

**TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP 34  
(TRLRAG 34)**

**Thursday 6 July 2023 | 9am – 11am**

**Video Conference**

**DRAFT AGENDA**

**1 PRELIMINARIES**

**1.1 Welcome and apologies**

The Chair will welcome members and observers to the 34<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RAG.

**1.2 Adoption of agenda**

The RAG will be invited to adopt the draft agenda.

**1.3 Declaration of interests**

Members and observers will be invited to declare any real or potential conflicts of interest and determine whether a member may or may not be present during discussion of or decisions made on the matter which is the subject of the conflict.

**2 UPDATES FROM MEMBERS**

Industry, scientific and government agency members and observers will be invited to provide verbal updates on matters concerning the TRL Fishery.

**3 TRL FISHERY RESEARCH PRIORITIES**

The RAG will discuss and provide advice on research priorities for the 2024/25 – 2029/30 five-year period.

**4 OTHER BUSINESS**

The RAG will be invited to raise any other matters for consideration.

**The Chair must approve the attendance of all observers at the meeting. Individuals wishing to join the meeting as an observer must contact the Executive Officer – Elissa Mastroianni ([elissa.mastroianni@afma.gov.au](mailto:elissa.mastroianni@afma.gov.au))**

<b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRLRAG)</b> <b>Video Conference</b>	<b>MEETING 34</b> <b>6 July 2023</b>
<b>PRELIMINARIES</b> <b>Welcome and apologies</b>	<b>Agenda Item 1.1</b> <b>For NOTING</b>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the RAG **NOTE**:
  - a. an acknowledgement of Traditional Owners;
  - b. the Chair's welcome address;
  - c. apologies received from members unable to attend.

## **BACKGROUND**

2. As at 27 June 2023, no apologies had been received.

<b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRLRAG)</b> <b>Video Conference</b>	<b>MEETING 34</b> <b>6 July 2023</b>
<b>PRELIMINARIES</b> <b>Adoption of agenda</b>	<b>Agenda Item 1.2</b> <b>For DECISION</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the RAG consider and **ADOPT** the agenda.

## BACKGROUND

2. This meeting was noted by members at TRLRAG 33 (14-15 December 2022) with key agenda items including:
  - a. consideration of the any intersessional work undertaken by CSIRO
  - b. discuss research and data needs planning, including:
    - consider Data Sub-Group meeting outcomes and future work
    - discuss research priorities and any updates to the five-year research plan.
3. Due to resourcing constraints, a Data Sub-Group meeting was not held in May 2023 as originally planned so will not be discussed in this meeting. AFMA plans to convene a Data Sub-Group meeting later in the year.

<b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRLRAG)</b> <b>Video Conference</b>	<b>MEETING 34</b> <b>6 July 2023</b>
<b>PRELIMINARIES</b> <b>Declaration of interests</b>	<b>Agenda Item 1.3</b> <b>For Decision</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That RAG members and observers:
  - a. **DECLARE** all real or potential conflicts of interest in the Torres Strait Rock Lobster Fishery at the commencement of the meeting (**Attachments 1.3a** and **1.3b**);
  - b. **DETERMINE** whether the member may or may not be present during discussion of or decisions made on the matter which is the subject of the conflict;
  - c. **ABIDE** by decisions of the RAG regarding the management of conflicts of interest; and
  - d. **NOTE** that the record of the meeting must record the fact of any disclosure, and the determination of the RAG as to whether the member may or may not be present during discussion of, or decisions made, on the matter which is the subject of the conflict.

