

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
PRELIMINARIES Meeting preliminaries	Agenda Item No. 1.1 FOR NOTING

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Finfish Fishery Working Group **NOTE:**

1. the Chairperson's acknowledgement of traditional owners and welcome address; and
2. apologies received from members unable to attend.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
PRELIMINARIES Meeting preliminaries	Agenda Item No. 1.2 FOR NOTING

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group **CONSIDER** and **ADOPT** the draft agenda.

BACKGROUND

1. Key items for a draft agenda for this FFWG meeting were circulated to members and other participants via email on 21 August 2019. No comments were received from members on the key items for discussion.
2. A full draft agenda (**Attachment A**) was circulated together with papers, to members on 22 November 2019.

PROTECTED ZONE JOINT AUTHORITY TORRES STRAIT FINFISH FISHERY WORKING GROUP

29 November 2019 (8:30 am - 5:00 pm)
TSRA Boardroom, Thursday Island, Torres Strait.

DRAFT AGENDA

The meeting will open at 8.30am on Friday 29 November 2019 at 8:30 am.

AGENDA ITEM 1 PRELIMINARIES

1.1 **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, welcome and apologies**

The Chair will welcome FFWG members, permanent observers (noting incoming scientific permanent observer Dr Trevor Hutton), invited participants and any observers to the November 2019 meeting of the Torres Strait Finfish Working Group.

1.2 **Adoption of agenda**

The FFWG is invited to consider and adopt the draft agenda.

1.3 **Declarations of interest**

FFWG members must declare any real or potential conflicts of interests to the group and determine whether a member may or may not be present during discussion of, or decisions made, on the matter which is the subject of the conflict.

1.4 **Action items from previous meetings**

The FFWG will note the status of action items arising from previous meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 2 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

2.1 **Industry updates**

Industry members and invited participants are invited to provide a verbal update on activities and strategic issues relevant to the management of the fishery.

2.2 **Government agencies updates**

PZJA agencies are asked to provide a short update to the group on relevant changes to management arrangements and strategic issues.

2.3. **Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority update**

The working group is to note any relevant updates on native title matters relevant to the fishery.

2.4 **Native title**

The working group is to note any relevant updates on native title matters relevant to the fishery noting Malu Lamar RNTBC are invited participants to all PZJA advisory group meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 3 TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH ADVICE for 2020-21 SEASON

3.1 Spanish mackerel Total Allowable Catch advice for the 2020-21 season

Expected outcome: Having considered advice from the FFRAAG 6 (27-28 Nov 2019) on Recommended Biological Catches and best estimates of catches taken outside the fishery, FFWG will discuss and provide advice on Total Allowable Catches for the 2020-21 fishing season for Spanish mackerel.

3.2 Coral trout Total Allowable Catch advice for the 2020-21 season

Expected outcome: Having considered advice from the FFRAAG 6 (27-28 Nov 2019) on Recommended Biological Catches and best estimates of catches taken outside the fishery, FFWG will discuss and provide advice on Total Allowable Catches for the 2020-21 fishing season for coral trout.

AGENDA ITEM 4 HARVEST STRATEGY

4.1 Draft Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Harvest Strategy

Expected Outcome: The FFWG will **discuss** and **provide advice** on key elements of Spanish mackerel harvest strategy and note the status of the coral trout harvest strategy.

AGENDA ITEM 5 MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE

5.1 Review of Western Line Closure

Expected Outcome: Having considered the outcomes of public consultation and relevant advice from the FFRAAG, the Working Group will **discuss** and **provide advice** on the possible removal of the Western Line Closure.

AGENDA ITEM 6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Other Business

The Working Group is invited to nominate any other business for discussion.

6.2 Date and venue for next meeting

The FFWG will confirm arrangements for meetings in 2020, tentatively scheduled for 26-27 March 2020 (joint FFRAAG + FFWG meeting). 6-7 May 2020 to consider the outcomes of community consultation on the harvest strategy and 25-26 November 2019

CLOSE OF MEETING

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
PRELIMINARIES Declarations of interests	Agenda Item No. 1.3 FOR ACTION

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

1. **DECLARE** all real or potential conflicts of interest in Torres Strait Finfish Fisheries at the commencement of the meeting;
2. **DETERMINE** whether the member may or may not be present during discussion of or decisions made on the matter which is the subject of the conflict;
3. **ABIDE** by decisions of the Finfish Fishery Working Group (FFWG) regarding the management of conflicts of interest; and
4. **NOTE** that the record of the meeting must record the fact of any disclosure, and the determination of the Working Group as to whether the member may or may not be present during discussion of or decisions made on the matter which is the subject of the conflict.

BACKGROUND

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 declare any real or potential conflicts of interest (**APPENDIX A**).
2. FFWG members are asked to provide the executive officer with a list of declared interests.
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.

Item 1.3 Appendix A, Register of Declared Interests (based on 15 March 2019 FFWG Meeting)

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Andy Bodsworth	Independent Chair	Independent Consultant – Cobalt Marine Resource Management.
Rocky Stephen	Traditional Inhabitant Industry Member, Kemer Kemer Meriam (Ugar, Mer, Erub)	Councillor for Ugar, Chairperson of Kos and Abob Fisheries Ugar, Works with brother in a commercial fishing business on Ugar, Eastern cluster member for the PZJA Finfish Working Group. Sits on Prawn MAC and TS Scientific Advisory Committee. Does not hold a TIB licence.
Frank Loban	Traditional Inhabitant Industry Member, Maluialgal Cluster (Badu, Moa, Mabuiag)	TIB licence holder (crab and crayfish) no finfish endorsement. Industry member on PZJA Hand Collectable Working Group and Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee to represent interests of western cluster.
Tenny Elisala	Traditional Inhabitant Industry Member, Gudmalulgal (Saibai, Dauan, Boigu).	TSRA Ranger Dauan, TIB licence holder.
Andrew Trappett	Executive Officer FRAG and FWG.	Co-investigator on TSSAC pre-proposal project for Spanish mackerel stock assessment as data services and industry liaison role. Staff time to be an in-kind contribution to the project.
Selina Stoute	AFMA Member	Nil
Allison Runck	TSRA Member	TSRA holds finfish allocation on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants. Involved with administration of leasing access to finfish fishery to sunset sector fishers. No role personally in decision making on access or quota pricing.
Michael O'Neill	Scientific Member	Principal Fisheries Scientist, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Principal scientist for TSSAC project to develop a harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.
David Brewer	Scientific Member	Director – Upwelling P/L (David Brewer Consulting) which has no current Torres Strait projects or pecuniary interests. Honorary Fellow – CSIRO. Chair - Torres Strait Finfish RAG. Scientific member – Torres Strait Finfish Working Group. Scientific member – Northern Prawn Fishery RAG. Current consultancies with Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, Redlands City Council.
Meeting observers and declarations of interests		
Tony Vass	Industry permanent observer	No financial interest in Torres Strait Fisheries. Previous Torres Strait finfish operator.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
PRELIMINARIES Action items and record from last meeting	Agenda Item No. 1.4 FOR NOTING

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Finfish Fishery Working Group **NOTE:**
 - a. that no actions arose at the last FFWG meeting (15 March 2019); and
 - b. the final meeting record of the FFWG meeting on 15 March 2019.

KEY ISSUES

Actions arising

2. No actions arose at the last FFWG Meeting (15 March 2019). There is a single outstanding action item from FFWG Meeting 20 March 2018 for AFMA to organise a presentation from Biosecurity Australia to present to the FFWG on monitoring in place to prevent invasive fish species such as climbing perch and snakehead from entering the Torres Strait from PNG (and vice versa for cane toads). It is proposed that this presentation can be scheduled for a future meeting.

Meeting record

3. The draft meeting record from FFWG 15 March 2019 was circulated for member comments in two parts. Key items for advice going to the PZJA meeting on 1 April 2019 (Advice on Spanish mackerel TAC, coral trout TAC and western line closure review) were circulated on 20 March 2019 as priority items for comment by 22 March 2019.
4. The remainder of the record was circulated for member comment on 4 April 2019 with the period for comment closing on 24 April 2019.
5. The meeting record was closed and ratified as a true and accurate record and posted on the PZJA website for public viewing: <https://www.pzja.gov.au/torres-strait-finish-groups>

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Finfish Working Group Meeting, 15 March 2019 meeting record.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Working Group



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Agenda Item 1 – Preliminaries

1.1. Opening Prayer, Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, Welcome, Apologies

The meeting was opened in prayer at 0845 hrs. The Chair welcomed attendees and acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which the meeting was held.

Mr Frank Loban was welcomed to the Working Group by the Chair as a newly appointed Traditional Inhabitant Member. FWG welcomed attendance from PNG-NFA officer Mr Joseph Posu as an invited participant and Mr Egon Stewart, sunset sector fisher as a meeting observer for the industry update and stock assessment agenda items.

QDAF member Mr Tom Roberts and newly appointed Traditional Inhabitant Members Mr Harry Nona and Mrs Hilda Mosby were noted as apologies received.

The FWG noted that the meeting was being recorded by AFMA to support an accurate record being produced. AFMA advised that these recordings are stored securely and are deleted once the final record is published.

1.2. Adoption of Agenda

The FWG adopted the agenda as circulated noting a request to consider research updates either under the AFMA update or under other business.

1.3. Declaration of Interests

Table 1. Torres Strait Finfish Working Group members and declarations of interests

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Andy Bodsworth	Independent Chair	Independent Consultant – Cobalt Marine Resource Management.
Rocky Stephen	Traditional Inhabitant Industry Member, Kemer Kemer Meriam (Ugar, Mer, Erub)	Councillor for Ugar, Chairperson of Kos and Abob Fisheries Ugar, Works with brother in a commercial fishing business on Ugar, Eastern cluster member for the PZJA Finfish Working Group. Sits on Prawn MAC and TS Scientific Advisory Committee. Does not hold a TIB licence.
Frank Loban	Traditional Inhabitant Industry Member, Maluialgal Cluster (Badu, Moa, Mabuia)	TIB licence holder (crab and crayfish) no finfish endorsement. Industry member on PZJA Hand Collectable Working Group and Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee to represent interests of western cluster.
Tenny Elisala	Traditional Inhabitant Industry Member, Gudmalulgal (Saibai, Dauan, Boigu).	TSRA Ranger Dauan, TIB licence holder.
Andrew Trappett	Executive Officer FRAG and FWG.	Co-investigator on TSSAC pre-proposal project for Spanish mackerel stock assessment as data services and industry liaison role. Staff time to be an in-kind contribution to the project.
Selina Stoute	AFMA Member	Nil
Allison Runck	TSRA Member	TSRA holds finfish allocation on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants. Involved with administration of leasing access to finfish fishery to sunset sector fishers. No role personally in decision making on access or quota pricing.
Michael O'Neill	Scientific Member	Principal Fisheries Scientist, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Principal scientist for TSSAC

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
		project to develop a harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.
David Brewer	Scientific Member	Director – Upwelling P/L (David Brewer Consulting) which has no current Torres Strait projects or pecuniary interests. Honorary Fellow – CSIRO. Chair - Torres Strait Finfish RAG. Scientific member – Torres Strait Finfish Working Group. Scientific member – Northern Prawn Fishery RAG. Current consultancies with Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, Redlands City Council.

Table 2. Meeting observers and declarations of interests

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Tony Vass	Industry permanent observer	No financial interest in Torres Strait Fisheries. Previous Torres Strait finfish operator.
Joseph Posu	PNG NFA Officer, FWG invited participant	No interests to register.
Egon Stewart	FWG observer	Torres Strait finfish fisher, Sunset licence holder (seasonally leasing fishery access) since 2008-09 leasing process started.

Consistent with the *Protected Zone Joint Authority Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 (FMP 1)* which guides the operation and administration of PZJA consultative forums the FWG noted the requirement for participants to declare all perceived or real interests in Torres Strait fisheries to protect the integrity of advice being provided by the group. Each meeting attendee declared their interests as documented in **Table 1** above. The FWG followed a process where each group of members with similar interests left the meeting to enable the remaining members to:

- freely comment on the declared interests
- agree if the interests precluded the members from participating in any discussions; and
- agree to any methods to treat the declared interest (e.g. the member provides preliminary input but leaves the room when any advice is formed).

Following this, groups of members were asked to re-join the meeting and the considerations were tabled in front of all members.

Traditional Inhabitant Boat sector interests

Members with declared direct commercial fishing interests in the Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) sector left the meeting (Mr Frank Loban, Cr Rocky Stephen). The FWG recognised the benefits of having industry expertise on fishing behaviour, economics and the state of the resource at the working group. The FWG noted that while fishers or their communities may have an interest, real or perceived, in the outcomes from FWG advice to PZJA, the licences held by members were geographically dispersed across the area of the fishery. It was also noted that with access to the fishery 100 per cent owned by traditional inhabitants this sector had preferential access to catch and the benefits of management arrangements meaning there may be less incentive for conflicted advice. TIB sector members re-joined the meeting.

Sunset sector interests

Attendees with declared interests in the sunset sector of the industry left the room (Mr Tony Vass, Mr Egon Stewart). The FWG agreed Mr Vass provides good expertise based advice as a permanent observer to the FWG and balances his interests and advice well. The FWG considered that having Mr Stewart as an active sunset fisher added valuable expertise to inform FWG consideration which would need to be balanced against a perceived interest in levels of total allowable catch or fishery access. Attendees rejoined the discussion and Mr Stewart was advised that his advice on the industry would be valued by the group. The chair reiterated that FWG

business was confidential until published on the PZJA website and that, as an observer, Mr Stewart should not contribute towards formation of any FWG recommendations.

Research interests

Members with research interests (Andy Bodsworth, Michael O'Neill, Dave Brewer and Andrew Trappett) left the room. The FWG noted that these members may have a perceived or real interest in potentially receiving contracting for future research projects or live TSSAC proposals being commented upon at the moment. It was noted that these members may have an interest either directly or through perceived employer affiliation or personal career interests. The FWG agreed that these interests would need to be declared by the member at any discussion on research, and if necessary, to leave the room to allow free discussion and to not participate in the working group forming its advice on these projects. These members re-joined the meeting.

Torres Strait Regional Authority

TSRA staff left the room (Ms Alison Runck and Mr Tenny Elisala). The FWG noted previous advice tabled at the FWG that TSRA advice was highly valuable given their direct role in the PZJA and direct interests in the Finfish Fishery through holding and leasing access through sunset licences. TSRA also had an important role in assessing research projects to be funded. It was noted that the TSRA have a role in administering the Finfish Quota Management Committee (FQMC) using community expertise to guide TSRA Board consideration on amounts to be retained to cover TIB sector catch and the amount to be seasonally leased to sunset fishers. It was noted that both John Tabo on the Finfish RAG and Hilda Mosby (FWG member) were members of the FQMC. FWG noted that this would foster good cross-committee support and shared understanding. The FWG agreed to treat TSRA interests as they arise at the relevant agenda items. TSRA staff re-joined the meeting.

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

AFMA staff left the room (Ms Selina Stoute and Mr Andrew Trappett). The FWG noted that allocation of management priorities and resourcing across different fisheries may be perceived as an interest. AFMA staff re-joined the meeting.

Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority

PNG-NFA officer Mr Joseph Posu left the room. The FWG noted that PNG-NFA provided valuable input to discussions and no direct conflicts of interest from the agency could be considered by the FWG. The group noted that the Australia-PNG Joint Advisory Council meeting and bilateral discussions were noted as the primary forum for Torres Strait Treaty stock sharing issues. Mr Posu re-joined the meeting.

1.4. Actions and record from last FWG meeting, 20 March 2018

The FWG noted the agenda paper detailing the record from the last meeting and actions arising. The FWG noted that most actions were complete aside from a presentation on biosecurity monitoring for invasive pest fish species which is scheduled for the June 2019 FWG meeting.

Agenda Item 2 – Working group updates

2.1 Industry updates

The FWG noted the following general updates from industry members and observers:

Traditional inhabitant advice that infrastructure to support fishing business remains the key strategic challenge for Traditional Inhabitant Boat sector of the fishery given remote communities. FWG noted that TSRA infrastructure improvements will likely see community freezers reopening within 12 months which may not have much impact on the fishery over the next 2019-20 season (starting 1 July 2019). This likelihood of renewed infrastructure is reported to be increasing interest in finfish within the central cluster who historically had harvested a lot of finfish. Ugar community reports strong catches of Spanish mackerel with 3-4 tonnes of mackerel reported caught over two-three month period working to privately owned chest freezers.

There is some general interest from Torres Strait based seafood businesses and within western communities in investing in finfish with several business buying or seeking to buy commercial fishing boats with reports that 2 to 4 boats are in the process of entering the fleet on Badu Island. This interest has reportedly been in response to the 2017-18 season low Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Tropical Rock Lobster, as well as small TACs for beche-de-mer, and potential removal of

the reef-line western area closure. Some operators may be looking to fish finfish as a contingency,. It was considered that these western communities would likely be seeking to establish markets for finfish in the near future.

The industry observer from the sunset sector advised:

- The fishing operation was mainly targeting mackerel to supply the local domestic market with the Sydney Fish Market buying some whole mackerel for export to the Asian market.
- Torres Strait fishery appears to be in good health generally. The operation has been taking their allocated catch in recent seasons with less skilled dory drivers available but have been taking more time to take the same harvest.
- Beach price for mackerel fillets remains steady at around \$16.50 / \$17.50 kg but may peak to support market demand around Chinese new year (\$26/kg for whole, un-bled fish under 10 kg).
- Species substitution was reported as an issue in some markets where other mackerel species such as grey mackerel was being onsold as Spanish mackerel when availability is low. Industry are supportive of a national standard for seafood labelling to address this concern.
- There is concern from some buyers in taking large sized mackerel from Torres Strait due to more northerly, warmer waters which may have increased associated risks of ciguatera poisoning. The group noted ciguatera had not previously been a problem for Torres Strait sourced mackerel.
- The key strategic issue for the industry was the increasing costs on a number of parts of fishing operations including:
 - Concern over rising fuel and bait prices.
 - Cold storage fees (\$20 per time to access stored catches)
 - Packaging (cartons and liners) prices increasing \$4000 over five years (\$6000 per season, now \$10,000).
 - Rising freight prices both southwards – product leaving Torres Strait via barge – but also now for northbound freight to resupply the fishing operation which until recently was free to fishing businesses shipping substantial amounts of catch southwards.
- Crews were still generally reporting round figures for effort (hours fished per session) in logbooks. AFMA urged fishers to help improved the standardisation of the catch rates by supplying the most accurate data in daily fishing logbooks.

The FWG advised that it would be interested in examining more economic detail on similar fishing operations as a full package including costs, beach prices for catch and lease prices for access (noting the *2016 Finfish Action Plan* is a resource providing info on economic drivers in the fishery) with a view to increasing FWG understanding of the economic viability of the fishery.

Catch reporting

Industry noted the present management focus on data collection with upcoming community visits on the Torres Strait Fish Receiver System. The FWG encouraged the TIB sector to continue to supply accurate and complete catch disposal records including effort data. Scientific members encouraged key finfish fishers in communities (those working a large number of days) to also complete daily fishing logbooks which are a powerful and cost effective way of meeting the data needs of the fishery. Industry members advised that managers and scientists needs to be respectful of community wishes to be aware of where data is housed, how it is treated and how it is used to support the fishery.

Catch depredation

Industry advised that sharks taking hooked fish (depredation) was an issue with an increasing number of sharks following the dories prior to, and during fishing. It was considered that a data need for the fishery was to understand how many fish per day were lost to sharks and that the daily fishing logbook should be amended to capture this data.

2.2 Government agencies updates

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

AFMA presented the FWG with the prepared agenda paper detailing relative matters to the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery. The following points were noted by the group:

- The FWG noted that the fishery was operating at present under notional catch limits. AFMA advised that work is progressing on moving the fishery towards formal and enforceable total allowable catches particularly in regard to the establishment of an independent traditional inhabitant led commercial entity to hold an allocation and take over leasing access on behalf of traditional inhabitants.
- AFMA advised that a standing item is to be introduced to future FWG meetings for the group to monitor the performance criteria and indicators of *The Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2013* in meeting its objectives to support management of the fishery.
- AFMA also advised that consideration is being given to how the Plan can support formal TACs and allocation ahead of the establishment of a Traditional Inhabitant entity to hold fishing entitlements.

TSRA advised that table 58 of the prepared paper on seasonal leasing to sunset fishers only reflects the leasing arrangements at the start of the season. TSRA advised that mid-season administration is available to support any additional available catch to be leased out to sunset fishers through the season. It was noted that in-season data on TIB sector catches from the fish receiver system can support this administration.

Torres Strait Regional Authority

TSRA provided the FWG with an update as follows:

- The program for infrastructure investment is underway with the design of island community freezers completed and engineers have been working on upgrades in some communities already;
- Some land access issues are delaying implementation;
- Work is progressing on export and branding of product from Torres Strait with a focus on understanding how to improve potential value for TIB fishers and participation in commercial fisheries.
- A round of community consultation has given the TSRA a mandate to progress the establishment of an independent commercial entity to take over leasing. The TSRA board have approved a model to be progressed.
- No advice is yet available on leasing for the 2019-20 season which would be dependent on total allowable catch decisions to be informed by outcomes of the present FWG meeting.

Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

The FWG noted the following updates from Dr Michael O'Neill, QDAF:

- Individually Transferrable Quotas and Competitive Quotas have been introduced for east coast fisheries.
- Harvest strategy development is progressing and is aiming to be completed by the end of 2019.
- Vessel Monitoring Systems are being rolled out on commercial boats (primaries and dories).
- Work will progress over the next two-three years on developing a production system to run and publish the outputs from up to 30 stock assessments per year to an accessible portal.
- The QDAF FISHNET website is a publically available resource on a fishing authorities, licensing and available quotas in Queensland fisheries: <https://fishnet.fisheries.qld.gov.au>. For example the site indicates that 50 per cent of available coral trout catch has been filled, and 35 per cent of Spanish mackerel. The FWG noted that the east coast Spanish mackerel fishery appears to be on a downturn, with available catches being well under-caught in recent seasons.
- A new state-wide recreational fishing survey is to occur in 2019, with similar surveys to be funded for replication every 2-3 years. The survey includes monthly phone calls to take data from fishing diaries. These catches are entered to a database which is extrapolated to give total catch estimates which feed into stock assessments to support commercial fisheries. 52 boat ramps are monitored by QDAF with 10 days a month of sampling. The FWG noted advice that many recreational fishing harvests are likely bigger than commercial harvests for some species/areas.
- The Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill was passed through Parliament on 28 February 2019. The Bill is the first step in amending the *Fisheries Act* and includes four key elements: modernising the Act objectives to recognise key stakeholder groups, clarify the decision making processes and establishing harvest strategies, and strengthening compliance powers and penalties to address series offences such as black marketing. This is an important step to provide the legislative basis for implementing the Strategy.

2.3 Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority update

The FWG noted an update from PNG-NFA:

- There is little interest among PNG commercial operations in fishing for mackerel or accessing catch sharing arrangements under the Treaty.
- The main commercial fisheries for finfish species in PNG are barramundi and jewfish. Some mackerel and coral trout are landed but mainly in artisanal fisheries which are sold at local markets.
- The main commercial fishing area available for Western Province villages is on north Warrior Reef. Fishers from these villages want to have engagement in commercial fishing to earn money. PNG-NFA is working with these villages by reviewing management arrangements and will potentially provide assistance.

A FWG industry member queried whether PNG Treaty villagers could work on Australian Torres Strait commercial fishing boats noting some of them are experienced dory drivers and divers. AFMA advised that this suggestion was good in principle but would need to be arranged in line with Australian Immigration Laws.

2.4 Native title update

The FWG noted that Malu Lamar were invited to attend the meeting but had declined the invite. AFMA advised that Malu Lamar had advised AFMA that they were not attending PZJA advisory groups until they were made full members rather than invited participants. An industry member ventured that it is important to have Malu Lamar advice in the context of the sea claim in progress. AFMA advised the FWG that they will progress consideration of full membership with the PZJA standing committee.

Agenda Item 3 – Advice on Total Allowable Catches for Spanish mackerel and coral trout

Spanish mackerel total allowable catch advice

Having regard for the FRAG advice the FWG agreed to recommend a **Spanish mackerel TAC of 82 tonnes** (RBC of 94 tonnes minus total estimated catch outside the Fishery – 12 tonne (10t for traditional (subsistence) fishing and 2 t for recreational fishing, **Table 2**). The FWG noted:

- a) That the recommended TAC balances the need for stock rebuilding recognising the apparent biomass decline and both modelled and observed CPUE reductions in recent years, with the need to minimise potential economic impacts on the Fishery. The FWG noted that any TAC reduction was most likely to be given effect through reducing the amount of Spanish Mackerel catch leased to sunset fishers;
- b) Industry members at the WG (all being Traditional Inhabitants) supported the proposed RBC and TAC reduction in order to be precautionary and recognising the importance of the fishery to Traditional Inhabitant livelihoods now and in the future; and
- c) Concern that the proposed TAC reduction may reduce available catch information to support future stock assessments at a time when stock is declining and in need of accurate assessments (catch per unit effort provides an index of stock abundance and is used in modelling stock biomass). It was noted that the proposed TAC reduction could reduce the number of dedicated Spanish mackerel sunset licence operators from three to one or two. This is down from four analysed in the latest stock assessment using 2017-18 data, as one operator has been excluded from TAC reductions in previous years. The FWG noted that future data needs is an important consideration in setting the RBC and TAC. The stock assessment scientist advised that a reduction to two vessel operations could still be analysed in the catch rate standardisation (identification of dory and skipper data, with VMS would mitigate the risk). However, irrespective of the number of fishing operations (2–5), the fishery dependency of the catch rate data (i.e. the amount of fishing by each fishing operation, locations and times) can influence results. Encouragingly, FRAG and FWG traditional commercial operators reiterated the importance of accurate catch and effort information from all sectors, and discussed how to improve and supply their catch-effort data to support the stock assessment process.
- d) TSRA concern that the historical catch data set being used to derive the CPUE time series not being accurate and as a priority should be investigated further.

Catches outside the fishery

FWG considered available estimates of mortality on the Spanish mackerel stock outside of the commercial fishery and supported the use of 10 t for subsistence take and 2 t for recreational harvest. The FWG noted that although there was uncertainty associated with these estimates they were the best available figures to support decision making and there was no rationale to depart from using these figures.

Coral trout total allowable catch advice

Having regard for FRAG advice the FWG agreed to recommend **maintaining the 134.9 t TAC for coral trout for the 2019-20 season** noting the likelihood of a healthy stock, and that recent catches have been substantially below the TAC. Assuming current catch levels remain unchanged, the FWG supported maintaining this TAC until it can be reconsidered in light of an agreed harvest strategy and stock assessment. The FWG noted FRAG advice that the current stock assessment is preliminary.

In making this recommendation the FWG noted:

- the current notional TAC of 134.9 t has been in place since 2008 and is based on average catches between 2001 to 2005;
- an initial stock assessment for Torres Strait coral trout was presented to the FRAG and was welcomed and deemed preliminary by the RAG due to its present stage of development and the range of uncertainties associated with the assessment;
- the approach of the preliminary assessment was accepted by the RAG. The approach uses biomass estimates from known Great Barrier Reef (GBR) habitats using underwater visual survey data and infers and scales these values to Torres Strait habitats using satellite mapping data to model the population and infer abundance;
- though it was deemed a preliminary assessment by the RAG the outputs do suggest that the trout stock has a healthy level of biomass which is reinforced by industry advice from industry members. The FWG noted the preliminary stock assessment indicates the spawning biomass is around 80 per cent of virgin biomass with the lowest model estimate of biomass being around 65 per cent of virgin biomass.

Agenda Item 4 – Western line closure advice

Noting advice from FRAG on likely negligible stock impacts, the FWG reiterated its previous advice on this issue and continued to support removal of the Western Line Closure. The FWG noted the Western Line Closure has no management purpose and its removal would increase economic opportunities for Traditional Inhabitants in the Finfish Fishery.

The FWG noted that PZJA approval would be sought to undertake further and more focused public consultation on removing the Western line Closure. The FWG recommended that AFMA work with TSRA and industry members to ensure community meetings are convened during the public consultation period alongside other scheduled community visits. Meetings were seen as more appropriate for gathering comments from Torres Strait Islanders compared to seeking written submissions.

Agenda Item 5 – Torres Strait Finfish Fishery management budget

The FWG noted the draft 2019-20 management budget for the fishery as detailed in the agenda paper. The FWG noted that the AFMA was working to present the full costs incurred in managing the fishery at future meetings including compliance, data entry services, logbooks and salaries.

