



TORRES STRAIT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING NO. 70

MEETING RECORD

**26-27 MARCH JUNE 2018
THURSDAY ISLAND**

CHAIR: IAN CARTWRIGHT

Agenda Item 1 - Meeting Administration

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

The Chair opened the meeting at 1pm and welcomed the TSSAC members and observers and acknowledged the traditional owners. The TSSAC went through the agenda noting the only potential conflict of interest was with the extension proposal for the CSIRO BDM harvest strategy project and CSIRO employee Roland Pitcher. The committee agreed he should join in discussions as has value to add, but would leave the room before a decision was made whether to support the project. The declarations of interest table is below.

TSSAC 70 attendance and declarations of interest

Name	Membership Status	Declaration of Interest
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chair	Consultant. AFMA Commissioner. Chair ARC, QLD expert panel.
Mr Stephen Bolton	AFMA Representative	None declared
Ms. Lisa Cocking	Executive Officer (AFMA)	None declared
Dr Natasha Stacey	Scientific Member	Research at Charles Darwin University. On FRDC NT RAF.
Dr Stephen Newman	Scientific Member	Fisheries scientist - Department of primary industries and regional development.
Dr Roland Pitcher	Scientific Member	Fisheries Scientist, CSIRO. Noted a potential conflict with extension of CSIRO project for BDM harvest strategy.
Dr Dirk Welsford	Scientific Member	Research scientist at AAD in Dept of Environment and energy. Sub-Antarctic resource assessment group.
Ms. Allison Runck	TSRA Representative	Fisheries Project Manager, TSRA
Mr Rocky Stephen	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member (Kemer Kemer Meriam)	Kemer Kemer Meriam member. Member of TSIRC for Ugar. President of Kos and Abob Ugar fishers association. Finfish working group representative. TSPMAC.

Mr Paul Kabai	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member (Gudumalulgal)	None declared
Mr Ned Larry	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member (Kulkaigal)	None declared.
Mr Jerry Stephen	TSRA Fisheries Portfolio member	TSRA Board member for Ugar. TSRA Deputy Chair, TSRA fisheries Portfolio member, TIB licence holder, Traditional owner.

Other attendees (observers)

Mr Stan Lui – TSRA LSMU

Professor Martin Nakata – Primary Investigator for project looking at protocols for research in the Torres Strait.

Absences

Mr Maluwap Nona (Industry Representative (Maluailgal), Mr Daniel Takai and Mr Phillip Ketchell.

TSSAC meeting 70 decision record

- 1.3.1 TSSAC **NOTED** outgoing and incoming correspondence since meeting No. 69, held on 28 June 2016.
- 1.5.1 TSSAC **NOTED** the self-assessment criteria (Attachment A) which will be used in 2019 to undertake a TSSAC self-assessment.
- 2.1.1 TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.
- 2.1.2 TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that the standard ERA for the TSPF not be undertaken, noting the cost, the status of the fishery and that it was a step backwards in the assessment already existing, undertaken by Roland Pitcher.
- 2.2.1 TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait hand collectable fisheries.
- 2.3.1 TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery.
- 2.3.2 The TSSAC **NOTED** the need to ensure open communication with TRL fishers regarding expectations around TACs, with a likely increased in frequency of extreme climate-driven events.
- 2.4.1 TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.
- 2.5.1 The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that fisheries managers consider the need to undertake peer review of the new JCU methodology to assess Dugong hunting mortality.
- 2.5.2 TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that fisheries managers consider the need to undertake peer review of the new management system looking at hunting groups versus habitat area of Dugong.
- 3.1.1. TSSAC **COMMENTED** on the final report, *Procedural Framework for Research in the Torres Strait (Procedural Framework)* at Attachment A, from the project – *Consultative and administrative processes for scientific research in the Torres Strait Islands*.
- 3.1.2 TSSAC **AGREED** for AFMA to apply the Procedural Framework once any TSSAC comments have been incorporated.
- 3.2.1 TSSAC **NOTED** the TSRA LSMU research update.
- 4.1.1 TSSAC **DISCUSSED** the five administrative documents used to guide and administer Torres Strait research (Agenda Attachments A-D and Nakata document at Agenda Item 3.1).
- 4.1.2 TSSAC **AGREED** the documents should be circulated out of session following updates for three week consideration by the TSSAC before they are sent to PZJA forums for consideration.

- 4.1.3 TSSAC **DISCUSSED** the amended terms of reference for the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee and **AGREED** they should be distributed to the committee out of session for comment prior to finalisation.
- 5.1.1 TSSAC **NOTED** the TSSAC budget for 2018-19 (Attachment 5.1A)
- 5.1.2 That the TSSAC **NOTED** the next full funding round will commence in late 2018 for the 2019-20 financial year.
- 5.1.3 TSSAC **DISCUSSED** possible projects for a tactical call for research for 2018-19 residual funding, and an extension for an existing BDM project at agenda item 5.2.
- 5.1.4 TSSAC **AGREED** to support the prawn stock assessment project to go to a proposal phase.
- 5.1.5 TSSAC **APPROVED** the TSPF stock assessment project scope (Attachment 5.1B) for distribution to researchers following the TSSAC meeting, noting it needs consideration by the TSPMAC.
- 5.2.1 TSSAC **DISCUSSED** the need to extend *Project 2016/0823 Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery* to enable additional work needed to effectively implement the harvest strategy and undertake further consultation (Attachment 5.2A).
- 5.2.2 TSSAC **NOTED** additional funding of \$51,882 is needed in the 2018/19 financial year to extend the BDM harvest strategy project and provided in principle support pending submission of an updated extension application be provided.
- 5.2.3 TSSAC **AGREED** that another project extension proposal was appropriate and requested AFMA to approach the PI of the current BDM harvest strategy project with a request for a revised proposal. The proposal should address:
- more detail regarding milestones financial breakdowns.
 - a short stakeholder engagement strategy identifying how they will communicate during the rest of the project, and how projects outcomes will be communicated to communities following the project
 - confirmation of the budget and whether any additional funds are required to improve extension and outreach following the project, or to ensure the December 2018 milestone is met.
- 5.3.1 TSSAC **DISCUSSED** the project proposal relating to climate change vulnerability in the Torres Strait.
- 5.3.2 TSSAC **AGREED** not to support the climate change update project at this time.

