



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries
Management Authority



Queensland
Government



Ref: NTN2025-07

15 December 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Comment on a proposed management action: section 24HA(2) of the *Native Title Act 1993*

I am writing to you on behalf of the Secretariat of the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) regarding the proposed management action to implement licence conditions for Traditional Inhabitant Boat licences that permit the take of sea cucumber species in the waters of the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery.

A variation to BDM endorsed Traditional Inhabitant Boat fishing licence conditions will require the mandatory carriage of a vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit during the 2026 Black Teatfish season.

Further details of the proposed action can be found in **Attachments A-D - Class Notification under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993***.

Under section 24HA(7), the PZJA must give the recipient of this notice an opportunity to comment on the action within a period defined by this notice. Please provide any comments on the proposed management action by **close of business 14 January 2026**, in writing:

Australian Fisheries Management Authority
Att: Ryan Murphy
PO Box 376
Thursday Island, QLD, 4875

Email: FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au

Since 2019, AFMA has been publishing the native title notifications on the [PZJA website](#). With your agreement, AFMA is also seeking to publish any comments received in response to proposed management actions. Please let us know if you have any concerns with this.

If you cannot meet the timeframe or have any questions regarding the proposed management action, please contact me by phone on 07 4069 1990 or email FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Ryan Murphy
On behalf of PZJA Secretariat
Senior Manager
Torres Strait Fisheries
AFMA

Attachments

A-D - Class Notification under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993*

Class Notification under the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993*

**Proposed variation of licence conditions on Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery
Traditional Inhabitant Boat Licences to implement black teatfish management
arrangements (vessel monitoring system) for the 2026 fishing season**

Date of Issue: 15 December 2025

SECTION OF NTA	Section 24HA(7) of the Commonwealth <i>Native Title Act 1993</i>
DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) on behalf of the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA)
CONTACT NAME	Ryan Murphy
E-MAIL	FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au
TELEPHONE NO.	(07) 4069 1990
REFERENCE NO.	NTN2025-07 – Proposed variation of licence conditions on Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery Traditional Inhabitant Boat Licences to implement black teatfish management arrangement (vessel monitoring system) for the 2026 fishing season

The Protected Zone Joint Authority intends to do the following act:

TYPE OF APPROVAL	Variation of Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery (BDM Fishery) Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) conditions under section 22 of the Commonwealth <i>Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984</i> (the Act)
NUMBER OF APPROVALS	Licence condition variation of all TIB licences that permit the take of sea cucumber species in the area of waters of the BDM Fishery.
UNDER WHAT ACT	<i>Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984</i>

The approvals, if granted, will permit the following activity to happen:

NATURE OF ACTIVITY	<p>Under subsection 22(1) of the Act a licence granted under section 19 is subject to conditions specified in the licence. Subsection 22(2) allows AFMA, as a PZJA delegate, to vary or revoke the conditions of the licence or specify further conditions to which the licence is subject to.</p> <p>The management action that is the subject of this notification, proposes to vary licence conditions for TIB licences that permit the take of sea cucumber species in the area of waters of the BDM Fishery.</p> <p>Subject to PZJA delegate approval, and in line with the BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy, the proposed condition variation will require the use of a vessel monitoring system (VMS) while fishing for black teatfish (commencing 23 March 2026).</p> <p>Further information on the proposed management actions are provided in Attachment B.</p>
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The above activity will be located within:

LOCATION OF ACTIVITY	The proposed activity would apply to the area of the BDM Fishery (Attachment C). The extent of the BDM Fishery is described in Item 1, Schedule 2 of the <i>Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985</i> (the Regulations). The Regulations can be accessed online at: https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2016C00633
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	Black teatfish has a distribution predominantly in the eastern Torres Strait with fishing occurring in the areas of the Great North East Channel, Darnley, Cumberland, Seven Reefs, Don Cay and Barrier. A map showing these areas is provided at Attachment D . These areas include waters surrounding the islands of Masig, Erub, Mer, Ugar and Poruma.
MAPS/PLANS	<p>Attachment C shows the area of the BDM Fishery, as described in Item 1, Schedule 2 of the Regulations.</p> <p>Attachment D shows the areas used by TIB licence holders for reporting locations of catch in the BDM Fishery.</p>
NAME OF REGISTERED NATIVE TITLE CLAIMANT GROUP/S OR NAME OF REGISTERED NATIVE TITLE BODY CORPORATE	<p>Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim (QC2001/042)</p> <p>Kaurareg People #1 (QC2008/006)</p> <p>Kaurareg People #2 (QC2008/007)</p> <p>Malu Lamar (Torres Strait Islander) Corporation RNTBC – Torres Strait Regional Sea Claim (QCD2010/003)</p> <p>Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC – Northern Cape York Group #1 (QCD2014/017)</p> <p>Gudang Yadhaykenu Native Title Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC – Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim (QCD2022/013)</p> <p>Northern Cape and Torres Strait United Indigenous Corporation – Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim (QCD2022/013)</p> <p>Seven Rivers Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC – Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim (QCD2022/013)</p>
NAME OF NATIVE TITLE REPRESENTATIVE BODY	<p>Cape York Land Council Aboriginal Corporation</p> <p>Gur A Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council</p>

If approved, after consideration of all comments, the management option will be implemented for the following period of time:

DURATION OF APPROVAL	It is expected that the proposed management action will occur in 2026, commencing 23 March 2026, until the black teatfish fishery is closed by AFMA.
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You are invited to comment upon the class of proposed future acts outlined above by close of business 14 January 2026.

