

**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 14<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:elissa.mastroianni@afma.gov.au))**

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| <b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER WORKING GROUP</b><br><b>Video Conference</b> | <b>MEETING 14</b><br><b>6 July 2023</b>     |
| <b>PRELIMINARIES</b><br><b>Welcome and apologies</b>                  | <b>Agenda Item 1.1</b><br><b>For Noting</b> |

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

## **BACKGROUND**

1. As at 27 July 2023 two apologies, from Economic Member Sevaly Sen and Industry Member Trent Butcher, had been received.

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| <b>PRELIMINARIES</b><br><b>Adoption of agenda</b>                     | <b>Agenda Item 1.2</b><br><b>For Decision</b> |

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Working Group consider and **ADOPT** the agenda.

## **BACKGROUND**

2. This meeting was noted with members at TRLWG 13 (16 December 2022) as a possible video conference with a proposed agenda to consider research priorities and input controls.
3. TRLWG 14 was announced to members with a draft agenda on 12 June 2023. No suggestions for changes were received on the draft agenda.

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| <b>PRELIMINARIES</b><br><b>Declaration of interests</b>               | <b>Agenda Item 1.3</b><br><b>For Decision</b> |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Working Group 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-b**);
  - 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 Working Group 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 Working Group 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. Working Group members are asked to confirm the standing list of declared interests (**Attachments 1.3a-b**) 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.

## TRLWG Declarations of Interest from most recent meetings

| Name              | Position   | Declaration of interest   |
|-------------------|--|---|
| <b>Members</b>    |  |   |
| 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        | Fisheries Economist Member   | Nil interest in Torres Strait fisheries. Conducts various FRDC research projects relevant to AFMA fisheries; Advisor to Sydney Fish Market; AFMA Commissioner; member on the New South Wales Rock Lobster Harvest Strategy Working Group.   |
| 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 maluyilgal  | Traditional Inhabitant Member, Guda maluyilgal. 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.  |
| Mark Dean         | Industry Member  | TVH operator.   |
| Peter Frazis      | Industry Member  | Employee of MG Kailis Pty Ltd. MG Kailis Pty Ltd is a holder of 5 TVH license. Seafood buyer from Torres Strait, QLD, and PNG TRL fisheries.  |
| Trent Butcher     | Industry Member  | TVH licence holder  |
| Emma Freeman      | AFMA Member  | Nil.  |
| Jenny Keys        | QDAF Member  | Queensland TRL Fishery Manager.   |
| <b>Observers</b>  |  |   |
| Joseph Posu       | PNG National Fisheries Authority   | Works in the Fisheries Management Unit responsible for managing the prawn and lobster fisheries in the Western Province   |
| Yen Loban         | TSRA Board Member, TSRA Portfolio Member for Fisheries, Director Zenadth Kes Fisheries | TSRA Board member and TSRA Fisheries Portfolio member. Chair of Zenadth Kes Fisheries.  |
| Brooke D'Albertto | ABARES   | Nil   |
| Robert Schutte    | QLD Workplace Health and Safety  | To be declared.   |
| Jon Flower        | QLD Workplace Health and Safety  | To be declared  |

**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   |

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| <b>UPDATES FROM MEMBERS</b>   | <b>Agenda Item 2</b><br><b>For NOTING</b> |

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the WG **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 WG 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 WG is able to have regard for these strategic issues and trends.
4. WG 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.