Agenda Item 1.2 - Review and Adoption of Agenda

The Committee adopted the agenda.

Agenda Item 1.3 - Correspondence

The Committee NOTED the incoming and outgoing correspondence since Meeting 69 held on 8 April 2016.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3.1

That the TSSAC **NOTED** outgoing and incoming correspondence since meeting No. 69, held on 28 June 2016.

Agenda Item 1.4 - Action Items from past TSSAC meetings

The committee did not have time to discuss the actions from previous meetings in detail due to the short meeting (1 day). However the action relating to the turtle and dugong discussion group was addressed as a part of the fishery updates. The actions will continue to be progressed out of session and discussed at the November meeting.

Agenda Item 1.5 – TSSAC Self-Assessment

The Chair explained the need to undertake a TSSAC self-assessment, as one hadn't been undertaken in several years. Members agreed on the value of holding meetings regularly to ensure the Committee was able to function effectively. The Chair noted that while a number of members were new to the Committee, it would be good to at least reflect on the effectiveness of this meeting. This did not happen due to time constraints.

RECOMMENDATION 1.5.1

The TSSAC **NOTED** the self-assessment criteria (Attachment A) which will be used in 2019 to undertake a TSSAC self-assessment.

Agenda Item 2 - Management Updates

A full update on each of the Torres Strait fisheries was provided, particularly for new members and the length of time since the last TSSAC member. Key discussion points were:

2.1 – Torres Strait Prawn Fishery

- TSPF has been in serious decline in fishing effort and consequently, catch and production value over the past 10 years.
- Decline is considered likely to be a result of economic factors but there was also uncertainty about whether stocks had declined for reasons other than fishing. The Committee noted the high cost of fishing in a remote location, absence of a regular barge service for offloading product and buying fuel and supplies, current input controls (e.g. 20m boat rule) which may limit efficiency.
- Catch and effort levels are unlikely to be a cause of overfishing as effort has been well below the TAE since 2009. There are unknowns around possible effects of climate change on the fishery and prawn stock.
- Current research priority is for undertaking an update of the stock assessment, including spatial analysis of fishing effort. While the harvest strategy triggers

(prompting the stock assessment) have not been reached, the assessment is 12 years old.

- Agreed that a standard ERA should not be undertaken for the TSPF noting sustainability assessment “ERA” undertaken by Dr Pitcher was equivalent of a level 3 ERA in the SAFE model, meaning it would be a step backward and wasted funding. If data mining indicates effort distribution changes, TSSAC could reassess the need for a new ERA with new spatial effort being taken into account.
- The committee also noted the possible benefits of completing an Ecologically Sustainable Development plan along-side any new ERAs, to cover the social component of the fishery. This should include an indigenous wellness component in the assessment matrix. The committee noted that the SRP could pick up some more social objectives to cover off on this as well.
- Discussed the observation of trawling lights by some traditional inhabitant members in the area around their islands before the season opened on 1 March, around 3-5 years ago. AFMA agreed to follow up on possible satellite tracking data with PNG regarding this.
- The committee discussed possible changes to seagrass on warrior reef, including the surveys undertaken by the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit. A survey of warrior reef hasn't been undertaken in some time, nor is there funding to complete one (TSSAC or other funding would be welcomed), however surveys in other areas indicated seagrass beds are relatively stable, making changes unlikely on the warrior reef seagrass bed.

The committee discussed the previously funded project looking at flow of benefits to communities from the TSPF (undertaken by Andy Bodsworth) and acknowledged that there was little to come out of the project, and some options which did come out can be difficult to pursue. For example, one industry member in the fishery has been doing a lot of work to build relationships with the Masig community, including attempts to fix their freezer and train community members in trades, however these initiatives proved difficult to progress. The dual license holder arrangement with the QLD east coast otter trawl fishery also make management and changes to boats unlikely, as the east coast still has hull unit restrictions. There may be a few dual endorsed NPF boats that would fish in the TSPF for a period on the way to the NPF, however this would be unlikely to have much benefit to Torres communities.

The committee acknowledged the importance of working as closely as possible with Queensland fisheries to have partnering and flexible arrangements to make things work in the TSPF with dual endorsed boats.

A TIB member commented that there seems to have been a general decline in most Torres Strait fisheries of late, noting the concerns regarding the TRL stock, being at its lowest since 1999. Finfish was also steadily declining in catches. The committee again noted the possible climate change effects or illegal take of TRL by foreign boats, of catch on the PNG side of the line effecting catches in Australia.

ACTION: ask NFA if they have VMS on trawlers and if any have been in Australian waters or nearby in the past 5 years, in December to 1 March.

ACTION: ask PNG NFA for a report on the gulf catches of prawns.

ACTION: redistribute Andy Bodsworth's report to TSSAC for information.

ACTION: AFMA to complete data analyses of trends and extent of the TSPF decline around historic fishing areas.

