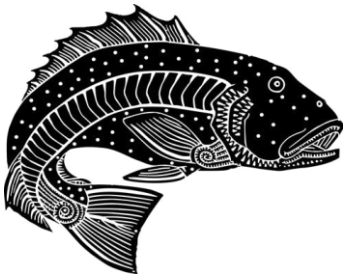
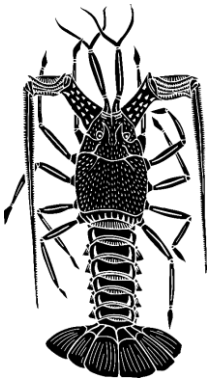
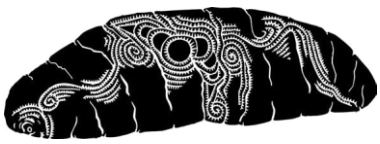
Protected Zone Joint Authority

Tropical Rock Lobster Working Group (TRLWG) 19

Final Meeting Record

11 December 2025, Thursday Island

Contents

Meeting participants

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Members		
Mr David Brewer	Interim TRLWG Chair	• Director – Upwelling P/L (David Brewer Consulting). • Chair, Torres Strait Finfish RAG • Chair, Hand Collectables RAG • Scientific member – Torres Strait Finfish Working Group • Current consultancies with Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation, The Moreton Bay Foundation. • As a fisheries consultant, may apply for funds for Torres Strait fishery research projects in the future where consistent with his role as Chair.
Dr Laura Blamey (online)	Scientific Member	Contributes to other Torres Strait research projects that CSIRO receives research funding for, including Torres Strait climate change and fisheries project. No other interests in the fishery.
Mr Les Pitt	Traditional Inhabitant Member – Kemer Kemer Meriam	TIB licence holder.
Mr Monti Naawi	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Kulkalgal	TIB licence holder
Mr Aaron Tom	Traditional Inhabitant Member – Guda Maluylgal	Traditional Inhabitant Member, Guda maluylgal. Zenadth Kes Fisheries member.
Mr Kame Matthew Paipai	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Maluyilgal	Apology.
Mr Thomas Fujii	Traditional Inhabitant Member - Kaiwalalgal	TIB licence holder. Zenadth Kes Fisheries member.
Mr Jake Kingdon	Industry member	Regional manager for MG Kailis Pty Ltd. MG Kailis Pty Ltd is a holder of 5 TVH licences. Seafood buyer from Torres Strait, QLD and PNG TRL fisheries.
Mr Mark Dean	Industry member	TVH boat operator
Mr Trent Butcher	Industry member	Apology.
Mr Keith Brightman	TSRA Member	Apology.

Name	Position	Declaration of interest
Ms Jenny Keys	QDAF Member	Apology.
Mr Ryan Murphy	AFMA Member	Employed by AFMA. Senior Manager for Torres Strait Fisheries. Nil interests.
Ms Georgia Bourke	Executive Officer	Apology.
Observers		
Mr Joseph Posu	PNG National Fisheries Authority	Works in the Fisheries Management Unit responsible for managing the prawn and lobster fisheries in the Western Province. No personal pecuniary interest in the fishery.
Mr Quinten Hirakawa	TSRA	Replaced Mr Ketih Brightman as TSRA Member at this meeting. TSRA employee, TIB license holder with a TRL endorsement.
Dr Tim Ward	TRL RAG Chair	• Associate Professor in Fisheries Science, Institute Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania • Chair, Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group • Scientific member, AFMA Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group • Scientific member, AFMA Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group • Scientific member, Heard Island and McDonald Island Fishery Working Group • Independent Conservation Member, GAB Trawl Fishery Management Advisory Committee • Principal Investigator, AFMA Research Projects (Blue Mackerel DEPM, Scallop Harvest Strategy) • Scientific Advisor, Principal Investigator, Department of Natural Environment and Resources Tasmania (Sardine Fishery) • Independent Conservation Scientist, South Australian Marine Scalefish Management Advisory Committee Principal Investigator, FRDC Research Projects (various)
Mr John Glaister (online)	TRLWG Chair	Not declared.
Ms Brooke D'Alberto	Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics and Sciences	Nil interests.

1 Preliminaries

Welcome and apologies

1. The 19th meeting of the Tropical Rock Lobster Working Group (TRLWG 19) was opened at 9:02am on Thursday 11th December 2025, at the TSRA Board room, Thursday Island. The interim Chair Mr David Brewer (hereafter the Chair) welcomed members and observers and provided an acknowledgement of Country. Mr Les Pitt opened the meeting with a Prayer. Apologies are recorded in the table above. Meeting participants were informed that the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of assisting the preparation of meeting minutes. It was also noted that the minutes from the previous meeting can be found on the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) website.
2. The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and detailed that he was looking forward to a respectful discussion progressing and developing the management of the fishery.

Adoption of agenda

3. The WG adopted the agenda (**Attachment A**) as final.

Declarations of interest

4. The Chair advised members and observers, that as provided in PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 (FMP1), all members must declare all real and potential conflicts of interest at the commencement of the meeting. Declared conflicts of interest are detailed in the meeting participant's table.

Action items and management history timeline

5. The WG noted the status of actions arising from previous meetings. The WG agreed with the recommendation to remove Action item 2 and 3 and noted that the remaining items would be progressed under Agenda Item 6 at this meeting. It was agreed that these items 1 and 4, should be formally removed from the Action item list at a subsequent meeting, pending the outcome of discussion under agenda item 6. The WG noted that the TRLRAG updated Management Timeline and did not suggest any further additions to the timeline.

2 Updates from Members

6. The RAG noted verbal updates provided by traditional inhabitant and industry members and observers regarding the performance of the TRL fishery during the 2024-25 fishing season, and start of 2026 season in particular that:
    a. The current 2026 season has been a bit slower with a substantial decline in the catches compared to last year. Industry's view is that it is going to be a tough year with low expected volumes;
    b. Observation that the slow start is due to the high water temperature – crayfish will stay in the cool deep water and it is hard for free divers to find fish – the cray will not stay on the reef at these temperatures;
    c. There has only been limited dive time and that there have been observations of lots of sand incursion into previously fishable grounds. The sand has also moved into areas where it has not been seen in the past, i.e. area 16. The view is that if we get a decent Nor-wester it might move the sand away. Area 16 has sand and green algae that has not been seen at this time of the year previously. It is thought that the algae might have something to do with the increased water temperatures;
    d. The sand and the algae are blocking the ledges and holes for lobsters to go into; and

e. Tides seem to be bigger making it difficult to locate fish.

7. Scientific Member Dr Laura Blamey highlighted a range of work/papers that CSIRO is in the process of finalising including work on the recently agreed empirical Harvest Control Rule (eHCR) that is in peer review and will be shared with the WG once published. She updated the group on a number of marine climate change webinars coming up and the latest developments and status of the Torres climate change project. The project is running till 2027 and is about halfway through. Current focus of the work is looking into past climate and how aspects such as El Nino and La Nina periods and shifting of large water bodies across the Pacific impact on tidal movements. They are also looking into long term changes around temperatures and removing seasonal influences from data to explore trends over time;
8. TSRA has been very busy across all TS fisheries not just TRL, the role of TSRA at the meeting is to support the TIB Fishers and their recommendations,
9. AFMA Manager Torres Strait Compliance, Mr Lyndon Peddell joined the meeting and gave an update on the domestic and foreign compliance program. He described some of the work they do in terms of inspections and at sea patrols and detailed how the program relies heavily on Queensland Police and Australian Border Force to complete their role. He set out that tasking and priorities are based on a risk approach and that one of the most important things fishers can do to help the program is to report incidents of illegal activity through the CRIMFISH Hotline.
10. Industry members highlighted their strong concerns that not enough is being done to address Illegal fishing and that there is a need for strong physical presence in Torres Strait to do this.
11. It was noted that Maritime Boarder Command (MBC) is responsible for prioritising resources to respond to incidents and that continuing to report incidents assists with MBC understanding of the level and frequency of events.
12. The working group noted the update and highlighted its continued frustration at lack of on the ground response to IUU in the Torres Strait while noting the constraints for fisheries compliance staff.
13. The WG recommended that increased communications be rolled out in relation to the CRIMFISH reporting hotline through the community and that MBC be invited to an upcoming meeting of the WG to provide an update on broader Government IUU responses.

Action Item: MBC invited to an upcoming meeting of the TRLWG.

14. The WG thanked Mr Peddell for the presentation and the work that he and his team provide to Torres Strait Fisheries.
15. Mr Posu from the National Fisheries Authority (NFA) of PNG detailed their progress completing Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for their TRL Fishery including addressing issues around proving chain of custody and development of an eco-label for Daru western province sector of the fishery. He noted that this information is available on the NFA website. He also noted recent changes to their licensing arrangement that require Fishers to have boats to hold a licence and that it is expected that this will reduce incidents of IUU on the TSPZ reefs. It was also noted that a new NFA command centre would open on Daru Island – this centre will have vessel capabilities and monitor fishing in the dogleg and TSPZ.

3 Catch summary for 2024-25 fishing season

16. The WG noted the latest catch summary information for the fishery in the agenda paper 3a.

4 Outcomes of TRLRAG 41

17. The WG noted a summary of the outcome of the TRLRAG 41 meeting held on 9-10 December presented by the TRLRAG Chair Dr Tim Ward. A copy of the presentation is at **Attachment B**. Key aspects of the presentation covered:
    a. overview of the TRL climate and ecosystem status report;
    b. CPUE analysis;
    c. outcomes and results from the latest annual survey;
    d. application of the empirical Harvest Control Rule and Recommended Biological Catch; and
    e. updated 5-year strategic research priorities, including the addition of a priority on quantification of IUU impacts on TRL sustainability.
18. The WG thanked the Chair for comprehensive summary of outcomes from the recent RAG meeting, particularly the explanation of the methods and procedures undertaken to complete the most recent survey and ensure consistency with previous CSIRO Surveys. The WG was keen to thank the new provider, Fishwell Pty Ltd for the high-quality work undertaken in completing this year's survey.
19. The WG made the following comments regarding the recent survey work:
    a. Request for the survey provider to include a graph of live and tailed lobster catch in their next CPUE analysis. It was also noted that the ABARES Fishery Status Reports also contains summary catch details and sales price information for tailed and live lobster.
    b. a range of variability and changes impacting the fishery including the sand incursions into previously fishable ground and that in some cases where sand has been previously the cray haven't come back. The Scientific Members noted that sand incursions are worrying for lobster abundance, but that they are variable, and they are one of multiple factors that influences what the abundance is doing. The 0+ index was down last year so it is not surprising that the 1+ is down this year. It is not unusual to get big fluctuations, and you can see this in the 1 + from the 2015 years. Other factors such as climate that can be considered to influence low survey counts, for example the 2015 temperature and currents as well was a big El Nino year were potentially factors at play here. The WG noted that the low 1+ for 2026 was not unprecedented.
    c. If the survey was conducted later in the year, there would be more lobsters around as the water is cooler after the monsoon has passed. Scientific and Management Members reiterated that the long-standing survey has been a reliable source of information to inform catch setting for the fishery and that there is no reason to change the timing of the survey.

5 Total Allowable Catch 2025-26

20. The WG Noted:
    a. the recently determined 200 tonne total allowable catch (TAC) for tropical rock lobster (TRL) in Australian waters;
    b. Advice from the TRLRAG on the recommended biological catch (RBC) for the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) TRL Fishery for the 2025-26 season based on the application of the revised empirical Harvest Control Rule (eHCR); and
    c. That to date, based on previous TRLRAG advice, other sources of mortality (e.g. traditional and recreational catch of TRL) have not been deducted from the RBC when Recommending a global TAC.

21. **In line with the RBC recommendation from the eHCR the WG recommended a global total allowable catch for the TSPZ fishery for the 2025-26 Season of 398.3 tonnes.**

6 Management Priorities

22. The WG noted that a review of management controls currently applied to the TRL Fishery has been ongoing since TRLWG 10 (December 2021) and that the main proposals that have been raised relate to changes to the hookah season dates, removal of periodic moon-tide hookah closures and extension of the TIB free dive season, but that due to lack of industry support, and competing management priorities (i.e. revising the TRL eHCR), these proposals have not progressed to date.

23. The WG noted a detailed proposal from TVH industry (**Attachment C**) outlining the need for considered action to remove unnecessary regulation and process that constrain the productive and efficiency of the industry (see Attachment C). Following from this paper it was noted that two key input controls should be considered in detail as to if they are meeting the management needs and objective of the fishery, namely the January Hookah closure and moon-tide hookah closure around peak Chinese New Year periods of the fishery.

24. TIB Members had a breakout session to discuss the matter.

25. TIB Members were not supportive of any changes to the current closures or wider management arrangements as this was not the desire of wider Torres Strait Community.

26. The Chair asked how the issue could be better explored and discussed with wider community in terms of communication with a view to better informing WG discussion on this issue in the future. In terms of the TVH proposal the Chair requested TVH consider developing a more detailed paper around marketing opportunities and what it would mean at the TIB fisher level if the proposed changes were made.

Action Item: TVH industry members to consider developing a more detailed paper to explain the implications of proposed management changes to TIB fishers.

27. The WG briefly discussed current vessel length restrictions and requirements around towing live fish cages but did not support any further changes to current management arrangements as described in Attachment 6a to the WG paper.

28. The WG also noted a management process issue around granting a TIB licence and the role of regional councillors and mayors in signing TIB forms to authenticate traditional inhabitant status and a way to streamline the TIB application process. It was agreed that this issue be added to the list of management priorities and that alternative options to the current system be explored as part of the review of management priorities

Action Item: AFMA to add TIB licencing form process around requirements to hold a licence for traditional inhabitant to Management review list.

29. Noting that the issues were not going to be further progressed at this meeting the AFMA Member proposed that AFMA prepare a detailed discussion paper exploring the various management proposals in more detail, including addition of new issues like spatial management and marketing. This approach was with a view to allowing more time for members to be better informed and discuss with their stakeholders prior to a focussed WG discussion of the issues.

30. The WG was happy with AFMA progressing the proposed discussion paper and updated process to progress this issue. Mr Posu offered to follow up with the PNG Audit Certification team around how PNG market access is operating.

Action item: AFMA to prepared updated discussion paper and process to progress review of TRL management arrangements.

7 Research Priorities

31. The WG noted TRLRAG's updated research priorities as detailed in Dr Ward's summary under Agenda Item 4. **The WG made no further changes to the updated TRLRAG priority list.**

8 Other business

32. The Guda maluylgal Member asked that the current AFMA policy limiting buyers' ability to help the TIB sector with vessels, fuel etc be changed. As there was some confusion within the group as to the specific policy referred to TSRA committed to working with the Member to explore the issue and provide more detail request to the WG at a later date.

Action Item: TSRA to work with the Guda maluylgal member to develop a proposed management priority issue for consideration for future amendment surrounding ability for TIB fishers to access third party support and resources which would benefit all of the fisheries within the TSvessels, fuel etc).

9 Date and venue for next meeting

33. Members noted the next meeting of the TRL WG was scheduled for 10 December 2026 on Thursday Island. Members requested that efforts be made to not hold the meeting over the neap.
34. The meeting was closed in prayer at 3:23pm on Thursday 11 December 2025.

