



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Beche-de-mer (BDM) Workshop

21-22 March 2023

Ngurupai (Horn Island)

Summary report and outcomes



BDM Workshop participants, 22 March 2023

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Workshop Overview

The Torres Strait Beche-de-mer (BDM) Workshop was held on 21-22 March 2023 at the Wongai Beach Hotel, Ngurupai (Horn Island). The Workshop was convened to seek broader industry views on future management arrangements for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery (BDM Fishery), in particular to:

- identify optimal timing for annual black teatfish openings;
- identify potential options for the better utilisation of the under caught black teatfish total allowable catch (TAC); and
- understand the benefits and impacts of different options for the better utilisation of the under caught white teatfish TAC, including the use of hookah gear.

The matters for consideration at the Workshop were identified by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG). Views and advice provided at the Workshop will be considered by the HCWG and inform future advice to the PZJA.

The Workshop also provided an opportunity for industry participants to:

- express, listen to and understand the aspirations and views of other industry members in relation to the future management of the BDM Fishery;
- raise ideas and options that may not have been considered previously;
- consider, discuss, and assess potential benefits and/or impacts of any proposed changes to the management of the BDM Fishery and how they align with the objectives and policies of the fishery, and the aspirations of industry.

A complete list of Workshop participants is provided in **Attachment A**. Workshop participants were provided with the draft agenda at **Attachment B** to help guide discussions during the Workshop. Copies of presentations provided at the Workshop are at **Attachments C-F**.

Introduction

The Workshop was opened in prayer at 0840 on 21 March 2023. An acknowledgement of country was made, and a minute of silence held to pay respect to the recent loss of a deeply respected Elder who was a pioneer in the Torres Strait fishing industry.

The Chair provided an overview of the purpose of the Workshop which was to seek broader industry views on key management issues pertaining to black teatfish and white teatfish, noting access rights to the BDM Fishery is 100% owned by Traditional Inhabitants. The Chair also provided an outline of the objectives of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* (the Act) and noted that the potential benefits and impacts of any proposed changes will need to be considered carefully in providing views and advice.

Black Teatfish

AFMA provided an overview of the 2021 and 2022 black teatfish openings, arrangements for the 2023 black teatfish opening and an introduction to the key issues for which advice from Workshop participants was being sought (**Attachment C**). The Workshop noted:

- the management framework for the BDM Fishery has undergone significant development since the 2014 and 2015 black teatfish openings where the TAC was significantly overcaught. Key developments include the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy (2016-2019), implementation of the Fish Receiver System (2017), BDM Fishery survey and updated stock assessment (2019-2020);
- the 2021 and 2022 black teatfish openings were undertaken on a trial basis with a 20 t TAC. The 2021 opening was held from 30 April to 3 May 2021 (4 days) during which 17.6 t was caught. The 2022 opening was held from 9-12 May 2022 (3 ½ days) during which 17.1 t was caught;
- the arrangements for the 2023 opening will be similar to previous years, including a 20 t TAC, fishers and fish receivers must be licenced, daily catch reporting and cessation of fishing once a notice has been given;
- key issues for which advice from Workshop participants was being sought:
 - optimal timing for annual black teatfish openings, including 2023. Prior industry feedback on key factors affecting timing was summarised:
 - favourable weather – February to May;
 - favourable tides – neap;
 - 2022 – last half day fell on high tide, not good for fishing;
 - favourable markets – e.g. Chinese New Year;
 - not on Sabbath;
 - during TRL openings – season and hookah;
 - avoid spawning – June-July and December;
 - potential options for the better utilisation of the under caught black teatfish TAC, noting current constraints imposed by conditions on the Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) approval for the BDM Fishery.

Workshop participants discussed at length the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) and its implications for the management of the BDM Fishery, in particular the limit placed on the catch of black teatfish (20 t) through conditions on the WTO approval for the fishery. The Workshop discussed and noted:

- Australia is a Party to CITES, an international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that the international trade in wildlife does not threaten wild populations of plants and animals;
- the import and export of species listed under CITES is regulated by governments under a permitting system to ensure the international movement of a listed species is both legal and sustainable;
- in Australia, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has responsibility for implementing CITES requirements, given effect through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). To export CITES listed species for commercial purposes, the species must come from an approved WTO;

- there are currently three species caught in the BDM Fishery that are listed under Appendix II of CITES – black teatfish, white teatfish and prickly redfish. As the majority of catch from the BDM Fishery is exported, the fishery must be assessed every three years to ensure it meets CITES requirements and for it to receive WTO approval;
- the WTO approval for the BDM Fishery expires on 30 November 2023. Currently, conditions placed on the WTO approval limit the catch of black teatfish (20 t) and white teatfish (15 t);
- the BDM Fishery will undergo re-assessment in 2023 and this will provide the opportunity to seek flexibility in the conditions placed on the WTO approval, to recognise the science-based TAC setting process in the BDM Fishery, remove fixed caps on TACs and introduce arrangements for under catch/over catch. Given the timing of the re-assessment process, this will not be able to occur prior to a 2023 black teatfish opening.

Industry participants recommended that PZJA agencies, Malu Lamar (Torres Strait Islander) Corporation RNTBC (Malu Lamar) and Gur A Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council (GBK) be involved in discussions and consulted during the WTO re-assessment. AFMA advised that public consultation is undertaken as part of the WTO re-assessment process and can provide further information on when this is likely to occur. AFMA has also suggested to the DCCEEW that they engage with Native Title bodies directly as part of the process.

Following a request from industry participants, CSIRO provided an overview of the results from the 2019-2020 BDM Fishery survey and 2022 size frequency sampling program (**Attachment D**). The Workshop discussed and noted:

- there are currently three species caught in the BDM Fishery that are listed under Appendix II of CITES – black teatfish (listed in 2019), white teatfish (listed in 2019) and prickly redfish (listed in 2022). These species can only be exported from Australia if they come from a fishery with WTO approval;
- the results of the 2019-2020 survey and 2022 size frequency sampling program supported the current CITES Non-Detriment Finding necessary for WTO approval for black teatfish and white teatfish. A CITES Non-Detriment Finding for prickly redfish will also be required;
- the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy provides details of current management controls and decision rules for setting TACs. Recent stock assessment modelling, that took into account data from the 2019-2020 survey and 2022 size frequency sampling program, estimated 21 t of black teatfish can be removed from the BDM Fishery sustainably. The Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group (HCRAAG) and HCWG recommended a 20 t TAC for the 2023 fishing season to provide a buffer from the risk of overfishing and closure;
- the estimated total stock biomass for black teatfish from the 2019-2020 survey was estimated to be 817 t. This includes animals of all size classes. The stock has been previously overfished and is still rebuilding;
- the size frequency sampling program was first undertaken during the 2022 black teatfish opening. Four AFMA Scientific Observers were stationed at Mer and Erub Islands to collect population size frequency data and morphometrics. Community involvement was voluntary. The HCRAAG and HCWG have recommended that this program be undertaken again during the 2023 black teatfish opening. AFMA and CSIRO will work with the relevant communities to make the appropriate arrangements;
- summary of key data from the 2021 and 2022 trial black teatfish openings:
 - voluntary data – 55% was left blank in 2021. 32% was left blank in 2022, good improvement;

- catch per day peaked on day 4 in 2021 (least on day 3 which was the Sabbath) and day 3 in 2022 (least on day 4 which was a half day);
- most of catch taken from Darnley, Cumberland, and Don Cay areas;
- approximately 10% of black teatfish caught during the 2022 opening was estimated to have been undersized (minimum legal size is 250 mm), taking into account shrinkage and evisceration. The age at maturity for black teatfish is estimated to be 10 years;
- in 2021 the majority of product was landed gutted and salted, compared to a greater diversity in 2022 which included whole, gutted, and gutted and salted;
- key outcomes from the 2021 and 2022 trial black teatfish openings:
 - no evidence of stockpiling;
 - no evidence of declining catch after a few days, which would indicate depletion;
 - cumulative catches tracked and adhered to TAC;
 - number of fishers participating in the fishery was a fraction of available fishing effort;
- ongoing length frequency time series data is important. This data will support understanding of size structure for black teatfish population, allow updates to modelling, indicate effects of fishing and support assessments under CITES.

