



Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

Meeting #54

February 17 2011

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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The 54th meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was held at Fisheries Queensland in Brisbane on 17 February 2011.

Major outcomes

The TSSAC:

- Agreed to recommend two research projects to AFMA for funding subject to several modifications being made to the satisfaction of the Committee.
- Completed a preliminary re-assessment of research priorities in the Annual Operational Plan.
- Agreed to investigate commissioning a review of available science on Turtle and Dugong stocks in Torres Strait.
- Agreed to recommend to the PZJA that TSSAC membership be carried over for another three year term.

Update on a central web-based repository of Torres Strait research

TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit webpage (www.tsra.gov.au/land--sea-management-home/research.aspx) provides information on current research projects. The TSRA requested the TSSAC to provide feedback and suggest improvements on the current website. The TSRA have been developing a centralised database for traditional fisheries under the Turtle and Dugong Community-based Management Plans including consideration of appropriate access and protection of sensitive data, copyright and other issues that would be applicable to a centralised database for a range of research projects. The TSRA will continue to progress development of a centralised repository for meta data when resources allow.

AFMA has updated the PZJA website research publication page to ensure that all AFMA funded research publications are available.

The Committee discussed commissioning a report or business plan to examine the various needs and options for a central web-based repository for Torres Strait fisheries research and how such a repository could be created and maintained. This would be contingent on competing priorities for research funds.

Assessment of research proposals

The Committee assessed two full commissioned proposals:

- *Characterisation of the traditional subsistence fisheries in the Torres Strait Treaty communities (Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea)* (PI Busilacchi, JCU/CSIRO)
- *'Empowering Torres Strait Islanders to have a greater role in the Research and Development (R&D) process'* (PI Calogeras, C-Aid)

The TSSAC agreed to recommend both proposals to AFMA for funding, provisional upon the Principal Investigators of the projects making the suggested modifications to the proposals to the satisfaction of the Committee.

The Committee re-reviewed one pre-proposal submitted and assessed at TSSAC #53. This was not supported for further consideration by the TSSAC.

Additional call for pre-proposals for the 2011/12 financial year

Following an agreement at the TSSAC out of session meeting in December 2010, the Committee considered conducting a second call for targeted pre-proposals for research beginning in the 2011/2012 financial year. The Committee reviewed the research priorities in the 2010 Operational Plan to identify tactical research areas that were currently not being addressed. The Committee identified two potential priority research areas that warrant further consideration:

1. Analysis of current turtle and dugong information for Torres Strait to inform future management of these species.
2. A desktop study on the ecosystem effects of trawling in the Prawn fishery, which would be beneficial in the future pending outcomes of management decisions in the fishery.

Co-ordination of research priorities

The Committee considered a matrix for coordinating communication between PZJA consultative groups as an important step in developing an efficient method for co-ordinating updates to research priorities for Torres Strait fisheries listed in the Annual Operational Plan. The Committee undertook to develop this methodology further in upcoming meetings.

Current project update

International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum

Organisation of the International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum has not progressed due to lack of resources and the forum still requires a champion to lead its development. Considering a number of factors, the Committee generally agreed that it was unlikely that a successful forum could be undertaken in November 2011. The Committee discussed deferring the forum to 2012 as well as downsizing the scale of the forum to a technical working group with participants from the Torres Strait and five key international countries that have successful indigenous involvement in fisheries. It was generally agreed that this form would deliver many of the objectives the larger forum aimed to achieve, however this will still require a large commitment from a funding organisation.

Sandfish survey of Warrior Reef

The TSSAC discussed the draft final report for the research '*The Recovery of Holothuria scabra (sandfish) population on Warrior Reef, Torres Strait*'. The Committee raised concerns that the report description of stock recovery on Warrior Reef was not as positive as the TSSAC had previously been advised as a result of preliminary reports from the Principal Investigator. The TSSAC raised concerns regarding recently approved research including experimental fishing for sandfish in 2011 and the potential risk to aggregations of sandfish. This concern was based on discussion that small aggregations of animals in a recovering stock were more susceptible to fishing than stable stocks.

Lobster Management Strategy Evaluation

The Committee noted the large amount of work and positive progress that has been made by the researchers for the project '*An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE)*'

for Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster'. The Principal Investigator will be requested to present further findings from the research at the next face to face TSSAC meeting in Brisbane.

Cultural Protocols

The Committee were informed that no comments had been provided on the draft Cultural Protocols that had been distributed to communities. The Committee agreed to accept the '*Cultural Protocols for researchers working in the Torres Strait*' as a final document. This will be made available to all researchers conducting research in the Torres Strait and will be reviewed regularly.

Other business

Climate Change

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has released a Torres Strait Climate Change Strategy 2010-2013 which includes information on the impact of climate change on fisheries. The TSRA will work with the TSSAC on projects which address climate change. Funding has already been approved for research which will examine climate change impacts on fisheries resources.

TSSAC membership

Committee members indicated their willingness to continue to offer their services to the TSSAC by offering to extend their membership. The Committee discussed an appropriate process to recommend to the PZJA that current elected members of the TSSAC continue for another three year term and AFMA agreed to pursue reappointment of the independent expert members prior to the next TSSAC meeting. PZJA agencies will continue to send nominated representative members as appropriate.

Fisheries Education in the Torres Strait

Despite a large focus on aquaculture, a Marine Discovery Centre is being built at Tagai College on Thursday Island. Marine studies are undertaken by pupils in year ten to twelve and there is potential to include lobster specific information as part of these lessons. The TSSAC will continue to monitor developments regarding inclusion of lobster specific education in Torres Strait schools.

Annual Research Delivery Day

The TSSAC has raised the idea of hosting an Annual Research Delivery day for Torres Strait research in Torres Strait which would bring researchers together to share research information with community members. The TSSAC concluded that this may be difficult to organise and fund and a more feasible option may be to request Principal Investigators of AFMA funded research to give presentations at TSSAC meetings. Opportunities for researchers to present at other forums such as the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility research delivery day at the TSRA will be investigated further.



Mr Ian Cartwright

TSSAC Chair

In attendance at TSSAC 54 were:

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chairperson	Consultant
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Representative	Manager, Thursday Island
Ms Rebecca Williams	Executive Officer (AFMA)	Senior Management Officer, Canberra
Dr Michael O'Neill	Scientist	Agri Science QLD, DEEDI
Dr Roland Pitcher	Scientist	CSIRO researcher
Ms Sevaly Sen	Social/Economics Member	Consultant
Dr Stephen Newman	Scientist	WA fisheries scientist
Mr Ian Jacobsen	Fisheries Queensland Representative	Senior Fisheries Management Officer
Mr Steve Hall	TSRA representative	Fisheries Policy Officer
Mr Tony Vass	Industry Representative	Ex Mackerel Licence Holder
Mr Gavin Mosby	Islander representative (proxy)	TIB Fisher (Masig) and traditional owner
Mr Shane Fava	Observer	TSRA
Mr Vic McGrath	Observer	TSRA

Apologies

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr Ludwig Kumuru	PNG Representative	PNG National Fisheries Authority