry and economic development. This is essential to the successful continuance of the TIB primary vessel. We envision that a TIB vessel would be owned and operated by an Indigenous skipper and would be allowed up to 4 non-Indigenous fishermen to supplement their Indigenous workforce. As we, as Torres Strait Islanders are moving towards 100% ownership and management of our fishery, we must move with the times and allow economic development to full potential.

Yours in fishing,

Patrick Mills
Chair – TSFA Inc

Hon Bill Byrne MP

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

GPO Box 46

Brisbane QLD 4001

28/07/2015

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 23rd June, 2015 in response to my concerns, as Chair of the Torres Strait Fishers Association, regarding conditions imposed on Traditional Inhabitant Boat Licences (TIB).

I would like to further respond to your letter. Of paramount importance, we were given Native Title commercial rights over our waters by the High Court on 7th August, 2013,, therefore, we feel that this overrides everything else. Maybe this commercial interest restricted to traditional owners by virtue of their Native Title can be expanded to external interest as labour or lessee to make the industry viable for Traditional Inhabitant License holders under Native Title.

In your letter, you raise the issue of sustainability of the fishery. As we are the custodians of our sea country given by the High Court, surely if there is to be a reduction of effort, it should be taken from the commercial TVH sector by reducing their tenders, rather than from the Indigenous sector. This is also in accordance with the Torres Strait Treaty which you quote as stating that licencing policy should "promote economic development in the Torres Strait ... and employment opportunities for traditional inhabitants". By restricting Indigenous boat owners in whom they may employ, has the very opposite effect. While it sounds good in principle to restrict these employment opportunities to Indigenous inhabitants, In reality, it is impossible to find Indigenous individuals in the volume needed to make a business economically viable. Many of the potential divers in Torres Strait prefer to work for themselves using their own ABN to subsidise their government payments, for example through the My Pathway or CDEP type programs. Indigenous masters are finding it increasingly difficult to staff their vessels to maintain their economic viability. Allowing a capped number of non-Indigenous divers to participate on TIB vessels, would not corrupt the intentions of the Torres Strait Treaty as long as the master/owner is Indigenous and the majority of the crew are Indigenous. Without adequate staffing of crew, the TIB sector is disadvantaged and there is not a level playing field for our businesses to compete commercially with the TVH sector. There is also little incentive for Indigenous fishers to pursue purchasing and running a vessel and create employment in our region.

To date, you are the only Minister who has replied to my concerns and I thank you for that. I thank you too, for forwarding my request to the PZJA secretariat.

Yours in fishing,

Patrick Mills

Chair – Torres Strait Fishers Association

4.6 APPENDIX B

Response letter from Minister Byrne



Hon Bill Byrne MP
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and
Minister for Sport and Racing

Reference: CTS 11455/15

23 JUN 2015

Mr Patrick Mills
Chair
Torres Strait Fishers Association Inc
kwemyss@bigpond.com

Level 8
80 Ann Street Brisbane 4000
GPO Box 46 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7560
Email agriculture@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Mills

Thank you for your letter of 25 May 2015 outlining the concerns the Torres Strait Fishers Association has about conditions imposed on Traditional Inhabitant Boat Licences (TIB).

I am advised that conditions on both TIB and non-traditional inhabitants (TVH) licences are in place to deliver a primary objective of the Torres Strait Treaty; *"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"*.

I note your concerns that TIB licence conditions only allow for the employment of indigenous fishers however these conditions, in addition to those restricting the issuing of new TVH licences, are all designed to ensure traditional inhabitants face minimal barriers in gaining entry to commercial fisheries. These conditions facilitate economic development opportunities for traditional inhabitants.

The employment of non-indigenous people on TIB vessels creates the risk whereby non-traditional inhabitants limit these opportunities. I am also advised that in the absence of a management plan such changes could result in sustainability concerns for the region's fisheries including the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery.

Notwithstanding these concerns, to change these conditions would require a decision by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA). To this end, I will forward your request to the PZJA Secretariat seeking further advice on your proposal prior to consideration by the PZJA.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Mr Tom Roberts
Senior Policy Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on telephone
07 3087 8071 or email tom.roberts@daf.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



The Honourable Bill Byrne MP
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and
Minister for Sport and Racing
Member for Rockhampton

Cc: Senator the Honourable Richard Colbeck
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture
PZJA Secretariat
Box 7051
CANBERRA BC ACT 2610

Response letter from Parliamentary Secretary Colbeck



SENATOR THE HON. RICHARD COLBECK

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture

Liberal Senator for Tasmania

Ref: MC15-006687

27 AUG 2015

Mr Patrick Mills
 Chair
 Torres Strait Fishers Association
 Warraber Island
 TORRES STRAIT QLD 4875

Dear Mr Mills Patrick,

Thank you for your letter regarding potential inequalities in licensing for Traditional Inhabitant (TIB) fishers, received by my office on 7 August 2015. I note there has also been correspondence on this matter with my Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) colleague, the Hon. Bill Byrne MP, Queensland Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Sport and Racing.