Any comments must be **in writing**:

By email to: FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au

Or by mail addressed to:
 Australian Fisheries Management Authority
 Attention: Ryan Murphy
 PO Box 376
 Thursday Island, QLD, 4875

Background Information

What are the proposed changes to Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence and Fish Receiver licence conditions?

1. Under subsection 22(1) of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* (the Act) a licence granted under section 19 is subject to conditions specified in the licence. Subsection 22(2) allows the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), as a Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) delegate, to vary or revoke the conditions of the licence or specify further conditions to which the licence is subject to.
2. AFMA, as the licencing delegate of the PZJA, will make a variation to BDM endorsed Traditional Inhabitant Boat fishing licences to require the mandatory carriage of a VMS unit during the 2026 Black Teatfish season. It will be a mandatory requirement for all boats operating in the 2026 black teatfish season to carry a working VMS.
3. These conditions will also include provisions to:
 - a) Recognise the VMS units are (will be) supplied, and owned, by AFMA and need to be returned at the end of the season,
 - b) Allow fishers, when authorised to do so, to move the units to a replacement boat (e.g. in the event of a breakdown etc),
 - c) Allow AFMA to exempt a licence holder (boat) from the requirement to fit a VMS , and
 - d) Allow AFMA to have a mid-season closure and/or part day openings.
4. AFMA and TSRA held community meetings in November 2025 to discuss the above arrangements. An ongoing communication plan will include the dissemination of information through digital notice boards, social media, SMS and email. AFMA has also developed a VMS information flyer that explains and answers common questions including why VMS is being trailed, how it will be implemented, cost of VMS, what is a VMS unit and how VMS will be installed.

Why are the licence conditions being changed?

5. At their meeting in July 2025, the Protected Zone Joint Authority Standing Committee (PZJA SC) agreed to the trial implementation of mandatory vessel monitoring systems for the 2026 black teatfish fishery opening.
6. The PZJA SC decision was in recognition of;
 - a. The need to meet Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) conditions on localised depletion,
 - b. The high costs and limited effectiveness of current monitoring of the BDM fishery, which requires the use of surface and aerial compliance assets, and
 - c. The need to ensure that the black teatfish fishery remains biologically and economically sustainable into the future.
7. The trial will be used to assess the effectiveness of VMS in addressing the above issues.

How may the proposed activity impact the environment or other fisheries?

8. The proposed arrangements for the 2026 black teatfish opening, are designed to pursue objectives under the Act, including to protect and preserve the marine environment and indigenous fauna and flora in and in the vicinity of the Torres Strait Protected Zone. The proposed TAC was derived by applying the decision rules detailed in the Strategy. The objectives of the Strategy include:
 - a. to provide for the sustainable use of all beche-de-mer in Torres Strait to take account of long-term sustainability for future generations;
 - b. 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.

9. With regards to the BDM Fishery more broadly, due to the highly targeted nature of the BDM Fishery and the highly selective fishing method used (hand collection only), there are no bycatch species (which includes species from other fisheries) or reported interactions with protected species. Further, an Ecological Risk Assessment for the BDM Fishery, completed in December 2021, found risks to all ecological components of the BDM Fishery to be low.

How may the proposed activity impact Traditional Inhabitants?