Attachment A – Adopted agenda

TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER WORKING GROUP 19 (TRLWG 19)

Thursday 11 December 2025 | 9:00am – 5:00pm

TSRA Boardroom, Thursday Island

ADOPTED AGENDA

Agenda item	Action required	Presenter	Time allocated
1 Preliminaries			
Welcome and apologies	**Noting**	**Chair**	**9am** 5 minutes
The Chair will welcome members and observers to the 19th meeting of the TRL Working Group.			
Adoption of agenda	**Decision**	**Chair**	**905am** 5 minutes
The Working Group will be invited to adopt the draft agenda			
Declaration of interests	**Decision**	**Chair**	**910am** 15 minutes
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 advice made on the matter which is the subject of the conflict.			
Action items from previous meetings	**Noting**	**AFMA**	**925am** 15 minutes
The Working Group will be invited to note the status of action items arising from previous meetings.			
2 Updates from members and observers • Traditional inhabitant and industry members • Scientific and economic members • Government agencies • Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority • Native title	**Noting**	**All members**	**945am** 45 mins
TRL WG members and observers are invited to provide updates on matters relevant to the Torres Strait TRL fishery, including recent fishing conditions, research, management, compliance and native title matters.			
Morning Tea (10:30am – 10:45am)			

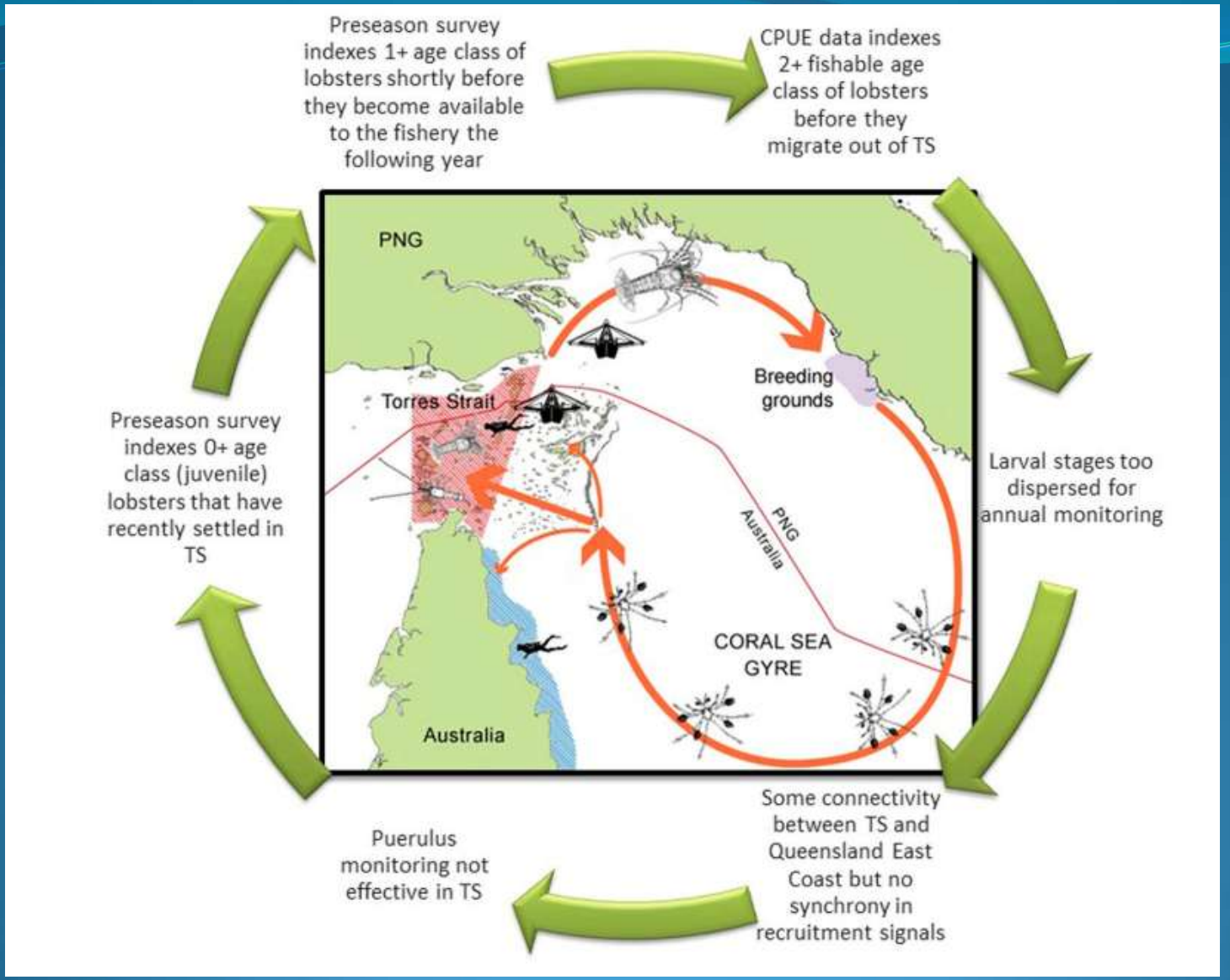
Agenda item	Action required	Presenter	Time allocated
3 Catch data for the 2024-25 fishing season	**Noting**	**-**	**Taken as read**
The WG is invited to note a summary of total catch of TRL in both the Australian and Papua New Guinean jurisdictions of the Torres Strait Protected Zone.			
4 Overview of TRLRAG 41 outcomes and advice	**Noting**	**TRL RAG Chair**	**1045am** 1 hour
The Working Group is invited to note an overview of the TRL RAG 41 outcomes to be presented by the TRL RAG chair. There is no agenda paper for this item.			
5 Total Allowable Catch.	**Recommendation**	**AFMA**	**1145am** 45 minutes
Having regard to the advice of TRL RAG 41 on the Recommended Biological Catch (RBC) for the TRL Fishery by applying the recommended revised eHCR, the WG will then be invited to provide advice on a total allowable catch (TAC) for the TRL fishery for the 2025-26 fishing season.			
Lunch (12:30pm – 1:00pm)			
6 Management priorities	**Recommendation**	**AFMA**	**1pm** 1.5 hours
The Working Group will be invited to discuss any future management priorities for the TRL Fishery including any proposed changes to management arrangements.			
7 Research Priorities	**Recommendation**	**AFMA**	**230pm** 1 hour
The Working Group will be invited to discuss and provide advice on research priorities for the TRL Fishery for the 2026/27 – 2031/32 five-year period.			
Afternoon Tea (3:30pm – 3:45pm)			
8 Other business	**Discussion**	**All members**	**345pm** 15 minutes
The Working Group will be invited to raise any other matters for consideration. There is no agenda paper for this item.			
9 Date and venue for next meeting	**Noting**	**Chair**	**400pm** 15 minutes
The Working Group will be invited to discuss suitable dates for the next working group meetings.			

TRL RAG Chair Summary for TRL WG

Dr Tim Ward

11 December 2025

Thanks to Dr Ian Knuckey and other presenters


Preseason survey indexes 1+ age class of lobsters shortly before they become available to the fishery the following year
CPUE data indexes 2+ fishable age class of lobsters before they migrate out of TS
Larval stages too dispersed for annual monitoring
Some connectivity between TS and Queensland East Coast but no synchrony in recruitment signals
Puerulus monitoring not effective in TS
Preseason survey indexes 0+ age class (juvenile) lobsters that have recently settled in TS
PNG
Torres Strait
Breeding grounds
PNG
Australia
CORAL SEA GYRE
Australia

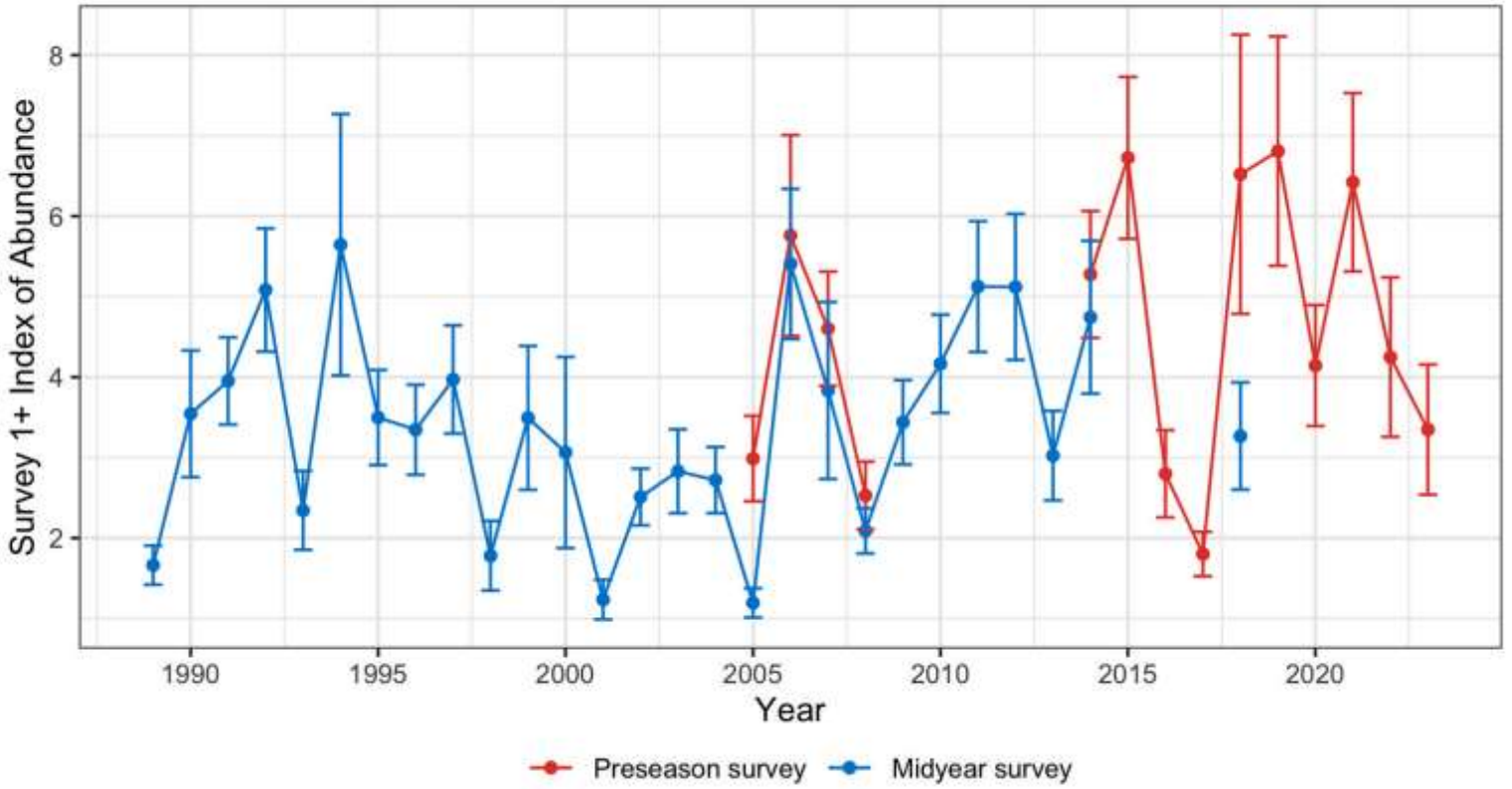
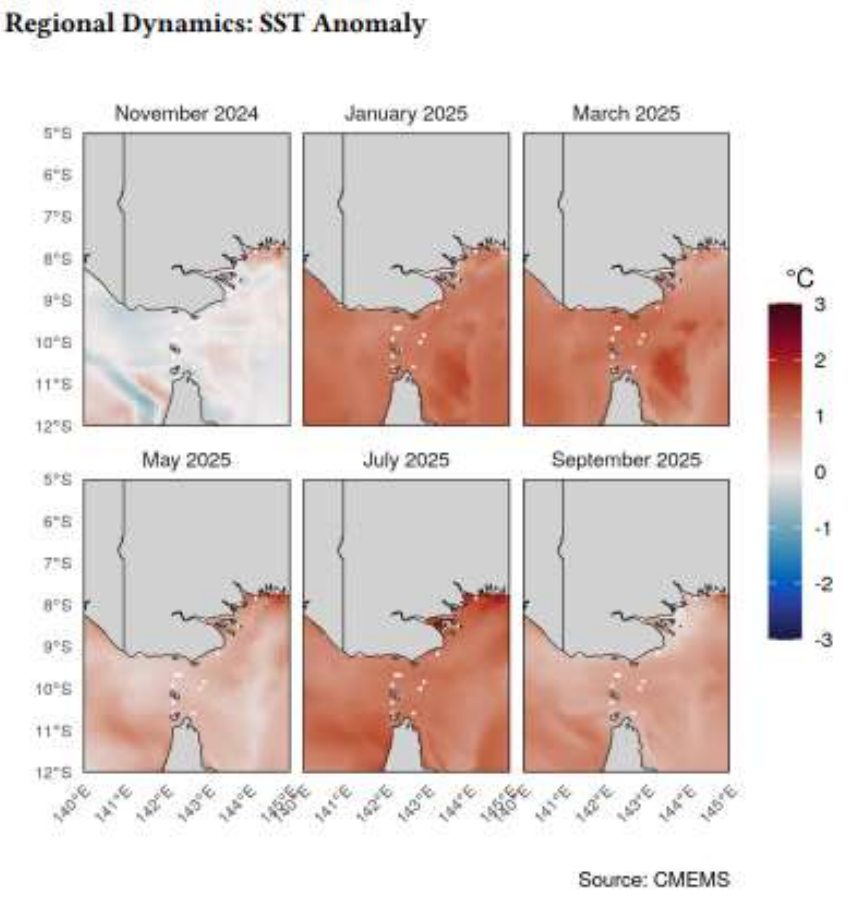
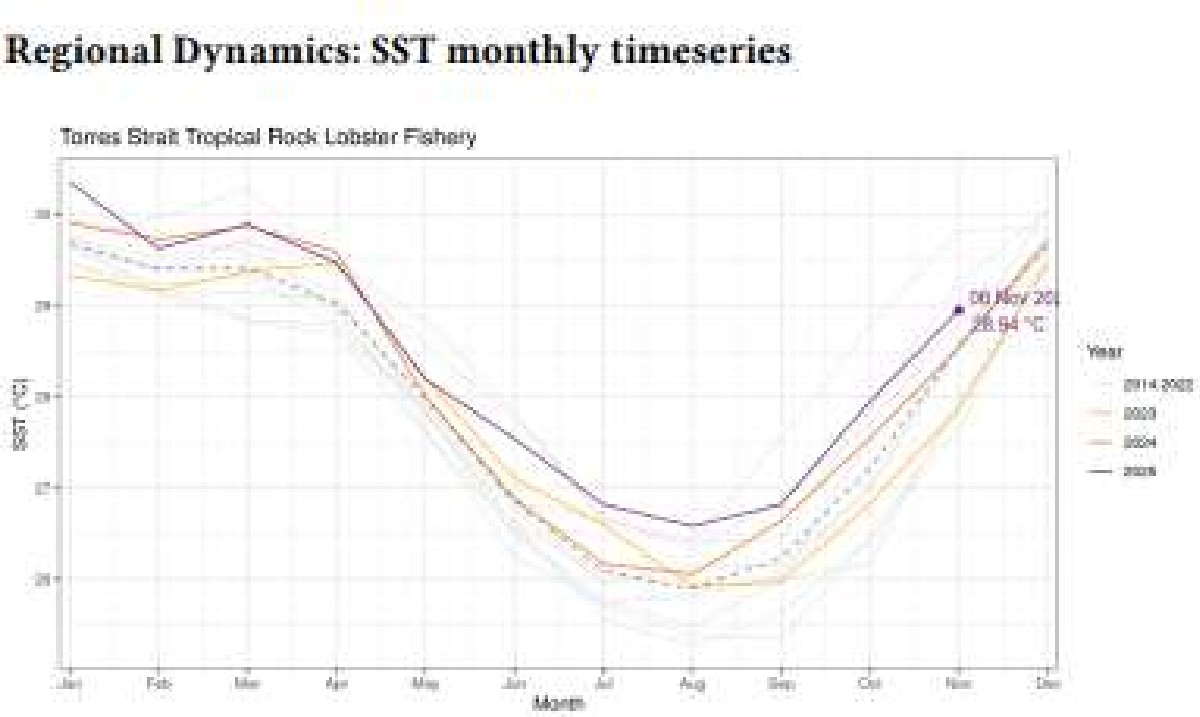


Fig. 3. Comparison of the Mid-year and Pre-season survey relative abundance of recruiting (1+) TRL.

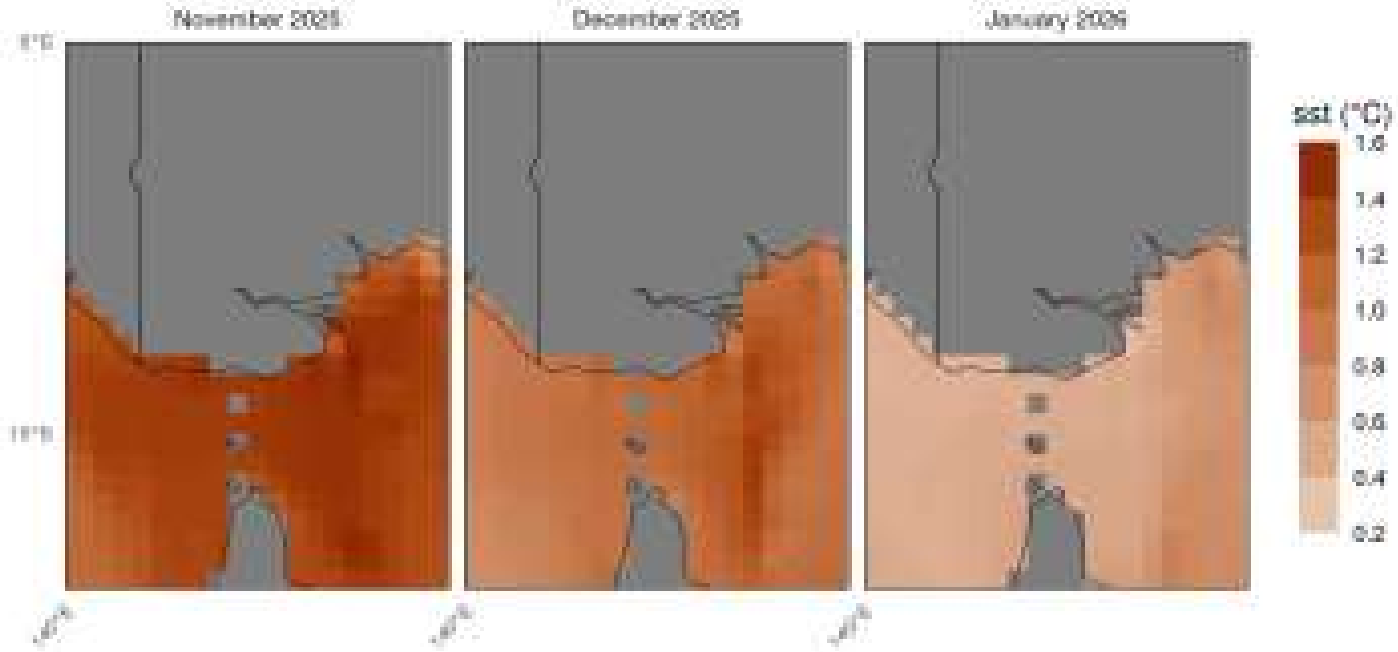
CSIRO Climate and Ecosystem Status Reports

