



Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)

**MINUTES
TSPMAC 14
16-17 JULY 2013**

NORTHERN FISHERIES CENTRE

CHAIR: Mr. Stuart Richey

**TORRES STRAIT PRAWN
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING No. 14**

16-17 July 2013: Commencing at 9:00 am

Venue: Northern Fisheries Centre - 38-40 Tingira Street, Portsmith, Cairns

AGENDA

Preliminaries

Chairs Opening Remarks, Apologies, Adoption of Agenda

1 Declarations of interest

1.1 Declaration of Interests (Chair)

2 Meeting Administration

2.1 Actions and/or business arising from previous TSPMAC meetings (EO)

3 Reports

3.1 Industry update – 2013 season to date (verbal) (**Industry**)

3.2 Management update (**AFMA**)

3.3 Compliance report - Season update on activities (**QB&FP**)

3.4 Data report – final 2012 and 2013 season to date catch and effort trends
(**Clive Turnbull**)

3.5 Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (QDAFF)

3.6 TSPF sustainability assessment final report (**Roland Pitcher**)

4 Management

4.1 Update on the Torres Strait prawn perceptions consultation (**Anthony de Fries**)

4.2 Where to from here following prawn perceptions consultation (**AFMA**)

4.3 2014-16 Total Allowable Effort limit (**AFMA**)

4.4 Season dates (**Industry**)

5 Finance

5.1. Final budget combined AFMA and QLD budget for 2013-14 (**AFMA**)

6 Other business

6.1 Dates and location for next meeting

Individuals wishing to attend the meeting as an observer are required to contact the Chair (Mr. Stuart Richey: care of Lisa Cocking (TSPMAC Executive Officer; lisa.cocking@afma.gov.au), notifying him of your desire to attend.

Attachment A - TSPMAC 14 Decision Record

1.1.1 The TSPMAC members and observers DECLARED:

- a) any interest (pecuniary or other) in the fishery at the commencement of the meeting.
- b) any potential conflicts of interest prior as they relate to each agenda item.

1.1.2 TSPMAC members and observers ABIDED by the decision of the MAC regarding conflicts of interest.

2.1.1 The TSPMAC NOTED progress on actions arising from previous TSPMAC meetings.

3.1.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the industry update for the TSPF.

3.2.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the management update for the TSPF.

3.3.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the Domestic Compliance Report for the period November 2012 to June 2013.

3.4.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the final catch statistics for the 2012 fishing season and the monthly trends in the catch and effort for the start of the 2013 fishing season.

3.5.1 The TSPMAC NOTED outcomes of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting (TSSAC) on 19 June 2013.

3.6.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the completion of, and DISCUSSED, the CSIRO project

“Environmental sustainability assessment update for habitats, assemblages and bycatch species in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (2013)”.

4.1.1 The TSPMAC DISCUSSED the draft report for the research project: Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities’ perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

4.2.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the recommendation of TSPMAC and the PZJA Standing Committee made in 2011 to allow a trial of larger boats and gear in the TSPF, subject to the outcomes of consultation with Traditional Inhabitants.

4.2.2 The TSPMAC DISCUSSED the results of the consultation on a proposed trial.

4.2.3 The TSPMAC AGREED:

- a) To provide supplementary information to PZJA Standing Committee to be considered alongside the 2011 TSPMAC recommendation regarding a trial of larger boats and gear in the fishery; and
- b) That the PZJA Standing Committee should consider both the previous TSPMAC recommendation, as well as this supplementary material when making a decision on whether a trial of larger boats and gear in the TSPF should occur.

4.3.1 The TSPMAC RECOMMENDED that the PZJA set the Total Allowable Effort (TAE) in the TSPF at 9,200 days for the 2014, 2015 and 2016 seasons.

4.3.2 The TSPMAC NOTED that the agreed TAE is consistent with the TSPF management plan, harvest strategy and PZJA sustainability reference points.

4.4.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the TSPMAC industry member proposal to move the TSPF season start date forward to improve the marketability of TSPF product.

4.4.2 The TSPMAC RECOMMENDED that:

- a) The PZJA AGREE to a one month extension of the TSPF season for a one year trial, commencing 1 February 2014; and
- b) If this trial extension isn't progressed for the 2014, then point the recommendation is for a one year trial commencing 1 February 2015.

4.4.3 The TSPMAC NOTED that:

- a) Recommendation 4.4.2 a) is dependent upon the advice from TSRA supporting the one month extension following consultation with the Torres Strait Island and Aboriginal sector.
- b) If a trial extension is to take place in 2014, a PZJA decision would be required by early October 2013.

5.1.1 The TSPMAC NOTED the 2013/14 draft budget for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF) which is based on AFMA's 2004 Cost Recovery Impact Statement (CRIS 2004)).

Attendance

The following members and observers were in attendance at TSPMAC 14.

Members

Chair - Stuart Richey
AFMA/ EO Lisa Cocking
Industry – Ed Morrison
Industry – Nick Shultz
Industry – Jim Newman
Industry – Marshall Betzel
Industry – Ron Earle
TSRA – John Adams
Traditional Inhabitant member – Hilda Mosby

Traditional Inhabitant member – Kenny Bedford

Traditional Inhabitant member–
Jerry Stephens

AFMA – Fiona Hill

QDAFF – Eddie Jebreen

QDAFF – Ian Jacobsen

Scientific member – CliveTurnbull,

Observers

Industry – Mike O'Brien
TSRA – Mariana Nahas
CSIRO – Dr Roland Pitcher
Consultant – Anthony de Fries
Ross Haldane – Port Lincoln Industry
(Wednesday only)

Permanent Observer

PNG – Ian Liviko

Meeting record from the TSPMAC 14

PRELIMINARIES

The Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) Chair Mr Stuart Richey welcomed participants to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Mr Steve Bolton, Mr Ludwig Kumora and Mr Bob Russell.

Item 1.3 Adoption of Agenda

The TSPMAC adopted the agenda, noting that agenda item 3.6 would be moved up the agenda so Dr Pitcher can leave following his presentation.

