

# Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

## Meeting 81

Meeting Record

6-7 April 2022

JCU conference room Thursday  
Island and Videoconference

Note all meeting papers and records are available on  
the PZJA webpage: [www.pzja.gov.au](http://www.pzja.gov.au)



Australian Government  
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

# Agenda Item 1 Meeting Administration

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## 1.1 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, welcome and apologies

1. The 81<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was opened at 940am AEST, on Wednesday 6 April 2022.
2. Attendees were welcomed by the Chair who acknowledged the traditional owners of the land on which all participants were on, and paid respect to elders past, present and emerging.
3. A prayer was offered by Mr Rocky Stephen.
4. Apologies were received from Ms Michelle Winning (Queensland Fisheries member). The committee also noted that Mark Anderson of TSRA would be arriving late morning, and Keith Brightman was attending in his place until then.
5. The chair opened the meeting by acknowledging the ongoing budget challenges with for Torres Strait research, and noted the progress that has been made with increases to the AFMA budget for 2022-23, and regular funding contributions from the TSRA.
6. The TSRA noted that some additional funding may be available from the TSRA for specific projects that have clear and strong economic links. The TSRA member noted that if the TSSAC can make recommendations which clearly outline the economic opportunities to come from research, and the relevant fishery, as a result of research, TSRA may be able to access money from the economic development fund.
7. The TSSAC also noted the view of one Traditional Inhabitant Industry (industry) member that requested researchers to take as many opportunities as possible to engage Torres Strait Islanders on research projects, to collect data, and take up as many roles as possible to save money on bringing project teams to the area to do work which Traditional Owners may be able to conduct.

**Action 81.1:** TSSAC to continue to encourage researchers to use Torres Strait Islander staff on projects, for their benefit through employment opportunities, as well as to reduce costs of research by using local staff.

8. The TSSAC noted questions from some industry members, as to whether the TVH sector could be levied, so as to make a contribution towards research funding.
9. AFMA acknowledged the complexities of levying the TVH sector alone, and not levying all commercial fishers (including the TIB sector). The TSSAC discussed the possibility of voluntary contributions from the TVH as a way around the legislative complexities of a formal levy. This was discussed further later in the meeting record under the TRL project discussion.
10. The TSSAC again noted the funding options through the FRDC. This includes matching dollar for dollar, voluntary contributions from the Commonwealth fishing industry, as well as the public good fund, that does not require industry contributions to access.
11. COMRAC are the committee which FRDC turn to for information on the research priorities across all Commonwealth Fisheries. Priorities are set through both long term research plans and

annual operational plans. The current draft plan includes economic development in indigenous fisheries, which is a topic relevant to accessing the public good funding for TSSAC research. FRDC also noted that research applications can be submitted that sit outside of the identified priorities.

12. The TSSAC chair identified that the TSSAC is like a RAC in its essence, as the committee is made up of users, and experts. The members of the TSSAC also sit on RAGs, where research needs to come from. So he questioned the need to go to another RAC, when TSSAC likely has better expertise regarding Torres Strait research.
13. FRDC noted that it would be difficult to expand the RACs (i.e. to include TSSAC), noting they have been trying to consolidate and reduce them from past numbers, so we will need to work with the current system.
14. The TSSAC Chair also acknowledged that Torres Strait fisheries GVP is included in the public good fund calculations for FRDC. So it would seem appropriate for Torres Strait research to be considered from time to time, as eligible candidates to access these public good funds.
15. The TSSAC noted the ongoing concerns from Torres Strait members regarding climate change. If communities are going to be able to adapt, and find ways of fishing as climate change impacts species, or find new forms of income, they will be forced to move away, which they don't want to do.
16. The FRDC noted they are building better engagement of Traditional Inhabitants into their processes, to ensure prior informed consent relating to research. The TSSAC Chair noted engagement with communities is already a strong part of the TSSAC research application and approval process.

**Action 81.2:** TSSAC Executive Officer to support project teams for the climate change and non-commercial catch monitoring projects to apply for funding through the FRDC Fishnet system.

17. The TSSAC noted a compliance issue relating to a TIB fisher and TRL raised by a traditional inhabitant member. The TSSAC chair acknowledged the importance of the issue, however that it is beyond the scope of the TSSAC, so requested that an action be provided to AFMA to follow up.

## **1.2 Adoption of agenda**

18. The TSSAC discuss the agenda, noting that a traditional inhabitant observer was concerned about discussing all of the research projects before the community engagement process was reviewed under agenda item 4. The committee agreed to leave the order of the agenda, however that any project could be discussed again following agenda item 4 if needed, in order to account for his concerns.

## **1.3 Declarations of Interest**

19. The Chair advised members and observers, that as provided in PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 (FMP1), all members of the TSSAC must declare all real or potential conflicts of interest related to Torres Strait research, most specifically the agenda items being considered in the current meeting. It was noted that where a direct conflict of interest is determined to exist,

the TSSAC may allow the member to continue to participate in the discussions relating to the matter but may also determine that, having made their contribution to the discussions, the member should retire from the meeting for the remainder of the discussions on that issue.

20. Each TSSAC member updated their interests lists, and roles held that may pose conflicts (as documented in **Table 1** below).
21. One declaration of interest was reported for Associate Professor (A/Prof.) Natasha Stacey, a scientific member on the committee, who is a co-investigator on the non-commercial catch monitoring project. A/Prof. Stacey left the meeting room while the committee discussed the potential conflict of interest. Remaining members agreed A/Prof Stacey. should engage in discussions around the project, however leave before any recommendations are made for this project.
22. The remaining members and observers left in groups (scientific members, industry members, Government members and observers), and remaining members agreed there were no conflicts that needed to be considered during the meeting for any other member.

**Table 1.** Declarations of interest for members and observers against. Each member includes a list of their positions and associations which have potential to create a conflict of interest. A note is also included as to whether each member has any specific conflict related to the TSSAC 81 agenda.

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chair	Fisheries consultant. Member of QLD sustainable fisheries expert panel. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Ms Danait Ghebrezghabier	AFMA Representative	A/g Manager Torres Strait Fisheries, AFMA.EO of the Hand Collectables Resource Assessment and Working Groups. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Ms. Lisa Cocking	Executive Officer (AFMA)	Senior Management Officer AFMA. EO of TSPMAC. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Dr Roland Pitcher	Scientific Member	Fisheries Scientist, CSIRO. Some CSIRO projects are held by researchers in same office. See section 1.2 of meeting record for the TSSAC decision on managing this perceived possible conflict against this agenda during discussions.
Dr Dirk Welsford	Scientific Member	Research scientist at Australian Antarctic Division. Sub-Antarctic resource assessment group. No specific conflicts against this agenda.

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
A/Prof Natasha Stacey	Scientific Member	Researcher at Charles Darwin University. Past (early 2020) FRDC NT Research Advisory Committee member. Co-investigator on the non-commercial catch project.
Dr Steve Newman	Scientific Members	Fisheries Scientist at Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA). No conflict considered against current agenda.
Mark Anderson	TSRA Member	The TSRA hold in trust, on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants, sunset licences for the Finfish Fishery, and hold licences in the TRL and BDM fisheries. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Mr Rocky Stephen	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	Kemer Kemer Meriam member. TSIRC Councillor for Ugar. President of Kos and Abob Ugar fishers association. Finfish working group member and Finfish RAG member. Partnership in fisheries business. TSRA member for Ugar. Member Zenadth Kes Fisheries Limited. Was a part of the project steering committee for the non-commercial catch project. Far North QLD data management committee, TSRA Fisheries Advisory Committee. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Mr Gavin Mosby	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	Member Zenadth Kes Fisheries Limited. Member TSPMAC. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Mr Patrick Mills	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	Member of the Torres Strait Fishers Association. TIB fisher. TRL Working Group industry member. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Maluwap Nona	Traditional Inhabitant Industry member	TIB licence holder (all entries), HCWG member. Chair of Maluilgal PBC, Badu Ar Mua Migi Lagal PBC.
Mr Yen Loban	Fisheries Portfolio member of the TSRA Board	TSRA Board member, TIB licence holder, director Zenadth Kes Fisheries. Fisheries portfolio member for all PZJA Advisory Committees. No specific conflicts against this agenda.

