



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery

Management Arrangements Booklet

2026 Fishing Season

Current as of October 2025



Published in November 2025 by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA).

Important note:

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this booklet is correct and accurate at the time of printing. However, the information provided is intended to serve as a guide only, and therefore AFMA will not be liable for any loss caused, whether due to negligence or otherwise, arising from the use of or reliance upon this booklet. The booklet is not intended to replace any conditions or requirements of an operator's fishing licence, the *Torres Strait Fisheries (Bêche-de-mer) Management Instrument 2022*, the *Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985* and the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*. Some of the items in this booklet may not apply to a particular fishing operation and management arrangements may be subject to change within a fishing season. Operators should refer to the key documents listed in this booklet and contact AFMA to check the current arrangements.

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Or electronically from the PZJA website at: <https://www.pzja.gov.au/commercial-fisheries-management/management-arrangements-booklets>

Preferred way to cite this publication:

AFMA (ed) 2025, Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery Management Arrangements Booklet: 2026 Fishing Season, Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Thursday Island QLD Australia.

Cover artwork:

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Contents

1		
1	Fishery rules	7
1.1	What licence do I need if I am fishing?	7
1.2	What licence do I need if I am operating a carrier boat?	7
1.3	Relevant legislation	7
1.4	Traditional fishing	8
1.5	Recreational fishing.....	8
1.6	Where can I fish?	8
1.7	Permitted species	10
1.8	Prohibited (no-take) species	11
1.9	Minimum size limits	11
1.10	Method and gear restrictions.....	12
1.11	What are the rules for black teatfish?.....	12
1.12	Processing requirements	15
1.13	When can I go fishing?	15
1.14	What size boat can I use?	15
1.15	Unique boat marks	15
2	Total allowable catches	16
2.1	How much can I catch?.....	16
2.2	How are total allowable catch levels set each fishing season?	17
2.3	Catch sharing with PNG	17
3	Monitoring.....	18
3.1	The Fish Receiver System	18
3.2	Do I need to use a daily fishing logbook?	20
3.3	Reporting wildlife interactions	20
3.4	Do I need a vessel monitoring system on my boat?	20
3.5	Illegal fishing.....	21
4	Background	23
4.1	Overview of the BDM Fishery	23
4.2	BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy.....	25
4.3	Research in the BDM Fishery	26
4.4	Ecological risk assessment and management	27
4.5	Export approval	27
4.6	Torres Strait Treaty	28
4.7	PZJA	30
4.8	PZJA advisory committees	30
4.9	Native Title	31
5	Contacts.....	32

Figures

Figure 1: Map of the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.	9
Figure 2. How to take a length measurement.	12
Figure 3. Areas for reporting in the TDB02 Torres Strait Fisheries Catch Disposal Record.	24
Figure 4. Australia’s maritime jurisdiction in the Torres Strait (source: Geosciences Australia).....	29

Tables

Table 1. Species of sea cucumbers that are currently fished commercially in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.	10
Table 2. Species of sea cucumbers that are prohibited (no-take) in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.	11
Table 3. Minimum size limits in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.....	11
Table 4. Boat marking specifications for Torres Strait fisheries.	15
Table 5. Total allowable catches (tonnes, gutted wet weight form) for sea cucumber species in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery for the 2026 fishing season (1 January to 31 December 2025)....	16
Table 6. Members on the Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group and Hand Collectables Working Group.	31

Overview of management arrangements for the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer (BDM) Fishery

Species	There are 17 species of sea cucumbers (abers) that are currently fished commercially in the BDM Fishery. Key species include black teatfish, prickly redfish, white teatfish and curryfish.
Management system	The BDM Fishery is managed through the <i>Torres Strait Fisheries (Bêche-de-mer) Management Instrument 2022</i> and licence conditions. Access to the fishery is limited to traditional inhabitants only .
Licence requirements	To fish commercially for sea cucumbers in the BDM Fishery, you must: • be a verified traditional inhabitant. • reside in the Torres Strait Protected Zone or adjacent coastal area of Australia. • hold a Torres Strait Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence with a BDM Fishery [BD] entry. See section 1.1 of this booklet for more information.
Fishery rules	• Fishing season runs from 1 January until 31 December each year. • Collection only by hand. • Underwater breathing apparatus (e.g. hookah, SCUBA) and underwater propulsion is prohibited. • Annual total allowable catch limits apply to all species. • A limited opening period, vessel monitoring system requirements and additional rules apply to fishing for black teatfish. These are notified prior to each opening. • Fishing for sandfish, surf redfish, and hairy blackfish is prohibited. • Minimum size limits apply to most species. • You must land all your commercial catch to a licensed fish receiver. • Sea cucumbers can be processed prior to weighing by a fish receiver. How catch is processed must be reported by the fish receiver. • Fishing boats must be 7 metres or less in length. • Each licensed boat must display its unique boat mark (e.g. TRAWQ001). • See section 1 of this booklet for more information on each of the above rules.

Acronyms used in this booklet	
Act	<i>Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984</i>
AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
CDR	TDB02 Torres Strait Fisheries Catch Disposal Record
CHSP	2018 <i>Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy</i>
CITES	<i>Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora</i>
eCDR	Electronic CDRs
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
ERA	Ecological risk assessment
ERM	Ecological risk management
HCRA	Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group
HCWG	Hand Collectables Working Group
GNE Channel	Great North East Channel
NDF	Non-detriment finding
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PZJA	Protected Zone Joint Authority
QDAF	Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
Regulations	Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985
RNTBC	Registered native title body corporate
TAC	Total allowable catch
TIB licence	Traditional Inhabitant Boat licence
Torres Strait Treaty	The Treaty between Australia and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea concerning Sovereignty and Maritime Boundaries in the area between the two Countries, including the area known as the Torres Strait, and Related Matters 1985
TSPZ	Torres Strait Protected Zone
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
WTO	Wildlife Trade Operation

1 Fishery rules

1.1 What licence do I need if I am fishing?

To fish commercially in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer (BDM) Fishery **you must hold a Torres Strait Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence with a BDM Fishery [BD] entry** for each boat that you operate.

To hold a TIB licence, you must:

- Be a verified traditional inhabitant. All persons fishing under the licence must also be traditional inhabitants.
- Reside in the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) or adjacent coastal area of Australia.
- Own the boat nominated on the licence.

A verified traditional inhabitant is a person who satisfies the criteria detailed in the Traditional Inhabitant Identification Form and continues to reside in the TSPZ or adjacent coastal area of Australia. The adjacent coastal area of Australia is prescribed under the Commonwealth *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* (the Act) and includes the communities of Bamaga, Injinoo, New Mapoon, Seisia and Umagico.

If you are receiving commercial catch from Torres Strait fisheries, including the BDM Fishery, a Torres Strait Fish Receiver licence is required. See [section 3.1](#) of this booklet for more information on the mandatory Fish Receiver System.

To learn more about licensing requirements, refer to the Protected Zone Joint Authority's (PZJA) *Guide to Licensing Arrangements in the Torres Strait* (the PZJA Licensing Guide), available on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/licences>. Copies of licensing forms are also available at this link. To apply for a licence contact AFMA Licensing on 1300 723 621, or email licensing@afma.gov.au.

You can also check the Torres Strait Fisheries Public Licence Register to see who holds a licence in all Torres Strait fisheries, available on the AFMA website at <https://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/concession-holders-conditions> or by contacting AFMA Licensing on the contacts provided above.

1.2 What licence do I need if I am operating a carrier boat?

The PZJA Licensing Guide provides information on carrier boat licences. To apply for a carrier boat licence contact AFMA Licensing on 1300 723 621, or email licensing@afma.gov.au to discuss the details of your operation. The Licensing team will be able to advise on the licence/s required to support your operation and the requirements for operating under each licence type.