I acknowledge the points you raise about employment constraints on TIB licences and the impact this might have on TIB fishing businesses. You correctly note that the existing constraint is related to fostering employment for indigenous Torres Strait people, which as you know is an important issue for government. The PZJA, under the Torres Strait Treaty, is to have regard to promoting economic development in the Torres Strait area and employment opportunities for traditional inhabitants. The Australian Government made this Treaty responsibility an objective under the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.

Economic development is a critical factor in the future of the Torres Strait people and I support reviewing any policy that might hinder such development. I note however that the policies of the PZJA must also complement each other if the overall best outcome is to be achieved. I also note, as Minister Byrne alluded to in his response, having a management plan for the Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery in place would provide more certainty under which to consider further development of licensing policy.

While it is critical that the PZJA consider the impacts of policy changes on its legislated objectives, there is value in giving due consideration to when a licensing policy designed to foster employment may in fact place limitations on economic development. It is also appropriate for the PZJA to consider, if a change to the licensing policy was prudent, exactly what that change would look like and whether or not changing the policy would result in unintended consequences.

I believe it is therefore worthwhile that this issue be subject to broader consultation within the Torres Strait fishery working groups over the next several months and for the PZJA Standing Committee to consider the outcomes of that consultation before making a recommendation for the PZJA to consider.

I will ask the Australian Fisheries Management Authority to ensure this issue is placed on the agendas of coming Torres Strait working group meetings. I will also ask for Torres Strait Fisheries Manager, Ms Selina Stoute, to discuss with you possibly using your letter as the basis for the working groups to consider the issue.

Thank you again for raising this important aspect of our licensing policy and how we might be able to improve the way we pursue economic development in the Torres Strait region through that policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Colbeck', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Colbeck

cc: the Hon. Bill Byrne MP, Queensland Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT AFMA Hand Collectable Fisheries Expenditure 2016/17 and Budget 2017/18	Agenda Item No. 4.7 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **NOTE** AFMA's budget for hand collectable fisheries in 2017/18.

KEY ISSUES

1. Each year, AFMA's annual operating budget is determined by the Australian Government. AFMA uses part of its budget to provide management services to the Protected Zone Joint Authority. AFMA's Torres Strait budget is apportioned across a range of activities and fisheries.
2. AFMA consults on its budget with all Commonwealth managed fisheries. Consultation with industry provides accountability and assists with driving management efficiency and priority setting. Whilst Torres Strait fisheries management costs are not currently cost recovered, industry and management are likely to benefit in the same way from understanding and discussing AFMA's budgeting arrangements.
3. AFMA's DRAFT budget for PZJA hand collectable fisheries, (direct costs only), is \$81,460. Note this does not include indirect costs such as staff time, overheads, research administration, logbook program, data management or licensing costs. The budget primarily covers the convening of Hand Collectable Working Group meetings. A detailed breakdown of the budget is provided in **APPENDIX A**.
4. In addition to the budgeted costs described above, AFMA is has commissioned the CSIRO funding application to develop a harvest strategy for the BDM fishery

2017/18 draft hand collectable fisheries budget**Consultants and Contractors**

Total budget costs for consultants and contractors are \$18,534 (two days of meetings at \$9287 per day) which covers the sitting fees of HCWG members.

Members	Sitting fees claimable per one day meeting
HCWG Chair	2196
Scientific Members	4392
Industry Members	2196
Malu Lamar invited participant	483
Total	<u>\$9,267</u>

Industry workshop –

Based on the rates and arrangements for the November 2016 Erub workshop on black teatfish - funding has been allocated for a similar workshop in 2017/18 financial year for consultation on harvest strategy or other management arrangements

Charters	\$14,369
Helicopter	\$6,000
Accommodation/Catering	\$4,300
Sitting Fees	\$2,196
Total	<u>\$26,865.00</u>

Hand collectable working group meetings

Total budget costs for holding two Hand Collectable Working Group meetings are \$30,657.