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
<b>Observers</b>		
Charles David	Observer - Industry	Zenadth Kes Fisheries board member. TIB license holder.
Ian Butler	Observer - ABARES	ABARES. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Georgia Langdon	Observer - AFMA	Senior Management Officer AFMA. EO of TRLRAG and TRLWG. No specific conflicts against this agenda.
Josh Fielding	Observer - FRDC	No conflicts against agenda.
Crispian Ashby	Observer – FRDC	No conflicts against agenda.
Daniel Takai	Observer – ZK Fisheries	CEO of ZK fisheries. ZK Fisheries hold commercial licences which are leased to MGF Kalis. No conflicts against this agenda.
Keith Brightman	Observer - TSRA	The TSRA hold in trust, on behalf of Traditional Inhabitants, sunset licences for the Finfish Fishery, and hold licences in the TRL and BDM fisheries. No specific conflicts against this agenda.

#### 1.4 TSSAC 80 meeting record and action Items from past meetings

23. The TSSAC noted the ratified TSSAC 80 meeting record, distributed to members on 27 January 2022.
24. The TSSAC noted progress against actions arising from past meetings.
25. They discussed action item 80.1 (to hold a meeting between Malu Lamar, TSRA and AFMA to discuss copywrite considerations for research). The TSRA noted that there had been delays with organising this meeting due to staff change overs within Malu Lamar, and that this action would be progressed following this meeting.
26. The TSSAC discussed action item 80.4 “ensure the white teatfish project be specified as a priority in the combined BDM scope”– and went into discussions regarding the white teatfish fishery. They noted that some decisions, such as issues around targeting methods, including use of Hookah, are considered a management issue, not a research issue and are being progressed by the RAG and working group. They also noted that the proposed white teatfish sampling

project aims to provide more data, to work towards the white teatfish fishery opening beyond trials.

27. The TSSAC noted action item 80.9, regarding conversations between NESP and FRDC, trying to access funding for the proposed Torres Strait climate change work. Crispian from FRDC noted they will continue to raise these funding and research priorities issues with them, and noted that the TSSAC can speak directly with Damien Burrows or Paul Hedge, to discuss priorities, particularly climate change, instead of having to go through FRDC.
28. Dirk Welsford also noted he can assist with being a contact for NESP, as he works within the department that NESP sits within.

**Action 81.3:** AFMA to work with FRDC to engage directly with NESP to discuss the climate change proposal for Torres Strait. Dirk can be a contact for answering questions as a TSSAC member, and staff within the Department that NESP sits within.

## Agenda Item 2 PZJA agency update

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29. AFMA provided an update from a recent PZJA meeting, which discussed the TSSAC research budget. The PZJA recommended the TSSAC look into alternative sources of funding to cover shortfalls for important research, and provide a report back to the PZJA.
30. The TSRA noted that they may have some additional funding available for research projects that have strong and clear links to supporting economic development for Torres Strait communities.
31. One of the research members noted that it can be quite hard to know the economic benefits of a project, until a project has been completed. They however noted that fisheries are generally vital to economics within the Torres Strait, as one of the major industries in the region.
32. The committee noted that if we do not clearly understand the social and economic value of the marine resources (commercially and traditionally), it is difficult to address this question.
33. ABARES have been working towards improving data on this in the Torres Strait, and Ian Butler believes they would be interested in supporting that sort of work.

**Action 81.4:** AFMA to follow up with ABARES on the sort of work they may be able to support, regarding building more knowledge around the social and economic benefits of fisheries in Torres Strait.

34. The committee discussed whether logbook data could assist with assessing the value of fisheries, based on previous catch compared to current catch, and how it may look in the future (i.e. a 10-15 year projection). They noted the difficulties with them being voluntary and that catch disposal records also wont necessarily provide enough information.
35. A/Prof Stacey, the social science member noted that there isn't a very good baseline for understanding the social benefits of fisheries in Torres Strait, as you need a baseline for forward predictions. Households and communities derive their livelihoods from fisheries, but there are also effects on culture etc, not just financial benefits, which are harder to find a baseline for, but are also important.

**Action 81.5:** TSSAC to discuss at future meetings ways we can gain a better understanding the social and economic benefits of fisheries and how this could be measured in the future, to support the work of the TSSAC and fisheries in Torres Strait.

36. The TSSAC noted the progress around existing TSSAC funded research projects.
37. The TSSAC went on to discuss changes in species composition of finfish in the Torres Strait, and discussed the PNG pollution as a possible influence, as well as climate change.
38. The TSSAC noted that tissue sampling can be used to test for water pollution, however it is expensive and not common practice.
39. The committee noted the previous study on the fly river run off, and agreed to check with the Finfish RAG of whether the need to understand the effects PNG pollution may have on the finfish fishery is still a high priority for them to progress.
40. Recent research has indicated that a 2016 warm water event has influenced recruitment into Spanish mackerel fisheries around Australia. It will be difficult to know whether which different elements are the ones effecting stocks (i.e. PNG runoff, climate change or biodynamic issues or a combination).

**Action 81.6:** AFMA to follow up with FFRAG as to whether the fly river pollution is still a high priority for the FFRAG, and provide the response to TSSAC out of Session.

41. The TSSAC noted there is uncertainty around the level and fishing methods being used in PNG in the finfish fishery, which also makes it difficult to understand possible impact to the stock.
42. The committee noted that PNG recently attended the TRLRAG meeting, so we are hopeful it may be the start of them reengaging with Torres Strait committees.

**Action 81.7:** TSSAC Chair to write to PNG welcoming their reengagement with the TSSAC.

## **Agenda Item 3      2022-23 Budget and Full proposals**

43. The TSSAC noted the intention of the budget agenda item, to discuss each research full proposal, note any comments required to go back to researchers to finalise their proposal, and prioritise the projects if adequate funding cant be secured to fund all projects.
44. The TSSAC also discussed the new process for stakeholder engagement, noting the removal of the pre-proposal process. The following points were noted:
  - a. Following conditional approval of any projects (that directly engage with communities) by TSSAC, a stakeholder engagement package will be distributed to all PBCs and councillors, offering an opportunity to comment.
  - b. Any comments received from communities will be summarised and sent back to TSSAC for comment with the final proposal, out of session, seeking approval. If there are significant comments from communities that need addressing, we will arrange a teleconference to discuss these.