ACTION: AFMA to seek approval not to undertake the standard ERA for the TSPF, noting the current assessment provides a higher level of assessment.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.1

That the TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1.2

The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that the standard ERA for the TSPF not be undertaken, noting the cost, the status of the fishery and that it was a step backwards in the assessment already existing, undertaken by Roland Pitcher.

Agenda Item 2.2 – Hand Collectable Fisheries

- Sea cucumbers are vulnerable to overfishing as they are slow to recover when fished down and easy to harvest, have high returns and are very easy to store.
- The biggest management challenge is the open access nature of the fishery (any TIB can fish commercially).
- harvest strategy is currently being developed, looking to separate some of the species out of the baskets currently used, which should improve monitoring and management.
- There are strong social aspects for the fishery, as it is solely for the TIB sector access. There is a potential and future for this fishery if it is developed and managed well.
- The committee discussed different potential management elements including community management through 10nm boundaries, which may encourage communities to be more invested in managing their areas. The Pacific BDM fisheries Southern BDM fisheries, use similar tools, managing discrete stocks around islands or closing different reefs in different years to allow recovery. This is a heavy data management technique, requiring lots of data from fishers which we don't have. This has required us to use more blunt and broad scale tools for management.
- The committee discussed the reseeded projects occurring for sandfish in some Aboriginal communities, which are proving successful, however there are some risks regarding a lack of genetic diversity.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.1

That the TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait hand collectable fisheries.

Agenda Item 2.3 – Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery

- Fishery offers the greatest economic employment benefits to traditional people in the Torres Strait, and traditional inhabitants would like to fully own the resource to support economic growth of communities. The PZJA has formally recognised this aspiration.
- The TRL fishery status is monitored through an independent survey which is undertaken each year (by CSIRO) funded by AFMA through the TSSAC.
- The Fishery has been producing fairly consistently the last 10 years however the TAC this year has only been recommended at 300t, one of lowest since 2007.
- There is currently no enforceable system of quota, so a low TAC is difficult to manage between operators. This issue will be discussed at the TRL meetings occurring the next few days.

- The committee noted the need to ensure good communication with TRL stakeholders regarding the likelihood of consistently increased extreme climate-driven events and potentially lower TACs. Being able to manage expectations around allowable catches will improve better business planning.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3.1

That the TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3.2

The TSSAC **NOTED** the need to ensure open communication with TRL fishers regarding expectations around TACs, with a likely increase in frequency of extreme climate-driven events

Agenda Item 2.4 – Finfish Fishery

- Fishery is 100% traditionally owned, with several sunset licences being leased to non-traditional fishers.
- 80% of catch occurs around Bramble Cay and catches include a basket of 4 species of coral trout. There are both fillet and live markets, following the ban on live product was lifted in 2015. The first successful year of live catch occurred in 2016-17, supported by a strong export market.
- It is a low impact, selective fishery with a low economic investment requirement.
- PNG has little commercial interest in the finfish fishery and unlikely to be fishing the next few years.
- AFMA is currently working to formalise a TAC through licence conditions.
- A priority area for research is better understanding spatial population structures.
- The recreational catches are considered negligible and do not really need to be considered (less than 1t a year), however are taken into account when determining the recommended biological catch.
- A community member raised the need for good management of finfish stocks for the ongoing future livelihood of communities.
- Discussed some of the limitations around the stock assessment, including the uncertainty in the data from the TIB sector. The low level of data creates uncertainty in the assessment, however this will improve as effort increases in the TIB sector. The RAG also undertakes peer review regarding the stock assessment and the PZJA still make the final decision regarding the RBC, taking uncertainties into account. As the uncertainty reduces, the RBC will become less precautionary.

RECOMMENDATION 2.4.1

That the TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery.

Agenda Item 2.5 – Turtle and Dugong Fisheries

- The TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit provided an update regarding work in the turtle and dugong fisheries.
- A hawksbill turtle monitoring project, due to complete in mid-2018, indicates that there may be some significant rookeries in the Torres Strait, potentially the largest nesting hawksbill turtle rookery in Australia. Scientists looking at the data but it is early days regarding results. They are looking to develop a monitoring and predator control plan for the area. There are also projects underway on Raine Island to conserve the nesting habitat for green turtles, as it's the main nesting site of the northern population.

- The committee noted the take of dugong in western parts of the Torres Strait by non-Torres Strait Islanders (mostly PNG fishers) using illegal nets (nets are not illegal in PNG). The TSRA LSMU believe the motivation for fishing is likely socioeconomic, thus they are working to address the issue at a high level, working with NGOs and PNG Government to compliment compliance operations in Australia.
- The committee noted the need to try to get a full data set of Dugong mortality, noting the limited data they receive is only hunting mortality, with no estimate of dugong that are injured and may subsequently die.
- It is difficult getting any data from the traditional take of dugong (and turtle) due to the political nature of public concern and past experiences by communities of incorrect and/or prejudicial media reporting.

TSRA LSMU explained that JCU are trialing a new methodology for assessment of Dugong and turtle hunting mortality, looking more at percentage of total dugong habitat that is being hunted. This is the work of Helene Marsh. Current rough estimates are only around 3% of total habitat area is hunted. Dr Pitcher explained that although 3% appears low, it is probably quite close to the sustainable harvest level, as 5% is probably the reproductive capacity, which is usually halved to get a sustainable take level. That isn't taking into account the catches in PNG either. This new method is currently being trialed on the Queensland east coast for assessing hunting mortality of Dugong and Turtle, however Dr Pitcher had uncertainty around how the new assessment model stands up against international standards. The TSSAC members agreed on the need for a peer review type assessment of the methodology, which should be undertaken by a turtle and dugong harvest/ fisheries expert. This would provide greater confidence in the methodology.