Dr Steph Brodie



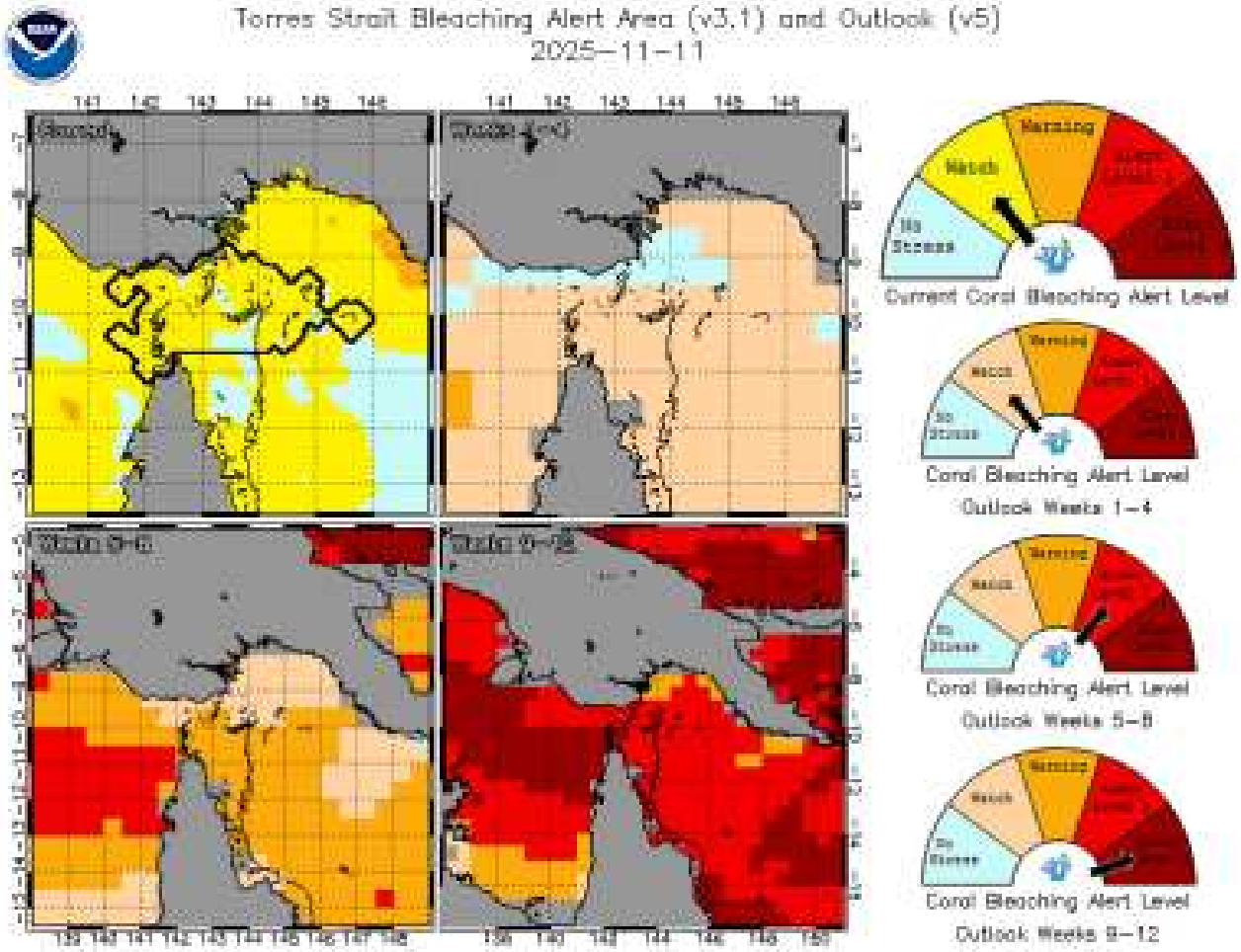


Regional Dynamics: SST Anomaly



Model: ACCESS-S (sourced from the Bureau of Meteorology)

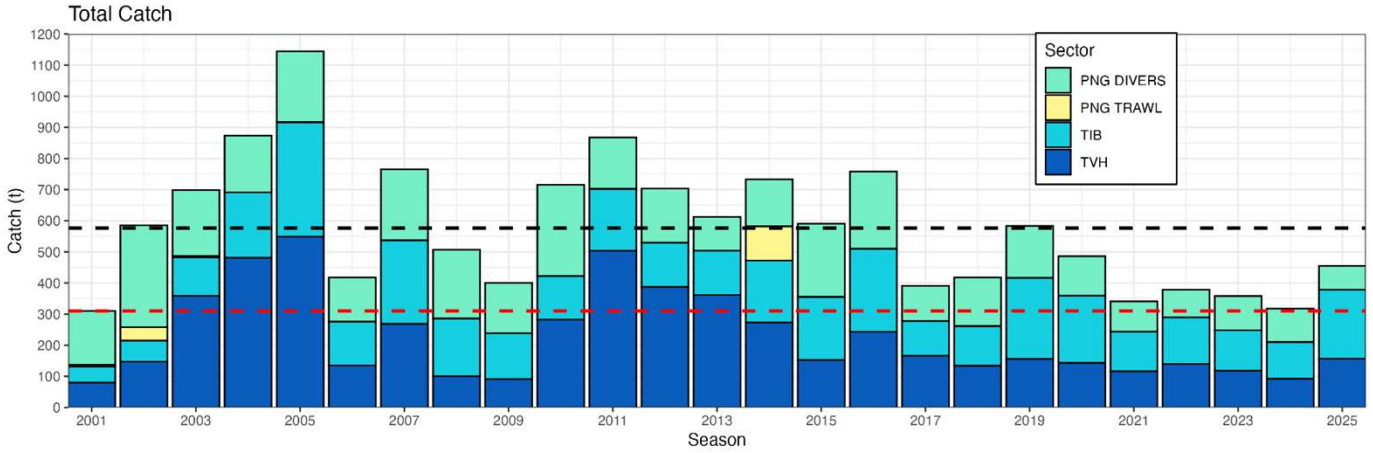
Ecosystem: Coral bleaching alert

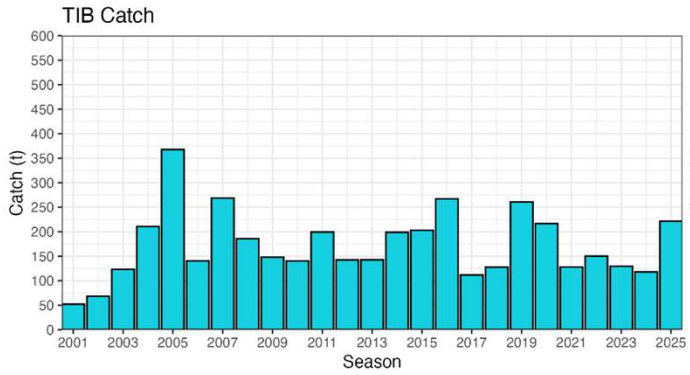


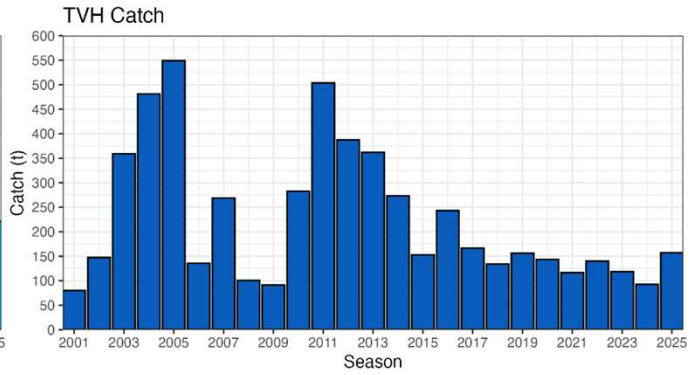
Catch and CPUE

Jonathan Smart

Catch







- Catch in 2025 was 455 t
  - TVH = 157 t
  - TIB = 221 t
- Total Catch below long-term average
  - Highest since 2020
- PNG 2025 catch estimated as 76.4 t
- Catches revised in 2024
  - Late returns for TIB and TVH
  - Reported catch for PNG

Effort and CPUE

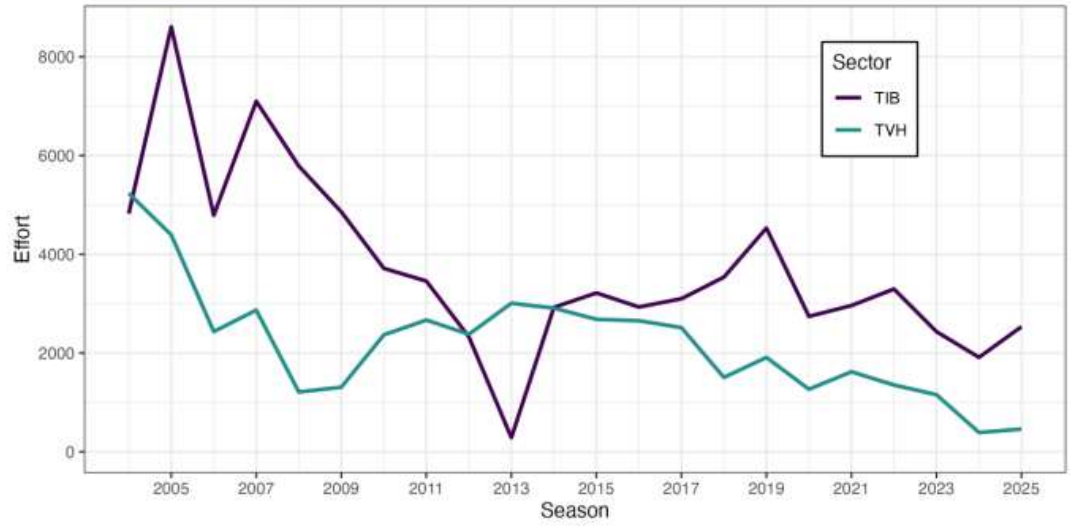


Figure 1: Annual effort trajectories for the TIB and TVH sectors

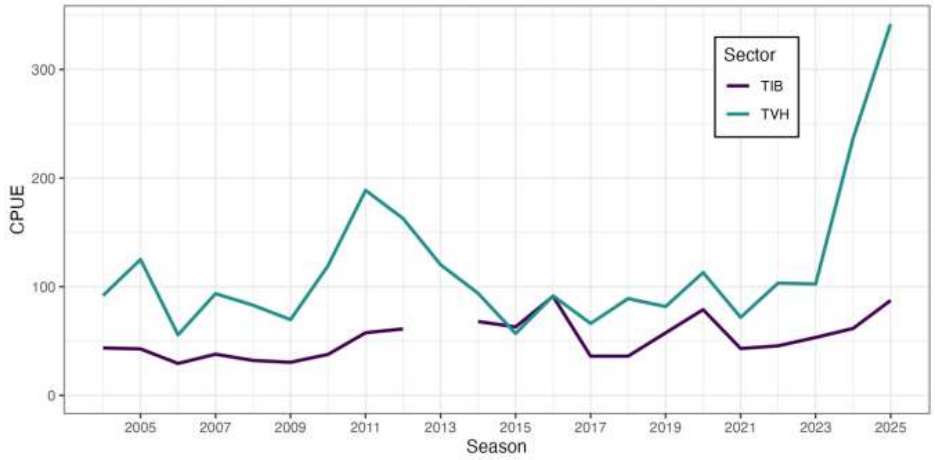


Figure 2: Annual catch per unit effort (nominal) for the TIB and TVH sectors. The 2013 CPUE is not shown for the TIB sector as it is anomalous given the low effort that season.

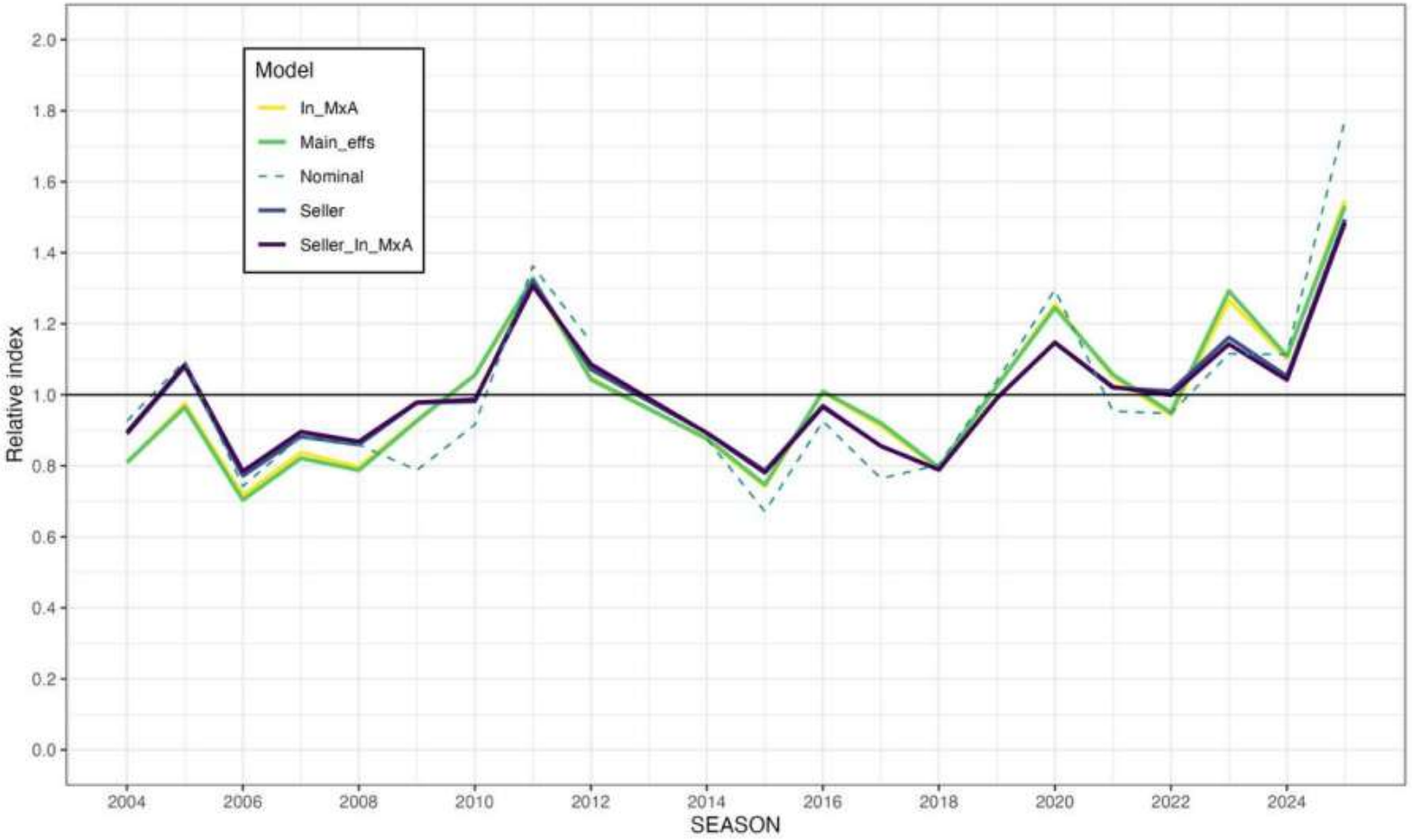


Figure 3: The relative abundance indices for the TIB sector, estimated from standardised CPUE for the Main effect, interaction, and seller GAMs from 2004 – 2025.