Industry participants advised:

- this is the first time many industry participants had been made aware of CITES, the WTO process, and conditions placed on the BDM Fishery under the WTO approval;
- there needs to be further discussion on TACs at the Workshop, including options to increase them above the limits currently prescribed in the WTO conditions. AFMA clarified that the WTO conditions limit the total catch from the BDM Fishery, not just how much can be exported i.e. cannot take more than the limit set in the conditions to sell on the domestic market;
- more information is needed on how natural mortality is considered in assessing stocks and setting TACs;
- there needs to be an independent survey to update TACs in the BDM Fishery. AFMA noted that the last survey undertaken in 2019-2020 cost approximately \$420,000, including a \$120,000 co-contribution from CSIRO.

Industry discussions on black teatfish issues

Industry participants requested that non-industry participants leave the room while the optimal timing for annual black teatfish openings and options for the better utilisation of the under caught black teatfish TAC were discussed. Following these discussions, the industry group then reported the outcomes to all Workshop participants. In summary, the group recommended:

- the optimal start date for the 2023 black teatfish opening is 15 May 2023;
- the TAC be increased to 22 t, noting that based on past catch trends less than 20 t will be caught;
- an independent survey be undertaken as a priority. Industry participants advised that they were unable to advise on the optimal timing for future black teatfish openings (i.e. beyond 2023), until this critical piece of research is undertaken. The survey needs to:
 - be independent;
 - be funded by PZJA agencies as a priority;

- identify where and when spawning of key species, including black teatfish, is occurring (e.g. cold water);
- collect the additional data needed to support a higher tier of assessment under the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy;
- expand the areas it covers, to include waters covered by the 2022 Determination of the Torres Strait Regional Sea Claim, Barrier Reef, and areas south of the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) border with Queensland;
- provide an opportunity for Traditional Owner and Traditional Inhabitant input into the design.

AFMA noted that the TAC for black teatfish for the 2023 fishing season has already been set by the PZJA, based on the available science and advice of the HCRAAG and HCWG. Industry participants requested a written response from the PZJA as to how the TAC was set and future opportunities for input into the TAC setting process.

Industry participants advised that it is the nature of the Torres Strait fisheries licencing system that is causing problems in the BDM Fishery. Native Title rights over sea country need to be recognised in this system and in the management of the fishery going forward.

Industry participants were asked to provide additional advice should an increase in the TAC to 22 t not be feasible. Industry participants again requested that non-industry participants leave the room while this was discussed. Following these discussions, the industry group then reported the outcomes to all Workshop participants. In summary, the group recommended:

- the optimal start date for the 2023 black teatfish opening remains 15 May 2023;
- an independent survey is undertaken prior to WTO approval expiry on 30 November 2023. Survey details as outlined above;
- WTO conditions to be updated to remove fixed caps on TACs and reflect latest science;
- the TAC to be increased to 22 t for the 2024 black teatfish opening;
- with regards to any remaining under caught TAC in 2023, re-open the fishery for the required period later in the year (e.g. one day in November). The remaining TAC will be held in trust by Zenadth Kes Fisheries Limited, who will then facilitate an agreement between Traditional Owners as to how it will be caught during the re-opening.

AFMA noted that the PZJA would need to consider the approach outlined above, including details of the agreement between Traditional Owners as to how any remaining under caught TAC will be accessed in 2023. PZJA agencies will also need to consider funding sources for an independent survey, noting the significant cost of such surveys and the current research budget being fully committed. TSRA confirmed they will work with AFMA and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF) to identify funding options.

AFMA acknowledged industry participants' frustration at the current WTO conditions, noting again that this is the first time many industry participants had been made aware of the conditions placed on the BDM Fishery through the WTO process. AFMA clarified that it is unusual for WTO conditions to prescribe a fixed TAC and AFMA would be seeking the removal of fixed caps on TACs as well as the ability to carry-over under catch/over catch to the next season, as part of the upcoming WTO re-assessment process. AFMA committed to provide additional information to Workshop participants on the WTO re-assessment process for the BDM Fishery, including opportunities to provide their views through the public consultation process.

Industry sought further advice on how sea claim determinations covering both the TSPZ and Queensland waters will be considered in the future management of the BDM Fishery, including whether the boundaries of the fishery/TSPZ will be expanded to reflect the areas covered by these sea claim determinations. AFMA advised that any movement of boundaries would require re-negotiation of the Treaty with PNG and agreements with Queensland, which would be a significant undertaking for governments.

With regards to the proposal to re-open the fishery later in the year to allow any remaining under caught TAC to be caught, AFMA suggested a pause day as part of the opening in May 2023 would be a more effective option. It was explained that re-opening the fishery for a second period would require additional funding and resources not currently allocated for in the administration of the 2023 black teatfish opening. Industry participants were supportive of exploring this option. Zenadth Kes Fisheries Limited committed to leading discussions with Traditional Owners and providing advice on who would access the remaining TAC and where. AFMA noted that it does not have the power to enforce access agreements between communities and such an approach entailed significant risk, particularly the risk that the TAC will be over caught. Notwithstanding this risk, AFMA and TSRA agreed to work with Zenadth Kes Fisheries Limited and would await advice on discussions with Traditional Owners. AFMA noted the timeframes that applied in the lead up to the 15 May season opening and the significant body of work and consultation required in a short period.

Industry participants requested the AFMA CEO and DCCEEW attend future workshops and HCWG meetings so that they can hear industry views and advice first hand. Industry participants further requested that PZJA agencies provide information to DCCEEW on the concerns and advice provided at the Workshop regarding the WTO process and conditions. GBK noted that they will be meeting with the AFMA CEO at a meeting at Saibai the following week and will raise these and other issues directly with them.

Compliance Program

AFMA provided a brief overview of compliance arrangements for the 2023 black teatfish opening, noting that the Compliance presence will be similar to openings in 2021 and 2022. Fishers were reminded of licencing and boat marking requirements. Industry participants expressed concerns that the compliance approach during past openings was too intrusive. AFMA advised there will be a continued focus on education during the 2023 opening.

White Teatfish

AFMA provided an overview of management arrangements for white teatfish, and consideration and consultation to date on the issue of the under caught white teatfish TAC (**Attachment E**). The Workshop noted:

- white teatfish is a commercially valuable species that is predominantly found in deeper waters largely inaccessible by free diving. Management arrangements for white teatfish include a 15 t TAC, no possession or use of hookah gear and a minimum size limit (320 mm). Only 2-3 t of the 15 t TAC is caught annually;

- similar to black teatfish, the WTO approval for the BDM Fishery currently places a limit on the catch of white teatfish (15 t);
- the 2019-2020 BDM Fishery survey was the first time a deep-water survey has been undertaken for white teatfish. The survey results have provided sufficient confidence for quantifying white teatfish stocks. The survey found ~50 per cent of white teatfish is found in deep-water strata. The survey trend for the shallow reef population has been fairly constant over time;
- the management framework for the BDM Fishery has undergone significant development since the 2011-2012 trial using hookah gear to fish for white teatfish. Key developments include a TVH licence buy-out (2014-2015), the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy (2016-2019), implementation of the Fish Receiver System (2017), BDM Fishery survey (2019-2020) and updated stock assessment (due 2023);
- over many years, participants in the BDM Fishery have proposed the prohibition on the possession and use of hookah gear be removed to allow more effective targeting of white teatfish. However, the management framework needed further development to ensure the PZJA had the tools available to ensure any potential changes could be implemented effectively. There has been past community consultation on options, however responses have been divided.