FWG members noted that Malu Lamar attendance was budgeted for at Finfish RAG and FWG meeting and members supported their ongoing input to FWG discussions.

Industry members also recommended as far as possible for future budgets to support sunset licence holders to attend the FRAG and FWG meetings to provide input such as industry updates.

Agenda Item 6 – Other business

TSRA noted that the PZJA would likely be developing a policy to support future consideration of applications for developmental permits to support TIB sector training and skills development on

commercial TIB fishing boats. AFMA advised that there was no current policy and all PZJA working groups would be given an opportunity to contribute to development of this policy.

The FWG noted that several pre-proposals to meet identified Torres Strait research needs had been received and considered by the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting on 27 February 2019. It was noted that following this TSSAC meeting two proposals were put to the Finfish RAG for further clarification; enhancing biological data inputs to Torres Strait Spanish mackerel assessment and Spanish mackerel stock assessment with the RAG providing support and comments for both projects.

Agenda Item 7 – Next meeting and meeting close

The FWG noted the next meeting was scheduled for 18-19 June 2019 with a focus on the final draft harvest strategy.

The FWG chair thanked attendees for a productive meeting and the meeting was closed in prayer at 1700 hrs.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
FISHERY UPDATES Industry updates and strategic issues	Agenda Item 2.1 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Finfish Fishery Working Group:

1. **NOTE** any updates provided by working group industry members on the fishery; and
2. **DISCUSS** and provide **ADVICE** on key strategic issues affecting the fishery.

KEY ISSUES

1. 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 strategically focused and may more effectively address each issue.
2. 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.
3. Updates provided by members and observers on fishery performance, trends, activities and issues occurring in the Torres Strait finfish and relevant fisheries from recent FWG meetings is provided in the Background section.

BACKGROUND – past industry updates

FFWG Meeting 15 March 2019

The FWG noted the following general updates from industry members and observers:

Traditional inhabitant advice that infrastructure to support fishing business remains the key strategic challenge for Traditional Inhabitant Boat sector of the fishery given remote communities. FWG noted that TSRA infrastructure improvements will likely see community freezers reopening within 12 months which may not have much impact on the fishery over the next 2019-20 season (starting 1 July 2019). This likelihood of renewed infrastructure is reported to be increasing interest in finfish within the central cluster who historically had harvested a lot of finfish. Ugar community reports strong catches of Spanish mackerel with 3-4 tonnes of mackerel reported caught over two-three month period working to privately owned chest freezers.

There is some general interest from Torres Strait based seafood businesses and within western communities in investing in finfish with several business buying or seeking to buy commercial fishing boats with reports that 2 to 4 boats are in the process of entering the fleet on Badu Island. This interest has reportedly been in response to the 2017-18 season low Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Tropical Rock Lobster, as well as small TACs for beche-de-mer, and potential removal of the reef-line western area closure. Some

operators may be looking to fish finfish as a contingency,. It was considered that these western communities would likely be seeking to establish markets for finfish in the near future.

The industry observer from the sunset sector advised:

- The fishing operation was mainly targeting mackerel to supply the local domestic market with the Sydney Fish Market buying some whole mackerel for export to the Asian market.
- Torres Strait fishery appears to be in good health generally. The operation has been taking their allocated catch in recent seasons with less skilled dory drivers available but have been taking more time to take the same harvest.
- Beach price for mackerel fillets remains steady at around \$16.50 / \$17.50 kg but may peak to support market demand around Chinese new year (\$26/kg for whole, un-bled fish under 10 kg).
- Species substitution was reported as an issue in some markets where other mackerel species such as grey mackerel was being onsold as Spanish mackerel when availability is low. Industry are supportive of a national standard for seafood labelling to address this concern.
- There is concern from some buyers in taking large sized mackerel from Torres Strait due to more northerly, warmer waters which may have increased associated risks of ciguatera poisoning. The group noted ciguatera had not previously been a problem for Torres Strait sourced mackerel.
- The key strategic issue for the industry was the increasing costs on a number of parts of fishing operations including:
 - Concern over rising fuel and bait prices.
 - Cold storage fees (\$20 per time to access stored catches)
 - Packaging (cartons and liners) prices increasing \$4000 over five years (\$6000 per season, now \$10,000).
 - Rising freight prices both southwards – product leaving Torres Strait via barge – but also now for northbound freight to resupply the fishing operation which until recently was free to fishing businesses shipping substantial amounts of catch southwards.
- Crews were still generally reporting round figures for effort (hours fished per session) in logbooks. AFMA urged fishers to help improved the standardisation of the catch rates by supplying the most accurate data in daily fishing logbooks.

The FWG advised that it would be interested in examining more economic detail on similar fishing operations as a full package including costs, beach prices for catch and lease prices for access (noting the *2016 Finfish Action Plan* is a resource providing info on economic drivers in the fishery) with a view to increasing FWG understanding of the economic viability of the fishery.

Catch reporting

Industry noted the present management focus on data collection with upcoming community visits on the Torres Strait Fish Receiver System. The FWG encouraged the TIB sector to continue to supply accurate and complete catch disposal records including effort data. Scientific members encouraged key finfish fishers in communities (those working a large number of days) to also complete daily fishing logbooks which are a powerful and cost effective way of meeting the data needs of the fishery. Industry members advised that managers and scientists needs to be respectful of community wishes to be aware of where data is housed, how it is treated and how it is used to support the fishery.

Catch depredation

Industry advised that sharks taking hooked fish (depredation) was an issue with an increasing number of sharks following the dories prior to, and during fishing. It was considered that a data need for the fishery was to understand how many fish per day were lost to sharks and that the daily fishing logbook should be amended to capture this data.

FFWG meeting 20 March 2018

The FWG welcomed updates from industry and other stakeholders on activities and strategic issues occurring in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery and also on issues from other relevant fisheries:

- It was considered that the outcomes of the TSRA infrastructure initiative would likely increase participation within the Ugar Community in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.
- Ugar community has been engaging with TSRA initiatives such as direct export of seafood product from Torres Strait.
- Available Sydney Fish Market price data shows strong market prices for Spanish mackerel with a clear spike in prices corresponding with Chinese New Year.
- Erub Community Freezer is intending to make its recent finfish catch data available to AFMA and the PZJA groups for consideration.
- The TSRA Finfish Quota Management Committee has seen increased interest from the sunset sector in leasing access to the Torres Strait to catch coral trout.
- The FWG noted that recent seasons on the Queensland East Coast fishery have seen the Total Allowable Catch almost totally filled with lease prices reaching \$6/kg corresponding with peak demand to fill orders for Chinese New Year at the end of the season. It was noted that, based on harvest control rules in place, a likely 200 t increase to the East Coast trout quota in 2018 there may be a decrease in interest from fishers wanting to access the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery reef-line sector. The QDAF member offered to circulate the recent Queensland Finfish Working Group communique for the interest of the FWG. <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/sustainable-fisheries-strategy/fishery-working-groups/-coral-reef-fin-fish-fishery-working-group/communiques/communique-6-7-march>
- QDAF member advised that consultation is underway on proposed amendments to the *Queensland Fisheries Act* to implement changes including stronger compliance powers and penalties. <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/sustainable-fisheries-strategy/changes-to-queenslands-fisheries-legislation>
- QDAF advised that workshops are being held in Queensland on social and economic indicators for East coast fisheries. These workshops are focused on what data can inform social or economic analyses and how can these data be collected and reported. The FWG noted that the findings from these workshops can help inform the development of Torres Strait harvest strategies.

FFWG meeting 16-17 March 2017

- Industry is eager for more Traditional Owners to enter the Finfish Fishery.
- Meriam fishers have been successfully increasing their effort with recent finfish catches around 500kg per day being taken by five to six dories. This catch is being frozen for the local market and also being sent to Cairns via barge.
- More representation from active fishers is needed on the working groups to ensure on-water fishing practices and business development issues were understood. It was also noted that this would broaden the on-water knowledge base of how data is used for fishery management purposes and could facilitate uptake of logbooks. An active fisher from Mer (e.g. Alan Passi), should be invited to the next FWG meeting as an observer for this purpose.
- A new finfish business is being established at Poruma.
- Local restaurants are seeking locally caught Spanish mackerel but are finding supply difficult.
- The Ugar industry association is working to develop a five year business plan following on from its success with its bech de mer. The plan will assist the association to become commercially independent. The association is advocating for a similar joint business plan to be developed among the eastern communities. This association is

seeking to have this done prior to making investments in things such as freezers to ensure smart/viable investments are made.

- The FWG noted the following update from the QDAF member:
- QDAF reported that coral trout caught southwards of Bowen attract a price premium of \$5 to \$10 per kilogram due to a market preference for fish with a strong red colouration.
- QDAF member advised that some east coast operators were currently tied up due to not being able to acquire coral trout quota.

The FWG noted an update on the FRDC funded project on scoping the development of Barramundi, jewfish and crab fisheries in the top-western waters of the Torres Strait by Andrew Tobin, the Principle Investigator for the project.

- Mr Tobin advised that the project has four elements:
- A desktop scoping study. Collate past research findings etc.
- Field surveys to understand local stock abundance and whether it could support a local fishery. Aim to commence field work after Easter.
- A stop-go review to determine if there is enough industry interest and stock available to justify proceeding with the study.
- An evaluation of infrastructure, skills and business needs to support an active fishery.
- The FWG noted the PZJA will likely require advice from the FWG to evaluate any proposal to develop and/or expand new fisheries to ensure they are sustainable. The FWG encourage early engagement with the FWG to ensure any future proposals may be considered in a timely manner.
- Dr Tobin also noted that a PZJA scientific permit will be required to undertake the field activities.
- Speaking on behalf of Malu Lamar, the representative requested that the PBCs in the relevant communities be engaged as soon as possible and that the terms and conditions of the work for this project be clearly agreed.

FFWG meeting 12-13 July 2016

- Queensland East Coast finfish fisheries (ECF):
 - fishers are experiencing good catches of coral trout and came close to reaching the TAC in the 2015-16 season (96% caught). As a result there is a high demand for coral trout quota which is now fully utilised;
 - in recent years species other than coral trout ('other species') have gone from being byproduct to now being specifically targeted by fishers as a result of high market demand. There is potential for similar trends to occur in the Torres Strait and it is important that good information (e.g. stock status and catch data) is available before further expansion occurs across these species and potential new areas. Some of these finfish species may be more vulnerable to overfishing;
 - Spanish mackerel catches in the ECF were poor in 2015-16 (300t caught equating to 51% of the TAC. Average catch to TAC ratio is 73%. Lowest catch recorded was 226t in 2007/08), with catch rates declining in recent years to the point where frozen product is not available (i.e. not enough mackerel are being caught to warrant freezing of product as the small amount of catch is going straight to market as fresh product);
 - with the interest in coral trout quota exceeding demand, more intense and targeted fishing for other species and a deteriorating Spanish mackerel fishery in the ECF, it is likely there will be increasing interest in Torres Strait finfish quota (Spanish mackerel, coral trout and other reef line species). The Torres

Strait fishery (including Spanish mackerel at Bramble Cay) are considered to be in good condition;

- anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been a recent increase in the incidence of fin rot in live coral trout product. The cause is still to be determined, however it has been suggested it may be due to additional environmental stresses on the fish following the recent climatic conditions that resulted in the large-scale coral bleaching event off the far northern Queensland coast. QDAF are testing some samples.
- Torres Strait finfish update from industry;
 - there is renewed interest in targeting live trout in Torres Strait, as shown during the FQMC's recent assessment of expressions of interest to lease finfish quota in 2016-17. Two operators are planning to trial live;
 - there are signs that interest in the fishery from the TIB sector is growing;
 - Ugar fishers are currently focused on the Beche-de-mer Fishery as the local freezer is not operational. The freezer is required to support finfish operations;
 - noting possible resourcing constraints, community based strategies should be examined to improve the efficiency of compliance;
 - there is ongoing need to balance the benefits of leasing quota to non-indigenous operators while still providing fishing industry development and employment opportunities for locals (in line with the COAGs commitment to closing the gap in indigenous disadvantage). The TIB sector needs to be supported to participate directly in the fishery.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
WORKING GROUP UPDATES Government Agencies Update	Agenda Item No. 2.2 FOR NOTING

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Finfish Fishery Working Group:

1. **NOTE** the update from AFMA as detailed below; and
2. **NOTE** verbal updates from TSRA and QDAF (if available).

AFMA UPDATE

Summary of catches

1. Reported fishing activity in both the Spanish mackerel and reef line sectors of the fishery has been relatively stable since the 2008 buyout and commencement of the leasing arrangements. Both coral trout and Spanish mackerel stocks were classified as **not overfished** and **not subject to overfishing** for the 2017/18 fishing season. Fishery status reports published by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) are available here: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/research-topics/fisheries/fishery-status/>
2. Since 2008-09 catches of Spanish mackerel have generally been around 70-100 tonnes, coral trout less than 50 tonnes and catches of other reef-line species. Recent catches of Spanish mackerel have been less than 5 tonnes (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Total reported commercial harvests Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.

Data sources: TDB01 Docket Books (ceased 30 Nov 2017), TDB02 Catch Disposal Records (1 Dec 2017-present) and TSF01 Daily Fishing Logbooks.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Spanish mackerel	83.9	86.9	93.2	73.8	64.7
Coral trout	21	38.4	25.7	27.3	17.3
Other reef-line species	2.1	3.9	4.4	2.2	2.4

3. Initial reports from sunset fishers indicate that, based on the first few months catches, 2019-20 is likely to be a good season for Spanish mackerel. For example, fishers have advised AFMA that despite poor weather at times, catch rates appear to be improved at Bramble Cay so far in relation to last season.

Management arrangements 2019-20 season

4. AFMA has not introduced any significant changes to management arrangements for this fishing season with the exception of a permit condition on Sunset licences for a prior report to be provided to AFMA via voicemail or email before any product is unloaded within the Torres Strait Protected Zone e.g. before it is unloaded to the Seaswift barge at Masig. This condition assists compliance with tracking product leaving the TSPZ and, if required, inspecting product.

5. As of 1 October 2019, 177 boats are licenced to fish in the Finfish Fishery under Traditional Inhabitant Boat fishing licences with either a reef line or a Spanish mackerel endorsement.
6. Five vessels have been leased access to the Finfish Fishery for the 2019-20 season under sunset licences as detailed in **Table 1**. The public register of all Torres Strait fishing licences is located here: <https://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/concession-holders-conditions>
7. Total available commercial catches for 2019-20 season are at **Table 2** and were sent to licence holders and made public on the PZJA webpage in June 2019 (**Attachment 2.2.a** letter to licence holders). Fishers working under a sunset permit are bound to a strict catch limit enforced via permit conditions.

Table 1. Packages leased to sunset sector permit holders for 2019-20 season.

Sunset licence package	Mackerel leased (t)	Coral trout leased (t)	Other species leased (t)
A	36	5	3
B	8	0	0
C	2	1	1
D	1	25	1
E	15	0	0
Total	62	31	5

Consideration of quota unit allocation options and formalising finfish Total Allowable Catches

8. At its meeting on 15 March 2019 the Finfish Working Group noted that AFMA was working on options to move the fishery towards an enforceable TAC (in line with previous recommendations from the FWG). AFMA also advised that consideration was being given to how the *Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2013* (the Finfish Plan) could support the allocation (of quota units) ahead of the establishment of a Traditional Inhabitant entity to hold fishing entitlements.
9. Due to resourcing constraints AFMA has not been able to further progress regulatory options for implementing enforceable TACs. The PZJA however agreed at its meeting on 19 November 2019 to consider an allocation model for the allocation of quota units to Traditional Inhabitants under the Finfish Plan using the same basis provided for under *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan 2018* (TRL Plan). Having considered the outcomes of the review the PZJA may then consider formally implementing quota management under the Finfish plan.
10. Quota units are yet to be allocated under the Finfish plan. When the PZJA decided in 2005 to change the management of the Finfish Fishery to a quota management system, the PZJA had concerns around fishing levels and that fishing effort was uncapped. Following the government funded buyout in 2008 of all non-Traditional Inhabitant licences, catches decreased. The PZJA then decided it was unnecessary to implement quota management at the commencement of the Finfish plan.
11. Although there is no formal quota system in place, leasing of individual catch allowances occurs annually. TSRA holds sunset licences on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants and, in consultation with stakeholders, administer an annual leasing process of those licences with agreed individual

catch allowances. Catch allowances are implemented through licence conditions. Revenue raised from leasing is used for the benefit of Traditional Inhabitants.

12. The TRL Plan requires the PZJA to review the allocation of quota units to the Traditional Inhabitant sector within two years of the TRL Plan commencement (30 November 2020). At the commencement of the quota system on 1 December 2019, the TSRA will hold quota units on behalf of the Traditional Inhabitant sector.
13. Separate to the allocation review to be undertaken by the PZJA, the TSRA is working with stakeholders to establish an independent, non-profit entity to manage community-owned commercial fishery assets under the *Fisheries Regional Ownership Framework* project (FROF project). TSRA is working to have the entity established by 1 July 2020.
14. Without excluding other options, in undertaking the review the PZJA may consider the following options in accordance with s17(2) of the TRL Plan:
 - a) allocating quota units to a non-government legal entity that represents Traditional Inhabitants;
 - b) allocating quota units to individual Traditional Inhabitants directly; and
 - c) a combination of the options above.
15. The PZJA has a policy and procedural framework for the allocation of fishing concessions (see FMP 2 at **Attachment 2.2.b**). The policy, among other things, states that the recommended basis of allocation will be developed at arms-length from PZJA Agencies. The policy approach is to establish and seek advice from an IAAP. An IAAP process was convened to inform the PZJA on the allocation of TRL quota units to non-traditional (TVH) licence holders.
16. The intention of using an IAAP process is to ensure and assure stakeholders that their views and issues are being properly heard by independent experts that do not have preconceptions about the end outcome.
17. An IAAP would be required to consult widely with stakeholders and seek necessary expert advice. Subject to approval by the PZJA, the IAAP would be required to release its draft report for public comment.
18. At its meeting on 19 November 2019 the PZJA agreed in principle that the review of TRL traditional inhabitant allocation be undertaken by an IAAP, in accordance with the PZJA's FMP 2 and directed the PZJA Standing Committee to provide draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for an IAAP, including its membership and process to the PZJA by April 2020 so that PZJA can confirm this in principle decision. The PZJA also agreed to commence the allocation review following the completion of the TSRA's FROF project, anticipated by 30 June 2020.
19. It will be necessary to ensure the IAAP is set up to appropriately assess the Torres Strait context as well as remain independent. Specific issues that the TOR will need to consider include composition (including the most appropriate means to ensure that detailed advice is available from native title and community interests), and method of consultation. The TOR will also need to specify the specific allocation questions that PZJA would like answered, including the basis for allocation to potentially different stakeholder groups (i.e. such as existing full-time and part-time commercial fishers, compared to casual/lifestyle fishers).
20. Unlike allocation models based on the allocation of entitlements to individual persons, a future allocation may be to an entity that holds quota on behalf of individuals. Such an entity may require regulatory oversight to:
 - a) protect the intent of the allocation;
 - b) ensure consistency with the PZJA's acknowledgment and support for the aspirations of 100 per cent ownership of Torres Strait fisheries by Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Traditional Owners;

- c) ensure, if relevant consistency with relevant PZJA licensing policies such as unlimited entry for Traditional Inhabitants;
- d) ensure Traditional Inhabitant interests are protected by ensuring affected persons have adequate rights of legal appeal; and
- e) ensure consistency with the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.

21. Moving to a formal quota system in the Finfish Fishery is consistent with Traditional Inhabitants aspirations for 100 per cent ownership of fishing entitlements. TSRA, through the FROF project, is consulting with stakeholders on the development of an entity to manage all entitlements currently held in trust by TSRA. This includes those in the Finfish Fishery. Clearly defined access entitlements, such as quota units, will be necessary to transfer the finfish leasing process to a non-government entity and/or person.

Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2013

22. As discussed at the Finfish Working Group meeting in March 2018, it is proposed that a standing item for the FWG will be considering and reporting on how the fishery is performing relative to the *Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2013*. As above, AFMA proposes that this is be made an agenda item at Working Group meetings in 2020

Tactical research proposals for the 2020-21 financial year

23. FFRAG 5 (31 Oct - 1 Nov 2019) considered research priorities for 2020-21 financial year noting that The Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) will make a public a call for research applications to address tactical research priorities identified for potential funding in 2020-21.
24. FFRAG noted that most research funding is fully committed for the 2020-21 cycle and recommended two tactical projects to be considered by TSSAC (drafts at **Attachment 2.2.c**) including:
- a. Continued biological sampling for Spanish mackerel to support the stock assessment; and
 - b. Performing a Catch Per Unit Effort standardisation on catch data for coral trout for data up to the 2019-20 fishing season to enable consideration of
25. These tactical project scopes will be considered by the TSSAC at their 25 November 2019 meeting ahead of potentially being released in the public call in December 2019.
26. Finfish Fishery Working Group will be tasked in early 2020 with providing comments on any research pre-proposal responses received by TSSAC in answer to this public call.

Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) Approval under the EPBC Act 1999

27. As of 21 December 2017, the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery were declared by the then Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston as an approved WTO under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) until 18 December 2020.
28. Approval under the EPBC Act is:
- a. necessary to legally export commercially wild caught seafood from Australia; and
 - b. subject to conditions which require ongoing work by the PZJA.
29. At the time of the last the approval, December 2017, conditions were applied to the fishery. A summary of these conditions and an update on the relevant management actions is outlined in **Attachment 2.2.d**.

Legislative Amendments

30. As per previous updates, AFMA is continuing to progress draft amendments to the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* and *Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985* as resources and priorities permit. The purpose of the amendments is to provide improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of fisheries administration in the Torres Strait. In the past 12 months, AFMA have experienced delays to the project due to the Federal Election, competing Australian Government legislative priorities and limited internal resources.
31. Details of the proposed amendments have been provided in previous meeting papers.

Independent review of the EPBC Act

32. The second independent review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) has been commissioned as part of a requirement that the Act is reviewed at least once every ten years. The review is being undertaken by Professor Graeme Samuel. To support the review a discussion paper has been developed and released for public comment outlining 26 questions for stakeholders to answer to inform the review. Submissions on this review are due by Friday 14 February 2020 ahead of exploration of reform options and a draft report being produced by June 2020. More information is available at: www.epbcactreview.environment.gov.au

New Assistant Minister

33. On 29 May 2019, Senator the Honorable Jonathon Duniam was sworn in as the Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries. In his position, Senator Colbeck will serve as the Chair of the Protected Zone Joint Authority. The previous Assistant Minister, Richard Colbeck is now the Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians and Minister for Youth and Sport.

ATTACHMENTS

- 2.2.a** Letter to licence holders on 2019-20 season TAC arrangements.
- 2.2.b** PZJA Fisheries Management Paper 2: Guidelines for Allocation Advisory Panels
- 2.2.c** Draft Research Project Scopes for tactical funding by TSSAC in 2020-21
- 2.2.d** Wildlife Trade Operation – Torres Strait Finfish Fishery -Summary of issues requiring conditions, December 2017



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

| July 2019

Dear Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Licence Holder,

Torres Strait Finfish Fishery sunset licence administration for the 2019-20 season

I am writing to advise you of the administrative arrangements for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Sunset Licences in the 2019-20 season (1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020).

At its 1 April 2019 meeting the Protected Zone Joint Authority decided that the Total Allowable Catches (TACs) will be 82 tonnes for Spanish mackerel and 134.9 tonnes for coral trout, based on advice from the Torres Strait Finfish Resource Assessment Group (Finfish RAG) and Working Group.

AFMA wrote to all licence holders on 18 April 2019 providing advice on the agreed TAC limits for commercial fishing in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery for the 2019-20 season. A copy of this letter is enclosed for your reference (**Attachment A**).

On behalf of Traditional Inhabitants, each year since 2008-09 the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has leased (temporary transfer) Finfish Fishery licences, with mackerel and/or coral trout catch entitlements, to non-traditional inhabitant fishers. The aim of leasing licences in this fishery is to utilise available catch and maintain market supply until the Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence sector increases its participation in the fishery.

Based on recommendations from TSRA, for the coming season, beginning on 1 July 2019, AFMA will temporarily transfer five sunset licences with a combined catch allocation across all licences of 62 tonnes of Spanish mackerel, 31 tonnes of coral trout and 5 tonnes of other reef-line species across all licences.

The remaining sustainable catch available to TIB fishers for the 2019-20 fishing season, considering reported catches over recent seasons, will be: 20 tonnes of Spanish mackerel, 103.9 tonnes of coral trout, as well as access to other reef-line species (see **Table 1**).

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

Table 1. 2019-20 season commercial Total Allowable Catch limits and available catch amounts for Traditional Inhabitant Boat Sector and leased amounts to Sunset sector.

	Spanish mackerel	Coral trout	Other reef-line species (basket)*
Agreed Total Allowable Catch	82	134.9	N/A
Traditional Inhabitant Boat sector available catch	20	103.9	N/A
Amount leased to Sunset licences	62	31	5

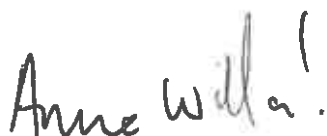
*Note the other reef-line species basket is capped at 30 tonnes per season and applies only to Sunset Licence holders. TIB fishers have access to unlimited take of other reef-line species. TSRA has advised that 5 tonnes out of the available 30 tonnes is to be leased for the 2019-20 season.

AFMA will provide catch watch reports throughout the season to inform licence holders about catches against the TAC limits. If required, additional measures will be developed to ensure catches will not exceed the agreed TACs.

Please note that all catch taken in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery must be weighed and recorded by a licenced fish receiver at the first point of landing. A list of licenced fish receivers is available on the public register of concession holders at: <http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/concession-holders-conditions/>. The public register also contains details of all commercially-licenced fishers in the Torres Strait, including sunset licence holders, and catch allowances granted for each licence.

If you would like further information about the TACs or any other matter relating to the Finfish Fishery please do not hesitate to contact the AFMA Torres Strait Office on (07) 4069 1990.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Willock
Executive Manager
Fisheries Management Branch
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 8225 5555 F 02 8225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

DOC REF F2019/0166

18 April 2019

Dear Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Licence Holder,

Fishery licence catch limits for 2019-20 season

I am writing to advise you of the agreed Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits for commercial fishing in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery (the Fishery) for the 2019-20 season.

At its 1 April 2019 meeting the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) agreed that the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Spanish mackerel TAC will be 82 tonnes and the coral trout TAC will be 134.9 tonnes for the 2019-20 fishing season, which commences on 1 July 2019.

In making its decision the PZJA considered advice from both the Finfish Resource Assessment Group (FRAG) and Finfish Working Group (FWG) advice (Attachment A).

The Spanish mackerel TAC is a reduction from the present 2018-19 season TAC of 115 tonnes. The reduction is intended to allow the stock to build in size following recent stock assessments showing the stock has likely declined. The response is precautionary and seeks to minimise potential economic impacts on the Fishery.

Spanish mackerel is subject to joint management arrangements under the Treaty with Papua New Guinea. At the 7 March 2019 Torres Strait Treaty Joint Advisory Council meeting, Papua New Guinea and Australia declined to enter into catch sharing arrangements. This means Australia does not need to set aside catches for PNG fishers for the 2019-20 fishing season.

Access to the Fishery is reserved for Traditional Inhabitants who hold a Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence and fishers that lease annual sunset licences from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA). Sunset licences may be held by non-traditional inhabitants and allow for a certain amount of catch to be taken. TSRA lease sunset licences and catch allowances on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants. The leasing process for 2019-20 is expected to be completed before the start of the 2019-20 fishing season. AFMA will further advise licence holders on the outcomes of this leasing process including the number of sunset licences issued and total catch leased to these licences.

AFMA will provide catch watch reports throughout the season to advise licence holders on reported catches against the TACs.

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

Please note that all catch taken in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery must be weighed and recorded by a licenced fish receiver at the first point of landing. A list of licenced fish receivers who can receive your catch is available on the public register of concession holders available here: <http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/concession-holders-conditions/>. The public register also contains details of all commercially licenced fishers in Torres Strait including sunset licence holders.

If you would like further information about the recommended commercial catch limits or any other matter relating to the Finfish Fishery please do not hesitate to contact the AFMA Office on Thursday Island on (07) 4069 1990.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Trappett
Senior Fisheries Management Officer
Torres Strait Fisheries

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Finfish RAG (13-14 March 2019) and Finfish Working Group (15 March 2019) Meeting Record excerpts

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 378
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

ATTACHMENT A

Excerpt from Finfish Resource Assessment Group Meeting Record, 13-14 May 2019

Agenda Item 3 – Stock assessments for coral trout and Spanish mackerel

3.1 Coral trout assessment and Recommended Biological Catch advice for the 2019-20 season

The PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Resource Assessment Group **RECOMMEND** maintaining the **134.9 tonne** Total Allowable Catch for coral trout for the 2019-20 fishing season.

