



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

13th Meeting of the Torres Strait Hand Collectables Working Group

24 July 2018

Minutes

Note all meeting papers and minutes
are available on the PZJA webpage:

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1 Preliminaries

1.1 Opening prayer, acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, welcome and apologies

1. Mr Arthur Naawi opened the meeting in prayer at 9:05 am.
2. The Chair welcomed attendees to the 13th meeting of the Torres Strait Hand Collectable Working Group (HCWG 13). The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which the meeting was held and paid respect to Elders past and present. The Chair further acknowledged the value of the knowledge and experience attendees would impart at the meeting and thanked them for taking the time to attend.
3. Given the relatively high number of new participants to the Working Group, each attendee gave a brief introduction to the broader group.
4. Attendees at the Working Group are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. List of attendees at the HCWG13.

Members	
Anne Clarke	Chair
Ian Butler	Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) Member
Mark Anderson	Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Member
Tim Skewes	Research Member
Maluwap Nona	Industry Member – Traditional Inhabitant representative for Gudumalulgal and Maluialgal
Michael Passi	Industry Member – Traditional Inhabitant representative for Kemer Meriam
Patrick Mills	Industry Member – Traditional Inhabitant representative for Kaiwalagal
Seriako Stephen	Malu Lamar representative
Georgia Langdon	Executive Officer, AFMA
Invited Participants	
Jerry Stephen	TSRA Board Member for Ugar and Portfolio Member for Fisheries
Rocky Stephen	Kos and Abob Fishers Association – Ugar (Stephens) Island
Patrick Bonner	Industry – Poruma (Coconut) Island
Observers	
Nick Boucher	TSRA
Eva Plaganyi	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Leo Dutra	CSIRO
Phil Ketchell	Industry – Thursday Island

5. Apologies received are detailed in the Table 2 below.

Table 2. List of apologies for HCWG13.

Apologies	
Danielle Stewart	Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF) Member
Francis Pearson	Industry Member – Traditional Inhabitant representative for Kulkalgal
Ian Liviko	PNG National Fisheries Authority (NFA) Invited Participant
Simon Naawi	Industry – Masig (Yorke) Island

1.2 Adoption of agenda

6. The Working Group adopted the draft agenda (Attachment A). An industry member requested that agenda items 3.4 Black Teatfish and 3.5 Prickly Redfish be discussed before 3.3 pearl and trochus as these species are of a higher priority.

1.3 Declarations of interest

7. As outlined in PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1, all members of the Working Group must declare all real or potential conflicts of interest in Torres Strait hand collectable fisheries at the commencement of the meeting (see Table 3 below). The Working Group noted that if a member discloses an interest, the Working Group must make a decision as to whether, for the relevant agenda items, they can participate in the discussion and in the making of recommendations or remain absent from the meeting.

Table 3. Declared interests from each participant.

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Anne Clarke	Chair	Nil.
Ian Butler	AFMA Member	Nil.
Mark Anderson	TSRA Member	Nil.
Tim Skewes	Research Member	CSIRO/Independent Consultant. Previous principal scientist for Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) project to develop a harvest strategy for the TSBDMF. Previous CSIRO researcher for TSSAC project investigating traditional take of finfish in Torres Strait.
Maluwap Nona	Industry Member	TIB licence holder and Chairperson of Malu Lamar.
Michael Passi	Industry Member	TIB licence holder.
Patrick Mills	Industry Member	TIB licence holder; Chairperson of the Torres Strait Fisheries Association.
Seriako Stephen	Malu Lamar rep	TIB licence holder.
Georgia Langdon	Executive Officer, AFMA	Nil.

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Leo Dutra	CSIRO Observer	Receives funding from CSIRO
Jerry Stephen	TSRA Board	TIB licence holder; TSRA Fisheries Portfolio Member

8. The Working Group determined that no member was required to be absent during discussion of or, decisions made on matters which are the subject of conflicts.

1.4 Action items from HCWG 12 and previous meetings

9. The Working Group noted the report provided by the Executive Officer advising of the status of actions arising from previous HCWG meetings (see Table 4 below).

Table 4. Status of action items arising from previous HCWG meetings.

#	Meeting #	Action item	Responsibility	Status
1	9 (20-21 June 2016)	AFMA to review the size limits set for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery taking into consideration the size limits in place in Queensland and the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery.	AFMA	In progress To be addressed as part of the Bech-de-mer Harvest Strategy Project
2	11 (27 June 2017)	Consideration on whether or not changes should be made to the current size limit for Prickly Redfish be undertaken during the Harvest Strategy Workshop noting relevant data will be presented.	AFMA	In progress Refer to action item 1
3	11 (27 June 2017)	Industry members and observers to submit any outstanding catch reports to AFMA as a matter of priority.	Industry	Completed Industry provided the outstanding catch data out of session.
4	11 (27 June 2017)	AFMA to confirm out-of-session the commitment from Masig and Ugar communities to voluntary spatial closures and size limits for Prickly Redfish.	AFMA	Completed AFMA sought comment from industry out of session following HCWG 11.
5	12 (24 October 2017)	AFMA to recirculate details of proposed legislative amendments to the Act and Regulations and as a standing item, make a report on the progress of these legislative amendments at future Working Groups	AFMA	Completed AFMA circulated the proposed amendments and will provide an update under Item 2.2.3
6	12 (24 October 2017)	AFMA to circulate the final report from the Smartphone Data Collection project to the Working Group.	AFMA	Completed The report was circulated to HCWG members out-of-session on 23 January 2018.

