



**Australian Government**

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**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**

# **Torres Strait Fisheries Community Visits Report**

**April - May 2019**

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# 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 Iama, 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
<b>Masig (Yorke)</b>	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
<b>Erub (Darnley)</b>	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.	
<b>Boigu</b>	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.	
<b>Poruma (Coconut)</b>	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
<b>Badu</b>	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.	
<b>Ugar (Stephen)</b>	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.
<b>Saibai</b>	Not discussed.	Not discussed.	Generally supported.	
<b>Warraber (Sue)</b>	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.
<b>Mer (Murray)</b>	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.
<b>New Mapoon (NPA)</b>	No concerns raised.	No concerns raised.	No formally expressed support or concerns raised.	Concern with the use of hookah on the tops of reefs.
<b>Injinoo (NPA)</b>	No concerns raised.	No concerns raised.	No formal support or concerns raised.	
<b>Thursday Island (Torres Shire)</b>	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"> <li>- Negative impact on TRL</li> <li>- Negative impact on availability of coral trout and ability to fish for subsistence (kai kai)</li> </ul>	Concerns with how the TSSAC identifies research priorities in the Torres Strait.
<b>Mabuiag</b>	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

<b>Date</b>	8 April 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Georgia Langdon and Natalie Couchman
<b>Traditional Inhabitant Members</b>	Hilda Mosby, Kulkalgal – FRAG Paul Lowatta, Kulkalgal – FWG
<b>Attendance List</b>	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).

<p><b><u>ACTION ITEM</u></b> – 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.</p>
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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

<b>Date</b>	8 – 9 April 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Andrew Trappett, Gabrielle Miller and Hannah Howard
<b>Traditional Inhabitant Members</b>	Rocky Stephen, Kemer Kemer Meriam – TSSAC, FWG, FRAG Michael Passi, Kemer Kemer Meriam – HCWG
<b>Attendance List</b>	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

<b>Date</b>	17 April 2019												
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Georgia Langdon and Gabrielle Miller												
<b>Attendance List</b>	Refer to Table 4												
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name</th> <th>Organisation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Kada Tom</td> <td>My Pathway</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Keith Pabai</td> <td>PBC Chair</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pabai Pabai</td> <td>My Pathway</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Robert Gizu</td> <td>My Pathway</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wusuru Wurukii</td> <td>My Pathway</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name	Organisation	Kada Tom	My Pathway	Keith Pabai	PBC Chair	Pabai Pabai	My Pathway	Robert Gizu	My Pathway	Wusuru Wurukii	My Pathway
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Wusuru Wurukii	My Pathway												

## 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

<b>Date</b>	11-12 April 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Georgia Langdon and Natalie Couchman
<b>Traditional Inhabitant Member</b>	Patrick Bonner, Kulkalgal – HCWG
<b>Attendance List</b>	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.

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

<p><b>ACTION ITEM</b> – AFMA to assess whether the data summaries from the 2011 hookah developmental permit can be released to communities.</p>
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### *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 was not shared by all in attendance.

# Ugar (Stephen) Community

<b>Date</b>	12 April 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Andrew Trappett and Gabrielle Miller
<b>Traditional Inhabitant Members</b>	Rocky Stephen, Kemer Kemer Meriam – TSSAC, FWG, FRAG Michael Passi, Kemer Kemer Meriam - HCWG
<b>Attendance List</b>	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.

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

<b>Date</b>	11 April 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Selina Stoute and Gabrielle Miller
<b>Traditional Inhabitant Members</b>	James Billy, Kulkalgal – TRL RAG
<b>Attendance List</b>	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

<b>Date</b>	18 April 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Georgia Langdon and Andrew Trappett
<b>Traditional Inhabitant Members</b>	Rocky Stephen, Kemer Kemer Meriam – TSSAC, FWG, FRAG Michael Passi, Kemer Kemer Meriam - HCWG
<b>Attendance List</b>	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)

<b>Date</b>	9 May 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Georgia Langdon, Kayoko Yamashita, John Jones and Natalie Jorna
<b>Attendance List</b>	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.

**ACTION ITEM:** AFMA to provide copies of the BDM Species ID Guide books to Michael Bond, Councillor of New Mapoon.

# Injinoo Community (NPA)

<b>Date</b>	10 May 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Georgia Langdon, Kayoko Yamashita and John Jones
<b>Attendance List</b>	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

<b>Date</b>	20 May 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Selina Stoute, Georgia Langdon, Natalie Couchman and Eva Plaganyi
<b>Attendance List</b>	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

<b>Date</b>	21-22 May 2019
<b>AFMA staff</b>	Georgia Langdon, Natalie Couchman, Kylie McKillop and Hannah Howard
<b>CSIRO staff</b>	Dr Eva Plaganyi
<b>Attendance List</b>	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 <a href="mailto:Ursula.nai@tsirc.qld.gov.au">Ursula.nai@tsirc.qld.gov.au</a> 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