1.3 Relevant legislation

To fish commercially in the BDM Fishery you must comply with all requirements detailed in legislation and your licence conditions.

Key legislation that applies to the BDM Fishery includes the:

- *Torres Strait Fisheries (Bêche-de-mer) Management Instrument 2022.*
- *Torres Strait Fisheries (Furnishing of Logbooks) Instrument 2024.*

The BDM Fishery is managed in accordance with the Act and the *Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985* (the Regulations), which give effect to the fisheries elements of the Torres Strait Treaty (*The Treaty between Australia and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea concerning Sovereignty and Maritime Boundaries in the area between the two Countries, including the area known as the Torres Strait, and Related Matters 1985*).

Copies of all Commonwealth legislation, including that detailed above, can be found on the Federal Register of Legislation website at <https://www.legislation.gov.au>.

1.4 Traditional fishing

You do not need a commercial fishing licence for traditional fishing

You do not need a commercial fishing licence (e.g. a TIB licence) for traditional fishing.

Traditional fishing is the taking of living natural resources (including fish, turtles and dugong) by traditional inhabitants for their own, or their dependants' consumption, or for use in the course of other traditional activities. Product taken in the course of traditional fishing cannot be for sale. Torres Strait traditional inhabitants of both Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australia may undertake traditional fishing activities in both the Australian and PNG waters of the TSPZ.

1.5 Recreational fishing

Recreational fishing (fishing that is not for traditional or commercial purposes) is managed by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QDAF) under the Queensland *Fisheries Act 1994*. More information on recreational fishing requirements can be found on the QDAF website at <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/recreational>.

QDAF also manages fishing charter boats and aquaculture in the Torres Strait. If you have any questions regarding recreational fishing rules and regulations, charter licensing or aquaculture please contact QDAF. Contact details are provided in [section 5](#) of this booklet.

1.6 Where can I fish?

The BDM Fishery comprises of tidal waters within the TSPZ and the area declared under the Act to be 'outside but near' the TSPZ for commercial fishing for sea cucumbers. For the BDM Fishery, the outside but near area extends to waters just south of Prince of Wales Island to the west and to due east of Cape York Peninsula. A map of the area of the BDM Fishery, where commercial fishing is permitted, is provided at [Figure 1](#).

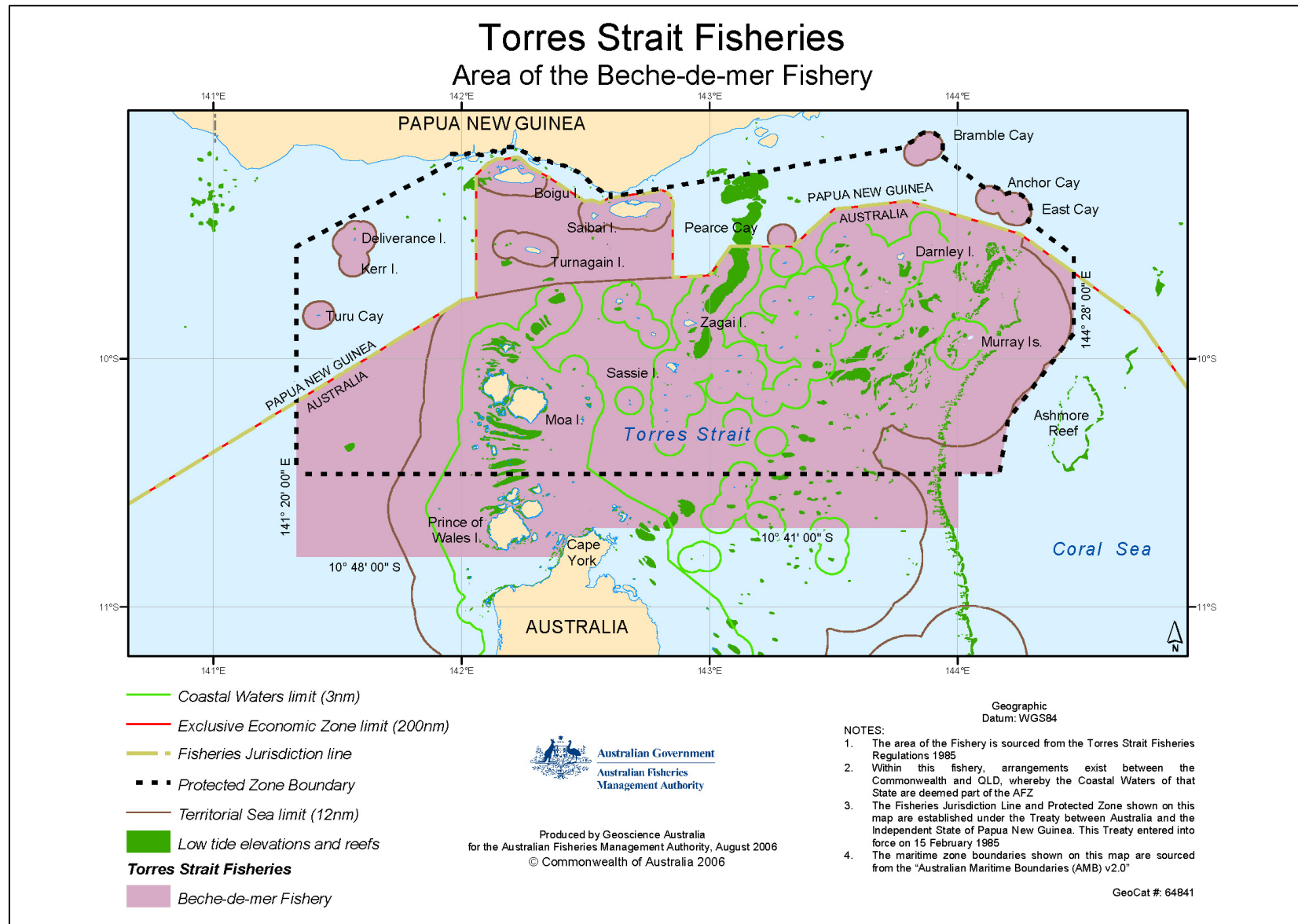


Figure 1: Map of the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.

1.7 Permitted species

All species of sea cucumbers of the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae may be fished commercially in the BDM Fishery, **except those species that are prohibited**. Species of sea cucumbers that are currently fished commercially in the BDM Fishery are detailed in [Table 1](#). A **limited opening period and additional rules apply to fishing for black teatfish**, further details are provided in [section 1.11](#) of this booklet.

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial research Organisation (CSIRO) have published a species identification guide to assist licence holders to correctly identify and report on the sea cucumber species they are catching. A copy of the *Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer (Sea Cucumber) Species ID Guide* can be found on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/torres-strait-fisheries/torres-strait-beche-de-mer-fishery> or by contacting the AFMA Thursday Island office. Contact details are provided in [section 5](#) of this booklet.



Table 1. Species of sea cucumbers that are currently fished commercially in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.