#	Meeting #	Action item	Responsibility	Status
7	12 (24 October 2017)	AFMA to circulate a copy of the Research Member's presentation to the Working Group.	AFMA	Completed The presentation was sent to members out-of-session on 23 January 2018
8	12 (24 October 2017)	Working Group Members and Observers acknowledged the serious risk that a lack of data and catch reporting poses to the sustainable management of the TSBDMF and agreed to submit any outstanding catch records and to assist AFMA in obtaining catch records from the BDM TIB licence holders and buyers within their respective communities.	Industry	Ongoing AFMA received some catch records following the meeting.

1.5 Out of session correspondence

10. The Working Group noted the correspondence circulated out of session since HCWG 12 held on 24 October 2017.

2 Fishery Updates

2.1 Industry update

11. The Working Group noted updates provided by Industry Members, invited participants and observers on the recent performance of hand collectable fisheries and strategic issues, including economic trends, affecting the management and development of these fisheries.
12. An industry member from Kemer Meriam raised the importance of discussing a Black Teatfish opening as "lots" have been observed on the reef. He advised, based on his observations over the past 12 months fishing for Prickly Redfish that it appears to be taking longer for species to return to the reefs. It is thought weather patterns can play a large role in the habitat associations of each species. He added that there is plenty of White Teatfish, but the only way to access this species is with hookah as it is a deep water species and rarely seen in shallow grounds.
13. The industry member and representative for Gudumalulgal, Maluialgal and Kemer Meriam reported an increased abundance of black and White Teatfish and questioned why White Teatfish remains closed to fishing and why the TAC for that species cannot be increased.
14. The representative for Malu Lamar advised the group that traditional owners will advocate strongly for the fundamental human rights of TIB operators, under the principles of Native Title, to access, to use and enjoy the resources of the sea. He stated Malu Lamar will strongly support two elements of fisheries arrangements; a) administrative arrangements and policy changes that will benefit the people through the use of hookah; and b) ways to increase the TAC of both black and White Teatfish. He also requested a focus on "closing the gap" by creating economic growth, employment and small business development.

15. The industry invited participant from Poruma supported the sentiments of the Malu Lamar representative and other industry members. He added that Black Teatfish appear to be abundant around Poruma Island and that Poruma community supports the use of hookah to fish for White Teatfish as it is too dangerous for free divers due to the depth of the species. He noted that curryfish appear to be coming back despite having been fished extensively throughout the year.
16. An industry observer supported the exploration of using hookah. He stated that while it is important to protect the views of those who oppose hookah, hookah is needed to support the development of the industry.
17. The research member noted that each species has different depth ranges, which is an important point for management and a fact that has served to protect some species from over harvest due to their lack of accessibility. Fishing access ultimately comes down to a management framework that ensures each species has at least 60 or 70 per cent of the population left behind to encourage reproduction at sustainable levels. This is particularly important for sea cucumber species that require a certain population density to ensure successful reproduction on the reef. He explained that the lower the density of sea cucumbers left behind on the reef, the lower fertilisation rate.in the water column. He added the key issue with opening up White Teatfish is around how the harvest would be monitored and controlled, even with a conservative TAC. He reiterated that good information from daily logbooks and CDRs is necessary to support any potential expansion of the TAC.
18. The TSRA fisheries portfolio member reminded the group that lifting the hookah ban on White Teatfish has been an ongoing issue for many years. Industry is very interested in gaining access to the deeper White Teatfish with the use of breathing apparatus so communities can earn an income.
19. An industry invited participant from Ugar described how their community is focussing on curry fish species, and strongly supported the idea of having a separate TAC for curryfish from the 80 tonne basket TAC. He noted the fragile nature of the species and high levels of discarded product. He questioned how discard information gets captured within the Fish Receiver System. He believed the high rate of unreported discarded product will have implications for a possible standalone TAC for curryfish species.
20. Industry members noted that discard rates of curryfish are reducing as people are learning better processing techniques. The temperature and time when boiling product is very important and that processing needs to commence as soon as the product is removed from the water. Another industry member added that using blocks of ice in the seawater helps to keep the product fresher for longer. The Malu Lamar representative reiterated that, the boat policy needs to change to allow larger vessels to support processing on board to better support the delicate operations of harvesting curryfish.

2.2 Government agencies update (AFMA, TSRA, QDAF)

2.2.1 Export approvals under the EPBC Act

21. The AFMA member provided a summary of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) export approval and acknowledged the pivotal importance of the ability to export fisheries product.
22. The Torres Strait Beche-de-merBeche-de-mer and Trochus fisheries have been declared approved Wildlife Trade Operations (WTO) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) until 18 December 2020 and 9 October 2026 respectively.