The Workshop noted the AFMA recommended guidance for reviewing management controls, which included:

- reflecting on the objectives under Act and BDM Fishery policies (e.g. BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy);
- considering the long-term vision for the BDM Fishery;
- defining what the issue is, and what the options are;
- assessing the benefits and impacts of potential changes/options against objectives, policies, and vision; and
- considering how potential changes/options can be implemented and enforced.

Workshop participants noted the next steps for progressing options for the better utilisation of the under caught white teatfish TAC:

- report to the PZJA on the Workshop outcomes;
- HCRAG and HCWG to consider the outcomes of the Workshop and provide further advice on proposed changes that might be recommended for further development;
- broader community consultation;
- HCRAG and HCWG to consider the outcomes of community consultation;
- PZJA decision and amendments to fishery management instrument and licence conditions.

The Workshop further noted options considered by the HCWG at recent meetings:

- allowing the use of hookah to fish for white teatfish only;
- allowing the use of hookah to fish for white teatfish only and in certain areas;
- having a designated white teatfish hookah fishing season which may potentially involve closing fishing to all other BDM species;
- trialling fishing for white teatfish using hookah with one fisher per community.

Industry participants expressed their dissatisfaction at the licencing arrangements for the hookah gear trial undertaken in 2011-2012, which saw only two developmental permits issued and one of

those, a non-Traditional Inhabitant (TVH) permit holder, taking the entirety of the white teatfish TAC. Some industry participants suggested that fishing with the use of hookah gear should be permitted now using the same mechanism.

Industry discussions on white teatfish issues

Industry participants requested that non-industry participants leave the room while the benefits and impacts of different options for the better utilisation of the under caught white teatfish TAC were discussed. Following these discussions, the industry group then reported the outcomes of to all Workshop participants (**Attachment F**). With regards to management options:

- the group identified the areas in which the white teatfish is heavily concentrated;
- the areas in which the group spoke openly and recognised to access is within the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) within the Meriam marine estate including the Cumberland Passage;
- the group agreed in principle that due to access to the Cumberland Passage, the islands of Ugar, Mer, Erub, Masig, Poruma and Warraber will be consulted on access to the 20 t;
- the break-down of the 20 t is as follows:
 - based on historical catch rate of all Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) operators in the past that they have agreed in principle for 5 t free dive within the Meriam marine waters. The free dive for white teatfish is open now;
 - the remaining 15 t will be accessed by hookah apparatus by our brothers from the Meriam, Kulkalgal, Guda Maluilgal, Maluilgal, Kauraraeg, Gudag/Yadaykenu and Angamuthi TIB licence holders within the Cumberland Passage area (pending community consultation);
 - this does not include accessing to the areas beyond 10 degrees 41 minutes latitude south from the tip of Cape York (accessing the recent claimed areas).

With regards to conditions to support industry's proposal, the group recommended:

- AFMA to immediately introduce to the HCRA, HCWG, PZJA Standing Committee and PZJA, a proposal to amend the Fisheries Management Notice and the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy as follows:
 - to allow the use of hookah apparatus;
 - TIB operators to hold an Australian Diving Course Certificate that meets all Australian Standards and survey standards;
 - change of vessel length based on safety to be between 7 m to 20 m;
 - no use of hookah apparatus for white teatfish during black teatfish opening;
 - hookah use for white teatfish only.

The group further:

- recommended a change of the white teatfish tonnage from 15 t to 20 t;
- expressed support for community consultation to endorse conditions for access to the white teatfish fishery;
- unanimously agreed to use hookah apparatus as per community condition endorsement.

The group unanimously agreed that while this issue is of high importance to industry, it is also of high importance that the right process is followed including Traditional Owner and community consultation, to ensure the sustainability of the fishery is protected for this and future generations.

AFMA acknowledged the considerable deliberation supporting the proposal. AFMA noted they will need to work closely with industry after the Workshop to understand the finer details of the proposal. It was also noted that consultation with Traditional Owners and all communities will need to be undertaken as part of progressing the proposal. AFMA advised that they could not commit to a timeframe for progressing the proposal, including community consultation, given the need to work through the details of the proposal and to identify additional funding and resources to support the work involved. TSRA committed to work with AFMA on community consultation and would advise on timeframes once known.

With regards to the TAC, industry participants noted that there are more white teatfish in the water than are being estimated from the survey. AFMA advised that changes to TACs will need to be considered through the established process, noting an update to the stock assessment for white teatfish is due in 2023. This may allow the TAC to be revised and will be considered by the HCRAG and HCWG at meetings later in 2023.

Industry participants emphasised that they would like to see progress on this issue, and do not want to revisit it year after year. Should there be significant delays in progressing industry's proposal, industry participants suggested that trial openings permitting the possession and use of hookah gear be facilitated through developmental permits in the short term.

Industry participants further emphasised that they want to progress this issue in the right way which will involve community consultation, HCRAG and HCWG consideration, and a PZJA decision. Ultimately, industry want to protect the sustainability of the BDM Fishery for future generations.

Mr Passi closed the item by sharing a story of his experiences as a Torres Strait fisherman and his learning that private enterprise is the solution to a prosperous future for Torres Strait Islanders, not welfare. Industry is asking for a fair go. He will take the outcomes of the Workshop back to his community for agreement. Access rights to the BDM Fishery is a resource owned by Traditional Inhabitants, and as such the final decision on these issues needs to come from communities.

Other Issues

During the Workshop, a range of additional issues were identified for discussion should time permit at the end of the meeting. These included:

- location agreements (including fees) between research providers/fishers and Traditional Owners of sea country;
- options for funding research needs, including the use of Torres Strait Finfish Fishery sunset licence revenue held in trust by the TSRA.

Due to time constraints, these issues were unable to be discussed further at the Workshop.

The Workshop was closed in prayer at 1515 on 22 March 2023.

Attachment A – Workshop participants

Name	Position
Nicholas McClean	Workshop Chair
John Tabo	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kemer Kemer Meriam
John Toshie Kris	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Maluialgal
Nicholas Pearson	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kulkalgal
Pabai Pabai	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Gudumalulgal
Graham Hirakawa	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kaiwalagal
Sereako Stephen	Malu Lamar (Torres Strait Islander) Corporation Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC)
Falen Passi	Gur A Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council (GBK)
Rocky Stephen	TSRA Board member
Charles David	TSRA Board member
Yen Loban	TSRA Board member
Daniel Takai	Zenadth Kes Fisheries Limited Chief Executive Officer
Harry Nona	Zenadth Kes Fisheries Limited
Samuel Mye	TIB fisher
Amina Ghee	TIB fisher and fish receiver
Harry Ghee	TIB fisher and fish receiver
Arthur Naawi	TIB fisher and fish receiver
Simon Naawi	TIB fisher and fish receiver
Monty Naawi	TIB fisher
Dick Whittington Billy	TIB fisher
Maluwap Nona	TIB fisher and fish receiver
Meiwap Nona	TIB fisher
Michael Passi	TIB fisher and fish receiver
Wilfred (Dennis) Passi	TIB fisher and fish receiver
Joseph Billy	TIB fisher
William Stephen	TIB fisher
James Ahmat	TIB fisher
Peo Ahmat	TIB fisher
Tony Pearson	TIB fisher
Jack Pearson	TIB fisher
Daniel Stephen	TIB fisher
Emma Freeman	AFMA
Natalie Couchman	AFMA

Name	Position
Matilda Richardson	AFMA
Damian Miley	TSRA
Quinten Hirakawa	TSRA
Nicole Murphy	CSIRO

Attachment B – Workshop agenda

Beche-de-mer (BDM) Workshop

Tuesday 21 March 2023 (0830-1700) + Wednesday 22 March 2023 (0830-1500)