## BACKGROUND

2. Consistent with the *Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) Fisheries Management Paper No. 1* (FMP1), which guides the operation and administration of PZJA consultative forums, members are asked to declare any real or potential conflicts of interest.
3. RAG members are asked to confirm the standing list of declared interests (**Attachments 1.3a** and **1.3b**) is accurate and provide an update to be tabled if it is not.
4. FMP1 recognises that members are appointed to provide input based on their knowledge and expertise and as a consequence, may face potential or direct conflicts of interest. Where a member has a material personal interest in a matter being considered, including a direct or indirect financial or economic interest; the interest could conflict with the proper performance of the member's duties. Of greater concern is the specific conflict created where a member is in a position to derive direct benefit from a recommendation if it is implemented.
5. When a member recognises that a real or potential conflict of interest exists, the conflict must be disclosed as soon as possible. Where this relates to an issue on the agenda of a meeting this can normally wait until that meeting, but where the conflict relates to decisions already made, members must be informed immediately. Conflicts of interest should be dealt with at the start of each meeting. If members become aware of a potential conflict of interest during the meeting, they must immediately disclose the conflict of interest.
6. Where it is determined that a direct conflict of interest exists, the forum may allow the member to continue to participate in the discussions relating to the matter but not in any decision making process. They may also determine that, having made their contribution to the discussions, the member should retire from the meeting for the remainder of discussions on that issue. Declarations of interest, and subsequent decisions by the forum, must be recorded accurately in the meeting minutes.

## TRLRAG Declarations of interests from most recent meetings

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
<b>Members</b>		
Ian Knuckey	Chair	<p>Chair/Director of Fishwell Consulting Pty Ltd and Olrac Australia (electronic logbooks). Chair/member of other RAGs and MACs. Conducts various AFMA and FRDC funded research projects including FRDC Indigenous Capacity Building project. Nil interests in TRL Fishery and no research projects in the Torres Strait.</p> <p>In 2019, delivered components of TSRA Induction Program for Traditional Inhabitant members on PZJA advisory committees.</p> <p>Full declaration of interests provided at <b>Attachment 1.3b.</b></p>
Eva Plaganyi	Scientific Member	<p>Lead scientist for PZJA funded TRL research projects conducted by CSIRO. Contribute to other Torres Strait research projects that receive research funding, including currently Shared science and Indigenous knowledge to support fisheries capacity building in Torres Strait. No other interests in the fishery. Independent scientific member of HCRA and NPFRAG.</p>
Andrew Penney	Scientific Member	<p>Director of Pisces Australis Pty Ltd, an Australian registered marine/coastal research and management consultancy based in Canberra - interests in any opportunities in this regard.</p> <p>Currently Principal Investigator on FRDC Projects Nos 2017-180: Design and implementation of an Australian National Bycatch Report: Phase 1 – Scoping; and 2019-036: Implementation of dynamic reference points and harvest strategies to account for environmentally-driven changes in productivity in Australian fisheries, potentially red leg banana prawns or TRL.</p> <p>Independent scientific member on the AFMA Southeast RAG, the Tropical Rock Lobster RAG and the Small Pelagic Fishery RAG. Member of the AFMA ERA Technical Working Group.</p> <p>No shareholding and hold no positions relating to any other companies, including any fishing companies or industry associations.</p>
Les Pitt	Traditional Inhabitant Member – Kemer Kemer Meriam	<p>Traditional Inhabitant Member Kemer Kemer Meriam, TIB licence holder and runs an independent freezer facility on Erub Island. Board member of Zenadth Kes Fisheries.</p>
Charles David	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Kulkaigal	<p>Traditional Inhabitant Member Kulkaigal, TSRA Fisheries Advisory Committee and Zenadth Kes Fisheries member.</p>

### Attachment 1.3a

Patrick Mooka	Traditional Inhabitant Member – Guda maluylgal	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Guda maluylgal. Zenadth Kes Fisheries representative.
Jermaine Reuben	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Maluyilgal	To be declared.
Thomas Fujii	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Kaiwalalgal	Traditional Inhabitant Member Kaiwalalgal. Queensland East Coast TRL and TIB license holder. Zenadth Kes Fisheries member.
Brett Arlidge	Industry Member	General Manager MG Kailis Pty Ltd. MG Kailis Pty Ltd is a holder of 5 TVH licences. Seafood buyer from Torres Strait, QLD and PNG TRL fisheries.
Ken McKenzie	Industry Member	TVH license and quota holder. Queensland East Coast TRL license and quota holder.
Damian Miley	TSRA Member	TSRA Fisheries Project Manager, TSRA holds multiple TVH TRL fishing license on behalf of Torres Strait Communities but does not benefit from them. No personal pecuniary interest.
Jenny Keys	QDAF Member	Queensland TRL Fishery Manager.
Emma Freeman	AFMA Member	Nil.
Elissa Mastroianni	Executive Officer	Nil.
<b>Observers</b>		
Joseph Posu	PNG National Fisheries Authority	To be declared.
Leo Dutra	CSIRO	No other interest in TRL fishery apart from involvement in research. Project lead for FRDC funded project: Shared science and Indigenous knowledge to support fisheries capacity building in Torres Strait. Member of TRL science survey project team.
Brooke D'Alberto	ABARES	Nil.
Quinten Hirakawa	TSRA	TSRA employee, TIB license holder with a TRL endorsement.

