

**TORRES STRAIT FINFISH WORKING GROUP MEETING
RECORD OF MEETING
29 November 2007
PEARLS BUILDING, THURSDAY ISLAND**

Action Items

No.	Action	Agenda	Agency
1.	CFGs and management to provide more details on alternate closure regimes that may be possible under trading arrangements with non-islander fishers who wish to fish in the finfish fishery post 100% buyout of the TVH sector. Suggested regimes should be passed through QBFP for compliance considerations.		CFG's AFMA/QDPI
2.	Annabel Jones to discuss with TVH fishers the recommendation from the CFG representatives to abolish the requirement for Master Fisherman Licences in the Finfish Management Plan. If the TVH fishers agree with this recommendation this should then be passed onto the TSFMAC as a TSFFWG out-of-session recommendation.		A Jones

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MEETING START TIMES: 8.30AM

AGENDA

OPENING

APOLOGIES

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

1. Update on progress of Management Plan
 - 1.1 Current status of 100% buyout process of fishery
 - 1.2 Progress of Management Plan in light of 100% buyout
 - 1.3 Drafting Instructions
2. Trading of Annual Catch Entitlements held by TIB sector (Leasing arrangements).
 - 2.1 Draft TSRA Trading Principles
3. Draft Management Plan – Issues that need consideration
 - 3.1 Master Fisherman's Licences
4. Research
 - 4.1 Subsistence Fishing in Eastern Torres Strait – research update

A modified agenda from that proposed for the Finfish Working Group was adopted.

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DRAFT RECORD OF MEETING

ATTENDANCE

Day 1

Members

Mr Karrod Beattie	(Chair/DPI&F)
Dr Jim Prescott	(AFMA)
Mr Shane Gaddes	(DPI&F)
Mr Lota Warria	(TSRA – Yorke Community Fisher Representative)
Mr Kila Odo	(TSRA – Mer Community Fisher Representative)
Mr Toshi Nakata	(TSRA)
Dr Annabel Jones	(AFMA)
William Lui	(TSRA – Warraber Community Fisher Representative)
Kenny Bedford	(TSRA – Erub Community Fisher Representative)
Lyndon Peddell	(QBFP)
Mr Shane Fava	(DPI&F)

Observers

APOLOGIES

Mr Francis Pearson	(TSRA – Poruma Community Fisher Representative)
Mr Carl D’Aguair	(Mackerel/Reef line Fisher)
Mr Shaun Hanson	(Reef Line and Mackerel Fisher)
Dr Ashley Williams	(Research member – JCU)
Mr Bert Matysek	(TSRA – Ugar Community Fisher Representative)
Mr Neil Green	(QSIA)

Agenda Item 1: Update on Management Plan Timeline including 100% buyout

1.1 Current status of 100% buyout process of fishery

Annabel Jones provided an update of the 100% buyout process.

Proposals were sent to all TVH fishers in the Finfish fishery and by 23rd November all of the TVH fishers have indicated their intent to participate in the offer. Technicalities with several of the offers are now being rectified by DAFF. DAFF hopes that these will be resolved by 7th December 2007 and the process will be finalised.

1.2 Progress of Management Plan in light of 100% buyout

The following timelines were discussed.

Task	Due date
TVH Licence Surrender #1	January 2008
TSFMAC meeting	February 2008
Interim licensing arrangements	Feb 2008
PZJA out of session decisions DMP and interim licensing arrangements	February 2008
Draft Management Plan out for public consultation	March/April 08
Amendments made to Management Plan	May 2008
TVH licence surrender #2	June 30 2008
PZJA endorses final management plan	July 2008
Trading arrangements accepted	September 08
Management Plan tabled in Parliament	?
Management Plan commences	Late 2008/2009

1.3 Drafting Instructions

Annabel Jones briefly discussed the drafting instructions provided in the FFWG papers to FFWG members.