1. In making this recommendation the RAG noted that the current notional Total Allowable Catch of 134.9 t has been in place since 2008 and is based on average catches (TIB and TVH) between 2001 and 2005.
2. The RAG noted a presentation of the first formal stock assessment for Torres Strait coral trout from Dr George Leigh (QDAF) and Dr Matthew Holden (UQ) and welcomed the efforts made by the team in performing the assessment. The RAG accepted the assessment as preliminary noting the stage of development of the assessment and the range of uncertainties within the assessment. Further peer review and development is recommended. The RAG strongly recommended that ongoing work be undertaken to ensure the assessment can be developed and made available for future management decisions.
3. The RAG accepted the methodology of the assessment of using biomass estimates from known Great Barrier Reef (GBR) habitats and inferring and scaling these values to Torres Strait habitats based on satellite mapping data to model the population and create an estimate of abundance.
4. The RAG noted that GBR values were an input to the model together with a catch per unit effort data series from the sunset licence sector daily fishing logbooks.
5. The RAG noted that although the values used as inputs to the assessment were estimates from an adjacent fishery and had some uncertainty associated with them, the outputs of the model were still useful in scaling the present level of effort, risk and catches in the Torres Strait Fishery.
6. Through the preliminary assessment, the RAG noted that the outputs suggest that the Torres Strait coral trout stock is presently healthy with around 80 per cent of virgin biomass available and that this outcome was validated by advice from industry members that the stock appears healthy. The RAG noted that all of the model estimates of current spawning biomass were above 65 per cent estimated virgin biomass.
7. In considering the available information and likely risks to the stock from recent catch levels the RAG recommended maintaining the current 134.9 t Total Allowable Catch. The RAG noted that

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2887

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4089 1990 F 07 4089 1277

the stock assessment once developed, together with an agreed harvest strategy would provide an effective basis to reconsider the current TAC.

Model methods, inputs and data

8. The RAG noted that the key inputs for the Torres Strait model are from either the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) model or Torres Strait catch data and are:
 - defined habitat areas (GBR values)
 - underwater visual survey data providing a fish density per habitat area (GBR values)
 - virgin fish density estimate (GBR estimate)
 - Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) series (from Torres Strait daily fishing logbook data).
9. Harvest data used in the model shows that in recent seasons catches have been low with generally less than 50 t fished.
10. Two bio-regions defined in the Torres Strait model represent most of the Torres Strait harvests with reefs in Region 5 being morphologically similar to the Cairns region in GBR model and reefs in Region 3 being morphologically similar to the northern GBR region.



Figure 1. Map showing bioregions used in Torres Strait stock assessment.

11. The RAG noted:
 - The model is using only sunset licence logbook data for the CPUE standardisation time series. The RAG noted that Region 3 has a smaller proportion of catch and different pattern of CPUE to Region 5.
 - Industry advised that Region 3 may have higher carrying capacity than Region 5 but is not fished as frequently as it is harder to access due to winds, currents and poorer anchorages. Consequently, Region 5 can normally only be fished in calmer weather.
 - The biggest uncertainty in the model is TIB sector catches with little available data for assessment.

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

- Industry members confirmed that the peak reported TIB catches around the year 2004-05 coincides with the period when a non-traditional inhabitant fisher was operating in the Fishery and supporting local TIB fishers (with fishing gear, processing and buying of product).
- The RAG agreed with the methodology to use either Islander freezer data or 4.2 times docket book catch for the TIB sector catch size for each year (whichever is higher) in the assessment for years where catches were unavailable.
- An industry member suggested that certain years did have low catches of coral trout due to fishers switching to bech de mer fishing and lack of supporting infrastructure due to freezer closures. Industry members confirmed that:
 - Masig (Yorke Island) freezer was in operation until around 2009.
 - Mer (Murray Island) freezer closed operations in 2010.
 - 2010 was the last year representative freezer data is available for the assessment team with the Erub (Darnley Island) freezer operating inconsistently in recent seasons with fewer TIB fishers targeting trout.

Coral trout model outputs

12. The RAG agreed that the methods of the assessment are appropriate noting that the values are being used to inform the assessment are assumptions at this stage of development.
13. The RAG noted that the stock status appears to be healthy with most model runs showing the stock biomass to be above 65 per cent of virgin biomass.
14. Scientific members advised that estimates generated by the model may be over or under estimates depending on the influence of tidal current flows within Torres Strait. The RAG noted that Torres Strait is shallower than GBR reefs with strong current flow. Industry members advised that coral trout generally go off the bite with strong current flow and murky water.
15. The model appears to have some areas where it is not able to fit to available catch data. The RAG suggested that the period following the November 2001 and February 2002 pre-buyout investment warning did see an increase in catch records returned to AFMA. Industry members and observers present supported this 'paper-fish' effect in the catch series and confirmed that industry were over-reporting catches to build up catch history through this period.
16. The RAG considered that an issue with assessing coral trout was that a pattern of short-term, localised depletion (or localised overfishing), followed by movement to a new reef, may act to maintain an illusion of high catch rates over time until catch rates suddenly decline. RAG noted that area-based catch limits can be developed to take account of local depletion issues. For example, if a particular zone of the fishery is known to be more easily accessible and will likely represent where the majority of catch will be taken, the likely effort from this zone can be compared to likely effort from the rest of the fishery. This can then be used to scale a Total Allowable Catch from the whole fishery with the correct proportion set to be fully harvested from the key zone.

Future work and research needs

17. The RAG noted:

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4089 1990 F 07 4089 1277

- a number of suggestions to increase precision in future coral trout stock assessment work. These will be detailed in the final project report;
- that future assessment should analyse species split issues. The draft harvest strategy is likely to recommend the species split to be monitored;
- based on industry advice on the distribution of catches of common coral trout, it was recommended that the southern boundary of the region 5 be moved north to the Cumberland reefs. As currently demarcated, Region 5 splits key fishing grounds for common coral trout; and
- an upcoming FRDC project on the health of the Great Barrier Reef might result in a rescaling of habitat areas due to carrying capacities changing due to reef degradation. It was noted that the outcomes of this project may have flow on effects for east coast quota and the Torres Strait model.

18. The RAG suggested that the most immediate priority to improve data collection and assessment for the fishery would come from improved catch reporting.

3.2 Spanish mackerel assessment and Recommended Biological Catch for the 2019-20 season

The PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Resource Assessment Group **RECOMMEND** a **94 tonne** Recommended Biological Catch for Spanish mackerel for the 2019-20 season noting a decline in the stock and a need for precaution.

19. The FRAG noted from the harvest strategy work in 2018–2019, results from an updated stock assessment had been undertaken by Dr Michael O’Neil. The Spanish mackerel stock assessment used an annual age-structured model. The assessment uses all available catch-effort data and fish age-frequency data. The stock assessment update included an additional three years of catch data (fishing years 2015–2016, 2016–2017 and 2017–2018).

20. The RAG noted that the updated assessment accounted for FRAG advice at its meeting on 19-20 November 2018 and intersessional advice from a FRAG data sub-group meeting held 20-21 December. The data sub-group comprised all RAG Scientific members, QDAF, AFMA and CSIRO.

21. The RAG noted the results of the updated stock assessment show:

- a) Biomass is on a down cycle (decline). The standardised catch rate of legal sized Spanish mackerel (the abundance index), using logbook data from sunset fishing operations, had declined since 2010-11. Standardised catch rates have reached near historic low levels in 2017-18.
- b) The estimated 2017–2018 biomass was between 15% and 45% (B_{15} and B_{45}) of original unfished biomass (B_0) measured in 1940–1941. Four of 39 model scenarios, estimated biomass in the 2017-2018 fishing season to be below B_{20} . B_{20} is the Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy limit reference point. The RAG considered this situation (4 of 39 scenarios) to be equivalent to the Harvest Strategy Policy guideline for harvest

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

strategies to ensure stocks remain above the limit reference point approximately 90 per cent of the time.

- c) Recent fishing pressures are unlikely to be exceeding F_{MSY} . This means overfishing is unlikely to be occurring. The biomass decline may be associated with factors other than fishing. The RAG noted advice from scientific members that similar unexplained declines over the last four to five years were reported for other Spanish mackerel stocks in Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland suggesting that broader environmental factors could be driving trends in these fisheries.

22. To guide advice on an 2019–2020 RBC, the RAG recommended:

- a) Applying a Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) fishing reference point on current 2017–2018 exploitable biomass. This interim management guide recognised that at the status of the stock, that B_{80} is not quickly achievable, and the fishery economic/data needs. A time to build the stock to this target reference point still needs to be evaluated with stakeholders as part of developing a harvest strategy. The RAG noted that the new Harvest Strategy Policy does not specify rates for building stocks that are above B_{LIM} and below B_{TARG} .
- b) The equilibrium yield approach is no longer used. Equilibrium yields were previously used to calculate RBCs. The equilibrium yield approach is only useful if stock is at an equilibrium reference point or above. Consistent with the Harvest Strategy Policy the recommended approach is to advise on yields for current estimates of spawning biomass.

23. Based on outcomes of the stock assessment and applying an interim reference point of F_{MSY} , the FFRAG recommended an RBC of 94 t for the 2019–2020 season. This setting notes a decline in the stock and need for some precaution. The 94 t represents the average over all 39 model-scenarios.

24. Noting there is no agreed harvest strategy in place for the Finfish Fishery, the FRAG considered fish-population projections for a range of RBCs to evaluate risks (Figure 2 and Table 1). Risk was interpreted as the proportion of scenarios below B_{20} in 2029 (as a percentage of all scenarios). The year 2029 was 2017 plus three times the average age of mature female fish (4 years) – a standard and accepted approach for assessing the timeframe to guide fishery stock status.

25. The FRAG provided advice on best estimates for catches taken outside of the commercial fishery and supported the use of the values shown in Table 2.

Other points discussed on the Spanish mackerel assessment

26. The RAG noted that based on advice from FRAG 3 (19–20 November 2018) and the Finfish Data Sub-group Meeting 1 (20–21 December 2018) the updated assessment included analysis of past catch from Taiwanese pelagic drift-net vessels known to be in operation across northern Australian during the late 1970s and early 1980s and guided by investigations by NT Fisheries (Northern Territory) on apparent uncertainties about missing older size class fishes. To account for the potential take from the Torres Strait Spanish mackerel stock, scenarios in the model examined inflated harvests of 100 t of Spanish mackerel for the years 1979 to 1986. The RAG agreed with the inclusion of these scenarios noting that although the true amounts of

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

these catches was not known, 100 t was deemed an appropriate order of catches for investigation. The RAG noted that the inclusion of these catches did act to depress the estimates of stock biomass right through to the present day and that these catches resulted in a number of scenario runs which estimated the present stock biomass as being below the limit reference point (BLIM = B20).

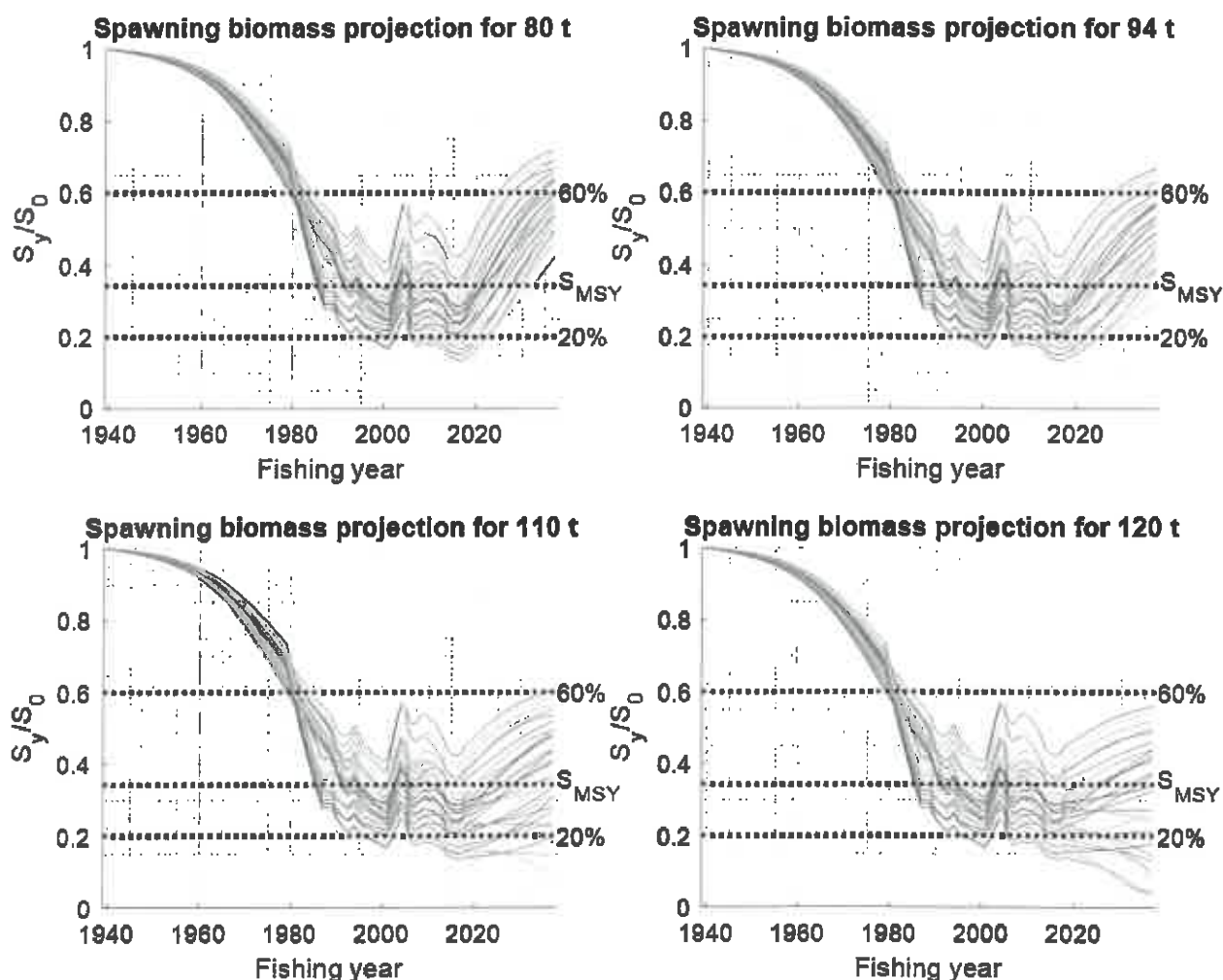


Figure 2 Spawning biomass projections under four different RBC levels.

Table 1 FRAG analyse of risk profiles based on model scenarios outputs for four RBC levels

Risk profile	RBC (t)	Number (and per cent) of runs out of 39 below limit reference point (B ₂₀) in 2029*.	Interpretation
"Low" risk	80	0	Precautionary but some implications for economics
Precautionary risk	94	0	Balancing for sustainability and risk
"Moderate" risk	110	3 (~8 %)	Moderate risk
"High" risk	120	10 (~26 %)	Unacceptable risk

*(B₂₀ agreed interim, 20 per cent of virgin biomass) in 2029 (which is 2017 plus three times the average age of mature female fish (4 years). Last estimate in 2017 + 12 years (3 x 4 years).

Table 2 FRAG recommended estimates of Spanish mackerel catches taken outside the Finfish Fishery

Source of catches	Expected catch (t)	Comments
Subsistence catch (kai kai) by Traditional Inhabitants	10	Based on data from <i>Busilacchi 2013</i> this value includes total of catch estimates for Mer, Masig and Erub Islands. The FWG agreed in July 2016 that the catch figures from the <i>Busilacchi 2008</i> research are the best estimates of traditional take of finfish. While originally reported to AFMA by CSIRO as 12 t this was later corrected to 5.155 t. The RAG recommended that an estimate of 10 t be used for decision making noting data was only from three islands, the number of TIB fishing endorsements has increased and effort creep may be occurring. Noting that anecdotal information presented at the FRAG by some TIB commercial reps infers this number generally may have decreased.
Recreational	2	RAG advised that based on the available evidence from QDAF recreational survey results with a limited number of Torres Strait households surveyed in 2013, recreational catches are likely to be minimal but not a 'zero' value. Two tonnes was used in the assessment noting the confidence intervals associated with estimate varied up to a total of five tonnes.
Charter	Likely to be minimal	Available QLD logbook records show Charter boat line catches are low. Logbook records for the period between 1995 and 2014 report a total of 19.58 tonnes of mixed species taken from Torres Strait waters. RAG has advised based on the available evidence from QDAF logbook data from charter catches are likely to be minimal.
PNG catch sharing	0	PNG-NFA declined to enter into catch sharing arrangements for 2019-20.

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

Excerpt from Final Finfish Working Group Meeting Record, 15 March 2019.

Agenda Item 3 – Advice on Total Allowable Catches for Spanish mackerel and coral trout

Spanish mackerel total allowable catch advice

2. The Finfish Working Group met on 15 March 2019. Having regard for the FRAG advice the FWG agreed to recommend a Spanish mackerel TAC of 82 tonnes (RBC of 94 tonnes minus total estimated catch outside the Fishery – 12 tonne (10t for traditional (subsistence) fishing and 2 t for recreational fishing, **Table 2**). The FWG noted:
 - a) That the recommended TAC balances the need for stock rebuilding recognising the apparent biomass decline and both modelled and observed CPUE reductions in recent years, with the need to minimise potential economic impacts on the Fishery. The FWG noted that any TAC reduction was most likely to be given effect through reducing the amount of Spanish Mackerel catch leased to sunset fishers;
 - b) Industry members at the WG (all being Traditional Inhabitants) strongly supported the proposed RBC and TAC reduction in order to be precautionary and recognising the importance of the fishery to Traditional Inhabitant livelihoods now and in the future; and
 - c) Concern that the proposed TAC reduction may reduce available catch information to support future stock assessments at a time when stock is declining and in need of accurate assessments (catch per unit effort provides an index of stock abundance and is used in modelling stock biomass). It was noted that the proposed TAC reduction could reduce the number of dedicated Spanish mackerel sunset licence operators from three to two. This will depend on the allocation process of TAC to fishing operations. The FWG noted that future data needs is an important consideration in setting the RBC and TAC. The stock assessment scientist advised that a reduction to two vessel operations could still be analysed in the catch rate standardisation (Identification of dory and skipper data, with VMS would mitigate the risk). However, irrespective of the number of fishing operations (2–5), the fishery dependency of the catch rate data (i.e. the amount of fishing by each fishing operation, locations and times) can influence results. Encouragingly, FRAG and FWG traditional commercial operators discussed how to improve and supply their catch-effort data to support the stock assessment process.

Catches outside the fishery

3. FWG considered available estimates of mortality on the Spanish mackerel stock outside of the commercial fishery and supported the use of 10 t for subsistence take and 2 t for recreational harvest. The FWG noted that although there was uncertainty associated with these estimates they were the best available figures to support decision making and there was no rationale to depart from using these figures.

Coral trout total allowable catch advice

4. Having regard for FRAG advice the FWG agreed to recommend maintaining the 134.9 t TAC for coral trout for the 2019-20 season noting likely stock status and that recent catches have been substantially below the TAC. Assuming current catch levels remain unchanged, the FWG supported maintaining this TAC until it can be reconsidered in light of an agreed harvest

strategy and stock assessment. The FWG noted FRAG advice that the current stock assessment is preliminary.

5. In making this recommendation the FWG noted:

- the current notional TAC of 134.9 t has been in place since 2008 and is based on average catches between 2001 to 2005;
- an initial stock assessment for Torres Strait coral trout was presented to the FRAG and was welcomed and deemed preliminary by the RAG due to its present stage of development and the range of uncertainties associated with the assessment;
- the approach of the preliminary assessment was accepted by the RAG. The approach uses biomass estimates from known Great Barrier Reef (GBR) habitats using underwater visual survey data and infers and scales these values to Torres Strait habitats using satellite mapping data to model the population and infer abundance;
- though deemed an preliminary assessment the outputs do suggest that the trout stock has a healthy level of biomass which is reinforced by industry advice from industry members. The FWG noted the preliminary stock assessment indicates the spawning biomass is around 80 per cent of virgin biomass with the lowest model estimate of biomass being around 65 per cent of virgin biomass.

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 378
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277



PROTECTED ZONE JOINT AUTHORITY

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PAPER No. 2

(PZJA FMP No.2)

GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION OF ALLOCATION ADVISORY PANELS FOR THE ALLOCATION OF FISHING CONCESSIONS IN TORRES STRAIT PROTECTED ZONE JOINT AUTHORITY FISHERIES WHERE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS CHANGE SIGNIFICANTLY

April 2006

Prepared by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority
on behalf of the Protected Zone Joint Authority

Contents

- Contents **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
- 1. Purpose.....3
- 2. Introduction.....3
- 3 The PZJA’s approach.....3
 - 3.1 The legislative objectives.....3
 - 3.2 The Torres Strait Treaty objectives.....4
 - 3.3 The objectives established by PZJA specialist working group.....4
 - 3.4 Changes to fisheries management arrangements4
- 4. Allocation of fishing concessions4
 - 4.1 Appeals Against Allocation5
 - 4.1.1 Statutory Management Plans5
- 5 Independent Allocation Advisory Panel5
 - 5.1 Membership5
 - 5.1.1 Traditional Inhabitant representation (observer)6
 - 5.2 Terms of reference6
 - 5.3 Brief6
 - 5.4 AAP Process7
 - 5.4.1 Consultation7
 - 5.4.2 Reporting requirements.....7
 - 5.4.3 Administrative support.....7
 - 5.4.3 Funding7

1. Purpose

This Draft Fisheries Management Paper sets out the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) policy and a procedural framework for the allocation of fishing concessions where a decision has been taken to significantly change the basis of management arrangements in existing fisheries.

For example, when a move is made from:

1. a non transferable input control system to a transferable unitised input control system; or
2. an input control system to an output control system (individual transferable quota).

This draft paper does not apply to development of fisheries management arrangements for new fisheries. Separate arrangements will be utilised in that instance.

2. Introduction

The PZJA is responsible for monitoring the condition of designated fisheries within the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) and for the formulation of policies and plans for their management. The PZJA has regard to the rights and obligations conferred on Australia by the Torres Strait Treaty, in particular the protection of the traditional way of life and livelihood of the traditional inhabitants, including their traditional fishing.

The PZJA is established under the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984 (the Act).

The purpose of this draft paper is to provide policy guidance and procedural frameworks for the allocation of fishing concessions where fishery management arrangements are proposed to be changed.

3 The PZJA's approach

3.1 The legislative objectives

The objectives to be pursued in the administration of the Act include:

1. To have regard to the rights and obligations conferred on Australia by the Torres Strait Treaty and in particular pay regard to the traditional way of life and livelihood of traditional inhabitants, including their rights in relation to traditional fishing.

Other objectives to be pursued by the PZJA are implied under the Act and by other commonwealth Acts and international treaties to which Australia is a signatory and include but are not limited to the following:

2. Keeping constantly under consideration the condition of the fishery;
3. Formulating policies and plans for the good management of the fishery; and
4. For the purposes of the management of the fishery:
 - a. Exercising the powers conferred it under Part V of the Act
 - b. Co-operating and consulting with other authorities (including Joint Authorities established under the *Fisheries Act* 1952 or the *Fisheries Management Act* 1991) in matters of common concern.

3.2 The Torres Strait Treaty objectives

The common objectives of the Torres Strait Treaty with regards to commercial fisheries are as follows:

1. The commercial utilisation of fisheries in the TSPZ are not to prejudice achievements outlined in the Treaty with regard to traditional fishing.
2. Treaty Parties shall cooperate in the conservation, management and optimum utilisation of Protected Zone commercial fisheries.
3. Treaty Parties shall, where appropriate, negotiate subsidiary conservation and management arrangements in respect of any individual Protected Zone commercial fishery.
4. Treaty Parties shall share the allowable catch of the Protected Zone commercial fisheries in accordance with provisions outlined in Article 23, 24 and 25 in the Treaty.

3.3 The objectives established by PZJA specialist working group

In February 2005, a specialist group consisting of senior officials from PZJA Agencies was formed, to determine options for resolving the issue of resource allocation in the TRL and Finfish Fisheries. The group recognised four principle stakeholder groups as having legitimate access to fisheries resources in Australia's jurisdiction of the TSPZ.

- Traditional fishers of the Torres Strait and PNG;
- Papua New Guinea commercial fishers;
- Traditional Inhabitant commercial (community) fishers; and
- Non-Traditional Inhabitant commercial fishers.

A set of principles were adopted by the specialist group to account for the intentions of the Treaty and the Act. The principles establish a hierarchy for assessing the relative merits of resource allocation options. The principles in order of importance are:

1. Protection of the fishery resource;
2. Protection of the traditional way of life and livelihood of Traditional Inhabitants;
3. Enhancing economic and employment opportunities for Traditional Inhabitants; and
4. Enhancing economic and employment opportunities for non-Traditional Inhabitants, and in a more general sense enhancing economic and employment opportunities within the Torres Strait region.

3.4 Changes to fisheries management arrangements

The PZJA may deem it necessary to implement new management arrangements for PZJA Fisheries for the effective pursuit of objectives outlined in the Torres Strait Treaty and relevant legislation. Management changes are also driven by external processes, such as the mandatory accreditation of all fisheries under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Changes may include movement in the level of input controls, including sustainability reductions made over a given time frame. Similarly, the PZJA may determine it to be necessary to move to either unitised input controls or output controls (quota management systems).

4. Allocation of fishing concessions

The fishing concessions that exist in a fishery at the time that management arrangements are proposed to change, are the only concessions that will be taken into account under any allocation that may be required by the move from one management regime to another.

It should be recognised that, in pursuing the Torres Strait Treaty and legislative objectives relevant to the PZJA, there will be instances where it is not possible to design an allocation formula that will have absolutely no impact on the relative economic position of individual operators.

From a legal, ethical and fisheries management perspective, the PZJA will explicitly endeavour to minimise any adverse differential economic impacts on individual operators. A body of legal case history in relation to allocation of fishing concessions has been established both in Australia and overseas which demonstrates that allocations of fishing concession resulting in a significant and differential economic impact on individual operators (which cannot be balanced against fisheries management objectives) not in the best interest of any of the parties nor the fishery and are clearly challengeable.

Therefore, the PZJA's approach to allocation of fishing concessions is based on the premise that, in making any management changes, the PZJA will ensure that:

1. such changes are consistent with and support the pursuit of the Torres Strait Treaty and legislative objectives relevant to the PZJA; and
2. any differential economic impacts of allocations on individual fishing concession holders are minimised unless there are reasons, justifiable with respect to the Torres Strait Treaty and legislative objectives relevant to the PZJA, that dictate otherwise.

4.1 Appeals Against Allocation

The AAP will provide advice to the PZJA for decision. The PZJA will consider the advice supplied by the AAP in making decision's relevant to allocation of fishing concessions.

Affected persons wishing to appeal decisions made by the PZJA should do so under a Administrative Decisions Judicial Review (ADJR) as established under the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977.

4.1.1 Statutory Management Plans

If decisions are made through Statutory Management Plans, then under section 15A(13) of the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984 and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal Act 1975, affected persons may appeal such decisions through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

5 Independent Allocation Advisory Panel

Experience provided by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) suggests that operators will have greater confidence in allocation outcomes where they result from an independent assessment of the fishery and individual circumstances. A central principle in the development of a fair and credible allocation system is that it has been based on an independent assessment. In order to achieve this, the recommended basis of allocation will be developed at arms length from PZJA Agencies and the PZJA.

In relation to PZJA fisheries, an independent Allocation Advisory Panel (AAP) will be established to provide advice to the PZJA on the catch ratio between commercial sectors within a defined fishery, or between defined fisheries (intersectoral allocation); and/or the most appropriate allocation system within a defined fishery, or between defined fisheries (intersectoral allocation); and/or in any other appropriate circumstances.

The AAP would be established under s40(7) of the Act which provides scope for the PZJA to establish advisory committees, consisting of such persons as it thinks fit, to provide information and advice to the PZJA. The AAP is advisory in nature, in much the same manner as the Torres Strait Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (TSFMAC) and relevant Fisheries Working Group's (FWG's). Any decisions in relation to allocation are made by the PZJA in accordance with its responsibilities under the Act. To facilitate this process, the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) will provide administrative support to the AAP. PZJA Agencies will provide information and briefing material to the AAP as requested/required by the AAP.