ACTION: Responsible fishery manager(s) to explore whether the new methodology used to manage the dugong fishery is sufficient, and consider the feasibility and/ or need to peer review the new assessment methodology.

RECOMMENDATION 2.5.1

The TSSAC **RECOMMENDED** that fisheries managers consider the need to undertake peer review of the new JCU methodology to assess Dugong hunting mortality.

The committee discussed the sensitivities around data collection, and the rules the communities have in place around how that data is used, so the communities understand and feel safe that it can only be accessed with their permission, noting negative publicity around the fishery in the past. The main objective of collecting data is to support management, which, in turn should benefit communities. TSRA acknowledged that whomever wanted access to the data needed to approach the community directly for approval from them to access their data. TSRA explained that a data confidentiality agreement would need to be developed directly between that community and the scientists. TSRA LSMU are happy to provide RNTBC contact details for every community. Having a PZJA repository for Turtle and Dugong hunting data would need to be negotiated directly with each community.

ACTION: AFMA, while liaising with the TSRA LSMU, to follow up and explore methods for data collection from communities within community agreed confidentiality requirements to improve data for setting sustainable catches. Data could be made available for a researcher to be used in an agreed way that would protect confidentiality and limit data use (for these specific needs. i.e. not publicly released).

RECOMMENDATION 2.5.2

That the TSSAC **NOTED** the background and current information regarding the Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong Fisheries.

Agenda Item 3 – Research Project Updates

Agenda Item 3.1 - Procedural Framework for Research in the Torres Strait

Professor Martin Nakata, the primary investigator presented the draft document, *Procedural Framework for Research in the Torres Strait*. The project was initiated to ensure we are collaborating appropriately with the TIB sector, including copywriter rules, intellectual property and ensuring traditional knowledge is appropriately acknowledged, managed and respected. This included proper management of “confidential” traditional knowledge or fishing information, which traditional inhabitants may permit use in confidential documents, however not public documents.

In addition to finalising this document, Prof. Nakata indicated he would like to develop a simple 1 page graphical representation of the procedure to make it very easy to use. The committee noted the steps are now a lot clearer, filling a gap on how to take projects all the way from commencement to wrap up, while respecting protocols. The document is a lot more concise than the original report. However continual improvement will be helpful as the procedure is used and trouble-shooting completed.

The committee went on to discuss the importance of protecting traditional knowledge and the ethics around this, acknowledging the strict ethics requirements for university and the IATSIS ethics approvals, such as permissions around photography and intellectual property. The committee agreed that Torres Strait research (and the procedure) should consider these things including:

- Acknowledging where the data or information used in research comes from, so that any money made from selling a concept in the future will be adequately linked to a community’s contribution/ knowledge so they also receive financial or other benefit from “selling” a concept. This would be world class data and information management, leading the way for the world.
- Ensuring traditional knowledge is used in the way agreed to by communities. For example just for stock assessment or management arrangements and not released to the public, as information can be private and sensitive (such as fishing grounds).
- Ensuring proper consultation with communities before research is funded (in the pre-proposal phase. This will vary between communities, where some such as Ugar will require face to face consultation before a project is funded, whereas some communities may only require phone communication and discussion.
- To ensure confidentiality of data and ethics are discussed in the procedure.

AFMA discussed the need for better use of traditional knowledge in every day fisheries management as well. We currently underutilise traditional knowledge in development of management arrangements.

The committee acknowledged that the consultation to be undertaken before research is funded by the TSSAC is important, and requirements would vary between communities and it is the researcher’s task to ascertain how this should be undertaken. There could be very high costs and time requirements associated with this requirement which could make some research in the Torres Strait unfeasible. This would be detrimental to communities, as research is important for protecting and growing fisheries. The committee noted researchers will need to be sensitive to this and consult with AFMA where there are questions about face to face versus other consultation during project pre proposal phases. The committee also noted that some funding bodies, such as the global environment fund, use a model whereby funding assistance is provided for some pre consultation, and noted that a similar approach could be used in the Torres Strait.

ACTION: ensure words are put in the procedural framework for research in the Torres Strait regarding the pre consultation, and possible need for face to face consultation on some islands.

ACTION: AFMA to look into the possibility of finding/ using some funds for Torres Strait pre-research consultation, similar to the process used by the global environment fund.

The committee noted that the procedure, and research in the Torres Strait, needs to consider ethics in two ways – as a sequencing issue around when ethics approval is sought, and also clarification regarding what information is confidential and how it can be used and published. Several options for managing this were considered, such as public versus internal reports or having documents with different privacy levels through websites that allow certain access (such as a research repository).

The committee agreed that some caveats should be placed in the SRP and the procedural framework around data confidentiality and ethics for researchers. The need for realistic timelines on the consultation were also discussed, likely 2-3 months for the researcher to undertake the preliminary consultation.

ACTION: AFMA to ensure period for preliminary consultation is realistic within the timelines for TSSAC funding.

The TSRA LSMU section noted that they have passed the draft procedure around their team and feel it is workable for their research as well. A best practice “box” should be added to the procedure explaining the best practice guidelines for ethics and consultation in the Torres Strait.

ACTION: ensure document is sent to relevant research funding bodies (including TSRA, FRDC) following completion to encourage their researchers to operate in according with the document as closely as possible.

