

Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Working Group Meeting 14

Final Meeting Record

6 July 2023

Hybrid Videoconference/Thursday
Island

Note all meeting papers and record available on
the PZJA webpage: www.pzja.gov.au



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

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Meeting participants

Members

Name	Position	Declaration of interests
John Glaister*	Chair	Member of Parks North, Chair of Northern Prawn Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC), Chair of the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC).
Laura Blamey*	Scientific Member	Contributes 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.
Sevaly Sen	Independent Fisheries Economist	Apology
Les Pitt [#]	Traditional Inhabitant Member – Kemer Kemer Meriam	Traditional Inhabitant Member Kemer Kemer Meriam, TIB licence holder and runs an independent freezer facility on Erub Island. Board member of Zenadth Kes Fisheries.
Charles David*	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Kulkalgal	Traditional Inhabitant Member Kulkalgal, TSRA Fisheries Advisory Committee and Zenadth Kes Fisheries member.
Patrick Mooka [#]	Traditional Inhabitant Member – Guda Maluligal	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Guda Maluligal. Zenadth Kes Fisheries representative.
Jermaine Reuben	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Maluyilgal	
Thomas Fujii [#]	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Kaiwalalgal	Traditional Inhabitant Member Kaiwalalgal. Queensland East Coast TRL and TIB license holder. Zenadth Kes Fisheries member.
Ned David [#]	Chair, Malu Lamar Registered Native Title Body Corporate	Nil.
Mark Dean*	Industry Member	Apology
Peter Frazis	Industry Member	Apology
Trent Butcher		
Emma Freeman [#]	AFMA Member	Nil.
Jenny Keys	QDAF Member	Apology
Damian Miley	TSRA Member	Apology

Name	Position	Declaration of interests
Nicholas Richards [#]	Acting TSRA Member	TSRA Program Manager Fisheries. TSRA hold TRL licences on behalf of Torres Strait Islanders.

*Attended online via MS Teams

[#]Attended in person at TSRA

Observers

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Joseph Posu*	PNG National Fisheries Authority	Works in the Fisheries Management Unit responsible for managing the prawn and lobster fisheries in the Western Province
Bonny Koke*	PNG National Fisheries Authority	Works in the Fisheries Management Unit responsible for managing the prawn and lobster fisheries in the Western Province
Robert Schutte*	QLD Workplace Health and Safety	Nil
Jon Flower*	QLD Workplace Health and Safety	Nil

*Attended online via MS Teams

1 Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

- The meeting was opened at 1410hrs on Thursday Island and online on Microsoft Teams on 6 July 2023. Attendees were welcomed to the 14th meeting of the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Working Group. The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the various lands on which members were participating from and paid respect to Elders past, present and emerging.
- Attendees at the Working Group meeting are detailed in the meeting participant tables at the start of this meeting record. The following apologies were received:
 - Independent Fisheries Economist, Sevaly Sen
 - Industry Member, Trent Butcher
 - Industry Member, Peter Frazis
 - Industry Member, Mark Dean
 - QDAF Member, Jenny Keys
 - TSRA Member, Damian Miley. Nicholas Richards attended as TSRA member.

1.2 Adoption of agenda

- The draft agenda was adopted without change (**Attachment A**).

4. The AFMA member advised they had received a request to discuss co-management from industry and would raise this under other business.

1.3 Declaration of interests

5. The Chair advised members and observers, that as provided in PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 (FMP1), all members of the Working Group must declare all real or potential conflicts of interest in the Torres Strait TRL Fishery at the commencement of the meeting. Where it is determined that a direct conflict of interest exists, the Working Group may allow the member to continue to participate in the discussions relating to the matter but may also determine that, having made their contribution to the discussions, the member should retire from the meeting for the remainder of the discussions on that issue.
6. The Chair requested that members update the record of declarations. These are detailed in the meeting participant tables at the start of this meeting record.
7. The Chair noted the value in having the experience, knowledge and opinions of all members present during discussions. However, the Chair also noted the conflict for scientific members associated with determining research priorities under Agenda Item 3.
8. Scientific members were asked to leave the meeting. The Chair then proposed that the RAG agree for all members to participate in discussions across all agenda items, but ask that scientific members leave the meeting during the final research prioritisation.
9. There were no objections to the Chair's proposed approach. The scientific members returned to the meeting.

2 Updates from members

Government agencies

10. The AFMA member provided a brief summary of RAG discussions from the morning's meeting:
 - a) Research priorities were discussed and agreed by the RAG, to be further discussed under Agenda Item 3.
 - b) Industry members have indicated that market, economic and logistical challenges are still evident in the fishery this year.
 - c) Industry members have also observed an average amount of cray on the grounds, and a number of new and increasing sand incursions which the RAG scientific member says may be related to developing El Nino conditions.
11. The WG also noted a more general AFMA update provided by the member, in particular:
 - a) Year on year catch comparison for the month of June indicate this season is tracking similarly to the past two years, with below average catches across the fishery overall.
 - b) The PZJA will meet in person on Thursday island later in July. Discussions will include the TRL TIB quota allocation process. AFMA, TSRA and QDAF have developed Terms of Reference for a consultant to identify an appropriate framework for this process, which will be considered by the PZJA. AFMA and TSRA welcomed further discussion and feedback from members on this issue out of session.

