



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**



**HAND COLLECTABLE WORKING GROUP  
MEETING NO. 4**

**CHAIRS SUMMARY**

**27-28 JULY**

PEARLS BUILDING, THURSDAY ISLAND

**CHAIR: MR KENNY BEDFORD**

## **Major Outcomes**

1) The CSIRO survey results from the Sand Fish Abundance Survey on Warrior Reef was presented to the TSHCWG. CSIRO proposed an experimental fishing program for 5 ton of Sand Fish for Warrior Reef. The reason for the 5 ton experimental program is:

- Dispatch uncertainty over the survey results, due to the burrowing nature of the sand fish
- Provide more information over the population status by comparing the catch rate against past catch rates
- Facilitate community involvement in monitoring the recovery and stock status

2) The CSIRO survey results from the Sea Cucumber baseline abundance survey in the Eastern Torres Strait found that black teatfish currently with a 0 TAC is estimated of having a stock abundance of 445 ton. CSIRO recommended re-opening the black teat fishery to a 25 ton TAC. HCWG recommended to develop better management arrangements with mandatory report catch data.

3) The CSIRO survey results from the Sea Cucumber baseline abundance survey in the Eastern Torres Strait 19-28 March was compiled into a Decision Support Tool. The Decision Support Tool was presented to the working group. The Decision Support Tool is a down loaded mapping program designed to show the density and species level of sea cucumber on the reefs in the Eastern Torres Strait.

4) The TSHCWG recommended that the research results by PhD student Alifereti Tawake 'Livelihood benefits of co-management of hand collectables fisheries in the Torres Strait' of Community Based Management Plan developed by two communities Warraber and Erub will need to include all communities in the Hand Collectable Fisheries. This will meet the DEWHA status and annual assessment recommendations for a WTO for the fishery.

This may include:

- A workshop comprising of all CFG members and stakeholders to map out a Harvest Strategy for Trochus and Sea Cucumber for the entire Torres Strait.
- Proposal of a funded position to recruit a consultant to map out a Harvest Strategy for Trochus and Sea Cucumber for the entire Torres Strait

### **Agenda item 2.1 Sandfish Survey Results**

HCWG noted the interim results of the Sand Fish Abundance Survey on Warrior Reef by CSIRO.

- CSIRO proposed an experimental fishing program for 5 ton of Sand Fish for Warrior Reef

### **Agenda item 2.2 2009 SURVEY OF Hand Collectables in eastern Torres Strait**

HCWG noted the interim results of the Sand Fish Abundance Survey on Warrior Reef and the conformation a Decision Support Tool by CSIRO.



**Agenda item 2.3 Proposed Trochus Survey**

HCWG noted the proposal by CSIRO. The proposed research project would carry out a survey of Trochus using amended survey techniques with dedicated searching for trochus thus allowing stock abundance with a greater degree of precision to be estimated. The outputs from this project will aid in the management of the TSTF, in particular assessment of the current TAC and facilitate the move to adaptive co-management in line with aspirations for Torres Strait Traditional communities.

The specific objectives of the proposed project are:

- To assess the size, status and spatial structure of trochus stocks in Torres Strait.
- To determine a sustainable Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Trochus in Torres Strait based on survey data.
- To record data including shell weight (animals in and out) and shell size, to evaluate and strengthen current trochus stock formulations.

HCWG recommended that the proposal to be tabled at the next SAC.

**Agenda item 2.4 Research priorities for the TSHC**

HCWG noted the TSSAC requests the TSHCWG review the Hand Collectables fisheries research priorities for the 2010 Annual Operational Plan as outlined below and provide comment to the TSSAC on these priorities.

RESEARCH AREA	RESEARCH NEED
i) Stock abundance/assessment for TAC setting	a) Complete stock assessment and estimate TAC for target species.
ii) Efficiency of management arrangements	a) Provide information for community based harvest strategies and/or management plans. b) Address uncertainties regarding trochus and Bêche de mer stock status and/or recovery. c) Impact of overfishing on PNG Warrior reef.
iii) Knowledge of biology, ecology and distribution of target species	a) Assessment of trochus habitat using Indigenous knowledge or remote sensing to inform stock assessment <sup>1</sup> .
iv) Effective recovery strategies	a) Modeling recovery strategies using tools such as Management Strategy Evaluation



### **Agenda item 3.1 Draft proposal 'Livelihood benefits of co-management of hand collectables fisheries in the Torres Strait'**

HCWG noted the draft of the community based harvest strategy for Warraber and Erub Island present by Alifereti Tawake. The main outcomes are:

- Incorporating the CBHS to include all Torres Strait Communities
- Habitat/stock survey on home reefs
- Agree to management strategies/rotation closures

HCWG recommended a workshop to progress the development of the CBHS for the total