23. The Trochus Fishery has no conditions on the basis that the fishery is currently inactive. Any new activity within the Trochus Fishery will need to be reported to the Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE). The Torres Strait Pearly Shell Fishery is not currently exporting.
24. The Beche-de-mer Fishery has six conditions attached to the approval. These include:
- Operation of the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery will be carried out in accordance with the management regime in force under the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984.
 - 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 Beche-de-mer Fishery management arrangements that may affect the assessment against which *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* decisions are made.
 - 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 Guideline for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition.
 - The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to implement a strategy to manage the risks of overfishing and localised depletion for all species harvest in the fishery.
 - The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to complete an ecological risk assessment and implement an ecological risk mitigation strategy to ensure all environmental and ecological risks are appropriately managed.
 - The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority to continue to pursue the changes necessary to facilitate reporting of interactions with species listed in Part 13 of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
25. The AFMA member noted that the export approvals apply to individual fisheries (i.e. the TSBDF) within Australia and the Torres Strait, and are in place to ensure that the Torres Strait BDM fishery is being harvested and managed in a sustainable manner, with minimal environmental impacts to be exported outside of Australia. It is not applicable to investors or buyers within the fishery. Should any significant changes occur within the BDM fishery, (e.g. an opening of the Black Teatfish) the DoEE needs to be notified and convinced that the fishery will continue to be managed sustainably.
26. The Fish Receiver System and catch reporting is critical to the management of the fishery in allowing AFMA to monitor catches against the TAC and to satisfy the concerns of the DoEE.
27. An industry member from Mer questioned why the provision of data to support the management of the fishery and keep operators accountable is not compulsory. He suggested that the Hand Collectables Working Group discuss and put forward a recommendation to the PZJA in the context of legislative amendments to the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*, to amend the Act and make catch reporting enforceable. The AFMA member noted that the Fish Receiver System is mandatory and that AFMA has the ability to enforce this. The AFMA compliance officer reminded the group that it is an offence under the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* not to comply with the requirements of the Fish Receiver System.
28. An industry observer asked about the impacts of fisheries being closed (e.g. Black Teatfish) and if that data is not available a part of the story is missing. This is particularly important for species like White Teatfish which has a TAC but is inaccessible due to the hookah ban. A CSIRO observer acknowledged that the Harvest Strategy will try to capture these data gaps and provide guidance on how to best understand the fishery

using other data and information in other ways where there are unknowns. The research member added that obtaining data in the TSBDMF is one of the greatest challenges.

2.2.2 AFMA Compliance Update

29. An AFMA compliance officer provided a brief update regarding compliance activities in the Torres Strait. The Working Group noted the following key points:

- AFMA has officially taken on the role of delivering the domestic compliance program from the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) as of 1 July 2018.
- There have been a number of seizures in tropical rock lobster and mud crab, as well as investigations of illegal hookah use and other potential offences.
- Currently, there is no mechanism for administering infringement notices for minor offences, however AFMA is looking to amend the Regulations to enable this. Alternatively, the Commonwealth Prosecutor must be satisfied there is public interest in a case, for an offence to progress to court.
- The Thursday Island compliance team is recruiting a third member to assist with the increase in work load.
- Key focus areas of the compliance team include data recovery and intelligence, profile building and port and freight inspections.
- Industry members are strongly encouraged to report any illegal or suspicious activity to AFMA.

30. An industry representative expressed frustration about the difficulties in understanding or finding out the outcomes of reported non-compliance. The AFMA compliance officer informed the group that if an investigation is taking place, with potential court action, then details around the case cannot be shared, however, once the case reaches the Courts, the information enters the public domain. He added that every report provided to AFMA does get recorded in the system, however it is not always possible to report back to the informant about the outcomes.

31. Industry members requested that a brief update or report back to the informant is appreciated.

2.2.3 Fish Receiver System

32. The AFMA member provided an overview of the Fish Receiver System (FRS). The Working Group noted the following key points:

- The FRS has been in place for seven months, since December 2017.
- AFMA has received some good catch and effort information through the new system, however some improvements are still needed.
- The FRS is a critical component to fisheries management across Australia. Accurate reporting and catch monitoring against TACs and individual catch allocations is not only important to ensure the sustainability of fisheries but also to maintain general compliance and integrity of management arrangements. This is particularly important when considering openings of the Black Teatfish fishery, or the potential for the Prickly Redfish fishery to close.
- The data received through the FRS is also very helpful in providing evidence to the DoEE regarding export approvals.
- The data received through the fish receiver system has:
 - a) been used to monitor catch in the Torres Strait Fisheries;

- b) been used to create Catch Watch reports for the Tropical Rock Lobster fishery to keep industry informed of how the fishery is performing as a whole and how many kilograms of a TAC remain. AFMA is working to produce similar regular reports for each of the Torres Strait fisheries;
 - c) been used for Government reporting e.g. Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics yearly fishery reports supported Compliance operations, and
 - d) been used by PZJA Working Groups to inform recommendations and management decisions.
- The AFMA member reminded the Working Group of the responsibilities of both fishers and fish receivers when landing commercial product under the fish receiver system.
 - AFMA has identified a number of issues that are occurring in the Beche-de-merBeche-de-mer fishery that need to be resolved, including:
 - a) Unauthorised agents completing catch disposal records.
 - b) Product being landed at unregistered premises.
 - c) Product not being landed directly when it is brought on to land.
 - d) The product is then landed and a CDR completed when it is received on the mainland.
 - e) CDRs not being returned within 3 days of the catch being landed. This is a condition of the fish receiver licence.
 - f) CDRs not being completed when the catch is received. Feedback from fish receivers suggests that a single CDR is completed for each fisher, when enough product has been received. This can occur over a number of landings.
 - g) Unreported catch. AFMA suspect that there are Beche-de-merBeche-de-mer fishers and buyers that are not reporting their catch.
33. AFMA sought feedback from the Working Group about the FRS to better understand some of the barriers to reporting through the FRS, including ways to resolve these issues.
34. An industry member questioned why the Torres Strait Prawn industry is not required to use the fish receiver system. The AFMA member explained that alternative management controls are used in the Torres Strait Prawn fishery (TSPF). The TSPF has input control limits on how much effort (number of fishing days) is undertaken, rather than output controls limiting how much product is caught or landed. The TSPF also use very detailed mandatory logbooks which is compared to observer data for verification.
35. Another industry member questioned the reporting of bycatch, particularly tropical rock lobster and pearl shell in the TSPF, as there are reportedly large numbers of these species taken as bycatch. The AFMA member noted that bycatch details are recorded and supported by an independent observer data collection program. There are also stringent requirements for using bycatch reduction devices.
36. Industry recommend that the TSPF be subject to the mandatory fish receiver system in line with the rest of Torres Strait fisheries.
37. Industry sought clarification on the following questions:
- a) If a licenced receiver in Cairns has an agent in the Torres Strait, does that make the agent a receiver also?
 - b) Does each person who receives the catch need to fill out a new CDR?
 - c) As a fisher wanting to unload his catch to any island, does he need to find a licenced fish receiver on that island to unload to?