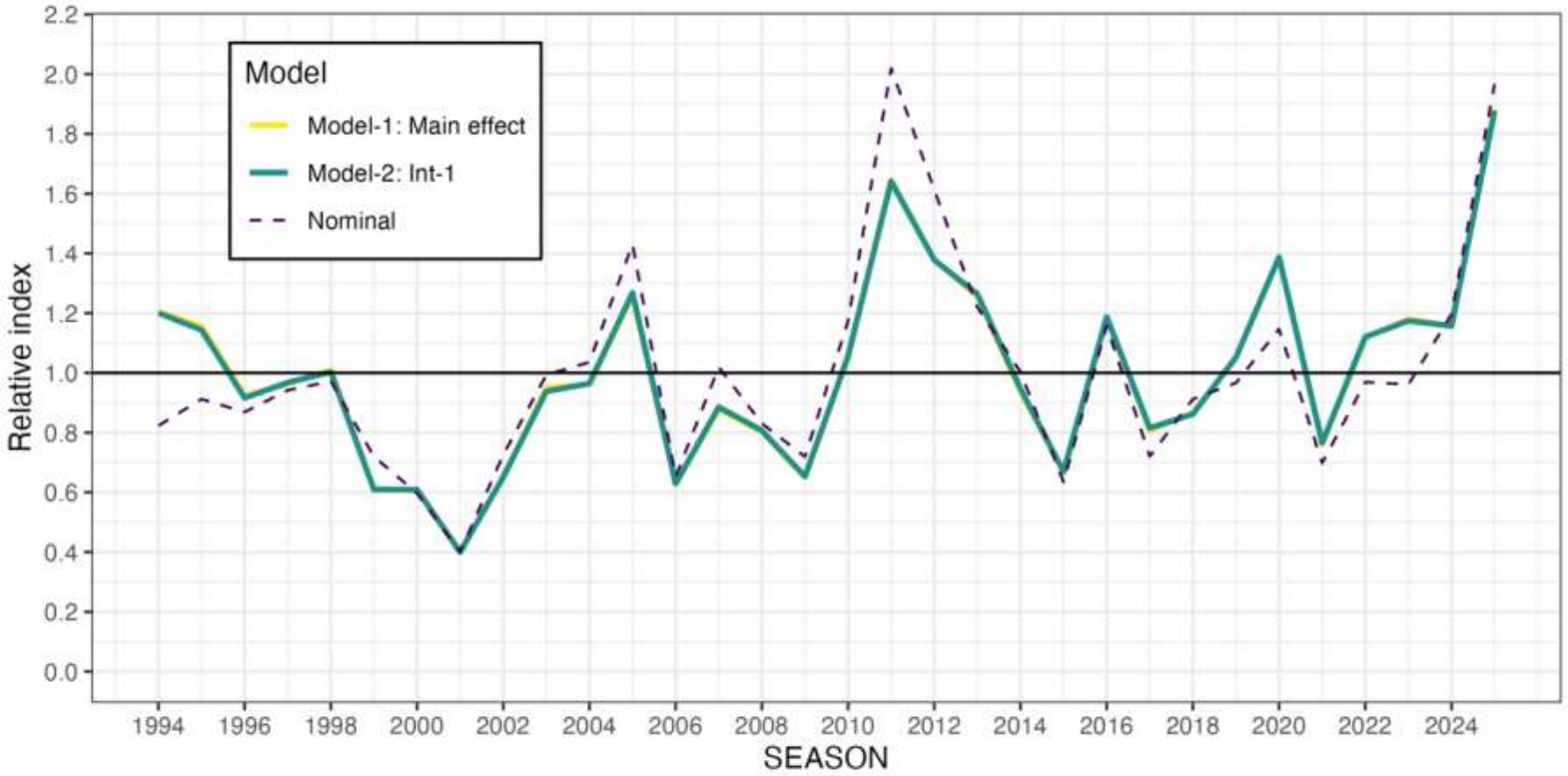
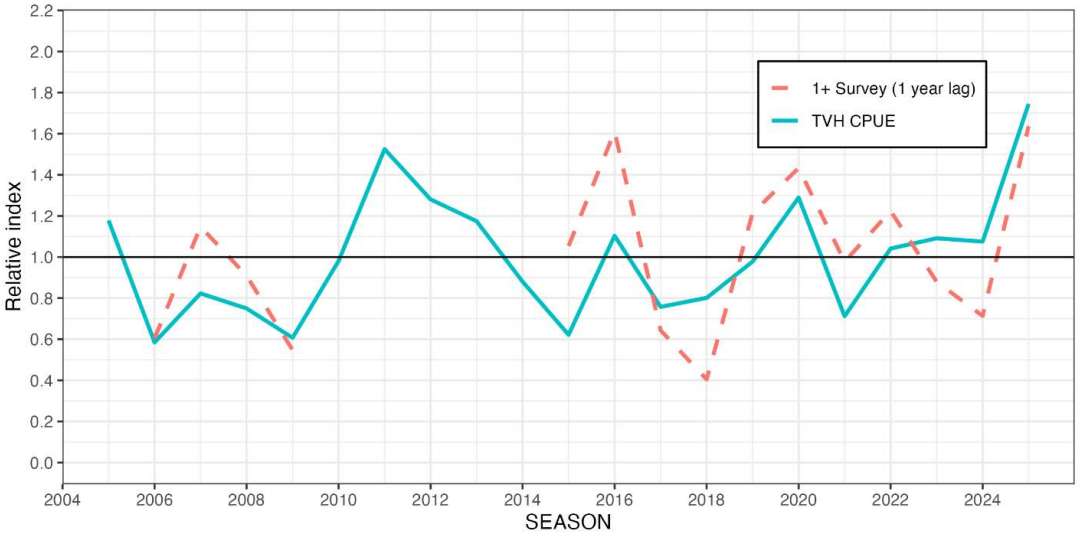


Figure 3: The relative abundance indices for the TVH sector, estimated from standardised CPUE for the Main effect and 'Model-2: Int-1' GAMs from 1994 – 2025.

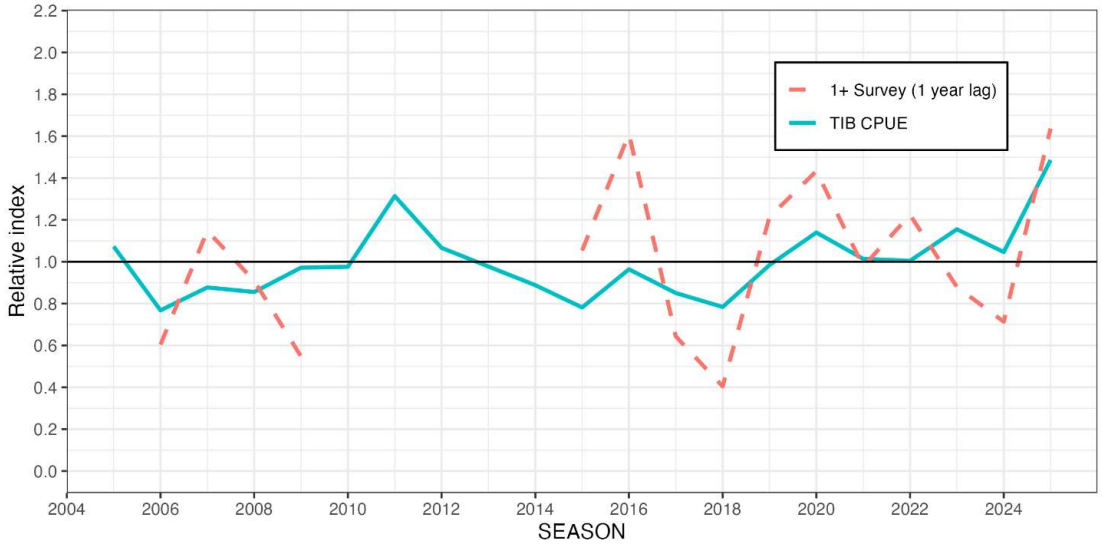
Relationship of surveys to CPUE

1-year lagged survey indices (- - -)

TVH

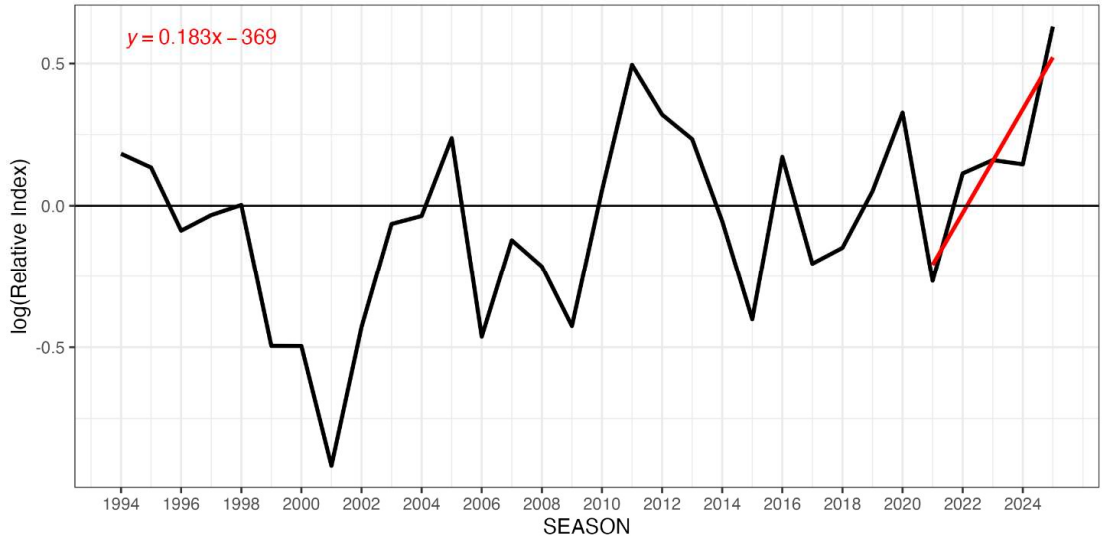


TIB

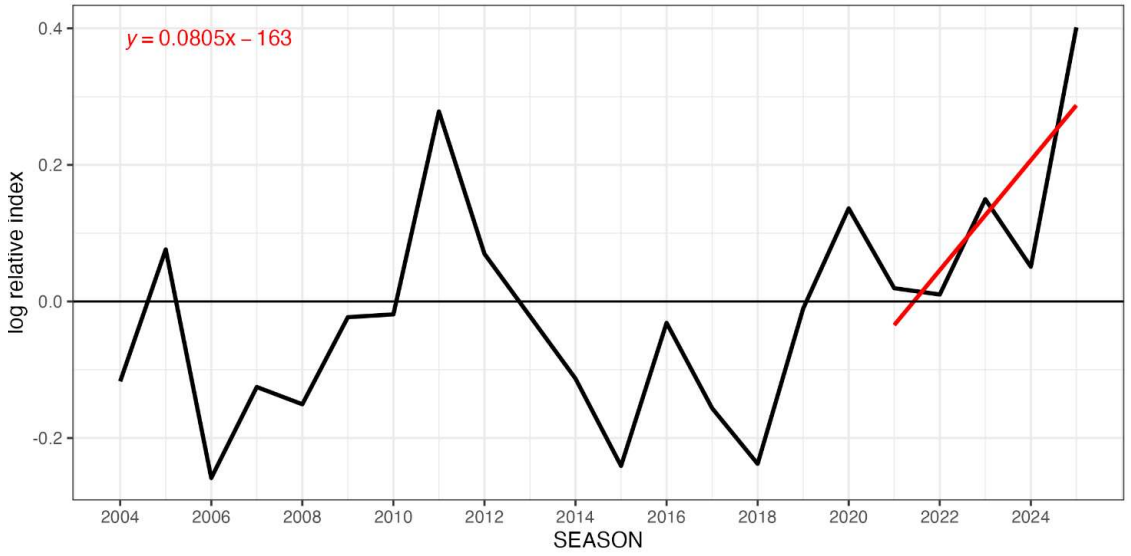


eHCR input- TIB

TVH



TIB



Survey

Ian Knuckey and Marjoleine Roos

Methods

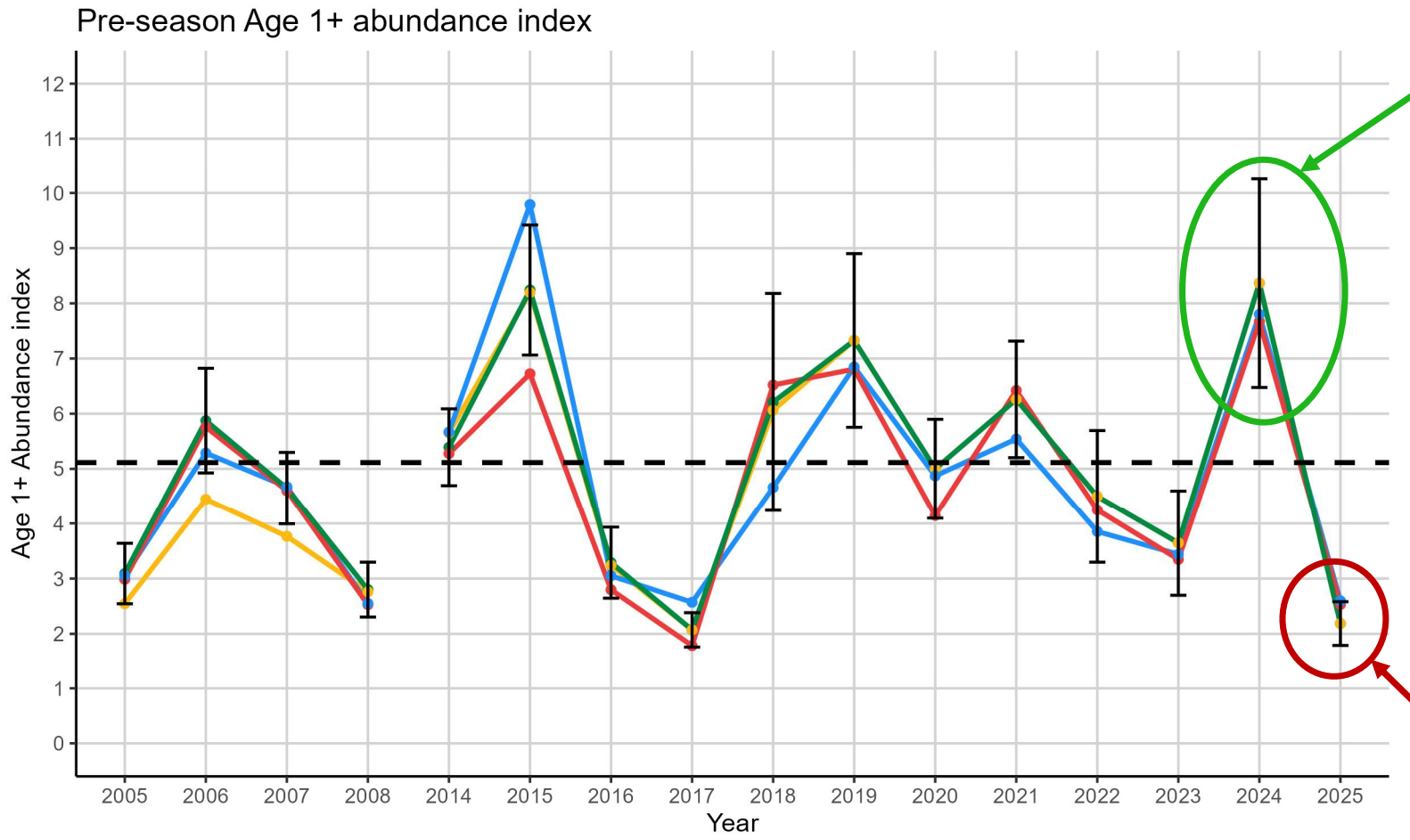
- Ensured continuity of 30-year time-series
- Replicated CSIRO methodology
- Matched design protocols equipment
- Standardised data processing
- Preserved index comparability

- Additional use of GoPro on every diver
  - Verification & validation
  - Post-survey benthic and biota calculations
  - Application of Reef

2025 Survey

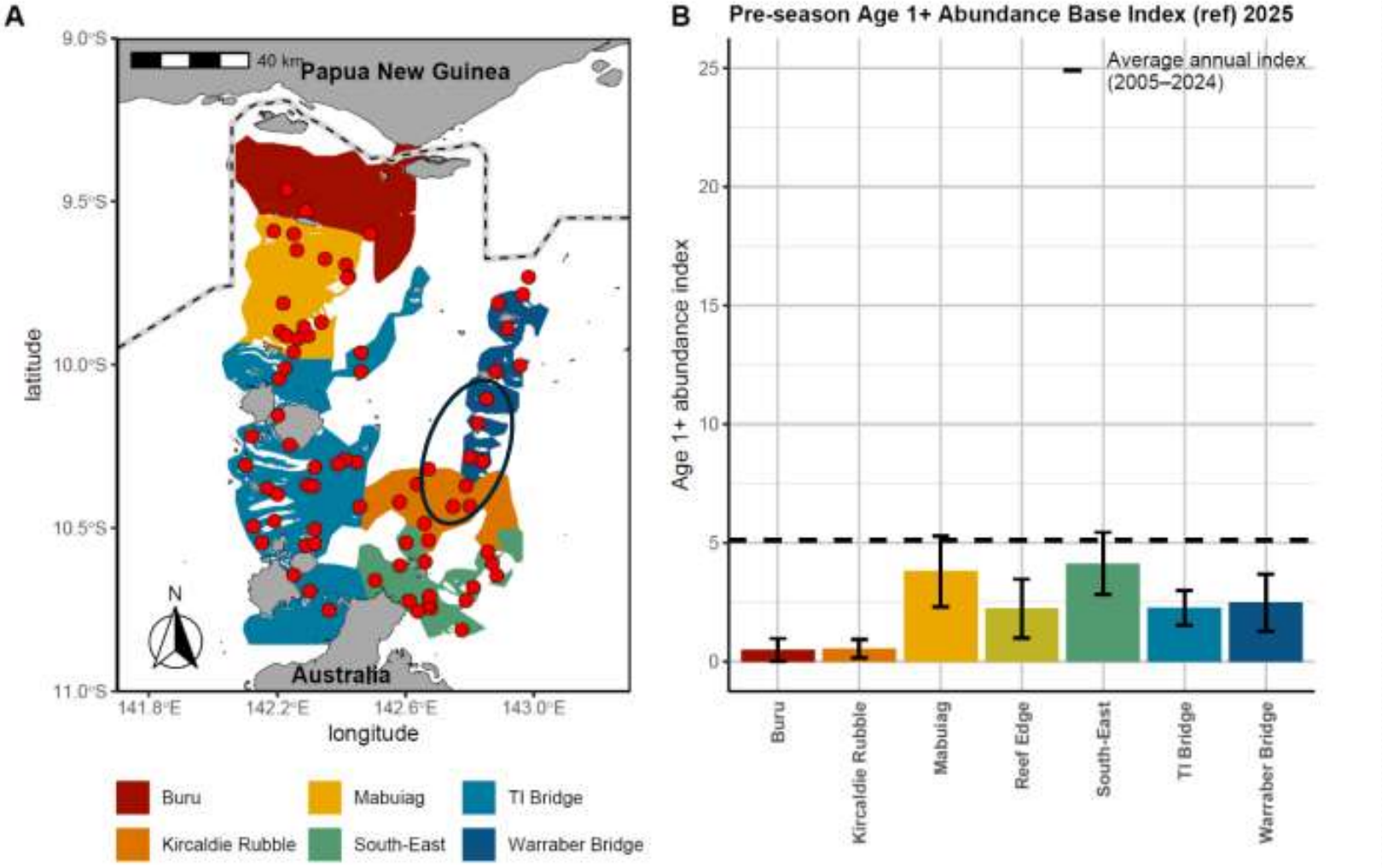
- Charter vessel: Cossack Pearl
- Skipper and crew included:
  - 3 experienced Islander divers / dory drivers
- Extremely good experience and local knowledge
- 95% transects:
  science + experienced divers
- All 77 sites completed