- c) Preparation is underway for the upcoming Torres Strait Treaty Bilateral meetings between Australia and PNG which will held in PNG this year.
- d) Heatwave conditions are likely in the coming months, and the Bureau of Meteorology has advised government and industry may need to prepare for hotter than average temperatures.

12. An update was provided by TSRA:

- a) The WAPIL project continues to progress. With a redesign completed TSRA are looking to have a project plan and budget developed implemented in September. The project continues to aim to improve fishing capacity and safety, access to finance and gear, cold storage and infrastructure.
- b) The project *Modelling climate change impacts on key fisheries resources in the Torres Strait to co-develop adaptation and mitigation strategies* has been included in the 2023-24 budget and is now progressing going through the TSRA procurement process. Stakeholder engagement will be included in this project.

Industry and scientific members

13. Industry had no comments to raise in addition to the AFMA member's RAG summary.

14. The Working Group noted a verbal update from the scientific member, in particular:

- a) The 12th International Conference on Lobster Biology will be held in Western Australia, with attendance by scientific members and Traditional Inhabitant Member – Guda Maluligal Patrick Mooka.
- b) The annual pre-season survey is set to go ahead from 2-16 November.
- c) The morphometric sampling project, supply chain resilience project, and environmental report cards are ongoing with further information on these projects to be available later in the year.
- d) The Working Group scientific member, Laura Blamey, will now be the Principal Investigator on the climate change project mentioned above.

Action Item 1. (Complete)

TRLWG EO to provide graphs and data for June year on year catches, and links to sea surface temperature maps.

Native Title

- 15. The Working Group noted that Malu Lamar are scheduled to meet with the PZJA while they are on Thursday Island for their face-to-face meeting.
- 16. The Chair of Malu Lamar asked about coordination between the many climate change projects currently underway or recently completed in the Torres Strait. The meeting noted that RAG scientific member, Eva Plaganyi, has previously provided some information on how these fit together and that these presentations could be provided to the working group as well. The meeting also noted that establishing a steering committee, which would include key stakeholders in the region, is a key element of the new climate change project.

Action Item 2.

CSIRO to share presentation on how climate change projects in the Torres Strait fit together.

Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority

17. The Working Group noted the following updates from the PNG National Fisheries Authority representative:
- a) NFA are also preparing for the upcoming Torres Strait Treaty Bilateral meetings.
 - b) Logbook and catch data remain Important priorities for NFA.
 - c) The TRL fishery review is in its final stages. Information from this review will be shared with Australia as it becomes available.
 - d) The MSC accreditation process for the PNG TRL fishery is ongoing.

3 Research Priorities for the TRL Fishery

18. The Working Group discussed and provided advice on future research priorities for the TRL Fishery.
19. The Working Group noted the outcomes of the TRLRAG's discussion and agreed with their recommendations on research priorities (**Attachment B**).
20. The Chair highlighted that research funding is limited for this year's round.
21. The Working Group noted that climate change and socio-economic impacts in the fishery remain key priorities for funding through the TSSAC. TSSAC will meet in August to discuss research funding across all Torres Strait fisheries.

4 Review of management controls

22. The AFMA member provided an update on the status of the input control review for the fishery. If endorsed by the PZJA, licence conditions will be changed to implement the two proposals agreed to by the TLRWG in December 2022.
23. The Working Group noted the importance of being able to evaluate the impact of introducing the flexibility to tow tenders un-associated with the primary vessel (to provide accommodation, fuel, and towing services to dinghy operators).
24. After some consideration, the Working Group agreed that the next meeting should further discuss metrics for measuring if the changes are achieving the intended socio-economic objectives, such as:
- a) Total or individual catches;
 - b) Time spent fishing, or time at fishing grounds; and
 - c) Economic indicators, such as per capita profit.

5 Other Business

25. As agreed during the adoption of the agenda, the Chair raised the topic of co-management for discussion at the group. There was no comment from members on how to pursue this.
26. The Working Group noted co-management could be raised again at a later meeting if it warranted further discussion.
27. The Working Group heard a brief update from observers Jon Flowers and Rob Schutte from QLD Workplace health and safety. They highlighted some of the

objectives of their work in the Torres Strait including improved diver safety, identifying and addressing challenges to diver safety (which may include a diver survey), training and certification, and improvements in infrastructure (such as air quality testing).

- 28. This work is being supported through TSRA and the WAPIL project.
- 29. Working Group members, in particular industry members, were in strong support for the capacity building potential of this work.
- 30. The 14th TRL Working Group meeting was closed at 1520hrs on 6 July 2023.

**TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER WORKING GROUP 14
(TRLWG 14)**

**Thursday 6 July 2023 | 2pm – 4pm
Video Conference**

DRAFT AGENDA

1 PRELIMINARIES

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair will welcome members and observers to the 14th meeting of the TRL Working Group.

1.2 Adoption of agenda

The Working Group 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 RESEARCH PRIORITIES

The WG is invited to discuss and provide advice on future research priorities for the TRL Fishery.

4 REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The AFMA member will provide an update on implementing the proposals agreed to at TRLWG13. The WG will be invited to provide and discuss any additional proposals.

5 OTHER BUSINESS

The WG 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)