Species	Islander name	Scientific name
Amberfish	-	<i>Thelenota anax</i>
Black teatfish	Pauraber or Goleh-Goleh Pauraber	<i>Holothuria whitmaei</i>
Brown sandfish	Susus Aber	<i>Bohadschia vitiensis</i>
Burrowing blackfish	Aospir Aber	<i>Actinopyga spinea</i>
Curryfish (common)	Bambam Aber	<i>Stichopus herrmanni</i>
Curryfish (vastus)	Warwarr Aber	<i>Stichopus vastus</i>
Deepwater blackfish	Goleh-Goleh Aber	<i>Actinopyga palauensis</i>
Deepwater redfish	Mamam Aber	<i>Actinopyga echinites</i>
Elephant trunkfish	Berber Aber	<i>Holothuria fuscopunctata</i>
Golden sandfish	Sirid Aber	<i>Holothuria lessoni</i>
Greenfish	Kerir Aber	<i>Stichopus chloronotus</i>
Leopardfish	Kepkep Aber	<i>Bohadschia argus</i>
Lollyfish	Wehwehsor Aber	<i>Holothuria atra</i>
Prickly redfish	Seker Aber	<i>Thelenota ananas</i>
Stonefish	Parak Aber	<i>Actinopyga lecanora</i>
White teatfish	Zarzer Pauraber	<i>Holothuria fuscogilva</i>

1.8 Prohibited (no-take) species

[Table 2](#) details the species that are prohibited to be fished commercially in the BDM Fishery (i.e. no-take). Sandfish and surf redfish are considered to be overfished and fishing for these species has been prohibited since 1998 and 2003, respectively. The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy has rules to guide how to re-open a species that is closed to fishing. These rules require that there is sufficient information (e.g. through a survey) to establish that a species has recovered from overfishing before fishing can resume.

Table 2. Species of sea cucumbers that are prohibited (no-take) in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.

Species	Islander name	Scientific name
Sandfish	Burbur Aber	<i>Holothuria scabra</i>
Surf redfish	Teraber	<i>Actinopyga mauritiana</i>
Hairy blackfish	Musmus Aber	<i>Actinopyga miliaris</i>

1.9 Minimum size limits

[Table 3](#) details the minimum size limits in the BDM Fishery.

Table 3. Minimum size limits in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery.

Species	Scientific name	Minimum size limit (cm)
Black teatfish	<i>Holothuria whitmaei</i>	25
Brown sandfish	<i>Bohadschia vitiensis</i>	25
Burrowing blackfish	<i>Actinopyga spinea</i>	22
Curryfish (common)	<i>Stichopus herrmanni</i>	31
Curryfish (vastus)	<i>Stichopus vastus</i>	15
Deepwater blackfish	<i>Actinopyga palauensis</i>	22
Deepwater redfish	<i>Actinopyga echinites</i>	20
Elephant trunkfish	<i>Holothuria fuscopunctata</i>	24
Golden sandfish	<i>Holothuria lessoni</i>	22
Greenfish	<i>Stichopus chloronotus</i>	No size limit
Hairy blackfish	<i>Actinopyga miliaris</i>	22
Leopardfish	<i>Bohadschia argus</i>	30
Lollyfish	<i>Holothuria atra</i>	15
Prickly redfish	<i>Thelenota ananas</i>	35
Sandfish	<i>Holothuria scabra</i>	18
Stonefish	<i>Actinopyga lecanora</i>	No size limit

Species	Scientific name	Minimum size limit (cm)
Surf redfish	<i>Actinopyga mauritiana</i>	22
White teatfish	<i>Holothuria fuscogilva</i>	32

To measure an animal, the length measurement is to be taken in an animal's original living form at their longest point ([Figure 2](#)).

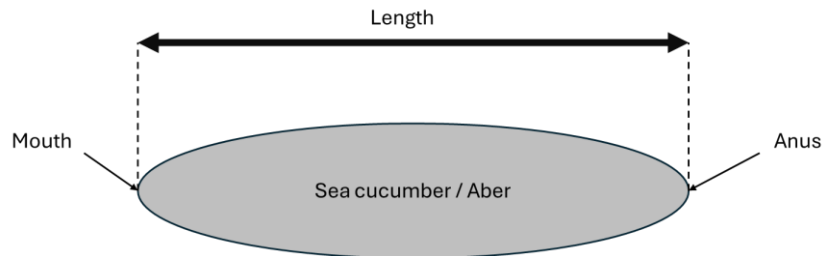


Figure 2. How to take a length measurement.

1.10 Method and gear restrictions

When fishing, you **can only take sea cucumbers by hand**.

You **cannot** take sea cucumbers using:

- equipment that allows breathing underwater, including hookah and SCUBA
- mechanical equipment which allows for underwater propulsion, such as underwater scooters.

You **cannot** use, possess or have under your control, on a boat in the area of the BDM Fishery, any quantity of underwater breathing apparatus, where you are also carrying sea cucumbers on the boat.

1.11 What are the rules for black teatfish?

Fishing for black teatfish is subject to a limited opening period and additional rules. Licence holders will be notified of arrangements prior to each opening

Commercial fishing for black teatfish is prohibited, except during a limited period it is opened each fishing season. Openings are usually for a period of only 3-4 days due to the high value and demand for black teatfish. The opening date each fishing season changes depending on tides and other operating conditions. During openings, catch is strictly monitored through daily catch reporting through the mandatory Fish Receiver System. This is to ensure the total allowable catch (TAC) for black teatfish is not exceeded. See [section 3.1](#) of this booklet for more information on the mandatory Fish Receiver System, including how to complete TDB02 Torres Strait Fisheries Catch Disposal Records (CDRs).

Additional rules apply during black teatfish openings. These are given effect through conditions on TIB and fish receiver licences and include the following:

- Total catch restrictions through the use of a competitive TAC.
- For TIB licence holders to land catches of black teatfish daily to a licensed fish receiver.
- For fish receiver licence holders to report to AFMA by **2300 hrs** on the same day of receiving catches of black teatfish.
- A prohibition on fishing or receiving black teatfish past the 'TAC Date' (closure date). The TAC Date is the specific date and time that the PZJA, or its delegate, determines as the last day of fishing based on its reasonable belief that the TAC will be reached, in order to avoid an over catch of the TAC. All TIB and fish receiver licence holders will be notified when the TAC Date is determined by mail, SMS and email.
- **Requirements to use VMS units:**
 - VMS units must be installed on ALL licenced boats operating in the 2026 black teatfish fishing season.
 - Units must be fixed to the nominated boat using a tamper evident seal
 - Fishers must not interfere with the VMS or the seal unless authorised

TIB and fish receiver licence holders will be notified of opening dates and the additional rules that will apply to each opening during the first part of the BDM Fishery fishing season. Further information, including notices to TIB and fish receiver licence holders, for black teatfish openings can be found on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/commercial-fisheries-management/torres-strait-fisheries/torres-strait-beche-de-mer-fishery>. This is updated in the lead up to and during each opening. TIB and fish receiver licence holders are also provided with notices by mail, SMS and email.

1.11.1 Black teatfish opening checklist for fishers

Prior to each black teatfish opening, AFMA will provide a checklist to assist fishers to prepare. This will be made available on the PZJA website and provided to TIB licence holders by mail and email.

Before an opening, fishers should:

- Check they hold a current TIB licence with a [BD] entry.
- If required, nominate an authorised agent/s to sign the 'Fisher Details' section of CDRs. The same person cannot sign the 'Fisher Details' section and the sections to be completed by the fish receiver.
- Check with AFMA that their contact details are up-to-date, including mobile number and email, and organise for installation of a VMS unit.
- Read their licence conditions for the opening and make sure they understand the rules.
- Plan which licensed fish receiver they will land catch to daily.

During an opening, fishers must:

- Hold a current TIB licence with a [BD] entry.
- Make sure that all crew are traditional inhabitants.
- Land all black teatfish catches to a licensed fish receiver on the same day that catch is taken. This means daily.

- Carry a working VMS unit.

Prior to an opening, fishers must not fish for or stockpile black teatfish before the opening date.

During an opening, fishers must not:

- Use underwater breathing apparatus, including hookah and SCUBA.
- Take black teatfish that are smaller than 25 cm (minimum size limit).
- Fish from a boat greater than 7 metres in length.
- Fish for black teatfish after the TAC Date (closure date).
- Interfere with the VMS unit.