- d) Does someone who fishes commercially by walking on the reef, not using a boat, still require a TIB licence?
- e) Can an un-licenced traditional inhabitant person fish under another person's TIB licence in a boat?
- f) What criteria does a person need to meet to become a licenced fish receiver?
- g) Can a TIB fisher offload their own catch to themselves as a fish receiver?
- h) Can a TIB fisher who is also a licenced fish receiver out on his boat (Fisher/Fish receiver A on boat A), receive catch from another licenced TIB fisher (Fisher B on boat B) who pulls up alongside him to offload his catch?
- i) Further to that, can Fisher/Fish Receiver A contract those people from boat B to work as processors on boat A, if their vessels are not attached to boat A?

ACTION ITEM #3 – AFMA to clarify and report back to industry regarding rules about licencing and the fish receiver system.

38. An industry member reported an issue where fishers come to offload to a licenced fish receiver but depart before signing the 'fisher details' section of the CDR form.
39. Given the level of uncertainty from industry about the rules surrounding the fish receiver system, the Working Group recommended that additional visits out to the communities, and a specific workshop, would help industry members better understand the Fish Receiver System. It was suggested that local radio and media is a useful tool to help communicate information.

RECOMMENDATION #1 – AFMA and TSRA to hold a Fish Receiver System education and awareness workshop for industry ahead of the TSRA Fisheries Summit in late August 2018.

40. An industry observer highlighted the importance of ensuring the correct safeguards are in place to prevent mis-reporting and logbook manipulation by fishers who are also fish receivers. The AFMA member reminded the group that the FRS does try to mitigate that issue by requiring two different entities to sign each part of the document. If the fisher is also a fish receiver, he/she cannot sign both parts of the form. An authorised agent must sign on their behalf as the fish receiver. This is further strengthened with the requirement to return the CDR to AFMA within three days of landing.
41. Further, the group noted that all commercial catch must be landed at the first point of landing to a licenced fish receiver, whether they be on land, or another vessel/carrier. A catch disposal record (CDR must be completed at this point. It was noted the receiver at the first point of landing may not necessarily be a buyer.
42. An industry member from Mer queried whether there should be a limit on the number of fish receivers within the industry, believing that only those who are active in the industry should possess a licence. The AFMA member noted that at present, a proposal for any limitation on licences would need very strong rationale and require to be put forward to the PZJA. The PZJA's policy of maximising the opportunities for Island participation in all sectors of the commercial fishing industry would need to be considered.
43. The Malu Lamar representative proposed that the entire Torres Strait licencing arrangements need to be reviewed and this should be discussed at the upcoming TSRA Fisheries Summit.

2.2.4 Legislative Amendments

44. The AFMA member provided a brief overview of the status of the proposed amendments to the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* (the Act) and the *Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985* (the Regulations). The Working Group noted the following key points:

- AFMA is progressing amendments to the Act and Regulations. These amendments will provide for:
 - a) the ability to require catch reporting across all licence holders;
 - b) the ability to provide electronic licensing and monitoring to licence holders;
 - c) the ability to delegate the powers to grant and vary scientific and development permits;
 - d) the ability to simplify the renewal of fishing licences;
 - e) the ability to delegate powers to contracted service providers;
 - f) for the simplification of the disclosure of fisheries information; and
 - g) the ability to issue Fisheries Infringement Notices.
- The amendment to provide for catch reporting across all licence holders will allow for the implementation of mandatory daily logbook reporting by TIB licence holders. This will provide for improved data on which to base management advice and decisions.
- Opportunities to provide comment on the proposed amendments will be provided to fishers, their communities and the general public as the amendments are progressed.
- The amendment process is lengthy and complex, and is expected to take a number of years.

45. The Malu Lamar representative advised that Malu Lamar is a critical stakeholder and must be consulted on all issues. Other industry members strongly supported this, adding that Malu Lamar should be a member of the PZJA and be a part of the decision making process.

ACTION ITEM #1 – AFMA to ensure Malu Lamar is included in all aspects of consultation regarding the proposed legislative amendments to the Act and the Regulations.

46. The TSRA fisheries portfolio member advised that any changes to the composition of the PZJA forum memberships would need to be submitted as a proposal to the PZJA.

47. An industry observer asked if there will be an avenue for members to propose their own legislative amendments. The Chair clarified that stakeholders will be provided with a draft proposal for all legislative amendments which may be the opportunity to provide additional suggestions.

48. The Malu Lamar representative suggested to the group that the ban on hookah breathing apparatus in the White Teatfish fishery also be included in any legislative changes, and changes to the boat policy in the TSBDMF also be considered. The AFMA member reminded the group that legislative amendments to the Act or Regulations is not the appropriate mechanism for lifting the hookah ban in the White Teatfish fishery.

49. Given this, an industry observer questioned whether a request could be submitted to the PZJA to lift the ban on the use of hookah out of session. The TSRA fisheries portfolio member noted that such a proposal needs to be tabled at a Working Group initially.

50. Industry expressed concern that the process for change is too slow and asked why a request to lift the hookah ban cannot be expedited in a way that other changes to fisheries management appear to have occurred previously. The TSRA fisheries portfolio

member noted that the changes referred to were made by the CEO of AFMA who has the delegation under the Act to do so. The TSRA member added that he believed there are two mechanisms in which the PZJA can initiate change; either through legislative amendments to the Act and Regulations, which is typically a very long timeframe (2-3 years) or alternatively through legislative instruments which are enacted through a delegate under the Act. Instruments are used to make changes to the day-to-day management of the fishery as necessary and are the mechanism in which other changes have been made previously.