5.1 Membership

An AAP will comprise from one to three members. The actual number of members will be determined by the PZJA on a case-by-case basis depending on the issues to be addressed, consideration of the breadth of expertise which is both being sought and is available, and the cost-effectiveness of the process. Members will be engaged under s40(7) of the Act.

PZJA Agencies will seek nominations for membership of the AAP from appropriately qualified persons. Nominations will be considered by the PZJA when they determine membership of an AAP.

A member or members may be a retired judge, or other qualified member of the legal profession with experience in administrative law, and/or an economist and/or an independent member of the fishing industry who is not associated with the fishery in relation to which the allocation process is being undertaken, and/or a fisheries scientist. Where it is determined that a panel should comprise two or more persons one of those persons will be a Presiding Member. Unless otherwise specified by the PZJA, the Presiding Member will be a retired judge or other qualified member of the legal profession.

Some of the information so provided to AAP members will be provided as “commercial in confidence” and members of the AAP must consent to follow accepted rules of confidentiality.

5.1.1 Traditional Inhabitant representation (observer)

As requested by the TSRA, the PZJA will consider the addition of one extra member to an AAP to act as an observer on behalf of the Torres Strait Traditional Inhabitants. In such case, the Traditional Inhabitant observer will act as an advisor to AAP members on relevant indigenous issues, but will not share in the production of recommendations for the PZJA.

The Traditional Inhabitant observer will be bound by the same confidentiality agreements that apply to other AAP members.

5.2 Terms of reference

Specific terms of reference will be established for each AAP formed by the PZJA. In general an AAP will advise the PZJA on:

1. The most appropriate basis for allocation of fishing concessions in a fishery or between fisheries (intersectoral allocation), in accordance with this Draft Fisheries Management Paper; and is
2. To identify and include in that allocation system any exceptional circumstance which the AAP considers should be taken into account.

In undertaking these tasks, the AAP will be required to:

1. Consult with relevant parties and any person/s or organisations with appropriate knowledge or experience;
2. Identify the data necessary to support the allocation system determined in terms of reference 1 and 2 and the most cost effective and appropriate methods of collection and verification of that data;
3. Explain and justify the recommended allocation system to the PZJA stakeholders;
4. Provide advice to PZJA agency officers appearing as witnesses before tribunals or courts in any challenge to the recommended allocation system if implemented;
5. Maintain full records of all activities undertaken by the panel; and
6. Ensure all information provided to the panel is publicly available.

5.3 Brief

To enable the AAP to consider allocation in or across a particular fishery/s, PZJA Agencies will provide the AAP with a brief which includes, but is not limited to:

1. this Fisheries Management Paper
2. any other policy papers relevant to the allocation being considered;
3. factual details of the fishery/s;
4. factual details of existing/historical management arrangements in the fishery/s;
5. factual details of existing fishing concessions; and
6. factual details of any past commitments made (whether by press release, correspondence or other written communication).

5.4 AAP Process

5.4.1 Consultation

A key component of determining the most appropriate allocation system in a particular fishery or fisheries are the consultative processes which are undertaken with operators, Traditional Inhabitants, and others with an interest in the fishery/s. Whilst the level and actual process of consultation may vary according to the fishery or specific circumstances, as a general rule the AAP will consult widely with relevant parties and any person/s or organisations with appropriate knowledge, experience or expertise as appropriate.

Where necessary, the AAP may obtain advice or input from relevant legal, economic or statistical experts, provided the costs are available in the AAP budget or have been agreed to by the PZJA.

5.4.2 Reporting requirements

The PZJA will establish an agreed timeframe by which the AAP is to have identified an appropriate allocation system for the fishery for which a change in management arrangements is proposed. The AAP will provide draft, and subsequently final, advice to the PZJA on a preferred allocation system in accordance with that agreed timetable.

The PZJA will consider the draft advice (and provide any comments to the AAP on that advice) within an agreed timeframe of receiving the draft.

5.4.3 Administrative support

DAFF will provide administrative support to the AAP as necessary. If requested, PZJA Agencies will provide assistance to the AAP in generating alternative allocation outcomes.

5.4.3 Funding

In deciding to form an AAP for a specific purpose, the PZJA will also consider the level of funding required for the AAP to meet its Terms of Reference. The PZJA will provide the agreed budget to the Presiding Member when the AAP is formed. Due to cost sharing issues, any variances to the AAP budget will require PZJA consideration.

Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Spanish Mackerel Biological Sampling

Estimated cost: \$40,000 (without extension work to communities)

Project Need: The Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Spanish mackerel stock assessment is based on commercial catch rate data and is used to identify the annual sustainable harvest for the Fishery. A declining catch rate is evident from recent updates to this assessment. Prior to the current fishing season, catch at age and length data had not been collected for some time (most recent ageing data before this was from 2005). These are important inputs into the stock assessment which help to improve our knowledge of the status of the stock. Samples being collected now, as a part of the project *Enhancing biological data inputs to Torres Strait Spanish Mackerel stock assessment* (project number: 2019/0832) will be incorporated into the next stock assessment. To support ongoing improvement in the assessment however, further samples are required. The FFRAG have recommended samples be collected for a minimum of three more years to produce a good time series.

Desired outcomes:

In consultation with AFMA and Finfish Fishery Resource Assessment Group (FFRAG) and stock assessment team:

- Continuation of the data collection and ageing program established through the AFMA funded project titled: *Enhancing biological data inputs to Torres Strait Spanish Mackerel stock assessment* (project number: 2019/0832), for the 2020-21 fishing season, with options of the 2021-22 and 2022-23 fishing seasons; and
- Delivery of ageing and length frequency data plus associated report, to AFMA within an agreed timeframe.

Applicants wishing to submit a proposal can contact AFMA for further information on the sampling regime.

Contacts:

Andrew Trappett

Senior Management Officer
Torres Strait Finfish Fishery

07 4069 1990

andrew.trappett@afma.gov.au

Lisa Cocking

Executive Officer
Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee
02 6225 5451
torresstraitresearch@afma.gov.au

Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Coral Trout Catch Per Unit Effort Standardisation

Estimated cost: \$3000 to \$5000.

Project Need: The first formal stock assessment for Torres Strait Coral trout was completed in 2019. The assessment was accepted as preliminary noting the stage of development of the assessment and the range of uncertainties within the assessment. Future development of the preliminary stock assessment, including inputs, is a priority to provide greater certainty in our understanding of the stock status and in doing so, potentially support future growth in the Fishery.

Catch Per Unit Effort is an important input into the assessment and may be used to monitor the performance of the Fishery in years without a full assessment being undertaken. Having an agreed CPUE standardization is the first necessary step towards using CPUE to inform management decisions. Nominal CPUE (not standardised) is unlikely to be a reliable indicator of coral trout stock status.

A small project is required to further refine the current CPUE standardisation methods and to update the CPUE time series with new catch and effort data.

The output from this CPUE standardisation will be used to inform advice on sustainable catch limits for the 2021-22 season.

Desired outcomes:

In consultation with AFMA and Finfish Fishery Resource Assessment Group (FFRAG), delivery of an updated CPUE series for coral trout to AFMA and the FFRAG by September 2020. The CPUE series is to be based on:

- any recommended refinements of the CPUE standardisation methodology developed through the AFMA funded project: *Harvest Strategy of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery* (project number: 2016/0824); and
- all available catch and effort data.

Contacts:

Andrew Trappett

Senior Management Officer
Torres Strait Finfish Fishery

07 4069 1990

andrew.trappett@afma.gov.au

Lisa Cocking

Executive Officer
Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee
02 6225 5451

torresstraitresearch@afma.gov.au

Agenda item 2.2.1.d

2.2.1.d Table 1. Wildlife Trade Operation – Torres Strait Finfish Fishery -Summary of issues requiring conditions, December 2017

Issue	Condition
<p><u>General Management</u></p> <p>Export decisions relate to the arrangements in force at the time of the decision. To ensure that these decisions remain valid and export approval continues uninterrupted, the Department of the Environment and Energy needs to be advised of any changes that are made to the management regime and make an assessment that the new arrangements are equivalent or better, in terms of ecological sustainability, than those in place at the time of the original decision. This includes operational and legislated amendments that may affect sustainability of the target species or negatively impact on byproduct, bycatch, EPBC Act protected species or the ecosystem.</p>	<p>Condition 1:</p> <p>Operation of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery will be carried out in accordance with management regime in force under the <i>Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984</i>.</p> <p>Condition 2:</p> <p>The Torres Strait Protect Zone Joint Authority to inform the Department of the Environment and Energy of any intended material changes to the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery management arrangements that may affect the assessment against which <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> decisions are made.</p>
<p><u>Annual Reporting</u></p> <p>It is important that reports be produced and presented to the Department annually in order for the performance of the fishery and progress in implementing the conditions in this report and other managerial commitments to be monitored and assessed throughout the life of the declaration. Annual reports should follow Appendix B to the 'Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition' and include a description of the fishery, management arrangements in place, research and monitoring outcomes, recent catch data for all sectors of the fishery, status of target stock, interactions with EPBC Act protected species, impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem in which it operates and progress in implementing the Department's conditions. Electronic copies of the guidelines are available from the Department's website at http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/guidelines-ecologically-sustainable-management-fisheries</p>	<p>Condition 3:</p> <p>The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to produce and present reports to the Department of the Environment and Energy annually as per Appendix B of the <i>Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition</i>.</p>

Issue	Condition
<p><u>Improving information for sustainable management</u></p> <p>Reliable information is important to ensure stocks are not overfished and fishing remains sustainable.</p> <p>In the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery, non-Traditional Inhabitant fishers must report all catch and effort data using AFMA approved logbooks. However information on the Traditional Inhabitant sector (the majority of license holders with unlimited licences available) is limited to voluntary reports of catch received by fish receivers using docket books.</p> <p>Although catch limits are set, the system could be improved to validate catches, monitor or manage catch limits. The unlimited number of licenses in the Traditional-Inhabitant sector also means there is capacity for fishing activity to rapidly increase and exceed catch limits. Measures that are likely to improve data collection, and monitoring and management of catches could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fishers reporting all catch, including bycatch and discarded catch using approved catch and effort logbooks. • fishers unloading all retained catch to an authorised fish receiver. • fish receivers verifying the quantity and composition of all received catches and report this in a form that facilitates validation of catch data reported by fishers. • monitoring and validation of reported data as necessary. <p>The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) has undertaken to make data reporting by all fishers compulsory, and ensure all landings occur to licensed fish receivers. These measures are facilitated by the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2013, but have not yet been implemented.</p> <p>A number of measures are being implemented including mandatory catch reporting (legislative amendment process to begin in 2018) and licenced fish receivers (mandatory catch disposal records, from 1 December 2017).</p> <p>The PZJA has also identified a need to obtain more reliable estimates of productivity. This is particularly important as fishing effort is increasing in the Reef Line Fishery sector, and there have been no formal stock assessments undertaken to date.</p> <p>The PZJA also intend to complete an ecological risk assessment for the fishery in 2019 which should further inform its data collection programme.</p>	<p>Condition 4</p> <p>The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to implement strategies to improve data collection, and monitoring and management of catch in all sectors of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery by 2019.</p> <p>Condition 5</p> <p>The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to complete an ecological risk assessment for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.</p> <p>Condition 6</p> <p>The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to improve estimates of stock abundance and harvest potential for all target species in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.</p>

Issue	Condition
<p><u>Reference points and management triggers to ensure fishing remains sustainable.</u></p> <p>Although a stock assessment and management strategy evaluation has been used to set biologically relevant reference points for the Spanish mackerel fishery, the Reef Line Fishery sector has not been assessed and has no formal target or limit reference points.</p> <p>A total allowable catch for coral trout in the Reef Line Fishery sector is allocated to licences at the start of each fishing season, but no limits apply to other species in the Reef Line Fishery sector.</p> <p>The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) has advised that a harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery is in development and will consider all target species in the Reef Line Fishery and Spanish mackerel sectors.</p> <p>The Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Management Plan 2013 provides for the PZJA to determine reference points for the fishery and review these as necessary. In relation to species harvested from the fishery, the plan requires the PZJA to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor catch information on finfish and byproduct species; and • if concerns about a species are identified, determine reference points that are appropriate for maintaining ecologically viable stocks of that species and an ecologically sustainable fishery. <p>The PZJA has previously advised that once the management plan for the fishery was implemented, the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group would consider reference points for the fishery. Development and implementation of reference points and appropriate management responses, with timeframes attached, are necessary to ensure the fishery's management arrangements remain ecologically sustainable.</p>	<p>Condition 7</p> <p>The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to develop and implement reference points and relevant management triggers, including timeframes for management responses, for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.</p>

2.2.d Table 1. Update on status against WTO conditions

	Condition	Status update
1	Operation of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery will be carried out in accordance with management arrangements in force under the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984.	Operation of the fishery occurs in line with TS Fisheries Act 1984 (and Fisheries Management Notices made under this legislation) along with the Torres Strait Finfish Management Plan 2013.
2	The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to inform the Department of the Environment and Energy of any intended material changes to the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery management arrangements that may affect the assessment against which Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 decisions are made.	Changes to operational and legislated amendments that may impact the status of the WTO are reported to the Dept. of Environment by AFMA.
3	The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to produce and present reports to the Department of the Environment and Energy annually as per Appendix B of the Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition.	Annual reporting and liaison with the Depart. of the Environment is actioned yearly by AFMA in line with the Guidelines.
4	The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to implement strategies to improve data collection, and monitoring and management of catch in all sectors of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery by 2019.	Strategies implemented including Daily Fishing Logbooks (mandatory for Sunset licence holders), mandatory catch disposal records through Fish Receiver System (Dec 2017) and Vessel Monitoring System requirement on all Processor-Carrier licenced vessels (July 2017).
5	The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to complete an ecological risk assessment for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.	ERA for Torres Strait Finfish Fishery (in line with all TS commercial fisheries) funded and scheduled for completion by 2020-21.
6	The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to improve estimates of stock abundance and harvest potential for all target species in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.	Spanish mackerel empirical assessment has been adopted by the PZJA to track abundance and advise on sustainable harvests. Preliminary assessment for coral trout has been actioned by FFRAG but requires further development.
7	The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to develop and implement reference points and relevant management triggers, including timeframes for management responses, for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.	Harvest strategy project funded, draft framework nearing completion, planned implementation to support management of key target species in the 2021-22 fishing season.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
WORKING GROUP UPDATES Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority Update	Agenda Item No. 2.3 FOR NOTING

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Working Group **NOTE** any updates from the PNG National Fisheries Authority (PNG-NFA).

BACKGROUND

2. PNG-NFA are invited participants on all PZJA advisory groups and advise on any developments in management, research and compliance in adjacent PNG waters.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
WORKING GROUP UPDATES Native Title Update	Agenda Item No. 2.4 FOR NOTING

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Working Group **NOTE** any updates on Native Title matters from members, including representatives of Malu Lamar (Torres Strait Islanders) Corporation RNTBC (Malu Lamar).

BACKGROUND

2. 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 Title rights in relation to commercial fishing must be exercisable in accordance with the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.
3. Traditional Owners and Native Title representative bodies have an important role in managing Torres Strait fisheries. It is important therefore that the RAG keep informed on any relevant Native Title issues arising.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCHES Total Allowable Catch recommendation for Spanish mackerel 2020-21 fishing season	Agenda Item No. 3.1 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

1. **NOTE** that for the 2019-20 fishing season the PZJA supported FFWG and FFRAG advice and set the Spanish mackerel Total Allowable Catch (TAC) at 82 tonnes (RBC of 94 tonnes minus total estimated catch outside the Fishery being 12 tonnes (10t for traditional (subsistence) fishing and 2 t for recreational fishing).
2. **NOTE** that with the Spanish mackerel harvest strategy in the final stages of development and not yet agreed, advice on sustainable catch limits has been formed on the basis of building the fishery towards interim target reference points. The 2019-20 season TAC of 82 tonnes is based on the FFRAG advice to apply a Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) fishing reference point (target of 40 per cent of unfished biomass, B40) on the level of 2017-18 season exploitable biomass.
3. **NOTE** that a joint FFWG and FFRAG meeting with industry participants (27-28 June 2019) recommended:
 - a. A stock assessment should be conducted each year until the biomass is greater than B40. It is assumed that the stock will take a few years to build to B40 at the current TAC. The industry participants noted that setting a lower TAC would allow for the stock to build faster.
 - b. The ongoing regularity of stock assessments will be set once B40 has been reached
 - c. B TARG (interim) was recommended to be B48. This is an interim B TARG that will be reviewed once it has been reached. The Group were unable to settle on a higher BTARG, given the current indicative biomass (B31) and the long term (>12 years) at current TAC levels, or significant catch reduction required for the stock to rebuild above B48. Industry expressed a strong preference for management to focus on building the biomass in the coming years, before tackling any other scenarios.
 - d. The TAC will be set to reach the target reference point (B TARG) by a determined year. From the 2020-21 season, the TAC will be set to allow the stock to build to B48. The FRAG will consider which year should be the aim for reaching B TARG prior to setting the 2020-2021 TAC. The scientists and industry noted that in determining the target year, the social/economic impacts of a low TAC would need to be weighed against building the stock quickly.
4. **NOTE** that the FFRAG will review an updated stock assessment for Spanish mackerel at their 27-28 November 2019 meeting (FFRAG 6) and provide advice on the Recommended Biological Catch (RBC) for 2020-21 fishing season. FFRAG advice will be tabled at the meeting.
5. **PROVIDE ADVICE** on estimates of catches outside of the commercial fishery to support forming a TAC based on the available RBC advice.
6. **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on an appropriate notional Total Allowable Catch for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Spanish mackerel stock for the 2020-21 fishing season.

KEY ISSUES

7. The FFWG is being asked to provide advice on the notional TAC to be set for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery to manage commercial catches for the 2020-21 fishing season beginning 1 July 2020.
8. Under the AFMA funded project "*Torres Strait Spanish mackerel stock assessment with appraisal of environmental drivers*" an updated stock assessment using catch and effort data up to June 2019 is to be considered at FFRAG 6. Having consider the outcome of the stock assessment update and available catch information, the FFRAG are tasked with providing advice on the Recommended Biological Catch. This advice will be tabled with Working Group at the meeting.
9. Consistent with the Australian Government's harvest strategy policy, TACs should take into account all sources of fishing mortality on the stock. That is catches taken outside the commercial fishery. These other sources of mortality might be discards, subsistence (kai-kai) take, recreational or charter sector catches for which data may be available or estimates may be agreed. FFWG are asked to review previous estimates of other sources of mortality (see Background section below), advice from the FFRAG and any additional information from members.

BACKGROUND

TAC advice for the 2019-20 fishing season and previous seasons

10. Having regard for the FFRAG advice, the FFWG agreed to recommend a Spanish mackerel TAC of 82 tonnes (RBC of 94 tonnes minus total estimated catch outside the Fishery – 12 tonne (10t for traditional (subsistence) fishing and 2 t for recreational fishing).
11. The FFWG noted:
 - a) That the recommended TAC balances the need for stock rebuilding recognising the apparent biomass decline and both modelled and observed CPUE reductions in recent years, with the need to minimise potential economic impacts on the Fishery. The FFWG noted that any TAC reduction was most likely to be given effect through reducing the amount of Spanish mackerel catch leased to sunset fishers;
 - b) Industry members at the WG (all being Traditional Inhabitants) supported the proposed RBC and TAC reduction in order to be precautionary and recognising the importance of the fishery to Traditional Inhabitant livelihoods now and in the future;
 - c) Concern that the proposed TAC reduction may reduce available catch information to support future stock assessments at a time when stock is declining and in need of accurate assessments (catch per unit effort provides an index of stock abundance and is used in modelling stock biomass). It was noted that the proposed TAC reduction could reduce the number of dedicated Spanish mackerel sunset licence operators from three to one or two. This is down from four analysed in the latest stock assessment using 2017-18 data, as one operator has been excluded from TAC reductions in previous years. The FFWG noted that future data needs is an important consideration in setting the RBC and TAC. The stock assessment scientist advised that a reduction to two vessel operations could still be analysed in the catch rate standardisation

12. A brief summary of previous advice on Spanish mackerel TACs is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary advice on past Spanish mackerel Total Allowable Catches

Season	RBC	TAC	Summary
2019-20	94 t	82 t (RBC 94 minus 12 t)	RBC of 94 t, minus 12 t deduction (10 t subsistence, 2 t recreational take). Agreed by PZJA 1 April 2019.
2018-19	125 t	115 t (RBC 125 minus 10 t)	RBC of 125 t, minus 10 t subsistence.
2017-18	125 t	132 t	RBC of 125 t recommended. PZJA Standing Committee agreed that a maximum estimated Spanish mackerel commercial catch of 132 tonnes (comprising proposed sunset leasing of 110 t and estimated TIB catches of 22 t) should be implemented. PZJA SC agreed that in the absence of new or updated information future catches should be managed in line with the RBC of 125t.
2008-09 to 2016-17	-	187.7 t	TAC was based on average annual commercial catches (TIB and Sunset sectors) between 2001-2005

Estimates of catches outside the commercial fishery

12. Consistent with Australian Government policy (detailed in the *Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy a framework for applying an evidence-based approach to setting harvest levels in Commonwealth fisheries – June 2018*), all sources of mortality (catch) must be taken into account when setting a TAC. This means the TAC generally equates to the Recommended Biological Catch (RBC) (previously referred to as ‘total kill’ by the FWG) for the species minus expected catches to be taken outside of the fishery.
13. Estimates of other sources of mortality were used to revise the Spanish mackerel notional TAC for 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 seasons.
14. FFRAG 4 (13-14 March 2019) provided advice on best estimates for catches taken outside of the commercial fishery and the FFWG Meeting 15 March 2019 supported the use of the values shown in **Table 2** below to support TAC setting by the PZJA for the 2019-20 season.

Table 2. FFRAG 4 (13-14 March 2019) Summary advice of available information on catches outside of the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery.

Source of catches	Expected catch (t)	Comments
Subsistence catch (kai kai) by traditional inhabitants	10	Based on data from <i>Busilacchi 2013</i> this includes total of catch estimates for Mer, Masig and Erub Islands. The FWG agreed in July 2016 that the catch figures from the <i>Busilacchi 2008</i> research are the best estimates of traditional take of finfish. While originally reported by CSIRO as 12 t this was further refined to 5.155 t. The RAG recommended that an estimate of 10 t be used for decision making noting data was only from three islands, the number of TIB fishing endorsements has increased and effort creep may be occurring. NOTING that anecdotal information presented at the FRAG by TIB industry members infers this number generally may have gone down.
Recreational	2	RAG advised that based on the available evidence from QDAF recreational survey results recreational catches are likely to be minimal. Changed now - based on QDAF survey (2013) which included TS.
Charter	Likely to be minimal	Available QLD logbook records show Charter boat line catches are low. Logbook records for the period between 1995 and 2014 report a total of 19.58 tonnes of mixed species taken from Torres Strait waters. RAG has advised based on the available evidence from QDAF logbook data from charter catches are likely to be minimal.
PNG catch sharing	0	PNG-NFA declined to enter into catch sharing arrangements under the Treaty for 2018-19 fishing season.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCHES Total Allowable Catch recommendation for coral trout in the 2020-21 fishing season	Agenda Item No. 3.2 For discussion and advice

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

1. **NOTE** that for the 2019-20 fishing season the PZJA supported FFWG and FFRAG advice and maintained the 134.9 tonne coral trout;
2. **NOTE** that a harvest strategy for coral trout is still in development and not yet been agreed;
3. **NOTE** that no further stock assessment work has been undertaken since the preliminary stock assessment presented was considered by the FFRAG and FFWG in March 2019;
4. **PROVIDE ADVICE** on estimates of catches outside of the commercial fishery to support forming a TAC based on the available RBC advice.
5. **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on an appropriate notional Total Allowable Catch for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery coral trout stock for the 2020-21 fishing season.

KEY ISSUES

6. The FFWG is being asked to provide advice on the notional TAC to be set for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery to manage commercial catches for the 2020-21 fishing season beginning 1 July 2020.
7. FFRAG is meeting on 27-28 November and will discuss and provide advice on a Recommended Biological Catch for coral trout for the 2020-21 fishing season. FFRAG advice will be tabled with the FFWG at the meeting.
8. Consistent with the Australian Government's harvest strategy policy, TACs should take into account all sources of fishing mortality on the stock. That is catches taken outside the commercial fishery. These other sources of mortality might be discards, subsistence (kai-kai) take, recreational or charter sector catches for which real data may be available or estimates may be agreed to support decision making. FFWG are asked to review estimates of other sources of mortality supplied by the FFRAG and any additional information from members.

BACKGROUND

2019-20 Season TAC Advice

9. Having regard for FFRAG advice the FFWG agreed to recommend maintaining the 135 t TAC for coral trout for the 2019-20 season noting the likelihood of a healthy stock, and that recent catches have been substantially below the TAC. Assuming current catch levels remain unchanged, the FWG supported maintaining this TAC until it can be reconsidered in light of an

agreed harvest strategy and stock assessment. The FFWG noted FFRAG advice that the current stock assessment is preliminary.

10. In making this recommendation the FFWG noted:

- a. the current notional TAC of 134.9 t has been in place since 2008 and is based on average catches between 2001 to 2005;
- b. an initial stock assessment for Torres Strait coral trout was presented to the FFRAG and was welcomed and deemed preliminary by the RAG due to its present stage of development and the range of uncertainties associated with the assessment;
- c. the approach of the preliminary assessment was accepted by the RAG. The approach uses biomass estimates from known Great Barrier Reef (GBR) habitats using underwater visual survey data and infers and scales these values to Torres Strait habitats using satellite mapping data to model the population and infer abundance;
- d. though it was deemed a preliminary assessment by the RAG the outputs do suggest that the trout stock has a healthy level of biomass which is reinforced by industry advice from industry members. The FFWG noted the preliminary stock assessment indicates the spawning biomass is around 80 per cent of virgin biomass with the lowest model estimate of biomass being around 65 per cent of virgin biomass.

Estimates of catches outside the commercial fishery

11. Consistent with Australian Government policy (detailed in the *Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy a framework for applying an evidence-based approach to setting harvest levels in Commonwealth fisheries – June 2018*), all sources of mortality (catch) must be taken into account when setting a TAC. This means the TAC generally equates to the Recommended Biological Catch (RBC) (previously referred to as 'total kill' by the FFWG) for the species minus expected catches to be taken outside of the fishery.
12. Estimates of other sources of mortality have been used to revise the Spanish mackerel notional TAC for 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 seasons but have not yet been applied to coral trout TAC setting.
10. At its 9-10 November 2017 meeting (FFRAG 1) the RAG:
 - advised that based on the available evidence from QDAF recreational survey data and charter sector logbook data, both recreational and charter catches of coral trout in Torres Strait are likely to be minimal; and
 - considered that there was no requirement at present to deduct coral trout subsistence catches given the amount of available information and that an assessment would likely be conducted on the species in 2018.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
HARVEST STRATEGY Draft Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Harvest Strategy	Agenda Item No. 4.1 FOR DISCUSSION and ADVICE

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Finfish Fishery Working Group:

1. **NOTE** a presentation from AFMA on the status of development of harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery (Spanish mackerel and coral trout);
2. **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on key elements of the draft harvest strategies developed noting FFRAG advice on any work plans proposed to resolve any outstanding matters as an outcome of further RAG consideration at their 27-28 November 2019 meeting.

KEY ISSUES

1. The AFMA funded project “*Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery*” has now closed. A final project report was submitted to AFMA on 14 June 2019 and was updated on 18 October 2019 following the June stakeholder harvest strategy meetings.
2. Key outcomes of the project include updating and further progressing the Spanish mackerel stock assessment, undertaking the first stock assessment for coral trout and recommending a range of components for the Strategy based on stakeholder input and project team expertise and analysis.
3. The project outcomes are a useful basis to guide further work required to finalise the draft harvest strategies for consideration by the PZJA ahead of community consultation. Further project work will be likely be required to continue development of the coral trout harvest strategy before it can be implemented by the PZJA.
4. FFRAG and FFWG advice is being sought on work plans to resolve any outstanding matters.
5. FFRAG 5 (31 Oct - 1 November 2019) provided advice to AFMA on the draft strategies with a focus on Spanish mackerel. FFRAG 6 (27-28 November 2019) will continue considering the developed components for Spanish mackerel, including consideration of RBC setting options and decision rules to guide building the stock when above the limit reference point (B20 agreed) and below the target reference point. This advice will be presented to the FFWG for consideration.

