



8 March 2024

Dear TRL Fishery Licence Holder,

TRL Total Allowable Catch for the 2023-24 Fishing Season is now 357,750 kgs

I am writing to advise that Senator the Hon. Murray Watt has determined an increase to the total allowable catch (TAC) of tropical rock lobster (TRL) in the Australian waters of the TRL Fishery from 200 tonnes to 357.75 tonnes for the 2023-24 fishing season (*Torres Strait Fisheries Tropical Rock Lobster (Total Allowable Catch) Amendment Determination 2024*). In line with the increased TAC please find the kilogram value of each quota unit and available catch for each TRL fishery sector outlined in the **Table 1** below.

This TAC increase is consistent with catch sharing arrangements between Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) agreed under the Torres Strait Treaty on 19 January 2024. The arrangements comprise agreement on a global TAC of 530 tonnes and an apportionment of catch between jurisdictions. In accordance with the Treaty, PNG have nominated two boats to access PNG’s catch entitlement of TRL (92.75 tonnes) in areas of Australian jurisdiction of the Torres Strait Protected Zone under what is referred to as ‘cross-endorsement’ arrangements. A further explanation of how catch is shared between Australia and PNG, and further detail on this seasons’ cross-endorsement arrangements is provided in the Enclosures to this letter.

The global TAC of 530 tonnes was recommended by the Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group (TRLRAG) and TRL Working Group (TRLWG) at their meetings 12-14 December 2023. The global TAC was calculated by applying the results of the 2023 pre-season survey and catch and effort data to the TRL Harvest Strategy. TRLRAG and TRLWG used the previous season TAC as a substitute for catch within the testing bounds of the TRL Harvest Strategy as part of the calculation. Meeting records will be available on the PZJA website soon.

Table 1. Quota unit value and available catch for each TRL fishery sector under the increased TAC. All weights are provided in unprocessed weight in kilograms.

TRL Fishery Sector	TAC (kilograms)	Number of quota units	Value of each quota unit (kilograms)	Available catch (kilograms)
Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence holders	357, 750	662,016*	0.357751	236,836.935
Transferable Vessel Holder (TVH) licence holders		337,981		120,913.065

*held in trust by the TSRA

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 PO Box 408
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As always, licence holders should familiarise themselves with all management arrangements that apply in the TRL Fishery outlined in the TRL Management Arrangements booklet 2023-24 available on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/management-arrangements-booklets> or by contacting AFMA.

Should you have any further questions on the matters covered in this letter, please contact the AFMA Thursday Island office on 07 4069 1990 or FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au. If you would also like to receive future management updates by email or SMS please contact the AFMA Thursday Island office to update your contact details.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Millward', with a small asterisk-like mark below the 'd'.

Rosemary Millward

Senior Manager, Torres Strait Fisheries

Enclosures

- A Additional information regarding catch sharing arrangements with Papua New Guinea
- B Infographic of Torres Strait TRL Catch Sharing Arrangements 2023-24
- C Cross-endorsement Fact Sheet 2024

What are the Australia-PNG catch sharing arrangements this season?

The Torres Strait Treaty recognises the rights of both Australia and PNG to commercial fisheries in the area of the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ). The TSPZ is an area in the Torres Strait that includes both Australian and PNG waters. These rights include the right of Australia and PNG to fish in the waters of the other country. This practice is known as cross-endorsement and involves both countries nominating an agreed number of commercial fishing boats to fish an agreed share of the TAC. This share is usually 25% of the other country's TAC apportionment, unless otherwise agreed.

At their meeting held on 19 January 2024, AFMA and the PNG National Fisheries Authority (NFA) agreed the following (outlined in **Table 2**):

- a. As per Article 22(1) of the Treaty, the global TAC of 530 tonnes is to be apportioned within each jurisdiction equal to 85 per cent (450.5 tonnes) in Australian waters and 15 per cent in PNG waters (79.5 tonnes);
- b. Australian boats can take in Australian waters, part of the cross-endorsement catch entitlement ordinarily available to PNG boats in Australian waters, equivalent to Australia's cross-endorsement catch entitlement in PNG waters (equal to 19.875 tonnes);
- c. In return, AFMA will not seek access to Australia's cross-endorsement catch entitlement in PNG waters and that this can instead be taken by PNG boats in PNG waters.
 - i. This is consistent with the PZJA agreement (on 19 November 2019) that subject to further consultation with stakeholders, the preferred arrangement for utilising Australia's cross-endorsement allocation within PNG's waters is to not seek cross-endorsement but rather pursue a preferential entitlement arrangement under Article 25 of the Treaty.

An illustration of this agreement is at **Enclosure B**.

Cross-endorsement

PNG nominated to PNG licenced boats to access PNG's 92.75 tonne catch entitlement in Australian waters under cross-endorsement arrangements which was approved by AFMA as the licensing delegate on 1 March 2024. Further detail on the cross-endorsement boats is enclosed.

Table 2. Catch apportionments and provisional cross-endorsement catch entitlements for the TRL Fishery for the 2023-24 fishing season.

Jurisdiction	Total Apportionment (kg)	Catch entitlement to PNG vessels (kg)	Catch entitlement to AU vessels (kg)
Australia	450,500 (85%)*	92,750 [#]	357,750
PNG	79,500 (15%)*	79,500	0
Total	530,000	172,250	357,750

* Based on the agreed distribution of TRL stocks in the TSPZ TRL Fishery between Australian and PNG waters.

[#] Under Article 23(4) of the Torres Strait Treaty, each Party is entitled to 25% of the catch share in the other Party's jurisdiction. This may be accessed by each Party through cross-endorsement. Under Article 25 of the Treaty, Parties can agree to transfer all or part of a given catch entitlement to the other Party.