ACTION: AFMA to work with Martin Nakata to make changes and recirculate the document for consideration by the TSSAC (allowing 3 weeks consideration). We will take silence as agreement from members. The document can then be reviewed and edited as needed as it is used.

RECOMMENDATION 3.1.1

The Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) **COMMENTED** on the final report, *Procedural Framework for Research in the Torres Strait* (Procedural Framework) at Attachment A, from the project – *Consultative and administrative processes for scientific research in the Torres Strait Islands*.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2.1

The Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) **AGREED** for AFMA to apply the Procedural Framework once any TSSAC comments have been incorporated.

Agenda Item 3.2 – Update on research from TSRA LSMU unit

The committee did not have time to discuss the paper from TSRA LSMU in detail due to the short meeting. However TSRA suggested any members get in contact with the LSMU if they have questions.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2.1

That the TSSAC **NOTED** the TSRA LSMU research update.

Agenda Item 4 – TSSAC Administration**Agenda Item 4.1 – Overview of TSSAC administrative processes and funding opportunities**

The TSSAC reviewed the new administrative documents and processes for TSSAC research funding and administration. The main change to the administrative processes include:

- the Procedural Framework for undertaking Research in the Torres Strait, which now describes the processes for undertaking research (for researchers) from research application stage to project completion. This document refers to the other TSSAC documents and the research application form.
- Moving to individual fishery five year plans - no longer in the five year strategic research plan. These five year rolling fishery plans will be updated by the relevant RAG, WG or MAC each year to maintain a five year project of research priorities.

Strategic Research Plan

The committee discussed the changes to the five year strategic research plan (SRP), noting simplification and consolidation of the research priorities into three themes, and a number of example strategies under each theme. The following recommendations were made regarding changes to be made to the SRP draft:

- Add in a paragraph into the introductory section in the SRP relating to the importance of social and economic challenges relating to Torres Strait fisheries, similar to the functions undertaken by the FRDC Human Dimensions Research subprogram.
- Add another strategy, possibly under 2a or 2b, seeking projects exploring the role of women in fisheries.
- Add a section 2.5, after the MACs, RAGs, and WGs section, discussing confidentiality, including data between different sea countries. This should also be added to the annual research statement and the cover letter for the research applications.
- Remove the point under strategy 2a, referring to “*identifying critical knowledge gaps and up-skill strategies...*” as there isn’t enough funding for this, and it fits into the TSRA or IRGs area of work specifically.
- Change section 2.3.1 to be titled “*Other Government Agencies*” (this was a typo in the draft).
- Ensure the timing for researchers to undertake the complete proposal, including the pre consultation, is a minimum of 6-8 weeks, excluding the EO review time.
- Add a link to the treaty in appendix A.

ACTION: AFMA to add in information in the SRP about economic and social aspects of Torres Strait fisheries. Information can be taken from the FRDC website and documents.

ACTION: AFMA to update SRP with the comments detailed above within these minutes and recirculate to the TSSAC for comment.

ACTION: AFMA to draft covering letter for the research application, including the information on confidentiality. Use same words as in the other documents for consistency.

The committee discussed other points, including the photos on the SRP cover, which do not include women. AFMA agreed to try to source more photos of women in fisheries in the future. The committee also discussed capacity building and agreed that the TSRA were generally responsible for funding projects relating to capacity building. The committee noted that the Indigenous Reference Group sub-committee of FRDC could also work with the TSSAC around capacity development projects as this is one of their core roles. The reason development is discussed in the plan at all was due to historic conversations and concerns from communities that the TSSAC did not include development opportunities in its research. This led to further discussions around the research funding environment. The committee noted all the research bodies funding research in the Torres Strait, including universities, FRDC, IRG, TSRA and the TSSAC, where there is little communication, collaboration or discussion to minimise overlap, and be sure we are getting the best value for money. The committee agreed on the importance of improving communication going forward, including more collaboration, or even discussions around the TSSAC, or other body acting as a FRAB for the Torres Strait research. A discussion has already been set up between the TSSAC, AFMA, FRDC and the TSRA regarding this.

ACTION: AFMA to report back to TSSAC member on outcomes of the Torres Strait research meeting between agencies.

ACTION: AFMA to clarify the wording in the SRP relating to other funding bodies, and be more specific around the importance of TSRA funding for research, and improving communication between these bodies.

Rolling 5 year fisheries research plan

The committee noted the draft plan, and agreed that a column should be added to specify the possible funding agency, noting if TSSAC cannot fund a project, funding could be sought from another agency. The plan could be passed onto the other agencies following its development to inform them of priority Torres Strait Fisheries Research.

ACTION: Add a column to the table in the five year fisheries research plan template allowing funding agencies to be specified (where other agencies may have funding such as IRG or TSRA).

Annual Research Statement

The committee agreed that the assessment criteria, ARS (Annual Research Statement) and the criteria for research applications largely includes everything needed. The assessment criteria should be circulated out of session for comment and updated, noting it was difficult to do in a meeting format. There is some duplication between criteria (5 and 14) and a need to move some criteria between the attractiveness and feasibility headings. The committee also agreed that part 2 of the ARS should refer to the fact there is both tactical and strategic research.

ACTION: TSSAC EO to circulate the assessment criteria for comment to TSSAC members and amend according to recommendations. The updated document and criteria should then be circulated again to the TSSAC for approval.

TSSAC Research proposal application

The committee commented on the research proposal application which is filled out by researchers applying for funding. The same application is used for the expression of interest and full proposals (more sections completed). There was some confusion regarding what was being asked about consultation in the application, noting the research needs to both report on the consultation undertaken during the application phase as well as the stakeholder engagement strategy that will be used through the whole research period. There was also a

need to distinguish between stakeholder engagement, participation and post project extension.

