



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Dear Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery Traditional Inhabitant Boat Licence holder,

Notification of a variation of licence conditions for the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery for the 2026 fishing season

I am writing to inform you that I, as a delegate of the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA), under section 22 of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*, have varied the conditions of your Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) Licence for the Torres Strait Bêche-de-mer Fishery (BDM Fishery) to give effect to total allowable catches (TACs) and other changes for the 2026 fishing season.

The new conditions that will apply to your TIB Licence are provided at **Attachment A**. These conditions will apply from the date of this letter and replace the existing BDM catch allowances.

2026 TACs

At meetings held from 23-25 September 2025, the Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group (HCRAG) and Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG) recommended TAC's for sea cucumber species in line with the Harvest Strategy.

The PZJA agreed, out-of-session in December 2025, to the TACs for the BDM Fishery for the 2026 fishing season. The proposed licence condition variation gives effect to this decision.

Changes to TAC conditions are:

- 0 tonne TAC for hairy blackfish (*Actinopyga miliaris*). This species is now a no-take species.

Other existing conditions relating to TACs will continue to apply.

Once the TAC for a species or basket of species has been caught in a fishing season, AFMA will notify licence holders in the BDM Fishery that fishing for the species' concerned must cease for the remainder of the fishing season.

Black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*)

A TAC of 20.783 tonne for black teatfish for the 2026 season was agreed by the PZJA. However, to give effect to a limited season opening period, the TAC on licence conditions remains 0 tonnes until the season opening date of 23 March 2026; fishing for black teatfish prior to the opening date is prohibited.

The conditions that will apply to your licence are enclosed and give effect to the following:

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555
F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333
F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990

Lakes Entrance
PO Box 408
Lakes Entrance VIC 3909
P:0447 019 916

1. Commencing on **23 March 2026** and ending on the **TAC Date**, black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) may be taken by all TIB Licence holders with a beche-de-mer entry combined. The **TAC Date** is the specific date and time that the PZJA or its delegate determines as the last day of fishing for black teatfish based on its reasonable belief that the TAC will be reached to avoid an overcatch of the TAC.
2. After the **TAC Date**, the TAC for black teatfish will revert to 0 tonnes and fishing for black teatfish will close.
3. You must land all catches of black teatfish taken to a holder of a Fish Receiver Licence by **11:00 PM** within the same calendar day that it is taken.
4. Where the last day of fishing for black teatfish is not a full day, you must land all catches of black teatfish taken to a holder of a Fish Receiver Licence no later than the **exact time** that the PZJA or its delegate determines.

The new daily reporting deadline for Fish Receivers of 2300hrs is being introduced to allow for earlier information to fishers regarding the closure of the fishery, while allowing fishers and receivers sufficient time to land/report their catch.

VMS Trial for the 2026 black teatfish opening

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.

The PZJA SC decision was in recognition of the need to meet Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) conditions on monitoring for localised depletion, the efficiency and effectiveness of current monitoring of the BDM fishery, and the need to ensure that the black teatfish fishery remains biologically and economically sustainable into the future. The trial will be used to assess the effectiveness of VMS in addressing the above issues.

The updated conditions found in **Attachment A** give effect to the following objectives:

- a. Require VMS on all licenced TIB's operating in the 2026 black teatfish fishing season opening;
- b. Be generally consistent with VMS requirements across other TSFA and Commonwealth managed fisheries;
- c. Recognise the VMS units are (will be) supplied, and owned, by AFMA (and need to be returned);
- d. Ensure the units are fixed to the nominated boat using a tamper evident seal;
- e. Prohibit fishers from interfering with the Unit or the seal unless authorised;
- f. Allow fishers, when authorised to do so, to move the units to a replacement boat (e.g. in the event of a breakdown etc);
- g. Allow AFMA to exempt a licence holder (boat) from the requirement to fit a VMS; and
- h. Allow AFMA to have a mid-season closure and/or part day opening's.

AFMA and TSRA held community meetings in November 2025 to inform and explain the above arrangements.

Other management arrangements

A range of other management arrangements apply when fishing in the BDM Fishery. Details of these arrangements are provided in the enclosed BDM Fishery Management Arrangements

Booklet, also available on the [PZJA website](#). These include licensing requirements, prohibited species, minimum size limits, method and gear restrictions and catch reporting requirements. Licence holders should familiarise themselves with these arrangements prior to fishing.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

30/1/2026

Ryan Murphy

Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer

BDM Licence Conditions 2026

BDM Catch allowances

The annual (from 1 January to 31 December) total allowable catch (TAC) limits that apply to the species that may be taken by this licence, and all other licences granted by the PZJA to take these species, in the area of waters covered by this licence are outlined in the table below.