### **Agenda item 3.2 Sea cucumber and trochus ranching**

HCWG noted the strategies indicated in CBHS developed by the Warraber and Erub communities to include ranching identified home reefs. The reefs identified are;

1. To set aside 'Bet reef' as reef gardens for Warraber Island and trial restocking high value species such as sandfish from surrounding reefs.
2. To set aside 'Gasir lagoons and Patened reef' as reef gardens for Darnley Island and trial restocking high value species from nearby areas

It is noted that active fisheries management interventions must be considered to restore the spawning biomass of overexploited populations and 'fast track' recovery on home reefs. These include;

- restocking no-take zones with hatchery-reared juveniles (very expensive and limited to sandfish only at present);
- aggregating remnant wild individuals in no-take zones; and
- development of small enterprises to rear wild-caught sea cucumbers in simple sea pens, or dedicated mudflats and reef areas, to the size above sexual maturity that optimizes earnings

### **Agenda item 4.1 Foreign Compliance Update**

HCWG with a report on foreign compliance activities in Torres Strait with relation to Torres Strait Hand Collectable Fisheries

Since the commencement of the closure AFMA has closely monitored the activities of fishers on the PNG side of Warrior Reef. To date there has been no evidence of any sea cucumber harvesting taking place. Recent communications with Daru based fisheries officers also supports that no large scale harvesting has taken place on the PNG side.

HCWG recommended a letter go to the NFA supporting the progress of the 3year Sea cucumber closure and carefully consider a sustainable total allowable catch based on robust stock abundance data when the fishery closure is lifted.



### **Agenda item 5.1 TSSAC Update**

HCWG noted the major outcomes from TSSAC No.52 were:

1. a review of the Annual Operational Plan for Torres Strait Fisheries<sup>ii</sup>.
2. a review of draft report on cultural protocols for the Torres Strait and agreement to release the draft report for public comment, as well as to develop a stand-alone operational guide for researchers, based on the draft protocols.
3. an assessment the outcomes of the completed research '*Sustainable harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectables Fisheries*' (PI: Mr Tim Skewes, CSIRO).
4. agreement on the process to call for pre-proposals for research starting in the 2011/2012 financial year.

### **Agenda item 5.2 Yorke Island Sponge Farm update**

HCWG noted the Yorke Island Sponge Farm Update.

The farm is currently stocked with about 7,500 to 8,000 sponges, with the expectation potential for a further 75,000 by 2011.

Research continues to investigate the number and distribution of sponges, in addition to factors that influence sponge populations, including disease. Overall this information will assist Torres Strait communities to sustainably farm bath sponges. Further research is proposed to fill the gaps in knowledge.

### **Agenda item 5.3 Strategic assessments of Sea cucumber and trochus**

HCWG noted the update of the Sea cucumber and trochus assessments.

AFMA has drafted progress report for DEWHA with respect to the current progress against meeting the DEWHA strategic assessment recommendations for the TSBDMF and the TSTF.

### **Agenda item 5.4 Okinawa Pearls Update**

HCWG noted the update of the pearling interest in the Eastern Torres Straits.

A small Torres Strait Islander delegation visited the Ryuku Pearl Company operation in Japan. The familiarisation tour helped to prepare for 6 Torres Strait Islander trainees to gain two months experience in the pearl industry at Ishagaki Island later in the year. The visit also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to work further on a plan forward in this joint venture opportunity for Torres Strait.

### **Agenda item 6.1 Licensing and permits**

HCWG noted the granted permits by PZJA departments.

Two developmental fishing permits were issued to two fishing enterprises that applied to allow for the use of Hookah for predominantly white teatfish in the eastern Torres Straits region. The development permit comes with strict licensing conditions.



The following members and observers were in attendance at the Torres Strait Hand Collectables Working Group:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Kenny Bedford	Chairperson	Consultant
Mr Paul Seden	Executive Officer (AFMA)	Senior Fisheries Management Officer, Torres Strait
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Member - Thursday Island Fisheries Manager	AFMA
Mr Nathan Pearson	Warraber CFG	
Mr Gavin Mosby	Masig CFG	
Mr Dennis Passi	Mer CFG	
Mr Neville Nakata	TSRA	
Mr Grant Leeworthy	Tasmanian Seafoods	Buyers boat license holder
Mr Nyall Ledger	TVH BDM Fisher	TVH BDM Fisher, buyers boat license holder
Mr Tim Skewes	CSIRO	Researcher
Shane Fava	QDPI & F (PHONE LINK UP)	

#### Observers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Alifereti Tawake	PhD Candidate (Researcher)	
Mr Henry Savage	TO Erub	
Mr Chris Parry (*)	AFMA Foreign Compliance	

#### Apologies

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Mr Lyndon Peddell	QDPI & F Compliance

(\*) ATTENDED DAY TWO ONLY

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