1.11.2 Black teatfish opening checklist for fish receivers

Prior to each black teatfish opening, AFMA will provide a checklist to assist fish receivers to prepare. This will be made available on the PZJA website and provided to fish receiver licence holders by mail and email.

Before an opening, fish receivers should:

- Check they hold a current fish receiver licence.
- Check the premises listed on their fish receiver licence are up-to-date and includes the premises where they plan to receive catch during the opening, including if camping on an uninhabited island. Prior testing requirements apply if a fish receiver plans to receive catch at a premises that has not previously been shown to have reception (e.g. an uninhabited island).
- If required, nominate an authorised agent/s to sign the fish receiver sections of CDRs. The same person cannot sign the 'Fisher Details' section and the sections to be completed by the fish receiver.
- Check with AFMA that their, and their authorised agents', contact details are up-to-date, including mobile number and email.
- Check they have enough pages left in their CDR book for the opening.
- Check they have accurate scales to weigh the catch they will be receiving.
- Ensure they have the ability to email or SMS an image of their completed CDRs to AFMA from the premises where they plan to receive catch during the opening (e.g. mobile phone reception and/or internet connection).
- Read their licence conditions for the opening and make sure they understand the rules.

During an opening, fish receivers must:

- Hold a current fish receiver licence.
- Only receive black teatfish from licensed fishers.
- Only receive black teatfish at premises nominated on their fish receiver licence.
- Send an image of the white original copy of each completed CDR electronically to AFMA on the same day they receive the catch. This means daily. Images must be sent by email to blackteatfish@afma.gov.au or SMS to 0437 825 291.

During an opening, fish receivers must not:

- Receive black teatfish before the opening date.
- Receive black teatfish after the TAC Date (closure date).

1.12 Processing requirements

It is permitted to process catch of sea cucumbers prior to it being received by a licensed fish receiver. However, the catch should be received at the first practical opportunity during processing (e.g. after gutting or after boiling for curryfish species). The processed form (e.g. whole, gutted, gutted and salted) must be recorded by the fish receiver in the CDR. See [section 3.1](#) of this booklet for more information on the mandatory Fish Receiver System.

1.13 When can I go fishing?

Except for black teatfish (limited opening period only), the BDM Fishery fishing season is open from **1 January until 31 December** each year.

1.14 What size boat can I use?

Your fishing boat cannot be longer than 7 metres in length

Fishing boats cannot exceed 7 metres in length if the associated fishing licence is authorised for the BDM Fishery. The length of a boat is determined by measuring the distance between a vertical line passing through the foremost part of the hull and a vertical line passing through the aftermost part of the hull in a horizontal plane. This includes the length of any appendage, which effectively increases the length of the hull, but excluding the length of any anchor rail, bowsprit or similar appendage.

1.15 Unique boat marks

The boat nominated to your licence must clearly display its unique boat mark at all times according to the specifications in [Table 4](#). Boat marks are a unique combination of letters and/or numbers (e.g. TRAWQ001) assigned to your licence.

Table 4. Boat marking specifications for Torres Strait fisheries.

Length of boat	Height of letters or numbers (mm)	Width of letters or numbers (mm)
Under 6 metres	100	10–15
Under 10 metres, but greater than 6 metres	200	20–25
Under 25 metres, but greater than 10 metres	300	35–40
Greater than 25 metres	450	60–65

2 Total allowable catches

2.1 How much can I catch?

The PZJA sets TAC limits for all species in the BDM Fishery, either as individual species TACs or for groups of species categorised into ‘baskets’.

The TAC limits apply per a fishing season and are fished competitively by TIB licence holders. Fishing for a species or basket of species is closed if the TAC for that species or basket has been caught in a fishing season. AFMA will notify TIB licence holders if this is to occur.

[Table 5](#) details TACs for the BDM Fishery for the 2026 fishing season (1 January to 31 December 2026). TACs in the BDM Fishery are measured in gutted wet weight form.

The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy and TAC setting process is discussed further in [section 2.2](#).

Table 5. Total allowable catches (tonnes, gutted wet weight form) for sea cucumber species in the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery for the 2026 fishing season (1 January to 31 December 2025).

Species or basket	Total allowable catch (tonnes)	Explanatory notes
Amberfish (<i>Thelenota anax</i>)	10	10 tonne TAC introduced in 2025
Black teatfish (<i>Holothuria whitmaei</i>)	20.783*	Subject to a limited opening period and additional rules
Curryfish species basket (<i>Stichopus herrmanni</i> and <i>Stichopus vastus</i>)	60	Combined basket, catches to be reported by species
Deepwater redfish (<i>Actinopyga echinites</i>)	1	Reduced from 5 tonnes in 2025
Greenfish (<i>Stichopus chloronotus</i>)	40	
Hairy blackfish (<i>Actinopyga miliaris</i>)	0	Closed to fishing Reduced from 5 tonnes in 2025
Prickly redfish (<i>Thelenota ananas</i>)	15	
Sandfish (<i>Holothuria scabra</i>)	0	Closed to fishing
Surf redfish (<i>Actinopyga mauritiana</i>)	0	Closed to fishing
White teatfish (<i>Holothuria fuscogilva</i>)	15	
All other sea cucumber species basket (all other species in the families Holothuriidae and Stichopodidae)	50	Combined basket, catches to be reported by species

* In 2025, the PZJA agreed to apply an ‘under catch carryover’ rule for black teatfish, to allow up to 10% of uncaught TAC to be carried over to the following season. A TAC ‘under catch carryover’ amount of 783kg was applied to the 2026 TAC for black teatfish. This amount was calculated based on the total catch of 19,217kg for the 2025 season.

All catches are to be reported by species through the mandatory Fish Receiver System (FRS). This allows the close monitoring of species and to ensure catches do not exceed TACs. See [section 3.1](#) of this booklet for more information.

In addition to TACs, catch monitoring triggers have been implemented for most basket species. These are reviewed annually by the Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group (HCRAG) and Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG). Where catches reach a trigger, this is assessed further to determine whether additional management action is required.

2.2 How are total allowable catch levels set each fishing season?

The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy provides decision rules and other guidance for the setting of TACs for the BDM Fishery, including processing conversion factors to convert reported processed weights back to a standard unit of gutted wet weight. The strategy also includes catch monitoring triggers for species with a high uncertainty in population estimates and/or biological parameters. When a catch monitoring trigger is reached, a review is undertaken to more closely examine the catch of the species and to determine further action.

The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy uses a tiered approach that applies increased levels of precaution with increasing levels of uncertainty about sea cucumber stocks. It caters for different amounts of data available for the different species groups and types of assessments to guide the levels of TAC limits that can be set without compromising the sustainability of stocks, allowing for higher TAC limits to be set if there are more, better quality data available.

The HCRAG and HCWG meets at least once annually to review all available data from commercial fishing and surveys (where available) as well as primary indicators data (e.g. catch per unit effort) and advises on analyses needed as well as any future monitoring needs and revisions to the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy. The HCRAG and HCWG then provide advice to the PZJA on the application of BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy's decision rules and recommendations for TACs for the upcoming fishing season. TACs in the BDM Fishery are given effect through conditions on TIB licences.

Further information on the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy is provided in [section 4.2](#).

The Harvest Strategy for the BDM Fishery can be found on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/torres-strait-fisheries/torres-strait-beche-de-mer-fishery>.

2.3 Catch sharing with PNG

The BDM Fishery is not jointly managed by Australia and PNG under Article 22 of the Torres Strait Treaty and is therefore not subject to catch sharing arrangements. All available catch in the BDM Fishery can only be fished by TIB licence holders.