BACKGROUND

Harvest strategy project objectives

6. In developing these draft frameworks, the project has aimed to develop and ratify a clear and concise draft harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery. It has aimed to provide guidance for sustainable fishing, the data requirements that underpins management strategies, options for flexibility to suit market and community needs, targets and limits and guidance for situations where these targets and/or limits are reached, and data requirements for potential fishery expansion. The project has aimed to:
 - a) Collate and analyse available coral trout and Spanish mackerel fishery data to estimate variability and assess whether there is sufficient information to develop time-series indicators of stock status. This includes linkage to the Finfish Monitoring Project (data links

and sampling methodology).

- b) Summarise and assess utility of updated stock assessments and reference points for coral trout and Spanish mackerel.
- c) Present results and HS guidelines (including Harvest Control Rules) to the Finfish working group, with fishery managers and representative stakeholders to develop and evaluate key elements of the draft HS. It is the responsibility of the FWG to take the recommended draft HS and formally adopt it as the HS (noting implementation of the harvest strategy is addressed at FFRAG5 Agenda Item 3.2).

7. The Harvest Strategy project comprises four distinct tasks.

- a) **Task 1** – Data collation and quality assessment (this task collates data and provides early consideration of harvest strategy options).
- b) **Task 2** - Assessment minor revision (Spanish mackerel) and assessment development (Coral trout)
- c) **Task 3** - Harvest Control Rule (HCR) specification – for all components of a Harvest Strategy, these being:
 - Indicators (full set of chosen indicators outlined) (here included in Task 1);
 - Current Monitoring and future monitoring (here included in Task 1, but future monitoring relevant to all Tasks);
 - Reference Points (for both stocks: Spanish mackerel and coral trout – the target and limit reference points will be defined and agreed to as part of Task 2, and this task);
 - Method of status evaluation (assessment and empirical). For each stock the actual method depends on data and is a cost/risk analysis that should be informed by resources available (AFMA to advise);
 - Decision rules.
- d) **Task 4** - Summation of formal links with other projects e.g. Finfish Monitoring Project (mackerel ageing and length frequency sampling).

Harvest strategy development

- 8. As per Tasks 1 and 2, the project has delivered an updated stock assessment for Spanish mackerel using data up to June 2018 and has delivered a preliminary stock assessment for coral trout.
- 9. Through stakeholder meetings (FFRAG, FFWG, dedicated HS meetings), project team meetings and taking advice from industry the project has developed specification on components for the two harvest strategies. Key design principles provided from stakeholders in forming these strategies (page 8, Joint FFRAG-FFWG meeting 27-28 June 2019 meeting record) has been:

General design principles

- 1. TACs should vary according to stock status (up and down);
- 2. If biomass decreases be cautious. Stock is not to go below the limit;
- 3. If biomass is increasing be conservative; 'bank' fish.
- 4. For Spanish mackerel : a shorter-term target is required

Important considerations

Commercial fishing by traditional inhabitants is important for:

- local employment and economic development; and

- passing down traditional knowledge and cultural lore.

The Finfish harvest strategy should:

- Compliment cultural lore;
- Have regard for TIB participation;
- Ensure sustainability, enough fish are left in the water to make money and the protection of traditional livelihoods and cultural value

10. The joint FFRAG and FFWG meeting of 7-28 June 2019 provided advice to the project team and suggested actions to be progressed. AFMA will note updates from the project team on these items and take advice from FFRAG on progressing these actions. An excerpt of the meeting record detailing these actions is as follows:

The Group briefly discussed the action items from the previous meeting. It was agreed at the previous meeting (Harvest Strategy Meeting 11-12 June 2019) that the project team would take the following suggestions from industry away for further development prior to this meeting if possible:

- *Explore 15 per cent change decision rules in other fisheries where there is asymmetry (the rule applies when the recommendation is to decrease the TAC but not when the recommendation is to increase the TAC) and how these rules might apply to setting TACs in this fishery.*
- *Shorter recovery time approach for Spanish mackerel (e.g. 8 or 10 years for Spanish mackerel instead of 12 years used as a timeframe for building when below B TARG but above B LIM).*
- *In order for the RAG to explore a CPUE trigger rule for conducting a Coral trout assessment, provide the standardised CPUE over the reference period or a shorter time period (e.g. average of last three seasons). This point was discussed during the meeting and the time frame from 2012-2017 (inclusive) was agreed to.*

The Project team noted that these items were outstanding action items and would be completed for the next Finfish Resource Assessment Group to consider (although during this meeting – the CPUE trigger rule was discussed and a recent time-period was chosen).

Status of draft harvest strategies – Coral trout

11. Following advice from the two harvest strategy meetings held in June 2019, the project team has incorporated advice tabled from industry, FFRAG and FFWG and has supplied AFMA with a draft report.
12. The most recent stakeholder advice from 27-28 June 2019 meeting on coral trout is as follows:

A stock assessment should be conducted in three years provided additional data available (during the 2021-22 season). The Group noted that postponing the stock assessment for three years would allow enough time for additional data to be included. The additional data priorities are: a) the 1994-95 CSIRO fish survey data b) improved TIB data; c) a new catch or underwater survey.

A regular stock assessment schedule should be determined. The Group agreed that between now and the next stock assessment, that analyses should be conducted to determine the appropriate schedule for conducting stock assessments in the Coral Trout Fishery.

The use of empirical trigger reference points was recommended for the years between stock assessments. The agreed trigger reference points will use CPUE data as a proxy for biomass and the yearly fishery catch data to ensure the maximum yield of the fishery zones are not being exceeded.

The specific trigger reference points were:

- a) In line with the recommended target reference point (B TARG = B60), and taking into account the conservative approach preferred by industry, if the biomass of coral trout is less than B60 (B TARG) then an integrated stock assessment will be conducted. To determine the biomass level, this trigger will use standardised CPUE data as a proxy for biomass. It was agreed that the average CPUE from 2012 until 2017 (inclusive) would be used as an indicative reference point of the CPUE at B80 from which the CPUE at B60 can be calculated and used as the trigger reference point.
- b) If the combined yearly total catch of the four coral trout species from both commercial sectors is greater than 90 t, an integrated stock assessment will be conducted. Ninety tonnes was agreed because this is the estimated potential yield of Zone 3 at B60 from the preliminary stock assessment, and where most of the common coral trout is caught. This level was chosen on the advice of the Science members to avoid the risk of localised depletion within any of the Zones.

Action items

The project team is to determine whether it is appropriate to use standardised CPUE or raw CPUE in the assessments and for the triggers.

Status of draft harvest strategies – Spanish mackerel

13. The most recent stakeholder advice from 27-28 June 2019 meeting on development of the Spanish mackerel harvest strategy is as follows:

The Group reviewed what was agreed for the Spanish mackerel harvest strategy at the previous meeting (Attachment A) and provided the following recommendations for the draft Spanish mackerel harvest strategy:

A stock assessment should be conducted each year until the biomass is greater than B40.

It is assumed that the stock will take a few years to build to B40 at the current TAC. The industry participants noted that setting a lower TAC would allow for the stock to build faster. The ongoing regularity of stock assessments will be set once B40 has been reached.

B TARG (interim) was recommended to be B48. This is an interim B TARG that will be reviewed once it has been reached. The Group were unable to settle on a higher BTARG, given the current indicative biomass (B31) and the long term (>12 years) at current TAC levels, or significant catch reduction required for the stock to rebuild above B48. Industry expressed a strong preference for management to focus on building the biomass in the coming years, before tackling any other scenarios.

The TAC will be set to reach the target reference point (B TARG) by a determined year.

From the 2020-21 season, the TAC will be set to allow the stock to build to B48. The FRAG will consider which year should be the aim for reaching B TARG prior to setting the 2020-2021 TAC. The scientists and industry noted that in determining the target year, the social/economic impacts of a low TAC would need to be weighed against building the stock quickly.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE Review of Western Line Closure	Agenda Item 5.1 FOR ADVICE

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Finfish Fishery Working Group:

1. **NOTE** outcomes of public consultation on the potential removal of the Western Line Closure (**Attachment 5.1 (a) (b) (c) and (d)**);
2. **NOTE** relevant advice from the Finfish Fishery RAG (FFRAG) on key issues raised through public consultation. FFRAG advice will be tabled at the meeting;
3. **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on key issues raised through public consultation including:
 - a. Potential impacts from increased trout fishing effort on the Tropical Rock Lobster stock (coral trout - TRL interactions and habitat effects);
 - b. Impacts on where fishing occurs in the fishery e.g. more fishers originally targeting coral trout in Western communities may impact the stock and subsistence catch rates and lead to fishers moving over time to target trout in central and eastern areas of Torres Strait;
 - c. More TIB fishers entering the fleet may impact on the available Total Allowable Catch or cause localised depletion in areas leading to a drop in catch rates and availability of trout to support subsistence catches
4. Having regard for advice from FRAG and outcomes of public consultation **DISCUSS** and **PROVIDE ADVICE** on the removing Western Line closure.

KEY ISSUES

5. The Working Group is being asked to consider the outcomes of public consultation and advice from the FFRAG and provide advice on the possible removal of the Western Line Closure.
6. AFMA notes that the consultation process did not find widespread support for the removal of the closure, some communities did not express a view as it related to waters outside their own whilst others raised range of concerns as summarised in paragraph 3 above.
7. Public consultation outcomes are detailed in Attachment 5.1(b) (c) and (d).
8. The Finfish Fishery Resource Assessment Group (FFRAG) has previously advised that the removal of the Western Line Closure is unlikely to cause additional stock impacts (FFRAG 4) and its removal was supported in-principle by the Finfish Working Group (FFWG March 2017)
9. FFRAG will be asked at their FFRAG 6 meeting (27-28 November 2019) to provide technical advice to the PZJA on the issues raised by communities, including possible impacts from changes to fishing effort, impacts on the Tropical Rock Lobster stock and impacts on the available coral trout Total Allowable Catch. FFRAG advice will be table at the meeting.

Next steps

10. The PZJA will consider these public views, together with advice from the RAG and Working Group at early next year and make a decision on whether to remove the closure.

BACKGROUND

11. At its meeting in April 2019 the PZJA agreed to undertake public consultation on the removal of a closure to commercial fishing for finfish (not Spanish mackerel) west of Longitude 142°32'E (the Western Line Closure – Figure 1 below) (Attachment 4.1a).
12. Noting the removal of the western line closure requires the remaking of *Torres Strait Fisheries Management Instrument No. 8 - Torres Strait Finfish Fishery* the PZJA also advise that current fishing gear restrictions on Australian Traditional Inhabitants engaged in traditional fishing for finfish in the area of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery will need to be removed at the same to reflect that the PZJA does not have jurisdiction to regulate traditional fishing.
13. The Western Line Closure reflects an historic jurisdictional boundary that was carried over when the Finfish Fishery was transferred to single jurisdiction under the PZJA. The closure is not based on a specific management need for the Fishery.

Consultation

14. The public consultation process on the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure, comprised the following:
 - a. A public consultation package was mailed (and emailed for those clients AFMA holds an email address for) to all Torres Strait licence holders, Native Title bodies and claimants, the Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority, the Australian and Papua New Guinea Co-chairs of the Traditional Inhabitants Meeting (TIM) under the Torres Strait Treaty, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environment and Energy formally seeking comment on the draft HS. The consultation package not only sought submissions on the draft Harvest Strategy for the BDM Fishery, but also the draft Harvest Strategy for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) Fishery and the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure from the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery (**Attachment 5.1a**).
 - b. The package also included an overview of harvest strategies more broadly, as well as a specific overview of the BDM and TRL Harvest Strategies, and a summary of the key elements being objectives, data and information; limits and reference points and decision rules.
 - c. FFWG and FFRAG members were notified of the release of a public consultation package (email dated 9 April 2019) and traditional inhabitant members were invited to join AFMA in convening the community meetings.
 - d. AFMA convened a round of visits to communities across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area between April-May 2019. TIB licence holders were advised about community meetings through community notices and SMS. Community visits were not undertaken at Iama, St Paul's, Kubin or Dauan due to a lack of community availability during the consultation period. The offer was also made to convene a public meeting in Cairns, though this offer was not taken up by stakeholders.
 - e. The public consultation package was publicly available on the PZJA website and distributed it to attendees at community visits.
 - f. Submissions were able to be made by in writing, over the phone and at community meetings. The period for submissions closed on 31 May 2019.

Written submissions

15. A written submission was received from Cape York Land Council (**Attachment 5.1b**). In their submission, the Cape York Land Council did not support removal of the closure and raised concerns about the potential impacts this may have on the Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) stock and fishery. CYLC considered that more research and consultation should occur to establish the relationship between line fishing and TRL.

Community visits

16. Between 8 April and 22 May 2019, AFMA undertook visits to 13 communities. Community visits were not undertaken at Iama (Yam), St Paul's (Moa), Kubin (Moa) or Dauan due to a lack of availability in the period visits were conducted. However, licence holders in these communities were sent the public consultation package by mail. The offer was also made to convene a public meeting in Cairns, though this offer was not taken up by stakeholders.
17. During the community visits, communities expressed varied views on the proposed removal of the closure. Few communities were generally in favour of removing the closure. Some communities abstained from directly supporting the closure as it did not affect their area of waters but raised concerns on the impacts that lifting the closure may have on changing where fishing effort occurs in the fishery e.g. more TIB fishers targeting coral trout in Western communities may impact the stock and subsistence catch rates or fishers may move towards central or eastern communities to target trout in future. Concerns were also raised that more TIB fishers entering the fleet may impact on the available Total Allowable Catch or cause localised depletion leading to a drop in catch rates and availability to support subsistence catches.
18. Concerns were also raised that increased fishing for trout may have adverse impacts on the Tropical Rock Lobster stock and catch rates given likely interactions between these two species and shared habitats, although one community did provide advice that increased fishing for trout may relieve TRL from natural predation pressure from trout.
19. A summary of community views and concerns captured during the community visits is provided at **Attachment 5.1c**. A comprehensive report on all community visits is provided at **Attachment 5.1d** including other agenda items other than the Western Line Closure. This report was circulated to those attendees of the meetings that AFMA had contact details for, as well as Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) Divisional Managers and PBC Chairs for comment. No comments were received.

Native title representatives

20. On behalf of their clients, the Torres Strait Regional Authority's Native Title Office (NTO) requested a meeting with AFMA to discuss the matters contained in the public consultation package. AFMA made the offer to meet with the NTO and their clients at a time that suited their availability. However, a meeting did not proceed due to their client's lack of availability. AFMA continues to pursue opportunities to meet to discuss matters of concern to the NTO and their clients and has notified the NTO of this.

Previous FRAG and FWG advice

21. The removal of the western closure of the reef-line sector has been a long standing item which has been supported in-principle by the Finfish Working Group.
22. At the FFWG meeting (20 March 2012), TSRA indicated that there was community interest in removing the western closure.
23. At its July 2016 meeting the FFWG noted members had varying views on whether or not sufficient consultation on removing the closure had occurred. A key development since initial consultation on this issue has been the Native Title Determination on the Regional Sea Claim, and it was noted that notification to the relevant Registered Native Title Bodies Corporate groups would be undertaken prior to the PZJA making a decision.
24. At its March 2017 meeting the FFWG noted progress since the last FFWG meeting to remove the western line closure (as detailed in the agenda paper, work is ongoing to

compile outcomes of previous consultation processes). An industry member advised that if the area of the western closure was to be reopened consideration should first be given to:

- g. how much fishing the area could support noting that the fishing grounds are different from those in the east and concern that the area may not be able to support the number of licences in the fishery; and
 - h. the potential for alternative livelihoods or business opportunities for traditional owners such as ecotourism.
25. Other industry members were generally supportive of this proposal and advised that further community consultation should occur before the western area of the fishery was reopened, to gauge community aspirations on future usage.
26. Noting there are no existing agreements in place to guide resource sharing between sectors (fishing, tourism etc.) the FFWG agreed for following action:
- i. AFMA, TSRA and Malu Lamar to meet out-of-session to consider an appropriate process to canvass community aspirations and considerations for removing the western line closure.
27. AFMA convened a meeting with Malu Lamar and TSRA on 5 April 2017. The following was agreed:
- Removal of the western line closure is to be contingent on further community consultation with the western communities and consideration of any sustainability risks. The aim of the consultation will be to determine how communities may/or may not like the resources to be managed to benefit both commercial and tourism industries;
 - TSRA will lead this consultation process (undertaking meetings / report findings etc). TSRA will undertake consultation opportunistically combining with other meetings (e.g. AFMA fish receiver meetings, top western projects);
 - AFMA will seek scientific advice (through the future Finfish RAG) on the possible impacts of removing the closure on stocks, noting advice that the fishing grounds/habitat may be different in the west compared to the eastern area. There is concern that the reefs are shallower and possibly more susceptible to localised depletion.
28. AFMA sought preliminary technical advice from the Finfish RAG (FFRAG 1 9-10 Nov 2017) on what inter-session work will likely be required to assess the likely stock impacts from removing the western line closure. The FRAG had limited amount of time available and FRAG requested a further opportunity to consider the matter. The FRAG did however provide the following preliminary observations:
- Management is not proposing to increase the TACs for coral trout. In line with this it was suggested that removing the closure might spread the current commercial fishing effort to a broader area.
 - RAG noted previous considerations about coral trout catch rates and considered that economic impacts would likely come into effect (hook-shy fish leading to a drop in local catch rates) before ecological impacts might occur.
 - Some consideration was given to how the western habitats may be shallower than eastern habitats but data would be required to assess this.

- More fishing operations and freezers may open in the western Torres Strait in line with the outcomes of the current TSRA infrastructure project meaning there may be a total increase in fishing effort with more fishers entering the sector.

29. At their FFRAAG 4 meeting (13-14 March 2019) the RAG provided the following advice to support PZJA consideration on releasing a proposal to remove the closure for public comments:

The RAG noted advice from industry members that water turbidity means that fishers in Gudumalagal (top western) communities have fewer months of the year to target finfish compared to eastern, central and south-western Torres Strait communities. The RAG considered that western Torres Strait may be comprised of shallower reef habitats which may have lower carrying capacity than other areas of Torres Strait. Further Traditional Inhabitant boat sector licensed fishers will likely enter the fishery from Western Communities should the closure be removed. The RAG noted that catch data will be collected from operations in these waters through the mandatory Fish Receiver System which will allow monitoring of these extra harvests with analysis through future stock assessments.

The RAG provided the following advice on likely stock impacts from removing the Western Line Closure:

- a) Stocks impacts would likely be negligible, noting removal of the spatial closure would simply increase the total fishable area of the Fishery while all other management arrangements including recommended TACs for coral trout are to remain unchanged; and
- b) The boundary of the Western Line Closure is not likely to correspond to any natural stock boundary. Therefore there is no requirement for separate stock management arrangements within the Protected Zone for finfish species.

ATTACHMENTS

5.1a Letter to stakeholders on harvest strategies and western line closure proposal.

5.1b Written submission received from Cape York Land Council.

5.1c Summary of community views and concerns raised during community visits to discuss the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure.

5.1d Report on all community visits.



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

8 April 2019

Dear Torres Strait licence holder

I am pleased to advise that the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) agreed at its meeting on 1 April 2019 to release draft harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Protected Zone Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) and Beche-de-mer (BDM) Fisheries for public comment. The PZJA also agreed to seek stakeholder views on removing the 'western line closure' in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.

The PZJA agreed to commence a review of how Developmental Permits are used for training purposes in all Torres Strait Fisheries. The TSRA will lead the review and it is expected this will be concluded by around September 2019. The PZJA agreed it will not consider any further applications for training under Developmental Permits until new arrangements are established, following the review. It is expected the review will lead to the creation of detailed criteria, against which any future applications for Developmental Permits will be assessed. The PZJA continues to acknowledge and support the aspirations of Traditional Inhabitants for 100 per cent ownership of access to commercial fisheries, and wants to be confident that the Developmental Permit arrangements are contributing to this goal. More details on the PZJA decision is enclosed.

Copies of the draft harvest strategies together with frequently asked questions (FAQs) about harvest strategies in general and brief overviews of each are enclosed. Also enclosed is information concerning the removal of the western line closure in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery. Further copies of these documents may also be obtained from the PZJA website at www.pzja.gov.au or by contacting the AFMA Torres Strait Office on 07 4069 1990 or by email to FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au.

The PZJA looks forward to hearing from stakeholders on these proposed management initiatives. There are a number of ways you can provide your views to the PZJA. These are described below.

Canberra
 PO Box 7051
 Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
 P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
 PO Box 131
 Darwin NT 0801
 P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
 PO Box 376
 Thursday Island QLD 4875
 P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

Public meetings

Subject to approval from Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) Chairpersons, AFMA is planning to attend each Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula community to explain the draft harvest strategies and the proposal to remove the western line closure. A further meeting will be held in Cairns, subject to stakeholder interest, at a date and venue to be determined. All meetings will be concluded by 31 May 2019.

AFMA has written to all PBC Chairpersons to arrange these community meetings. Final meeting dates and locations will be advertised on the PZJA website and within each community as soon as details are finalised. If you are interested in meeting with AFMA in Cairns please register your interest with Georgia Langdon by phone on 07 4069 1990 or email at georgia.langdon@afma.gov.au.

Make a written submission

All written submissions need to be submitted to AFMA by close of business on 31 May 2019. Submissions can be sent to:

AFMA
Torres Strait Office
PO Box 376
Thursday Island, QLD, 4875
Australia

Or by fax to 07 4069 1277

Or by email to FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au

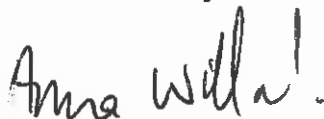
Please note that **all written submissions will be made public** unless confidentiality is requested.

Phone AFMA

If you wish to provide your views on the phone, please call the AFMA Torres Strait Office on 07 4069 1990.

Should you wish to discuss any of the matters contained in this letter, please contact the AFMA Torres Strait Office on 07 4069 1990 or by email to FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Anna Willock
Executive Manager, Fisheries

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

Enclosed documents

1. PZJA media release.
2. Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about harvest strategies
3. An overview, and copy of, the draft harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery
4. An overview, and copy of, the draft harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery
5. Information concerning the removal of the western line closure in the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery

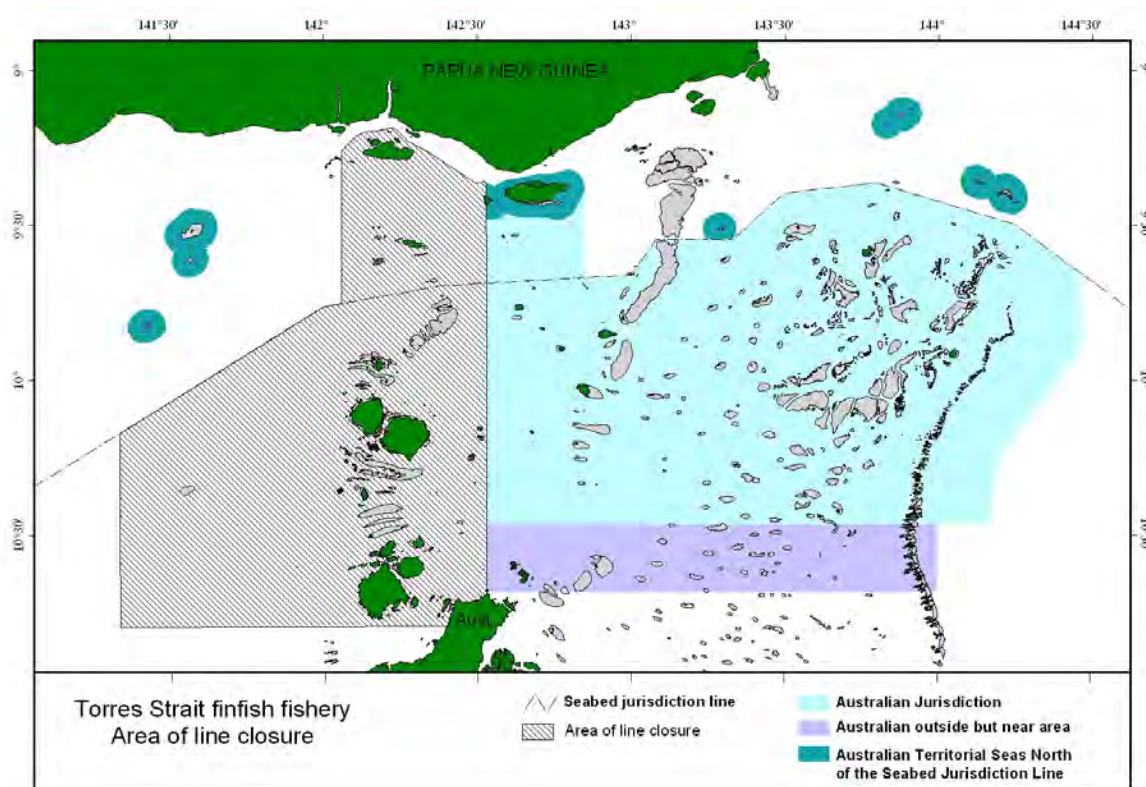
Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

WESTERN LINE CLOSURE FOR FINFISH

An Overview



Commercial fishing for reef-line finfish species (e.g. coral trout, trevallies and emperors) is banned in the area of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery west of 142° 32'E. This is referred to as the western line closure (see map above). The closure does not apply to mackerel commercial fishing or traditional fishing.

The closure affects all Traditional Inhabitant Boat licenced fishers who fish commercially for finfish species under a reef-line (LN) endorsement. Western communities including Boigu, the western half of Dauan, Mabuiag, Badu, Moa, Keriri, Ngurupai, Muralag and Waiben lie within the closure.

The closure does not serve a purpose in managing the fishery and reflects an historic boundary that was carried over when the Fishery was transferred to a single jurisdiction under the PZJA.

What will happen if the closure is removed?

If the closure is removed the area of the Fishery available for commercial reef-line fishers will increase.

AFMA will continue to monitor catches and participation in the fishery through the Fish Receiver System and will work with the PZJA Finfish Resource Assessment Group and Working Group to monitor how the fishery is performing.

Finfish Resource Assessment Group and Working Group advice

AFMA has gathered advice on potentially removing the western line closure from PZJA Finfish Resource Assessment Group and the PZJA Finfish Working Group. Both advisory groups support the removal of the closure.

Draft regulation to remove the closure

If communities support removing the closure the PZJA would need to make a new Fisheries Management Instrument.

In making a new instrument for the fishery, the current mesh net restriction on Australian Traditional Inhabitants engaged in traditional fishing for finfish will be removed to reflect that the PZJA's jurisdiction does not extend to traditional fishing.

If you have any questions contact AFMA on (07) 4069 1990 or via email FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au



7 June 2019

AFMA
Torres Strait Office
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875

Email: FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au

Dear AFMA

Re: TSPZ Fisheries Management

Cape York Land Council (CYLC) functions as the Native Title Representative Body (NTRB) for the Cape York region. In that NTRB role we fulfil statutory functions under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). In our broader Land Council role we support, protect and promote Cape York Aboriginal peoples' interests in land and sea to positively affect their social, economic, cultural and environmental circumstances and aspirations. In this capacity CYLC welcomes the opportunity to comment on AFMA's draft harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) and proposed removal of the "western line closure" in the TSPZ Finfish Fishery.

CYLC has an interest in management of Torres Strait fisheries for a number of reasons including that:

- we support the aspirations of Torres Strait Islanders for greater control over their traditional resources and their participation in mainstream commercial activity;
- the Cape York region adjoins Torres Strait and management of Torres Strait fisheries may set precedents for management of Cape York fisheries;
- Cape York Aboriginal people hold similar aspirations for greater control over their traditional resources and participation in mainstream commercial activity to support their social and economic development;
- many Cape York communities have many families with strong traditional and historical ties to Torres Strait communities and families;
- southern sections of TSPZ fisheries extend into waters that are the traditional country of Cape York Aboriginal people, and this southern TSPZ area is within the area of a CYLC native title sea claim, so Cape York Aboriginal people have plausible, and soon to be determined, rights to fisheries resources in this area;
- prospective Aboriginal holders of native title sea rights and interests will include some people who are currently eligible for access to TSPZ commercial fishing rights, but far from all of these prospective native title holders will have access to the TSPZ fishing rights in their traditional waters. Conversely, the current TSPZ Indigenous commercial fisher arrangements create rights for Indigenous people who will not be identified as native title holders through Cape York sea claims;
- AFMA must review the current TSPZ fisheries arrangements to ensure Cape York Aboriginal native title holders have a recognised interest in and access to the fisheries for those sea

areas where they hold or will hold native title, and that agreements are in place between Cape York Aboriginal native title holders and other parties who access fisheries in the seas where Cape York Aboriginal people hold native title rights.

TRL Fishery

CYLC is concerned that the objectives of the draft TRL harvest strategy, and the decision rules designed to achieve these objectives, may result in unsustainable levels of harvest that will cause a long term decline in TRL populations.