- c. The usual permissions will of course also be sought before researchers seek to go to a community.
  - d. The committee noted that some industries provide small funding grants for researchers to actually write an application, which TSSAC could consider in the future if that seemed to be a barrier to people applying for work.
  - e. The TSSAC also noted that given research priorities are recommended by WG's and RAG's, they do come from communities, so engagement is occurring the whole way through the priorities process, and the engagement with the proposal, is more related to the specific details of a project outlined within the project proposal.
45. The TSSAC considered five research proposals seeking funding in the 2022-23 financial year (and beyond for some multi year projects). The following major points were noted generally, before moving into discussion about individual proposals:
- a. The AFMA budget for 2022-23 is \$541,000, around \$121,000 more than the last few financial years. This additional funding was provided noting the large list of research priorities this year, however AFMA may not be able to provide additional funding in future years.
  - b. The TSSAC also noted that AFMA may be able to access underspends to fund the black teatfish project (\$44,193) from the current budget, noting the black teatfish project will need to start this financial year during the black teatfish season opening. AFMA will further consider providing this funding if TSSAC support the black teatfish project to go ahead on its own merits at this meeting. It's unlikely this money would be able to be put towards another project, as no other project is starting in the 2021-22 financial year.
  - c. TSRA have provided \$150 000 again in ongoing funding towards the TRL survey and stock assessment work. There may be additional funds available if strong links can be made between the project and direct economic development benefits to Torres Strait communities.
  - d. The committed AFMA and TSRA funding so far is insufficient to support all five research projects to go ahead this year. The TSSAC will need to prioritise projects and look at additional funding sources that could be pursued to allow all projects to go ahead.
  - e. Any multi year funding projects need to be considered carefully by TSSAC, to ensure there will be sufficient funding for possible future priorities that may arise.
  - f. The TSSAC Chair acknowledged that we will likely recommend either one or both of the climate change and non-commercial catch projects to seek co-funding from the FRDC.

### **Finfish coral trout catch per unit effort (CPUE) standardisation**

- 46. The TSSAC noted that the coral trout CPUE project is needed to further develop the finfish fishery harvest strategies. A harvest strategy is a requirement of the Wildlife Trade Operation approvals for the fishery, and due by 30 June 2023.
- 47. Standardised CPUE allows us to better take into account uncertainty for coral trout in the current stock assessment.

48. The RAG and working group are supportive of the proposal, and have provided some comments for the project team to address when finalising their proposal. The Principle Investigator (PI) has already provided some preliminary responses to these comments, however the TSSAC will provide a formal request in the reply letter to the PI, seeking these changes. These comments included:
- a. Define a clearer objective and rationale/need for the updated time series i.e. inclusion of four years (2018-2021) since the last assessment.
  - b. Including more detail on the analysis process in the methods of the proposal to ensure it is a stand alone document.
  - c. Provide a minimum list of the model outputs.
  - d. Provide information on the repeatability of the analysis, and whether code could be provided to allow this work to be easily repeated in the future.
49. One Industry member reiterated the importance of this project, in order to allow accurate setting of the TAC for the coral trout fishery.
50. The scientific members supported the project, noting it is good value for money, but noted the methods were fairly light, however referenced a past project which may have more detail.
51. The TSSAC supported the project, and agreed to prioritise it later, once the other applications were reviewed.

### **Tropical Rock Lobster Survey and stock assessment**

52. The TSSAC noted that the TRL fishery had anomalous circumstances the last several years due to COVID, where a market crash effected catch and catch rates in 2019 and 2020 – 50% of TAC caught). This effected the catch and catch rates, which improved again in late 2020. However China then made a choice not to receive Australian Lobster product, which has effected the catch rates again.
53. The empirical harvest control rule was affected by the changes to catch rates, which aren't related to stocks, but economics. The RAG recommended that metarules be developed to manage these sorts of anomalies instead of tweaking it in an ad hoc way. This proposal includes work to do this, as well as work to analyse the possible effects of lobster bycatch from the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.
54. The TSSAC discussed the budget increase for this project, which include:
- a. \$17,000 per year for employing a traditional inhabitant dory driver, as a development opportunity and also learn from him regarding the fishery.
  - b. annual pay increases for project staff, which haven't changed in three years (three year contracts) – additional \$25,000 per year.
  - c. Prawn bycatch analysis – around \$3000 per year.
  - d. Revisiting the morphometric analysis of TRL as the information we are using is quite old - \$2,300 per year.

55. The TSSAC noted that the project budget is spread across all years of the project, despite assessment years having more work. The budget is not necessarily directly linked to specific work in each year, even though milestones are paid based on specific actions being progressed.
56. The TSSAC questioned whether savings should be seen at some point, noting the project is repeated each year, simply adding more data points, so you would assume, would become more efficient, like efficiency dividends expected in Government.
57. The TSSAC went on to discuss the opportunity cost of research funding, across different fisheries, and the importance of identifying the return on the research dollar for different fisheries. The following points were noted:
- a. The TRL project is providing gold standard research, however other fisheries are still developing more base line level science, so the TSSAC should consider whether the standard of TRL could come down, in order to allow other fisheries to raise their standard to a closer level, creating more value for dollar in these other fisheries.
  - b. A recent management strategy evaluation of the TRL assessments and surveys found the research to be good value for money. The review noted that if a lower standard of assessment (such as less frequent surveys) was carried out, it would likely lead to a drop in TAC through the harvest strategy (due to uncertainty), and this an income loss for the fishery which outweighs the cost of the surveys. The MSE did not assess the costs to other fisheries, though having less access to research funding, only impacts directly on TRL.
  - c. A constant catch model, such as used in QLD would also likely lead to a reduced TAC, and reduced income. This wasn't the preferred option when considered by the RAG and WG during development of the harvest strategy.
  - d. The TSSAC noted that the Queensland TRL Fishery is managed through a constant catch model, however surveys are not possible in Queensland due to differences in topography.
  - e. It is important to understand priorities from communities relating the different fisheries, and where they believe research funding should be spent.
  - f. The TRLRAG do have a priority to try to improve fishery dependant data, noting that fishery independent surveys may not continue indefinitely.
  - g. A constant TAC was estimated at being 300t annually, and the TIB catch in 2018 was 299t, and the fishery closed early. So there is some risk to the TIB sector hitting the lower TAC that would be required under a conservative constant catch model.
58. Eva Plaganyi, the project team leader joined the meeting and the following points were discussed:
- a. There can be costs saved on some aspects within the project, but it would reduce the quality of the stock assessment. It is up to management of whether a reduced quality assessment would still meet the needs of the fishery for management.
  - b. Survey costs do not reduce over time, if anything they increase through inflation.
  - c. There are some options for reducing costs in other areas of the project. This includes less in depth CPUE analysis, not completing an MSE for the new metarules that need to be

developed, or leaving out continual improvement they have built into the stock assessment such as for climate change elements.

- d. It isn't recommended to remove the annual survey, as it would lead to a reduced TAC as discussed earlier, as biomass doesn't accumulate in this fishery like it does in the Queensland fishery, so annual surveys are required for certainty.
59. The TSSAC chair thanks the PI for attending the meeting, and the PI left. The following additional points were discussed:
- a. The TSSAC should be careful not to question the RAG and WG recommendations, given they are the expert body, particularly regarding the preferred assessment models.
  - b. The TSSAC noted that Dr Plaganyi has provided clear advice that a lower standard of survey will lead to a reduced TAC, and less income, so a recommendation just needs to be made regarding the priority of this work versus other fisheries.
  - c. One traditional inhabitant member noted the importance of the TRL fishery for the bread and butter for communities, as so many TIB fishers operate in the fishery.
  - d. There is a lot extra work beyond the bare minimum of a stock assessment, such as the metarules, climate work etc, which hasn't been asked for, and has an additional cost. This work is useful, however not asked for, so we would be in our right to ask for a proposal that does only cover that requested in the scope. It is also possible this extra work is covered by the 30% co-contribution from CSIRO, so isn't specifically costing the TSSAC money, and is a marginal cost saving in the whole budget. The environmental data being collected is also very valuable, and is really a value adding process, given surveys are already being conducted, which can benefit other fisheries too.
  - e. The TSSAC again noted the importance of determining the social value of these different fisheries, as there was discussion noting the economic value of TRL is higher both in terms of profit, and the number of licences (several hundred TRL licences, compared to only 15 in the finfish fishery). However other social benefits may outweigh economic.
  - f. Several Industry members noted that the TRL project is important, and if recommended by the expert groups, should be supported.
60. The TSSAC supported the project and agreed it should be recommended for funding, without seeking any reductions in the scope and budget.
61. The TSSAC noted the desire to ensure community engagement on the project is sufficient, so communities in the areas of this fishery know what is happening with the project. AFMA noted that the project team leader has been out to the communities in the past to talk about the research and its outcomes.