Item 1.4 Declaration of Interest

The Chairman reminded committee members of the importance of discussing and recording potential conflicts of interest for the TSPMAC as a whole and each agenda item. The following declarations of interest were reported in general, and potential conflicts relevant to specific agenda items are recorded within the relevant section of the minutes.

Participant Interest declared

Stuart Richey	Chair of NORMAC. No other interests in northern Australian fisheries.
Lisa Cocking	Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) employee.
Edwin Morrison	TSPF licence Holder and operator.
Ron Earle	Owner TSPF, Qld East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery and Northern Prawn Fishery licences. Owner of boats greater than 20m which may be relevant to agenda items 4.1 and 4.2.
Nick Schultz	Holder of TSPF licences and Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery licences.
Mike O'Brien	Fleet manager with Tropic Ocean (TSPF, Queensland East Coast and Northern Prawn Fishery licences).
James (Jim) Newman	TSPF fleet manager with Portsmouth Fuels.
Marshall Betzel	President of QLD seafood marketers association and fleet manager for Torres Strait boats.
John Adams	Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) employee.
Mariana Nahas	TSRA employee.
Hilda Mosby	TSRA Board member (Massig Island), president of the Massig fisheries organisation.
Jerry Stephens	TSRA Board member (Stephens Island).
Kenny Bedford	TSRA Board member (Erub Island), land owner Erub Island. Traditional Inhabitant Boat licence holder, TRL licence holder, member of PZJA committees as TSRA fisheries portfolio member and president of the Erub fishing organisation.
Fiona Hill	AFMA employee.
Eddie Jebreen	Queensland Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (QDAFF) employee.
Ian Jacobsen	QDAFF employee, TSSAC member, the TSSAC has funded the projects under agenda item 3.6 and 4.1.
Clive Turnbull	No current conflict of interest. AFMA consultant.
Ian Liviko	Papua New Guinea National (PNG) Fisheries Authority employee.
Roland Pitcher	CSIRO employee. Primary investigator for project at Agenda Item 3.7.
Anthony de Fries	AFMA consultant. Primary investigator on project at agenda item 4.1.
Ross Haldane	No conflicts of interest.

MEETING ADMINISTRATION

Item 2.1 Actions and business arising from past TSPMAC meetings

Members discussed the actions arising from past meetings, noting a number have been finalised.

REPORTS

Item 3.1 Industry update

The TSPMAC industry members provided an update on the 2013 fishing season to date.

Effort and Catch Rates

Industry commented that early catch rates have been good this season, however there has been a lot of debris from flooding. Endeavour catches have also dropped as tiger prawns are currently worth more.

Economics

The TSPMAC heard that the market value for prawn increased in June and July as the product quality was higher. Fuel prices have also stayed high but fairly stable. Mr Earle acknowledged that fishing is still a difficult industry, particularly in remote fisheries such as the Torres Strait. Mr Morrisson added that his company has been profitable since he bought in last season and has an additional boat fishing this season.

Other matters

TSPMAC Industry members explained that it is increasingly difficult to find and maintain crew in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF), resulting in higher costs when crew need to be swapped over.

Industry members also raised some difficulties around the scientific observer program. They acknowledged that some boats find it difficult to house scientific observers as they don't have enough provisions or sleeping arrangements. Further, under the current management of the observer program, boats sometimes only receive a day's notice that they will be required to take an observer. Industry members explained that it would be useful if active boats are informed when there are observers in the fishery, so that they know they may be contacted in the next few months to take an observer. It would then be useful if they could be provided one to two weeks' notice that they will be taking an observer. This will allow boats to be better prepared and forward plan.

ACTION: See if the AFMA observer section can notify active boats when observers are in the fishery, and then give 1-2 weeks' notice before they will be required to take one on board a boat.

Item 3.2 Management Update

AFMA presented a management update for the fishery.

Investment warning

The TSPMAC heard an update on the process for lifting the TSPF investment warning, noting its complexity due to the series of warnings in place across all Torres Strait fisheries. TSPMAC noted that the PZJA Standing Committee has agreed in principle to lift the warning, and is currently determining the appropriate mechanism. The TSPMAC will be informed when the warning is officially lifted.

Observers

The TSPMAC noted the observer report, noting that few interactions have occurred with any species of interest to the traditional sector during 2012 and 2013 to date. The meeting heard that observer coverage has been increased slightly for the 2013 season in the TSPF to ensure we are meeting 3.2 per cent coverage for the fishery.

Environment report

Ms Hill stated that the major item in the environment report related to the low number of sygnathids interactions reported in logbooks. Because some neighbouring fisheries using similar fishing methods do report sygnathid catches, it is possible they are being under reported in the TSPF. TSPMAC industry members agreed to remind licence holders of their obligation to report interactions with Threatened, Endangered and Protected species, including sygnathids.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to remind skippers through the TSPMAC industry report to report sygnathid interactions.

ACTION: AFMA to include in future reports the Meriam Mir and Kala Lagau Ya traditional names for species of interest to the traditional sector.

Item 3.3 Compliance report

The QDAFF member presented the compliance report for the 2012 fishing season. The TSPMAC members noted that 83 at seas days were achieved during the 2012 fishing season with very few compliance breaches in the TSPF, which remains a very compliant fishery. The meeting noted the ongoing concerns with compliance in other Torres Strait fisheries, and that these matters could be raised by the TSRA and board members through higher consultative structures such as the PZJA standing committee, or the TSPMAC; the committee responsible for discussing management of these fisheries. The also noted that the QDAFF compliance team are happy to speak about compliance matters at any time, they do not need to wait for a face to face meeting.

The committee noted that there were some errors in the data in the compliance report and QDAFF agreed to update the paper and redistribute to the TSPMAC out of session for information.

ACTION: QDAFF to update compliance report and redistribute to TSPMAC out of session.

Item 3.4 Data report

Dr Turnbull presented the data trends for the TSPF for the 2012 season, and 2013 to date. Data showed a 57 percent increase in effort compared to last year; noting this is still very low (2,310 days of a possible 6,867 days), at only around 21 per cent of the 1991-2003 average catch.

