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Australian Fisheries Management Authority



TORRES STRAIT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING NO. 66

MINUTES

27 MARCH 2015

CHAIR: MR IAN CARTWRIGHT

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



AGENDA

1. Meeting Administration

- 1.1. Preliminaries - Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/Chair's Opening Remarks/Meeting attendance/Declaration of Interests/Apologies
- 1.2. Review and Adoption of Agenda
- 1.3. Correspondence
- 1.4. Ratification of TSSAC 65 Minutes
- 1.5. Action Items from TSSAC 65

2. 2014/15 Research Project Update (ongoing)

- 2.1. Smart phone technology for remote data collection in the Torres Strait Traditional Inhabitant finfish fisheries (UTAS)
 - Presentation by PI
- 2.2. Tropical Rock Lobster Stock Assessments/Surveys (CSIRO)
 - Presentation by PI

Note – The Defining the status of Torres Strait Spanish mackerel to inform future fisheries allocation and sustainable fishing (JCU) and the Improved Torres Strait Prawn Fishery profitability for a sustained flow of benefits to Torres Strait Island communities (Cobalt) have had no further milestones due following the 28 January Meeting.

3. TSSAC Processes

- 3.1. Budget
- 3.2. Research pre proposal for assessment:
 - i. Turtle and Dugong - Improving Stock Assessments
- 3.3. Research full proposals for assessment:
 - i. Determination of the appropriate management units for Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea Spanish mackerel;
 - ii. Development and opportunities for the Torres Strait lobster TIB sector;
 - iii. Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Surveys/Stock Assessments and TAC estimation.

4. Other Business

- 4.1. Native Title Update (verbal)
- 4.2. Update from PZJA Forums (verbal)
- 4.3. Confirmation of TSSAC No. 67 (Teleconference)

Individuals wishing to attend the meeting as an observer are required to contact the Chair, Mr. Ian Cartwright: c/o TSSAC Executive Officer – Alicia Sabatino (Alicia.sabatino@afma.gov.au) to notify of your desire to attend.





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ATTENDANCE – TSSAC #66 (27 March 2015)

The following members and observers were in attendance at TSSAC No. 66:

Members & Observers

Name	Membership Status	Declaration of Interest
Mr. Ian Cartwright	Member	Chairperson, AFMA Commissioner and Independent Consultant
Mr. Shane Fava	Member	AFMA Fisheries Manager, Torres Strait Fisheries
Ms. Alicia Sabatino	Member	AFMA Executive Officer, Torres Strait Fisheries
Dr Michael O'Neill	Member	Fisheries Scientist, DAFF
Ms. Sevaly Sen	Member	Independent Consultant
Dr Stephen Newman	Member	Fisheries Scientist, Department of Fisheries, Western Australia
Mr. Tom Roberts	Member	Fisheries Management Officer, QDAFF
Ms. Mariana Nahas	Member	Fisheries Project Manager, TSRA
Mr. Kiwat Lui	Member	Near Western, Cluster Representative
Dr Roland Pitcher	Member	Fisheries Scientist, CSIRO
Mr. Tony Vass	Member	Commercial Fishing Industry member
Mr. Kenny Bedford	Member	TSRA Board Member
Mr. Ned Larry	Member	Traditional Inhabitant Fisher
Mr. Joseph Posu	Member	Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority – Fisheries Management
Mr. Michael Passi	Member	Traditional Inhabitant Fisher
Ms. Selina Stoute	Observer	AFMA, Fisheries Manager

Apologies

No apologies were received.





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Action Items – TSSAC #66

No.	Action Item	Agenda no.	Champion	Due date
1	Invite the Indigenous Reference Group to the TSSAC meeting in October 2015. This will give them the opportunity to provide advice on pre proposals	1.4	AFMA	20 September 2015
2	The TSSAC agreed for AFMA to write a paper to Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group in time for the next meeting. The paper will need to outline the objectives of the group focusing on the future needs of the group.	3.2.1	AFMA	21 May 2015
3	The TSSAC Chair to write to the TSRA Chair and MG Kailis seeking co- funding for the Development and opportunities for the Torres Strait lobster TIB sector project.	3.3.2	TSSAC Chair	10 May 2015
4	Seek clarification from CSIRO on travel budget associated with Option C of their pre-proposal.	3.3.3	AFMA	25 April 2015
5	The TSSAC Chair to write to the TSRA seeking ongoing funding for other projects in the Torres Strait	4.1	AFMA	2 May 2015
6	Mr Tony Vass to discuss with Andrew Tobin regarding submission of a pre proposal for a pilot study to be conducted on Spanish mackerel and Ciguatera	4.1	Tony Vass	ASAP

MINUTES

Agenda Item 1 Preliminaries

Agenda Item 1.1 - Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/Chair's Opening Remarks/Meeting attendance/Declaration of Interests/Apologies

The Chair welcomed the TSSAC members, observers and acknowledged the traditional owners.