## **Beche de mer fishery projects**

62. The TSSAC discussed the three beche-de-mer projects which have been presented with a single project proposal.
63. The TSSAC noted that the Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group (HCRA) Chair is supportive of all three components, and in particular the black teatfish work, which is required

to better understand the stock. One scientific member also provided feedback, including a request to clarify the survey options and data storage mechanisms. This feedback will be given to the project team to address in their final proposal.

## **Black Teatfish Sampling**

64. The following main points were discussed regarding the black teatfish size sampling proposal:
- a. The Black Teatfish project would undertake size frequency sampling, and updating the stock assessment using catches from the season opening.
  - b. This work is important as the species' history and CITIES listing leads to a higher environmental imperative when managing the fishery.
  - c. AFMA has underspends from the 2021-22 budget which may be able to be applied to this project, given it needs to occur this financial year if it is recommended by the TSSAC.
  - d. The committee noted a suggestion from one Industry member, that fishers could be used to sample the species, to save money instead of having to employ people to do this work. AFMA noted that they would like to work towards this, however this year they would be starting to build that capacity by observers teaching fishers how to do measurements themselves. This first year of sampling is an experiment, which will be used to build on future years sampling.
  - e. The BDM survey study several years ago, funded by TSRA, showed that the stock had recovered, and this information was used to open the fishery last year and increase the TAC.
  - f. After this second trial reopening, the RAG and WG will need to discuss what the fishery would look like going forward. This size sample data will allow us to inform the harvest strategy to provide good advice for the fishery around a regular TAC and opening going forward.
  - g. This proposed project will attempt to sample at the first point of landing, to allow us to tie the measurement of each specimen to the location it came from.
  - h. The TSSAC agreed to recommend the black teatfish project for funding consideration by the delegate, and noted that the comments of the RAG should be addressed in the final proposal.
65. The TSSAC noted the need to ensure proper engagement with communities before the trial opening, and sampling begins, so they understand the intentions of observers and compliance officers being on community, before the opening. This will be discussed further in the community engagement section.
66. The TSSAC agreed that the black teatfish project should go ahead, if funding can be secured, and comments of the RAG be incorporated into the final version of the proposal.

## **White teatfish stock assessment model development**

67. The following main points were discussed regarding the white teatfish stock assessment modelling proposal:

- a. There is currently no stock assessment model for white teatfish, and we need to consider the updated information from the last survey.
  - b. There was a 10 year gap in surveys for black and white teatfish. To be able to increase the white Teatfish TAC, we need more information for the species.
  - c. There is currently a default limit reference point of B40, for all species, however if they want to have higher TACs, particularly for deepwater catches, then incorporating the data from the recent survey is important.
  - d. Industry questioned whether we could be putting white teatfish at risk by fishing without completing size sampling. AFMA confirmed that the deepwater survey indicated the white teatfish stock is in good shape, and catches have been low the last few years. AFMA are however hoping to do size sampling in future, if the black teatfish sampling is successful and can be applied to the other species.
  - e. The TSSAC noted that a project such as this is important for ensuring ongoing export approval will be granted, as teatfish fisheries are high risk, and the Commonwealth Government has strict rules around export approvals being linked to strong fisheries management regimes.
68. The TSSAC again noted the importance of progressing the hookah policy for the teatfish fisheries, which is a high priority to industry, who want to access hookah in order to be able to fish in the deep water.
69. The TSSAC agreed that this project was a priority to progress, noting the overall rankings for funding that need to occur.

### **Curryfish conversion ratio project**

70. Targeting of curryfish has increased overtime and it needs good management.
71. Industry has developed useful processing methods which we haven't yet clarified dedicated conversion ratios for, to ensure effective management of the stock.
72. At the moment we apply the most conservative conversion ratio for the processing method, which manages the risks of overfishing. For this reason this project could be considered a lower priority, as it is lower risk, however is still an important project.
73. AFMA hope to work closely with industry to develop the conversion ratios.
74. One industry member questioned whether there has been any concern from the fishing industry relating to curryfish, similar to other teatfish species.
75. AFMA noted that there are no issues with the curryfish species, however industry have noticed some changes to species ratios for common versus vastus; where the ratio is changing in different areas of the fishery. AFMA are hoping to support improvement of species specific reporting by industry, so we can see any changes with species like this over time.
76. One industry member noted it could be useful to develop community based management plans for the species in the future, which will bring some responsibility back onto communities, then if anything goes wrong, communities are the ones who are responsible for the decision.

77. The TSSAC supported this project to go ahead without any change, pending prioritising funding later in the meeting.

## Climate change

78. The TSSAC discussed the climate change modelling project, noting that we know there is TSSAC support for the project, and the discussion is largely around where we will go to seek funding for the project, as well as answering final questions with the project team.

79. Eva Plaganyi - from the CSIRO joined the meeting to answer questions regarding the project, noting Leo Dutra the team lead is on leave.

80. The TSSAC discussed the following key points related to the project:

- a. The project was identified because Torres Strait is a gap in marine ecosystems data in Australia. We have ecosystem models with hydrodynamic models and species interactions for most fisheries around Australia except Torres Strait. It's a big job to develop these, however we need them, because the other models (Great Barrier Reef in the east and Gulf of Carpentaria in the west) around Australia are different, and don't suit Torres Strait, due to the ecosystem unique characteristics.
- b. The TSSAC discussed why Finfish isn't included in the proposal for this project. Ms Plaganyi noted that Finfish could be added, however there is very little data for the finfish fishery, so there will be uncertainty if it is included in the model.
- c. The TSSAC noted that if species with uncertainty are included, the results won't be as helpful to people on the ground. They noted that the additional data that would be needed for finfish, to allow it to be added to the project with more certainty would include spatial distribution and movement patterns, including seasonal differences for the species. They would also need information on connectivity, diets and interactions with other species and environmental variables.
- d. The TSSAC noted Beth Fulton's adaptation strategy project for Commonwealth Fisheries, and heard from Dr Plaganyi about the links to this project. She noted that MICE models are tactical, designed to answer particular questions, and help make management decisions, so it can be used in a strategic way. She noted that Ecosystem models are different. This project would look at some of the key management questions to try to find answers for the questions.
- e. John Rainbird, the TSRA climate change manager noted that the MICE models uncover very important information for supporting climate change in fisheries management. He sees these models as the best available systems for management and is very supportive of the project.
- f. The TSSAC noted that TSRA have a memorandum of understanding with AIMS, who are increasing their effort in the Torres Strait. They collect general environmental data as well as fisheries data, which would probably be helpful for this project. They also noted that AIMS could additional data, if they have capacity on their vessel to do so.

**Action 81.8:** AFMA to support the project team to speak to John Rainbird and AIMS regarding options for collecting more environmental data that would be useful for this project. The project team could also consider a brainstorming meeting with TSRA, AFMA, AIMS and TIB industry members and CSIRO to discuss the data which would be useful to collect.