RECOMMENDATION #2 – AFMA to work on shortening the timeframe to progress the legislative amendments over concern that the process is too time-consuming.

2.2.5 TSRA Update

51. The TSRA member provided a verbal update on the latest activities in the fisheries program. The next milestone will be the Fisheries Summit in late August which is hoped to provide a platform for productive discussions on the way forward for all fisheries in the Torres Strait region. The membership of TIB representation in PZJA forums will also be discussed and will be informed by a review that is currently being undertaken by Tim Skewes. The review will cover the experiences that current members have had over their last term of representation and recommend ways forward for future membership representation and how the TSRA can better support members for the next term.
52. The TSRA recently secured funding (approximately \$4.5 million) from the Northern Australia Fund for fisheries infrastructure upgrades in the Torres Strait aimed at repairing, upgrading or renewing facilities for fisheries infrastructure. Currently, a TSRA project officer is currently visiting Fishing Associations in islands in the Torres Strait as a follow up from the fisheries infrastructure audit that was conducted earlier in 2018.
53. A traditional inhabitant industry representative expressed concerns about the way consultation was undertaken for the infrastructure audit stating that consultation should have been targeted at individuals rather than communities, as it is individual TIB operators that are working in this industry.
54. The TSRA Fisheries Portfolio member expressed strong support for individual operators but noted there are terms and conditions associated with government funding packages which can be an issue when providing funding for communities. The TSRA needs to ensure that individuals can be well supported to access those communal facilities.
55. The Chair acknowledged that the distribution of these funds is very important and suggested that the portfolio member communicate any industry comments back to the TSRA Board.
56. Several industry members expressed concerns over past community infrastructure projects that have failed, adding that these failures must be recognised to ensure we learn from those lessons. There needs to be a way to support the individual operators to access the funds as individuals rather than as a community. The TSRA Fisheries Portfolio member and TSRA member advised that there are avenues for individuals to access those funds. A Fishery Business Grant Package under the Regional Economic Investment Strategy is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living and working in the region. These people can apply to the TSRA at an individual or company level for support through a combination of loans, grants and business support. To date, four successful applicants have accessed the funding package.

2.2.6 QDAF Update

57. The AFMA member provided a brief summary of the QDAF update on behalf of the QDAF member. The Working Group noted the following key points:

- The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy was released in June 2018
- The Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel has been appointed comprised of experts in the fields of fish biology, fishery management, stock assessment modelling, economic and social science and will provide independent advice to the Minister responsible for fisheries and Fisheries Queensland on best practice fisheries management and implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.
- Fishery working groups will be established to provide operational advice and engage stakeholders from all sectors in the development of harvest strategies and day to day management of fisheries.
- The Sea Cucumber Fishery Working Group has been appointed and since then have met in March and June 2018.
- The East Coast Sea Cucumber Fishery has been operating under a Rotational Harvest Scheme for 15 years. A comprehensive catch data set has been recorded for each zone throughout this time and will be used to inform future management arrangements.
- Industry has requested the TACC for Black Teatfish be increased from zero and include the species in the development of the harvest strategy. The Expert Panel will review the independent Black Teatfish survey results at the July meeting and provide further advice to Fisheries Queensland.
- The Working Group is scheduled to meet again in November to review the draft harvest strategy.

2.3 Native Title update

58. The representative of the Malu Lamar (Torres Strait Islanders) Corporation RNTBC advised that the Part B Sea Claim is still in progress.

59. He also advised that Malu Lamar will continue to advocate for the Corporation to be a member on each PZJA forum as well as the PZJA itself

60. The Chair added that the involvement of Malu Lamar in the HCWG is highly valued and is a very beneficial component to the working group.

61. The Malu Lamar representative queried some of the information presented in paragraphs 7 and 11 of the agenda paper (2.3). The Chair advised the group to inform AFMA if there is any errors in the working group papers, so they may be corrected.

ACTION ITEM #2 – AFMA to clarify the information in paragraphs 7 and 11 of Agenda Item paper 2.3.

2.4 PNG National Fisheries Authority update

62. This agenda item was not discussed as the PNG NFA Invited Participant was not in attendance.

3 Management

3.1 Research update and priorities

63. The Research Member provided a brief verbal update on Beche-de-mer research projects and the Working Group noted the following key points:

- The most recent surveys conducted in the Torres Strait were in 2009, the Warrior Reef survey in 2010 and the 2012 Warrior Reef experimental fishing survey.
- The east coast fishery has conducted ongoing burrowing blackfish surveys.
- A recent Black Teatfish survey has just been completed, which is showing signs of recovery and may support a re-opening of that fishery.
- CITES listing for teatfish and sandfish is very likely. If successful, non-detriment findings will be required to export product out of the Torres Strait. This may provide greater marketability for Beche-de-mer product out of the Torres Strait, provided that sustainability can be demonstrated.
- Western Australia fisheries are pursuing Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification in their Beche-de-mer fisheries to add value to their product.
- Reports of poaching in the Moreton Bay area.
- PNG fisheries have re-opened their sandfish fishery.

64. The AFMA member also provided a summary regarding the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) and Strategic Research Plan (SRP).

65. The TSSAC now requires each fishery to develop a five year fisheries research plan, which fits into the three themes identified in the SRP:

- a) Protecting the Torres Strait marine environment for the benefit of Traditional Inhabitants
- b) Social and economic benefits
- c) Technology and innovation

66. The five year plans are to be updated annually, thus always having a five year projection for research.

67. The HCWG was asked to consider the themes of the SRP and discuss and advise on future research priorities for hand collectable fisheries over the coming five years.

