



**Australian Government**



TORRES STRAIT  
**PZJA**  
PROTECTED ZONE  
JOINT AUTHORITY

# **Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)**

**MINUTES  
TSPMAC TELECONFERENCE  
26 NOVEMBER 2013**

**CHAIR: Mr. Stuart Richey**



## Attendance

The following members and observers were in attendance at the TSPMAC teleconference held on 26 November 2013.

Members	Observers
Stuart Richey – Chair	Andy Bodsworth – Consultant, Primary Investigator of proposed research
Tom Roberts – Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)	Robert Curtotti – ABARES
Fiona Hill – Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA)	<b>Apologies</b>
Lisa Cocking – AFMA	Ron Earle – Industry
Ed Morrison – Industry	Eddie Jebreen – Queensland DAFF
Marshall Betzel – Industry	
Nick Shultz – Industry	
Jim Newman – Industry	
Clive Turnbull – scientific member	
Kenny Bedford - Traditional Inhabitant member	
Jerry Stephens - Traditional Inhabitant member	
Francis Pearson - Traditional Inhabitant member	
Marianna Nahas – Torres Strait Regional Authority	

## Decision Record

1.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) pre-proposal “Improved TSPF profitability and pathways for a sustained flow of TSPF benefits to Torres Strait Island Communities.”

1.2 The TSPMAC considered the proposal and unanimously **AGREED** to support the project, subject to amendments which clarify the link between the flow of benefits to the traditional sector and profitability of the fishery.

## **1 PRELIMINARIES**

The TSPMAC Chair welcomed members to the meeting and acknowledged an apology from industry member Ron Earle, who provided his comments on the proposal to Marshall Betzel.

### **1.1 Conflicts of Interest**

Conflicts of Interest were not sought. However, this meeting was discussing a single issue related to a research proposal and not any usual MAC business. It was clear that Mr Bodsworth was a consultant, who had prepared the draft research proposal, and would benefit if the MAC supported the project going to full proposal.

## **2 TSSAC RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

Ms Cocking summarised a research proposal that had been developed to explore ways to improve profitability in the TSPF, and to improve the flow of benefits from the fishery to the traditional inhabitant sector. The MAC noted that it has been investigating ways to improve profitability in the TSPF for several years with little progress. The community consultation identified that a lack of benefits flowing from the TSPF to the communities as a key concern to all four communities.

Committee members noted that if flow of benefits from the TSPF to communities was increased, it may improve cooperation and the relationship between the two sectors.

The MAC noted that the research proposal aims to explore both avenues for profitability and flow of benefits, noting the close link between the two. The MAC also heard that the research proposal had links to three research priorities identified for the Torres Strait in the annual operational plan.

Mr Bodsworth, the project primary investigator spoke to his research proposal, advising MAC members he was hoping to gain a better understanding of the different needs and benefits of stakeholders who are interested in this project. He explained that the project was initially developed to focus on exploring profitability pathways for the TSPF. Following discussions with AFMA and TSRA staff, the project was expanded to include the new priorities around flow of benefits to the traditional sector and this could influence social licence for the prawn industry in this region.

Each member was provided an opportunity to discuss the proposed research and advise the MAC of their position. Mr Betzel, also speaking on behalf of Mr Earle, gave his support for the project, particularly given the outcomes of the community consultation which identified flow of benefits as a key concern of the traditional sector. Mr Betzel suggested that the following three matters need to be addressed in the proposal:

1. Identify the existing benefits under current management regime e.g. tax dollars, product for the Australian public, benefits across different stakeholders.
2. Identify the current gaps in infrastructure services that restrict the flow of benefits.
3. Address profitability as well as flow of benefits.

Mr Schultz gave support for the proposed research, and reiterated Mr Betzel's point that profitability needs to be addressed through this project.

The remaining TSPMAC industry members also supported the project. Mr Newman felt exploring avenues to get community members into employment in the fishery and use of bycatch were good options to increase the flow of benefits.

Mr Bodsworth explained that phase 2 of the project would involve consultation with communities and the project would identify existing infrastructure and any gaps. Mr Bodsworth reiterated that determining how the communities can benefit from, and contribute to the fishery is important.

During these discussions, the Chair's phone connection was lost and the meeting was progressed without the Chair.

Mr Bedford, Traditional Inhabitant representative, supported the project going to full proposal, noting it was a natural progression from past discussions at TSPMAC. Mr Bedford advised the MAC that he feels it is important for the Torres Strait Islander sector to engage in the fishery. It is hoped that the research can investigate how this can happen, along with determining the benefits to industry.

The MAC noted that the Traditional Inhabitant sector already had some ideas, including Torres Strait Islanders gaining access to byproduct to sell or supply to communities.

Mr Stephens and Mr Pearson supported the project and Mr Bedford's views. Mr Stephens added that the full proposal would need more clarity around the process for carrying out the research, particularly the community consultation. He explained that there are lots of different groups such as local fisher groups, fisheries committee members and board members who would need to be consulted. Mr Pearson added that the opposition to management changes such as season dates and boat size may be reduced if flow of benefits is increased, and that the project should consider whether different islands have different needs around flow of benefits.

Mr Bodsworth welcomed the suggestion of ways to increase flow of benefits, however he felt it was important that the MAC remains realistic around what the project can achieve, in the short term, particularly while effort is so low.

Ms Nahas, TSRA, supported the project going to a full proposal taking into account the comments made by the Traditional Inhabitant members. Ms Nahas added that it is important that this project focuses on the profitability aspects as well as the possibilities for a flow of benefit to communities but cautioned the project focusing on improving social licence for the industry given the project would be funded using public monies.

Mr Roberts from Queensland DAFF supported the project going to full proposal, noting how positive it is that Traditional Inhabitant representatives are supportive of the project.

Mr Turnbull also supported the project, suggesting the project should see if any linkages could be made with proposed research into growing out of Tropical Rock Lobsters, as trash fish from prawn trawl bycatch may be a source of food for growing out undersized TRL, to legal size limits.

Mr Curtotti, ABARES, supported the project. He added that ABARES is currently undertaking its economic survey of the fishery and is seeking participation from industry members. The survey will be looking at TSPF profits, and the data collected through this project may be useful for the proposed research. The project will be finalised in early 2014.

The MAC noted that AFMA see this as a positive way forward with helping PZJA agencies to achieve the current objectives to explore flow of benefits to communities.

In summary, taking into account all the comments and suggestions made during this meeting, there was unanimous support from all MAC members for this pre-proposal to be developed into a full proposal for consideration by the TSSAC. The Chair will write to the TSSAC outlining the TSPMAC position.

The meeting closed at 5:05pm.



Stuart Richey  
TSPMAC Chair  
23 December 2013

#### **Actions arising from TSPMAC OOS 26 November 2013**

<b>Action reference number</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
TSPMAC OOS 261113	TSPMAC Chair to write to TSSAC, informing the committee that all members were in full support of the project, noting minor changes should be made during the development of a full proposal. The changes should clarify the links between flow of benefits to traditional communities and fishery profitability.	TSPMAC Chair/ Executive Officer