- g. The TSSAC again noted the importance of ensuring that this project has tangible outcomes including strategies that can be provided to communities to manage climate change impacts in a very practical way. Some of the specific suggestions for the project included understanding:
- What are the key drivers of climate change for Torres Strait? (SST, sea level, or is it cumulative or synergistic effects etc)
  - What are the trade-offs? (if any, e.g., cross-species interaction effects - does TS Rock Lobster increase and coral trout decrease, or are individual species impacted only in terms of more poor years becoming more regular or potentially more good years appearing more regularly etc)
  - What sort of impacts will further development have?
  - How can we mitigate any climate change problems?
  - What are the hidden environmental/ecosystem impacts?
  - How does climate link to changes in the biology of individual species?
  - What climate change factors affect recruitment of fish and seagrass etc?
  - How do fish respond to coral bleaching? Is it important?
  - Impacts of climate change on threatened species (turtle, dugong), is it the same as other exploited species?
  - What are the impacts on critical habitats (mangroves, seagrass etc)?
- h. The TSSAC discussed the project team plan to communicate the outcomes of the project, noting there isn't currently a budget for that aspect of the project. This should be considered, so the project outcomes can be used effectively.
- i. The TSSAC noted views from industry members, including considering options of getting Torres Strait communities to collect missing data needed for the model. They also noted the importance of this project, and the desire for it to occur as soon as possible. They also noted that closely involving Torres Strait Islanders is important, as more projects are generally more effective when there is support when on islands.

**Action 81.9:** AFMA and TSRA to work with the project team to consider whether there is useful data for input into this project, that could be collected by Torres Strait Islanders.

- j. The TSSAC also noted that climate change is a political issue beyond TSSAC. It needs to involve leaders of the region, as without fisheries, there is no economic development for



Traditional Owners. If there is no climate action, there will be no fisheries in 15 years to look after.

- k. The TSSAC noted that it could be useful for the TSRA Fisheries Advisory Committee, Torres Strait Islander Regional Council and TSRA Board should be offered a presentation on this project.
- l. The TSSAC agreed that the climate change project is a high priority for funding, and noted that stakeholder engagement should be required before the project could proceed, and if funding can be secured.

### **Non-commercial catch project**

- 81. The TSSAC noted the purpose of this project, which is to develop, through co-design with communities, a catch monitoring program for the non-commercial catch of commercial species, with the option to progressing to non-commercial species if that is something wanted by communities. The project could also have the potential to collect environmental data, which would also need to be an initiative from communities.
- 82. The TSSAC noted that the project team have budgeted for a cost benefit analysis of the different options for data collection (i.e. app based system). This includes reviewing what is already built or available, to use the most cost-effective tool to meet the specific needs of communities and other stakeholders.
- 83. The TSSAC Chair welcome David Brewer, one of the project team, to answer questions related to the project. The following points were discussed:
  - a. The project team took on notice a question as to what additional costs would be required, if any, to fund a TSRA staff member, and traditional owner to be part of the consultation on communities. If any other costs are not included in the project proposal, whether in kind or monetary, it must be included in the full proposal.
  - b. The TSSAC noted a cost benefit analysis will be completed as a part of this project, to ensure they are using the most cost-effective data collection tool.
  - c. The TSSAC noted that the project team will know that there is broad agreement for the feasible options by communities, through the consultation during the co-development meetings.
  - d. The TSSAC questioned the data validation methods that will be used in the project. Mr Brewer emailed that the complimentary survey methods will be used in the project, to help manage data bias, and agreed to add more information about the specific statistical methods they will be using to manage statistical bias that may arise in this sort of data collection as well.
  - e. One industry member questioned whether this project could be weaved into the Turtle and Dugong project. The project team considered this could be something that may be able to occur down the track, if key stakeholders consider it a good method. They suggested this be raised during community engagement.
  - f. The TSSAC noted there may be longer term employment opportunities within the project, if it proceeds. The program would need ongoing champions in communities, and data

maintenance roles long term, however we are only on step one of the process, and that would occur in the second stage of this project, which isn't part of this project proposal. This could be raised under project extension in the project proposal.

- g. The TSSAC agreed that additional information should be included in the proposal, to explain the data collection that will occur in the project.

**Action 81.10:** TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to add cost benefit analysis into the methods of the proposal. i.e. a cost benefit analysis will be carried out against the different data collection and management options.

**Action 81.11:** TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to include, in their proposal, the statistical methods that will be used to manage statistical bias that may arise in data collection.

**Action 81.12:** TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to consider whether there would be benefit of using the turtle and dugong project to facilitate the community engagement part of the project.

**Action 81.13:** TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to include information around possible employment opportunities if this project goes ahead to the next stage, following this project. This could be included in the extension part of the project proposal.

**Action 81.14:** TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to include more information on data collection methods in the project proposal.

## Funding prioritisation of projects

84. The TSSAC discussed the five research projects and their order of priority for funding by TSSAC in 2022-23. The following key points were noted:
- a. We need to ensure we consider the effects projects with multi-year funding will have on future research priorities when making our recommendations to the delegate.
  - b. There is complexity around prioritising the different fisheries and research projects, noting that BDM fisheries have a high bar for research and management due to CITES listings, however TRL is the most financially lucrative fishery. Also, despite TRL having the most fishers and highest GVP, that doesn't mean it is more important than other fisheries, which may be considered more important for social reasons, and future development of these fisheries, noting TRL already has gold class science, and other fisheries are only in their development phase.
  - c. TSRA noted that they are hopeful to secure \$500 000 towards the climate change project which can be provided by Zenadth Kes Fisheries as a co-contribution, which is around 50% of the projects funding. FRDC noted that they tend to be more open to supporting projects which have a co-contribution, and they are welcome to submit an application through the FRDC funding round opening soon.

- d. Without the climate change project, all our other projects seem a bit futile, as they won't exist if climate change causes changes and we don't have ability to adapt.
- e. TSRA agreed to work with AFMA and FRDC offline to try to secure funding between TSRA and FRDC.
- f. FRDC noted that it would be helpful for the industry members (ZK Fisheries) or TSSAC to write a letter to FRDC noting there is interest to secure industry funding (from ZK Fisheries) to apply into FRDC to obtain the matching funding from the ¼ percent available from FRDC.
- g. The TSSAC agreed that climate change should be listed as the number 1 priority for funding, however noting that funding will be secured outside of the standard TSSAC funding pool, due to its significant cost. We want to ensure it is recorded that this is the priority to Torres Strait communities for funding.
- h. One Industry member discussed the need to ensure the curryfish fisheries don't end up like black teatfish, through overfishing or mismanagement, and have to close for years to recover, so research in these fisheries is very important to some industry members.
- i. AFMA explained that even though we don't have species specific conversion ratios for the species, we are using conservative ones now, which are very precautionary and they have a way to capture wastage due to damaged product. Despite this, the TSSAC agreed that the curryfish conversion ratio project should still be a priority for funding in 2022-23.
- j. The TSSAC discussed the TRL project funding, and whether the TVH sector could provide funding towards research, to help support the TRL research, so funding is available for other important research. They noted that there is no formal cost recovery framework for Torres Strait fisheries, so any contribution would likely need to be voluntary from industry, and could take many years to implement.
- k. The TSSAC discussed again the option of moving to a conservative TAC in the TRL fishery, in order to bring the budget down, given the TVH industry are not contributing towards research.
- l. TSRA and industry members left the room to have a conversation relating to research priorities and funding.
- m. TSRA and industry members provided a proposal for TSRA to provide additional funding of \$75,000 for two of the three year TRL contract being considered, to make up the shortfall of funding and allow all projects (excluding climate change) to be progressed now through TSSAC funding. This would be a total of \$225,000 for 2022-23 and 2023-24, which equates to around 66% of the funding of the surveys, matching the TIB ownership percentage for the fishery.
- n. TSRA noted that this funding would be provided on the proviso that over the next two years, there should be discussions facilitated with the TVH sector around providing voluntary contributions towards TRL research, so the TRL research moves to being fully funded by industry, with 66% covered by the TIB sector through TSRA funding, and 33% paid by the TVH sector through voluntary contributions.
- o. The TSRA and industry provided the view that if all sectors are benefiting from the high quality research in TRL, it would be ideal for all to be contributing to the cost, and doing this

based on the percentage ownership of the fishery would seem appropriate. If the TVH sector don't agreed to do so for the third year of the TRL contract, TSRA's additional \$75,000 funding will be removed for that year, and the TSSAC traditional inhabitant industry members and TSRA would put forward an argument for the TRL research to move towards a more conservative TAC, to save money. The TSSAC noted this position, but also noted that the TRLRAG would need to consider the way forward for the TRL surveys in this case.