The TSPMAC heard that the tiger prawn catches in 2012 were almost double the 2011 levels, due to increased fishing effort and higher catch per unit effort. Endeavour prawn catches were slightly higher than 2012 at the start of the 2013 season, and then dropped. Endeavour prawn catch remains lower than tiger prawn catch because lower market prices result in less targeting.

Dr Turnbull explained that the catch, effort and catch rates data for first part of the 2013 season indicates a similar effort and catch level to 2012 may occur. The committee noted that the high tiger prawn CPUE & low harvest suggests that the tiger prawn stock is well above the sustainability reference point (B_{MSY}). Similarly the very low harvest of endeavour prawn in recent years suggests that the impact of fishing on the endeavour prawn stock size is low.

Mr Newman acknowledged that because the quality of prawn has improved, there is a higher market price which is increasing profitability despite similar catch rates to past seasons. The TSPMAC noted that although the slight increase in effort last year was positive, and increased market value for product, effort in the fishery is still very low, and not economically viable.

The TSPMAC acknowledged that there were still gaps between the logbook and VMS data due to a large lag in the submission of logsheets and industry should be reminded to submit logsheets promptly to allow better monitoring of the fishery.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to put a reminder in the TSPMAC industry report about timely submission of logbooks.

3.5 Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) report

The TSSAC representative provided a verbal update from the TSSAC. He explained that the two TSPF TSSAC projects had been finalised or were soon to be finalised. TSPMAC members noted that the funding that was received for TSPF research projects was a positive step for the TSPF, as few TSPF projects had been funded in the past. The TSSAC member asked that the TSPMAC think about future research projects that funding may be needed for, particularly if effort in the fishery continues to rise and harvest strategy triggers are reached. These triggers will initiate requirements for a new stock assessment or bio-economic model for the TSPF.

ACTION: TSPMAC members to consider any future funding initiatives for the TSPF and provide ideas to the TSPMAC executive officer for distribution to the TSPMAC out of session.

Item 3.6 Sustainability assessment

Dr Roland Pitcher presented the results of the 2013 sustainability assessment for trawl bycatch in the TSPF. Dr Pitcher explained that the 2013 study was an update of the 2005 sustainability assessment titled "*seabed mapping and characterisation project*". He explained that the TSPF in general, doesn't interact much with the bio-habitat, as the productive trawl grounds are generally relatively bare habitats.

Results of the 2013 project showed that the sustainability risks to non-target species were a lot less than during the 2005 assessment, largely as a result of the low level of effort currently occurring in the fishery. The TSPMAC heard that the 2005 assessment showed two of nine habitat types having moderate to high exposure to trawling, whereas the 2013 project, showed that the 2011 trawl exposure was low for all habitats. Further, in 2005 more than 50 of 256 species had moderate to extreme exposure to trawl grounds or effort, and in 2011, only three species had moderate exposure to trawl effort, and no species exceeded any sustainability reference points, meaning there is little to no sustainability risk to any species at the 2011 effort levels.

Dr Pitcher explained that if effort continues to increase in the fishery and starts moving towards or above 2005 levels, risk may increase and another assessment could be undertaken to monitor this. He added that a similar assessment could be undertaken in a similar timeframe and for a similar cost as the current update. The TSPMAC also noted there are additional safeguards through triggers and management responses in the harvest strategy (such as a 4000 day trigger). These triggers initiate a review of the stock assessment and the possibility of undertaking a bio-economic model, as well as trigger AFMA to assess whether a full ecological risk assessment (ERA) should be undertaken for the fishery.

Mr Jacobsen asked whether the species that were at “risk” in the 2005 assessment were likely to be the same if effort increases, or of species groups may move and other groups become more susceptible. Mr Pitcher explained that species typically have relatively stable distributions; however the makeup could change a little.

The TSPMAC also noted that the assessment was conservative in nature, so the risks to species are generally less than that reported, and would definitely not be greater than reported. The TSPMAC acknowledged that it is important that we ensure people understand these results are conservative when reading the report.

Mr Betzel and Mr de Fries advised that they had referred to Dr Pitcher’s Sustainability Assessment during their community consultation (Agenda Item 4.1) and found it very helpful in discussion of bycatch issues and seabed impacts. Community elders had asked whether early trawling had simplified habitats. Mr Bedford suggested that there may have been a few scattered elements of structure that were removed as the fishery developed, but they would have been a very small proportion of the whole Torres Strait habitat.

Mr Jerry Stephen noted that habitat maps used in the report did not show the reefs around Ugar Island where the trawlers operate. Dr Pitcher explained that the habitat maps are at a very broad scale in the report, however trawl gear cannot be used in reef areas as it is too dangerous to the boat.

ACTION: Dr Pitcher to ensure the introduction to the report includes information explaining the conservative nature of the results.

Mr Jebreen thanked Dr Pitcher for his work and acknowledged the importance of this work in painting a better picture for trawl fisheries. He explained that trawl fisheries are often associated with images of bycatch being discarded from boats, which can concern the public. This project shows that although there may appear to be large volumes of bycatch, this is low risk as the species caught have fast growth rates and high fecundity, allowing the species to continually replenish.

ACTION: upload sustainability assessment to the PZJA website; prepare an AFMA update article; and send a link to the TSPMAC for information.

Item 4.1 Update on the Torres Strait Prawn Perceptions Consultation

Mr Anthony de Fries and Mr Marshall Betzel (in his capacity as co-investigator) presented the preliminary outcomes from the indigenous community consultation undertaken in the Torres Strait during May 2013. Mr de Fries explained that the project aimed to document indigenous community views on a proposed trial of larger boats and gear in the TSPF.

Mr de Fries acknowledged how positive the open and direct feedback from communities was and that the consultation cleared up some misconceptions of some community members that a trial had already been agreed to, and the consultation were being undertaken to 'tick the box'. The committee noted that community comments and the subsequent reports were still being finalised, however the major concern highlighted by communities was the view that the proposal only contains downside risks for them around bigger boats, nets and increased effort, yet they were bearing all the risks of the fishery, given the boats operate in their backyards..

