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Torres Strait
PZJA
Protected Zone
Joint Authority

Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

Meeting #46

August 27 2008

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Chair: Mr Ian Cartwright

Prepared by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority on behalf of the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority

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Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

The 46th meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was held at the QDPI&F Building, Brisbane on the 27 August 2008. In attendance were:

Name	Role
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chairperson
Ms Yvonne Zunic	Executive Officer (AFMA)
Dr Roland Pitcher	Research Member (CSIRO)
Ms Sevaly Sen	Social/Economics Research Member
Mr Shane Fava	QDPI&F Representative
Mr Tony Vass	Industry Representative
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Representative
Mr Augustine Mobiha	PNG Representative
Mr Toshi Nakata	Observer - TSRA
Mr Neil Bensley	Observer – BRS
Mr Maluwap Nona	Observer

Apologies

Dr Yimin Ye	Research Member (CSIRO)
Dr Stephen Newman	Research Member (WA Fisheries)
Mr Charles David	Traditional Inhabitant Representative

The Committee noted with regret the resignation of Dr Yimin Ye from the TSSAC effective 21 August 2008. Dr Ye's significant contribution over the past several years to Torres Strait fisheries research and his input and expertise made available to the TSSAC was acknowledged with gratitude by the Committee. .

Major outcomes

The Committee agreed to:

- Amendments to the Terms of Reference to better reflect a broader strategic role for TSSAC.
- A policy for identifying and managing conflict of interest in the deliberations and decision making of the Committee. A process for contracting targeted research projects for funding in the 2008/2009 financial year including projects:
 - to facilitate learning experiences for Torres Strait Islanders from similar international fisheries with respect to reallocation of fisheries resource to Traditional Inhabitants; and
 - to identify strategies for overcoming difficulties in meeting OH&S and HR policy in engaging Torres Strait Islanders in research projects.
- A process for calling for pre-proposals as the first step in recommending strategic research projects for the 2009/2010 financial year.
- The need for a set of cultural protocols to be developed by a Torres Strait Islander after reviewing current published cultural protocols, and endorsed by the TSSAC. A process to ensure these protocols are adopted and utilised by researchers should also be developed.

Terms of Reference

The TSSAC discussed suggested amendments to the Terms of Reference (TOR) to expand the Committee's scope to better reflect a broader strategic role, including making recommendations on funding sources and linkages with other research organisations. Several changes to the current terms of reference endorsed at PZJA (21.5.1.3) were discussed and agreed to. The revised terms of reference will be circulated to members prior to the next meeting. The amended terms of reference will then be recommended to the PZJA for endorsement.

The Committee also discussed its role as a resource assessment group for the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (and other fisheries). The SAC felt that it did not have the resources available to adequately provide stock assessment advice to management advisory committees as well as conduct other required tasks, and that the TOR should be amended to support this. Individual fisheries should engage a suitably skilled resource assessment group (such as the Tropical Rock Lobster RAG) to evaluate stock assessments if required.

Conflict of Interest

The TSSAC agreed that the greatest potential for the detrimental effects of conflict of interest (COI) to manifest is in the evaluation of research proposals submitted to the Committee and the identification of suitable research providers for targeted research projects.

The Committee discussed and agreed on a two phase approach to mitigating the potential risk of Conflict of Interest. Phase one included clear definitions of how, who, why and where conflict of interest could occur in the context of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee. Phase two includes guidelines as to the actions to be followed by members of the Torres Strait SAC if COI is identified.

The Committee agreed to draft a formal COI policy to be accepted by the Committee.

Research Proposals for 2008/2009 FY

Members discussed the remaining Torres Strait research funding for this financial year and noted that unspent funds could not be rolled over to next year's budget. The Committee recognized that it might not be feasible to effectively utilise this financial year's entire research budget through a stringent and competitive assessment process as per the preferred approach for calling for research proposals.

To maximise benefits from this year's remaining funds, members agreed that the best approach would be to commission targeted, short-term projects against this financial year's budget based on research needs identified by PZJA working groups or the TSSAC.

Two research projects were identified for completion in this financial year.

1. A workshop with a small but well-informed group of national and international experts to discuss reallocation of fisheries resources to the traditional inhabitant sector. The benefits would be opportunities for Torres Strait Islanders to learn from experiences in other fisheries internationally.

2. A workshop to facilitate active engagement and employment of Torres Strait Islanders in all aspects of research undertaken in the Torres Strait. The workshop will identify operational requirements of various research agencies and discuss strategies for overcoming the difficulties in meeting these requirements. The workshop will bring together OH&S and Human Resource personnel, researchers, Torres Strait Islanders (eg turtle and dugong project officers) and TSRA.

In addition, the committee will advertise and call for pre-proposals for funding in the 2009/2010 financial year based on broad themes identified in the previous Strategic Research Plan 2005-2010 (discussed at TSSAC 45) in lieu in of the finalised research plan currently in development. The calls for pre-proposals will be advertised in national websites (NRM News), in local newspapers (Torres News) and by networks developed by the TSSAC such as the COMFRAB emails. Pre-proposals will be similar to those for FRDC.

Aquaculture

The TSSAC noted that QDPI&F who have responsibility for all aspects of aquaculture are investigating the possibilities for future aquaculture development within the Torres Strait Protected Zone. QDPI&F will continue to offer strategic advice for future development, administrative and operational functions which include licensing and extension to facilitate the development of aquaculture within the region. The TSSAC will stay abreast of aquaculture issues in Torres Strait by regular reports to the Committee by the QDPI&F Representative.

Cultural Protocols for researchers working in Torres Strait.

The Committee confirmed the need to develop a set of guiding protocols for adoption by researchers working in the Torres Strait. These protocols would need to consider the diverse nature of Torres Strait as well as the cultural and social aspirations of Torres Strait Islanders. Members agreed that preparation of a protocols document would best be undertaken by a Torres Strait Islander reviewing current published protocols. Professor Nakata was suggested as an appropriate person to conduct this work.

The Committee also discussed methods for ensuring researchers abide by cultural protocols. It was agreed that pre-proposals should be required to include information on how cultural protocols would be identified and methods for abiding them in undertaking the research. .

Involvement of Torres Strait Islanders in research

The Committee re-confirmed the need to encourage involvement of Torres Strait Islanders in all aspects of research in Torres Strait. A key initiative to facilitate this was the support for a workshop to identify strategies for overcoming difficulties in meeting OH&S and HR requirements.

Effective involvement of Torres Strait Islanders in research will be included as an assessment criteria against which pre-proposals and full proposals will be assessed.

Next Meeting

The Committee AGREED to set TSSAC 47 for August 18-19 November 2008, Cairns, Northern Fisheries Office QDPI&F (venue to be confirmed).