Because the TSPZ TRL fishery extends into the traditional waters of Cape York Aboriginal people, and they have aspirations to commercially harvest TRL, Cape York Aboriginal people have a strong interest in the sustainability of the TRL populations and submit that:

- the objectives of the draft TRL Harvest Strategy should be amended to seek to return the stock to 90 per cent of the original unfished size of the TRL spawning stock in 1973, and to maintain TRL stock above a lower limit of at least 50 per cent of the original unfished size; and
- Decision Rule 1 should set a maximum catch limit of 250 tonnes per season so that the above TRL population objectives may be achieved.

CYLC also supports the aspirations of traditional inhabitants to own 100 percent of the Torres Strait TRL Total Allowable Catch, as outlined in the 2014 Roadmap Agreement signed by TSRA, and that this target is achieved as soon as possible. AFMA should consider how the harvest strategy could be utilised to accelerate the transition to 100 per cent ownership of the TAC by traditional inhabitants.

CYLC also advocates that a native title corporation should hold, manage and allocate the Total Allowable Catch for TRL and other species for the Traditional Inhabitants Boat sector. The right of traditional inhabitants to take TRL for commercial purposes is partly based on their native title rights, so the Malu Lamar (Torres Strait Islander) Corporation, as the Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC), should be the management entity because it holds and manages Torres Strait Islander native title rights and interests.

CYLC is interested in management arrangements for the Torres Strait TRL fishery because similar arrangements should also apply to Queensland's east coast TRL fishery which operates almost exclusively on Cape York's east coast north of Cape Melville. However, unlike the Torres Strait TRL fishery, AFMA and other fisheries regulators responsible for Cape York waters have not established a TRL fishery management plan that allocates a Total Allowable Catch quota to the Cape York Traditional Inhabitants Boat sector. Consistent with the transition to 100 per cent ownership of the TSPZ TRL Total Allowable Catch quota by traditional inhabitants, the Cape York TRL Total Allowable Catch quota should be 100 per cent owned by Cape York traditional owners.

If such an arrangement existed for Cape York it would provide desperately needed opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate in this commercial fishery in their traditional waters. In the absence of such an arrangement the allocation of Cape York's allowable catch is effectively limited to large non-Indigenous fishing companies and Cape York Aboriginal people are effectively excluded.

Given that CYLC has registered native title claims over northern Cape York seas, and further sea claims will be lodged in the near future, AFMA must recognise that it must start working with other fisheries regulators to develop a Cape York TRL fishery management plan that reserves 100% of the Total Allowable Catch quota for Cape York Aboriginal people. CYLC requests that AFMA and other fisheries regulators meet with CYLC as soon as possible to discuss how to progress this important matter.

Western line closure for finfish

CYLC is very concerned about the proposed removal of the western line closure so that commercial line fishing may be undertaken for finfish species in western Torres Strait waters. We note comments in AFMA's Discussion Paper that the existing closure is based on a historic management boundary, and not a specific management need for the fishery. However, CYLC is concerned about widespread and consistent anecdotal evidence that TRL populations, and therefore the TRL commercial fishery, are negatively affected by the introduction of commercial line fishing.

Because of the possible risk to the TRL commercial fishery, the importance of this fishery to Traditional Inhabitant fishers, and because the TSPZ western fin fishery extends into the traditional waters of Cape York Aboriginal people, CYLC considers that more research and further consultation must be done before the closure can be removed to clearly ascertain and settle the current questions from fishers about the relationship between commercial line finfishing and TRL populations. CYLC submits that the precautionary principle must be applied in this situation and that the western line closure for finfish remain in place.

CYLC supports that access to the commercial line fishery, within the existing open area, is limited to Traditional Inhabitants because this arrangement makes an important contribution to Indigenous employment and economic development opportunities. However, as proposed by CYLC for the TRL fishery and other fisheries, the Total Allowable Catch for the finfish line fishery should be held, managed and allocated by the Malu Lamar (Torres Strait Islander) Corporation. If this was the arrangement then CYLC would also support the participation of non-Traditional Inhabitant fishers in the fishery through leasing of a temporary licence from Malu Lamar because the benefits from this arrangement would be redistributed to Malu Lamar's native title holder members. This will not be the case if the TSRA continues to manage licences for the Total Allowable Catch for the Traditional Inhabitant Boat sector.

Issues with TSPZ fisheries management plans

As outlined above, CYLC supports that AFMA's TSPZ management plans provide greater commercial opportunities for Torres Strait Islander fishers in Torres Strait Islanders' traditional waters through the allocation of 100 per cent of total allowable catches to traditional inhabitants and the management of fishing allocations by the Malu Lamar RNTBC.

However, CYLC is concerned that management plans for TRL, finfish and other species provide rights for non-traditional owners in the traditional waters of Cape York Aboriginal people without their consent. This issue will become more critical as Cape York native title sea claims are determined and confirm the rights of Cape York Aboriginal people in these waters. AFMA must commence a process immediately to establish agreements between the traditional owners of these claimed waters and the parties who are accessing the fisheries in these waters.

Attachment 1 shows where native title has been determined to exist in Torres Strait, and Attachment 2 shows where native title has been claimed in Cape York seas. AFMA fisheries management plans must be more cognizant of these legally recognised rights and interests of native title holders and plans amended accordingly and agreements negotiated where necessary.

This issue would be partially resolved if AFMA and other fisheries regulator relevant to Cape York seas prepared fisheries management plans for a range of Cape York commercial species, whereby the Cape York fisheries management plans provided that:

- 100 per cent of the Total Allowable Catch is allocated to the Traditional Inhabitants Boat sector for each Cape York fishery;
- the Total Allowable Catch for the Traditional Inhabitants Boat sector is held, managed and allocated by the relevant RNTBC. For example, for waters within the amalgamated Cape York Aboriginal people's native title sea claim the relevant RNTBCs will be the Ipima Ikaya

Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC and the Kaurareg Native Title Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC. Further south, the Kuuku Ya'u Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC should hold and manage Total Allowable Catches for the waters where it holds native title. As other Cape York native title sea claims are lodged and determined the ensuing RNTBC should hold and manage fishing allocations for their relevant waters;

- for Cape York waters where a native title claim has not been lodged or determined, the CYLC has interim responsibility to hold, manage and allocate licences to the Traditional Inhabitants Boat sector, and to hold benefits from the allocation of licences pending transfer to the RNTBC upon establishment;
- eligibility for a Traditional Inhabitants Boat licence is restricted to the Aboriginal Traditional Owners of those waters;
- if the Total Allowable Catch has not been fully allocated to Traditional Owners, and no further expressions of interest are received from Traditional Owners, then non-Traditional Inhabitant fishers may lease a temporary licence from the RNTBC with the consent of the Traditional Owners;
- Traditional Owners are identified by the RNTBC for determined waters, and the TOs are identified by CYLC anthropology processes for claimed and unclaimed waters; and
- the RNTBC distributes benefits from the allocation of fisheries licences to the native title holder members of the RNTBC.

By implementing these proposed arrangements AFMA would make a significant contribution to the participation of Cape York Aboriginal people in mainstream economic activity, and help close the gap on Aboriginal socio-economic disadvantage.

CYLC requests that AFMA makes arrangements to meet with CYLC to discuss the matters raised in this submission with a view to progressing these proposals.

In the meantime, if you wish to discuss any matter raised in this submission please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



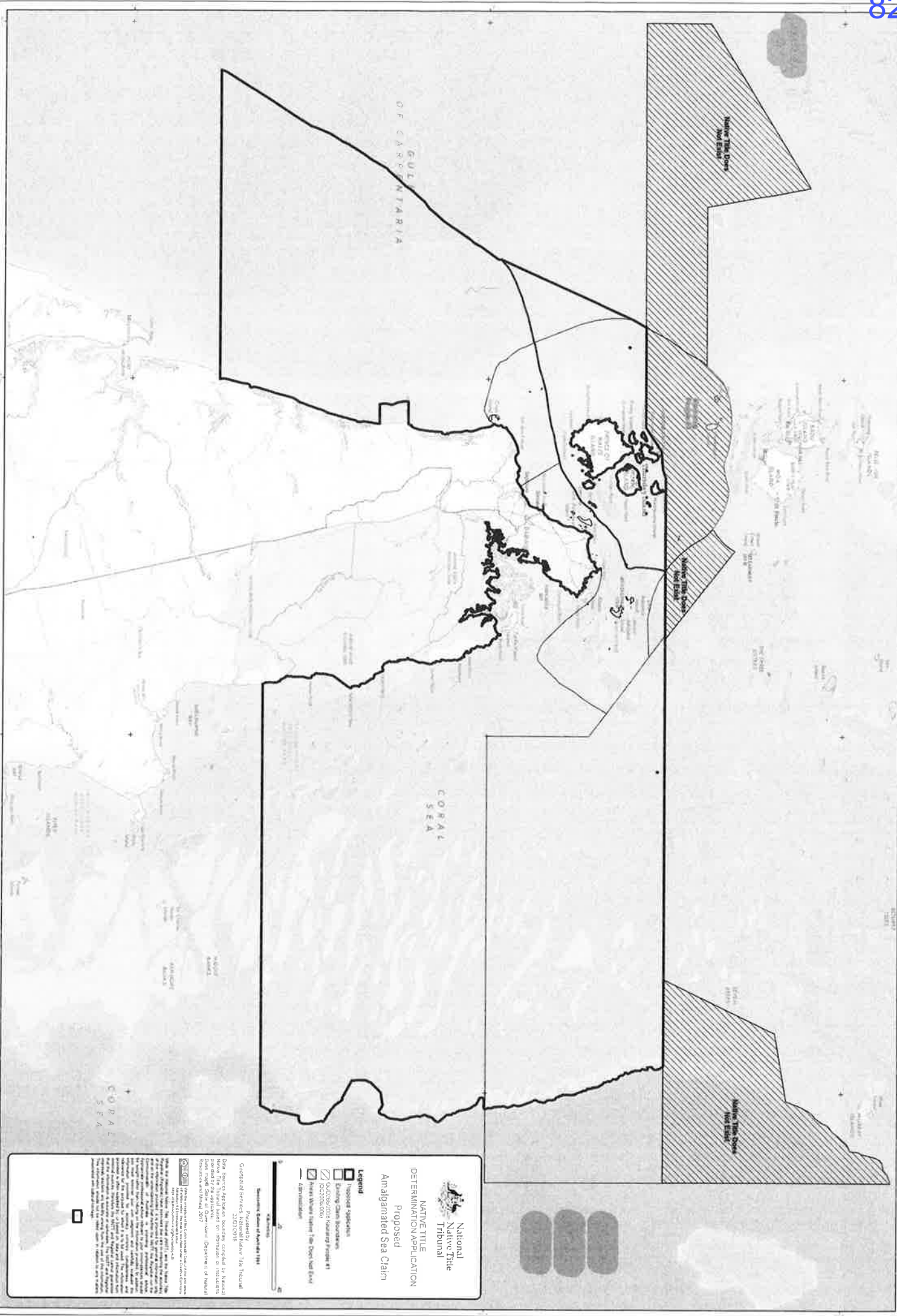
Richie Ah Mat
Chair
Cape York Land Council

ATTACHMENT 1

Document No: 7615206



ATTACHMENT 2



Attachment 5.1c

Summary of community views and concerns raised during community visits to discuss the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure.

Community	Date of visit	Summary of views on Western Line closure review
Masig (Yorke)	8-Apr	Concerns with how removing the closure will impact on the distribution of sunset leases.
Erub (Darnley)	8-9 April	Not formally supported as the proposal does not directly apply to the Erub community however general support expressed for the western communities to remove the closure if they wish. General concern with how removing the closure may change where fishing effort is concentrated.
Boigu	17-Apr	Very supportive of the proposal to remove the closure and to open up access to the fishery for the Boigu community.
Poruma (Coconut)	11-12 April	Limited interest in proposal as very little commercial finfish fishing occurs in Poruma. Concerns with how removal of the closure may impact the finfish TAC.
Badu	15-16 April	Concern that removing the closure will impact the sustainability of TRL stocks. Proposal to remove the closure not supported by Malu Lamar nor a number of Badu fishers.
Ugar (Stephen)	12-Apr	Community members withheld from making comment on proposal as not directly relevant to Ugar waters. Some concern that removing closure will result in more western community's access key eastern fishing grounds. Supportive of spatial controls.
Saibai	1-May	Generally supported.
Warraber (Sue)	11-Apr	No concerns raised.
Mer (Murray)	18-Apr	Community members withheld from making comment on proposal as not directly relevant to Meriam waters. General comments that more coral trout fishing is desired to alleviate natural trout predation on TRL. Anecdotes that the more coral trout is fished, the more habitat is available for TRL.
New Mapoon (NPA)	9-May	No formally expressed support or concerns raised.
Injinoo (NPA)	10-May	No formal support or concerns raised.
Thursday Island (Torres Shire)	20-May	A number of concerns raised regarding the proposal to remove the closure: - Negative impact on TRL - Negative impact on availability of coral trout and ability to fish for subsistence (kai kai).
Mabuiag	21-22 May	Generally supported.

Torres Strait Fisheries Community Visits Report

April - May 2019

Contents

Glossary	4
Executive Summary	5
Summary of views	7
Masig (Yorke) Community	9
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	9
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	10
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	10
<i>Licensing</i>	10
<i>Other Business</i>	11
Erub (Darnley) Community	12
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	12
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	12
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	13
<i>Licensing</i>	13
<i>Other Business</i>	13
Boigu Community	14
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	14
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	14
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	14
<i>Other Business</i>	15
Poruma (Coconut) Community	16
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	16
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	17
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	17
<i>Licensing</i>	17
<i>Other Business</i>	17
Badu Community	19
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	19
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	19
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	19
<i>Other Business</i>	20
Ugar (Stephen) Community	22
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	22
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	22
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	22
<i>Other Business</i>	22
Saibai Community	24
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	24

<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	24
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	25
<i>Other Business</i>	25
Warraber (Sue) Community	26
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	26
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	26
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	26
<i>Other Business</i>	26
Mer (Murray) Community	28
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	28
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	28
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	29
<i>Other Business</i>	29
New Mapoon Community (NPA)	31
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	31
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	31
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	31
<i>Other Business</i>	31
Injinoo Community (NPA)	33
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	33
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	33
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	33
Thursday Island (Torres Shire) Community	34
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	34
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	34
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	34
<i>Other Business</i>	34
Mabuiag Community	36
<i>Fish Receiver System</i>	36
<i>Harvest Strategies</i>	36
<i>Western Line Closure</i>	37
<i>Licensing</i>	37
Summary of Action Items	38
Attendance Lists	40

Glossary

Acronym	Definition
AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
BDM	Beche-de-mer
CDR	Catch Disposal Record
CPUE	Catch Per Unit Effort
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
FRAG	Finfish Resource Assessment Group
FRS	Fish Receiver System
FWG	Finfish Working Group
HCWG	Hand Collectables Working Group
NPA	Northern Peninsula Area
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
PZJA	Protected Zone Joint Authority
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TDB02	The catch disposal record book
TIB	Traditional Inhabitant Boat
TRL	Tropical Rock Lobster
TRL RAG	Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group
TRL WG	Tropical Rock Lobster Working Group
TSIRC	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
TSPZ	Torres Strait Protected Zone
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
TSSAC	Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee
TVH	Transferable Vessel Holder
WLC	Western Line Closure

Executive Summary

Between 8 April and 22 May 2019, AFMA undertook a round of visits to communities across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area to meet with interested stakeholders and community members and discuss a range of issues relating to Torres Strait fisheries. The purpose of the visits was to:

- provide a follow up education and awareness program in support of the newly implemented Fish Receiver System (FRS). Prior to implementation on 1 December 2017, AFMA had been working with fishers and industry members to rollout the new mandatory reporting system and acknowledged that a secondary round of community meetings was required to follow up with industry and identify any issues or barriers to adoption that users were experiencing;
- report back to industry on how the FRS had been working and what data was being reported;
- consult on three key fisheries management issues, specifically the draft Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) harvest strategy, the draft Beche-de-mer (BDM) harvest strategy and a proposal to remove the Western Line Closure within the Finfish Fishery.

Familiarisation with the FRS varied greatly among communities depending on the level of active fishing occurring at each island/community. The summaries of what data had been reported in each fishery and from which areas was consistently well received and generated good discussions among communities about the level of fishing across the Torres Strait. Many were impressed with the vast improvements in catch and effort reporting coverage. Most attendees gained a good understanding of how important the provision of data is, and how that data is used to inform management decisions across Torres Strait fisheries.

These messages then supported following discussions about harvest strategies. Although the term 'harvest strategy' was unfamiliar for many, the link between data provision and how a harvest strategy requires that data to guide management decisions (i.e. setting a total allowable catch) was evident. Most communities expressed general support for both the draft TRL and BDM harvest strategies with no significant concerns or comments. Badu was the only community that expressed strong concerns about the BDM harvest strategy, highlighting that the current management arrangements in the BDM Fishery do not necessarily support growth of the fishery/industry.

Views on the Western Line Closure proposal varied, particularly between island clusters. Generally, Kemer Kemer Meriam communities abstained from providing comment on the proposal but expressed support for those communities that would be impacted by the proposal (e.g. Gudumalulgal, Maluialgal and Kaiwalagal). Gudumalulgal communities expressed a strong desire to remove the closure to enable fishers from those communities to have similar opportunities (e.g. to commercially fish for reef line species) as those further east. Kulkalgal communities expressed similar views. Contrastingly, communities within Kaiwalagal and Maluialgal expressed different concerns regarding the potential impacts of the proposal on the TRL stock should reef line species be commercially fished, or the ability to then fish for reef line species traditionally or for kai kai.

In addition, each community was advised of the public call for comments concerning the draft TRL and BDM harvest strategies and Western Line Closure proposal and the means to make a submission.

AFMA staff were accompanied by Protected Zone Joint Authority Traditional Inhabitant members to a number community visits. The involvement of consultative forum members was very valuable, not only in generating engagement within communities but in communicating some of the more complex issues.

This report summarises the discussions and views expressed at each community meeting. At the time of writing, community consultations had not taken place at lama, St Paul's, Kubin village or Dauan due to a lack of availability in the period visits were conducted.

Summary of Community Views

Table 1. Summary of views by community on each key consulted.

Community	TRL harvest strategy	BDM harvest strategy	Western Line Closure	Other issues
Masig (Yorke)	No concerns raised	No concerns raised	Concerns with how removing the closure will impact on the distribution of sunset leases.	Advice sought on obtaining a TIB licence in the absence of owning a boat Concerns with the processing for achieving sign-off on Traditional Inhabitant ID forms Request that the PBC Chair should be a signatory to the ID forms instead of the Mayor
Erub (Darnley)	General support	General support	Not formally supported as the proposal does not directly apply to the Erub community however general support expressed for the western communities to remove the closure if they wish. General concern with how removing the closure may change where fishing effort is concentrated.	
Boigu	General support	General support, with some concern that additional restrictions (i.e. minimum size limits) may cause the BDM Fishery to be economically unviable.	Very supportive of the proposal to remove the closure and to open up access to the fishery for the Boigu community.	
Poruma (Coconut)	No concerns raised	No concerns raised	Limited interest in proposal as very little commercial finfish fishing occurs in Poruma. Concerns with how removal of the closure may impact the finfish TAC.	Number of questions regarding the TRL Management Plan
Badu	Not supported by Malu Lamar. Concern that HS should be designed for full time operators only.	Not supported by Malu Lamar.	Concern that removing the closure will impact the sustainability of TRL stocks. Proposal to remove the closure not supported by Malu Lamar nor a number of Badu fishers.	A range of other issues were raised relating to management arrangements in the BDM Fishery, including the prohibition on hookah and the 7m boat length restriction.

Community	TRL harvest strategy	BDM harvest strategy	Western Line Closure	Other issues
	No concerns raised by other attendees.		Outside of the meeting, some fishers expressed support to remove the closure.	
Ugar (Stephen)	No concerns raised.	No concerns raised however strong desire for traditional knowledge to be incorporated.	Community members withheld from making comment on proposal as not directly relevant to Ugar waters. Some concern that removing closure will result in more western community's access key eastern fishing grounds. Supportive of spatial controls.	Concern that the use of hookah in the TRL Fishery is unfairly impacting the free-diving sector. Suggestion for a cap to be implemented within the TIB TRL catch share to limit hookah catches.
Saibai	Not discussed.	Not discussed.	Generally supported.	
Warraber (Sue)	No concerns raised.	No concerns raised.	No concerns raised.	Concern that inner island fishers have a disproportionate influence on fisheries management processes over outer islands.
Mer (Murray)	No concerns raised.	Supported in recognition of how the HS guides re-opening of closed species (e.g. black teatfish)	Community members withheld from making comment on proposal as not directly relevant to Meriam waters. General comments that more coral trout fishing is desired to alleviate natural trout predation on TRL. Anecdotes that the more coral trout is fished, the more habitat is available for TRL.	Strong desire for a licensing review to implement area controls on licencing conditions (e.g. to prohibit non Meriam fishers fishing in Meriam waters). Concerns raised regarding the inability for the TIB sector to fill the finfish TACs and the desire to establish a program that aims to upskill TIB operators.
New Mapoon (NPA)	No concerns raised.	No concerns raised.	No formally expressed support or concerns raised.	Concern with the use of hookah on the tops of reefs.
Injinoo (NPA)	No concerns raised.	No concerns raised.	No formal support or concerns raised.	
Thursday Island (Torres Shire)	Not discussed at the request of attendees.	Not discussed noting that the BDM HS is not a high priority for stakeholders.	A number of concerns raised regarding the proposal to remove the closure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative impact on TRL - Negative impact on availability of coral trout and ability to fish for subsistence (kai kai) 	Concerns with how the TSSAC identifies research priorities in the Torres Strait.
Mabuiag	No concerns raised.	Not discussed at the request of attendees noting that the community does not fish for beche-de-mer.	Generally supported.	

Masig (Yorke) Community

Date	8 April 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon and Natalie Couchman
Traditional Inhabitant Members	Hilda Mosby, Kulkalgal – FRAG Paul Lowatta, Kulkalgal – FWG
Attendance List	Refer to Table 2

Fish Receiver System

1. A number of attendees were not familiar with the FRS and so the delivery of information was simplified and messages about why AFMA collects data, how that data is used, and how fishers and fish receivers contribute to the overall process were reinforced.
2. Attendees were very interested in the data summaries for each fishery and reported that there is more TRL taken in the eastern areas than was represented in the data summary. It was noted that more than 50 per cent of voluntary location data is not reported on CDRs. Contrastingly, attendees agreed that the finfish data summary seemed more accurate. Others made comments in the margins of the meeting indicating that the catch of Prickly Redfish is under-reported.
3. Fishers acknowledged that if they want to be better represented in the data then they need to be providing the voluntary location data.
4. Some attendees suggested an option be developed to electronically submit CDRs as the post is deemed too slow and administratively onerous. AFMA advised that scanned copies or photos of CDRs are able to be submitted if they are clear and legible, and if that is the preference of the fish receiver, noting however that the AFMA does not have established systems in place to do this as the default at this stage. It was also noted that the original white copy is still required to be submitted to AFMA. One attendee recalled an earlier mention that the TSRA perhaps has scope to facilitate electronic reporting services through iPads.

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to follow up with TSRA regarding the status of proposed iPads for electronic reporting.

5. Some attendees suggested one option to improve the accuracy and completeness of data, would be by AFMA employing a person in each community to complete CDRs for all fishers in that community. While this is not within the remit of AFMA's role, attendees were informed that the FRS is flexible in that it could accommodate communities nominating a central fish receiver (e.g. community freezer) to weigh and record all catch landed in a community.
6. Some fishers sought clarity on the three day submission requirement for CDRs. There were some concerns that the three day timeframe is not workable if TRL are held in cages for up to two weeks after being caught and are not sold until sometime later. It was clarified that the submission of the data must be within three days of weighing and recording the data which must be done as soon as fish are brought to land (i.e. landing), and not within three days of catching the product. This was well understood.

Harvest Strategies

7. Many attendees were not familiar with or had a good understanding of current Torres Strait fisheries management arrangements or the development of harvest strategies. Again, the information presented was simplified, starting with simple explanations of TACs and other common terms used by fisheries managers. The effectiveness of harvest strategies was linked back to the importance of providing accurate and complete data to AFMA and reinforcing how that data is used in the overall management process.
8. Attendees did not raise any concerns regarding the harvest strategies. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

9. The proposal to remove the Western Line Closure in the Finfish Fishery was well understood. Some attendees raised concerns about the effect of removing the closure on finfish sunset licence lease money. Currently lease money from sunset licences are held in trust by the TSRA on behalf of the eastern communities. Attendees were concerned with how the lease money might be distributed further with other non-eastern communities if the closure is removed. Masig attendees expressed a strong view that the lease money should be allocated to eastern communities only (i.e. Erub, Ugar, Mer and Masig).
10. Some attendees sought to better understand when and why the Western Line Closure was originally implemented.

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to clarify and report back to Hilda Mosby about when and why the Western Line Closure was originally implemented.

Licensing

11. A number of attendees sought information on how a person can commercially fish if they do not own a boat (e.g. many younger fishers cannot afford their own boat). AFMA advised that under the current system, a boat needs to be nominated to a TIB licence, though there is provision under the legislation for hand collection licences (e.g. commercial fishing without the use of a boat), though the administrative procedures are not currently in place to issue these licences.
12. An alternative option discussed was to fish using another person's boat, and under that person's licence as an authorised agent.
13. A number of attendees expressed frustration regarding the delays they are experiencing in receiving sign-off from Mayor Gela (Regional Council Mayor) on Traditional Inhabitant Identification forms. It was advised that three people in the community have been waiting more than three months for sign-off and have had difficulty contacting the Mayor's office to follow up. AFMA offered to support the process and contact the TSIRC office to query the status of these forms, but also suggested that applications also needed to be followed up by the applicant.
14. A number of community members strongly suggested that the PBC Chair be able to sign-off on Traditional Inhabitant Identification forms, as they have a much better understanding of who is who in their community in comparison to the relevant Council Mayor (who may not know the Traditional Inhabitant background of the person in question).

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to follow up with TSIRC Mayor Gela's office regarding outstanding Traditional Inhabitant Identification forms.

Other Business

15. One community member advised that the TVH BDM licence currently held in trust by TSRA (originally owned by Nyall Ledger) should be 'given back' to the Masig community, who first held the licence under historical community licensing arrangements. The community members expressed frustration that the original owner, not the community, made \$1.5 million when the licence was sold.
16. AFMA advised that while the TSRA currently holds this licence in trust, it is not currently in use and TSRA would need to advise what will happen to this licence when the independent entity is established. Attendees were also advised that TSRA were to be visiting all Torres Strait communities in May 2019 to discuss the regional ownership and management of fisheries assets (i.e. the Entity).

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to raise the issue of TVH licences held in trust and associated monies with TSRA Fisheries Program ahead of their community visits in May 2019.

17. Community members encouraged AFMA staff to do an overnight visit next time to allow more time to consider the issues. An overnight stay would also allow more face to face time to address licensing queries and general fisheries questions.

Erub (Darnley) Community

Date	8 – 9 April 2019
AFMA staff	Andrew Trappett, Gabrielle Miller and Hannah Howard
Traditional Inhabitant Members	Rocky Stephen, Kemer Kemer Meriam – TSSAC, FWG, FRAG Michael Passi, Kemer Kemer Meriam – HCWG
Attendance List	Refer to Table 3

Fish Receiver System

18. Some attendees expressed concern that fish receivers are not submitting data to AFMA on time due to missing signatures from fishers. Several fish receivers' in attendance at the meeting acknowledged that it is difficult to fill in the paperwork with bloody or wet hands, and to get signatures from fishers while processing catches, if fishers want to leave the premises quickly. AFMA reminded attendees of the fisher and fish receiver joint responsibilities in landing and reported catches.
19. Attendees were very pleased with level of reported catches and agreed that the species composition data for BDM species looked accurate.
20. A number of attendees noted a general concern from some fishers about providing voluntary data about the area where fish are caught and suggested that greater awareness needs to be built about what happens with the data that is collected, who sees it and what it is used for. This would encourage more fishers to provide voluntary data. AFMA showed some key examples of how data is used in the most recent Spanish mackerel assessment.
21. Many attendees were familiar with the FRS. Key questions included:
 - a. the difference between commercial and traditional fishing;
 - b. when to land catch, i.e. if TRL is kept offshore in a cage, or if product is freighted or flown to Cairns/Horn Island. It was explained that catch needs to be landed to a licensed fish receiver as soon as it comes onto land;
 - c. who needs to complete a CDR. Some fishers were uncertain if they should complete a CDR, as their product was being flown/freighted to Cairns/Horn Island. It was explained that catch needs to be landed to a licensed fish receiver as soon as it comes onto land. Some fishers raised concerns that some product is not currently being landed correctly by the fish receivers/buyers in Cairns/Horn Island; and
 - d. the difference between a catch disposal record and a daily fishing logbook;

Harvest Strategies

22. Attendees noted both draft harvest strategies with general support for their structure and function. There was some confusion with technical language, e.g. empirical harvest control rules, though all agreed that this was the necessary language required.
23. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

24. The proposed removal of the Western Line Closure was noted as well as removal of traditional fishing rules (mesh netting). The community, led by the PBC Chair did not wish to formally support the removal noting it doesn't directly impact the Erub community however there was general support for those western communities to remove the closure should they wish. The key comment from the Erub community was that increasing the size of the Finfish Fishery may change areas where fishing is conducted, shift effort around and may affect how the available TAC is filled. Agreed with the AFMA advice that, should the closure be lifted, the focus will be on monitoring and data analysis through Finfish RAG.