ACTION: Natasha Stacey to work with TSSAC Executive Officer to amend application and send to committee for consideration.

The committee noted some words could be added into the application similar to that used by the IRG, noting sharing their research for the benefit of all. There would be a need to note the sensitivities around this in terms of data confidentiality etc.

ACTION: Stan Lui to send words relating to sharing research with all from IRG application to TSSAC EO.

Agenda Item 4.2 – TSSAC new terms of reference

The committee discussed the terms of reference, and noted a few changes including:

- Adding to term 3 – development of the Annual Research Statement
- Amend term 9 to be specific to research projects
- Add to term 12, information asking the TSSAC to consider research areas or projects that require peer review, noting this can be a very costly process.

The committee discussed the potential need for the TSSAC, or another body, to oversee all Torres Strait Research, similar to a Torres Strait FRAB (the FRDC fisheries research advisory bodies). It was agreed this would be a big change to the terms of reference for the committee. The aim and benefits of a central committee such as this would be to add value to:

- Piggyback of the robust TSSAC structures and administrative documents that are in place, specific to Torres Strait Fisheries research.
- ensure better collaboration between agencies, researchers and projects where possible
- minimize duplication of work and assist in funding as many projects as possible between funding bodies.
- Add value to projects through giving input on things that may strengthen a project, from a panel of experts such as the TSSAC.

There was some concern that going through the TSSAC or a FRAB may slow down processes and speed of research being undertaken. The committee noted that on occasions there have been examples in the past where a lack of communication has inhibited a research project from being progressed, which may have been avoided with better communication between AFMA and / or the TSSAC.

The committee generally agreed that given the function of TSSAC to guide the investment of research funds into Torres Strait fisheries management and the need to improve cooperation and coordination, it would be appropriate:

- i) to explore the opportunity to expand the role of the TSSAC or some other body to oversee all fisheries management-related research in the Torres Strait; and
- ii) for the TSSAC Chair to raise opportunities for improved collaboration with other funding bodies for discussion. This should be completed at the meeting planned between the TSSAC, FRDC and other research agency heads in the coming months.

In relation to i) above, the TSRA member could not see the value in doing this unless a clearer need is identified.

ACTION: TSSAC Chair to raise the possibility of a body, such as TSSAC, overseeing all TS research.

The committee agreed the terms of reference were largely suitable, however should be circulated with the amendments out of session for comments from members. They also agreed the executive officer should reinstate the need for the TSSAC to consider project final reports before the final milestone payments are made. This could be included in term 9 of the terms of reference. The project report evaluation template should be sent to the committee for consideration with the other draft documents.

ACTION: AFMA to amend the terms of reference according to the above notes and circulated out of session for comments.

ACTION: AFMA put together a plan (with other funding bodies) about how best to work with other agencies, for one body such as the TSSAC to oversee Torres Strait research through the TSSAC following the meeting between agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.1

TSSAC **DISCUSSED** the five administrative documents used to guide and administer Torres Strait research (Agenda Attachments A-D and Nakata document at Agenda Item 3.1).

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.2

TSSAC **AGREED** the documents should be circulated out of session following updates for three week consideration by the TSSAC before they are sent to PZJA forums for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.3

The TSSAC recommended that final milestone payments for projects are only released following TSSAC consideration and evaluation, noting if no response is received from members it is considered as approval.

Agenda Item 5 – TSSAC Budget

Agenda Item 5.1 – Scopes for tactical call for research for 2018-19 and 2019-20 funding round update

The committee discussed the TSPF 2018-19 budget and tactical call for research. \$88,521 of the \$410 000 remains in the 2018-19 budget after the committed funds of \$277,476 for the TRL surveys and 44719 for the finfish harvest strategy are taken out.

There is one new project priority being put forward by AFMA, for a TSPF stock assessment update, as well as an extension to the BDM harvest strategy project. Another project has also been put forward by an independent consultant which relating to climate change, which the TSSAC considered, however it wasn't considered a high priority at this time by AFMA. The next full funding round will be for the 2019-20 financial year.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.1

The TSSAC **NOTED** the TSSAC budget for 2018-19 (Attachment 5.1A)

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.2

The TSSAC **NOTED** the next full funding round will commence in late 2018 for the 2019-20 financial year.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.3

The TSSAC **DISCUSSED** possible projects for a tactical call for research for 2018-19 residual funding, and an extension for an existing BDM project at agenda item 5.2.

TSPF Stock assessment

AFMA have identified the need to undertake an updated stock assessment for the TSPF. The current stock assessment was undertaken in 2006, and its viability is often questioned due to its age. The low effort levels in the fishery have minimised the risks to the stock, however AFMA consider it time to undertake another assessment.

The committee noted that although the harvest strategy triggers (for undertaking a stock assessment) have not been close to being reached, updating the stock assessment (and keeping it up to date) is important, including to gain new information on fishing power. The committee also questioned whether additional information is needed (such as surveys) about the current stock distribution before the assessment can be completed. Due to the high cost of surveys they agreed a desktop data analysis of spatial effort and catch should be completed before costly surveys were considered.

The committee agreed that a scope should be provided to Clive Turnbull and a pre proposal produced for the TSSAC.

ACTION: TSSAC EO to provide the stock assessment scope, and other documents (application form) to Clive Turnbull for development of an EOI.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.4

The TSSAC **AGREED** to support the prawn stock assessment project to go to a proposal phase.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.5

The TSSAC **APPROVED** the TSPF stock assessment project scope (Attachment 5.1B) for distribution to researchers following the TSSAC meeting, noting it needs consideration by the TSPMAC.