3.1 The Fish Receiver System

It is a condition of your TIB licence that you must land your commercial catch to a licensed fish receiver

A fish receiver is a licensed person who is required to weigh and record a fisher's catch when it is unloaded. A list of fish receivers can be found on the Torres Strait Public Licence Register available on the AFMA website at <https://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/concession-holders-conditions> or by contacting AFMA Licensing on 1300 723 621, or email licensing@afma.gov.au.

Fish receivers must record catch data using either the paper system by filling in a CDR or electronically (eCDRs). For more information about how to get set up using CDRs, contact AFMA Licensing on the contacts provided above. Detailed instructions on how to complete a CDR are provided in the front of each CDR book.

The data provided through the Fish Receiver System is used to ensure commercial catches do not exceed the TAC limits in a given fishing season.

[illegible]

3.1.1 Checklist for fishers

When you land your commercial catch, you must ensure your catch is weighed and reported in a CDR by a licensed fish receiver. Catch is landed when it is brought ashore or unloaded to a Carrier Class B or C boat.

When you land your commercial catch you must:

- Ensure the person weighing your catch and completing the CDR is a licensed fish receiver or a registered agent for a licensed fish receiver.
- Have your fishing licence details ready; these will need to be detailed in the CDR.
- If the fish receiver is using paper-based CDRs, verify the details of your licence and landed catch being recorded on the CDR by signing and dating the 'Fisher Details' section of the CDR. Keep the pink carbon copy of the CDR from the fish receiver.
- If the fish receiver is using eCDRs, provide your name, fishing licence number and boat mark to the fish receiver. You will receive an SMS or email notification from AFMA with details of your landed catch once the CDR has been submitted by the fish receiver.

Giving information about where you went fishing (fishing area), what method you used, or how many people fished from your boat is voluntary but is very important information for managing

Torres Strait fisheries sustainably. **Please consider providing this important and useful information under 'Part B' of the CDR.**

3.1.2 Checklist for fish receivers

When you receive commercial catch from a fisher you must:

- Nominate your fish receiver premises with AFMA and only receive fish at the premises nominated on your fish receiver licence. You can nominate more than one premises.
- Have your paper-based CDR book, or your GoFish account ready to enter your eCDRs.
- For the catch you are receiving, check whether a CDR has already been filled out by another fish receiver. Do not complete a CDR if one has already been completed.
- Ensure the fisher you are receiving catch from has a valid fishing licence.
- ensure the catches you are receiving are of legal size and do not receive any prohibited (no-take) species or under-sized animals.
- Record the fisher's name and licence information correctly. No nicknames please.
- Record the weight and processed form (e.g. whole, gutted, gutted and salted) by species as soon as you receive the catch. **You need to weigh the catch and fill in a CDR immediately after you receive the catch.**
- Ask the fisher if they wish to provide voluntary information about their fishing trip, under 'Part B' of the CDR. Providing information about where they went fishing (fishing area), methods they used, or how many people fished from their boat is very important information for managing Torres Strait fisheries sustainably.
- If using paper-based CDRs:
 - make sure the licensed fisher (or their authorised agent) verifies their licence details, the weight of the catch and signs the 'Fisher Details' section of the CDR
 - sign and date the 'Receiver Details' section of the CDR showing your name and licence details
 - give the fisher the pink copy of the CDR
 - send the white copy of the CDR **to AFMA within 3 days** of receiving the catch, and
 - keep your own green copy of the CDR for 5 years.
- If using eCDRs, make sure you record the licensed fisher's (or their authorised agent's) mobile number or email (if their name is not in the drop-down list) so they receive a notification once you have submitted the eCDR.

More information about the mandatory Fish Receiver System, including a copy of the Checklist for Fishers and Fish Receivers is available on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/licences/fish-receiver-licences> or by contacting the AFMA Thursday Island office. Contact details are provided in [section 5](#) of this booklet.

3.2 Do I need to use a daily fishing logbook?

Daily fishing logbooks are different to the mandatory Fish Receiver System and CDRs. Daily fishing logbooks collect additional information on fishing activities and are filled out daily by fishers.

TIB licence holders do not have to use daily fishing logbooks but can assist in the management of the BDM Fishery by voluntarily completing the HC01 Torres Strait Hand Collection Daily Fishing Log.

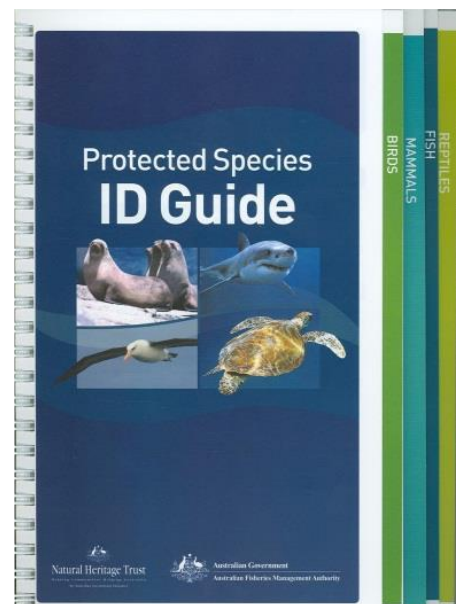
For more information about daily fishing logbooks contact AFMA Licensing on 1300 723 621, or email licensing@afma.gov.au or by contacting the AFMA Thursday Island office. Contact details are provided in [section 5](#) of this booklet.

3.3 Reporting wildlife interactions

A wildlife interaction is any physical contact a person, boat or gear has with a protected animal that causes death, injury or stress. This includes any collisions, catching, hooking, netting, entangling or trapping of a protected species.

You should report all interactions with protected species to AFMA. Contact details are provided in [section 5](#) of this booklet.

The CSIRO has published a *Protected Species Identification Guide*, which can help you identify protected species. If you would like a copy, please contact the AFMA Thursday Island office or you can download a copy from the AFMA website at <https://www.afma.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-02/protected-species-id-guide.pdf>.



3.4 Do I need a vessel monitoring system on my boat?

A Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) on commercial fishing boats helps manage fisheries in the Torres Strait by allowing AFMA to monitor the location, speed and course of a boat. This information helps AFMA monitor fishing activity to assist in the management of fisheries as well as to see if a vessel is doing something it should not be, like fishing in a closed area, or fishing outside of a fishing season.

All fishers participating in the 2026 black teatfish season must carry a working VMS unit.

You must have a working VMS unit fitted to your boat if it is a primary boat, or a carrier boat. Vessels operating for freight shipping are exempt from installing a VMS. Exemptions may also be provided for carrier vessels that are six (6) meters or less in length.

All VMS units must meet AFMA standards which can be found on the AFMA website at <https://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/vessel-monitoring>.

If required on your boat, your VMS must be working at all times. If your VMS breaks or is not working, stay in port and let AFMA know as soon as possible by calling 1300 723 621 (and follow the prompts to the VSM team) or by emailing ausvms@afma.gov.au.

For more information about VMS visit the AFMA website at the address provided above or contact the AFMA Thursday Island office. Contact details are provided in [section 5](#) of this booklet.

3.5 Illegal fishing

You can help us make sure your fish stocks are protected for the future by reporting any illegal or suspicious fishing activities you see.

Illegal fishing activities include:

- landing catch to someone other than a licensed fish receiver.
- illegal use of fishing gear.
- unlicensed commercial fishing.
- catching and sale of protected species (e.g. crocodiles).
- sale of turtle and dugong, including the meat, bones or shell.
- catching and sale of prohibited species (e.g. sandfish).
- fishing in closed or prohibited areas.
- commercial fishing during seasonal closures.
- foreign fishing.