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| <b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER WORKING GROUP</b><br><b>Video Conference</b> | <b>MEETING 14</b><br><b>6 July 2023</b>                  |
| <b>TRL Fishery Research Priorities</b>                                | <b>Agenda Item 3</b><br><b>For Discussion and Advice</b> |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Working Group **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 Working Group **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 Working Group last discussed research priorities on in 2021 and supported the recommendations of the TRL RAG.
4. Since that time the TRLRAG has considered research priorities out of session in 2022 and at TRLRAG34 and provided further advice on research priorities for the TRL Fishery and has 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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***

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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***

12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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><br>(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.<br><br>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><br>(as per TRLRAG 29 advice) | Assessment this financial year dependent prioritisation against other high priority fisheries.<br><br>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><br>(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, including TRL. This, combined | 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.<br><br>The funding for RAG data sub-groups is to be sourced from the AFMA TRLRAG budget. |

| Research need  | Detail  | TRLRAG Prioritisation                         | Status  | Comments/Questions   |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  |   |   | with COVID-19 impacts and ongoing travel restrictions has unfortunately impacted the ability of the RAG data sub-group to reconvene in 2021.<br>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><br>(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><br>(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 recent tagging study is over 30 years</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>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><br>(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><br>(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.  |

## Attachment 3b – 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<br>(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 3c – 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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stock assessment and fishery harvest strategies for key commercial species.</li> <li>Ecological risk assessments and management strategies for fisheries.</li> <li>Minimising marine debris in the Torres Strait.</li> <li>Addressing the effects of climate change on Torres Strait fisheries through adaptation pathways for management, the fishing industry and communities.</li> <li>Incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge into fisheries management.</li> <li>Methods for estimating traditional and recreational catch to improve fisheries sustainability.</li> </ol> |
| Strategy 1b – Catch sharing with Papua New Guinea   | <p>Possible research activities under this theme may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status of commercial stocks and catches by all sectors within PNG jurisdiction of the TSPZ.</li> <li>Good cross-jurisdictional fisheries management through better monitoring and use of technology.</li> </ol>  |
| 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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Models for managing/administering Traditional Inhabitant quota</li> <li>Understanding what influences participation in commercial fishing by Traditional Inhabitants.</li> <li>Understanding the role and contribution of women in fisheries.</li> <li>Capacity building for the governance of industry representative bodies</li> <li>Methods for valuing social outcomes for participation in Torres Strait fisheries.</li> <li>Identifying opportunities and take-up strategies to increase economic benefits from Torres Strait fisheries.</li> </ol>                              |
| 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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electronic reporting and monitoring in the Torres Strait, including for small craft.</li> <li>Technologies or systems that support more efficient and effective fisheries management and fishing industry operations.</li> </ol>   |

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| <b>REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT CONTROLS</b>                                  | <b>Agenda Item 4</b><br><b>For Discussion and Advice</b> |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Working Group:

1. **NOTE** that in recent years a review of management controls currently applied to the TRL Fishery has been underway, following the process agreed to by TRLWG 10 (**Attachment 3a – Table 1**).
2. **RECALL** that TRLWG 12 (15 December 2022) considered the summarised outcomes of the five industry-based proposals for changes to management controls in the TRL Fishery as discussed by communities during AFMA's community visits between June and September 2022.
3. **RECALL** that TRLWG 12 agreed to:
  - a. Implement proposals 1 and 2 to create flexibility for traditional inhabitant boat (TIB) primary and carrier boat operators in the TRL fishery to tow any other TIB tender boat, provide accommodation and fuel to other TIB operators;
  - b. Revisit this proposal 3 again in 2025 (three years' time); and
  - c. Not progress proposals 4 and 5.

(Additional information on these 5 proposals at **Attachment 4b**).
4. **NOTE** that the PZJA will consider the recommendations a-c above at their 44<sup>th</sup> meeting in mid July 2023. Subject to PZJA approval, AFMA will amend licence conditions to give effect to these proposals.
5. **DISCUSS** what metrics and reporting to the Working Group may be required to determine the effectiveness of implementing proposals 1 and 2. This would also allow the Working Group to consider socioeconomic factors and concerns in a more structured way.
6. **PROPOSE** and **DISCUSS** any additional proposals the Working Group may need to consider in the future.