Licensing

25. Some attendees queried the arrangements for using another person's boat undertake commercial fishing and if this was permitted under the current licensing system. The authorised agent system was explained involving the authorisation of a person to operate under another person's TIB licence. Feedback from attendees agreed that more awareness was required around authorised agents among communities.

ACTION ITEM: AFMA to develop and disseminate more information about authorised agents to communities.

Other Business

26. The Erub Fisheries Management Association freezer is the main receiver for finfish product (coral trout, Spanish mackerel) on Erub, receiving product from fishers from the other eastern islands. The freezer has not been operational in recent months, due to a delay in repairs. However when the freezer is fully operational it employs 3-5 staff. It was noted that fishers are unlikely to resume fishing for finfish while the freezer is non-operational.
27. The meeting noted the outcomes of the most recent Spanish mackerel assessment including the estimated level of biomass (approximately 32 per cent of pre-commercial fishing levels) the downwards trend in recent Catch Per Unit Effort estimates and the corresponding reduction in total allowable catch. Community members were concerned about the apparent decline in catch rates and also were concerned that the data supporting this stock assessment came mainly from non-indigenous fishers (sunset licence holders). Community noted that further data from the TIB sector would help improve the scientific understanding of the health of the Spanish mackerel stock.

Boigu Community

Date	17 April 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon and Gabrielle Miller
Attendance List	Refer to Table 4

Fish Receiver System

28. Attendees showed some knowledge of the FRS. It was understood by the active fishers that they need to land their catch to a fish receiver and that the fish receiver completes a CDR for them. A few attendees were confused as to whether they needed to have their own TBD02 book or not. This was clarified.
29. The fishers in attendance mostly land TRL to Seafari (a carrier boat and fish receiver anchored off Horn Island) as they fish south of Boigu. It was advised that sometimes fishers will transport their catch to Thursday Island to offload at a land based fish receiver. Fishers advised there are very limited times they can fish around Boigu as the waters are muddy and only clear enough to dive during a quarter moon.
30. Additional time was spent discussing what the requirements are for both fishers and fish receivers and explaining when the catch needed to be recorded in a CDR (i.e. when the catch is first brought to land).
31. There was a good response to the summary 'area fished' data presented. Fishers advised that they may not be giving accurate location data due to fear of their fishing spots becoming known. However, they agreed that the TDB02 area maps were broad enough that the exact reef could not be identified, and understood how useful this data is to the management of fisheries.

Harvest Strategies

32. Both the TRL and BDM harvest strategies were well received, with attendees agreeing that they were a good idea. They appeared to have a good understanding of the key differences between the two strategies in terms of what data and information is available and how this impacts on the level of management required in each fishery, including how the TACs are generated.
33. Some questions were asked about whether the full time commercial fishers were happy with the TRL harvest strategy. The group discussed more about how the strategies were developed over time with significant input from various stakeholders, particularly Gudumalugal PZJA traditional inhabitant members, Aaron Tom and Tenny Elisala.
34. PBC Chair, Keith Pabai raised concerns that the restrictions in the BDM Fishery may make it economically unviable for the fishers. Specifically, the proposed increase in minimum size limits and the prohibition on the use of hookah gear to access deeper species such as white teatfish.
35. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

36. Attendees were very supportive of the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure in the Finfish Fishery and were strongly supportive of opening up access to the fishery to enable their communities to have the same opportunities as others in the Torres Strait.

37. The PBC Chair advised that the TSRA is providing Boigu with a freezer through their Fisheries Infrastructure Project, and that local fishers should be able to commercially fish for coral trout (and Spanish mackerel) to utilise the resource and the freezer to its capacity.

Other Business

38. A number of attendees enquired about the new coxswains' requirement through the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and were instructed to directly contact Jade Morris at MyPathways.

Poruma (Coconut) Community

Date	11-12 April 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon and Natalie Couchman
Traditional Inhabitant Member	Patrick Bonner, Kulkaigal – HCWG
Attendance List	Refer to Table 5

Fish Receiver System

39. The majority of attendees were familiar with the FRS. The community hall also had FRS fact sheets in A3 size displayed on the walls.
40. Attendees sought clarification on the time frames for completing CDRs when TRL are being held in cages and then flown to Horn Island or Cairns. This discussion also touched on how authorised agents work within the FRS.
41. Attendees also enquired about what data requirements the TVH fishers are required to comply with. AFMA staff passed around a copy of the TRL04 daily fishing logbook for attendees to look at and explained how TVH fishers are required to fill in much more detailed information about what they are catching, how and when, each day they are out fishing, in addition to completing a CDR when they land their catch.
42. The group was very interested in the area fished data summaries, noting the areas are large enough not to reveal specific fishing locations, but small enough to understand general areas in which fish are being caught.
43. One attendee queried whether the CDR data could be used to support future allocation discussions amongst communities. AFMA advised that although this is not the reason why the data is collected, it is possible that if an allocation process was agreed to by communities, CDR data could be used. However, the group noted that such discussions have not been had yet, and TSRA is currently working to develop an Entity to hold and manage Torres Strait fisheries assets.

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to advise Patrick Bonner about the membership of the TSRA board sub-committee working on the Entity project.

44. Attendees reported that there is more TRL taken in the central area (e.g. Dungeness Reef/Area 14) than what is represented in the data summary, noting more than 50 per cent of location data was not reported.
45. Fishers agreed that the finfish data looked accurate but noted that Poruma fishers do not fish for finfish commercially, largely as there are no buyers, and that the processing is more intensive than for TRL. Others noted that there is good fishing grounds for finfish but no one is fishing it commercially.
46. Attendees also noted that fishing for BDM has recently declined. Patrick Bonner's operation is temporarily closed and most fishers on the island are fishing for TRL. Caroline Enterprises is processing BDM and sending it through to Independent Seafood Producers (ISP) in Cairns. Clarification was provided to attendees about the requirement for a CDR to be completed by a fish receiver at the point fish is first landed, not by the buyer.
47. Attendees gained a good understanding of the benefits of submitting voluntary data to assist in understanding the health of stocks and how fisheries are performing.

Harvest Strategies

48. Learning from earlier community visits, the discussion on harvest strategies started with a very simple overview of 'what is a harvest strategy?' Both harvest strategies were linked back to the importance of providing catch and effort data to AFMA and reinforcing how that data is used in managing each fishery. It was emphasised how harvest strategies were developed in consultation with PZJA forums and industry stakeholders and attendees were encouraged to take home the overview fact sheets and come back following day with any questions.
49. Key questions included what is the difference between a Management Plan and a harvest strategy? It was explained that management plans set out who can access a resource and a harvest strategy sets out how the PZJAs determines how much can sustainably be taken each season. Generally well received.
50. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

51. There was limited interest in the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure in the Finfish Fishery given the lack of commercial finfish fishing by Poruma fishers. Attendees supported the removal, recognising that reef-line species are community resources and all communities should have access.
52. Some attendees queried whether the removal of the closure will impact the finfish TAC. AFMA advised that removing the closure will likely impact where the TAC may be caught and may mean more fishers from the western islands become active in the reef line fishery, however the way the TAC is set each season will not change to reflect a larger area of the fishery. It was noted that preliminary advice from scientists has indicated removing the closure poses no risk to the sustainability of the stock.

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to report back to Poruma fishers about whether there any TIB operated finfish sunset licences.

Licensing

53. A number of attendees queried whether a person can commercially fish if they do not own a boat (e.g. many younger fishers ca not afford their own boat, but can still go fishing e.g. reef walking).
54. AFMA advised that usually a boat needs to be nominated to a TIB licence, though there is provision for hand collection licences. Another option is to fish using another person's boat, and under that person's licence (as an authorised agent).

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to provide clear guidance on whether TIB licences can be issued without a boat.

Other Business

55. Some fishers expressed an interested in selling shark fin to Chinese buyers. The rules for fishing for sharks were explained (i.e. requiring reef-line endorsement, maximum size limits, finning at sea prohibitions and no take species). The group also discussed the rational for these restrictions

including the importance of sharks in the ecosystem, their vulnerability to overfishing and optimal utilisation of whole animals.

56. Patrick Bonner advised that Mura Porumalgal Fishers Corporation recently held their Annual General Meeting. Patrick remains the President however there is a new board of Directors in place. He noted the Corporation was very pleased with the AGM outcomes and believes they have a good team on board now to achieve things.

ACTION ITEM: – AFMA to follow up with Patrick Bonner with details of who sits on the Poruma fisheries association and their contacts.

57. AFMA staff had a detailed conversation with one Poruma fisher regarding how Torres Strait legislation and policy works. They also discussed a desire of the Poruma community to have their cultural protocols respected out on the water and how AFMA/TSRA can support them in this. He advised the Fishers Corporation had a discussion on this issue at the AGM, in particular around non-Poruma fishers (largely TVH operators, but also some TIB) respecting protocols concerning anchoring near communities, seeking permission to fish on home reefs, using hookah on reef tops and anchoring near islands during certain cultural ceremonies. He explained concerns that boats anchoring near islands during coming of age ceremonies are scaring off dugongs/turtles which results in young people not able to successfully hunt as part of that ceremony.
58. AFMA advised that we need a better understanding of what their community protocols are, and then to have a broader discussion with all stakeholders on how we can work together to have them respected, whether at a community level or through regulation. Other options were discussed including developing a code of practice with TVH fishers, and that other fisheries in the Commonwealth operate under codes of practice developed through their industry associations.
59. One attendee questioned whether there will be enough TRL to get to the end of the season, noting catches to date. AFMA advised that more analysis is being done on the data now and that AFMA will flag with fishers if this is looking like a possibility.
60. Attendees questioned whether the sectoral catch shares could be overturned now by the PZJA if there were any appeals during the allocation phase under the TRL Management Plan. AFMA advised that TVH operators can only appeal their small slice of the 33.83 per cent pie but that if their small slice increases slightly, this does not mean that the overall TVH catch share increases rather that all other TVH operators 'slices' would need to be adjusted accordingly. AFMA also advised that depending on how long the appeals process takes, the PZJA may need to make another decision to keep the interim arrangements in place for coming seasons until the formal allocation process is completed. However, the PZJA remains committed to pursuing 100% ownership in the TRL Fishery and not renewing the interim arrangements while appeals are underway would not be consistent with this commitment.

Badu Community

Date	15-16 April 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon and Natalie Couchman
Traditional Inhabitant Members	James Ahmat, Maluialgal – TRL RAG Frank Loban, Maluialgal – HCWG
Attendance List	Refer to Table 6

Fish Receiver System

61. The majority of attendees were familiar with the FRS however there was a low level of engagement during discussions.
62. AFMA staff reinforced key messages concerning the need for voluntary data to better understand the health of stocks and how fisheries are performing. Attendees were very interested in the data summaries. Some people requested TVH and TIB catches be split out and shown. There was no other specific feedback on the FRS.

Western Line Closure

63. One attendee raised concerns that removing the Western Line Closure may impact on the sustainability of kaiar stocks and queried whether any research has been undertaken into the potential impacts of removing the closure. AFMA advised that this matter had been considered by the Finfish Resource Assessment Group and the Finfish Working Group and preliminary advice indicated there was no sustainability concerns at this time.
64. Some attendees went further to explain that coral trout are often found sharing the same habitat with TRL and questioned whether fishing coral trout would have a negative impact on TRL. AFMA advised that the outcomes from the FRAG and FWG consideration of sustainability impacts could be provided to the group out of session. It was advised that Malu Lamar would not support the removal of the western line closure until there is assurance that it won't create sustainability concerns. A number of other fishers at the meeting supported this, noting the importance of TRL to local fishers on Badu.
65. Contrastingly, on the second day of the AFMA visit, other fishers expressed support to remove the closure.

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to provide Malu Lamar with details of FRAG/FWG consideration of sustainability impacts of removing the western line closure.

Harvest Strategies

TRL Harvest Strategy

66. The Malu Lamar Chairperson claimed that the draft TRL harvest strategy should be designed around full-time operators and not those that fish part time so as to allow full time fishers to make the most of the resource.
67. AFMA explained that the harvest strategy was not designed to cater for any one sector over another. Instead the strategy recognises that the resource is shared and is important to the way of life and livelihoods of Traditional Inhabitants in the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea. This

is reflected in the objectives, reference points and decision rules. The Chairperson advised that Malu Lamar do not support the harvest strategy and will write to the PZJA expressing this view.

BDM Harvest Strategy

68. The Malu Lamar Chairperson claimed the harvest strategy will be ineffective as accompanying management arrangements in the BDM Fishery force fishers to only “fish the top of the pyramid”. Further, currently fishers are limited to only a few species with low TACs resulting in a lot of fishing effort being concentrated on home reefs and observations of a decline in key target species such as prickly redfish. The view was expressed that two management rules exacerbate this problem specifically the prohibition on hookah and the 7m boat length restriction. The Malu Lamar Chairperson suggested that these restrictions be lifted in order to take the pressure off home reefs, and this needs to happen at the same time the harvest strategy is implemented otherwise it will be ineffective.
69. The Malu Lamar Chairperson advised that Malu Lamar do not support the BDM harvest strategy and will write to the PZJA expressing this view and their concerns regarding the management arrangements within the BDM Fishery.
70. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Other Business

Membership on PZJA forums

71. The Malu Lamar Chairperson expressed a strong desire for Malu Lamar to seek membership on all PZJA Forums and advised that their lawyers will be writing to the PZJA on this matter.

Consultation with Malu Lamar

72. The Chairperson requested that AFMA consult with Malu Lamar concerning any amendments to legislation. AFMA advised that Malu Lamar are consulted as per requirements under the *Native Title Act 1993*, and that AFMA had written to them directly concerning the latest management proposals (e.g. harvest strategies and Western Line Closure).

Compliance

73. Two attendees expressed concerns that the AFMA Compliance program is ineffective, alleging that TVH operators are fishing illegally to circumvent the sectoral catch shares arrangement. Allegations were made that TVH fishers are fishing in the Torres Strait and landing the product as Queensland product. Other allegations included primary vessels anchoring near the Southern jurisdictional line of the Protected Zone with tenders fishing in Torres Strait waters but landing the product as Queensland product. AFMA advised about how AFMA took over domestic compliance mid-2018 and highlighted how a range of tools (e.g. VMS, catch reporting, aerial surveillance, inspections and other compliance tools) are used to monitor TVH operations.
74. Attendees were advised to report any suspected illegal fishing to AFMA noting how these reports are important to an effective compliance program.

Use of hookah breathing apparatus

75. The Malu Lamar Chairperson expressed a strong desire for industry to fish for white teatfish using hookah. AFMA advised that this issue had been discussed at length at previous HCWG meetings, at which he was present. The HCWG advised there were some sustainability concerns around using hookah to fish for BDM that need to be addressed and this is exacerbated by the lack of data on the health of BDM stocks more broadly. The Chairperson noted a developmental permit was issued in 2011 to allow fishing for BDM species (largely white teatfish) to a non-Traditional Inhabitant operator, and advised that if that was allowed then it should be allowed now.
76. The Malu Lamar Chairperson advised that Malu Lamar will write to the PZJA on this matter and requested that the data from the developmental permit be released to communities. AFMA advised it had been considered in the HCWG.

ACTION ITEM – AFMA to assess whether the data summaries from the 2011 hookah developmental permit can be released to communities.

7m boat length restriction

77. The Malu Lamar Chairperson expressed a concern that the current 7m boat length restriction in the BDM Fishery prevents operators from fishing a greater area in the fishery, forcing them to fish only on home reefs. AFMA explained the origin of this rule as a blunt tool to control effort. Further, AFMA explained the biological vulnerabilities of BDM, which means that in lieu of more complex fisheries management arrangements (e.g. rotational fishing) blunter tools have been used to control effort in the fishery to prevent overfishing.
78. AFMA advised that good fisheries data is needed to support changes to current management settings, which until the FRS was implemented, the fishery was very data poor.
79. The Chairperson advised that Malu Lamar will write to the PZJA on this matter.

General

80. Some fishers expressed the view that PNG persons should not be eligible for a TIB licence. AFMA explained the current eligibility criteria under the *Torres Strait Treaty* and PZJA policy. There was also a query as to whether a PNG person with a TIB licence can have another PNG person working on their boat. AFMA advised this is only possible if that person is deemed a Traditional Inhabitant as defined by the *Treaty* and PZJA policy.
81. In the margins of the meeting, some fishers noted that the views expressed by Malu Lamar were not shared by all in attendance.

Ugar (Stephen) Community

Date	12 April 2019
AFMA staff	Andrew Trappett and Gabrielle Miller
Traditional Inhabitant Members	Rocky Stephen, Kemer Kemer Meriam – TSSAC, FWG, FRAG Michael Passi, Kemer Kemer Meriam - HCWG
Attendance List	Refer to Table 7

Fish Receiver System

82. Most attendees were generally familiar with FRS, however a significant misunderstanding was evident in terms of the function of authorised agents, and the issues with fishers receiving their own catch. The group discussed in detail the issue of requiring two separate parties verifying and signing off on the catches received and how an authorised registered agent can assist fishers who are also receivers in ensuring the Catch Disposal Records are filled out correctly.
83. Attendees were very interested in the volume of reports and reported catches in the TRL, Finfish and BDM Fisheries.
84. Attendees noted how the provision of BDM catch data will help support future openings for Black Teatfish, acknowledging that reported catches within the last the opening for black teatfish were significantly delayed resulting in an over-catch of the TAC.

Harvest Strategies

85. Generally, attendees were pleased with the level of involvement two of their community members (Rocky Stephen and William Stephen) had in developing the draft BDM harvest strategy in recent years.
86. Attendees expressed a strong need for traditional knowledge and on-water observations (seabed health for BDM) to be incorporated in the harvest strategy and in stock assessments. It was acknowledged that this sentiment is captured as an objective the draft BDM harvest strategy.
87. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

88. Community members from Ugar abstained from making comment on the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure, noting it was an issue not directly relevant to their waters.
89. Some expressed concern that removing the closure will result in more western community fishers accessing key eastern fishing grounds for coral trout and mackerel with larger boats in future.
90. Attendees advised that some spatial control on harvests will be required in future. As an example, during a black teatfish opening, it is not satisfactory that fishers are licensed to fish in the whole of Torres Strait noting that home reefs and community reefs traditionally fished need to be respected and reserved for those home communities.

Other Business

91. There appears to be a general lack of understanding of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery with concern that the prawn trawl fleet is destroying seabed habitat, have unlimited catches, unlimited

fishing effort, no monitoring, and are catching bycatch of other finfish species which is impacting on Torres Strait finfish commercial catches. Attendees suggested that AFMA could provide general facts and information about the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery to help communities understand more about how the fishery operates and is managed.

92. Similarly, there appeared to be a general lack of understanding of the TRL Management Plan and how the new quota management system works (e.g. sectoral catch shares).
93. Attendees expressed concerns that hookah method is taking most of the TIB sector TRL catch and this unfairly impacts free-diving fishers. It was suggested that a cap or split be implemented within the TIB TRL sectoral catch share to retain catch available for free-diving fishers in years with low TACs.
94. Concerns that the new AMSA coxswains requirement will result in some TIB fishers leaving the fleet as they may not be able to pass coxswains course.

Spanish mackerel

95. The group discussed the Spanish mackerel assessment in detail and examined the downwards trend in CPUE and corresponding decrease in total allowable catch.
96. Some attendees expressed concern that sunset finfish fishers were impacting the breeding stock at Bramble Cay and these effects flow on and disadvantage the rest of the TIB fleet. The group was reminded of the current finfish management arrangements in already having secured 100 per cent TIB access to ownership.
97. After substantial discussion on potential factors causing the decline, attendees agreed that monitoring the fishery via reported catch data was the best way to improve our understanding of the fishery. Some fishers expressed a desire to contribute to the strength of the CPUE signal through voluntarily completing TSF01 Daily Fishing Logbooks. As a result, two TSF01 logbooks were issued to fishers.
98. Attendees noted that it is important for TIB sector catch and effort to be tabled for analysis as the sunset sector (and subsequent catch and effort data) comes from a substantially different area of waters (compared to the TIB sector) due to the 10nm closures around inhabitant eastern island communities.
99. TIB fishers present suggested recent mackerel catches have been strong on Ugar with good catch rates and good size class fish (~15kg).

Saibai Community

Date	1 May 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon, Natalie Couchman and John Jones
Attendance List	Not available

100. The consultation at Saibai did not go ahead in the same manner as other community visits. This was due to a lack of facilities available on Saibai on that day, in conjunction with an accidental double booking of Government agencies holding community meetings. The TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit offered AFMA staff a window to present to community members in the margins of their own meeting, which was preceded by a TSRA Fisheries Infrastructure Program presentation. While presentation time was limited, the access to a broader range of community members was welcomed.
101. A formal attendance list was not recorded, however attendees included TSRA rangers, fishers, My Pathways and respected elders of the Saibai community.

Fish Receiver System

102. The majority of attendees were not familiar with the FRS or general commercial fishing licensing requirements. AFMA staff took the opportunity to discuss primary licence conditions for commercial fishing in the Torres Strait and the requirement to land catches to a licenced Fish Receiver. AFMA staff also touched on the importance of the need for voluntary data fishing effort data to understand the health of stocks and how well fishers are operating.
103. Questions and suggestions from stakeholders included:
- Requiring the marking of cray cages, pots and nets to identify them as TIB fishing gear;
 - Requiring a fisher to be in possession of a licence card in order to legally fish with the intent to stop the misuse of commercial licences. This suggestion also included the introduction of magnetic strips on licence cards to be used to record catch through an electronic system.
 - Whether a licenced fisher can have unlicensed persons on their boat. AFMA staff advised this is possible, however such crew members are required to be traditional inhabitants. In the event a TIB boat is crewed by non-traditional inhabitants, it is the TIB licence holder who is liable if any fishing offence is made.
 - Whether a TIB licence can be issued without a boat. AFMA staff advised that if a person does not have a boat, they could use a licenced boat with the permission of the owner, however the owner is liable for the actions of the person using the boat. This arrangement can be made formal by registering an authorised agent to act on the licence holders behalf.

ACTION ITEM –Clear guidance to be developed on whether a TIB licence can be issued to a traditional inhabitant without a boat.

Harvest Strategies

104. Due to the nature of the community consultation and lack of facilities to show a powerpoint presentation, AFMA were unable to present on draft harvest strategies. Attendees were advised

that all TIB licence holders were mailed a package containing information on the draft harvest strategies out for public comment and encouraged people to provide comment.

Western Line Closure

105. The proposal to remove the Western Line Closure was understood. One of the TSRA Rangers was very useful in facilitating the discussion and outlining the issue. Those in attendance supported removing the closure, noting it would support the operation of the community freezer once up and running.

Other Business

Community freezer

106. A representative from the TSRA fisheries infrastructure project presented on the development of a Saibai community freezer:
- The Saibai freezer will be one of six freezers to be built across the Torres Strait region. A network of freezers will provide for improved continuity of fisheries product supply and potentially pooling of catch and other resources.
 - All freezers will be the same design to facilitate maintenance and repairs. Freezers will be built to accommodate both live and frozen product, occurring in 3-4 stages with building of the Saibai freezer to commence by the end of June over a 30 day contract period.
 - Fishers will be paid beach price immediately on landing and TSRA will fund 6 positions at the freezer (manager, book keeper and 4 filleters/processing staff).
 - Any profits from the freezer will be reinvested back into its operation.
 - Designed to meet domestic food safe requirements but will not meet export requirements. This is because export requirements are considered too expensive and not necessary as all product will pass through export grade facilities in Cairns before leaving Australia.

Biosecurity risks

107. The TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit gave a general awareness presentation regarding the biosecurity risks from PNG (various invasive fish species and plant diseases) or from south of Saibai (e.g. carried by Seaswift barges (cane toads)). The presentation also touched on existing controls for deer which are reportedly increasing in numbers and having detrimental impacts on local swamplands.

Warraber (Sue) Community

Date	11 April 2019
AFMA staff	Selina Stoute and Gabrielle Miller
Traditional Inhabitant Members	James Billy, Kulkaigal – TRL RAG
Attendance List	Refer to Table 8

Fish Receiver System

108. Attendees raised concern about confidentiality of location and effort data and queried whether fishers on Thursday Island or from the TVH sector see the spatial data.
109. Concerned that fish receivers are sharing fishing area information with others, some fishers questioned whether there are any rules preventing fish receivers from releasing data to others. AFMA advised no, no such rules exist.
110. Further, attendees questioned what information the TVH sector are required to supply and whether discarded catches are included in CDRs and accounted for under the TAC.

Harvest Strategies

111. No specific comments were made about the draft harvest strategies. AFMA staff advised that explanatory material has been provided to licence holders to assist and AFMA is available on phone anytime to discuss.

Western Line Closure

112. Attendees queried by the closure was first introduced. AFMA advised the closure is a carryover for a historical management boundary when QLD Fisheries solely managed fisheries in this region.
113. No formal support or opposition in relation to the Western Line Closure was expressed by the Warraber community.

Other Business

114. A fisher made anecdotal reports and observations of dumping mass quantities of dead crays in the Thursday Island harbour from a full cage.
115. Attendees expressed concern that Thursday Island based fishers have disproportionate influence in the fisheries management process without understanding the views of outer island communities. Attendees recommended that all communities should be informed about all meetings and consulted on all matters.
116. AFMA staff advised that the AFMA Thursday Island office has an open door policy, and stakeholders are encouraged to meet with AFMA when on Thursday Island, or contact AFMA staff by phone anytime. AFMA staff agree to the importance of meeting with communities to better understand outer island community views.
117. Further, views can be conveyed through PZJA advisory forums (e.g. TRL Working Group). Attendees noted that building effective communication and engagement is a joint

responsibility between AFMA and industry/communities. This is particularly effective where industry associations/organisations are in place.

118. By way of example, participants reiterated that the Malu Lamar court case decision in 2018 that overturned the hookah ban was not known about beforehand at Warraber and not supported by the Warraberalgal community.

Development permit

119. Attendees questioned a current Developmental Permit and raised concern that it was being used primarily for fishing not training. AFMA advised that at their most recent meeting in April, the PZJA agreed to commence a review of how developmental permits are used for training purposes in all Torres Strait fisheries. Further, the PZJA agreed that until a policy has been developed, the PZJA will not be considering any applications for developmental permits that seek an exemption of the policy for TIB boats to be fully owned and crewed by traditional inhabitants.

General questions – TRL

120. Attendees had a number of general questions and concerns about the TRL Fishery;
- a. How the quota system works, whether shares will change and whether the TVH boats will be able to lease quota from the TIB sector;
 - b. Concerns that TVH boats will fish for a full season when TAC is high (i.e. still be operating on TIB grounds) and if measures are able to be put in place to avoid this happening? AFMA advised any such measures are not possible through quota system, however other avenues may provide a pathway to address this concern. This includes the continued pursuit of 100% ownership, and industry codes of practice with TVH boats around home reefs. Under a more certain access agreement (i.e. quota allocation), industry codes of practice may be easier to develop;
 - c. Whether closures could be implemented to stop TVH entering some areas of the fishery. AFMA advised closures can be made however these need to be fair and consistent with objectives of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.
 - d. Whether AFMA consulted on the TRL management plan? AFMA staff advised that there were two full rounds of community visits and consultation in developing the TRL management plan in addition to the 2018 Fisheries Summit and form Native Title Notification;
 - e. What is QLD East Coast TRL Fishery TAC? AFMA advised the East Coast Fishery operates under a 195 tonne constant catch strategy. The East Coast does not benefit from an annual independent fishery survey, like the Torres Strait. Industry on the East Coast would need to fund a survey in order to move away from a constant catch strategy.
 - f. Concern that East Coast boats unload east coast catch in Thursday Island yet declare it as caught in Torres Strait. AFMA advised that a range of tools are used to monitor the activities of boats, including the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), mandatory QLD pre-unload reports (when, how much and where) and verified landing reports noting that QLD is set to have VMS on all boats (primary and tender) for east coast TRL by the 2020 season.