3.5.1 How can I report illegal fishing activities?

If you think you have seen illegal fishing operations or suspicious activity involving fishing you can contact:

AFMA's free call **CRIMFISH** hotline on **1800 274 634 (1800 CRIMFISH)**

Email to intelligence@afma.gov.au

AFMA Duty Officer on **0428 196 114** or **(02) 6275 5818** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

AFMA Thursday Island office on **(07) 4069 1990**

You can also report any incident by lodging your information on the AFMA CRIMFISH website at <https://www.afma.gov.au/monitoring-enforcement/report-illegal-fishing-activity/>.

Reports may be made **anonymously** and all information received will be treated with the strictest confidence.

3.5.2 Reporting illegal fishing activities

The following information should be provided if possible:

- name and call sign of the boat suspected of illegal fishing activities.
- description of the boat involved e.g. type of boat, distinguishing features, registration details.
- type of illegal fishing activity e.g. shark finning, using hookah during a hookah closure.
- nationality.
- where the offence took place. Give as much detail as you can e.g. latitude and longitude.
- time and date.
- description of the suspected offenders, including the clothing they were wearing.
- names of the suspected offenders and any distinguishing features, if known.
- type of fish being caught.
- fishing gear being used e.g. nets, traps, trawls etc.
- photographs.
- other information you feel may be useful or any other suspicious activity that might be associated with the offence.

4 Background

4.1 Overview of the BDM Fishery

The BDM Fishery is an important commercial fishery to Torres Strait Islanders. Historically, the main species of sea cucumber harvested in the Torres Strait have been blackfish species, black teatfish, deepwater redfish, prickly redfish, sandfish, surf redfish and white teatfish with recent increases in the catch of curryfish species. Fishing for sandfish was closed in 1998 due to sustainability concerns following a considerable decline in abundance. This was followed by the closure of fishing for black teatfish and surf redfish in 2003. Fishing for black teatfish has since re-opened under species-specific rules.

Fishing has historically been undertaken on Warrior Reefs and in the eastern parts of Torres Strait, with most of the catch typically taken from the Great North East Channel, Darnley, Cumberland, Seven Reefs, Don Cay and Barrier areas ([Figure 3](#)). Western Torres Strait is included in the BDM Fishery area but is documented as having naturally low abundance of sea cucumbers.

There are no bycatch (byproduct and general bycatch) species due to the highly targeted nature of the BDM Fishery and the highly selective fishing method utilised (hand collection). Interactions with protected species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) are highly unlikely.

Fishing for sea cucumbers in Torres Strait is mainly by free diving from dinghies crewed by 2–3 fishers or by hand collection along reefs at low tide. Following collection, sea cucumbers are processed for market. Typically, this involves gutting, grading, cleaning, boiling and salting. Operators may also dry the product before sending it to market. This is a labour-intensive process usually carried out on processing vessels or at shore-based facilities.

Estimates of net economic returns are unavailable for the BDM Fishery. In 2022–23, the gross value of production (GVP) for the BDM Fishery was an estimated \$0.47 million (ABARES Fishery Status Reports 2024). Generally, demand for sea cucumber is high, particularly from Hong Kong. Other Australian export destinations include Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and the United States.

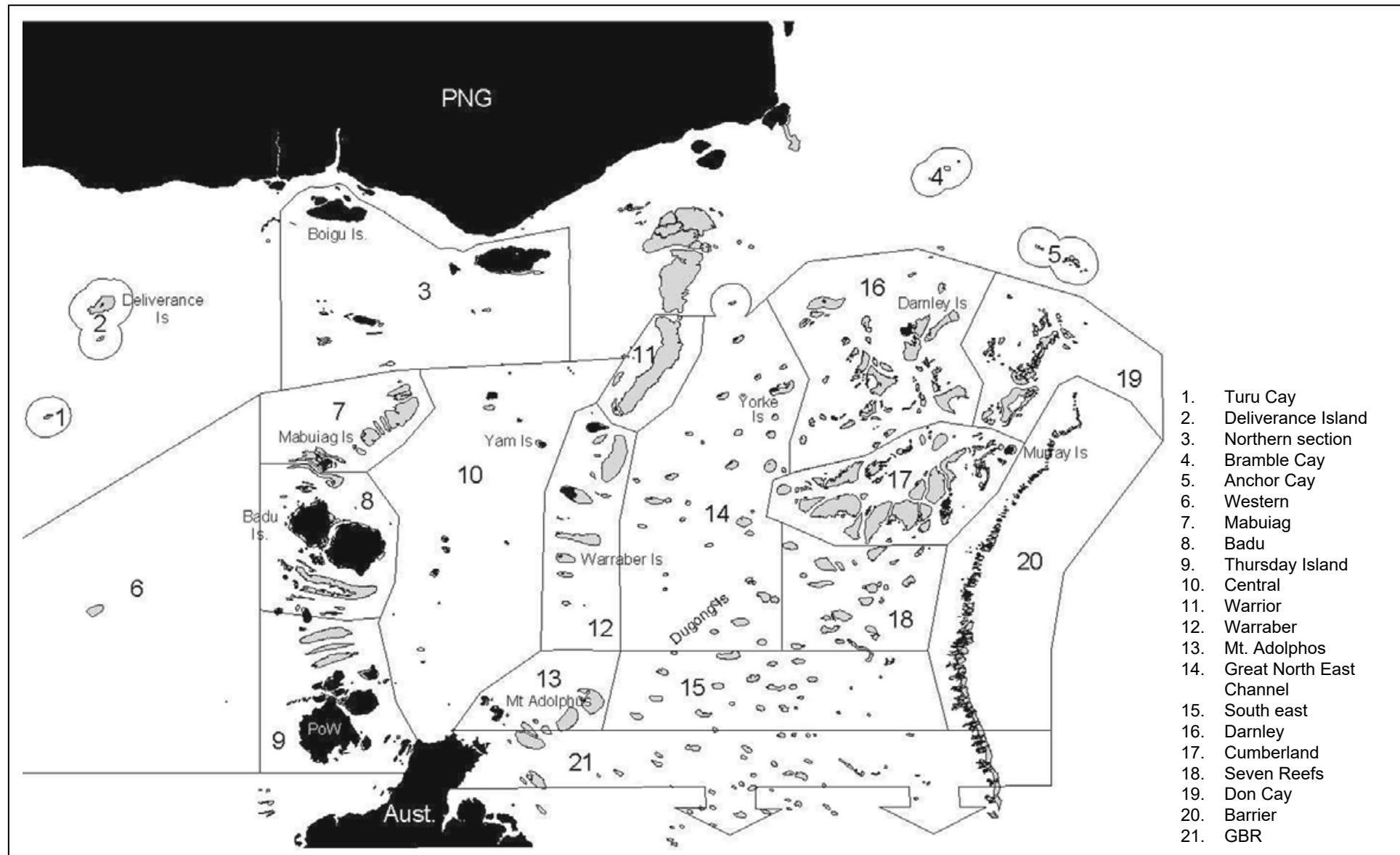


Figure 3. Areas for reporting in the TDB02 Torres Strait Fisheries Catch Disposal Record.

4.2 BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy

A harvest strategy is a set of pre-agreed rules that use an evidence-based, precautionary and transparent approach to controlling the amount of fish that can be caught in a fishing season. These rules are created to meet defined objectives for the fishery. A harvest strategy describes the performance indicators used for monitoring the condition of a fish stock/s, the fishery independent survey and stock assessment procedures and the rules applied to determine a TAC limit/s each fishing season.

The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy was adopted by the PZJA in November 2019. The strategy was developed in accordance with the 2018 *Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy* (CHSP) and is consistent with objectives of the Act.

The objectives of the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy are:

- to provide for the sustainable use of all bêche-de-mer in Torres Strait to take account of long-term sustainability for future generations.
- to develop bêche-de-mer populations for the benefit of Australian Traditional Inhabitants (as defined by the Torres Strait Treaty) and accommodating commercial considerations.
- to acknowledge area-specific issues.
- where possible, to consider an ecosystem approach to management that reduces impacts on, or optimises interactions with, other harvested and dependent species and acknowledges the important ecological role of sea cucumbers.
- to develop long-term recovery strategies for species, where appropriate.