Mr de Fries confirmed that community concerns about impacts were consistent with feedback provided by indigenous representatives on TSPMAC, these included:

- The risk to the environment, e.g. from vessels sinking, collisions and inappropriate disposal of rubbish.
- The impact of the bigger boats and gear and increased effort on other fisheries, particularly Tropical Rock Lobster.
- The level of bycatch and possible impacts on the habitat.

The TSPMAC acknowledged the current policies that were already in place to the TSPF environment, such as MARPOL, and the code of conduct for responsible disposal of marine debris developed specifically for the TSPF. Mr Richey declared an interest at this point; that he sits on the board of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority which administers MARPOL in Australian waters. Mr Bedford also acknowledged how far industry had come with these issues, but noted that as long as communities can still see the pollution and debris in the water, they are going to raise it as an issue, so we need to keep reminding communities how far industry have come.

The MAC discussed the survivorship of Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) caught in trawl nets. Dr Turnbull explained that the then Department of Primary Industry Queensland undertook a joint tag and release program with PNG in the north east channel of the Torres Strait in 1984. The project found that TRL were moving from Australian waters into the Gulf of Papua and joining up with TRL migration from around Daru with an approximate 2% return rate of tags. This project also explored shark predation of TRL discarded from fishing boats. The results found that sharks didn't show interest in the discarded TRL, and generally they collected on the bottom and then set off marching again. The damage to individuals from trawling was also found to be relatively low. The TSPMAC agreed that it would be useful for Dr Turnbull to distribute the summary from the project to the MAC through the executive officer.

ACTION: Dr Turnbull to send a summary of the results of the TRL tagging project to the EO for distribution to the MAC.

The committee agreed that it would be useful to develop ongoing communication strategies, such as a regular newsletter or posters with references. This would

ensure communities have a better understanding of the good policies in place to protect the TS region and fisheries, and the results of any relevant research.

ACTION: PZJA agencies to work with Mr Bedford to develop a communication strategy, including an ongoing newsletter and/ or posters about what is happening in the TSPF, or other TS fisheries. Information may include current mechanisms in place to offer environmental protection to the region (i.e. MARPOL, code of conduct etc), results of research projects (i.e. the sustainability assessment or TRL survivability trial) and the progress on developing methods to increase flow of benefits to the traditional sector.

Mr de Fries and Mr Betzel explained that the consultation helped consolidate the record regarding community concerns on impacts related to trawling but advised that the central message was the lack of a flow of benefit to the communities. The consultant's view was that the communities were not prepared to support a review of input control measures for the commercial sector while they believed there was an unresolved resource allocation issue in the fishery.

Mr de Fries explained that the communities suggested options for creating a flow of benefits, including a cadet program employing indigenous crew and the use of facilities on the local islands. Mr Newman explained that he has successfully hosted indigenous crew on the boats he manages. He added that it works most effectively if arrangements are flexible, as they generally want to work a week or two on and off, rather than three months straight. The TSPMAC supported further exploration of options to improve the flow of benefits back to communities from this fishery.

Mr de Fries also explained that communities had indicated that the loss of mothership services is not a concern to communities.

ACTION: PZJA agencies to work together to explore possible options for improving the flow of benefits to Torres Strait communities, such as a cadet program or utilising community infrastructure.

Mr de Fries explained that some communities also asked about the three indigenous licences that were surrendered, as some community members were of the belief that these licences were taken away without adequate consultation with the affected communities. Mr Jacobsen explained that the licences were surrendered as part of the buyout of the finfish fishery and that significant benefits had been derived by communities through the finfish buyout. Mr Bedford explained that they were aware of the confusion and that the matter requires more community education so there is a better understand of the history of these licences and the exchange for funding of the finfish buyout. Mr Bedford noted that the education process will take some time to implement, and the process could be used to educate communities on any matters that arise. AFMA and QDAFF offered support with any aspect of this education process if it is needed.

ACTION: TSRA to provide information to communities about the surrender of TSPF licences.

Mr de Fries also explained that the Masig community expressed interest in hosting a TSPMAC meeting. The TSPMAC noted that this was a good idea, however the Executive Officer would need to assess if it would be financially viable.

ACTION: TSPMAC Executive Officer to compare the costs for a meeting on Massig Island and in Cairns.

Mr de Fries finished by expressing his and Mr Betzel's gratitude to all communities for being a part of the consultation in such a positive way. The TSPMAC noted that once a draft final report from the consultation is available, it will be presented to the TSSAC for comment before being finalised and made available on the PZJA website.

ACTION: TSPMAC Executive Officer to draft a letter from TSPMAC chair to TSSAC acknowledging Mr de Fries presentation of the report to the TSPMAC. This letter should also acknowledge the importance of this project in the progression of the TSPF management.

Item 4.2 Where to from here?

The TSPMAC noted the results of the community consultation project, and discussed how this information should be used in moving forward with the fishery. The TSPMAC discussed the potential conflicts of interest relating to this agenda item. Each industry and member and traditional inhabitant representative stated their potential conflicts and left the room individually while the TSPMAC considered whether it was appropriate for them to take part in the discussions.

Mr Earle and Mr O'Brien noted that their fleet includes boats larger than 20 metres however as all licence holders are eligible for the trial this does not advantage their company over anyone else.

No conflicts were received from other members.

The TSPMAC noted the potential conflicts and agreed that all members should be a part of the discussions regardless.

The AFMA member spoke to this agenda item and reminded the TSPMAC of the original PZJA standing committee decision; *recommending a nine month trial of larger boats and gear following consultation with traditional inhabitants, if PZJA agency heads agree that consultation regarding the trial has had a suitable outcome.* She explained that this decision had already been made, however the MAC can provide supplementary advice following the results of the communities consultation.

The committee noted and discussed the following 11 challenges highlighted through the consultation project, as outlined by Mr de Fries in the previous agenda item.

1. Increasing effort

One of the major community concerns is that effort would increase from current levels during the trial. The MAC acknowledged that this was more a social than environmental concern as effort is currently well below the 9,200 day total allowable effort limit, which is set based on maximum sustainable yield, and has room to increase. Communities' are worried about increased effort as they are comfortable with seeing fewer boats. This relates to the view that they hold a lot of the risk of the fishery having large boats in their home area, with little benefit flowing back to the community.