Age 1+ TRL – Abundance index over years



V. High 2024 1+ indicating a good 2025 season

V. Low 2025 1+ indicating a poor 2026 season


A
9.0°S
9.5°S
10.0°S
10.5°S
11.0°S
latitude
40 km
Papua New Guinea
Australia
N
141.8°E
142.2°E
142.6°E
143.0°E
longitude
Buru
Kircaldie Rubble
Mabuiag
South-East
TI Bridge
Warraber Bridge
B
Pre-season Age 1+ Abundance Base Index (ref) 2025
Average annual index (2005–2024)
Age 1+ abundance index
25
20
15
10
5
0
Buru
Kircaldie Rubble
Mabuiag
Reef Edge
South-East
TI Bridge
Warraber Bridge

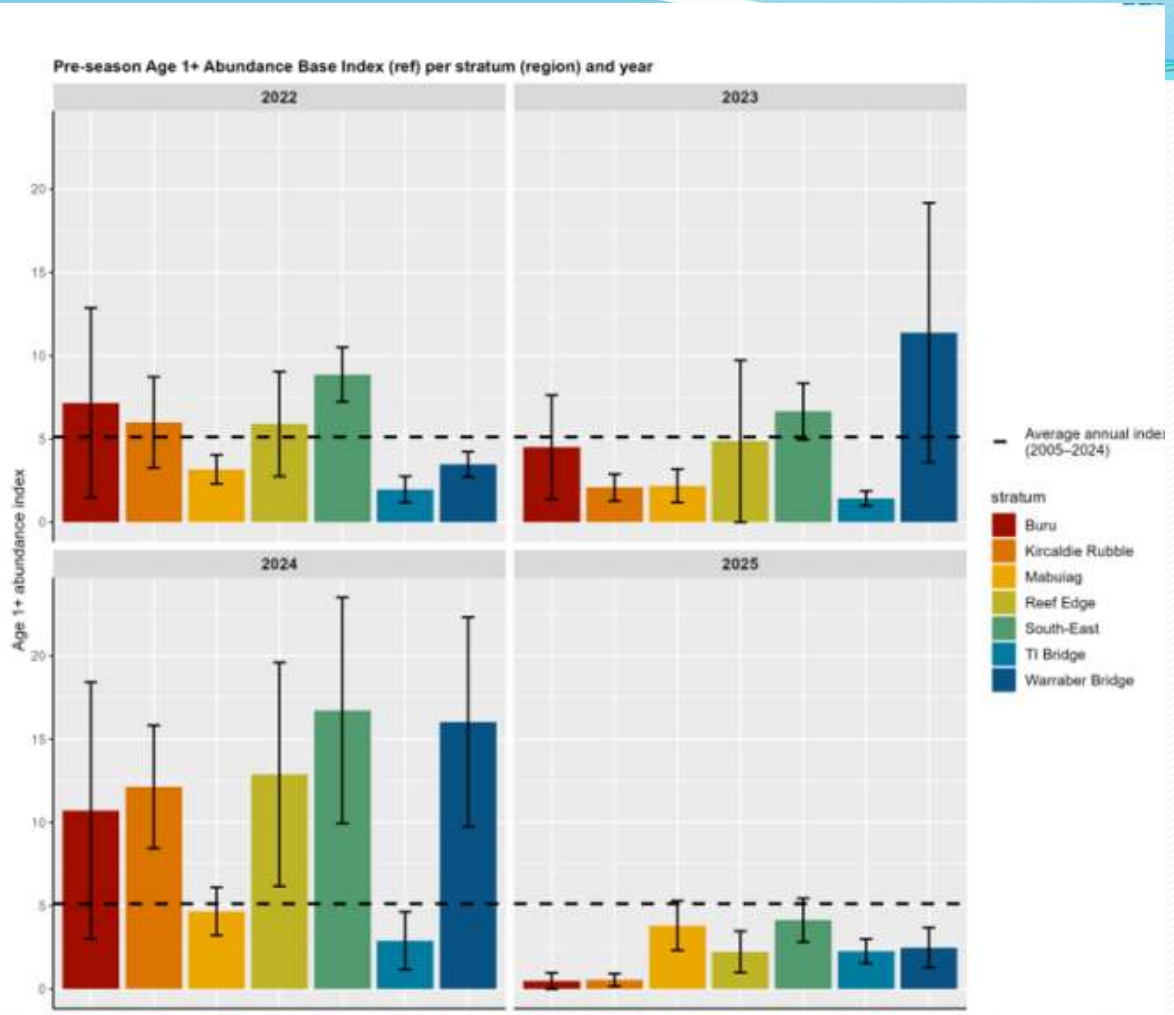


Figure 12. Age-1+ abundance indices of Torres Strait tropical rock lobster (TRL, P. ornatus) across years and strata, calculated under the Ref2024 scenario. Vertical black lines indicate standard errors, and the black dashed line shows the mean abundance index for 2005-2024 under the Ref2024 scenario.

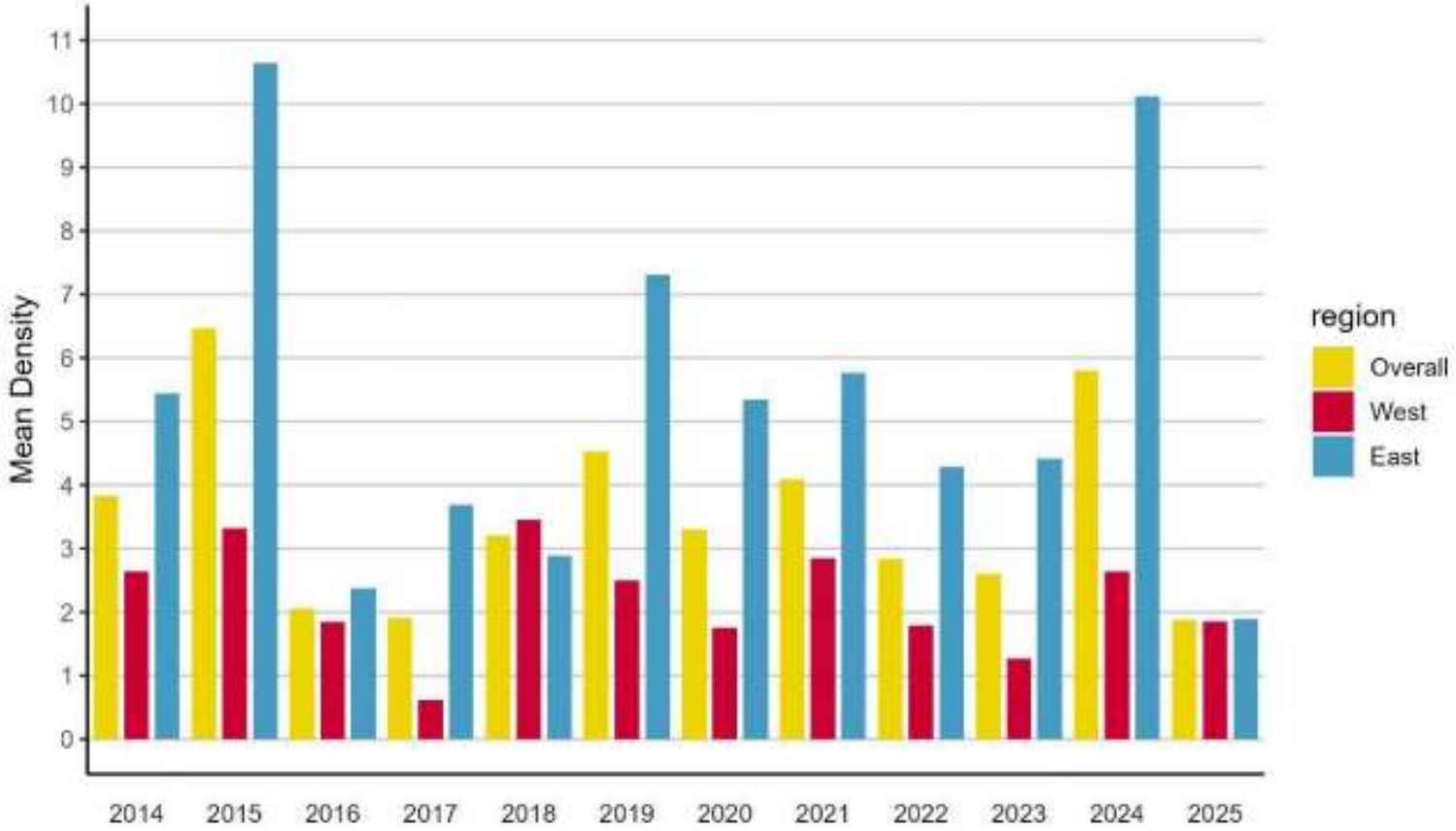
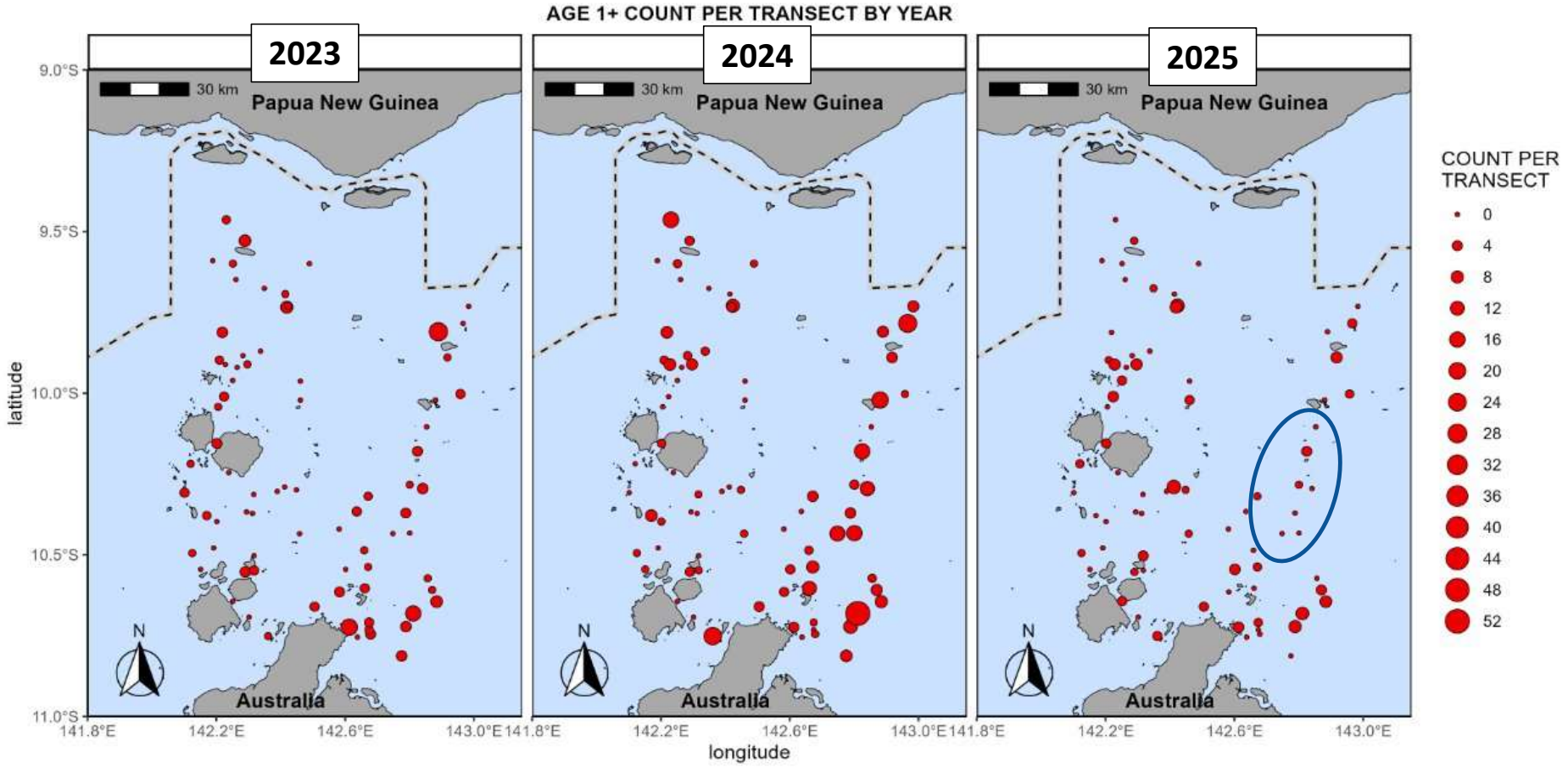
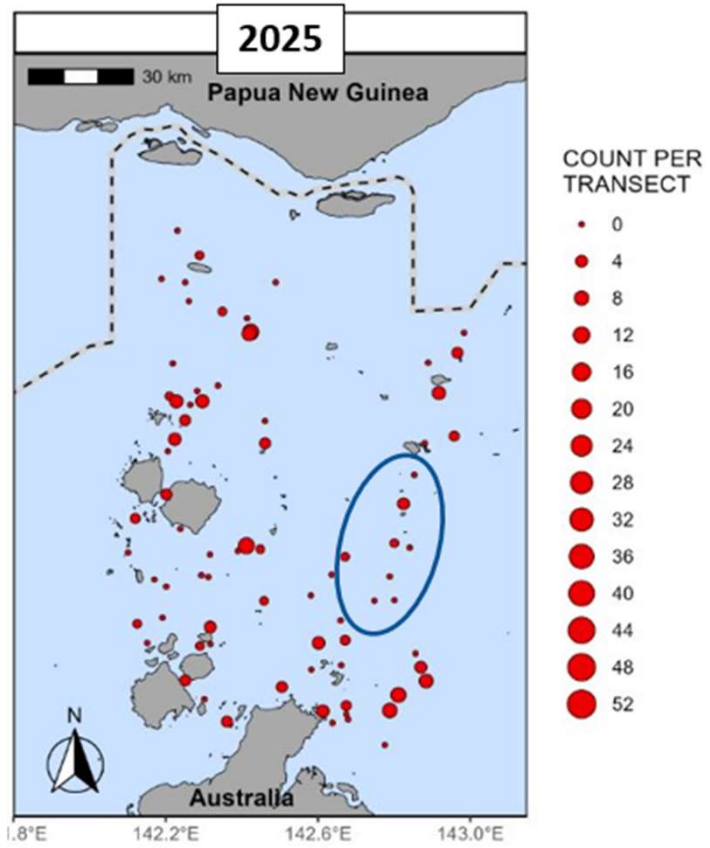


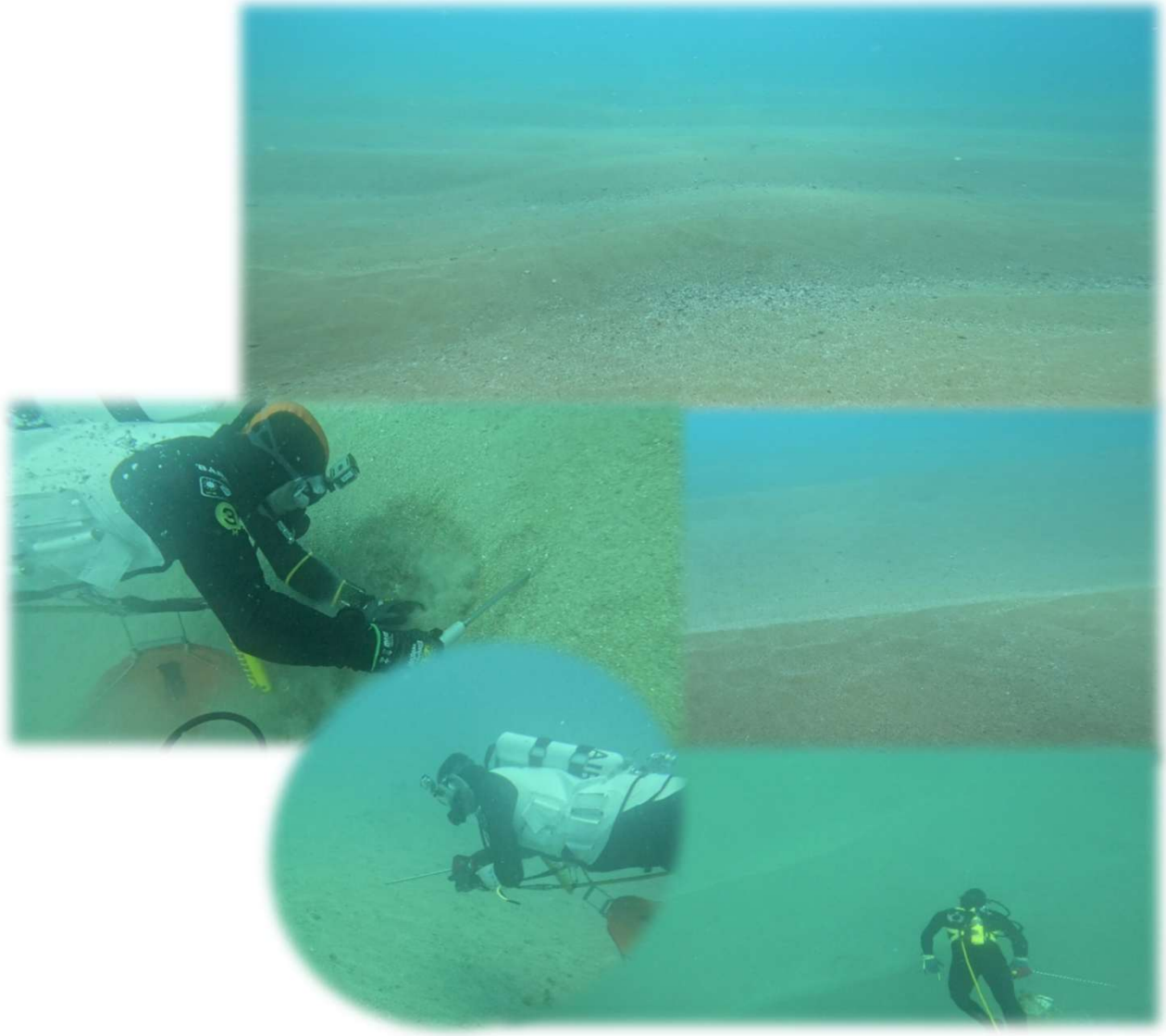
Figure 10. Mean age-1+ density (number of individuals per full transect area of 2,000 m^2) of Torres Strait tropical rock lobster (TRL, P. ornatus) for the overall survey area, and separately for the western and eastern regions.