- p. The TSSAC noted that the above proposal relating to TRL aims to free up TSSAC funding to continue to process important research, and thus development in the other Torres Strait fisheries, which are also important to Torres Strait Islanders.
- q. The TSSAC noted that the Spanish mackerel management strategy evaluation project is still a high priority, which we should consider when supporting multiyear funding projects. However given we did not receive an application, we could not really earmark money for it, until an application is received.

**Action 81.15:** TSRA to work with AFMA and FRDC to determine the best way forward to seeking FRDC co-contributions towards the climate change project, and support the project team to progress an FRDC application.

**Action 81.16:** TSSAC to write a letter to FRDC and AFMA CEO noting there is interest to secure industry funding (from ZK Fisheries) to apply into FRDC to obtain the matching funding from the ¼ percent available from FRDC.

The TSSAC **NOTED** that the climate change and non-commercial catch monitoring project will be seeking co-funding from FRDC. The climate change project will need additional funding to proceed. If the non-commercial catch project does not secure co-funding, it should still be able to be funded by TSSAC, with some changes to the project years and budget spread.

The TSSAC **RECOMMEND** that all projects be funded for 2022-23 financial year, with the following priority order for projects:

1. Climate change
2. Stock assessment modelling of white teatfish
3. BDM size frequency sampling program for black teatfish
4. Curryfish conversion ratios
5. Finfish Catch per Unit of Effort for Coral Trout
6. Tropical Rock Lobster Fisheries Independent Survey, stock assessment and recommended biological catch calculations
7. Measuring non-commercial catches in the Torres Strait

- 85. The TSSAC went through the project evaluation criteria for each of the projects, and noted that all projects meet the criteria. The TSSAC agree to look into changing the language from "traditional inhabitants" to "traditional owners" in our assessment criteria, as traditional

inhabitant can be offensive. The committee noted that the language is used because that is the terminology used in the treaty, however could be changed.

86. The TSSAC noted the following additional points related to various projects:
- a. TRL – ask the project team for the TRL project to more fully consider the possibility of involving indigenous cadets or students in the research.
  - b. Non-commercial catch monitoring project – check with the project team if they could involve younger community members such as school students in the engagement to even better meet the capacity building criteria.
  - c. Black Teatfish – the sampling relies on anecdotal information from fishers, as 2 or 3 fishers are involved as data loggers. The project team should clarify what this means more clearly in the proposal.
  - d. Generally, proposals don't identify if traditional knowledge is specifically being collected, and how it will be managed. In several projects, a generic statement is in there to cover off this item which is unhelpful. All proposals should consider if local or traditional knowledge will be used. And if so, or possible, what sort of knowledge will be collected, how, how will it be used and how it will be protected.
  - e. The project extension part of proposals is generally unclear. Ask the project teams to be clear of whether an extension idea is a specific opportunity which should be followed up for proper implementation of the results of the project, or just an aspiration.
  - f. The TSSAC agreed that in future, all members should complete the evaluation forms for each project before the meeting, then let Executive Officer will know if any criteria are not meet for any project, which can then be addressed at the TSSAC meeting, instead of going through every criteria.

**Action 81.17:** TSSAC Executive Officer to change the language in the assessment criteria from traditional inhabitant to traditional owners.

**Action 81.18:** TSSAC Executive officer to ask the TRL project team to include more detail regarding how indigenous cadets or students could be involved in the TRL research.

**Action 81.19:** TSSAC EO to request all TSSAC members to complete the evaluation forms before a meeting, in order to determine whether any criteria are not met for any project. Then this will be addressed at the meeting.

## Stakeholder Engagement Packages

87. The TSSAC reviewed each of the stakeholder engagement strategies for the proposed research. They noted that Natasha Stacey had reviewed each document in detailed, and noted that none of the documents meet the requirements set out in the guiding documents. Some of the issues included:
- a. Some researchers have combined the two separate documents (stakeholder engagement strategy – which is meant to outline the process with which they will engage throughout the

project, and community flier – which should detail the project information) into one, which is not the requirement.

- b. they are generally not very clear on which community members will be involved in the project and how they will be engaged.
  - c. They have not provided detail on how and when the project team will engage with communities throughout the project, despite an example table being provided for them to fill in.
88. The TSSAC agreed that Natasha Stacey would work with the TSSAC Executive Officer to collect all comments on the engagement strategies, and work with the project teams to improve the quality of these.
89. The TSSAC agreed that the executive officer would send the project engagement packages out to the PBCs and Councillors for consultation on behalf of the projects teams, as one package, to simplify the process for everyone involved.

**Action 81.20:** AFMA to work with Natasha Stacey and project teams to improve engagement plans and consultation documents.

90. The TSSAC also noted there is still a need to improve the way, and type of information that is provided back to communities on the outcomes of research.
91. The TSSAC noted that it would be worth trying to engage a communications expert, who may be able to assist with project engagement, given fisheries scientists are not always experts in science communication.
92. The TSRA noted that they can secure funding for a science communication expert, such as from the CSIRO, or a freelance graphic designer, if we can find a suitable expert, as the other ways they have tried to achieve this have not worked. The communication mechanisms need to be suitable for Torres Strait islanders such as simple fact sheets or infographics.
93. The TSSAC noted there may be able to be standard template researchers would fill in the help facilitate this process. They also noted that the project teams could budget this into their project budget as an alternative.
94. Dr Welsford noted he has contacts for someone who may be suitable for this work as well.
95. FRDC noted that they are also trying to improve the communication of research outcomes, to really meet the needs of the end users, so they would be happy to work with TSSAC on this.
96. The TSSAC also noted that it could be possible for someone who isn't the project team, to communicate outcomes of a project, such as a Traditional Owner, or communication specialist.

**Action 81.21:** TSRA and AFMA to find a suitable science communicator to do work from Torres Strait research communications, noting the TSRA could fund this. This may involve developing a template for researchers to complete in order to facilitate the communication of project results.

**Action 81.22:** TSRA to speak to FRDC around science communication work for project outcomes.

97. The TSSAC discussed a past action item, for the TSSAC Executive officer to provide a presentation to the Torres Strait Regional Island Council on the TSSAC functions. They also discussed the best way to engage communities as part of the consultation process that occurs before the TSSAC gives final support and recommendations for research funding.
98. One industry member noted that Malu Lamar (or GBK) is now the first port of call for engagement relating to community engagement as the prescribed body corporate for the area, and they could be consulted on the research engagement. They will then engage councillors and PBCs where needed.
99. Another industry member noted that it would make sense to also contact the Traditional Owner RAG and Working Group members, as they were the ones who were a part of the recommendation process for the projects. This could be done through ZK Fisheries.