Wongai Beach Hotel (2 Wees Street, Ngurupai)

Draft Agenda

Workshop Chair: Nicholas McClean

Day one – Tuesday 21 March 2023 – 0830-1700		
Agenda Item	Speaker	Time
Acknowledgement of country and opening prayer	TBA	0830
Welcome and introductions	Chair	0840
Overview of management arrangements for 2023 black teatfish opening	AFMA	0845
Morning tea		1030-1045
Overview of items for break-out group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify optimal timings for annual black teatfish openings (providing advice)- Identify potential options for better utilisation of under caught black teatfish total allowable catch (TAC) (generating input)	AFMA	1045
Break-out group session 1	All attendees	1100
Lunch		1200-1300
Break-out group session 2	All attendees	1300
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group sessions 1 and 2	All attendees	1330
Afternoon tea		1500-1515
Trial black teatfish openings for 2021 and 2022 – overview of catch data and size frequency sampling program	CSIRO	1515
Overview of the compliance program for the 2023 black teatfish opening	AFMA Compliance	1600
Recap and questions	AFMA	1645
Close in prayer	TBA	1700

Day two – Wednesday 22 March 2023 – 0830-1500		
Agenda Item	Speaker	Time
Opening prayer	TBA	0830
Industry feedback from day one	All attendees	0835
Overview of management arrangements for white teatfish, including past consultation	AFMA	0900
Overview of item for break-out group discussion:	AFMA	0915
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand the pros and cons of different options for addressing the under catch of white teatfish, including the use of hookah (generating input) 		
Break-out group session 3	All attendees	930
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group session 3	All attendees	1000
Morning tea		1030-1045
Break-out group session 4	All attendees	1045
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group session 4	All attendees	1130
Lunch		1215-1315
Break-out group session 5	All attendees	1315
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group session 5	All attendees	1400
Recap, next steps and questions	Chair, AFMA	1445
Close in prayer	TBA	1500

Attachment C – Workshop presentation

Beche-de-mer Workshop

21 March 2023

Ngurupai



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority





Who we are

- Chair – Nicholas McClean
- PZJA HCRAAG + HCWVG Traditional Inhabitant members
 - John Tabo – Kemer Kemer Meriam
 - John Toshie Kris – Maluialgal
 - Nicholas Pearson – Kulkaigal
 - Pabai Pabai – Gudumalulgal
 - Graham Hirakawa – Kaiwalagal
- AFMA – Emma Freeman, Natalie Couchman
- CSIRO - Nicole Murphy
- TSRA – Damian Miley, Quinten Hirakawa



House keeping

Breaks

- Morning tea (15 mins), lunch (1 hr) and afternoon tea (15 mins) provided

Airport transfers

- Please confirm airport transfer with your hotel, for your return flight

Ferry transfers

- Last ferry to TI departs 6:10pm daily, need to book – see Matilda

Meals

- Meal allowance provided for meals not provided by AFMA – see Matilda

Other travel

- See Matilda with any other travel queries



Agenda

Day one – Tuesday 21 March 2023 – 0830-1700		
Agenda Item	Speaker	Time
Acknowledgement of country and opening prayer	TBA	0830
Welcome and introductions	Chair	0840
Overview of management arrangements for 2023 black teatfish opening	AFMA	0845
Morning tea		1030-1045
Overview of items for break-out group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify optimal timings for annual black teatfish openings (providing advice)- Identify potential options for better utilisation of undercaught black teatfish total allowable catch (TAC) (generating input)	AFMA	1045
Break-out group session 1	All attendees	1100
Lunch		1200-1300
Break-out group session 2	All attendees	1300
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group sessions 1 and 2	All attendees	1330
Afternoon tea		1500-1515
Trial black teatfish openings for 2021 and 2022 – overview of catch data and size frequency sampling program	CSIRO	1515
Overview of the compliance program for the 2023 black teatfish opening	AFMA Compliance	1600
Recap and questions	AFMA	1645
Close in prayer	TBA	1700



Why are we here today?

- Explain – arrangements for 2023 black teatfish opening
- Get your advice – future black teatfish openings
- Update – science and compliance programs



How did we get here?

2014 and 2015	Trial black teatfish openings – overcatch
2016-2019	Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy
Dec 2017	Fish Receiver System
2019-2020	Scientific beche-de-mer survey and stock assessment
2021 and 2022	Trial black teatfish openings
2023	Annual black teatfish openings



Black teatfish openings

2021 and 2022 openings

- Trial
- 20t TAC
- 30 Apr-3 May 2021 (4 days) – 17.6t caught
- 9-12 May 2022 (3 ½ days) – 17.1t caught

2023 opening

- PZJA agreed to annual openings
- 20t TAC for 2023
- Opening date to be informed by this workshop



Stocks are healthy – what else?

Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy

- We can't over-catch the TAC - 20t
- We need good catch reporting

Export limits

- Export fishery
- Black teatfish and white teatfish are CITES Appendix II listed
- Export limits apply - 20t for black teatfish and 15t for white teatfish



Same arrangements as for 2022

- Licenced
- All fishers to land black teatfish catches **daily** to a licenced fish receiver
- All fish receivers must submit reports of landed catches of black teatfish **daily** to AFMA
- Must stop fishing when notice given



Other things to be aware of for 2023 black teatfish opening

- Further information to be provided at end of the day
 - Scientific size monitoring program
 - Refresh on black teatfish opening arrangements
 - Compliance program



Break-out groups

Session 1

- Annual timing of black teatfish openings – 2023 and future years

Session 2

- Better utilisation of the black teatfish TAC



Session 1 – timing – industry feedback so far

- Favourable weather – Feb-May
- Favourable tides
 - neap
 - 2022 – last half day fell on high tide, not good for fishing
- Favourable markets
 - Chinese New Year – new moon between 21 January and 20 February, 15 days of festivities
- Not on Sabbath
- During TRL openings – season and hookah
- Avoid spawning – Jun/Jul/Dec



Session 1 – timing – other considerations for 2023

- Time for fishers and fish receivers to organise logistics
- Compliance availability



Session 1 – timing – ?s for break-out groups

- What is the preferred timing for a black teatfish opening in:
 - 2023?
 - future years?



Session 2 – better utilisation of the black teatfish TAC

- TAC under-caught in 2021 and 2022
- Under-catch and over-catch
 - no under-catch provisions in the Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy
 - no over-catch due to 20t export limit
 - process to implement, including PZJA approval
 - would need to be supported by scientific evidence – HCRAAG
- Fishery to undergo export reassessment (WTO) in 2023 – provides opportunity to introduce flexibility if changes are to happen



Session 2 – better utilisation of the black teatfish TAC – ?s for break-out groups

- How can we support the better utilisation of the TAC in terms of our on-the-water arrangements, noting work underway to implement over-catch and under-catch?