Agenda Item 2: Trading of Annual Catch Entitlements held by TIB sector (Leasing arrangements).

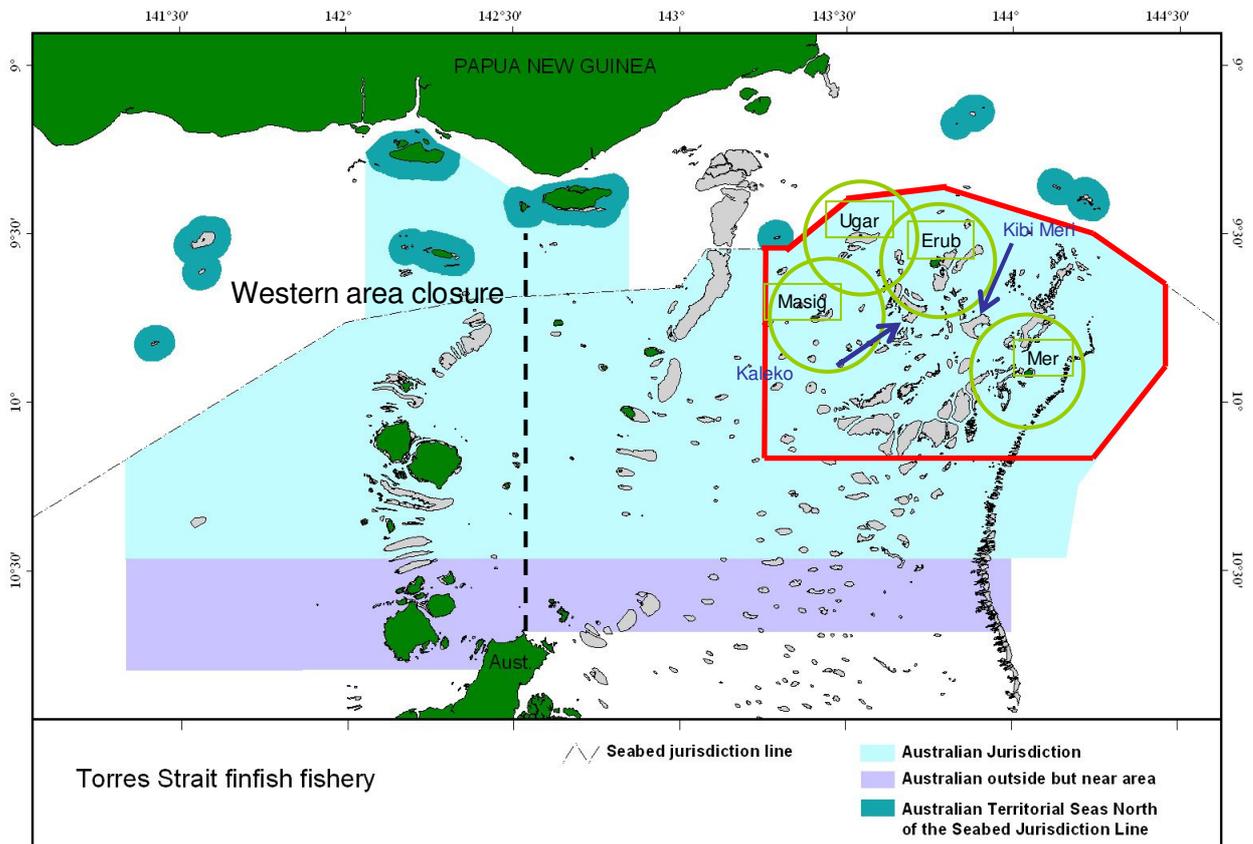
2.1 Draft TSRA Trading Principles

Mr Nakata discussed the draft principles of trading of TSRA Annual Catch Entitlements with non-islander fishers.

The following points were raised by the participants.