Age 1+ TRL – Spatial patterns

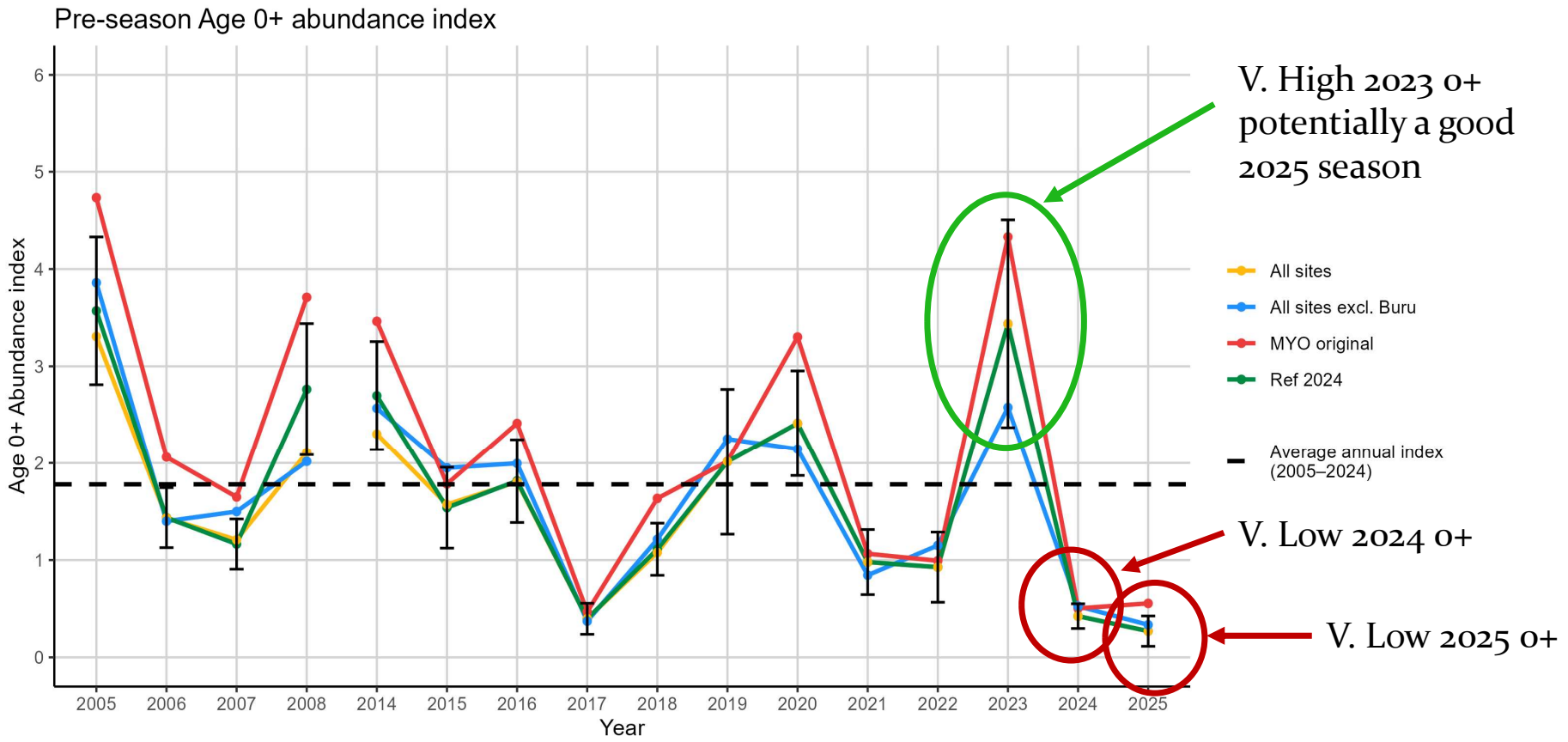


Sand incursions

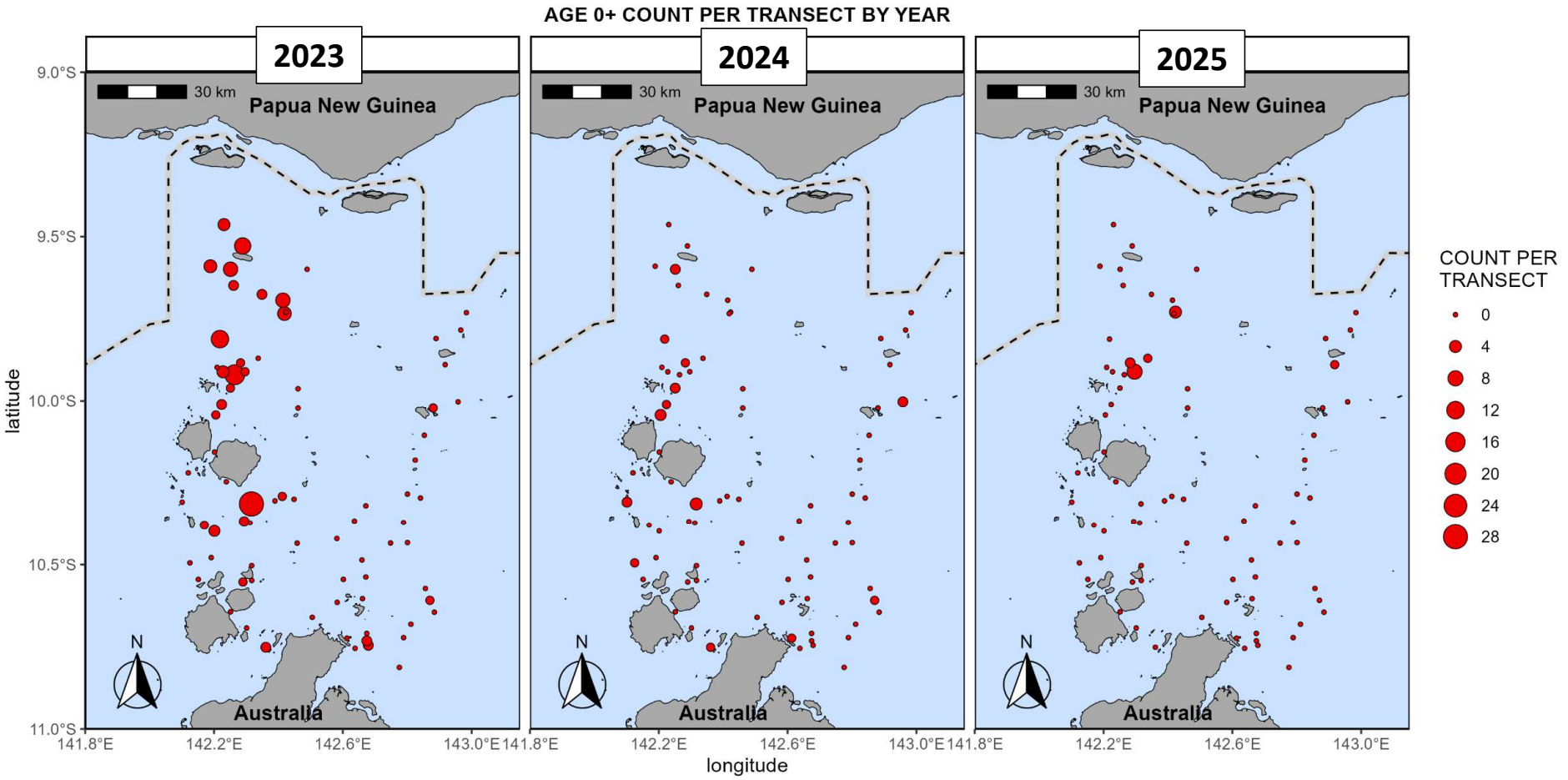




Age 0+ TRL – Abundance index over years



Age 0+ TRL – Spatial patterns



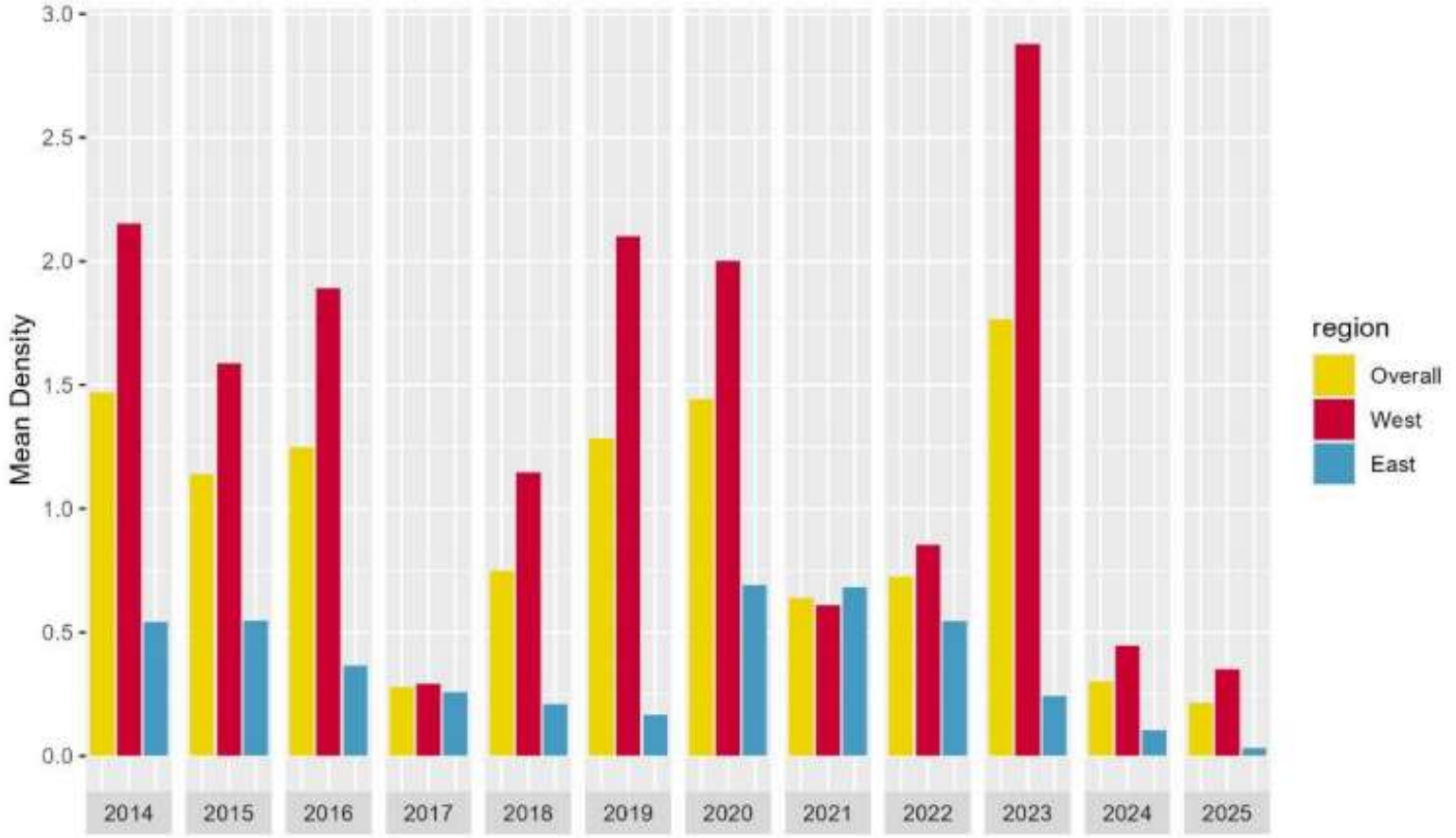
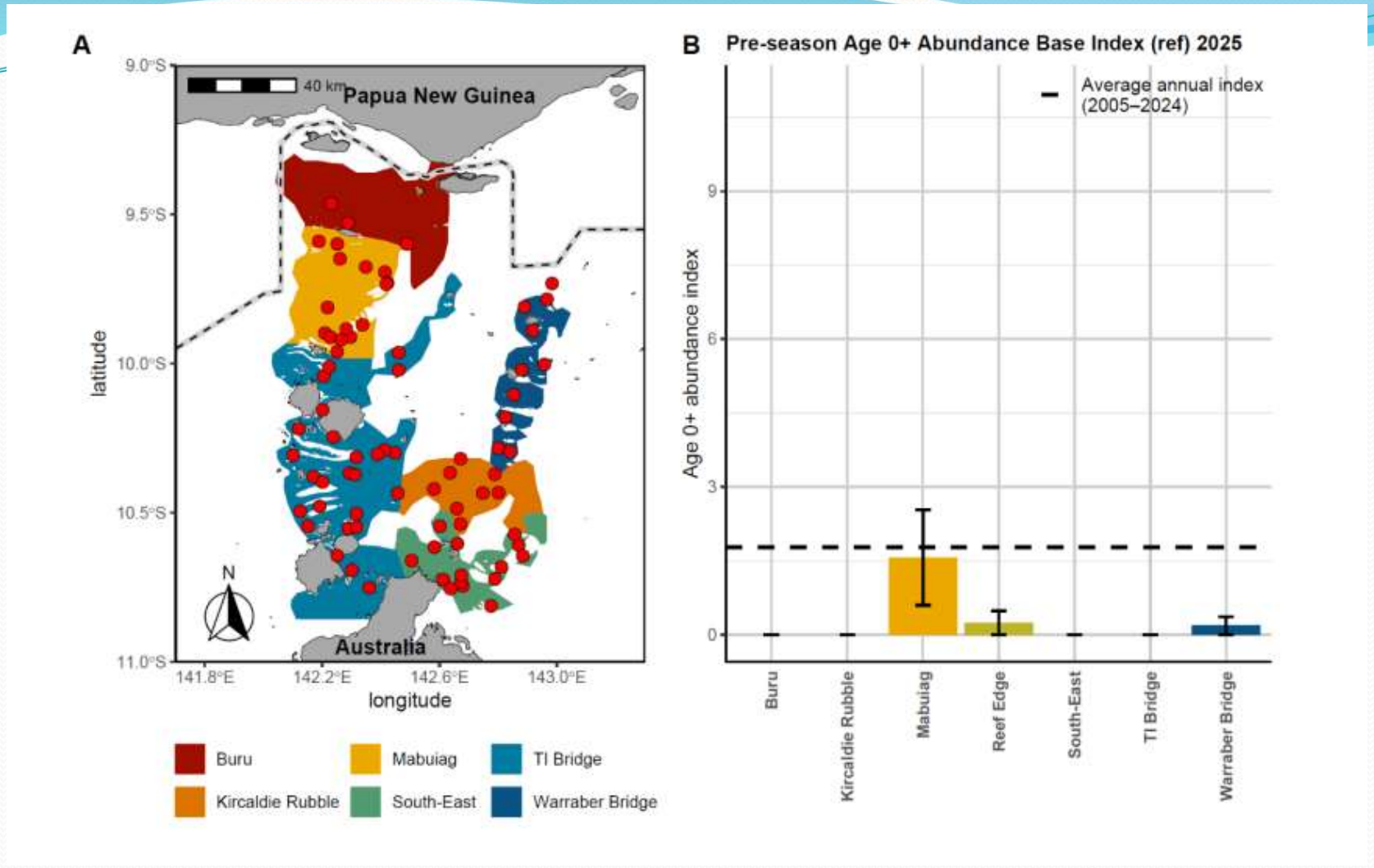


Figure 5. Mean age-0+ density (number of individuals per full transect area of 2,000 m^2) of Torres Strait tropical rock lobster (TRL, P. ornatus) for the overall survey area, and separately for the western and eastern regions.