Mer (Murray) Community

Date	18 April 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon and Andrew Trappett
Traditional Inhabitant Members	Rocky Stephen, Kemer Kemer Meriam – TSSAC, FWG, FRAG Michael Passi, Kemer Kemer Meriam - HCWG
Attendance List	Refer to Table 9

Fish Receiver System

121. Attendees were eager to see the reporting progress under the FRS and were satisfied with the level of reporting that was occurring, noting in particular how poor catch reports used to be prior to FRS implementation. Most were generally happy with the trends in the data with regards to areas reported.
122. Some attendee's role-played an example fish receiver transaction using the example pages from the TDB02 book. This method proved very useful in helping people to understand each field in the form and how to complete the record. Attendees appeared comfortable with the role of both fishers, fish receivers and authorised agents and the importance of providing details to one another to complete the form.
123. The Spanish mackerel assessment was used to demonstrate an example of how the voluntary effort data helps build the understanding of CPUE series, highlighting how and why AFMA collects catch and effort information. AFMA staff reiterated that the FRS supports fishers but only if fishers are supporting the FRS.
124. Attendees were vocal about sunset fishers harvesting near their waters and the group discussed the requirements sunset fishers have under their lease arrangements, including their permit conditions, VMS, logbooks, compliance inspections and spatial closures. Attendees expressed a strong desire to understand what the 'big boats' (sunset licences) are catching, with some assuming that the declining finfish catch rates are from the 'big boats'.
125. A member of the TSRA Finfish Quota Management Committee noted how important it is to have fish receiver data in the context of allocation for finfish, acknowledging tonnage is allocated to the TIB sector first, and the remainder is available to be leased to the sunset (TVH) sector.
126. It was suggested that AFMA should be paying people in communities to collect data on behalf of the fishers – there was general support from others about this.
127. Attendees also questioned why AFMA won't allow TIBs to have big boats and fish the way the sunset licensed boats do. AFMA staff advised that TIB fishers are able to operate a boat up to 20m in length, noting however that there are additional requirements (e.g. VMS) for larger boats.

Harvest Strategies

128. Attendees acknowledged the differences between the draft TRL and BDM Harvest Strategies, particularly regarding the level of data and information available in each fishery and how that impacts our understanding of the health of the respective stocks and in return impacts to the management in both fisheries.
129. Those in attendance supported the draft BDM harvest strategy noting it will help set out how to re-open closed species (i.e. black teatfish).

130. Attendees noted that a larger BDM survey across the Torres Strait may be occurring but is subject to funding. It was emphasised that a survey is not the only key for opening a species like black teatfish and that AFMA is still committed to pursuing an opening and how and what that opening looks like will be discussed at the next HCWG meeting.
131. The group discussed how communities can implement their own measures above and beyond the Harvest Strategy or other fishery rules (e.g. Mer & Erub agreement to let Big Mary, Little Mary reefs lie fallow to protect prickly redfish). AFMA reiterated that there is nothing prohibiting communities implementing their own complimentary fishery rules and that the beche-de-mer harvest strategy is designed to enable this.
132. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

133. The proposal to remove the Western Line Closure was well noted with general consensus to not provide specific advice on the proposal. It is considered a western islands issue and western communities should be the ones to decide what to do with the closure.
134. General comments indicated that western communities want more fishing for trout to alleviate predation TRL and to enhance the abundance of TRL. Some anecdotal comments were made indicating that the more coral trout is fished, the more habitat is opened for TRL (i.e. holes in the reef).
135. General comments were also made that Western communities should make sure to get their management settings in order before sunset licences might access their waters – referring to the tensions prior to the implementation of the 10nm radial closures excluding sunset fishing effort around Mer, Ugar, Massig and Erub communities.

Other Business

136. The PBC Chair stated that more generally that there is a need for licencing review to occur and for further area controls on licencing permits. Most fishers seemed dissatisfied that a TIB licence technically permits a fisher to access the whole fishery (Torres Strait wide) which is in conflict with cultural protocols. This issue results in community tensions during black teatfish openings or when primary-tender operations from the west, come to fish in Meriam waters.
137. A number of attendees queried whether there was to be a future establishment of an EEZ or territorial zones around inhabited islands, or changes to licence conditions to prohibit TIB boats from one particular island cluster fishing in another, and vice versa. Attendees advised this is currently ailan custom but that in order for it to be effective, it needs to be regulated through licencing conditions. If people want to fish in Meriam waters they should have to ask permission from the Meriam community. The issue was parked and suggested that the upcoming commercial entity formation would be the vehicle to progress this idea. All attendees were strongly encouraged to share these views with TSRA who are leading the development of a commercial fisheries entity.
138. Fishers expressed concerns and reports that they are having to travel further to find good catches of prickly redfish and that the sizes of prickly redfish are decreasing.
139. The PBC Chair advocated strongly for licensing reform, stating that Traditional Inhabitants own 100 per cent of the rights in most fisheries but don't have the capacity to fill the TACs (i.e. in finfish). He requested that the Australian Government work on a program that is designed to have clear outcomes for TIB taking more of the harvest using larger primary-tender operations

in major communities. Such boats need to be training boats, set up to upskill local fishers. Attendees suggested this concept was something the Entity could establish with AFMA's assistance.

140. A number of attendees expressed criticism about the TSRA holding finfish lease licence money and the lack of feedback to communities and transparency about what money was or was not being used for. It was noted that the funds are still being held in trust but that there has been political debates about how the funds are to be distributed. Those in attendance expressed strong support that the money should be put back in to communities to develop fishing capacity so that fishers are able to fish for finfish, to utilise the fishery better and therefore no longer need to lease licences to non-indigenous operators. AFMA suggested this issue be raised with the TSRA in the context of the formation of an Entity.
141. Further criticism was expressed in relation to the fisheries infrastructure renewal project. Given that there are land disputes on Mer, not all businesses will be able to benefit from a community based freezer, particularly if they have to travel onto another clan's land to access the establishment. Others advised that since the community freezer has been in disrepair since 2010 they have had to themselves invest in their own infrastructure and a community freezer will not benefit their business now they have gone an alternate route.
142. Attendees advised there is a general community ban on the use of hookah in Meriam waters in all fisheries including TRL.
143. A number of reports were made to AFMA regarding fisheries compliance:
 - Reports of Indonesian blue boats seen transiting through Meriam waters and Cumberland passage;
 - Concerns of possible illegal fishing in Area 20 (referring to TDB02 map) with reports that although those reefs have been deliberately left to fallow for over a year, fishers have returned the reefs to discover they have been completely fished out (BDM species).
 - Discovery of washed up bleach bottles over certain periods suggests to community members that offshore IUU fishing may be occurring using this destructive fishing practice.
144. All were consistently encouraged to report any suspected illegal fishing to AFMA with as much detail as possible in a timely manner, via the CRIMFISH hotline. Float keyrings were handed out to attendees with the CRIMFISH phone number and the AFMA Office phone number.

New Mapoon Community (NPA)

Date	9 May 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon, Kayoko Yamashita, John Jones and Natalie Jorna
Attendance List	Refer to Table 10

Fish Receiver System

146. Most attendees were not familiar with the FRS though some recalled the voluntary docket book system (TDB01). Some attendees were licenced TIB fishers but many had never held a TIB licence and there was a general lack of awareness in relation to PZJA managed fisheries within the Protected Zone versus areas of jurisdiction managed by Queensland Fisheries.
147. The group worked through the TDB02 example handouts in detail, with fishers reading through each field to understand the information that is being asked on each form. AFMA staff emphasised the need for voluntary data to understand the health of stocks and how well or poorly the fishery is performing. This was well received, and most understood the value in providing basic 'area fished' information, confident that the areas were broad enough to not give away their specific fishing spots.
148. Attendees were very interested in the maps of where fish were reportedly caught. There was a good understanding of how only part of the story is told with the 'area fished' data, particularly for TRL where almost 60% of the area fished data was not provided.

Harvest Strategies

149. The draft harvest strategies information was generally well received and understood in terms of how TACs are set and linked well with the importance of reporting catch and effort data.
150. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

151. No formally expressed support for the Western Line Closure however the proposal was generally well understood. Participants were encouraged to go away with information handouts and discuss further with their communities and provide comments back to AFMA with any views.

Other Business

152. Several attendees expressed concern regarding the use of hookah on the tops of reefs. AFMA advised that there are no formal rules about where hookah can be used (as opposed to rules about when, i.e. moon-tide hookah closures), however industry codes of conduct or 'gentlemen's agreements' are options that can be explored by communities with operators to establish rules about the use of hookah around community home reefs. AFMA advised that it would be very difficult to enforce rules relating to the depth of hookah use given current monitoring tools but that AFMA and/or the TSRA can support communities in establishing codes of conduct and facilitate communicating this information between communities and fishing operators.

153. Some concern expressed from attendees about keeping cray cages in coastal waters, stating they had been advised by Queensland Fisheries that the practice was prohibited. AFMA advised that this practice is common with fishers in the Protected Zone but that perhaps QLD Fisheries have particular rules about this in QLD coastal waters. AFMA were not able to provide firm advice on this matter.
154. Fishers queried whether it was legal to catch and sell barramundi from Mapoon on the west coast of Queensland. AFMA advised that under a TIB licence this is not permissible, however QLD Fisheries may have different rules about barramundi on the west coast.
155. Overall, there was general lack of awareness about PZJA/TIB fishing rules and Queensland Fisheries rules and jurisdictions. Communities would benefit greatly with some very clear maps and targeted communications about PZJA fisheries management arrangements.

<p>ACTION ITEM: AFMA to provide copies of the BDM Species ID Guide books to Michael Bond, Councillor of New Mapoon.</p>
--

Injinoo Community (NPA)

Date	10 May 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon, Kayoko Yamashita and John Jones
Attendance List	Refer to Table 11

Fish Receiver System

156. Very few attendees were familiar with TIB licences, or the old voluntary docket book system. No one present had heard of the FRS and there was again a general lack of awareness about PZJA managed fisheries within the Protected Zone.
157. The presentation was simplified to basic licencing requirements in the Protected Zone, what a TIB licence permits a fisher to do, who AFMA are and who the PZJA are.
158. There was a lot of concern expressed about the Part B sea claim and how commercial fishing impacts the sea claim and Aboriginal rights in the NPA.
159. AFMA advised of the ability for traditional inhabitants of the five NPA communities to apply for a TIB licence, providing them the option to fish commercially within the Protected Zone and Outside But Near Areas.
160. Attendees were very interested in the effort data shown by area fished, however some were very concerned that the TDB02 map of Area Fished has arrows pointing south for Area 21 (east of Cape York). AFMA were unable to provide any advice as to why the arrows point down, or why there are any arrows at all. Attendees suggested that Area 21 should have more fish reported from that area.
161. Attendees then spent time examining detailed maps of the fisheries to better understand exactly where the area of the fisheries are, versus the Protected Zone, and the Outside But Near Area, in relation to where their communities are on the mainland NPA.

ACTION ITEM: AFMA to send copies of the BDM Species ID Guide to the Ipima Ikaya Secretary, Amanda Ewart.

Harvest Strategies

162. Despite presenting to a community that is quite unfamiliar with PZJA fisheries management arrangements or language, attendees appeared to have a good understanding of the importance of data collection and how it impacts management decisions.
163. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.

Western Line Closure

164. No formal support or opposition expressed by the group but attendees were encouraged to discuss further with their communities and other fishers not in attendance.
165. The Western Line Closure proposal generated a number of questions about the Finfish Fishery in terms of barramundi, netting restrictions, size limits and no take species. Summary information from *Torres Strait Fisheries Management Instrument No. 8* was provided to the PBC Secretary following the meeting.

Thursday Island (Torres Shire) Community

Date	20 May 2019
AFMA staff	Selina Stoute, Georgia Langdon, Natalie Couchman and Eva Plaganyi
Attendance List	Refer to Table 12

Fish Receiver System

166. Many people within the Torres Shire are very familiar with the FRS, and so only a brief overview was provided to those present.
167. No major concerns were raised with the FRS. One attendee queried whether discards or mortalities of TRL are recorded. AFMA advised that currently, this data is not captured on CDRs however there is a sub-group of the TRLRAG tasked with examining this issue.

Harvest Strategies

168. Harvest Strategies were not discussed at this meeting.

Western Line Closure

169. A number of concerns were raised in relation to the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure, including:
- Whether AFMA had already made a decision to remove it. AFMA advised that no decision had been made. Consultation on the issue was still on going, and that the outcomes of the consultation will then be put back to both the Finfish RAG and Working Group to discuss further.
 - Concern that coral trout are very territorial and don't move around reefs much, meaning that removing the closure may impact on the availability of coral trout in the area.
 - Whether lifting the closure could only apply to TIB operators. AFMA advised that this could be considered through advice from stakeholders and the Finfish Working Group.
 - Concerns that top western communities who have supported removing the WLC, won't actually utilise the opportunity to fish for reef line species if the closure is lifted.
 - Concern with the potential impact on TRL stocks and the ability for fishers to fish for coral trout for kai kai.
170. Other attendees noted that there is 'no trout on the grounds and no life on the bottom' around the inner islands this TRL season.

Other Business

171. Dr Eva Plaganyi from CSIRO delivered a comprehensive presentation about the science that underpins the management of the Torres Strait TRL Fishery and stock assessment, including the annual fishery independent survey. This was very well received by a number of industry members.
172. Some active fishers present noted that;
- the abundance of TRL around Thursday Island is worse than last season although the TAC is higher;
 - there a high numbers of 0+ lobsters being observed on reefs this season; and

- c. habitats have changed around Thursday Island with more mud instead of reef.
- 173. Sandie Edwards, from Torres Straits Seafood offered to provide size samples of landed TRL to CSIRO to contribute to the length frequency data set used in the TRL stock assessment.
- 174. One attendee questioned who the members of the PZJA consultative committees are, particularly the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) and added that Torres Strait Islanders should be setting the agenda for what is researched in the Torres Strait. It was emphasised that the Chair of all Working Groups and RAGs should be Torres Strait Islanders. AFMA advised that a call for applications for all non-traditional inhabitant positions on PZJA fisheries consultative committees had recently been advertised.

Mabuiag Community

Date	21-22 May 2019
AFMA staff	Georgia Langdon, Natalie Couchman, Kylie McKillop and Hannah Howard
CSIRO staff	Dr Eva Plaganyi
Attendance List	Refer to Table 13

Fish Receiver System

175. Despite there being a number of active TIB fishers present, only some people recalled the voluntary docket book system and very few were familiar with the FRS. At the time of the community meeting, there were no licenced Fish Receivers based on Mabuiag, and fishers reported that they take their catches to Badu or down to Thursday Island to be received.
176. Fishers raised a number of technical queries around whether you can be a TIB fisher and a Fish Receiver at the same time. AFMA advised the importance of having two separate (ideally independent) parties sign the CDR and outlined the options for enlisting an Authorised Agent to ensure that two different parties are signing the paperwork.
177. Most attendees appeared comfortable with providing voluntary effort and area data and understood how useful that information can be in understanding the health of the stocks and how well the fishery is performing.
178. One industry member expressed concern over the Area Fished map in the TDB02 book, highlighting that the broad areas outlined do not reflect how the people of Mabuiag view their waters traditionally. It was suggested that the map would be more useful to communities if the map areas were divided up in to community boundaries as understood by communities. This would allow communities to use and understand their catch data more effectively, particularly if they want to make decisions about their own fisheries management. AFMA advised that the areas were originally devised based on habitat similarities across the Torres Strait, but agreed that there is scope to adjust the areas. As an example, in the TRL Fishery, the TDB02 areas do not align well with the areas used by CSIRO in the stock assessment and this issue was being considered by the TRLRAG.

Harvest Strategies

179. At the request of attendees, and noting that the community does not fish for BDM, only the draft TRL harvest strategy was presented.
180. Although no specific comments on the draft harvest strategy was made, the concept of how the harvest strategies guide the way TACs are sustainably set in the TRL Fishery was well received.
181. Attendees were advised as to how they can make a submission in response to the public call for comment.
182. The discussion on harvest strategies was followed up with a comprehensive presentation from Dr Eva Plaganyi from CSIRO on the science that underpins the management of the TRL Fishery in the Torres Strait. The group spent some time discussing the life cycle of TRL, in particular how the level of recruitment of young TRL is heavily influenced by environmental factors and not just fishing pressure.

Western Line Closure

183. AFMA introduced the proposal to remove the Western Line Closure and shared some of the diverse views already shared by other communities during previous consultations, in particularly the potential interplay between TRL and coral trout. In consideration of these issues, there was general support for the closure removal in principle through a show of hands. No firm opposition to the proposal was expressed. A TSRA Ranger advised that further discussions needed to be had within the Mabuiag community, particularly with the islands' elders.

Licensing

184. A number of licencing queries and applications were made, as well as queries about holding a TIB licence without a boat.
185. Some community members expressed frustration with the difficult in getting sign off from both their local Councillor and the Regional Island Council Mayor on Traditional Inhabitant ID forms.

Summary of Action Items

Description	Status	Comment
AFMA to follow up with TSRA regarding the status of proposed iPads for electronic reporting	Ongoing	AFMA has raised this with the TSRA Fisheries Program and is awaiting further advice.
AFMA to clarify and report back to Hilda Mosby about when the Western Line Closure came in to place.	Complete	Advice was provided to Ms Mosby via email on 15 July 2019.
AFMA to follow up with TSIRC Mayor Gela's office regarding outstanding Traditional Inhabitant ID Forms.	Ongoing	Mayor Gela's office has advised that all TIB ID applications should be sent directly to Ursula.nai@tsirc.qld.gov.au or through a local TSRIC office who can pass it directly to Mayor Gela's office.
AFMA to raise the issue of TVH licences held in trust and associated monies with TSRA Fisheries Program ahead of their community visits in May	Complete	The TSRA Fisheries Program has been made aware of this issue.
AFMA to develop and disseminate more information about authorised Registered Agents to communities.	Ongoing	AFMA has drafted some materials regarding this topic.
AFMA to report back to Patrick Bonner about the membership of the TSRA board subcommittee working on the Fisheries Entity project	Complete	Advice on the membership of the Entity project was provided on 27 June 2019 via email
AFMA to report back to Poruma fishers about whether there any TIB operated finfish sunset licences.	Complete	Advice on the membership of the Entity project was provided on 27 June 2019 via email
AFMA to provide clear guidance on whether TIB licences can be issued without a boat.	Ongoing	AFMA is seeking legal advice on this matter
AFMA to follow up with Patrick Bonner with details of who sits on the Poruma fisheries association and their contacts.	Complete	Nil.
AFMA to provide Malu Lamar with details of FRAG/FWG consideration of sustainability impacts of removing the western line closure	Complete	Copies of relevant meeting papers and meeting records of both FRAG and FWG meetings where the WLC was discussed was circulated to Malu Lamar via email on 27 June 2019
AFMA to assess whether the data summaries from the 2011 hookah developmental permit can released to communities.	Ongoing	AFMA is seeking advice on this matter.

Description	Status	Comment
AFMA to provide copies of the Beche-de-mer Species ID Guide books to Michael Bond, Councillor of New Mapoon.	Complete	Guides were posted on 28 June 2019.
AFMA to send copies of the Beche-de-mer Species ID Guide to the Ipima Ikaya Secretary, Amanda Ewart.	Complete	Guides were posted on 24 May 2019.

Attendance Lists

Table 2. Masig (Yorke) Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Charles Asai	
Francis Nai	TSRA Land & Sea Management Unit – Ranger
Gabriel Nai	Police Senior Sargent
Hilda Mosby	Kulkalgal PZJA Traditional Inhabitant Member on Finfish Working Group
Laskem Samuel	My Pathway
Leroy Kris	My Pathway
Loretta Adidi	My Pathway
Mary Lowatta	My Pathway
Ned Mosby	IBIS
Ned Mosby	Masig PBC Deputy Chair
Paul Lowatta	My Pathway Fisher Kulkalgal PZJA Traditional Inhabitant Member on Finfish Resource Assessment Group
Percy Misi	My Pathway
Samson Mosby	My Pathway
Simon Naawi	TIB Licence Holder
William F Mosby	My Pathway/Fisher
Willie Gamia	TIB Licence Holder

Table 3. Erub (Darnley) Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Amina Ghee	
Bert Matysek	Erub Fisheries Management Association
Chris Sailor	Erub Freezer
Dan Sailor	Finfish rep (Erub)
Eddie Savage	Erubam Le PBC
Harry Ghee	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
Jimmy Gela	Erubam Le PBC
Les Pitt	PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam on TRL Working Group and Resource Assessment Group.
Mary Savage	
Michael Passi	Mike Passi Divers PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam on Hand Collectables Working Group
Rocky Stephen	Brother Bear Fisheries PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam on Finfish Resource Assessment Group and Working Group
Yana Gesa	

Table 4. Boigu Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Kada Tom	My Pathway
Keith Pabai	PBC Chair
Pabai Pabai	My Pathway
Robert Gizu	My Pathway
Wusuru Wurukii	My Pathway

Table 5. Poruma (Coconut) Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
David Mari	Boat Decky
Douglas Gaidan	Builder
Francis Clark	Fisher
Francis Pearson	Poruma Councillor
Frank Faud	TSRA Board Member PBC Chair
Gibson Billy	Fisher
Harry Ketchell	Builder
Joseph Pearson	Builder/Fish Receiver
Lawrence Mosby	Fisher
Nicholas Pearson	Fisher
Patrick Bonner	Fisher/Fish Receiver
Timothy Faud	Fisher
Victor Billy	Fulltime diver
Wrench Larry	Fisher/Fish Receiver
Yessie M Pearson	Fisher

Table 6. Badu Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Anthony Garnier	My Pathway
Barry Nona	Police Liaison Officer
Dick Williams	TSRA Ranger
Edmund Tamwoy	Fish Receiver
Emmanuel Simitzis	Australian Live Seafood
Frank Loban	PZJA Traditional Inhabitant Member for Maluialgal
George Asse	
Gerald Bowie	TSRA Ranger
James Ahmat	PZJA Traditional Inhabitant Member for Maluialgal
Jermaine Ruben	
Maluwap Nona	Chairperson of Malu Lamar
Philemon Nona	
Phyllis Tamwoy	
Troy Stow	TSRA Ranger
Youngas Bowie	Fish Receiver

Table 7. Ugar (Stephen) Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Alapasa Panuel	Sol Fishers
Jennie Morris	
Michael Passi	Mike Passi Divers PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam
Pau Stephen	Brother Bear Fisheries Biosecurity
Robert Modee	
Rocky Stephen	Brother Bear Fisheries PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam
Victor Morris	
William Stephen	Sol Fishers

Table 8. Warraber (Sue) Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Aken Baragud	TSRA Ranger
Alfred Billy	My Pathway
Boggo Billy	My Pathway
Elizabeth Mari	My Pathway
Ettie Gela	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
Ewelu Mene	My Pathway
Harold Pearson	Macoy Enterprise/TSIRC
Ian Larry	My Pathway
James Billy	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
James Bob	My Pathway
John Bob	My Pathway
John Bowie	My Pathway
John Larry	My Pathway
Joseph Mari	My Pathway
Kabay Tamu	Warraberalgal PBC Chair
Laura Pearson	Macoy Enterprise/TSRA Ranger
Nasona Bob	My Pathway
Nathan Pearson	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
Pattison Larry	My Pathway
Paul Mari	My Pathway
Peter Bob	Torres Strait Island Regional Council
Yessie Pearson	My Pathway
Young Bob	TSRA Ranger

Table 9. Mer (Murray) Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Beimop Tapim	PBC
Ben Barsa	Fisher
Cyril Gabey	Gelam Tail Seafoods
Falen D Passi	PBC Chair
Fraser Wailu	Fisher/diver
Gawomi Passi	MDW Fishers
James Zaro	Fisher
John K Tabo	MDW Fisheries TSRA Fisheries Quota Management Committee PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam
John S Tabo	PBC
Lyall Kelly	Fisher
Michael Passi	Mike Passi Divers PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam
Nakimie Maza	Fisher/diver
R M Kaigey	
Rocky Stephen	Brother Bear Fisheries PZJA Traditional Inhabitant member for Kemer Kemer Meriam
Sabu Wailu	Fisher/diver

Table 10. New Mapoon Community (NPA) attendance list

Name	Organisation
Aaron Bamaga	
Albert Bond	
Billy Daniel	
Daniel Sebasio	
James Bond	
Mervyn Bond	
Michael Bond	Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council
Trevor Lifu	

Table 11. Injinoo Community (NPA) attendance list

Name	Organisation
Amanda Ewart	Ipima Ikaya RNTBC
Jerry Songoro	
Manihera Blarrey	
Nicolas Thompson	Deputy PBC Chair, Ipima Ikaya RNTBC
Roger Williams	

Table 12. Thursday Island (Torres Shire) Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Charles David	
Graham Hirakawa	Fisher
Koro Samai	Fisher
Ned David	Gur A Baradharaw Kod Land and Sea Council (GBK)
Richard Takai	Fisher
Sandie Edwards	Torres Straits Seafood
Tony Shibasaki	Fisher
Yacoba	Fisher

Table 13. Mabuiag Community attendance list

Name	Organisation
Desmond Kris	
Deusia Ware	My Pathway
Douglas Bani	My Pathway
Evrardus Kaise	
Flora Warrior	TIB licence holder
Frank Whap	Community member
Gibson Joe	My Pathway
Harry Kris	
Jack Whap	My Pathway
Jimmy Kris	
Kadiab Gizu	Fisher
Noel Misi	My Pathway
Patrine Misi	
Phillip Billy	
Phillip Kepi	
Ricky Gizu	My Pathway
Ryan Kris	
Sarion Bani	My Pathway
Ted Whap	TSRA Ranger
Thomas J Holland	
Thomas Mene	Fisher
Tigi Bani	
Tyrus Fujii	My Pathway
William Gizu	Fisher
William Misi	My Pathway

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
OTHER BUSINESS	Agenda Item No. 6.1 FOR NOTING

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Working Group **NOMINATE** any additional items of business for the meeting.

PZJA Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Working Group	Meeting: 29 November 2019
NEXT MEETING and MEETING CLOSE	Agenda Item 6.2 For DISCUSSION and ADVICE

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Working Group **NOTE**:

- a. a joint FFRAG + FFWG meeting is tentatively scheduled for 26-27 February 2020 and will only be required if additional advice is required on harvest strategy development and TAC advice ahead of the 2020-21 season. Member will be advised in the first week of December 2019 whether this meeting will be required or not.
- b. that the next meeting of **FFWG** meeting is tentatively scheduled 6-7 May 2020 to consider outcomes public consultation on a draft harvest strategy (if finalised in time).
- c. a schedule for upcoming FFRAG, FFWG and PZJA meetings/decisions (**Table 1** overleaf); and
- d. closing remarks from the Chairperson.

Table 1. Upcoming Torres Strait Finfish Fishery dates: PZJA and advisory group meetings.

Date	Group	Key agenda items
27-28 November 2019	FFRAG 6	Spanish mackerel assessment update. RBC advice for 2020-21 season. Development of Harvest Strategy Advice on public comments on proposal to remove Western Line closure.
29 November 2019	FFWG	TAC setting advice for 2020-21 season. Advice on draft Harvest Strategy. Advice on public comments on proposal to remove Western Line closure.
20 January 2020 (TBC)	PZJA	Decision on 2020-21 season TACs. Decision on Western Line Closure. Decision on releasing draft harvest strategy for public comment.
(26-27 February 2020 ¹)	(Joint FFRAG and FFWG)	(Additional Joint FFRAG and Working Group meeting only if required to progress advice on Spanish mackerel assessment update. ***TBC first week December 2019).
6-7 May 2020	Joint FFRAG & FFWG	Consideration of public comment on Finfish Fishery Harvest Strategies. Advice to PZJA on implementation.
June 2020 (date TBC)	PZJA	Consideration of final draft Harvest Strategies for implementation to support decision making in the 2021-22 season.
1 July 2020 - Torres Strait Finfish Fishery 2020-21 Season Opens		
2-3 September 2020	FFRAG 7	Preliminary assessment update for Spanish mackerel.
14-15 October 2020	FFRAG 8	RBC advice for 2021-22
25-26 November 2020	FFWG	TAC advice for 2021-22 season.

¹ Originally members were asked to attend on Thursday 27th and Friday 28th February, members from both Finfish RAG and Finfish Working Group are now asked to consider availability to attend on Wed 26th and Thursday 27th to allow members to travel home on Friday rather than Saturday.