Member	Origin	Plane Fare	Accommodation	Taxi/ferry/parking	TA	Dinner	Venue Hire	1 day meeting total	
HCWG Chair	Cairns	620	600	172.8	331	250	535	2508.8	
Scientific Member	Brisbane	920	600	172.8	456			2148.8	
Scientific Member	TBA* (based on Brisbane base)	920	600	172.8	456			2148.8	
AFMA staff	TI	0		0	0			0	
AFMA staff	TI	0		0	0			0	2 meetings
Total		2460	1800	518.4	1243	250	535	\$6,806.40	\$13,612.80

Member	Origin	Plane Fare	Accommodation	Taxi/ferry/parking	TA	Dinner	Venue Hire	1 day meeting total	
Maluwap Nona	Mer	1250	600	52.8	331	250		2483.8	
Patrick Mills	TI	0	0	0	0			0	
Francis Pearson	Poruma	918	600	52.8	331			1901.8	
Michael Passi	Mer	1250	600	52.8	331			2233.8	
Malu Lamar Rep.	TBA*	1250	600	52.8	-			1902.8	
Total		4668	2400	211.2	993	250	0	\$8,522.20	\$17,044.40

**Overall Total
(1 meeting) \$15,328.60**

**Overall Total
(2 meetings) \$30,657.20**

Staff travel

Total budget costs for other staff travel (community visit) are \$2,629.10

Purpose	# staff	Destination	# days	flights	Ferry	Accom.	TA	Total
Trip for stakeholder meeting/catch up with industry relating to Hand Collectable fisheries	2	TBA	1	1240	105.6	556	727.5	2629.1
Total								\$2,629.10

Other Administrative costs

Total budget costs for other administration and publications are \$2,775

Account	Item	Explanation	Quantity	Unit cost	Total	Comments
Advertising	Torres News advert	General management notices	3	\$380	\$1,140	
Printing & publishing	Printing and binding	BDM management arrangements guide	175	\$7.5	\$825	\$750 excl GST
Total					\$2,775	

Note that this budget does not include other AFMA operating costs, including overheads, research administration, logbook programs, data management, or licensing costs.

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP	Meeting No. 11 27 June 2017
MANAGEMENT Grant of carrier licences to non-traditional inhabitants	Agenda Item No. 4.8 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on granting new carrier-only boat licenses to non-traditional inhabitants for vessels that are not also licensed to fish.

KEY ISSUES

1. From time to time the PZJA receives applications from people/companies seeking authorisation to transport (carry) seafood by boat in the Torres Strait. Vessels must hold a carrier licence to carry seafood taken in Torres Strait Fisheries.
2. Recognising the reliance of Torres Strait commercial fishers on having sea-freight services to transport fisheries products from and within the Torres Strait, the PZJA has granted new carrier licences and renewed others for freight vessels. This includes freight vessels owned by non-traditional inhabitant persons/owned entities e.g. sea-freight companies such as *Seaswift Pty Ltd*. These decisions have been consistent with directions from the PZJA.
3. More recently there has been interest from smaller companies to transport seafood that are owned by non-traditional inhabitants.
4. Advice is being sought from the Finfish Working Group as there is some ambiguity in the PZJA “*Guide to management arrangements for Torres Strait Fisheries, June 2004*” (the Guide) which describes the PZJA licencing policy (**Attachment A**) and with previous directions from the PZJA.
5. Having regard for the objectives of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act* 1984, AFMA is seeking working group advice on any concerns with the grant of new carrier-only licences to non-traditional inhabitants, subject to the conditions set out in paragraphs 6 and 7.

BACKGROUND

6. The Guide states ‘*carrier licences **may be granted** to boats which are legitimate cargo vessels*’ (Carrier vessel licence, pp.19). Another section of the Guide states ‘*all new fishing licences and carrier licences are **only to be granted to Traditional Inhabitants***’ (tropical rock lobster, Spanish mackerel, pearl shell, finfish, beche-de-mer, trochus and crab fisheries, pp.19).
7. Consistent with directions from the PZJA, the grant of a new carrier licence to a non-traditional inhabitant vessel to carry (transport) seafood, may be considered for vessels that are not also licenced to take fish in a Torres Strait Fishery (meaning the vessel can’t be used to fish– it can only transport seafood) provided they are subject to the following minimum licence conditions:
 - a. The carrier boat will not change the state of the product.
 - b. The carrier boat will not purchase or take on board or carry product from a vessel which is not licenced.

- c. The boat shall not be used to take tender boats or dinghies to and from the fishing grounds or be used as accommodation for fishers.
 - d. The licence is non-transferrable
8. Consistent with the PZJA's recent decision, these licences would also be required to have an operating Vessel Monitoring System.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – A guide to management arrangements for Torres Strait fisheries June 2004