Attachment D – Workshop presentation



Black teatfish Fishery Trial Openings - 2021 & 2022



Black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) (source: CSIRO)

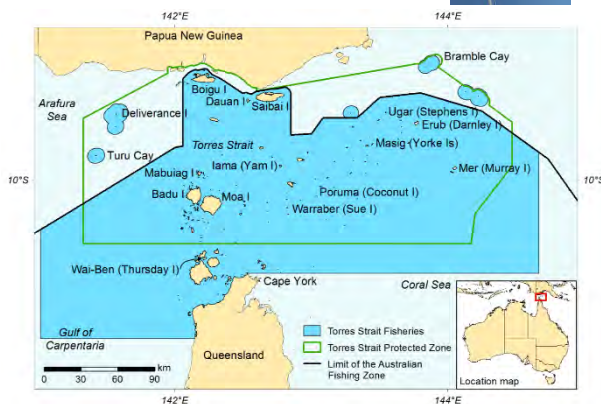
Nicole Murphy | March 2023
Éva Pláganyi and Timothy Skewes

CSIRO acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land, sea and waters, of the area that we live and work on across Australia. We acknowledge their continuing connection to their culture and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present



Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery

- Fishery located in East Torres Strait
- Fished by Traditional Owners
- Wholly export
- 26 commercial species
- ~10 currently fished
- 1-4 species fished by a single fishing operation
- Sea cucumbers widely distributed but habitat specific
- Stock surveys: 1995/1996, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2019/2020
- **Black teatfish – closed 2003**
- **Trial openings 2014 & 2015 - overfished and closed again**



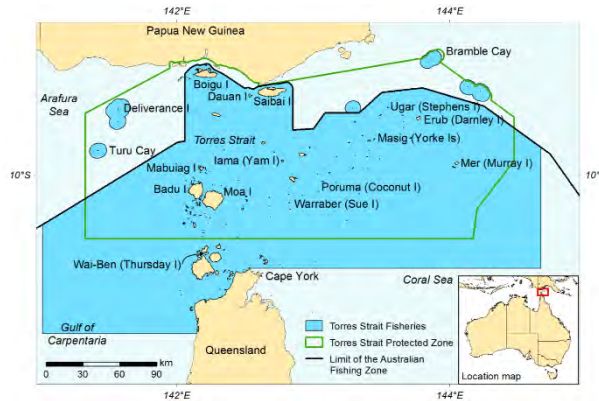
(Photo courtesy of Mr Mike Passi)





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(Photo courtesy of Mr Mike Passi)





Current concern - CITES

CITES - the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

- **Listing of Teatfish species on CITES Appendix II (2019)**
- **Listing of *Thelenota* species on CITES Appendix II (2022)** *Prickly Redfish
- **Species can only be exported under a CITES export permit**

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species:

- Species assessed as **Endangered** (a very high risk of extinction in the wild):
 - *Holothuria lessona* (Golden Sandfish): Pop. decline 50%, trend: decreasing
 - *Holothuria nobilis* (Black Teatfish): Pop. trend: decreasing
 - *Holothuria scabra* (Sandfish): Pop. trend: decreasing
 - *Holothuria whitmaei* (Black Teatfish): Pop. Decline >70%, trend: decreasing
 - *Thelenota ananas* (Prickly Redfish): Pop. trend: decreasing
- Species assessed as **Vulnerable** (a high risk of extinction in the wild):
 - *Actinopyga echinites* (Deep Water Redfish): Pop. trend: decreasing
 - *Actinopyga mauritiana* (Surf Redfish): Pop. trend: decreasing
 - *Actinopyga miliaris* (Hairy Blackfish): Pop. trend: decreasing
 - *Holothuria fuscogilva* (White teatfish): Pop. decline 30%-50%, trend decreasing
 - *Stichopus herrmanni* (Curryfish): Pop. Decline 30-40%, trend: decreasing





CITES – Non detriment finding

Results of the 2019/2020 survey:

- Supported the current CITES *Non-Detriment* finding for:
 - *Black teatfish* and *White teatfish* in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery
- Non-Detriment finding for *Prickly Redfish* also now required

Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Harvest Strategy:

- Key control of setting cap on total catch limits for species
- Other important controls:
 - Spreading of fishing effort
 - Limiting effort pulses
 - Mitigating localised depletion
 - Collection of valuable fishery and fishery-independent data
 - Carrying out catch monitoring and resource assessments as required



Traditional Owner & Fisher, Mr Genes Passi – Mer Island
(Photo courtesy of Mr Mike Passi)



Re-opening Black teatfish

Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy (2019)

Re-opening Decision Rule applies for species that have been:

- *Closed to fishing due to concerns of overfishing or stock depletion, significantly exceeding catches beyond the TAC, or in the absence of reported catches*
- Stock above B_{LIM} (limit reference point)
- Demonstrated by high quality survey data (BDM survey 2019/2020)
- Meets parameters of the Decision Rule - species to be opened with *Trial 15 t*
- Additional population modelling - 21 t can be removed sustainably
- Allows for higher opening TAC (Tier 3)
- Traditional Owner fishers decided on 20 t - allows for a buffer, so no risk of overfishing or Black teatfish closed



Traditional Owner & Fisher, Mr Warren Ghee – Mer Island
(Photo courtesy of Mr Mike Passi)



Trial opening - 2021

Trial opening: 30th April 2021 for 20 t

- Closed 3rd May 2021
- 17.6 t caught as at 15:00 on 5th May 2021

(<https://www.pzja.gov.au/2021-black-teatfish-trial-opening>)

- The trial was deemed to be successful

Notes:

- New catch reporting measures in place
 - CDR catch reporting - compulsory since 2017
- Fishers organised among themselves, previous times described as 'free for all'
- Went further out and worked in across days
- Came in early on fourth day in anticipation that nearing quota
- Were happy with how the fishing went



Traditional Owner & fisher, Mr Tristen Passi – Mer Island
(Photo courtesy of Mr Mike Passi)



Size frequency sampling program - 2022

Undertaken during 2022 BTF trial opening

Collect population size frequency data and morphometrics – *Voluntary*

- Four AFMA *Observers* stationed at Mer and Erub Island
- Minimum of 1000 length and width measurements (mm) distributed across logbook zones (fishing areas)
- Record product form e.g. Whole (Live), Gutted & Salted
- Collect weights (gr)

Outcomes:

- Update estimates for population modelling – 21 t sustainable
- Support analyses of recruitment rates and help identify indicators of fishing effect
- Support current CITES non detriment finding



Photo courtesy of AFMA



Size frequency sampling program - 2022

Measurements – Black teatfish

- Total of 1886 Length and Width (mm)
- Total of 1701 Weights (gr)
- Product form – Whole (Live), Gutted, Gutted & Salted

Other species also measured:

Common name	Species
White teatfish	<i>Holothuria fuscogilva</i>
Curryfish common	<i>Stichopus herrmanni</i>
Curryfish vastus	<i>Stichopus vastus</i>
Prickly redfish	<i>Thelenota ananas</i>
Burrowing blackfish	<i>Actinopyga spinea</i>



Photo courtesy of AFMA



Size frequency sampling program - 2022

Results

- Average size 285 mm
- Average size range: 267 mm to 307 mm
- Black teatfish from Darnley had largest Whole (Live) length, followed by Don Cay, then Cumberland

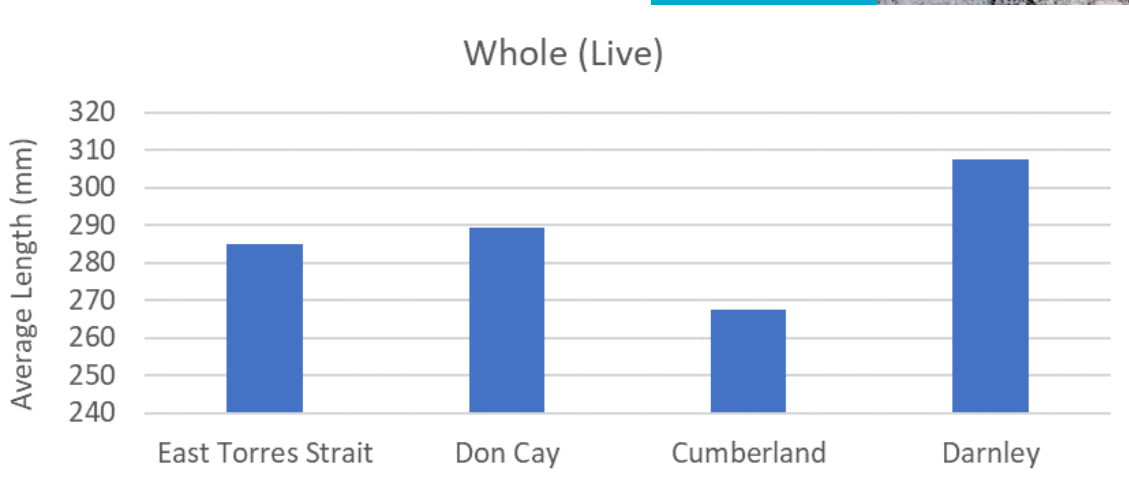


Photo courtesy of AFMA



Catch data – 2021 & 2022

Results – Fishery opening 9th May 2022, 20 tonne TAC (Gutted)