BDM

AFMA provided an update regarding the project 2016/0823 – *harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Beche de Mer Fishery*, which includes application for a project extension. The committee acknowledged the initial delays in the project resulting from difficulties organizing suitable times for the first consultation workshop, a common challenge when undertaking meetings in the Torres Strait. AFMA also explained that the project investigators have identified additional unforeseen work which is required to ensure a robust harvest strategy is developed. This includes the need to undertake additional consultation to ensure a wide range of views are collected, noting the meetings have had positive feedback from community members. A TIB member acknowledged that before attending a CSIRO/ TSRA supported training activity the harvest strategy workshop he didn't understand their purpose and was somewhat resistant to its development, however he now understands its importance for ensuring the future of their fishery and their livelihood. Other additional work required in the extension included work on conversion ratios, minimum legal size limits to enhance management, historical data review

for improving distribution and density estimates and development of communication and outreach programs to help fishers understand the harvest strategy when implemented.

The committee acknowledged that the project has met its original expectations and milestones, however a lot more work is required than initially thought to ensure a quality harvest strategy is developed. The committee agreed that a project extension should occur through a contract variation. The committee noted that improved stakeholder engagement is an important step in the harvest strategy development. The meetings attempt to get at least 2 people in addition to the member from each community on the working group, meaning 10-20 people at a workshop. Numbers are highly dependent on availability. Some traditional inhabitant members reiterated the importance of this project and its complexity in managing a number of species, which are of great importance to the traditional inhabitant sector. It is also important to have a clear timeline for the project, as results are really needed by the end of the year, which is when the project is scheduled to end.

The committee acknowledged the need to improve the initial TSSAC assessment of projects to ensure they are properly scoped and budgeted in the proposal phase to minimise the need for extensions. They also acknowledged that sometimes unforeseen things arise.

The committee agreed that the project investigators should put together a two page stakeholder engagement plan if the extension is to go forward, identifying how they will communicate during the rest of the project, and how project outcomes will be communicated to communities following the project. This is in alignment with the requirements for new projects under the *Procedural Framework for research in the Torres Strait*.

The committee discussed whether the proposal for extension may still be underestimating the budget, noting that travel costs for community members attending meetings is not included, and the ID guide could be re-added, noting there is still several thousand dollars unspent in the budget. The TSRA noted they couldn't guarantee they would pay for the additional community members to attend the workshops out of the standard funding agreement, which was designed to cover costs of existing members, not observers or additional workshops outside of standard PZJA forum business, so funding relating to this may need to be considered as well. AFMA and TSRA agreed to discuss this point outside of the meeting.

The committee agreed that the PI should submit another project extension application including more details information of the budget breakdown, further critical consideration of the new budget and whether it is realistic and costs of adding the ID guide back into the project.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.1

That the TSSAC **DISCUSSED** the need to extend *Project 2016/0823 Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery* to enable additional work needed to effectively implement the harvest strategy and further consultation (Attachment 5.2A).

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.2

TSSAC **NOTED** additional funding of \$51,882 is needed in the 2018/19 financial year to extend the BDM harvest strategy project and provided in principle support pending submission of an updated extension application be provided.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.3

TSSAC **AGREED** that another project extension proposal was appropriate and requested AFMA to approach the PI of the current BDM harvest strategy project with a request for a revised proposal. The proposal should address:
- more detail regarding milestones financial breakdowns.

- a short stakeholder engagement strategy identifying how they will communicate during the rest of the project, and how projects outcomes will be communicated to communities following the project.
- confirmation of the budget and whether any additional funds are required to improve extension and outreach following the project, or to ensure the December 2018 milestone is met.

ACTION: TSSAC EO to contact CSIRO requesting an updated project extension letter, for consideration by the TSSAC out of session.

ACTION: AFMA to consider whether any additional funding could be sought for the finfish harvest strategy development or similar projects before the TSSAC commit all funding to BDM and provide the information to the EO for distribution to the TSSAC out of session.

Climate change

The committee noted the letter putting forward a project to update a 2013 project looking at the vulnerability of Torres Strait fisheries to climate change. The committee noted the extensive work being done on climate change around Australia, including recent workshops looking at climate change priorities in the Torres Strait. The TSSAC agreed that it would be best to wait until there are more outcomes from the NESP/ TSRA led Torres Strait climate change workshop (December 2017) and other projects, before the TSSAC can strategically consider a climate change project.

The committee agreed that the BDM project extension and TSPF stock assessment update are the priority items for funding, and that the finfish fishery managers at AFMA should be encouraged to consider any additional finfish work, including possible extension or outreach for the finfish harvest strategy project, which may also be underscoped or benefit from extension of its objectives to bring in consultation. Noting these will need to be compared with the BDM and TSPF projects to decide the best place to invest the 2018-19 funds.

The committee also noted that it may be useful for a TSSAC member to attend the IRG meeting in Cairns on 18-19 April.

RECOMMENDATION 5.3.1

The TSSAC **DISCUSSED** the project proposal relating to climate change vulnerability in the Torres Strait.

RECOMMENDATION 5.3.2

The TSSAC **AGREED** not to support the climate change project update at this time.

Other Business

The TSSAC discussed the TSRA funded project, "Monitoring the traditional take of finfish in the Torres Strait Protected Zone", as there was concern regarding this project meeting its objectives. The TSSAC Executive Officer noted a few projects that require reporting on however they will need to be sent out of session as the meeting was about to close. The TSSAC agreed AFMA and the TSRA can work together to review the projects progress and then send to TSSAC out of session for review before providing more milestone funding.