**Declaration of interests**  
**Dr Ian Knuckey – October 2022**

**Ian Knuckey positions:**

Director –	Fishwell Consulting Pty Ltd
Director –	Olrac Australia (Electronic logbooks)
Chair –	Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group
Chair –	Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group
Chair –	Victorian Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Assessment Group
Chair –	Victorian Central Zone Abalone Fisheries Resource Advisory Group
Chair –	Gulf of St Vincent's Prawn Fishery MAC Research Scientific Committee
Scientific Member –	Northern Prawn Management Advisory Committee
Scientific Member –	Gulf of St Vincent's Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee
Scientific Member –	Tropical Tuna Resource Assessment Group
Scientific Member –	SESSF Resource Assessment Group
Councillor –	Victorian Marine and Coastal Council
Member –	The Geelong Agri Collective

**Fishwell current projects:**

DAWE Project	Multi-sector fisheries capacity building
AFMA 2022-	Annual monitoring, reporting and assessment of SPF marine mammal interactions, including effectiveness of mitigation measures
AFMA 2020-0807	Bass Strait Scallop Fishery Survey – 2020-22
AFMA project	Design sea cucumber fishery-independent survey for Coral Sea
FRDC 2019-027	Improving and promoting fish-trawl selectivity in the SESSF and GABTS
FRDC 2018-021	Development and evaluation of SESSF multi-species harvest strategies
Traffic Project	Shark Product Traceability
Sea Cucumber Ass.	Design and implementation of various sea cucumber dive surveys.
Australia Bay	Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Developmental Fin Fish Trawl Fishery
Expert Witness	Gladstone Harbour development impacts

<b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRLRAG)</b> <b>Video Conference</b>	<b>MEETING 34</b> <b>6 July 2023</b>
<b>UPDATES FROM MEMBERS</b>	<b>Agenda Item 2</b> <b>For NOTING</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the RAG **NOTE** verbal updates provided by industry, scientific and government agency members.

## BACKGROUND

2. Verbal reports are sought from members under this item, with particular emphasis on changes to catch and effort trends this fishing season.
3. It is important that the RAG develops a common understanding of any strategic issues, including economic, fishing and research trends relevant to the management of the TRL Fishery. This includes within adjacent jurisdictions. This ensures that where relevant, the RAG is able to have regard for these strategic issues and trends.
4. RAG members are asked to provide any updates on trends and opportunities in markets, processing and value adding.
  - a. Industry is asked to contribute advice on economic and market trends where possible.
  - b. Scientific members are asked to contribute advice on any broader strategic research projects or issues that may be of interest to the Torres Strait in future.
5. Government agencies are asked to provide a brief update on matters relating to the Torres Strait TRL Fishery.



<b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRLRAG)</b> <b>Video Conference</b>	<b>MEETING 34</b> <b>6 July 2023</b>
<b>TRL Fishery Research Priorities</b>	<b>Agenda Item 3</b> <b>For DISCUSSION &amp; ADVICE</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the RAG **DISCUSS** and provide **ADVICE** on the research priorities provided in the draft rolling five-year research plan for 2024/25 to 2028/29 (the Research Plan) for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) Fishery (**Attachment 3a**), including advice on feasibility, timing and indicative costing of essential, unfunded research project(s), and identifying any new research needs.
2. That the RAG **NOTE**:
  - a) The current status of recently identified research needs, as last reviewed by the TRLRAG in August 2022 (out of session, see Attachment 3b) outlined in **Table 1** (Attachment 3a); and
  - b) The Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) is scheduled to meet in August to discuss the 2024/25 research funding round.