68. The Working Group agreed that progressing work on the Harvest Strategy would help to identify additional research priorities including:

- a) Standardising conversion ratios
- b) Understanding biological parameters (growth, mortality, breeding)

69. An industry member noted that Malu Lamar must be consulted regarding any research conducted in the Torres Strait and that the research protocols previously developed by Dr Nakata must be adhered to.

70. Industry members strongly recommended that full time TIB fishers take part in any research, noting that it is a good opportunity to encourage ownership in the process, and share in local knowledge.

3.2 Catch data summary

71. The AFMA member provided a brief overview of the catch data summary for the Torres Strait hand collectables fisheries. The Working Group noted the following key points:

- Fishing activity in both the Pearl Shell and Trochus Fisheries remains negligible. The low level of catch and effort in the Pearl Shell and Trochus Fisheries is thought to be due to low market demand rather than a decline in stock availability.

- Fishing activity in the Beche-de-mer fishery has increased and is largely attributable to increased interest associated with two trial Black Teatfish openings in 2015 and 2016.
- As of 2 July 2018, the total number of issued licences by fishery and type were as follows:

Table 5. Summary of licences issued in each fishery.

Fishery	TIB licences	TVH licences	Carrier Boat licences
Beche-de-mer	123	1 package (held in trust by TSRA)	14 (B and C)
Pearl shell	61	9 packages	13 (A, B and C)
Trochus	69	-	7 (A, B and C)

- Total reported catch of Beche-de-mer through catch disposal records (TDB02) as of 29 June 2018 was 26.14 tonnes.
- 16.82 tonnes (approximately 64 per cent) of this total was from basket species including curryfish.
- Most notably, 8.64 tonnes of Prickly Redfish was reported. This equates to approximately 60 per cent of the TAC, half way through the season.

72. An industry member queried the seemingly high number of carrier boat licences listed in the TSBDMF. The group noted that this number includes barges or similar vessels such as Sea Swift boats and that the details of who holds these licences is available on the public register of Torres Strait licences, on the AFMA website.

73. The package of TVH beche-de-me licences held in trust by the TSRA was queried by an industry invited participant as it is widely understood that the Beche-de-mer is 100 per cent traditionally owned. The TSRA fisheries portfolio member and an industry observer to the meeting reminded the group that the licence was bought out by the TSRA when the PZJA took over the management of fisheries within the Torres Strait. In the event that the TVH licence was to be leased out, substantial consultation would be undertaken and any decision made would be for traditional inhabitants as a preference.

74. An industry observer questioned whether the 7m TIB boat length restrictions apply to the TVH licence, and advised the group that Malu Lamar will be seeking to have the 7m boat length restriction lifted.

75. Noting the catch summary provided for curryfish (15.37 tonnes), an industry invited participant highlighted that the numbers presented do not accurately reflect what is harvested as discarded product is not included. He added that the CDRs are not capturing the significant amount of wasted/discarded curryfish which is contributing to the overall total harvest. An additional field or code was suggested to help capture this data. Further, he suggested that with recent increased interest in that species, and high discard rates, there needs to be consideration of a separate TAC for curryfish species outside of the 80 tonne basket to ensure the sustainability of the species.

76. The AFMA member acknowledged that capturing information on discards is very important, however it might be best captured within the daily fishing log, rather than CDRs.

77. A CSIRO observer added that the idea of a separate TAC is being considered under the development of a harvest strategy for Beche-de-mer species. A recommendation was made through the last Harvest Strategy Workshop for a 60 tonne TAC for curryfish species with a trigger for *Stichopus vastus*, inclusive of discards. The remainder basket species TAC would then likely be reduced from 80 tonnes down to 60 tonnes. It is critical to understand species specific catch details including the amount of discarded product

as well as the conversion ratios for boiled product versus discarded product to inform these potential TAC numbers.

78. All industry members expressed support for a separate TAC for curryfish, in addition to the 80 tonne basket species TAC.
79. The research member reminded the group that in the last BDM survey, the estimate biomass for curryfish was 734 tonnes, with a recommended trigger for curryfish of 40 tonnes. At that time, the Working Group advised that a separate TAC was not necessary as curryfish was not heavily targeted. However, given that effort on curryfish has since increased, the 40 tonne trigger may still be relevant.
80. An industry invited participant advised that some industry members from Ugar have been proactive in reporting the different species, with retained and discarded weights to AFMA through CDRs.

RECOMMENDATION #3 – To implement a separate TAC for curryfish species, in addition to the 80 tonne basket species TAC through the Harvest Strategy.

3.3 Pearl Shell & Trochus Fisheries

81. This agenda item was not discussed due to the limited fishing effort in both fisheries.

3.4 Black Teatfish

82. The AFMA member provided an overview of agenda item paper 3.4 on Black Teatfish, including a brief summary of the history of the fishery. The Working Group noted the following key points:
- Beche-de-mer species are particularly vulnerable to over catching, which is evident in the catches of Black Teatfish in the past.
 - The Black Teatfish fishery was opened as a trial in both 2014 and 2015. The 15 tonne TAC was exceeded in both instances.
 - The PZJA agreed (out of session, February 2017) that fishing for Black Teatfish will remain closed until the risk of exceeding the TAC is substantially reduced through cost-effective management tools;
 - As per a recommendation from the HCWG in 2016, a mandatory fish receiver system was implemented on 1 December 2017 to facilitate accurate catch reporting in the fishery.
83. The AFMA member noted that although the FRS still requires some improvements, AFMA is very supportive of undertaking another Black Teatfish opening. The Working Group was asked to discuss and advise on management arrangements needed to support any future opening for Black Teatfish, noting:
- a) the arrangements AFMA has implemented to date to support any future opening (VMS, FRS and the public licence register) and the review of the FRS presented at item 2.2.2;
 - b) the work still underway on the Beche-de-mer harvest strategy and legislative amendments to the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* which will support the future development of the Beche-de-mer Fishery;
 - c) previous management arrangements that have been considered to date by the Industry Workshop, Working Group and AFMA.
 - d) that any management requirements discussed, would need to be met and consistently demonstrated for a period of time prior to a Black Teatfish opening being considered.