The committee noted that at any time all 61 boats could be active under current arrangements so this is a good opportunity to engage the traditional sector as we move forward, possibly leading to greater effort than current levels, so that they can help to shape the future of the fishery. The TSPMAC agreed that stakeholders should work together to move forward in the management of the TSPF.

The meeting discussed the two main methods that PZJA agencies would use to control fishing power and ensure effort remains sustainable during a trial.

1. A conversion ratio to account for the increased spread of nets/ fishing power,, where boats using larger gear would “pay” more “effort units” to fish a day than regular gear. This means that they will actually have fewer days to fish, acknowledging that they may catch more on each day with larger gear.
2. A minimum holding of days for boats taking part in the trial, which cannot be fished or transferred to others. This provides a conservative buffer on top of the conversion ratio.

The committee noted that these two methods ensure the effective maximum allowable effort would remain at 9,200 (6,867 for Australian licence holders), and allow a buffer for any other factors affecting fishing power (i.e. gear size), that haven't been considered here. Further, if the catch and effort triggers within the harvest strategy (~4,000 days) are reached, management triggers would be activated providing additional protection for the fishery.

The TSPMAC noted that there are some recent new entrants to the fishery who are succeeding under the current management system. Mr Jacobsen explained that the reason the fishery is still operating is because people are still paying their levies, even though they are choosing not to fish and are not getting a return on their investment (i.e. licence). Mr Newman noted that there was a market for some of the, however the TSPMAC noted that the value of licences is much lower than operators paid ten to 15 years ago, so they would be selling the licences at a loss, and potentially couldn't cover their overheads/debts. As such there are some industry members who are hoping that management changes could increase the value of licences for those operators to sell or lease. The MAC noted that although some operators have shown they can succeed in business under the current arrangements, the TSPMAC's job is to recommend management arrangements that consider the different situations of licence holders and support as many business models as possible. This can be done by introducing the most efficient mechanisms for sustainably harvesting of stocks, and trading licences for the greatest return.

The TSPMAC was also noted that it can be easier to get crew for smaller boats.

The MAC acknowledged that their previous recommendation was trying to balance safeguards to ensure the fishery remains sustainable, without having disincentives in place, as participation in the trial is needed to allow important data collection on whether relaxing some input controls could improve the economic viability of the fishery as a whole.

The MAC discussed the risk of increased pulse fishing at the start of the season from larger boats, and that this could further limit the flow of benefits to communities, if the fishery operates for less time during a season. Ms Hill questioned how the pulse fishing risk was different from the current arrangements, as some operators in the fishery currently do this. She added that the trial also has the minimum holdings in place to act as a disincentive to pulse fish; because boats in the trial have to hold a certain amount of days, they get more value out of the trial the more days they fish.

The TSPMAC noted that the industry is divided on whether larger boats and gear should be legislated in the TSPF, which is why a trial was recommended. TSPMAC industry members noted that even though they don't all support the use of larger boats and gear, they were interested in the data that would be collected during the trial, particularly fishing power data. It was noted that data from the trial will hopefully

allow PZJA agencies to determine whether the concerns from the different stakeholder groups are realised or not.

Mr Bedford closed this agenda item by explaining that the report re-enforces the previous advice that traditional communities do not support a trial because they don't see any benefits from the fishery, and have become used to seeing only a few boats and don't want this to change. Mr Bedford added that the MAC has been presented many different views from all the different stakeholder groups now, and it is up to the decision makers to consider these views and make a decision, which will be difficult. The committee agreed that whatever the PZJA decides, it is important to have a clear communication strategy to all stakeholders.

2. Compliance concerns

The TSPMAC discussed how compliance will be monitored effectively during a trial, particularly given the move of the compliance operations from Thursday Island to Cairns.

The committee acknowledged that the compliance concerns of communities are generally linked to the broader compliance concerns for the Torres Strait, as the TSPF generally have very good compliance, with very few breaches. Members also heard that PZJA agencies would monitor the minimum holdings and effort expended by boats participating in the trial to ensure they are compliant within the rules.

The TSPMAC agreed that it would be beneficial for Torres Strait compliance activities to be better communicated to local communities both generally and if a trial were to occur.

ACTION: PZJA agencies to work to improve communication of compliance activities to local communities.

3. Take of TRL and other culturally significant species

The TSPMAC discussed the catch of culturally significant species such as TRL. They noted that the take of culturally significant species will continue to be monitored through the observer program, where observer coverage increases with effort. Members noted that the rules prohibiting the retention of TRL will also remain in place if a trial were to occur. Further, given the information provided earlier by Dr Turnbull, research indicates very good survivability of TRL caught in trawl nets.

The TSPMAC discussed the higher take of TRL during one period in the environment report, and Ms Hill explained that this take occurred during the TRL march. Mr Betzel explained that skippers generally move on if there are large takes of TRL, as these cannot be retained and lessen their catch of marketable prawn. The MAC also heard that the march generally occurs in September and October, when fewer boats are fishing. The TSPMAC agreed that information about the march and voluntary move on provisions could be added to the industry code of practice, TSPF handbook and communicated in the TSPMAC industry report to ensure new skippers are aware of it.

ACTION: AFMA to review the code of conduct for the responsible disposal of marine debris and rubbish and see if more generic issues can be added, such as the TRL march and voluntary move on provisions.

The TSPMAC acknowledged the benefits of distributing footage of working BRDs and TEDs to communities to improve community understanding of initiatives in place to minimise the take of bycatch and community significant species.

ACTION: PZJA agencies to work together to distribute TED and BRD footage to communities.

The MAC heard that communities had concerns that the trial would be approved as soon as the consultation had occurred, and that bigger boats and gear would become standard practice. The MAC heard a summary of the process the PZJA will go through when considering a trial, including reviewing MAC advice and the consultation report. The MAC also noted that any proposed long term management changes would require extensive consultation before implementation.