## KEY ISSUES

### *Research priorities for the TRL Fishery*

3. The TRL RAG last considered research priorities out of session in August 2022 for the 2023-24 TSSAC research funding round and recommended that:
  - a) The highest 'essential' priority for the fishery remains the need to undertake **fishery independent surveys, stock assessment, harvest control and Recommended Biological Catch (RBC)** work.
  - a) Undertaking an update to the 2007 **Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA)** for the TRL Fishery remains an essential priority. Assessment by CSIRO this financial year is dependent on prioritisation against other high priority fisheries. Funding can be sourced from the AFMA TRL Fishery budget (~\$20,400).
  - b) **Improvement of data collection** (to be pursued by the TRL RAG data sub-group) remains an essential priority.
  - c) **Understanding fisher behaviour** and capturing information on the impacts of COVID-19 on the fishery remain essential priorities.
  - d) **Understanding connectivity, environmental drivers and adaptation strategies** also remain an essential priority, noting that a recently funded climate project led by CSIRO (Leo Dutra) that will provide greater insights into available environmental information and advice on what should be collected to develop downscaled climate effects models for Torres Strait Fisheries. More specifically, the RAG supported further work on understanding connectivity, highlighting that a discrete tagging project of 0+ and 1+ lobsters could help better understand any potential disparities between pre-season survey data, and fishery dependent data.
  - e) Following initial qualitative data collection through improvements to fishery dependent data, more specific resources can be dedicated to **understanding changes to fishing power** to develop a representative and structured annual

fishing power survey. This will be better facilitated when face-to-face stakeholder engagement is more feasible. As such, this research item remains as desirable.

- f) Considering that perhaps the original driver for the **science peer review** is now less important, the RAG agreed it could be moved down in terms of priority against other research needs, and is now prioritised as desirable.
4. Due to funding being allocated to several multiyear projects (commencing or continuing from 2021/22 and 2022/23) TSSAC released a limited call for research for 2023/24, in which there was no money available for new research projects in the TRL Fishery.
5. The TRL research priorities identified for 2023/24 (a-f above) were not part of this limited call for research however, a new full funding round is being run for 2024/25.
6. Given that the 2023/24 TSSAC funding round has been considered by the TSSAC, the RAG is being invited to discuss and provide advice on research priorities for the TRL Fishery for 2024/25 financial year and beyond.

## **BACKGROUND**

### ***TSSAC Research Funding Process***

7. Each year the TSSAC invites applications for funding to undertake research to support the management of Protected Zone Fisheries. The TSSAC seek input from each fishery advisory committee to identify research priorities.
8. Historically, Protected Zone Joint Authority fisheries research has predominantly been funded by AFMA. The AFMA research budget is generally set at around \$420,000 each year. In recent years TSRA has committed to contributing around \$200,000 each year towards PZJA fisheries research. This allows around \$620,000 annual for all Torres Strait research.
9. Additional funding can also be sought from other bodies such as the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), when needed, and when projects align with FRDC objectives.
10. A detailed breakdown of committed TSSAC funds for multi-year projects 2021/22 – 2024/25 is provided at **Attachment 3c**.

### ***TSSAC Fisheries Strategic Research Plan 2018-2023 and rolling five-year fishery specific research plans***

11. TSSAC operates under a Strategic Research Plan (SRP) which guides priority setting for research in Torres Strait fisheries over a five year period. The SRP specifies the research priorities and strategies that the PZJA intend to pursue in Torres Strait fisheries, and provides background to the processes used to call for, and assess, research proposals. The research priorities can be broad, covering all topics within the SRP, some of which may be funded by AFMA, and some of which may require funding from other funding bodies.
12. There are 3 research themes within the SRP, under which the TRLRAG and TRLWG could identify research priorities for the TRL Fishery (**Attachment 3d**). There are several strategies under each theme and suggested ideas to help RAGs and Working Groups to think about the sorts of projects which may fit within these themes and strategies.
13. The TSSAC requires each fishery to develop a rolling five-year research plan, which fits into the themes identified in this SRP.