**Action 81.23:** TSSAC Executive Officer to speak to Malu Lamar regarding how they would like to be communicated with regarding research.

**Action 81.24:** TSSAC to send the project engagement documents each year to the RAG and Working Group Traditional Owner members, in addition to Malu Lamar, PBCs and Councillors, noting their link to these projects.

## Agenda Item 4      Review of Procedural Framework for Undertaking Research in Torres Strait

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100. The TSSAC Executive Officer walked the TSSAC through the paper, providing background in relation to ethical oversight required for all research, and the difference between general ethical approvals and considerations, compared to ethics in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research is relevant to research carried out anywhere on land or sea that may affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in Native Title Claim areas. The following main points were noted:
  - a. AIATSIS recently updated their code of conduct for carrying out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. This is not a mandatory code to follow, however if people do follow it, they would be considered to be doing best practice research and ethics management with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
  - b. TSSAC commenced a project in 2008, lead by Professor Martin Nakata, to develop a guiding protocol for research in Torres Strait to make it more ethically sounds.
  - c. This guide was completed in 2011, and was reviewed in 2015 following the Native Title ruling, to ensure it was still best practice.
  - d. Since this time, AFMA has been working with AIATSIS to even further improve the standards of engagement and research conduct for Torres Strait research.
  - e. AIATSIS noted that the effectiveness and suitability of our process inevitably falls on communities being happy with it. However from their perspective, the processes we currently use are a higher standard than many other researchers follow in Australia. AIATSIS also noted that given all our research priorities come from RAGs and WGs, which include

Torres Strait Islanders who have been elected by communities, this is a strong platform for ethical research, as the research projects are coming from or supported by Torres Strait Islanders from the first level of recommendation all the way through.

- f. The TSSAC noted that we can't do really long consultation processes around our research, as we are still bound by finance cycles, and researchers completing research within a financial year, which gives around 10 months.

101. The TSSAC went on to discuss the TSSACs views on the current research protocols, and discussed the following points:

- a. They noted that Zenadth Kes Fisheries has taken over the management of RAGs and WGs nominations, and the member on the WG and RAG will be the same to allow continuity. The industry members on this committee were generally supportive of the process for nominations of the new members.
- b. The TSSAC noted that it could be useful to have AIATSIS attend a meeting for some education regarding ethical conduct in research, or attend the TSRA stakeholder forum being hosted for new members in July.
- c. The TSSAC noted one suggestion from AIATSIS, to continue to work towards inspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take fisheries career pathways. They acknowledged it is beyond the remit of the committee, however that programs such as the TSRA and CSIRO Indigenous cadetship programs, encourage and support education in fisheries science.
- d. The TSSAC noted that it would be useful for researchers to complete cultural awareness training before doing research in Torres Strait. They agreed that it is ideal for researchers (particularly those doing regular research in Torres Strait) to do face to face training, but development of an online model could also be effective and most cost effective. Industry members also noted that a basic training such as AFMA's SBS online training, completed by all staff, would be a good first step while other trainings are developed.
- e. The TSSAC discussed what would be considered the best ways to communicate with Torres Strait communities regarding research outcomes. The following ideas were suggested:
  - f. TSRA to work with FRDC to progress an avenue for developing infographics to communicate research outcomes.
  - g. Community notice boards – we could have a QR code with a link to an infographic or fact sheet.
  - h. Work with GBK and Zenadth Kes Fisheries who can assist with getting the notices up, and information out to communities in the way they see is best.
  - i. Ensure information goes back to the members of the relevant fishery committees and TSSAC.
  - j. Scientists doing a presentation to communities where possible. This could be in person or via video or similar.



102. The TSSAC discussed the other engagement that communities may want during a project in progress, noting we need to be mindful of balancing realistic resourcing and providing information. The following suggestions were made.

- a. The TSSAC noted the sms system of notifying licence holders is very effective, however if used too often, will dilute and become less effective. AFMA can consider whether sending a text to licence holders as soon as a notice related to research is released on the website is feasible or may be overusing the SMS system.
- b. The TSSAC noted that GBK should be contacted initially for any tasks, as they will know the best language expert, or person with any skillset for any task on a community, to direct us to them.
- c. The TSSAC noted that the new procedural framework could include a list of possible ways scientists could communicate with communities, and when and why to each option.
- d. The TSSAC noted that the consent forms that are completed for projects that directly engage fishers, should also discuss interviews, and provide a transcript back to interviewees where needed, for their review. In instances such as the non-commercial catch monitoring project the researchers would provide a summary of the outcomes from each meeting, back to the community to review after the meeting, to ensure they agree with the outcomes.
- e. Engage Malu Lamar to help with language translations for research outcomes.

**Action 81.25:** TSSAC EO to include communication options, and why and when to use each of them, in the updated procedural framework.

**Action 81.26:** AFMA to speak to Human Resources team as to whether researcher could access/complete the SBS online cultural awareness training.

**Action 81.27:** TSSAC Executive Officer to see whether funding would be available for researchers to complete cultural awareness training, and look at options for how any online cultural awareness training model specific to the Torres Strait could be built and funded.

**Action 81.28:** TSRA and AFMA to consider how we would language translations of other consultation with Malu Lamar if there is a fee for service.

**Action 81.29:** AFMA to consider whether the sms notification system could be used during the research cycle to notify licence holders of proposed research once a year.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The TSSAC **AGREED** that the following changes should occur to the procedural framework for review by TSSAC:

- Add in Do's and Don'ts of communication types in a table.
- Contact GBK and Zenadth Kes Fisheries as a starting points for community engagement for research, to hear their views on the best communication methods.
- Ensure researchers know they need to complete consent forms with paid or non-paid employees/ volunteers for research projects.
- Remove the pre-proposal references, and update the process with full proposals only.

- Ensure the procedure states that researchers are expected to complete a plain English summary at the end, and ideally in the middle of the project. This will be agreed through individual communication plans for each project.

**Action 81.30:** TSSAC Executive officer to update procedural framework, and send to TSSAC for comment, including the changes listed above.

## Agenda Item 5 Other Business

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103. The TSSAC noted that they will need to speak out of session regarding future meeting schedule, noting that they are recommending to forward commit their budget for two years, with the recommended projects. This means we may only require a short teleconference to discuss urgent research priorities.
104. The Chair noted that it could be useful meeting to do more tactical work, noting all our time usually gets taken up by research projects. AFMA will work with TSRA and the Chair to discuss options for agendas and meeting schedules going forward out of session.
105. The TSSAC also noted there will be new members, so it could be worthwhile meeting to brief new members, and also consider cultural awareness training, or AIATSIS training, or to discuss communication plans.

**Action 81.31:** TSSAC Executive Officer to work with the Chair to consider possible meeting agenda and priorities this year, and send a proposed meeting schedule to members.

## Agenda Item 6 Meeting Close

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106. The Chair thanked members for attending the meeting, and for their service during their three year term, noting AFMA are currently facilitating a process to elect new members, so some may not return for the next term. The TSRA member also gave special thanks to the scientific members for their expertise, which is critical to this meeting. The Fisheries Portfolio member also thanked everyone, and noted that working together as one is very effective at getting things done.
107. The meeting was closed with a prayer at 330pm.