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Agenda Item 1.2 Review and Adoption of Agenda

The Chair requested that all members review the agenda and raise any additional items for inclusion. Mr Tony Vass mentioned the papers he had distributed regarding Ciguatera and the potential for research in this area, the committee noted that this issue will be considered under Agenda item 4 as part of Other Business. The AFMA representative indicated he would like to provide an update on the outcomes of the Traditional Inhabitant representation meeting and potential funding from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) The TSSAC noted the further items to the agenda.

Agenda Item 1.3 Correspondence

The Chair highlighted the outgoing correspondence containing reply letters to pre proposal applicants. The TSRA officer indicated that the letter addressed to Mr. David Welch regarding the *Empowering Torres Strait Islanders in the optimal harvest of coral trout* pre proposal would have links to the current Finfish Action Plan project being funded by the TSRA and FRDC (noting this is not a My Pathway project).

The TSSAC noted the incoming correspondence from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). It was noted that the correspondence indicated there was no support for the project in its current form, noting, however, that DFAT has a particular interest in the potential of cross border trade. The Chair sought advice from the Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority (PNG-NFA) officer regarding their support for this project; and in particular the level of funding that may be available. Mr. Joseph Posu indicated that there is some interest from the PNG-NFA however to shore up support, some tangible benefits for PNG should be included in the project, including capacity building for PNG-NFA officers. Mr. Posu indicated that there may be up to \$50,000 available for this project however they could make some exception to expanding the project and funds to the 2016 financial year, particularly if clear and tangible benefits to PNG could be demonstrated.

Agenda Item 1.4 Ratification of TSSAC 65 Minutes

The Committee noted the minutes from TSSAC Meeting 65, acknowledging that there were minor amendments made out of session and taken into account in the final minutes. The TSRA officer provided comments regarding the wording captured in the minutes and requested that TSRA be acknowledged for providing the funding for the review and revision of Dr. Martin Nakata's guide. The TSRA officers also mentioned that Mr Jerry Stephen (who was not present at this meeting) also had comments regarding the draft minutes seeking that the attendance register be changed recognising traditional inhabitant representatives from Observer to cluster rep. These comments were included and changed in the minutes as appropriate.

The minutes were ratified by the TSSAC as a true and accurate record of TSSAC Meeting 66.

Agenda Item 1.5 Action Items from TSSAC 65

The AFMA representative provided an update to the TSSAC on all completed and ongoing action items. The TSSAC agreed to the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) being invited to the October 2015 TSSAC meeting (Action Item 1). The committee felt that this would be a great opportunity for the IRG to provide input into the Annual Operational Plan/Strategic Research Plan.

Action Item 1 – Invite a representative of the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG) to the next TSSAC meeting to provide advice on pre-proposals

Agenda Item 2 2014/15 Research Project Update (Ongoing)





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Defining the status of Torres Strait Spanish Mackerel to inform future fisheries allocation and sustainable fishing

Mr. Andrew Tobin provided an update on what will be achieved over the upcoming months.

The Principal Investigator (PI) outlined three components for the project;

1. Spanish Mackerel Movement – Acoustic monitoring 30 tags were placed on individual Spanish Mackerel;
2. Desktop study has taken place capturing TVH data – AFMA TSF01 logbook
3. Formal Stock assessment – tools for controlling catch.

There were concerns amongst Traditional Representatives as to how accessible the data collected by the project would be; noting that some of the information collected is confidential. Mr. Lui, Cluster Representative for the Near Western communities explained at the previous meeting that another Cluster Representative had also raised his concerns relating to the sensitivity of data being accessed by people outside of the Torres Strait Community. He believed that this information could also fall into the hands of other fishermen, which could lead to over fishing in the Torres Strait.

The Committee along with Mr. Tobin noted the concerns of the Traditional Representatives regarding the sensitivity of data obtained from the project and outlined the data management provisions in the research contract aimed at mitigating such concerns.

Agenda Item 2.1 Smartphone technology for remote data collection in the Torres Strait Traditional Inhabitant finfish fishery

The AFMA representative provided the TSSAC with an update of the project noting that it is scheduled for completion by the end of this financial year. University of Tasmania Researchers Dan French and Klaus Hartmann attended the meeting and provided the TSSAC with a final presentation that captured an overview of the findings of the smartphone project noting that it is scheduled to be completed this year.

The TSSAC expressed their appreciation for the research outputs, and particularly for the way in which the researchers had adapted the initial project proposal to the needs and concerns of communities. Without this adaptation, it was unlikely that the project would have succeeded; as it eventuated, the project has been very successful and gained considerable support from communities and other stakeholders.