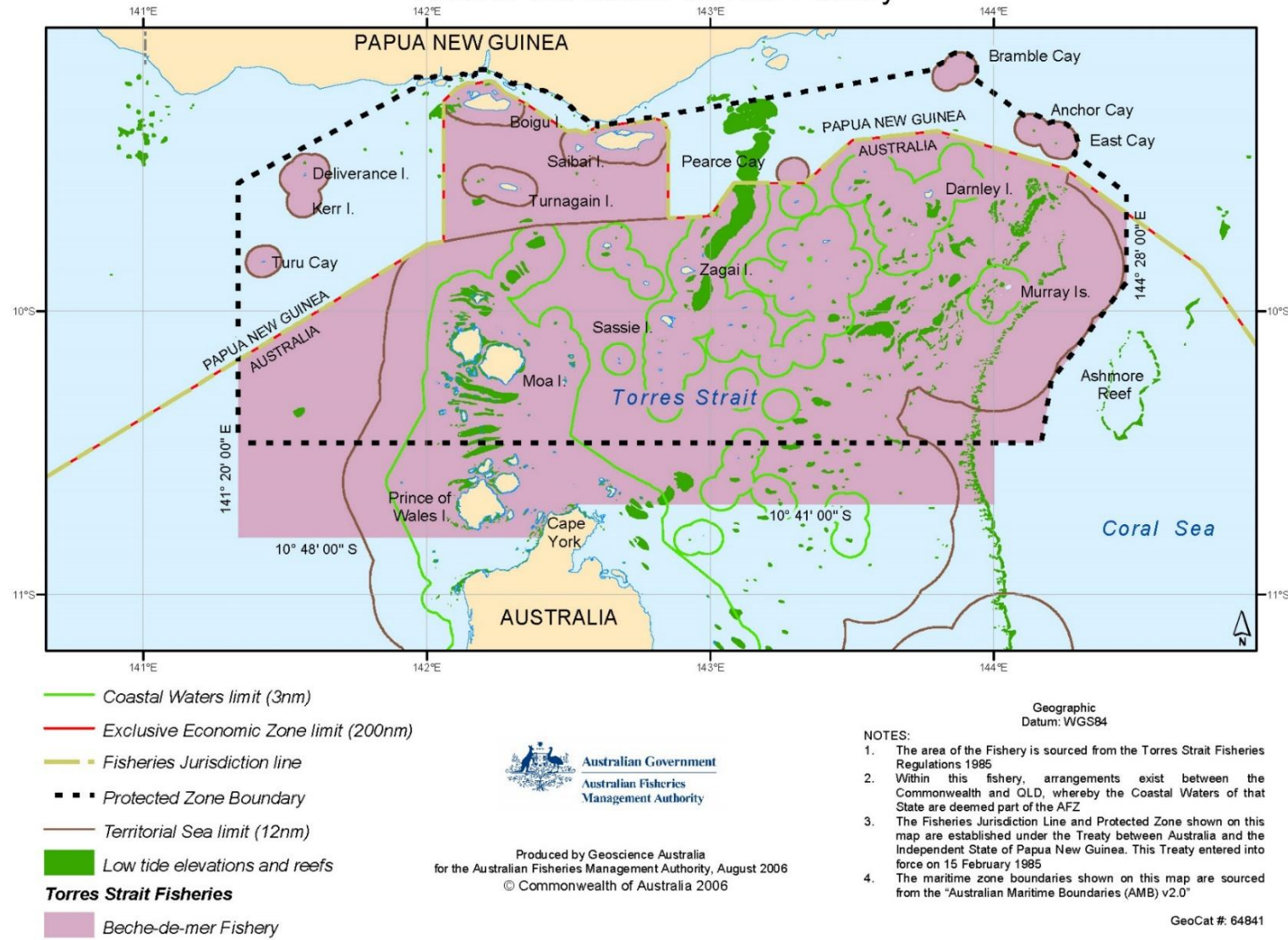
10. The proposed arrangements for the 2026 black teatfish opening, which are the subject of this notification, are consistent with the objective of the Act to have regard in developing and implementing licensing policy, to the desirability of promoting economic development in the Torres Strait area and employment opportunities for Traditional Inhabitants.
11. The VMS trial will be at no cost to fishers. The purchase, installation and operational costs will be funded by Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and AFMA.
12. VMS has been trialled on individual boats, on a voluntary basis, during the 2024 and 2025 black teatfish seasons. During the two voluntary trials the units were attached to several licenced fishing boats, including both centre console and tiller steered boats. These boats operated independently of each other which provided AFMA a good operational picture of vessels throughout the fishery. The feedback from fishers was positive, with the units used found to be robust and slight in design allowing units to be mounted in a place that did not impede fishing activities.
13. In accordance with Australian government standards, all data received from the VMS units during the black teatfish season is confidential. Only authorised officers are permitted to access the information. Fishers can request copies of their licensed vessel's position data, but not in real time.

How may the proposed activity impact Native Title Holders?

14. The proposed arrangements for the 2026 black teatfish opening, are designed to pursue objectives under the Act, including:
- to acknowledge and protect the traditional way of life and livelihood of traditional inhabitants, including their rights in relation to traditional fishing;
 - to protect and preserve the marine environment and indigenous fauna and flora in and in the vicinity of the Protected Zone;
 - to adopt conservation measures necessary for the conservation of a species in such a way as to minimise any restrictive effects of the measures on traditional fishing;
 - to administer the provisions of Part 5 of the Torres Strait Treaty (relating to commercial fisheries) so as not to prejudice the achievement of the purposes of Part 4 of the Torres Strait Treaty in regard to traditional fishing;
 - to manage commercial fisheries for optimum utilisation;
 - to have regard, in developing and implementing licensing policy, to the desirability of promoting economic development in the Torres Strait area and employment opportunities for traditional inhabitants.

Torres Strait Fisheries

Area of the Beche-de-mer Fishery



AREAS FOR TORRES STRAIT CATCH DISPOSAL RECORD



Edition Date:
September 2017

Use area where most catch was taken