## KEY ISSUES

7. Having regard to the advice of the industry workshop and a series of community visits across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area to consult with communities on, and amongst other things, the review of management controls in the TRL Fishery, TRLWG 12 recommended that proposals 1 and 2 be implemented.
8. Separate to the discussion on supporting the 5 identified proposals, TRLWG 12 also discussed socioeconomic concerns present in the fishery (and how this related to setting the TAC for the 2022-23 season). Multiple members stated that setting a lower TAC would unlikely alleviate these socioeconomic issues.

9. Proposals 1 and 2 were suggested as a mechanism to help increase participation and employment opportunities in the TRL fishery and help the traditional inhabitant sector catch a greater proportion of their total allowable catch.
10. Proposals 1 and 2 are intended to address some of these socioeconomic issues, however given the emphasis many members placed on this issue at TRLWG 12, AFMA would like to give members the opportunity to provide any additional ideas or proposals for consideration in future.
11. In line with AFMA's preference to conduct any review in a careful, and considered step-wise manner, AFMA would caution against implementing additional changes without first evaluating the success of proposals 1 and 2.
12. As such, the Working Group is also being asked to provide advice on measuring the success of implementing these proposals. Metrics could include number of active fishers in a season or per capita catch rates each season, and would be reported on annually. This would also allow the Working Group to consider socioeconomic factors and concerns in a more structured way.

## **BACKGROUND**

13. Over the last few years, industry (both TIB and TVH) have expressed a desire to see a review of certain of management controls currently applied to the TRL Fishery, some of which are longstanding issues that have been raised, not only in the Working Group forum.
14. Prior to the quota system being implemented, at its meeting on 26 November 2018 the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) reaffirmed existing management controls currently applied to the TRL Fishery. TRL Fishery licence holders were notified at the time, that a review of existing PZJA licencing policies and management arrangements, including input controls, would be conducted periodically after the quota management system under was operational.
15. Input controls are restrictions put on the ability of fishers to catch fish. Most commonly these are restrictions on the number and size of boats, the amount of time boats are allowed to fish, the areas in which boats are allowed to fish, and the amount, type, or size of gear that can be used.
16. By contrast, output controls are direct limits on the amount of fish coming out of a fishery (e.g. TACs). Fishery resources are limited and if fishing is not controlled, history has shown it will increase until the fishery becomes economically unviable or the stock collapses. Output controls are generally regarded as good mechanisms to control the total catch in single species, high value fisheries which are targeted using a single gear type (such as abalone and lobster). However, even with strong output controls, some input controls may still be required to ensure a range of management objectives are met (e.g. gear controls to minimise impacts on habitats and the environment and/or to meet other social objectives).
17. As the understanding of fish stocks and fisheries management techniques have improved, many fisheries across the globe, including around Australia, have undergone the transition from input to output controls.



18. However, in making such a transition it has been important that the proposed removal of controls is scrutinised closely to ensure management objectives will continue to be met, and all potential impacts considered.
19. TRLWG 10 agreed to a process for reviewing management controls (**Attachment 4a – Table 1**) and pursuing changes. Following stakeholder workshops, discussion by the TRLWG and community consultation, we are now at the final stage of this process (8 – Implementation). The PZJA will consider the recommendations of TRLWG 13 at their next meeting in July.