The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy is based on a tiered framework which uses different decision rules to cater for different levels of available data and uncertainty about sea cucumber stocks. The different tiers of decision rules apply increased levels of precaution that correspond to increasing levels of uncertainty about a stock's status. Further details on each tier are provided in [sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.4](#). The intent of this approach is to maintain the same level of risk across the different tiers.

Further information and a copy of the CHSP is available on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) website at https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/fisheries/domestic/harvest_strategy_policy.

Further information and a copy of the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy is available on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/commercial-fisheries-management/torres-strait-fisheries/torres-strait-beche-de-mer-fishery>.

4.2.1 Low tier

In the low tier, the minimum data needed for each species is the total catch taken each fishing season. The low tier has rules to guide:

- what happens to a species if the TAC is overcaught or a trigger limit for a species within a joint TAC is reached
- what happens if there is no data reported for a species at all.

Depending on the information available, the low tier allows individual species TACs to be maintained or reduced. For species with individual catch monitoring triggers, within a basket, the low tier may allow changes to the basket TAC, or to individual catch monitoring triggers (up or down).

4.2.2 Middle tier

To transition to the middle tier, two or more primary indicators must be available. The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy states however that the middle tier is not applicable during the initial years of implementation as insufficient detailed historical fishery data are available.

For the purposes of the middle tier the primary indicators are:

- catch per unit effort
- spatial footprint
- average size
- catch proportion.

The information from these primary indicators will guide how much TACs should be varied. If the primary indicators suggest an increase is possible, there are pre-agreed rules that set a maximum level that the TAC can increase by before high-quality survey data is required.

4.2.3 High tier

The high tier may be applied to all species if species-specific, high quality survey data becomes available. Under this tier, TACs may be adjusted upwards (in cases where there is evidence of scope to increase TACs) or downwards (in cases where there are concerns about the status of a species).

4.2.4 Closed species

A species may be closed to fishing if it has been overfished, the TAC has been significantly over caught, or if fishing has been occurring but there is no reported catch. The BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy has rules to guide how to re-open a fishery if enough information is available.

4.3 Research in the BDM Fishery

The PZJA commissions research to support the management of Torres Strait fisheries. For the BDM Fishery, this includes research concerning the biological attributes of sea cucumber species, scientific surveys of their abundance and stock assessments. Surveys of sea cucumber stocks in the BDM Fishery have been undertaken since 1995. In the eastern Torres Strait, where sea cucumber stocks are concentrated, three full scale surveys were undertaken in 1995/96, 2002 and most recently 2019/20 with a further two abbreviated surveys in 2005 and 2009.

Sandfish are considered to be overfished and fishing for these species has been prohibited since 1998. Warrior Reef sandfish population surveys have been carried out in 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2010 and 2025 to assess the status and recovery of the sandfish population. In addition, to further assess the recovery and investigate the feasibility of experimental fishing to monitor the fishery, a small experimental fishing exercise was undertaken in 2012.

More information on current research projects is available on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/research>.

4.4 Ecological risk assessment and management

The direct and indirect impact of BDM Fishery activities on the marine environment was assessed in 2021 using AFMA's Ecological Risk Management (ERM) framework. An ecological risk assessment (ERA) assessed all direct and indirect impacts to and of the BDM Fishery as having either minor or negligible scores and the overall risk for the ecological impacts for the effects of fishing and external activities as low. The assessment outcome was based on the scale and nature of the fishery as well as available survey data. Fishing for sea cucumbers is very selective as it is done by hand collection. There is no bycatch (byproduct and general bycatch). It followed also in the assessment that the direct ecological impact on the benthos from harvesting the species is low.

Noting that the ERA did not identify any moderate or high risks, all ecological components were eliminated at Level 1 and no specific ERM strategy is required at this time.

The ERA report for the BDM Fishery is available on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/commercial-fisheries-management/torres-strait-fisheries/torres-strait-beche-de-mer-fishery>.

4.5 Export approval

Approval under the EPBC Act is required in order to permit the export of sea cucumbers taken from the BDM Fishery. The BDM Fishery was last assessed under the EPBC Act in 2023 and has formal approval as a Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) for export until 30 November 2026.

A number of species currently commercially fished in the BDM Fishery have been listed under Appendix II of the *Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES), namely black teatfish, white teatfish and prickly redfish. Another species, amberfish, is found in the area of the BDM Fishery but has not been commercially fished since 2001.

CITES is a binding international agreement aimed at preventing international trade from driving unsustainable population decline in species listed under the Convention. Species listed under Appendix II of CITES are not necessarily threatened with extinction, and may still be traded internationally provided the trade, or a specified level of trade, has been determined to be non-detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild.

With regards to Australian commercial fisheries, to export CITES listed species for commercial purposes, the species must come from a fishery that is both an approved WTO and have a positive non-detriment finding (NDF) for the species. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) is responsible for administering these processes. A positive NDF for prickly redfish and amberfish is currently in place for the BDM Fishery. The NDF for black teatfish and white teatfish is currently under review.

More information about strategic assessments for Torres Strait fisheries is available on the DCCEEW website at <https://www.environment.gov.au/marine/fisheries/commonwealth-managed-fisheries>.

4.6 Torres Strait Treaty

The Torres Strait Treaty was signed by Australia and PNG in Sydney on 18 December 1978 and ratified by Australia on 15 February 1985. The Treaty defines the border between Australia and PNG and provides a management framework of the common border area. This area is defined by the Treaty and is known as the TSPZ shown in [Figure 4](#) (red dotted line).

The TSPZ was established by the Torres Strait Treaty to acknowledge and protect the traditional way of life and livelihood of the traditional inhabitants of the area, including traditional fishing and the traditional right of movement between the two countries. Additionally, the TSPZ enables the development of sustainable commercial fishing in the region. Treaty articles 20–28 set out a framework to guide both countries in providing for the management, conservation and sharing of fishing resources, and inspection and enforcement in the TSPZ.