- Black teatfish catch for 2022 was 17.05 t and for 2022 was 17.6 t - *below the TAC*
- Trial openings for both years were successfully managed
- 2021 – 55% of catch area/logbook zone ‘Unknown’ - left blank in catch reporting
- 2022 – Improvement for ‘Unknown’ reporting - 32% records left area/logbook zone blank

	Day	Warrior	GNE Channel	Darnley	Cumberland	Don Cay	Seven Reefs	Barrier	Unknown	Grand total
2021	30-Apr	-	119.78	41.24	468.95	311.13	-	-	3075.51	4016.62
2021	1-May	-	141.19	551.31	1392.45	-	-	-	2820.29	4905.24
2021	2-May	-	67.14	276.20	1030.81	-	-	-	166.42	1540.57
2021	3-May	-	-	1010.19	2210.87	145.56	-	-	3553.51	7022.03
Total		-	328.12	1878.94	5154.03	456.69	-	-	9797.69	17615.47
	Day	Warrior	GNE Channel	Darnley	Cumberland	Don Cay	Seven Reefs	Barrier	Unknown	Grand total
2022	9-May	-	-	985.82	1768.25	1229.02	-	-	210.75	4193.85
2022	10-May	-	331.00	1379.75	1948.39	631.25	324.11	-	873.56	5488.07
2022	11-May	-	-	1065.44	4024.48	641.80	270.01	185.23	-	6186.96
2022	12-May	-	-	335.02	397.09	371.24	--	-	83.54	1186.90
Total		-	331.00	3766.03	8138.22	594.13	2873.30	185.23	1167.85	17055.76



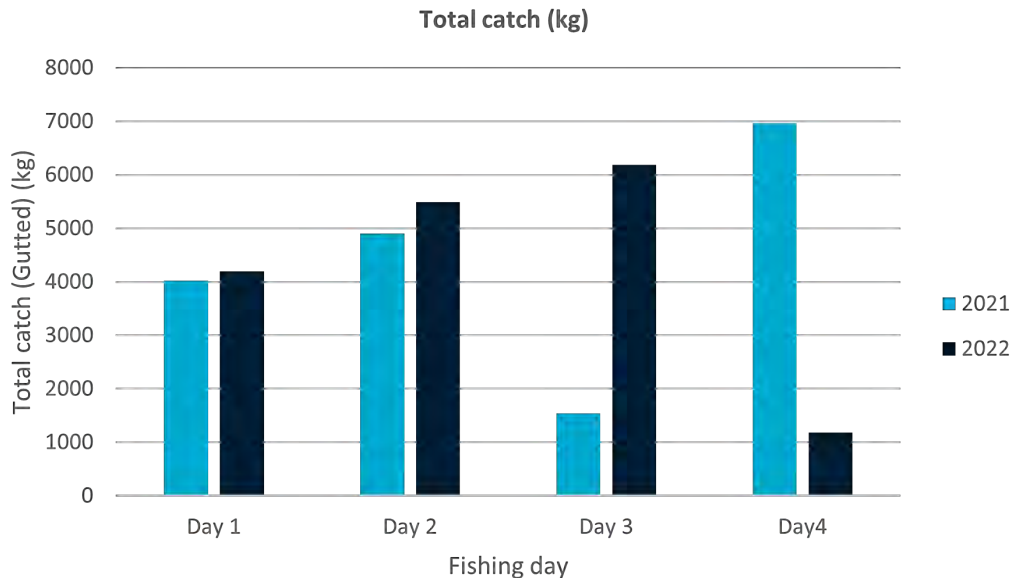
Catch data – 2021 & 2022



Photo courtesy of AFMA

Catch per day

- 2021 - largest catch was taken on day 4 and the least on day 3 (Sabbath)
- 2022 - largest catch was taken on day 3 and the least on day 4 (half day)





Catch data – 2021 & 2022

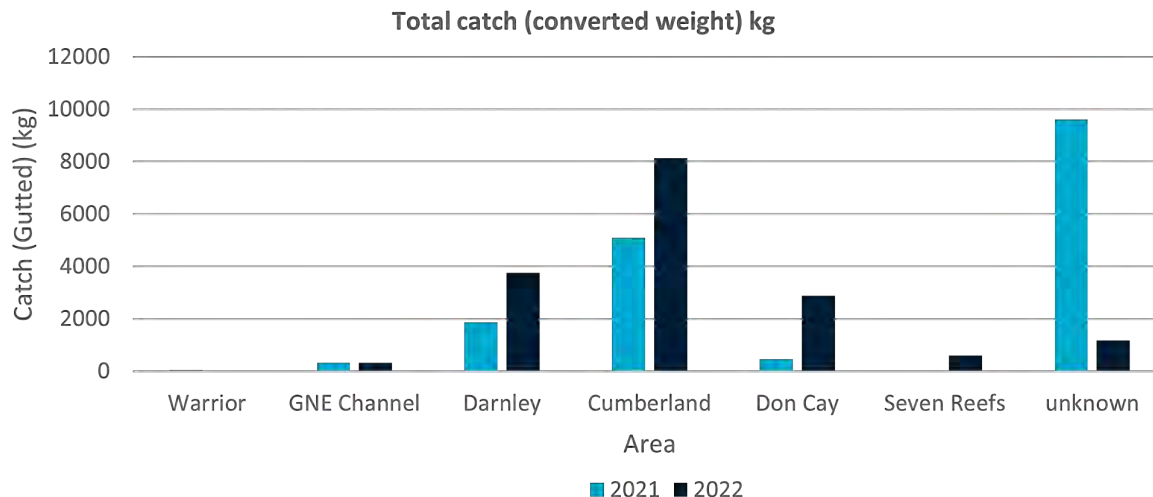


Photo courtesy of AFMA

Catch per area fished

2022:

- Darnley, Cumberland and Don Cay received more effort - these areas may have contributed to the 'Unknown' area data in 2021 catch reporting
- Seven Reefs fished - not fished in 2021
 - Further information why zones fished would help understanding of fishing e.g. Phone reception, location of catch landing points, fuel costs, *other*?





Size frequency sampling program - 2022

Minimum Legal Size - MLS

Black teatfish: 250 mm

- Definition under the instrument:

Measurement in water, undisturbed state

- Survey – collected, taken to boat and measured
- Observer – collected, stored, transported, then measured
- Need to determine the correction for shrinking
- Shrinkage factor

2022 - Size frequency data

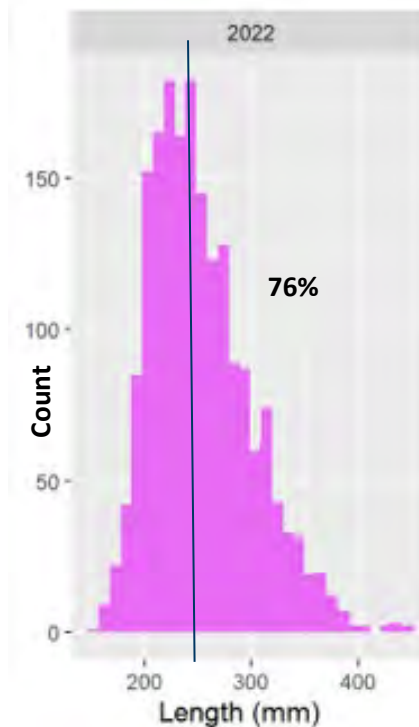


Photo courtesy of AFMA



Size frequency sampling program - 2022

Minimum Legal Size (MLS)