**Attachment 4a – Table 1. Agreed method and process for reviewing management controls.**

| # | Review step   |
|---|---|
| 1 | <b>Scope</b><br>Defining the scope of proposed changes that will be considered in the review process will provide for a more ordered and timely process.  |
| 2 | <b>Initial assessment of benefits and/or impacts against objectives</b><br>Any proposal should have a clear rationale for change, and be considered alongside any expected benefits and/or impacts, including who any benefits or impacts may extend to.<br>The proposed change should also be considered against the objectives listed under section 8 of the <i>Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984</i> (the Act) and PZJA objectives for the TRL Fishery.   |
| 3 | <b>Development of evaluation criteria</b><br>The Working Group should develop a clear set of criteria, to evaluate each proposal against.<br>Evaluation criteria may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social/cultural – equity of access, race to fish, participation rates, part-time vs. full-time fisher participation, new entrants, sense of self-determination, changes to 'ailan kastom', conflict between communities, conflict between individuals and families, traditional fishing rights.</li> <li>- Biological – stock status, risk to resource, spatial distribution of fishing.</li> <li>- Economic – total catch, value of fishery, market prices, operating costs, employment, access for duration of season, cost of implementation.</li> <li>- Management – complexity, enforceability, impact on fishery monitoring regime (e.g. does it impact on the data series).</li> </ul> The selected criteria should be linked back to the objectives being pursued. |
| 4 | <b>Prioritisation of proposals</b><br>Noting scientific advice for careful consideration of the potential impacts of changes to management controls on fishing patterns or fisher behaviour, AFMA suggests that a review of management controls be progressed in a staged manner.<br>Relevantly, it will be important to identify and recommend which proposals are to be addressed first, and in what order after that.  |
| 5 | <b>Further development and analysis of proposals with broader stakeholders</b><br>AFMA suggests that a dedicated workshop be convened (outside of regular TRLWG business) to bring together a broader group of stakeholders to seek their views on a prioritised suite of proposals. This discussion is to include to further analysis of benefits and impacts and evaluation criteria.   |
| 6 | <b>Public consultation</b><br>Opportunity for broader stakeholder comment on proposed changes.<br>This step would usually be undertaken over a minimum 8 week period. Depending on the nature of the proposal/s, formal Native Title notification under the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> may also be required.  |
| 7 | <b>Consideration of public consultation outcomes</b><br>TRLRAG and TRL Working Group to consider the outcomes of the public consultation process and provide further advice as appropriate.   |
| 8 | <b>Implementation</b><br>Depending on the nature of the changes/review, a PZJA decision is likely to be required, as well as potential amendments to legislation (e.g. the TRL Management Instrument).  |

## Attachment 4b – Further detail on each of the five proposals put forward by TRLWG 11

| <b>Proposal 1 – Flexibility to tow tenders un-associated with the primary vessel (within survey limits)</b> |   |
|---|---|
| Current rule  | A primary boat can only tow tenders that are associated with that primary boat and the tenders must be licenced to the same person that holds the licence for the primary boat. The primary boat cannot tow another person's licenced dinghy.   |
| Rationale discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop  | Traditional inhabitant members of the Working Group raised concerns that the TIB sector is not able to catch their share of the TAC. This is believed to be because the TIB sector does not have enough capacity, nor fishing crew for boats to operate. Others believe that there are too many restrictions on primary tender operations. For example, a primary boat can only tow tenders that are licenced by the same person who has the licence on the primary boat. |
| Potential benefits/impacts discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved safety for dinghy operators – to be towed out to the fishing grounds</li> <li>• Improved access for TIB fishers to the fishing grounds</li> <li>• Increased crew availability for primary vessel operators</li> </ul>   |

| <b>Proposal 2 - Flexibility for carrier boats to be able to provide accommodation, fuel and towing services to dinghy operators at the same time (linked to (1) above)</b> |  |
|--|--|
| Current rule   | <p>Carrier Class C licences authorise the use of the boat to carry and process catch of other boats in a Torres Strait fishery or fisheries for which the licence is endorsed. However these boats may not be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transporting (towing) fishing boats to and from fishing grounds</li> <li>- Accommodating fishers from other fishing boats</li> </ul> <p>This is a long standing PZJA policy originally introduced (circa 1985) to</p> |
| Rationale discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased flexibility in operations</li> </ul>  |
| Potential benefits/impacts discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved safety for fishers</li> <li>• Increase participation in the TRL fishery by providing newcomers to the fishery an additional opportunity to access the fishery.</li> </ul>  |