A
9.0°S
9.5°S
10.0°S
10.5°S
11.0°S
latitude
40 km
Papua New Guinea
Australia
N
141.8°E
142.2°E
142.6°E
143.0°E
longitude
Buru
Kircaldie Rubble
Mabuiag
South-East
TI Bridge
Warraber Bridge
B
Pre-season Age 0+ Abundance Base Index (ref) 2025
Average annual index
(2005–2024)
Age 0+ abundance index
0
3
6
9
Buru
Kircaldie Rubble
Mabuiag
Reef Edge
South-East
TI Bridge
Warraber Bridge

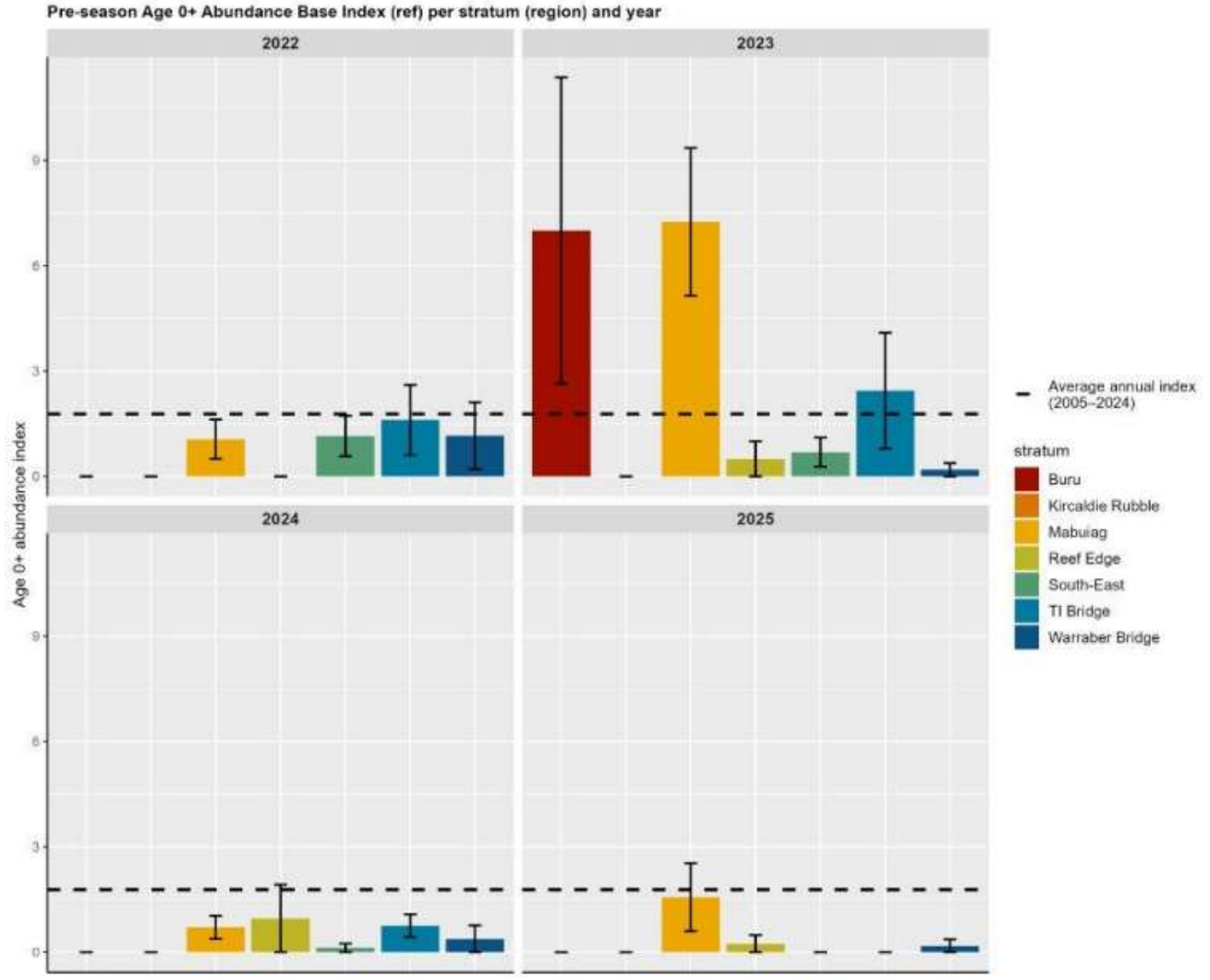


Figure 7. Age-0+ abundance indices of Torres Strait tropical rock lobster (TRL, P. ornatus) across years and strata, calculated under the Ref2024 scenario. Vertical black lines indicate standard errors, and the black dashed line shows the mean abundance index for 2005-2024 under the Ref2024 scenario.

eHCR

Ian Knuckey

eHCR Components

Four primary indices:

- **Fishery**
  - TIB standardised CPUE (10%)
  - TVH standardised CPUE (10%)
- **Survey**
  - Age 1+ pre-season survey index (70%)
  - Age 0+ preseason survey index (10%)

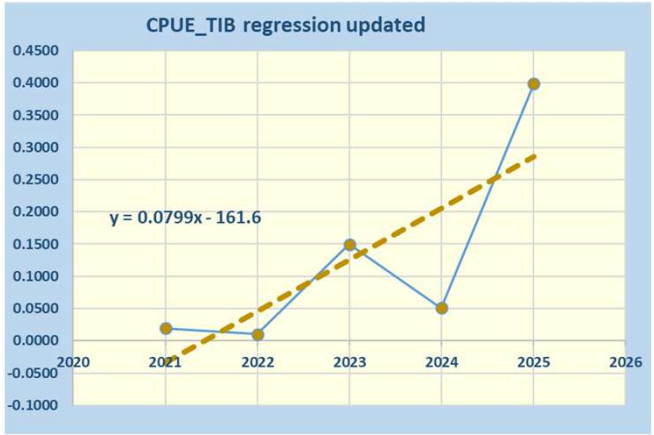
Additional inputs:

- Trend (slopes) of recent 5 years of indices
- Osprey tuning multiplier
- 1+ index / median index
- 1+ CV

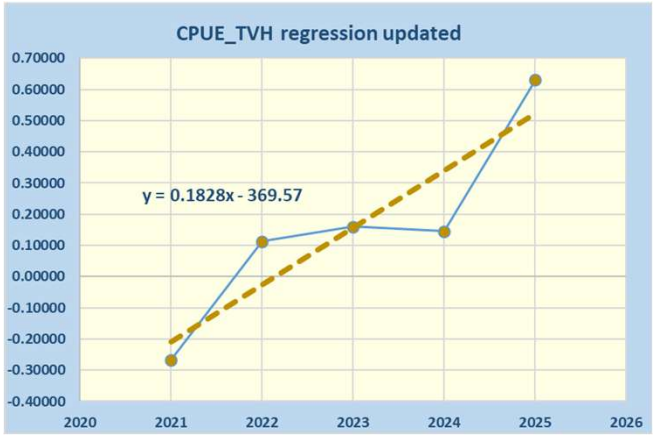
CPUE Indices

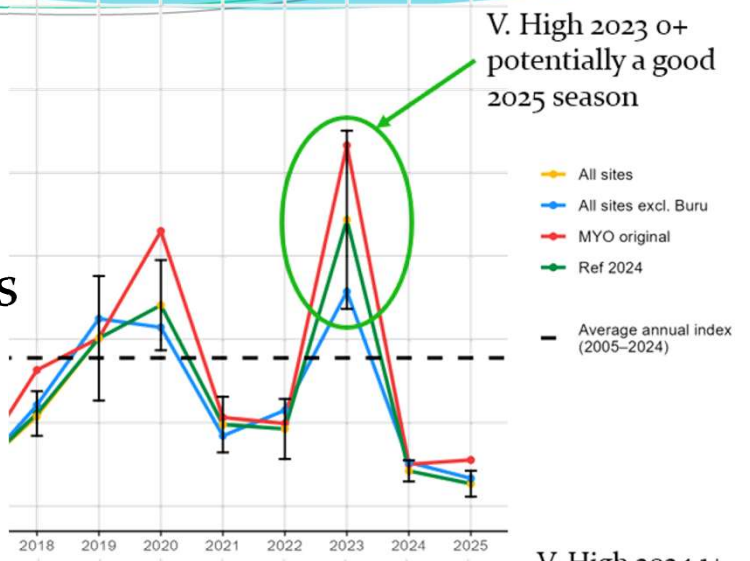
- Good 2025 season consistent with survey results
  - V. high 2023 0+ index -> V. high 2024 1+ index
  - V. high 2025 TIB CPUE index
  - V. high 2025 TVH CPUE index

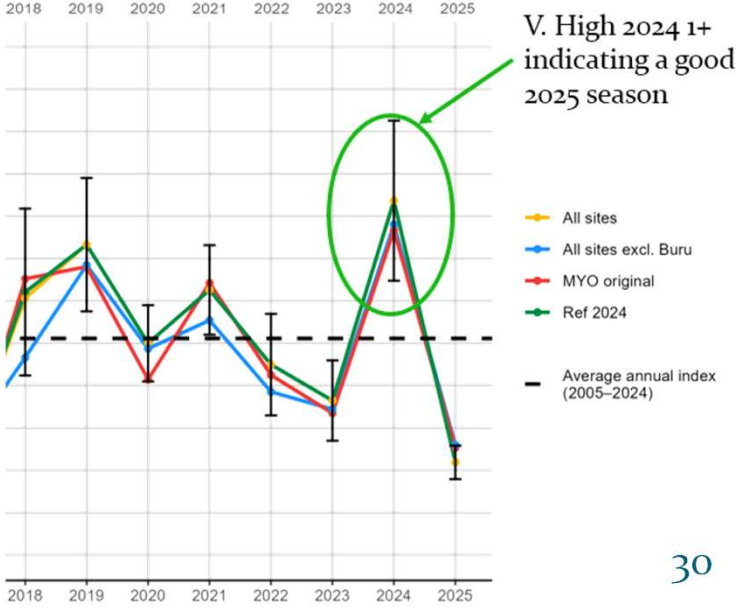
TIB



TVH



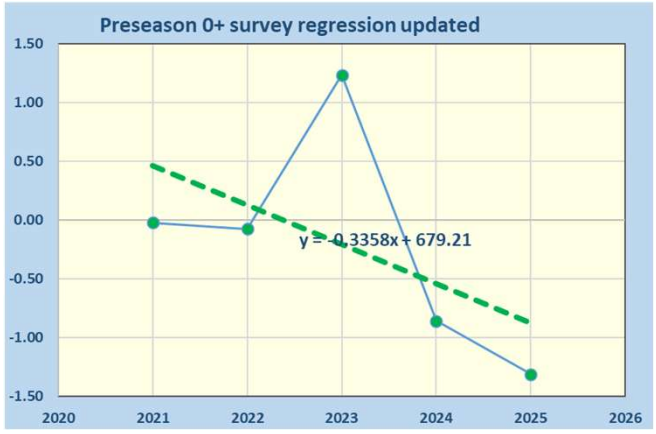




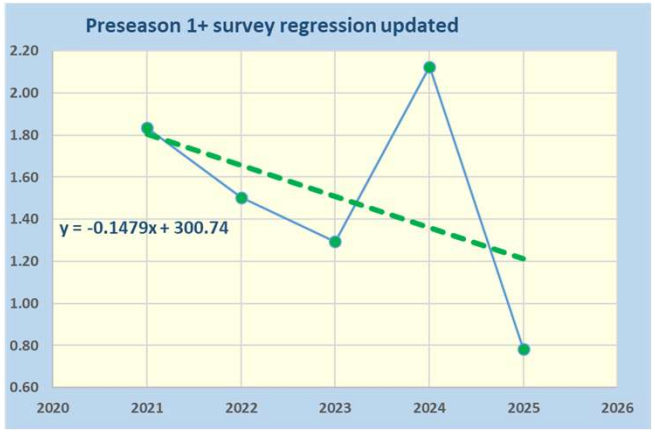
Survey Indices

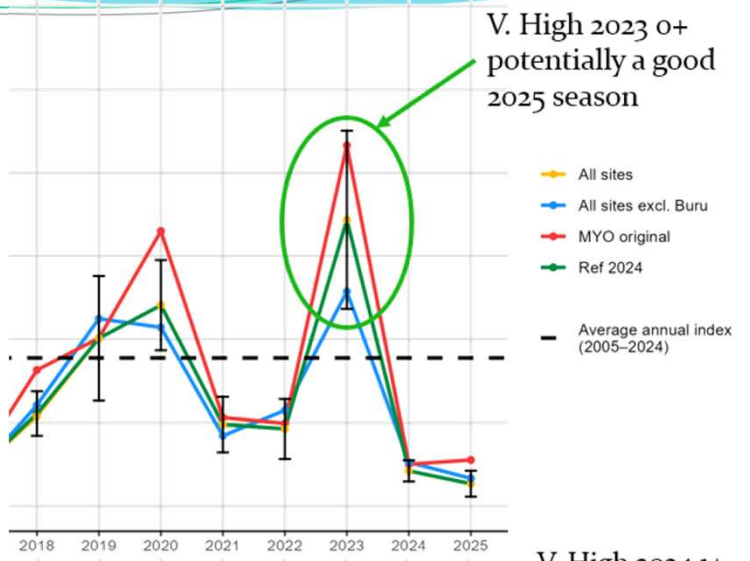
- 2025 survey consistent with 2024 results
  - V. high 2023 0+ index
  - V. low 2024 0+ index
  - V. high 2025 TIB CPUE index
  - V. high 2025 TVH CPUE index

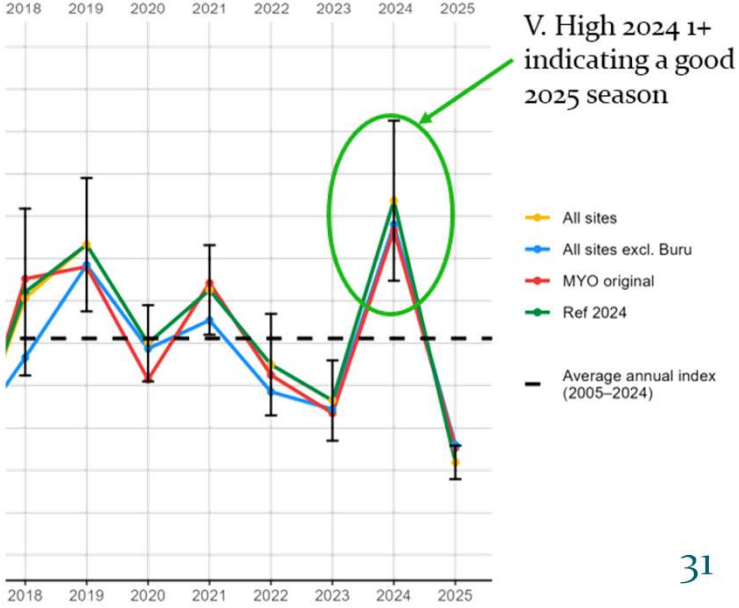
0+



1+

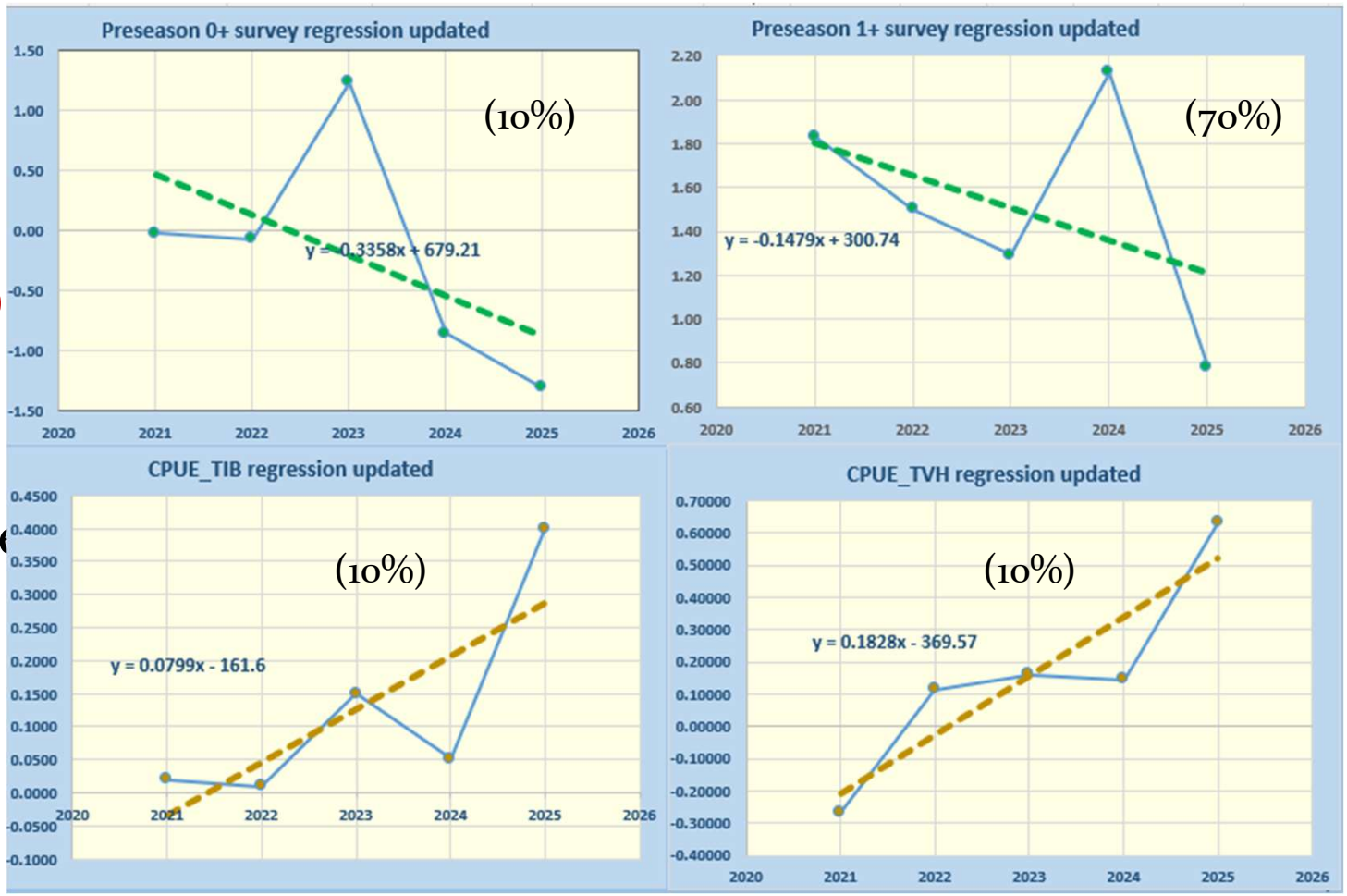






Summary

- Low 2025 survey 0+ & 1+ indices
  - 1+ drives eHCR **(70%)**
  - 0+ **(10%)**
- High 2025 CPUE indic
  - TVH **(10%)**
  - TIB **(10%)**



