

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 5 4-5 December, 2007
Research: Torres Strait Prawn Research Program: Progress report	Agenda Item No. 5.1

RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The TSPMAC **NOTES** the results presented from the Torres Strait Prawn Research Program.

BACKGROUND

During the months of May, July, September and November of 2007, QDPI&F conducted fishery independent trawl surveys of the TSPF. These surveys were funded by the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry for the Australian jurisdiction and the National Fisheries Agency of Papua New Guinea for the PNG jurisdiction of the Torres Strait Protected Zone. A PowerPoint presentation detailing analysis of the data from the May, July and September surveys and general observations from the November survey will be presented at TSPMAC5. This presentation is an updated version of the presentation given at the October 2007 Bilateral Fisheries meeting in Port Moresby.

DISCUSSION

Below is a summary of results from the May, July and September surveys:

- The species composition and prawn sizes varied markedly between sites within both the Australian and PNG jurisdictions. Small numbers of Kuruma prawn (*Penaeus japonicus*) were obtained at the sites near Bramble Cay and along the northern eastern edge of the TSPZ.
- The overall catch rates and species composition of prawns in the PNG area of the TSPZ are similar to that for the Australian area.
- The catch rates (CPUE) especially as numbers of prawns, for both tiger and endeavour prawns was higher in May than July and September, indicating higher stock abundances towards the earlier part of the fishing season. In contrast the average carapace length (size) of both species was higher in September and July than in May reflecting the growth of the individual prawns.
- The percentage of ripe female tiger prawns was higher in July than May. The majority of the sites with higher percentages of ripe female tiger prawns were located in deeper water in the regions between Yorke Island and Stephens Island, south of Bramble Cay and around Dugong Island. There was also a higher percentage of ripe female tiger prawns in September in the PNG area from Pearce Cay to Bramble Cay.
- In May the sites with the higher percentage of ripe endeavour prawns were generally in the shallower central sites of the fishery: the East of Warrior Closure to Yorke Island. This contrasts with the July data where generally it was the sites in the deeper northern and southern areas of the fishery that had the highest percentage of ripe females.