## ATTACHMENT 3a

Table 1. Overview of recent research needs identified or discussed at previous TRLRAG and TRLWG meetings with an update on current status.

Research need	Detail	TRLRAG Prioritisation	Status	Comments/Questions
<b>Fishery surveys, stock assessment, harvest control rules and recommended biological catch (RBC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor ongoing changes in the fishery and update or develop fishery performance indicators as required.</li> <li>Recommend a recommended biological catch (RBC) annually for each season.</li> <li>Every third year update and implement the long-term stock assessment.</li> <li>Conduct a pre- season survey in November each year, including seabed habitat monitoring.</li> <li>Continue development of a harvest strategy for the TRL Fishery including an empirical harvest control rule.</li> <li>Facilitate data sharing with PNG.</li> <li>Development of a tiered harvest strategy for the TRL Fishery.</li> </ul>	<b>Essential</b> (as per TRLRAG 29 advice)	<b>Currently funded</b> under AFMA Research Project (2019/0825) until 2021-22.	Currently scoped as a three year project from 2022-23 onwards, and under consideration by the TSSAC.  Estimated projected cost is \$290,000 annually
<b>Ecological risk assessment (ERA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an update to the 2007 ERA for the TRL Fishery.</li> </ul>	<b>Essential</b> (as per TRLRAG 29 advice)	Assessment this financial year dependent prioritisation against other high priority fisheries.  Funding can be sourced from the AFMA TRL Budget (~\$20,400).	TRLRAG 29 agreed that because the Fishery is based on a single species, collected by hand, there is unlikely to be any significant change in the ecological risk factors relating to the TRL fishery since the last ERA was undertaken in 2007.
<b>Improvement of data collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved monitoring of commercial catch and effort in all sectors of the fishery.</li> <li>Estimate of non-commercial take of TRL.</li> <li>Alternative monitoring techniques of effort, for example GPS tracking.</li> </ul>	<b>Essential</b> (as per TRLRAG 29 advice)	Due to the timing of 2021 black teatfish opening in the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery, commencing on 30 April 2021, and the level of AFMA resources required to support a successful opening, AFMA had to reprioritise some of our other fisheries work during the first half of 2021,	The RAG has supported the continuation of the data sub-group as a means to progress options for addressing ongoing fishing dependent data needs for the fishery.  The funding for RAG data sub-groups is to be sourced from the AFMA TRLRAG budget.

Research need	Detail	TRLRAG Prioritisation	Status	Comments/Questions
			including TRL. This, combined with COVID-19 impacts and ongoing travel restrictions has unfortunately impacted the ability of the RAG data sub-group to reconvene in 2021.  The next meeting of the RAG data sub-group is still to be confirmed and will aim to be in the first half of 2022.	
<b>Understanding fisher behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the drivers and incentives in determining fishing behaviour in all sectors.</li> <li>Understanding fishing behaviour under output controls: the impact of ITQs or competitive quota on the fishery (including social impacts); the extent and impact of discard mortality; the effect of changing market preferences on fishing behaviour under output controls; the extent of value adding e.g. moving to live product, targeting different sizes; the extent of high grading under output controls.</li> <li>Work should also include capturing information on the impacts of COVID-19 on the fishery to ensure that analysis of fishery data is accounting for potential 'COVID noise'.</li> <li>Commencing initial conversations with industry now, to capture qualitative information on fishing activities, would be a useful approach.</li> </ul>	<b>Essential</b> (as per TRLRAG 29 advice)	Currently unfunded and requires an indicative cost estimate.	TRL Data Sub-group should commence initial conversations with industry and collection of qualitative data, with a view to developing a structured quantitative survey over time.
<b>Understanding connectivity, environmental drivers and adaptation strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of migration of different age classes of lobsters between, and within, jurisdictions (e.g. PNG, QLD East Coast and Torres Strait).</li> <li>Understanding of recruitment connectivity between, and within, jurisdictions, including key areas of larval release within each jurisdiction.</li> <li>Management implications of movement and recruitment connectivity between, and within,</li> </ul>	<b>Essential</b> (as per TRLRAG 29 advice)	Currently unfunded and requires an indicative cost estimate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>industry could be engaged to undertake a discrete tagging project of 0+ (recently settled) and 1+ (juvenile) lobsters to examine movement from the East Coast into the Torres Strait.</li> <li>Useful to help better understand any potential disparity between pre-season survey data, and the fishery catch data, noting that the most</li> </ul>