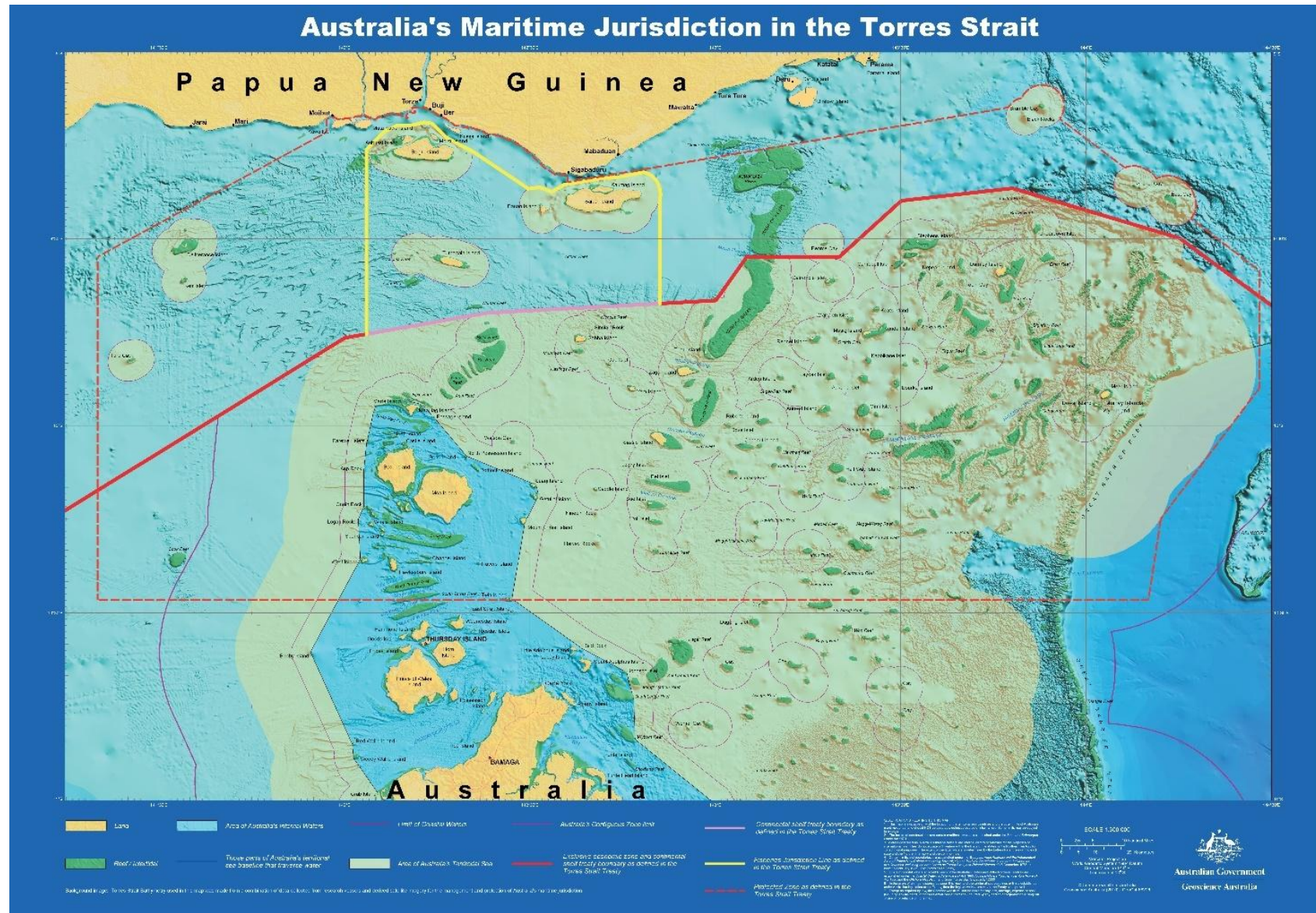


Figure 4. Australia's maritime jurisdiction in the Torres Strait (source: Geosciences Australia).

4.7 PZJA

The PZJA is responsible for making decisions and formulating policies relating to Torres Strait fisheries within the areas of Australian jurisdiction of the TSPZ under the Act. The Act gives effect, in Australian law, to Australia's obligations under the Torres Strait Treaty as they relate to fisheries. Section 30 of the Act establishes the PZJA, which consists of the Minister administering the Act, the Queensland Minister administering the laws of Queensland relating to marine fishing in the Protected Zone, and the Chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA). The TSRA is the Commonwealth agency established under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* that represents the interests of Torres Strait Islanders.

The PZJA is supported by four government agencies (known as 'PZJA agencies'), namely AFMA, DAFF, QDAF, and TSRA.

AFMA is responsible for providing day-to-day fisheries management services for the PZJA including compliance and licensing and undertakes its delegated functions in consultation with PZJA agencies.

4.8 PZJA advisory committees

To assist in the management of BDM Fishery the PZJA has established two advisory committees, the HCRAG and HCWG. It is the role of the HCRAG to provide advice on the status of sea cucumber stocks and on the impact of fishing on the marine environment. Advice provided by the HCRAG should address biological, economic and wider ecological factors affecting the fishery. The HCRAG is comprised of five traditional inhabitant members (one from each cluster nation), fisheries scientists and QDAF, TSRA and AFMA members.

The role of the HCWG is to discuss issues, identify concerns and develop solutions and provide advice to the PZJA on a range of management matters. The HCWG is comprised of five traditional inhabitant members (one from each cluster nation), fisheries scientists and QDAF, TSRA and AFMA members.

A list of the current members on the HCRAG and HCWG is provided in [Table 6](#).

You can download copies of the meeting records and meeting papers from the HCRAG and HCWG from the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/advisory-committees/pzja-committees>.

Table 6. Members on the Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group and Hand Collectables Working Group.

Member type	Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group	Hand Collectables Working Group
Chair	David Brewer	Delahay Miller
Traditional inhabitant member	John Tabo – Kemer Kemer Meriam cluster Toshie Kris – Maluialgal cluster Sattrick Baluz – Kulkaigal cluster Pabai Pabai – Gudumalulgal cluster Vera Havili – Kaiwalagal cluster	Michael Passi – Kemer Kemer Meriam cluster James Ahmat – Maluialgal cluster Sattrick Baluz – Kulkaigal cluster Thomas Mooka – Gudumalulgal cluster Ian Wymarra – Kaiwalagal cluster
Scientific member	Dr Jonathon Smart Nicole Murphy Tim Skewes	Nicole Murphy Tim Skewes
QDAF member	Manager, Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery	Manager, Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery
TSRA member	Manager, TSRA Fisheries Program	Manager, TSRA Fisheries Program
AFMA member	Senior Manager, Torres Strait Fisheries	Senior Manager, Torres Strait Fisheries

4.9 Native Title

AFMA, on behalf of the PZJA, consults with registered native title body corporates (RNTBC), registered native title claimants and representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies. In accordance with section 24HA of the *Native Title Act 1993*, AFMA on behalf of the PZJA undertakes native title notification for future acts. In addition, AFMA engages with RNTBCs, registered claimants and representative bodies through formal consultation and as invited participants on the PZJA advisory committees.

A summary of all native title notifications undertaken by AFMA since 2019 can be found on the PZJA website at <https://www.pzja.gov.au/native-title-notifications>.

5 Contacts

AFMA Thursday Island office	
Street address	Level 1 Pearls Building 38 Victoria Parade Thursday Island QLD 4875 Australia
Postal address	PO Box 376 Thursday Island QLD 4875 Australia
Business hours	9am to 5pm – Monday to Friday
AFMA Direct phone	1300 723 621
Thursday Island Office phone	(07) 4069 1990
Email	fisheriesTI@afma.gov.au
Website	https://www.pzja.gov.au/

AFMA Licensing	
Business hours	9am to 5pm – Monday to Friday
Phone	1300 723 621 (follow prompts for AFMA Licensing team)
Email	licensing@afma.gov.au
Website	https://www.pzja.gov.au/licences

AFMA VMS	
Business hours	9am to 5pm – Monday to Friday
Phone	1300 723 621 (follow prompts for AFMA VMS team)
Email	ausvms@afma.gov.au
Website	https://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-management/monitoring-tools/vessel-monitoring-systems

Illegal fishing	
CRIMFISH hotline	Free call on 1800 274 634 (1800 CRIMFISH)
AFMA Duty Officer (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)	0428 196 114 or (02) 6275 5818
Thursday Island Office phone (business hours)	(07) 4069 1990
Email	intelligence@afma.gov.au

Illegal fishing	
Online report	https://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-management/compliance/report-illegal-fishing

Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (recreational fishing, charter fishing and aquaculture)	
Business hours	9am to 5pm – Monday to Friday
General enquiries	13 25 23
Fishwatch hotline	For illegal fishing, free call on 1800 017 116
Email	info@daf.qld.gov.au
Website	https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/

Torres Strait Regional Authority (Fisheries Program)	
Street address	Level 1 Torres Strait Haus 46 Victoria Parade Thursday Island QLD 4875 Australia
Business hours	9am to 5pm – Monday to Friday
General enquiries	1800 079 093 or (07) 4069 0700
Email	fisheries@tsra.gov.au
Website	http://www.tsra.gov.au/