Black teatfish: 250 mm

- From 552 Whole (Live) measurements:
76% of measurements above MLS

Shrinkage factor:

- 24% below fishery size limit:
 - Half value applied e.g. water loss – 12%
- Possible evisceration (expelling guts)?
 - Studies show ~60% decrease from Whole (Live) to Gutted (Purcell et. al 2009)
- Loss of approximately two thirds – 9%
- Overall probably ~10% undersized

2022 – Size frequency data

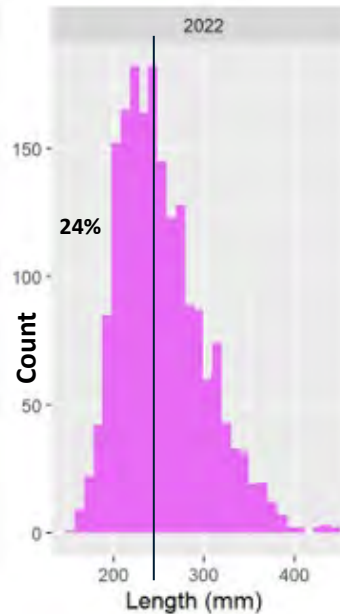


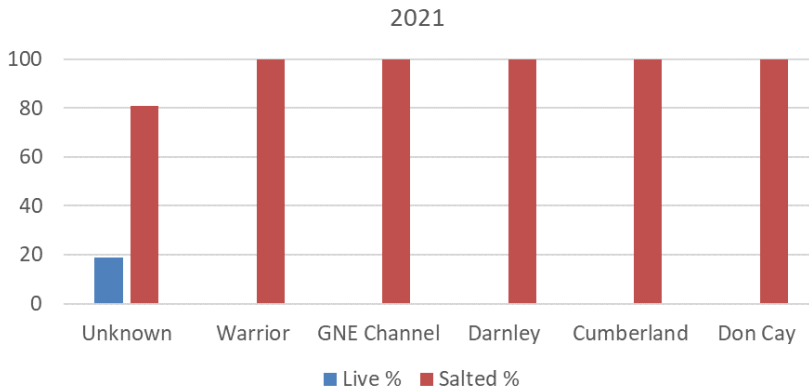
Photo courtesy of AFMA



Catch data 2021 & 2022

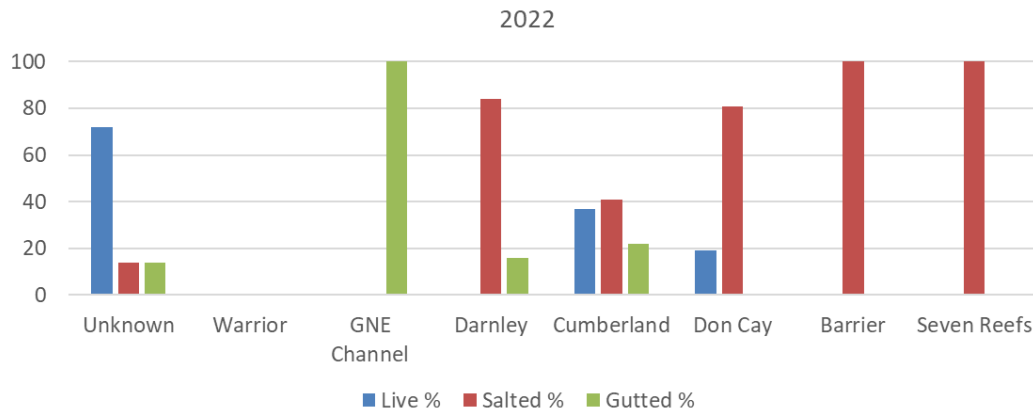


Photo courtesy of AFMA



Product state: 2021

- Majority of product landed – Gutted & Salted



Product State: 2022

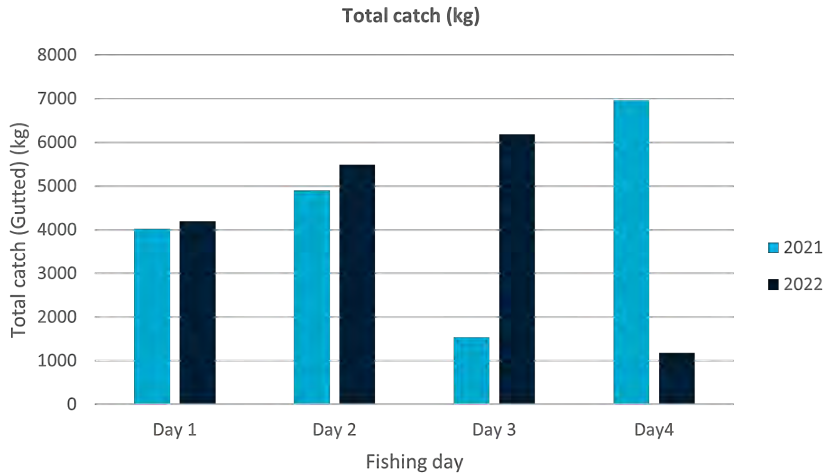
- More product types landed – Whole (Live), Gutted, Gutted & Salted



Black teatfish - Observer and Catch data

Outcomes:

- No evidence of stockpiling
- No evidence of declining catch after a few days, which would indicate depletion
- Cumulative catches tracked and adhered to TAC
- Number of fishers participating in the fishery was a fraction of available fishing effort





Black teatfish - Observer and Catch data

Note:

- Importance of Minimum Legal Size:
 - Spawning
 - CITES
- Area caught:
 - Important to note Log book zone in catch recording
- Check species of Teatfish:
 - White teatfish?





Black teatfish - Observer and Catch data

Future:

- Importance of ongoing length frequency, time series data:
 - Surveys are expensive
- Length frequency data will inform on:
 - Size structure for Black teatfish population
 - Update modelling
 - Indicate effects of fishing
 - CITES
- Importance of anecdotal information from fishers and Observers
- Loggers on boats or fishers:
 - Catch per unit effort
 - Indicate effects of fishing



East Torres Strait BDM survey 2019/2020



'Esso'

Thank you and appreciation to:

Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer fishers for providing their fishery data

AFMA Thursday Island

AFMA Observers - Tamre Sarhan, Ben Lidell, David Schubert, Henry Oak and Stephen Hall

Funding: AFMA, CSIRO

CSIRO OCEANS & ATMOSPHERE

Nicole Murphy (P.I.)

Brisbane, Australia

t +61 7 3833 5948

e nicole.murphy@csiro.au

w www.csiro.au

Australia's National Science Agency



Photo courtesy of AFMA

Attachment E – Workshop presentation

Beche-de-mer Workshop

22 March 2023

Ngurupai



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority





Agenda

Day two – Wednesday 22 March 2023 – 0830-1500		
Agenda Item	Speaker	Time
Opening prayer	TBA	0830
Industry feedback from day one	All attendees	0835
Overview of management arrangements for white teatfish, including past consultation	AFMA	0900
Overview of item for break-out group discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Understand the pros and cons of different options for addressing the undercatch of white teatfish, including the use of hookah (generating input)	AFMA	0915
Break-out group session 3	All attendees	930
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group session 3	All attendees	1000
Morning tea		1030-1045
Break-out group session 4	All attendees	1045
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group session 4	All attendees	1130
Lunch		1215-1315
Break-out group session 5	All attendees	1315
Industry presentations and discussion of break-out group session 5	All attendees	1400
Recap, next steps and questions	Chair, AFMA	1445
Close in prayer	TBA	1500



Why are we here today?