**Table 1.** Summary of TSSAC 81 recommendations

Agenda Item #	Recommendations
3	<p>The TSSAC <b>RECOMMEND</b> that all projects be funded for 2022-23 financial year, with the following priority order for projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Climate change</li> <li>9. Stock assessment modelling of white teatfish</li> <li>10. BDM size frequency sampling program for black teatfish</li> <li>11. Curryfish conversion ratios</li> <li>12. Finfish Catch per Unit of Effort for Coral Trout</li> <li>13. Tropical Rock Lobster Fisheries Independent Survey, stock assessment and recommended biological catch calculations</li> <li>14. Measuring non-commercial catches in the Torres Strait</li> </ul>
3	<p>The TSSAC <b>NOTED</b> that the climate change and non-commercial catch monitoring project will be seeking co-funding from FRDC. The climate change project will need additional funding to proceed. If the non-commercial catch project does not secure co-funding, it should still be able to be funded by TSSAC, with some changes to the project years and budget spread.</p>
4	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION:</b> The TSSAC <b>AGREED</b> that the following changes should occur to the procedural framework for review by TSSAC:</p>

Agenda Item #	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add in Do's and Don'ts of communication types in a table.</li> <li>• Contact GBK and Zenadth Kes Fisheries as a starting points for community engagement for research, to hear their views on the best communication methods.</li> <li>• Ensure researchers know they need to complete consent forms with paid or non-paid employees/ volunteers for research projects.</li> <li>• Remove the pre-proposal references, and update the process with full proposals only.</li> <li>• Ensure the procedure states that researchers are expected to complete a plain English summary at the end, and ideally in the middle of the project. This will be agreed through individual communication plans for each project.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** Actions from TSSAC 81 and progress against actions from past TSSAC meetings.

Action	Action item	Member
81.1	TSSAC to continue to encourage researchers to use Torres Strait Islander staff on projects, for their benefit through employment opportunities, as well as to reduce costs of research by using local staff.	AFMA/ TSSAC EO
81.2	TSSAC Executive Officer to support project teams for the climate change and non-commercial catch monitoring projects to apply for funding through the FRDC Fishnet system.	TSSAC EO
81.3	AFMA to work with FRDC to engage directly with NESP to discuss the climate change proposal for Torres Strait. Dirk can be a contact for answering questions as a TSSAC member, and staff within the Department that NESP sits within.	AFMA

<b>81.4</b>	AFMA to follow up with ABARES on the sort of work they may be able to support, regarding building more knowledge around the social and economic benefits of fisheries in Torres Strait.	<b>AFMA</b>
<b>81.5</b>	TSSAC to discuss at future meetings ways we can gain a better understanding the social and economic benefits of fisheries and how this could be measured in the future, to support the work of the TSSAC and fisheries in Torres Strait.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.6</b>	AFMA to follow up with FFRAG as to whether the fly river pollution is still a high priority for the FFRAG, and provide the response to TSSAC out of Session.	<b>AFMA</b>
<b>81.7</b>	TSSAC Chair to write to PNG welcoming their reengagement with the TSSAC.	<b>TSSAC Chair</b>
<b>81.8</b>	AFMA to support the project team to speak to John Rainbird and AIMS regarding options for collecting more environmental data that would be useful for this project. The project team could also consider a brainstorming meeting with TSRA, AFMA, AIMS and TIB industry members and CSIRO to discuss the data which would be useful to collect.	<b>AFMA</b>
<b>81.9</b>	AFMA and TSRA to work with the project team to consider whether there is useful data for input into this project, that could be collected by Torres Strait Islanders.	<b>AFMA and TSRA</b>
<b>81.10</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to add cost benefit analysis into the methods of the proposal. i.e. a cost benefit analysis will be carried out against the different data collection and management options.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.11</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to include, in their proposal, the statistical methods that will be used to manage statistical bias that may arise in data collection.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.12</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to consider whether there would be benefit of using the turtle and dugong project to facilitate the community engagement part of the project.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>

<b>81.13</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to include information around possible employment opportunities if this project goes ahead to the next stage, following this project. This could be included in the extension part of the project proposal.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.14</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to ask the project team for the non-commercial catch monitoring project to include more information on data collection methods in the project proposal.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.15</b>	TSRA to work with AFMA and FRDC to determine the best way forward to seeking FRDC co-contributions towards the climate change project, and support the project team to progress an FRDC application.	<b>TSRA</b>
<b>81.16</b>	TSSAC to write a letter to FRDC and AFMA CEO noting there is interest to secure industry funding (from ZK Fisheries) to apply into FRDC to obtain the matching funding from the ¼ percent available from FRDC.	<b>TSSAC Chair</b>
<b>81.17</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to change the language in the assessment criteria from traditional inhabitant to traditional owners.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.18</b>	TSSAC Executive officer to ask the TRL project team to include more detail regarding how indigenous cadets or students could be involved in the TRL research.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.19</b>	TSSAC EO to request all TSSAC members to complete the evaluation forms before a meeting, in order to determine whether any criteria are not met for any project. Then this will be addressed at the meeting.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.20</b>	AFMA to work with Natasha Stacey and project teams to improve engagement plans and consultation documents.	<b>AFMA</b>
<b>81.21</b>	TSRA and AFMA to find a suitable science communicator to do work from Torres Strait research communications, noting the TSRA could fund this. This may involve developing a template for researchers to complete in order to facilitate the communication of project results.	<b>TSRA and AFMA</b>
<b>81.22</b>	TSRA to speak to FRDC around science communication work for project outcomes.	<b>TSRA</b>

<b>81.23</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to speak to Malu Lamar regarding how they would like to be communicated with regarding research.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.24</b>	TSSAC to send the project engagement documents each year to the RAG and Working Group Traditional Owner members, in addition to Malu Lamar, PBCs and Councillors, noting their link to these projects.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.25</b>	TSSAC EO to include communication options, and why and when to use each of them, in the updated procedural framework.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.26</b>	AFMA to speak to Human Resources team as to whether researcher could access/ complete the SBS online cultural awareness training.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.27</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to see whether funding would be available for researchers to complete cultural awareness training, and look at options for how any online cultural awareness training model specific to the Torres Strait could be built and funded.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.28</b>	TSRA and AFMA to consider how we would language translations of other consultation with Malu Lamar if there is a fee for service.	<b>TSRA</b>
<b>81.29</b>	AFMA to consider whether the sms notification system could be used during the research cycle to notify licence holders of proposed research once a year.	<b>AFMA</b>
<b>81.30</b>	TSSAC Executive officer to update procedural framework, and send to TSSAC for comment, including the changes listed above.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>81.31</b>	TSSAC Executive Officer to work with the Chair to consider possible meeting agenda and priorities this year, and send a proposed meeting schedule to members.	<b>TSSAC EO</b>
<b>Action No.</b>	<b>Action item</b>	<b>Member</b>



<b>80.1</b>	TSRA to organise meeting with Malu Lamar and AFMA to discuss copyright considerations for Torres Strait research, to ensure proper partnerships and copyright management relating to any Traditional Ecological Knowledge and data ownership. Once preliminary discussions and work are completed, the TSSAC should be presented with options for managing research data and copywrite, including a copy of the standard TSSAC research contract template for consideration.	<b>TSRA</b>
<b>80.5</b>	AFMA to consider possibilities of adding provisions into research contracts for researchers to provide metadata (and data if confidentiality can be managed) and reports to AFMA, for inclusion in the CSIRO database.	<b>AFMA</b>
<b>79.1</b>	Contact TSIRC to discuss options for providing a presentation on Torres Strait research at a TSIRC meeting. This aims to give Councillors background on research, including the pre-consultation processes we use to engage Councillors as a part of project development.	<b>AFMA</b>
<b>79.2</b>	AFMA/ TSRA to consider whether information within the climate change slideshow could be useful to put into an infographic for presentation to communities.	<b>TSRA AFMA</b>