84. One industry member expressed concern about the potential increase in TIB fishing effort should the Black Teatfish re-open, particularly given that there was a rapid increase in TIB licences following the first opening of Black Teatfish. An influx of effort would pose a disadvantage for those full time industry members currently active within the fishery.
85. Another industry member supported the use of daily fishing logs, in addition to the fish receiver system for a Black Teatfish opening to provide catch and effort information. He advised that in a good days fishing, one dinghy may catch up to 400kg of product. With a small TAC and high fishing effort, a CSIRO observer questioned if there is capacity to cope with such high volumes of product over a short time frame and suggested it may be better to spread the fishing effort out.
86. An industry invited participant from Ugar raised similar concerns over increased fishing effort due to the high value of Black Teatfish. With additional concerns over the consistency in reporting through the FRS in the Beche-de-mer fishery overall, the potential increase of effort needs to be carefully managed. He suggested that only the five key eastern island communities, who are the most active in the Beche-de-mer fishery, be able to participate and that all Black Teatfish be channelled through these communities.
87. The Working Group discussed some management options to support a Black Teatfish opening:
- a) encouraging payment of a nominal fee to participate in a Black Teatfish opening, and to disperse the TAC among “access buyers”.
 - b) endorsing specific fish receivers in each of the five islands who can receive Black Teatfish. Some industry members expressed concern about limiting flexibility if only certain fish receivers are endorsed
 - c) providing additional resourcing to support fishers in reporting their catches and requiring landed product to be reported by 9am daily.
 - d) establishing an alert system to notify fishers when they are approaching the TAC limit – through VHF radio
 - e) Holding an opening during the TRL season, but during a hookah closure to prevent a potential transfer of fishing effort.
 - f) a mechanism to control the increase in people wanting to access the Black Teatfish fishery when it opens. Suggestion to only allow marked dinghies from the five key islands to fish.
88. The Executive officer noted that if improvements through the FRS can be demonstrated through other species (e.g. Prickly Redfish) over the coming months this will help towards building a solid proposal to the PZJA to reopen Black Teatfish. An opening is contingent on the FRS working well and demonstrating that the risk of over harvesting Black Teatfish can be mitigated.
89. Noting that decisions through the PZJA take some time with consultation, particularly if limited access is proposed, an opening is unlikely before the end of 2018. Consideration of the WTO Export Approval is also needed. Suggestions for a February or March opening, to align market availability with Chinese New Year and higher prices when the TRL catch rates tend to increase were put forward. A February opening is not supported by the community of Ugar.
90. November or December is preferred as the weather is calmer, and it provides economic opportunity for communities ahead of Christmas. This was supported by the industry invited participant from Ugar.
91. An industry observer suggested to double the TAC in one year with a defined period opening (e.g. 10 days) and have no opening the following year. This was not supported by Ugar.

92. The group acknowledged that the timeline for a decision by the PZJA will be determined by the type of model presented, i.e. limited access, or open access, and therefore determine when an opening may occur. It was also recognised that the more time available to improve catch reporting, the greater the chances of the PZJA being satisfied that the risk of over catching the TAC has been reduced.
93. Ugar and Erub remain unsupportive of an opening until there is more confidence in the FRS and the reporting of data.

RECOMMENDATION #4 – That AFMA prepare a proposal for the PZJA, for a Black Teatfish trial opening in December 2019, following consultation with communities about potential limited access for the five key eastern islands and to include a basis for scientific data to support the proposal after the finalisation of the harvest strategy.

3.5 Prickly Redfish

94. The AFMA member provided a brief update on the most recent management actions for Prickly Redfish. Most notably:
- The PZJA Standing Committee endorsed the reduction of the Prickly Redfish TAC from 20 down to 15 tonnes effective as of 1 January 2018 through the variation of TIB licences.
 - The Standing Committee also agreed that any continued fishing for Prickly Redfish be contingent on having reliable catch data in order to monitor and enforce the TAC.
 - Without any new information on stock status, and if catch reporting is still considered to be unreliable, the PZJA will need to further consider closure of the Prickly Redfish fishery.
 - As of 29 June 2018, the reported catch of Prickly Redfish through catch disposal records was 8.64 tonnes, which equates to approximately 60 per cent of the TAC, half way into the fishing season. However, due to uncertainty in the completeness of the FRS data, the catch of Prickly Redfish is likely to be greater than what has been reported to date.
 - Industry have observed declines in abundance of Prickly Redfish across many key fishing grounds and with fishers having to fish further afield and/or for a longer time to maintain good catch rates.
95. Industry members supported the idea of regular catchwatch reports to alert BDM fishers when the TAC is being approached, and encourage regular reporting. Text messages, community notices and radio announcements are useful for communicating catchwatch alerts. Alerts may encourage a voluntary slowing of fishing effort to ensure the TAC is not over caught and provide a way for fishers to demonstrate responsiveness to the information in providing timely CDR reports.
96. Some concerns were raised that such notifications would encourage a “race to fish” to harvest the remainder of the TAC before the fishery is potentially closed.
97. The AFMA member noted that the cut off point for a potential closure will depend on the time lag in reporting with some understanding of catch rates.