| <b>Proposal 3 - Ability to employ non-traditional inhabitants on TIB vessels (only boats over 10m in length, and a maximum of 2 non-traditional inhabitants per boat)</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Current rule  | Only traditional inhabitants are allowed to commercial fish from the boat with a traditional inhabitant boat licence. TIB operators can only have non-traditional inhabitant persons on their TIB boat for training purposes which needs to be authorised under a developmental permit for training purposes. This policy was originally implemented to assist traditional inhabitants in achieving greater participation in Torres Strait fisheries, with the intention to provide some flexibility in relation to TIB licences by allowing non-traditional inhabitants on board TIB boats on the condition that the non-traditional inhabitants were providing training to traditional inhabitants on the boat. Since 2020, the PZJA has implemented a dedicated policy relating to the granting of development permits for training purposes which provides clearer guidance on the conditions that permit non-traditional inhabitants to engage in fishing on TIB boats. |
| Rationale discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop  | Some industry members were concerned that there is not enough crew available, or that they have trouble recruiting traditional inhabitant crew on TIB vessels.   |
| Potential benefits/impacts discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop   | Increased access to labour force to crew boats   |

| <b>Proposal 4 - Removal of boat length replacement policy for the TVH sector</b> |   |
|--|---|
| Current rule   | <p>The boat replacement policy was introduced in an attempt to limit overall fishing effort in the TRL Fishery TVH sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A vessel measuring six metres or less should be replaced by a vessel measuring six metres or less;</li> <li>- A vessel measuring between six metres and 10 metres in length should be replaced by a vessel measuring 10 metres or less;</li> <li>- A vessel greater than 10 metres and less than 14 metres in length may be replaced by a vessel of 14 metres or less; and</li> <li>- Where the existing vessel is greater than 14 metres in length and prior approval has been given for a replacement vessel, as far as practicable, the replacement vessel should be of the same size as the existing vessel or less.</li> </ul> |
| Rationale discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop                           | The boat replacement policy prevents TVH operators from using larger boats in the fishery.  |
| Potential benefits/impacts discussed by the                                      | Some TVH operators indicated that a larger boat would allow carriage of on-board live tanks (rather than towing cages) which would therefore increase crayfish quality and in turn, maximise value, as well   |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| TRLWG and Industry Workshop | <p>as improve the safety of the vessels operation. Some traditional inhabitant members considered that boat size does not matter if the licence holder is restricted by how much they can catch (i.e. allocated quota units).</p> <p>Traditional inhabitant fishers (in particular, smaller dinghy operators) are concerned with the potential for larger boats to increase their localised fishing effort on reefs, and stay on the grounds longer, despite TVH quota units or tender numbers remaining capped. The impact of large primary boats fishing on the ability for smaller operators to access the fishery remains an ongoing concern of many traditional inhabitant operators.</p> |
|-----------------------------|--|

| <b>Proposal 5 - Removal and/or amendment of hookah gear possession requirements either side of moontide hookah closures</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Current rule  | <p>A person is prohibited from using, having in their possession, or control any hookah gear on a boat in the TRL Fishery.</p> <p>Moontide hookah closures give free-diving operators an opportunity to access the reefs without competition from hookah divers. The possession provision was introduced due to multiple reports of boats using hooker gear before or during a hookah closure.</p>   |
| Rationale discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some operators were concerned that the current controls result in lost time fishing because they are unable to steam out to the fishing grounds until the hookah season opens.</li> <li>Others are concerned that the controls result in bottle necks during unloads (in some cases boats may wait up to several days before being able to unload their catch).</li> </ul> <p>Removing these controls (not the closures themselves) will give operators the ability to steam out to the fishing grounds before the hookah season opens.</p> |
| Potential benefits/impacts discussed by the TRLWG and Industry Workshop   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operators are impacted from inter- and intra-sectoral competition on the fishing grounds. In other words, operators feel they need to reach the fishing grounds before others, otherwise reefs will be fished out before they get there.</li> </ul>   |

Attachment 4c – Table 1. Summary and status of input controls and proposals for change raised over time.