Species/Basket	TAC (wet weight of gutted fish)
Amberfish (<i>Thelenota anax</i>)	10 tonnes
Prickly redfish (<i>Thelenota ananas</i>)	15 tonnes
White teatfish (<i>Holothuria fuscogilva</i>)	15 tonnes
Deepwater redfish (<i>Actinopyga echinites</i>)	1 tonne
Greenfish (<i>Stichopus chloronotus</i>)	40 tonnes
Curryfish species (<i>Stichopus herrmanni</i> , <i>Stichopus vastus</i> and <i>Stichopus ocellatus</i>)	60 tonnes combined TAC (basket)
Black teatfish (<i>Holothuria whitmaei</i>)	0 tonnes (CLOSED)
Hairy blackfish (<i>Actinopyga miliaris</i>)	0 tonnes (CLOSED)
Surf redfish (<i>Actinopyga mauritiana</i>)	0 tonnes (CLOSED)
Sandfish (<i>Holothuria scabra</i>)	0 tonnes (CLOSED)
All other sea cucumber species (all other species in the families <i>Holothuriidae</i> and <i>Stichopodidae</i>)	50 tonnes combined TAC (basket)

Catch conversion ratios

The weight of a take of sea cucumbers of a species mentioned in an item in column 1 of the table, if not delivered whole to a fish receiver, is presumed to be:

- if the fish is delivered live - the weight of the fish multiplied by the factor in column 2 of the item; or
- if the fish is delivered salted- the weight of the fish multiplied by the factor in column 3 of the item; or
- if the fish is delivered boiled and salted - the weight of the fish multiplied by the factor in column 4 of the item; or
- if the fish is delivered dried - the weight of the fish multiplied by the factor in column 5 of the item.

Common Name	Live to Gutted	Salted to Gutted	Boiled & Salted to Gutted	Dried to Gutted
Amberfish (<i>Thelenota anax</i>)	0.894	1.706	1.706	12.502
Black Teatfish (<i>Holothuria whitmaei</i>)	0.677	1.213	1.213	5.663
Brown sandfish (<i>Bohadschia vitiensis</i>)	0.735	1.199	1.199	6.337
Burrowing blackfish (<i>Actinopyga spinea</i>)	0.544	1.449	1.449	7.424
Curryfish (common) (<i>Stichopus herrmanni</i>)	0.651	1.706	1.706	8.772
Curryfish (vastus) (<i>Stichopus vastus</i>)	0.894	1.706	1.706	12.502

Deepwater blackfish (<i>Actinopyga palauensis</i>)	0.818	1.374	1.374	5.335
Deepwater redfish (<i>Actinopyga echinites</i>)	0.692	1.706	1.706	6.579
Elephant trunkfish (<i>Holothuria fuscopunctata</i>)	0.519	1.097	1.097	8.772
Golden sandfish (<i>Holothuria lessoni</i>)	0.645	1.226	1.226	6.588
Greenfish (<i>Stichopus chloronotus</i>)	0.894	1.706	1.706	12.502
Hairy blackfish (<i>Actinopyga miliaris</i>)	0.48	1.037	1.037	4.785
Leopardfish (<i>Bohadschia argus</i>)	0.665	1.286	1.286	5.841
Lollyfish (<i>Holothuria atra</i>)	0.436	1.706	1.706	5.917
Prickly redfish (<i>Thelenota ananas</i>)	0.667	1.382	1.382	12.502
Sandfish (<i>Holothuria scabra</i>)	0.496	1.319	1.319	10.638
Stonefish (<i>Actinopyga lecanora</i>)	0.894	1.372	1.372	5.418
Surf redfish (<i>Actinopyga mauritiana</i>)	0.684	1.145	1.145	5.930
White teatfish (<i>Holothuria fuscogilva</i>)	0.627	1.29	1.29	4.219
Unidentified BDM	0.894	1.706	1.706	12.502

Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) Licence conditions - 2026 black teatfish fishing season opening

Black teatfish total allowable catch for the 2026 fishing season¹

- 1) Commencing on **23 March 2026** and ending on the Total Allowable Catch date (**TAC Date**), black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) may be taken by all Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) Licence holders with a beche-de-mer entry. The **TAC Date** is the specific date and time that the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) or its delegate determines as the last day of fishing for black teatfish based on its reasonable belief that the TAC will be reached, in order to avoid an overcatch of the TAC.

¹ Based on previous seasons conditions

- 2) After the **TAC Date**, the TAC for black teatfish will revert to 0 tonnes and fishing for black teatfish will close.

Catch must be landed to a licenced Fish Receiver within the same calendar day that it is taken

- 3) The holder of this licence must land all catches of black teatfish taken to a holder of a Fish Receiver Licence by **11:00 PM within the same calendar day** that it is taken.
- 4) Where the last day of fishing for black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) is not a full day, the holder of this licence must land all catches of black teatfish taken to a holder of a Fish Receiver Licence no later than the **exact time** that the PZJA or its delegate determines.