Dan French indicated to the TSSAC that there will be unspent funds that could see the project extended for another 12 months. The TSSAC agreed for AFMA to support the extension of the project with the remaining funds. The TSSAC also agreed to support the investigation of opportunities for the smartphone applications to be implemented in other fisheries in the Torres Strait in the near future.

Agenda Item 3 TSSAC Processes

Agenda Item 3.1 Budget

The TSSAC noted the current budget update for this and next financial year. The AFMA representative informed the TSSAC that the overall budget for next financial year is \$440K (noting that this may be reduced) and that the only committed funds for this period are to the *Defining the status of Torres Strait Spanish Mackerel to inform future fisheries allocation and sustainable fishing* project which is a total of \$98,097.

Agenda item 3.2.i Research pre proposal for assessment

Improving stock assessments of the Torres Strait dugong and green turtle





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The TSSAC considered the outcomes of the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group that met in Brisbane on 23 February 2015 and noted that the *Improving stock assessments of the Torres Strait dugong and green turtle* pre proposal had not been assessed by the group. The AFMA representative provided an update to the committee noting that the TSSAC will need to assess the pre proposal for this project at the current TSSAC meeting. Mr Roland Pitcher, who attended the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group, provided a brief update on some of the discussions that took place at the meeting. Some of the members of the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group felt that it was unnecessary to have catch data to ensure that the Dugong and Turtle harvest is sustainable. The Discussion Group also went on to say that they thought a stock assessment would not be successful in the Turtle and Dugong Fishery, noting the differences between this fishery and the majority of fisheries in Australia.

The Chair asked the Traditional Representatives for their views were and what they felt the best approach would be to ensure sustainable management of these species. The Cluster Representative for Mer explained that the best approach will be around education and informing stakeholders, and highlighted the importance of providing clear explanations to the people in the Torres Strait then progress onto collecting data once education has been given; and building relationships with communities and provide education prior to collecting data.

Member for the Near Western communities highlighted turtle and dugong management is a sensitive topic and he believed that data should not be recorded in this traditional fishery on the basis that such information may be released and used against indigenous communities. The TSRA Fisheries Portfolio Member also noted he was aware that there are concerns around how the turtle and dugong data will be used.

The TSSAC did not recommend supporting the proposed project at this point in time due to the sensitivities in this area as discussed. Whilst the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group did not fully address the question leading to its formation the TSSAC would like the group to meet again via teleconference. The Committee agreed that the TSSAC will need to write a paper clearly outlining advice from the TSSAC regarding what information is required from the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group. The AFMA representative indicated that the next Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group meeting will need to be scheduled in the next financial year.

The TSSAC agreed for a document to be prepared highlighting a need for a long term monitoring program for what catch levels are in communities, which would also highlight the sensitivities around such a program. There is a need to highlight all the communities' concerns in a single document. The TSSAC suggested the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group required two scientists from the TSSAC to ensure the key messages are communicated and recommendations are provided to the group. The TSSAC highlighted the purpose of the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group is to provide expert advice to TSSAC around research being conducted in the Turtle and Dugong fishery and should possess sufficient technical expertise on how to address concerns including sensitivity around data. The Chair highlighted the areas of sensitivities that needed to be addressed. Overall, it was agreed that the TSSAC needs to provide clear advice to the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group on precisely what the concerns of the Committee are regarding catch data and obtain the group's views on that advice.

Action Item 2- AFMA to write a paper to Turtle and Dugong Discussion Group in time for the next meeting. The paper will need to outline the objectives of the group focusing on the future needs of the group. The TSSAC also suggested there be two members at the Turtle and Dugong Scientific Discussion Group.





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Agenda Item 3.3.i Determination of the appropriate management units for Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea Spanish mackerel

The Committee reviewed the full proposal; noting that AFMA and the PI looked at co-funding opportunities for this project from the PNG-NFA and DFAT. The PNG-NFA again highlighted the need for capacity building initiatives within the project. Mr Newman explained to the PNG-NFA officer that there is a training course for rangers in the Northern Territory and that there may be potential to incorporate elements of this course into the proposed project, which could address some of the capacity building components (noting that this will depend on the budget).

At this stage Mr Stephen Newman left the room declaring his interest in the project. The TSSAC continued to discuss the project. In considering scoring the proposal according to the usual evaluation criteria the TSSAC noted that the timing of the project was not ideal as there is currently another TSSAC funded Spanish mackerel project underway which also focuses on movement but on a smaller scale and as such could not be supported at this time.

While acknowledging the value of the data that would come from the project the Committee noted that there is no current management need for such information given the continued low level of activity in the fishery.