| Management measure | Controls                                 | Changes proposed   | Date Raised                 | Status   |
|--------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Input controls     | Boat length restriction & policy         | Option for primary vessels limited to 9.9m being increased to 13.9m  | TRLWG 4 (27-28 Aug 2015)    | <b>Not Progressed</b><br>TRLWG 4 identified this item as a high priority following the implementation of the Management Plan.  |
|                    |  | Review how/if use of tow cages undermines boat length restrictions   |                             |  |
|                    | Fishery closure (Oct – Nov)              | Review fishing season dates to align with international markets  | TRLWG 4 (27-28 Aug 2015)    | <b>Complete</b><br>Amendment of the fishing season dates to enable the effective implementation of the Management Plan was considered at TRLRAG 24 (18 19 October 2019). No recommendation was made to change the fishing season for this purpose. |
|                    | Hookah closure (1 December – 31 January) | Allow free-dive and lamp fishing year round  | TRLWG 4 (27-28 Aug 2015)    | <b>Not Progressed</b><br>Last proposed for discussion at TRLWG 6 (25 26 July 2017). However, this item was not considered due to the early closure of the meeting (lack of quorum).  |
|                    |  | 12 month season for free-dive and lamp fishing for TIB boats only  | TRLWG 5 (5-6 April 2016)    |  |
|                    |  | Proposal to permit lamp fishing from TIB boats only  | TRLWG 5 (5-6 April 2016)    |  |
|                    |  | Requested the hookah season commence earlier (on 1 January) and possibly close again in March to allow industry to maximise the catch value in the season by fishing to the Chinese New Year market, and restricting hookah catches in March when market prices are reduced and lobster mortality is higher due to moulting and increased water temperatures and lobster discards. | TRLWG 10 (12 December 2019) | <b>Not Progressed</b>  |
|                    | Moontide closures                        | Amend method for setting hookah closures to coincide with full moons and moult cycles  | TRLWG 6 (25-26 July 2017)   | <b>Complete</b><br>This was reconsidered at TRLWG 8 who agreed to maintain the existing methodology  |

|  |  |   |                             |  |
|--|--|---|-----------------------------|--|
|  | Moontide closures                      | Requirements concerning the possession and use of hookah gear around hookah closure periods be considered ahead of next meeting.  | TRLWG 9 (19 February 2019)  | <b>Prioritised at TRLWG 11 - Part of the current review</b>                                      |
|  |  | Submission from Trent and Mark Dean <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Submission received on 25 November 2019 from TVH TRLWG members proposing moon-tide hookah closures be removed for the 2019-20 fishing season onwards.</li> <li>- TVH members advised that their preference in the long-term is to remove all moon-tide hookah closures.</li> </ul> | TRLWG 10 (12 December 2019) | <b>Not Progressed</b>  |
|  |  | TIB members want consideration of having an additional moon-tide hookah closures to alleviate fishing pressure on home reefs and to reduce the competition pressure on free-divers from hookah divers.  | TRLWG 10 (12 December 2019) | <b>Not Progressed</b>  |
|  | Tender/dinghy number restrictions      | Provide for the temporary transfer of tender boats to operate in conjunction with another primary boat held by the same licence holder  | TRLWG 6 (25-26 July 2017)   | Is now part of Torres Strait fishing licensing policy as agreed to by the PZJA in December 2021. |
|  | Gear restrictions (SCUBA & propulsion) | No proposal to change   | n/a                         | n/a  |
|  | Equipment restrictions (spear/hand)    | No proposal to change   | n/a                         | n/a  |
|  | Meat removal from shell                | No proposal to change   | n/a                         | n/a  |
|  | Diving equipment at night              | No proposal to change   | n/a                         | n/a  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER WORKING GROUP</b><br><b>Video Conference</b> | <b>MEETING 14</b><br><b>6 July 2023</b>       |
| <b>OTHER BUSINESS</b>   | <b>Agenda Item 5</b><br><b>For Discussion</b> |

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Working Group **NOMINATE** any further business for discussion.