## Attachment 3a

Research need	Detail	TRLRAG Prioritisation	Status	Comments/Questions
	<p>jurisdictions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding large scale environmental perturbations and their impacts on lobster recruitment, availability and aggregations.</li> </ul>			<p>recent tagging study is over 30 years old.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The currently-funded climate project work led by CSIRO (Leo Dutra) will provide greater insights into the available environmental information, and advice on what information should be collected to develop downscaled climate effects models for TS fisheries.</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding changes to fishing power through time</b>	Understanding changes in fishing behaviour and power over time (e.g. changes to the size of engines, use of GPS, gear, areas fished, time fished, experience of divers), to inform the standardisation of CPUE data.	<b>Desirable</b> (as per TRLRAG 29 advice)	TRL Data Sub-group to progress once progress on improving data collection has been made – funding for sub-group meetings to be sourced from RAG budget	Following initial qualitative data collection, more specific resources can be dedicated towards the project to develop a representative and structured annual fishing power survey. This will be better facilitated when face-to-face stakeholder engagement is more feasible, allowing for trusted relationships with industry to be built up over time.
<b>Science peer review</b>	Consistent with AFMA's best practice <i>Guidelines for quality assurance of Australian fisheries research and science information</i> (the Guidelines), a peer review be conducted of the TRL Fishery survey design.	<b>Desirable</b> (as per TRLRAG 29 advice)	This project is currently estimated to cost between \$60,000 - \$80,000 depending on final scope. The Chair and independent scientific member agreed to finalise the Terms of Reference for the review out-of-session (TRL RAG 29)	Original driver for this research need may be now less important.
<b>Mid-year survey</b>	Conduct mid- year survey, as required under the Harvest Strategy for the TRL Fishery.	To be conducted only if requirement to undertake a mid-year survey is triggered under the Harvest Strategy – indicative cost \$110,000 with in-kind contribution from CSIRO	n/a	Unless triggered under the Harvest Strategy for the TRL Fishery, this project is not a priority for the TRL Fishery.

## TRLRAG Out of session correspondence

**From:** LANGDON, Georgia  
**To:** john.glaister@bigpond.com; Sevaly, SEN; Crous, Laura Blamey (O&A, St. Lucia); nicholas.richards@tsra.gov.au; Jenny Keys; trent@fnqfish.com.au; torrescrays@gmail.com; Ian Knuckey; Eva Plaganyi; Andrew Penney; Brett Arlidge; FREEMAN, Emma; mookapatrik@gmail.com; sayo\_fujii@hotmail.com; charles.a.david@hotmail.com; Les Pitt; jisupermarket16@outlook.com; vali59@bigpond.net.au; Jerome Kalwi  
**Cc:** TL Fisheries  
**Subject:** Update on TSSAC research funding call for 2023-24 and fishery research priorities [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Friday, 26 August 2022 1:51:00 PM  
**Attachments:** Att B Research funding table Existing projects.pdf  
 Att A Info paper on new TSSAC funding timeline.pdf  
 Att C TRL Fishery Research Plan 2023-24 2021-28.pdf

## OFFICIAL

Good afternoon Tropical Rock Lobster RAG and Working Group members,

It's been a while since we've corresponded! I hope you have all been keeping well.

Firstly, welcome to our new RAG and WG members and welcome back to our other members who have signed on for another term.

I am writing to you with an update regarding three Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) research funding matters:

1. Outcomes of the 2022-23 funding round
2. Proposal for the 2023-24 limited budget research funding cycle – **seeking your advice!**
3. Changes to the TSSAC research cycle timeline (**Attachment A**). The change has resulted in the need to commence our research cycle earlier each year, in order to allow us to have draft project budgets in time for Government budget deadlines. See the attached paper for more information on the changes to the research cycle timeline.