It was also noted that there was a lack of capacity building components in the application. The Committee suggested that Traditional Inhabitants and PNG-NFA officers need to be involved in this research through capacity building initiatives.

The TSSAC recognised the strategic value of the proposed project and highlighted that the proposal ranked highly on feasibility. The TSSAC recommended that AFMA does not fund the proposed project.

Agenda Item 3.3.ii Development and opportunities for the Torres Strait lobster TIB sector

The AFMA representative provided an update on the proposal; the project is adding value to the TRL fishery and arrangements in the fishery relating to hookah closures. The Chair asked the Traditional Representatives for their views around the project. In response, Mr Bedford declared his support of the project; Ms Nahas from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) agreed that it was an important project. The TSSAC chair asked if there could be in-kind funding from the TSRA in support of the project and Ms Nahas agreed to take this back to the TSRA as she was not in a position to agree or commit funds.

The TSSAC agreed to recommend AFMA to fund the project agreeing to recommend a payment of \$20,000 for a sign on of the project. The Committee noted the importance of the project as there is a possibility the fishery will move to quota this year and the proposed project will support this decision.

The TSSAC noted that the MSE project was to investigate the early stages and the implications of quota as well as the social value and economic value. These topics were addressed in the MSE project noting that the *Development and opportunities for the Torres Strait lobster TIB sector* project reflects and addresses the findings of the MSE and this proposal is a broader project. The TSSAC suggested that Industry should provide funding for the project. Noting that the project is providing support to industry members in regards to leasing of quota.

Action Item 3-The TSSAC Chair to write to the TSRA Chair and MG Kailis seeking co-funding for the Development and opportunities for the Torres Strait lobster TIB sector project.





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The Chair asked the TIB Representatives if they would like to add any further information or questions, the representatives were happy with the outcomes to the full proposal and had no further input.

Agenda Item 3.3.iii Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Surveys/Stock Assessments and TAC estimation

The AFMA representative provided an update. The TSSAC noted the number of options (A, B, C, D) outlined in the full proposal, the Committee noted the options were provided on the basis that the fishery may move to quota this year and how this will impact the surveys. From a management perspective, which was also supported by other members of the TSSAC, Option C was agreed as ideal as it focuses on an output controlled fishery. High travel costs associated with this option were queried and the TSSAC agreed for AFMA to seek clarification on travel costs associated with Option C.

Action Item 4- AFMA to seek clarification on travel costs associated with Option C.

The TSSAC indicated that costs associated with staffing time may be reduced by having some of the members involved.

In summary the TSSAC agreed to recommend AFMA to fund the following full proposal applications for the following projects in priority order;

1. Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Surveys/Stock Assessments and TAC estimation (Option C);
2. Development and opportunities for the Torres Strait lobster TIB- The project will heavily rely on co funding from the TSRA and Industry (Action Item 3).

Agenda Item 4 Other Business

Agenda Item 4.1 Ciguatera (Requested by Mr Tony Vass)

Mr Tony Vass provided the TSSAC with an update and a report on Ciguatera in Queensland. At the previous TSSAC meeting in January 2015 Mr Vass asked the TSSAC if there would be scope for a project on Ciguatera. The Chair thanked Mr Vass for following this up and providing the TSSAC with some ideas. Mr Vass explained that there should be a small investigation into Ciguatera as a starting point to progressing onto further research. The Chair asked the AFMA representative to provide an idea as to how much funds will be required to undertake these studies. The AFMA representatives indicated the possibility of having a small scale Pilot study as Phase One and trying to allocate some of the remaining \$20,000 from the research budget. In response to a question from the Chair to the Committee for indications of support, questions were raised to what the priority need is for this research at this time.

The TSSAC suggested to Mr Vass that he work closely with Mr Tobin and submit a pre proposal to the TSSAC at the next face to face meeting in October 2015.

The AFMA representative provided an update relating to possible funding provided by the TSRA for a number projects. The TSRA indicated to AFMA that there is a need for a finfish project based on subsistence fishing in the Torres Strait. The project will be based on a survey that focuses on traditional subsistence take; AFMA will need to speak to Tim Skewes from CSIRO. The Chair acknowledged and thanked the TSRA for the funding support. The TSSAC noted the need for possibly ongoing funding for other projects in the Torres Strait.

Action Item 5- The TSSAC Chair to write to the TSRA seeking ongoing funding for other projects in the Torres Strait.

Action Item 6 – Mr Tony Vass to discuss with Andrew Tobin regarding submission of pre proposal for a pilot study to be conducted on Spanish mackerel and ciguatera





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Agenda Item 4.3 Confirmation of TSSAC meeting 67.

The TSSAC agreed for Meeting 67 to be held on 19 June 2015 via teleconference.

RATIFIED