RECOMMENDATION #5 – AFMA to consider using catchwatch alerts to advise BDM fishers how catches of Prickly Redfish are tracking relative to the TAC.

3.6 Future Management Priorities

98. The AFMA member noted that the key future management priorities for hand collectable fisheries are:

- Progressing the Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy
- Developing a Beche-de-mer management plan
- Continuing education and awareness training with the Fish Receiver System
- Improving communication and engagement with industry

3.7 Budget for 2018/19

99. The Working Group noted a brief verbal breakdown of the allocated budget for conducting Hand Collectables Working Group meetings and Harvest Strategy workshops.

100. Fishers were reminded to advise of any travel changes for meetings well in advance to avoid penalty and cancellation fees with airlines.

4 Other business

4.1 PZJA forum traditional inhabitant representation

101. Traditional Inhabitant members were reminded that their membership expired on 30 June 2018. AFMA, on behalf of the PZJA is offering an extension to each members' current term of appointment on the Hand Collectables Working Group until 31 December 2018, or until the appointment of new members is finalised.

102. The Working Group noted that the nomination of new memberships would take place at the upcoming Fisheries Summit in August 2018.

4.2 Hookah ban and White Teatfish (out of session)

103. The issue of the hookah ban was discussed out of session during the CSIRO Harvest Strategy Workshop on Wednesday 25 July.

104. Industry members expressed concern over the existing ban on using hookah to fish for Beche-de-mer, particularly for high value species such as White Teatfish which inhabit deeper water (greater than 20m). White Teatfish is currently inaccessible due to its depth, and the occupational health and safety risks involved with freediving to such depths.

105. One industry invited participant from Ugar was not supportive of lifting the hookah ban unless the appropriate management controls could be implemented and demonstrated by industry to ensure the harvest could be managed sustainably.

106. CSIRO noted that the use of hookah poses a greater risk to Beche-de-mer fisheries and reiterated the importance of having stringent processes in place for reporting and monitoring to build a case to support lifting the hookah ban. CSIRO also acknowledged that the stock status of White Teatfish below 20m is not well understood as the species has never been surveyed past those depths.

107. Industry members were supportive of putting together a discussion paper to the PZJA to propose lifting the hookah ban in order to fish for White Teatfish. In support of this, the TSRA member made a commitment for the TSRA to assist traditional inhabitant licence holders in developing a discussion paper to the PZJA to propose lifting the hookah ban to fish for White Teatfish.

108. The group agreed that the White Teatfish hookah ban issue needs to be included on the next HCWG meeting agenda.

ACTION ITEM #4 – TSRA to assist TIB licence holders to develop a proposal to lift the hookah ban when fishing for White Teatfish, to be put to the PZJA for consideration.

5 Close of Meeting

109. The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions throughout the meeting and the meeting was closed at 5.45pm with a prayer by Mr Seriako Stephen.

Attachment A – Adopted Agenda

13th MEETING OF THE TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP

24 July 2018 (8:30 am – 5:00 pm)

TSRA Board Room, Lv 1, 46 Victoria Parade

ADOPTED AGENDA

1. Preliminaries

- 1.1. Opening prayer, acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, welcome and apologies
- 1.2. Adoption of agenda
- 1.3. Declarations of interest
- 1.4. Action items from previous meetings
- 1.5. Out of session correspondence

2. Fishery Updates

- 2.1. Industry
- 2.2. Government
 - 2.2.1. Export approvals under the EPBC Act
 - 2.2.2. AFMA Compliance Update
 - 2.2.3. Fish receiver system
 - 2.2.4. Legislative amendments
 - 2.2.5. TSRA Update
 - 2.2.6. QDAF Update
- 2.3. Native Title
- 2.4. PNG National Fisheries Authority

3. Management

- 3.1. Research update and priorities
- 3.2. Catch data summary
- 3.3. Pearl and Trochus Shell Fisheries
- 3.4. Black Teatfish
- 3.5. Prickly Redfish
- 3.6. Future management priorities
- 3.7. Budget for 2018/19

4. Other business

5. Date and venue for next meeting

Summary of New Action Items

#	Meeting #	Action item	Responsibility
1	13 (24 July 2018)	AFMA to ensure Malu Lamar is included in all aspects of consultation regarding the proposed legislative amendments to the Act and the Regulations.	AFMA
2	13 (24 July 2018)	AFMA to clarify the information in paragraphs 7 and 11 of Agenda Item paper 2.3.	AFMA
3	13 (24 July 2018)	AFMA to clarify answers and report back to industry regarding the rules about licencing and the fish receiver system.	AFMA
4	Out of Session	The TSRA to assist TIB licence holders to develop a proposal to lift the hookah ban when fishing for White Teatfish, to be put up to the PZJA for consideration.	TSRA

Summary of Meeting Recommendations

#	Recommendation
1	AFMA and TSRA to hold a Fish Receiver System education and awareness workshop for industry the day before the TSRA Fisheries Summit in late August 2018.
2	AFMA to work on shortening the timeframe to progress the legislative amendments over concern that the process is too time-consuming.
3	To implement a separate TAC for curryfish species, in addition to the 80 tonne basket species TAC through the Harvest Strategy.
4	That AFMA prepare a proposal for the PZJA, for a Black Teatfish trial opening in December 2019, following consultation with communities about potential limited access for the five key eastern islands and to include a basis for scientific data to support the proposal after the finalisation of the harvest strategy.
5	AFMA to consider using catchwatch alerts to advise BDM fishers how catches of Prickly Redfish are tracking relative to the TAC.