- Understand – industry views
- Get your input – options to better utilise the white teatfish TAC (e.g. use of hookah)



Current management of white teatfish – management controls

- 15t TAC – only ~2-3t caught per year
- No possession or use of hookah gear
- Minimum size limit – 32cm



Current management of white teatfish – what else?

Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy

- We can't over-catch the TAC - 15t
- We need good catch reporting

Export limits

- Export fishery
- Black teatfish and white teatfish are CITES Appendix II listed
- Export limits apply - 20t for black teatfish and 15t for white teatfish



Current management of white teatfish – health of the stock

- 2019-2020 scientific beche-de-mer survey - first time deep water survey undertaken. Survey results have provided sufficient confidence for quantifying white teatfish stocks
- Survey found ~50 per cent of white teatfish is found in the deep water strata. None found beyond 36m
- Survey trend for shallow reef population fairly constant over time
- Review TAC – potential to increase, however additional population modelling and/or fishery dependent data required



How did we get here?

2011-2012	Trial opening using hookah
2014-2015	TVH licence buy-out
2016-2019	Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy
Dec 2017	Fish Receiver System
2019-2020	Scientific beche-de-mer survey
2023	Updated stock assessment



How did we get here?

Since 2010	HCWG discussions
2017-2020	Community consultation – divided views
2022	Priority issue for HCWG
Today	Industry workshop



Why are we here?

- Advice (no decision making)
- Seeking industry views
 - What are your aspirations for the fishery
 - What do the changes mean for you / your community / your fishery
 - Could there be any unintended consequences if the rules are changed
- Opportunity for industry to
 - Express, listen to and understand the aspirations and views of other industry members
 - Raise options that may not have been considered previously
 - Consider potential benefits and / or impacts
 - Consider how changes may be implemented and / or enforced



What happens after this workshop?

- Report to PZJA on workshop outcomes
- Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group (HCRAAG) and Working Group (HCWG) will consider the outcomes of this workshop and provide further advice on the proposed changes that might be recommended for further development
- May involve broader community consultation
- HCRAAG and HCWG will need to consider the outcomes of any community consultation
- PZJA decision and amendments to fishery management instrument and licence conditions



So, what's the plan for today?

- Guidance for discussing management changes (key steps)
 - Reflect on fishery objectives and policies
 - What is your long term vision for the fishery
 - What's the issue and what are some solutions
 - What are the benefits and impacts
 - Can the changes be implemented and enforced
- Small group breakout discussions on key questions
- Report back to the workshop on key points



Fishery objectives and policies

Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984

- Traditional way of life and livelihoods
- Protecting the environment
- Giving effect to the Torres Strait Treaty
- Optimum utilisation
- Economic opportunity for Traditional Inhabitants



Fishery objectives and policies

Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy

- Long-term sustainable use including for future generations
- Develop BDM stocks for the benefit of Traditional Inhabitants
- Acknowledge area-specific issues
- Ecosystem approach to reduce impacts on/optimize interactions with other harvested and dependent species
- Where needed, develop long-term recovery strategies for species



What is your long term vision for the fishery?

- What do you want out of the fishery?
- What do you want the fishery to look like in 5, 10, 50 years time?



What is the actual issue?

- Considering the objectives and industry's vision for the fishery...
 - Be clear on what the issue is e.g. under-utilisation of the white teatfish TAC
 - What are you trying to change? (e.g. use of hookah) Why?
 - What are the options / solutions? Opportunity to raise options / solutions that may not have been considered previously



What are the benefits and impacts?

- Benefits / impacts might be obvious
- Some might not be realised until later – unintended
- Are the proposed changes consistent with the objectives of the Act and fishery, or the long term aspirations (vision) of industry?



What are the benefits and impacts?

- What are the benefits for and impacts on the sustainability of the fishery?
 - Optimum utilisation, improved data
 - BDM is vulnerable to over-exploitation, localised depletion
 - Impacts of increased effort on other species (both shallower and deeper waters)
- What are the benefits for and impacts on fishers, communities and the fishery?
 - Economic opportunity for Traditional Inhabitants, support the traditional way of life and livelihoods of Traditional Inhabitants
 - Some changes to the rules may only benefit some individuals, or one sector of the fishery, while disadvantaging others
 - Limited TAC cannot sustain all licenced fishers. What happens when the TAC is reached
- What are the implications for safety?



Can the changes be implemented and enforced?

- What do the changes mean for the TAC?
- Do the changes mean we need
 - Additional reporting
 - Extra monitoring
- Are the changes to the rules going to be enforceable?
- Do the changes create compliance risks?
 - Misreporting
 - Illegal fishing e.g. stockpiling, taking of prohibited species, unlicensed, use of prohibited gear
 - What happens if the TAC is exceeded



Break-out groups

Session 3

- How can the white teatfish TAC be better utilised? (e.g. use of hookah)

Sessions 4 and 5

- Consideration of different management options



Management options

- Options discussed by HCWG
 - Allowing the use of hookah to fish for white teatfish only
 - Allowing the use of hookah to fish for white teatfish only and in certain areas
 - Having a designated white teatfish hookah fishing season which may potentially involve closing fishing to all other BDM species
 - Trialling fishing for white teatfish using hookah with one fisher per community



Session 3 – vision and options – ?s for break-out groups

- How can the white teatfish TAC be better utilised?
 - Considering the objectives and industry's vision for the fishery...what is the issue?
 - What are the options / solutions? (e.g. use of hookah)



Sessions 4 and 5 – management options – ?s for break-out groups

- Consideration of different management options
 - What are your views on each management option?
 - How do you think the proposed changes could benefit/impact you and your fishing operation (positively and/or negatively)?
 - How do you think the proposed changes could benefit/impact communities (positively and/or negatively)?
 - How do you think the proposed changes could benefit/impact the fishery as a whole (positively and/or negatively)?
 - Can the changes be implemented and enforced?

Attachment F – Workshop presentation



BDM WORKSHOP

**NGURUPAY GAGAITH
KAURAREG NATION**

21 -22 MARCH 2023



Management Options

- The group identified the areas in which the White Teatfish is heavily concentrated.
- The areas in which the group spoke openly and recognised to access is within the TSPZ within the Meriam marine estate including the Cumberland Passage.
- The group agreed in principle that due to access to the Cumberland Passage, the islands of Ugar, Mer, Erub, Masig, Poruma and Warraber will be consulted on access the 20t.
- The break down of the 20t is as follows;
- Based on historical catch rate of all TIB operators in the past that they have agreed in principle for 5t free dive within the Meriam marine waters. The free dive for white teatfish is open now.
- The remaining 15t will be accessed by hookah apparatus by our brothers from the Meriam, Kulkaigal, Guda Maluilgal, Maluilgal, Kauraraeg, Gudag/Yadaykenu and Angamuthi TIB licence holders within the Cumberland Passage area (pending community consultation).
- This does not include accessing to the areas beyond 10 degrees 41 minutes latitude south from the tip of Cape York (accessing the recent claimed areas).



CONDITIONS

- That AFMA immediately introduced to the RAG, HCWG, the PZJA Standing Committee to PZJA to amend the Fisheries Management Notice and the BDM Harvest Strategy, the following amendments;
- Use of hookah apparatus.
- TIB fisher operators to hold an Australian Diving Course Certificate that meets all Australian Standards and survey standards.
- Change of vessel length based on safety to be between 7m to 20m.
- No use of hookah apparatus for white teatfish during black teatfish opening.
- Use for white teatfish only.



ISSUES

- Change of the white teatfish tonnage from 15t to 20t.
- Support for community consultation to endorse conditions for access to the white teatfish fishery.
- The group have unanimously agreed to use hookah apparatus as per community condition endorsement.



The group unanimously agreed that while this issue is of high importance to industry, it is also of high importance that the right process is followed including Traditional Owner and community consultation, to ensure the sustainability of the fishery is protected for this and future generations