4. Inexperienced fishers

The TSPMAC acknowledged the need to ensure that new skippers understand the significant cultural, environmental and social sensitivities in the Torres Strait region, and that this is relevant both to a trial, and any new skippers in the fishery. The MAC heard that the proposed trial includes undertaking an education program for new skippers, which explain these matters. They agreed that this education program may be useful for all skippers, whether a trial proceeds or not. The TSPMAC agreed that the TSRA cultural handbook should be provided to licence holders.

The Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Traditional Inhabitant representatives reiterated that they support Mr de Fries report and do not support a trial.

Mr Stephen raised concern about the trawl grounds being the front and back yard for Torres Strait communities and the high risks to those communities from trawl incidents. He emphasised the need to protect the livelihood of those communities.

ACTION: AFMA to investigate the feasibility of an education program for skippers, providing information on cultural, environmental and socially significant matters for the region (e.g. pre-season briefings or an information pack for boats and/ or new skippers).

ACTION: AFMA to distribute a copy of the TSRA cultural handbook with the TSPF handbook in 2014. The handbook should also include a link to the cultural handbook on the PZJA website.

5. Bycatch/environmental impacts

The TSPMAC discussed how bycatch would be monitored during a trial. MAC members acknowledged Dr Pitcher's sustainability report, and reiterated the importance of communicating the results of the report to communities.

The TSPMAC noted that fishery bycatch levels are current low due to reduced effort in the fishery and there is a trigger of 4,000 boat days in the harvest strategy, which will remain in place under a trial. At this level of effort AFMA must assess the need to update the ecological risk assessment, including an assessment of bycatch species. Further, the potential for increased swept area under a trial with larger nets is addressed by adjustments in the conversion ratio calculations and compulsory minimum holding of days that can't be fished or transferred. These measures are in place to reduce any risks while data is collected during the trial.

The TSPMAC also acknowledged the compulsory use of TEDs and BRDs. The MAC heard that the TSPF has received the United States TED accreditation which is world's best practice, demonstrating the internationally recognised effectiveness of TEDs in the TSPF.

6. Mitigation measures – e.g. closures

The TSPMAC discussed the community concerns with trawl boats operating in close proximity to islands, particularly Massig and Poruma. The committee noted that closures can protect islands and reduce the risks of boats running ashore, however there are challenges with implementing closures in some areas. The Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Traditional Inhabitant representatives advised the MAC that the finfish fishery has a closure for non-TIB fishers within 10 nautical miles of the finfish communities, which is implemented through permit conditions, and leasing contracts, as well as informal arrangements for community home reefs.

Members agreed that it would be ideal to address these issues through improved communication with licence holders, and if specific areas can't be addressed in this way the TSPMAC can discuss other options. The MAC also noted that if there were a trial, we could not have special closures in place for the trial boats, as it would be inconsistent with other boats, meaning data couldn't be compared.

The MAC noted that in general, communities are able to propose fisheries closures through their representation at PZJA forums or the TSRA. These members then take the proposal to the relevant MAC (i.e. TSPMAC or TSFMAC) for consideration. It was suggested that this matter be raised at the next TSFMAC meeting for information.

ACTION: include information in the TSPF handbook about appropriate behaviour when operating near island communities. Also include this information in the industry update.

ACTION: TSFMAC to discuss how community proposals for closures in the TSPF can be fed through the MAC process.

7. TIB ownership/benefits

The TSPMAC reiterated that the major outcome of the consultation was the community view that there is a lack benefits from the TSPF back to the local communities.

Mr Bedford explained that communities are not concerned about the prospect of the fishery staying as it is or dying away. He added that Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Traditional Inhabitants had explored what benefits they could get from the fishery for years, but would rather not have the fishery because there are no benefits to them from the fishery.

Mr Bedford encouraged the TSPMAC to look seriously at how to increase benefits to communities, for example, trialling different approaches. Mr Bedford also highlighted the importance not to lose sight of the message about livelihoods and impacts.

The MAC discussed the aspirations of Torres Strait Islanders for the TSPF, and the TSRA Board members advised the MAC that they would like to have 100 per cent ownership of all resources in the Torres Strait, including the TSPF. Mr Stephens added that the consultation report further reflected these community aspirations. The MAC heard that this doesn't necessarily mean exclusive access, but could include

similar arrangements to the lease back in the finfish fishery. It was noted that aspirations vary between communities, and that the communities most affected by TSPF don't support a trial.

The MAC discussed options for creating a flow of benefits to the local communities

Options include:

- Cadetships or skipper training programs for indigenous community members. It has been difficult for community members to gain the hours for the training needed to gain their master fishermen's licence. The TSPMAC acknowledged that the opportunity for this training may be greater on larger boats, as it is easier to accommodate more crew.
- Employing Torres Strait crew on boats generally, and providing more flexible working arrangements, such as shorter periods of time at sea.
- Investigating markets for bycatch species, including export markets providing an income to communities.
- Investigate services communities could provide to the TSPF fleet, such as net making and chandleries.
- Review the current infrastructure on islands to see if any can be used to the TS fleet.

The committee also noted questions of some stakeholders on why these three indigenous prawn licences were surrendered if they wanted a share of the fishery.

Mr Bedford acknowledged that the three Indigenous licences, which were aimed to provide community access to the fishery, were surrendered as it wasn't practical to share three licences between all Torres Strait Islanders.

The TSPMAC noted that Torres Strait communities feel the same way about non-TIB fisheries as how broader Australian communities feel about extractive industries such as coal seam gas. Mr Earle suggested that a lot of opportunities to increase benefits to communities sit outside the responsibility of the MAC and need to come from another source. Mr Jebreen explained that the cost of accessing fisheries resources in the Torres Strait has been determined according to CRIS 2004. If the Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal traditional sector want to obtain a flow of cash benefits from the fishery accessing the resource this would have to be incorporated with the current costs associated with accessing resources in this fishery.

ACTION: TSRA to provide a copy of the 2010 report on island infrastructure to the Executive Officer to distribute to the MAC.

The TSPMAC agreed that PZJA agencies should work together to further explore options to increase the flow of benefits to the communities.

ACTION: PZJA agencies to develop options for improving the flow of benefits to Torres Strait communities.