Next meeting

The committee agreed the next meeting should be held this year, in early November noting the need to keep things moving with the committee. Some members are not available in late October.

Action Items – TSSAC #70

No.	Action Item	Responsible Party	Progress
70.1	Ask NFA if they have VMS on trawlers and if any have been in Australian waters or nearby in the past 5 years, in December to 1 March.	AFMA	
70.2	Ask PNG NFA for a report on the gulf catches of prawns.	AFMA	
70.3	Redistribute Andy Bodsworth's report to TSSAC for information.	TSSAC EO	
70.4	Undertake data analyses of trends and extent of the TSPF decline around historic fishing areas.	AFMA	
70.5	Seek approval not to undertake the standard ERA for the TSPF, noting the current assessment provides a higher level of assessment.	AFMA	
70.6	Management agency (AFMA or TSRA) need to ensure the info we are getting is sufficient to manage the fishery and consider a peer review of the new management system.	TSRA LSMU	
70.7	TSRA LSMU to explore methods for data collection with confidentiality requirements to improve data for setting sustainable catches. The data could be made available for a researcher to look at in a way agreed to protect confidentiality and data use.	TSRA LSMU	

70.8	Ensure words are put in the procedural framework for research in the Torres Strait regarding the pre consultation, and possible need for face to face consultation on some islands.	TSSAC EO	
70.9	AFMA put together a plan (with other funding bodies) about how best to work with other agencies to oversee Torres Strait research through the TSSAC following the meeting between agencies.	AFMA	
70.10	AFMA to ensure period for preliminary consultation is realistic within the timelines for TSSAC funding.	AFMA	
70.11	ensure document is sent to relevant research funding bodies (including TSRA, FRDC) following completion to encourage their researchers to operate in according with the document as closely as possible.	AFMA	
70.12	AFMA to work with Martin Nakata to make changes and recirculate the document for consideration by the TSSAC (allowing 3 weeks consideration). We will take silence as agreement from members. The document can then be reviewed and edited as needed as it is used.	AFMA and Martin Nakata	
70.13	AFMA to add in information in the SRP about economic and social aspects of Torres Strait fisheries. Information can be taken form the FRDC website and documents.	AFMA	
70.14	AFMA to update SRP with the comments detailed above within these minutes.	AFMA	
70.15	AFMA to draft covering letter for the research application, including the information on confidentiality. Use same words as in the other documents for consistency.	AFMA	

70.16	AFMA to report back to TSSAC member on outcomes of the Torres Strait research meeting between agencies.	AFMA	
70.17	AFMA to clarify the wording in the SRP relating to other funding bodies, and be more specific around the importance of TSRA funding, and improving communication between these bodies.	AFMA	
70.18	Add a column to the table in the five year fisheries research plan template allowing funding agencies to be specified (where other agencies may have funding such as IRG or TSRA).	AFMA	
70.19	Circulate the assessment criteria for comment to TSSAC members and amend according to recommendations. The updated document and criteria should then be circulated again to the TSSAC for approval.	TSSAC EO	
70.20	Natasha Stacey to work with TSSAC Executive Officer to amend application and send to committee for consideration.	TSSAC EO and Natasha Stacey	
70.21	Stan Lui to send words from IRG application to TSSAC EO relating to sharing research with all.	Stan Lui (TSRA LSMU)	
70.22	TSSAC Chair to raise the possibility of a body, such as TSSAC, overseeing all TS research.	TSSAC Chair	
70.23	AFMA to amend the terms of reference according to the above notes and circulated out of session for comments.	AFMA	
70.24	AFMA put together a plan (with other funding bodies) about how best to work with other agencies to oversee Torres Strait research through the TSSAC following the meeting between agencies.	AFMA	

70.25	TSSAC EO to provide the stock assessment scope, and other documents (application form) to Clive Turnbull for development of an EOI.	TSSAC EO	
70.25	TSSAC EO to contact CSIRO requesting an updated project extension letter, for consideration by the TSSAC out of session.	TSSAC EO	
7.26	AFMA to consider whether any additional funding could be sought for the finfish harvest strategy development or similar projects before the TSSAC commit all funding to BDM and provide the information to the EO for distribution to the TSSAC out of session.	AFMA	

Ongoing actions from past TSSAC meetings

No.	Action Item	Responsible Party	
69-1	AFMA to put together a cover letter explaining requirements for development of pre proposals for researchers. Including the need to provide a detailed explanation of consultation and data management, not assuming knowledge of the TSSAC from past proposals from the researchers.	AFMA	
69-2	The TSRA agreed to share research projects with the TSSAC as soon as and when possible.	TSRA	
69-3	TSSAC Executive Officer to contact Mr Nakata and ask if he can distribute a draft report out of session and attend the October TSSAC meeting.	TSSAC EO	
	AFMA to circulate declaration of interests table prior to next face to face meeting	AFMA	Ongoing FMP1 requires verbal updates by members at each meeting with declarations logged in the meeting record only

	AFMA to revise the pre-proposal assessment template to provide a descriptive sentence for each criterion, and to consider the re-addition of an N/A column	AFMA	Ongoing Draft revisions completed. Will be tabled for full discussion at next face to face meeting.
	Future draft correspondence from the TSSAC Chair that refers to the TSRA to be provided to the TSRA for feedback	AFMA	Ongoing
	AFMA to develop a paper outlining the objectives of the Turtle and Dugong Discussion Group, and focusing on the future needs of the group, to be completed by 30 June 2016 (carried over from TSSAC 66)	AFMA	Ongoing due 30 June 2016