#### 1. Outcomes of the 2022-23 funding round

Thank you for all of your work on providing research priorities and scopes for consideration in the 2022-23 funding round. Five research projects were recommended for funding by the TSSAC, with three being immediately supported through TSSAC funding, and in the process of being contracted. Two other projects were recommended for funding, however are seeking co-funding from the Fisheries Research and Development Council (FRDC), to allow them to proceed (Table 1). FRDC anticipate providing an outcome on whether they have supported these two projects for co funding or not, by Friday 2 September.

**Table 1.** List of research projects recommended for funding by TSSAC for 2022-23 financial year. Three projects are fully funded and two awaiting consideration of co funding from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).

Research project	Funding source
TRL Fishery Independent Survey, stock assessment, and RBC calculations	TSSAC
Research to support Bêche-de-mer fisheries in Torres Strait (curryfish conversion ratios and white teatfish modelling)	TSSAC
Coral trout catch per unit effort standardisation	TSSAC
Measuring non-commercial catches in the Torres Strait (note this project has been recommended for funding by TSSAC, however is seeking a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation co-contribution to allow the project to go ahead. We hope to have a response from FRDC by end August).	TSSAC and FRDC co funding sought (note we anticipate FRDC providing an outcome on whether they have supported this project for funding or not by Friday 2 September)
Climate change project (note this project has been recommended for funding by TSSAC, however is seeking a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation co-contribution to allow the project to go ahead. We hope to have a response from FRDC by end August).	TSRA and FRDC co funding sought (note we anticipate FRDC providing an outcome on whether they have supported this project for funding or not by Friday 2 September)

#### 2. Proposal for the 2023-24 funding round

We are commencing the new funding round (for the 2023-24 budget) and have a limited budget available. This is due to the above 5 research projects being supported for funding in 2022-23 (and some are multi-year projects commencing or continuing from 2021-22. This means around \$110,000 is likely to be available for funding **new** research in the 2023-24 financial year. See **Attachment B** to this email for the list of current research projects and budgets.

In the last (2022-23) funding round, a 6<sup>th</sup> project scope was released in the research call, ([Management Strategy Evaluation of Spanish mackerel for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery](#) – *click link to read the scope*) which attracted interest from one research provider, however they did not have time to complete the project in 2022-23. This project remains a high priority for funding for the Finfish Fishery.

Given the limited funding available (around \$110 000), for the next (2023-24) funding round, the TSSAC suggests releasing a limited call for research in early September 2022, for the [Management Strategy Evaluation of Spanish mackerel for the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery project only](#). This is noting the project was already approved as a high priority by the Finfish Resource Assessment Group, Finfish Working Group and TSSAC last year. The only reason it didn't progress, was due to staffing shortages not allowing the interested project team to submit an application.

This is also noting no other high priorities for research were identified in 2022-23 for any other fishery, which were ranked more highly than this research priority AND **all** fisheries already have research projects underway progressing the development and maintenance of these fisheries.

#### What do we need from the RAG and WG?

1. Please take a look at the latest research priorities in our TRL five-year rolling research plan (**Attachment C**) and consider whether any of the unfunded research priorities are urgent and cannot wait until 2024-25 to be considered for funding. It is worth noting that the next highest research priorities for the TRL fishery are for the work of the TRL RAG data sub-group which is currently budgeted for under the AFMA TRL Fishery Budget.

In any case, **please send your thoughts via email to back to me by Wednesday 7 September**

**When will we complete a full funding round again?**

A full TSSAC funding round will occur again for the 2024-25 financial year, as more funding becomes available again that year with the completion of multi-year funded projects.