8. Community Consultation

The TSPMAC acknowledged that there is a need to improve communication with both commercial industry and the local communities, to ensure information about the TSPF, and other Torres Strait fisheries, is distributed.

The TSPMAC agreed that whether or not a trial proceeds it is important to ensure there is transparent communication between all stakeholders.

9. Current licence holder views

The TSPMAC acknowledged the differing views of TSPF industry members about a trial of larger boats and/or gear, and how a trial would be structured, some of which were discussed in detail in section 1 of this agenda item. Despite these differences, industry members were interested in collecting data to increase the understanding of efficiencies of boats/gear and efficacy of different business models. A summary of the industry views are provided below:

- Current boats operating within the 20 metre rule may feel discriminated if larger boats enter the fishery.
- It can be easier to crew smaller boats (don't need an engineer).
- Larger boats can be more stable in rough weather, and safer / more comfortable for crew.
- Fuel efficiency is not directly linked to vessel length.
- There is a desire to improve the fishery for all licence holders and create a market for endorsements.
- Current value of licences has been driven down to a level that is not acceptable.
- Low levels of participation and high risk of surrenders is still real.
- Risk of losing infrastructure e.g. mother-shiping services given the current level of effort.
- bigger boats may not fish for a full season, which would lead to pulse fishing.

10. Traditional inhabitant views

The TSPMAC traditional inhabitant representatives reiterated the views expressed in the consultant report and previously in the minutes, in that there is no support for a trial to proceed, particularly given the lack of flow of benefits to the communities.

The traditional inhabitants reiterated to the MAC that there are concerns that the fishery may impact on home/community reefs within the trawl fishery area and that an increase in trawl activity from current low levels would increase the likelihood of marine incidents/accidents, even though larger boats can be safer in general.

11. Engagement with community

The TSPMAC acknowledged the need to improve communication with Torres Strait communities, which is covered above. Members reiterated that there is a need to commit to real two way engagement between industry and communities on the future management of the TSPF.

In closing this item, the Chair noted that a lot of the discussion today around the proposed trials has been discussed in detail over the past three years, leading to the previous TSPMAC recommendation. However new discussion was important considering there are new members at all levels of PZJA management and on the TSPMAC, and effort has increased a bit, it is useful to revisit these issues to some degree.

Item 4.3 Total Allowable Effort Limit

The TSPMAC discussed the total allowable effort for the TSPF. Ms Cocking explained that in 2010, the TAE was set at 9,200 days for the following three fishing seasons. As the fishery data indicates that the target species continue to be sustainable, AFMA proposes to set the TAE at the same level for another three seasons (2014, 2015 and 2016).

The MAC agreed to recommend a 9,200 day TAE for three years, noting that the PZJA can change the TAE at any time by emergency determination if required.

The meeting discussed the level of effort required for maximum economic yield and identified that it is probably in the region of 5,000 to 5,500 days.

ACTION: AFMA to develop a PZJA paper seeking determination of a 9,200 day TAE for the 2014 – 2016 fishing seasons.

Item 4.4 Season dates

The Chair facilitated a process to determine potential conflicts of interest relating to this agenda item. TSPMAC industry members and observers left the room individually. All members declared the same interest in *that they would like the season dates to be extended*. The Committee agreed that each member, despite this potential conflict, should be a part of the discussions and any subsequent recommendation.

TSPMAC noted a proposal from industry members to open the TSPF season earlier (1 February or mid – February) to provide licence holders additional time to market prawns for the Easter period; typically a peak period for prawn purchasing. The MAC noted the challenges with marketing prawns on the domestic market with a high AUD, and that in the past the TSPF had struggled to supply product into the Easter market due to the current season dates. Mr Betzel and Mr Newman also agreed to put together a basic model showing grading and prices for prawns if there was an earlier fishing season.

ACTION: Mr Betzel and Mr Newman to compile a basic model showing grading and prices for prawns if there was an earlier fishing season and distribute to MAC members.

The TSPMAC noted that the TSPF season was originally set to match the east coast season, and protect juvenile prawns, however a temporal closure (East of Warrior Reef) has now been put in place to meet the second function. The committee noted that February prawn catches are historically good and there would be no sustainability concerns to open the fishery earlier. A longer season could also improve staff retention.

The committee noted the social benefit to the closure, as it gives communities a period free from trawl boats. Mr Bedford explained that given the current community views on fishery effort, the option to put in place a commensurate closure at another time would likely be better received. The MAC agreed that Torres Strait communities would need to be further consulted before a decision on trialing an earlier season date is made, and that an extension to the season should be trialed for one year, dependent on the outcomes of consultation.

ACTION: TSRA to provide advice to TSPMAC on how Torres Strait communities should be consulted about the proposal to have an early season start date.

The TSPMAC noted that this matter would need to be considered by the PZJA standing committee by around October if the season dates were to be trialed in the 2014 fishing season. The TSRA also acknowledged that is unlikely they will be able to gather community information and receive advice back from the TSRA in this time

period, however if it can't be collected this quickly, they could aim for the 2015 season.

5.1 Combined AFMA and QDAFF budget

Ms Cocking presented the budget paper for the TSPF. She explained that the budget is nearly finalised, however there will be minor changes to the AFMA budget, including a \$10,000 increase under consultants and contractors, for contracting Clive Turnbull as the scientific member on the MAC now he is no longer a QDAFF employee. This will not result in an overall increase of the budget from last financial year, as the QDAFF budget will decrease.

The MAC noted an explanation of the QDAFF budget from Mr Jacobsen, which has decreased in both compliance and management costs. The decrease is primarily a result of the restructure in QDAFF and the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol.

Members noted the decrease in the QDAFF budget, and that a final budget will be presented for information out of session once it is finalised.

6.1 Other business

PNG update

The MAC noted an update from Mr Liviko on the PNG fishery, explaining that the fishery is mainly inactive, with low levels of fishing occurring in the Gulf of Papua. The TSPMAC heard that PNG would like to trial larger boats in PNG waters due to the limitations of small boats ability to carry fuel and product. The MAC discussed the current level of operation in the fishery, noting that the boats operating are currently targeting banana and tiger prawns for export. The MAC also heard that there are closures and management measures in place, such as no retention of TRL, but these measures are difficult to enforce.