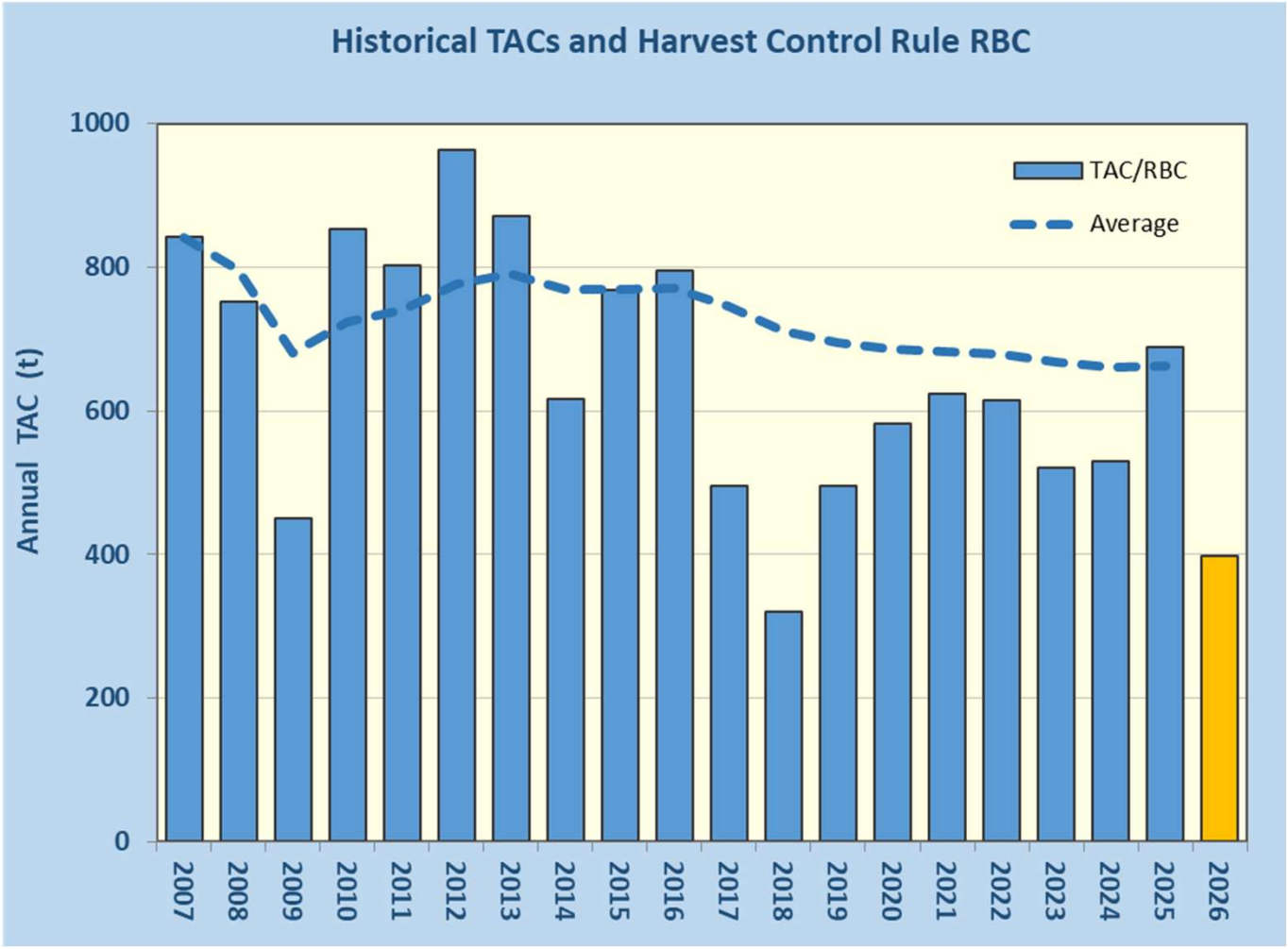
Summary

- Low 2025 survey 0+ & 1+ indices
  - 1+ drives eHCR **(70%)**
  - 0+ **(10%)**
- High 2025 CPUE indices
  - TVH **(10%)**
  - TIB **(10%)**

Component	Value
2025 Survey 0+ index	0.27
2025 Survey 1+ index	2.19
2025 Fishery Standardised TIB CPUE	1.49
2025 Fishery Standardised TVH CPUE	1.88
Osprey tuning multiplier	619
Pre-season SSC term	0.724
1+ index / reference median	0.45
1+ CV	0.18

Summary

- Low 2025 survey
  0+ & 1+ indices
  - 1+ drives eHCR **(70%)**
  - 0+ **(10%)**
- High 2025 CPUE indices
  - TVH **(10%)**
  - TIB **(10%)**
- **RBC = 398.3 t**



(Spreadsheet by CSIRO, contact Dr Eva Plaganyi-lloyd: Eva.Plaganyi-lloyd@csiro.au)

B. Data Entry Section

Year	Total Catch	Survey indices			CPUE indices		Preseas SSC term (OSPREY	Tuning multiplier
		Preseason 0+	Mid 1+	Preseason 1+	CPUE_TIB	CPUE_TVH	Adjustment for multiplier based on most recent survey	Osprey fixed input
2024	318							
2025	455	0.27	-	2.19	1.49	1.88	0.724	619

ENTER UPDATED DATA IN YELLOW CELLS

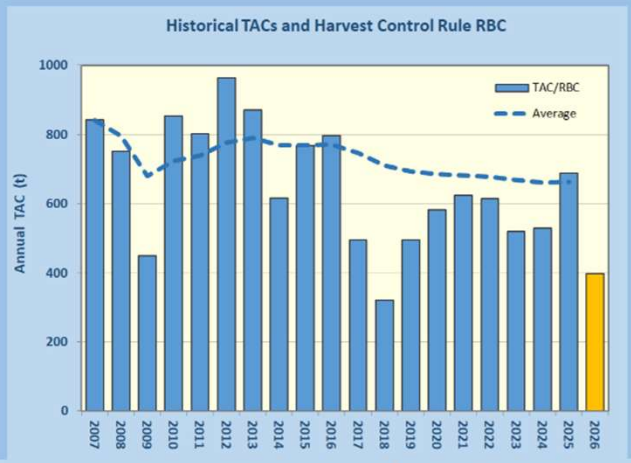
Last Pre-seas 1+ index / (reference median): 0.45

Last Preseas 1+ survey CV: 0.18

C. RBC Calculator

Year	RBC	Forecast RBC	Assessment required?		RBC-Forecast
2024	530.0	*589.0*			
2025	689.0	*755.3*			100.0
2026	**398.3**	*-247621.0*	No	HCR	-357.0

RBC (AUS AND PNG) CALCULATED FOR NEXT YEAR

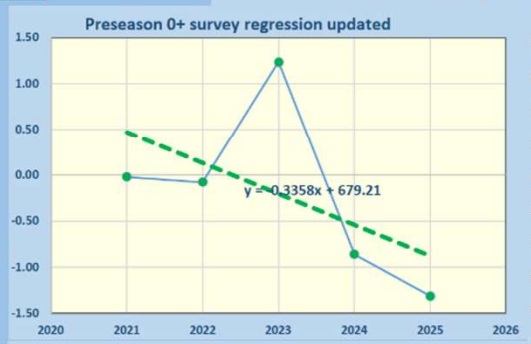


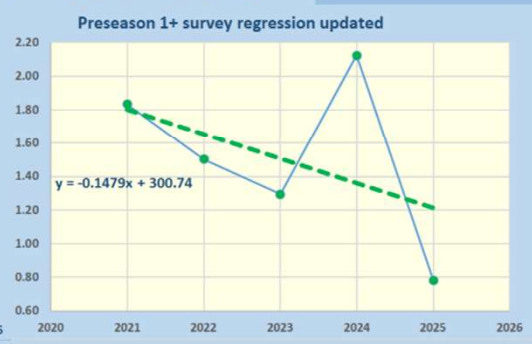
D. Consolidated Catch, Indices and RBCs table

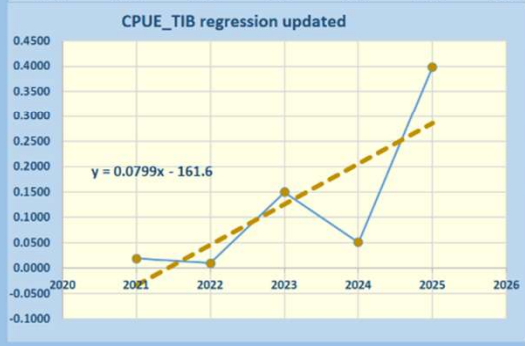
Seller Int-1

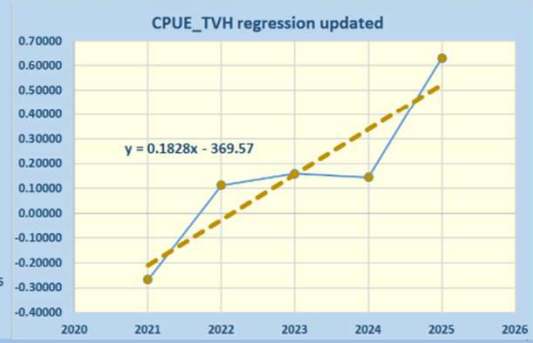
Year	Total Catch for eHCR	Survey indices			CPUE indices		TAC / RBC	Average TAC
		Preseason 0+	Mid 1+	Preseason 1+	CPUE_TIB	CPUE_TVH		
2007	765.3	1.17	3.83	4.65	0.85	0.89	842	842
2008	507.1	2.76	2.09	2.80	0.82	0.81	751	797
2009	400.3		3.44		0.97	0.65	450	681
2010	715.5		4.17		0.99	1.06	853	724
2011	867.6		5.12		1.42	1.64	803	740
2012	703.4		5.12		1.16	1.38	964	777
2013	612.5		3.02			1.26	871	791
2014	733.2	2.70	4.74	5.39	0.89	0.95	616	769
2015	591	1.54	-	8.24	0.79	0.67	769	769
2016	758.2	1.82	-	3.29	0.97	1.19	796	772
2017	390.8	0.40	-	2.07	0.86	0.82	495	746
2018	412.1	1.11	3.55	6.21	0.79	0.86	320	711
2019	583.6	2.01	-	7.33	0.99	1.05	495	694
2020	582	**2.41**	-	**5.00**	**1.15**	**1.39**	582	686
2021	623.5	**0.98**	-	**6.26**	**1.02**	**0.77**	623.5	682
2022	615	**0.93**	-	**4.50**	**1.01**	**1.12**	615	678
2023	521.4	**3.44**	-	**3.65**	**1.16**	**1.17**	521	669
2024	530	**0.42**	-	**8.37**	**1.05**	**1.16**	530	661
2025	689	**0.27**	-	**2.19**	**1.49**	**1.88**	689	662
2026							**398.3**	

note TAC for 2024/25 set by PZJA at 689t









D. Harvest Control Rule information

Relative weighting of indices in harvest control rule

Preseason 0+	Preseason 1+	CPUE_TIB	CPUE_TVH	CPUE_TVH
0.1	0.7	0.1	0.1	0.1

Slope of regression line fitted to logs of last 5 points of each series

Year	Slope_Pre0+	Slope_Pre1+	Slope_C/E_TI	Slope_C/E_TVH
2024	-443.214	0.049	-0.004	0.006
2025	-0.336	-0.148	0.080	0.183

Research Priorities

- Impacts of climate change on Torres Strait Fisheries (CSIRO funded)
- Surveys, stock assessment, HCRs and RBCs (Fishwell funded)
- ERA high priority (low cost) – do it asap
- Estimation of Illegal fishing (advice from WA)
- Improved spatial data and update lobster biology/ecology (tagging)
  - Builds on climate project
  - Need Data Sub-group to provide direction (TIB guidance)
  - Fishwell to summarise available technology (GPS)
  - Research scope and funding options to be developed

Notes on Arresting the Decline of the Australian TRL Industry

For Discussion - December 2025 TRL Consultative Meetings (RAG and Working Group)

Introduction

With no obvious pathway to lift the current protected species ban to enable re-entry to the Chinese market, the Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) industry must act to increase efficiency and its market presence to survive.

This is critical not just for fishers, but the many businesses that support the industry, their employees and the broader community.

The current trajectory of our industry is creating lower prices for fishers and discouraging investment, with less competition and diminishing returns to the broader community.

The TRL industry is the most important industry in the Torres Strait, employing many people and supporting their families, and its decline is impacting this community more than any other.

Two critical policy platforms are required to address this decline and build industry resilience for the current trade challenge, and challenges of the future

1. Increase industry efficiency
2. Address the declining industry scale

Industry Efficiency

There is an urgent need to get costs down not only at fishing level but through the entire industry supply chain. This will increase the price paid to fishers for catch, and rebuild confidence, investment and competition in the industry.

A key objective of moving to output (quota) controlled fisheries is the gradual removal of input controls to increase industry efficiency. However, despite TRL being the highest cost and most commercially challenged spiny lobster species in Australia, it is the only lobster fishery in Australia not to have acted on this. Other fisheries like Westen Australia, have gone as far as removing seasonal closures entirely to maximise catching efficiency under an overall TAC.

The impact of unnecessary input controls on the TRL industry include:

- Concentrating unloads over fixed closure dates creates artificial supply peaks with supply chain bottlenecks
- This results in pulses of over supply putting avoidable pressure on infrastructure (transport and production) and markets, increasing costs, adding to product degradation (mortality) and lower prices.

- Closures limit the ability of industry to align supply with strong market periods when higher prices are possible.
- Inflexible controls constrain catch opportunities. Fishers should be able to fish when environmental and operational conditions best suit them and they are most productive (lowest unit cost).

What is required:

- An immediate review to remove any input controls in both the TIB and TVH sectors that are not required for resource protection
- Priority to remove moon closures that have the greatest adverse operational impact across both sectors.
- Review season closures to allow catching in peak demand periods, in particular the period leading up to and including Lunar (Chinese) New Year across Asia.

Industry Scale

As an industry that has a substantial fixed cost supply chain, industry scale is critical to reduce the unit cost of production and maintain competition. Lower unit production costs increase the capacity to pay higher prices to fishers. Industry scale attracts and accommodates competition to ensure that benefits are passed to fishers. The resulting cumulative impact of a more efficient industry with increased production is higher prices to fishers.

Currently we are in a downward spiral of declining scale, higher unit costs, less competition and falling returns.

Another adverse outcome of falling scale is we lose presence in the market, becoming less attractive to buyers who lack reliable supply for end user customers such as restaurants. The result of this is less interest in our lobster, less buyer competition and diminished support in difficult market conditions.

This not only results in lower prices but in the current difficult circumstances has resulted in near industry closure. For significant periods in 2023 and 2024 MG Kailis Pty Ltd was the only live lobster buyer left in Far North Queensland and Torres Strait, operating at a loss to support the industry.

This is not a sustainable situation and a shift of quota and other fishery management settings from options that lead to lower catches, falling industry production and higher costs, to options that maximise catch and economic yield within acceptable resource sustainability settings is required.

Community Impact

A sub scale industry with declining activity, production and prices has a direct impact on the wider communities that the industry operates in, in particular Torres Strait.

This has far-reaching effects that go beyond individual fishers to all the businesses involved in the industry (including on the outer islands), local businesses that support

the industry, all their employees and ultimately the broader community that benefits from lobster income multiplying through the local economy.

It also impacts on employees in the industry outside of the Torres Strait, many of whom are also traditional inhabitants from Torres Strait or Cape York, for example making up over 50% of the MG Kailis Lobster workforce.

All these livelihoods are at risk if we do not move to modernise the TRL Fishery and maximise its efficiency.

Summary

While the Torres Strait lobster resource is in a healthy state with extremely precautionary harvest control settings (<15% of spawning biomass) the TRL industry itself is in critically poor health and trapped in a downward spiral suffering from reduced scale, falling prices, and falling investment, with less competition and buyer interest. The impact of this extends throughout the local communities it operates in, and Torres Straits in particular, with less employment and less income multiplying through the local economy.

Whilst the Chinese trade ban and then the protected species issue exacerbated this impact, it is not the only cause, and we must understand this to make the necessary changes to protect and secure our future as other Australian lobster sectors have done under quota management.

All people associated with the industry from fishers, intermediaries, exporters, regulators, advisors, policy setters, and government agencies need to take responsibility for this to drive the required change.

It is possible, it just requires a coordinated and aligned all of industry approach.

28/11/2025

TRL Industry RAG and Working Group Members

Jake Kingdon
Mark Dean
Trent Butcher
Brett Arlidge