If you have any questions regarding the above please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Have a fantastic weekend,  
Georgia

**Georgia Langdon**

Senior Management Officer | Torres Strait Fisheries

Thursday Island Office

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

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## ATTACHMENT 3c

## Committed Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) funds for multi-year projects 2021-22 to 2024-25

Research priority theme	Project Title	Cost per year			
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
1a - Fishery stocks, biology and marine environment.	Fishery independent survey, stock assessment, Harvest Strategy and Recommended Biological Catch calculation for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery	\$291,000	(estimate \$290,000)	(estimate \$290,000)	(estimate \$290,000)
1a - Fishery stocks, biology and marine environment.	Finfish Fishery: Coral Trout and Spanish Mackerel Biological Sampling 2021-2024	\$122,000	\$128,000	\$135,000	
1a - Fishery stocks, biology and marine environment.	Finfish Fishery Spanish mackerel stock assessment	\$57,000	\$59,000	\$61,000	
1a - Fishery stocks, biology and marine environment.	Designing a close-kin mark-recapture study for Torres Strait Spanish mackerel	\$93,000			
<b>Total cost for all projects (including yet to be scoped TRL)</b>		<b>\$563,000</b>	<b>\$477,000</b>	<b>\$486,000</b>	<b>\$290,000</b>
Available research budget (if TSRA funding continues at \$150,000 and AFMA at \$420,000 per year) <sup>1</sup>		NA – funding round complete	\$570,000	\$570,000	\$570,000
Remaining funding available if TRL project continues funding in future			~\$93,000	~\$84,000	~\$280,000

<sup>1</sup> The TRL stock assessment and survey is ongoing work generally funded each year. This work usually costs around \$290,000 a year. Although this project proposal will be assessed against all others, its considered a high priority for Torres Strait research and is likely to be funded. This can be taken into account when looking at the likely funding available for 2023-24 and beyond.



## ATTACHMENT 3d

## Torres Strait fisheries strategic research themes, strategies and research activities

Theme 1: Protecting the Torres Strait marine environment for the benefit of Traditional Inhabitants	
<b>Aim:</b> Effective management of fishery stocks based on understanding species and their biology and ecological dependencies so it can support Traditional Inhabitant social and economic needs.	
Strategy 1a - Fishery stocks, biology and marine environment	<p>Possible research activities under this theme may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Stock assessment and fishery harvest strategies for key commercial species.</li> <li>b. Ecological risk assessments and management strategies for fisheries.</li> <li>c. Minimising marine debris in the Torres Strait.</li> <li>d. Addressing the effects of climate change on Torres Strait fisheries through adaptation pathways for management, the fishing industry and communities.</li> <li>e. Incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge into fisheries management.</li> <li>f. Methods for estimating traditional and recreational catch to improve fisheries sustainability.</li> </ul>
Strategy 1b – Catch sharing with Papua New Guinea	<p>Possible research activities under this theme may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Status of commercial stocks and catches by all sectors within PNG jurisdiction of the TSPZ.</li> <li>b. Good cross-jurisdictional fisheries management through better monitoring and use of technology.</li> </ul>
Theme 2: Social and Economic Benefits	
<b>Aim:</b> Increase social and economic benefits to Traditional Inhabitants from Torres Strait Fisheries.	
Strategy 2a - Promoting social benefits and economic development in the Torres Strait, including employment opportunities for Traditional Inhabitants	<p>Possible research activities under this theme may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Models for managing/administering Traditional Inhabitant quota</li> <li>b. Understanding what influences participation in commercial fishing by Traditional Inhabitants.</li> <li>c. Understanding the role and contribution of women in fisheries.</li> <li>d. Capacity building for the governance of industry representative bodies</li> <li>e. Methods for valuing social outcomes for participation in Torres Strait fisheries.</li> <li>f. Identifying opportunities and take-up strategies to increase economic benefits from Torres Strait fisheries.</li> </ul>
Theme 3: Technology and Innovation	
<b>Aim:</b> To have policies and technology that promote economic, environmental and social benefits from the fishing sector.	
Strategy 3a – Develop technology to support the management of Torres Strait fisheries.	<p>Possible research activities under this theme may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Electronic reporting and monitoring in the Torres Strait, including for small craft.</li> <li>b. Technologies or systems that support more efficient and effective fisheries management and fishing industry operations.</li> </ul>

<b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRLRAG)</b> <b>Video Conference</b>	<b>MEETING 34</b> <b>6 July 2023</b>
<b>OTHER BUSINESS</b>	<b>Agenda Item 4</b> <b>For Discussion</b>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the RAG **NOMINATE** any other business for discussion.