The MAC heard that PNG fishers are generally reluctant to use BRDs and TEDs as they believe their nets will collapse, or that they would affect the quality or quantity of product caught. Industry MAC members suggested PNG fishers should have an opportunity to observe fishing on Australian TSPF boats to see TEDs and BRDs operating. AFMA agreed to facilitate discussions between PNG and industry for this to happen.

The TSPMAC recommended that QDAFF provide the videos of TEDs and BRDs in operation to PNG, showing their effectiveness.

The TSPMAC Chair thanked Mr Liviko for attending the meeting and providing a valuable update about the PNG fishery.

ACTION: QDAFF to provide BRD and TED video links to PNG.

ACTION: AFMA to facilitate the process to engage some PNG fishers to work on TSPF boats to see the effectiveness of TEDs and BRDs. Discussions will need to be facilitated with TSPF licence holders and PNG.

Etiquette when visiting communities

Ms Hilda Mosby raised some cultural concerns around crew behaviour on Massig Island. TSPF crew often visit Massig Island during the fishing season, and have been seen walking around the island without suitable clothing, showing piercings and tattoos etc. Ms Mosby explained that the children on these communities are impressionable, and communities ask that crew are respectful of cultural protocols.

The TSPMAC recommended that appropriate behaviour is discussed in the prawn handbook and be communicated to all licence holders in the industry report.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to include information about appropriate behaviour and cultural sensitivities when visiting Islands.

The MAC discussed appropriate procedures if assisting PNG nationals at sea. The correct procedure is to contact an island and the police before taking the PNG nationals to an island. Mr Betzel agreed to speak with Ms Mosby and TSRA to document the correct procedures for assisting PNG nationals.

The TSPMAC Chair closed the meeting and thanked members for their participation in the meeting. The MAC also made special mention of Mr Jacobsen, who will no longer be working in Torres Strait fisheries, and thanked him his hard work and support over the past five years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Richey', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Stuart Richey
TSPMAC Chair
August 2013

Actions arising from previous TSPMAC 14

Item number	Action	Responsibility
	Liaise with observer section to see if they can notify active boats when observers are in the fishery, and then give 1-2 weeks' notice before they will be required to take one on board a boat.	AFMA
	Remind skippers through the TSPMAC industry report to report sygnathid interactions.	TSPMAC industry members
	Update compliance report and redistribute to TSPMAC out of session.	QDAFF
	Put a reminder in the TSPMAC industry report about timely submission of logbooks.	TSPMAC industry members
	Consider any future funding initiatives for the TSPF and provide ideas to the TSPMAC executive officer for distribution to the TSPMAC out of session.	ALL TSPMAC members
	Ensure the introduction to sustainability assessment final report includes information explaining the conservative nature of the results.	Roland Pitcher
	Upload sustainability assessment to the PZJA website, prepare an AFMA update article; and send a link to the TSPMAC for information.	AFMA
	Send summary of the results of the TRL project to the EO for distribution to the MAC.	Clive Turnbull and EO
	PZJA agencies to work with Mr Bedford to develop a communication strategy, including an ongoing newsletter and/ or posters about what is happening in the TSPF, or other TS fisheries. Information may include current mechanisms in place to offer environmental protection to the region (i.e. MARPOL, code of conduct etc), results of research projects (i.e. the sustainability assessment or TRL survivability trial) and the progress on developing methods to increase flow of benefits to the traditional sector.	Kenny Bedford and PZJA agencies
	PZJA agencies to work together to explore possible options for	PZJA Agencies

	improving the flow of benefits to Torres Strait communities, such as a cadet program or using community infrastructure.	
	Develop a method communicating decisions and information to communities such as the surrender of TSPF licences.	TSRA
	Compare the costs for a meeting on Massig Island and in Cairns.	EO
	Draft a letter from TSPMAC chair to TSSAC acknowledging Mr de Fries presentation of the report to the TSPMAC. This letter should also acknowledge the importance of this project in the progression of the TSPF management.	EO
	Review the code of conduct for the responsible disposal of marine debris and rubbish and see if more generic issues can be added, such as the TRL march and voluntary move on provisions.	AFMA
	PZJA agencies to work together to distribute TED and BRD footage to communities.	PZJA Agencies
	Investigate the feasibility of an education program for skippers, providing information on cultural, environmental and socially significant matters for the region (e.g. pre-season briefings or an information pack for boats and/ or new skippers).	AFMA
	Distribute a copy of the TSRA cultural handbook with the TSPF handbook in 2014. The handbook should also include a link to the cultural handbook on the PZJA website.	AFMA
	Include information in the TSPF handbook about appropriate behaviour when operating near island communities. Also include this information in the industry update.	AFMA
	TSPMAC to discuss how community proposals for closures in the TSPF can be fed through the MAC process.	TSPMAC EO
	Provide a copy of the 2010 report on island infrastructure to the Executive Officer to distribute to the MAC.	TSRA
	PZJA agencies to develop options for improving the flow of benefits to Torres Strait communities.	PZJA Agencies
	Determine whether there has been a study on the feasibility of community provision of services.	AFMA and TSRA

	Develop a PZJA paper seeking determination of a 9,200 day TAE for the 2014 – 2016 fishing seasons.	AFMA
	Compile a basic model showing gradings and prices for prawns if there was an earlier fishing season.	Marshal Betzel and Jim Newman
	Provide advice to TSPMAC on how Torres Strait communities should be consulted about the proposal to have an early season start date.	TSRA
	Provide BRD and TED video links to PNG	QDAFF
	Facilitate the process to engage some PNG fishers to work on TSPF boats to see the effectiveness of TEDs and BRDs. Discussions will need to be facilitated with TSPF licence holders and PNG.	AFMA
	Include information about wearing appropriate clothing and having awareness of cultural sensitivities when coming onto Islands.	TSPMAC industry members
	Add information on cultural sensitivities to the TSPF handbook	AFMA