Mr Odo (Mer Island CFG representative) suggested a closure strategy (as approximated in Fig 1) as an alternative to the 10nm closures around Mer, Masig, Erub and Ugar Islands

Some at the meeting felt that the suggested area closure would be unacceptable to non-islander fishers as they would feel that the closure left little fishing area available to them to fish and may lead to decreased catch rates. It is unlikely that non-islander fishers would be willing to enter into leasing agreements under such a closure. Non-islander fishers have indicated previously at working group meetings that reefs south of the Cumberlands group were not suitable fishing areas in bad weather (due to poor anchorages) which predominates in the winter months when this sector is most active.



Jm:

FIG 1 – Mer representatives suggested closure regime (in red). Green circles are 10nm areas.

An alternative was to introduce seasonal closures with 10nm closures to non-islander fishers for example from September through to May as this is the time when good weather means islander fishers can fish further from their communities in competition with non-islanders.

Mr Bedford (Erub Is CFG representative) provided input from the Erub community. They have requested that in addition to a 10nm closure to non-islander fishers around the community be increased to include Mary and Kaleko reefs.

ACTION ITEM: CFG's undertook to discuss strategies for area closures for non-islander fishers who buy quota from TIB fishers and provide suggestions that would meet TIB objectives for room to increase participation in the fishery while providing for trading conditions that are attractive to non-islander fishers to enter into.

Additionally there was discussion on who should be included in discussions of trading arrangements and how profits from leasing should be utilised. There was no resolution on these issues.

4.2 Interim arrangements for TVH fishing under 100% buyout scenario

TVH licences surrendered through the 100% buyout will be surrendered on the 31st January or the 30th June 2008. After this time, and when the Finfish management plan comes in, there will exist a time where there will be no licenced non-islanders fishers and no quota for them to buy from the TIB sector.

The group discussed the need to maintain supply of product to processors in southern ports. There has been concern raised that these processors could be negatively affected by decrease in supply from Torres Strait and/or market price for Torres Strait product is affected. Non-islander fishers considering participating in Torres Strait finfish fishery by leasing quota in the future, would need to investigate other fisheries in the short term if they are not allowed to fish in Torres Strait prior to commencement of the management plan (and quota). Once settled into another fishery, these operations may opt to participate in the Torres Strait fishery when quota becomes available as they are settled elsewhere. It may be noted that processors may source other supplies (hence filling the shortfall) lessening the impact of decreased supply from Torres Strait.

The method discussed to allow non-islander fishers to fish in Torres Strait prior to commencement of the management plan (and quota arrangements) was for the PZJA to issue temporary licences to TSRA to “lease” to non-islander fishers. There would be no quota imposed on these temporary leases, however, restrictions would be imposed on these fishers in individual licence conditions. This could include area closures.

Under interim arrangements allowing for non-islander fishing in Torres Strait, the following questions may be worthy of consideration. In a fishery with lower effort levels, those that are allowed to fish may see increased catch rates and profits. Under what conditions would a non-islander fisher be allowed to fish in the fishery with no restrictions on catch (quota)? How would a fee for access be determined, again in the absence of quota?

Agenda Item 3: Draft Management Plan

3.1: Master Fisherman’s Licence (MFL)

The participants at this meeting discussed the potential advantages and disadvantages of alternate options for a MFL in the Finfish fishery under the new management plan.

The CFG’s agreed that there was insufficient advantages to either options discussed which maintained MFL’s in the fishery and supported the option to abolish master fisherman’s licences in the fishery.

The CFG members agreed to recommend this to the TSFMAC pending support from TVH fishers as an out-of-session FFWG recommendation.

Agenda Item 4: Research

On behalf of Ms Sara Busilacchi, Dr Jones provided an update on the research conducted by her on subsistence fishing in the eastern Torres Strait on her behalf. A brochure was also distributed for CFG representatives to distribute at their communities.

A brochure and DVD on live fishing of coral trout was also distributed to the CFG representatives.