Temporary closure period(s)

- 5) The PZJA or its delegate may declare a (single or part day) **temporary closure period**, or periods, during the **fishing season**, where necessary, to:
- a) avoid unsafe weather conditions,
 - b) manage the risk of exceeding the total allowable catch, or
 - c) such other reason as considered appropriate by the delegate.
- 6) Where a **temporary closure period** is declared, the PZJA or its delegate will:
- a) issue notice of the closure **no later than 11:59 PM on the day prior** to the **temporary closure period**,
 - b) communicate the closure via official channels (e.g. website, email, SMS),
 - c) specify the date, start time, and end time of the **temporary closure period**,
 - d) include the rationale for the **temporary closure period** in the notice.
- 7) During the declared **temporary closure period**:
- a) no fishing for black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) is permitted, and
 - b) the boat authorised on this licence must remain on land or within **nearshore waters**.

Black teatfish VMS Trial Requirements for the 2026 fishing season

- 8) If the symbol(s) noted on this licence include BD, and the boat authorised on this licence is, or intends to be, used for taking, processing or carrying black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) during the 2026 black teatfish **fishing season**, the boat must be **fitted** with an **operating AFMA VMS unit** throughout the **trial period**.
- 9) The holder of this licence (or a person acting on the holder's behalf) must take all reasonable steps to comply with the **operating instructions** to ensure that the AFMA VMS unit on the authorised boat is **operating** at all times during the trial period.
- 10) The holder of this licence (or a person acting on the holder's behalf) must not **interfere**, or attempt to **interfere** with;
- a) the operation of the **AFMA VMS Unit**, or
 - b) the **cable seal** affixing the **AFMA VMS unit** to the authorised boat,

unless authorised, or directed, to do so by an **authorised person**.

- 11) if the vessel monitoring system stops operating, the licence holder must inform AFMA as soon as practicable after the licence holder becomes aware that the VMS has stopped operating by calling 1300 723 621 or emailing ausvms@afma.gov.au
 - 12) The holder of this licence (or a person acting on the holder's behalf) must return the **AFMA VMS Unit**, no more than 30 Days after the **TAC Date**, to an authorised receival point.
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Notes

Exemption from VMS requirement - During the 2026 Black teatfish fishing season , AFMA may exempt the authorised boat, or boats, from the requirement to have an **AFMA VMS Unit fitted**. Where such an exemption is granted, AFMA will notify the licence holder, in writing, of the granting of the exemption.

Approval to move an AFMA VMS unit - Where the licence holder wishes to move the VMS unit to another licenced boat, the licence holder must first obtain approval from an **authorised person**.

Approval to move an authorised boat - Where the licence holder wishes to move the authorised boat to another location, during a **temporary closure period**, the licence holder must first obtain approval from an **authorised person**.

Definitions

'AFMA VMS Unit' means a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) unit wholly owned by AFMA, marked with AFMA identifications and supplied by AFMA.

'AFMA Thursday Island Office' means the Australian Fisheries Management Authority's office located at Level 1, Pearls Building, 38 Victoria Parade THURSDAY ISLAND QLD 4875

'authorised boat' means the boat listed under 'boat description' on this licence

'authorised person' includes;

- A Commonwealth Fisheries Officer,
- An (authorised) AFMA Employee,
- Any other person authorised, in writing, by AFMA

'authorised receival point' means any of the following;

- AFMA Thursday Island Office, or
- Any Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) office, or
- Any Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) office, or
- Any TSRA Indigenous Ranger, or

- Any Torres Strait Island Police Liaison Officer (TSIPLO).

‘cable seal’ means a tamper evident cable seal supplied and/or fitted by AFMA.

‘fitted’ means securely attached to a permanent fixture or fitting on the **authorised boat**, using a **cable seal**.

‘fishing season’ means, in relation to the Black Teat fishery, the period between the **season opening date** and the **TAC date**.

‘installation instructions’ means instructions provided by AFMA prescribing the method for fitting an **AFMA VMS Unit** and **cable seal** on the nominated boat.

‘interfere’ includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) Physical obstruction or removal of the **AFMA VMS Unit** or **cable seal**, or
- (b) Deliberately disconnecting, obstructing or otherwise interfering with the power supply (including through the obstruction of solar panels) to the **AFMA VMS unit**,
- (c) Deliberate physical interference with the casing or any external or internal components of the **AFMA VMS unit**, or
- (d) Deliberate physical interference with the **cable seal**

‘nearshore waters’ means waters within 200 metres of the coastline or the shoreline of any island within the fishery area, including beaches and sheltered bays.

‘operating’, in relation to an approved vessel monitoring system, means sending a signal that:

- (a) is in a format that has been approved by AFMA; and
- (b) identifies accurately the location of the boat to which the vessel monitoring system is fitted.

‘operating instructions’ means instructions provided by AFMA outlining ‘best practice’ requirements to help ensure that the **AFMA VMS unit** on the nominated boat is operating at all times.

‘season opening date’ means the date on which the 2026 Black teatfish fishery opens

‘temporary closure period’ means the period declared by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) or its delegate.

‘trial period’ means the period commencing 1 calendar day before the **season opening date** until 5 calendar days after the **TAC date**.

‘TAC date’ means the Total Allowable Catch date when the 2026 Black teatfish fishery closes.