

## **Proposed AFMA research project: improving TSPF profitability and the flow of benefits to Island communities**

### **Chair's Summary: Masig Island Stakeholder Meeting 16-17 Jun 14**

#### **Meeting Overview**

A stakeholder meeting was held on Masig Island on 16-17 June 2014 to determine the likely level of support from traditional owners for the proposed TSPF profitability and flow of benefits (TSPF FoB) project (AFMA Research Project RR2014-0824).

A full list of meeting attendees is at Attachment A. Representatives included the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) members (including fishing industry, traditional inhabitant representatives and PZJA agencies) as well as community representatives from Ugar, Masig, Poruma, Mer, St Pauls and Erub and representatives from the Torres Strait Fisheries Association and Malu Lamar (new Native Title Prescribed Body Corporate).

Overall there was general support for the project and none of the participants suggested the project should not go ahead, or that they would not cooperate with it. Participants emphasised that the project should proceed carefully, and proper consultation was very important. In particular they emphasised the need to spend a few days on each community so the consultation processes were not rushed, and community members had time to consider information and chat with project investigators.

Key discussion points are discussed below.

#### ***What does the flow of benefits project propose?***

Andy Bodsworth, Principal Investigator for the TSPF FoB project noted the project was developed based on both TSSAC research priorities and other Torres Strait sustainable fisheries and community development objectives and programs (i.e. Closing the Gap). The major project objectives are to:

- evaluate profitability for the prawn fishery, including vessel efficiency and prawn abundance and catch rates, small business productivity factors, supporting infrastructure and related supply chain factors;
- understand what traditional owners expect/need in terms of shared TSPF benefits or opportunities, and their capability to enable and support such benefits over time; linking those with practical needs of both the fishery and traditional owners and their communities.

Mr Bodsworth also explained that support and strategies to build TSPF related business skills are likely to be relevant for other Torres Strait fisheries like TRL & finfish. They may also be able to assist in achieving the 100% traditional ownership aspirations of Torres Strait fisheries.

#### ***Native Title holder aspirations for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery and this project***

A number of community members provided input on the Traditional Inhabitant aspirations for the TSPF and this project. Overall, the vision of native title holders and communities is to

have economically sustainable and efficient commercial fisheries in the Torres Strait that are owned by traditional inhabitants. They emphasised the importance of traditional owners and non-traditional inhabitant licence holders (in all Torres Strait fisheries) working closely together to ensure sustainable, successful and economically viable fisheries and in developing pathways to 100% ownership.

### ***Where do the TSPF licence holders see the fishery in the future?***

Mr Marshall Betzel presented an overview of industry perspectives on the future of the prawn fishery on behalf of TSPF licence holders. He explained as a whole, industry members supported the improved profitability of the TSPF, but for a range of reasons. Some would like improved profitability so their business can be more viable and others so they can sell their licence and leave the fishery. A key message from industry that was the current level of effort and profitability of the fishery was so low that there are no benefits that could flow to communities. So this project's dual objectives to increase profitability of the fishery, and find ways to create benefits to communities is vital. No benefits can be received from a fishery that isn't profitable.

He noted major influences on profitability were high fuel costs and lower prawn prices, and these were difficult to influence. He suggested attention be placed on areas of cost and revenue generation that could be influenced by industry and traditional owners.

### ***Key outcomes of the meeting***

The following key outcomes of the meeting were noted, including key considerations for the project if it goes ahead:

- **Flow of benefits and fishery profitability need to be assessed hand in hand as the project plan provides for, because unfortunately there can't be any value going back into the communities without improving the profitability of the fishery.**
- A more active prawn fishery could improve infrastructure and services that are valuable to the fishery and communities (i.e. the Sea-swift mother-ships/barge services - reduces fuels costs for communities; and direct flights to Cairns from Masig Island).
- Thorough and respectful communication between the PZJA, project investigators and communities is vital during the project and into the future to ensure best value of the project. Breakdowns in communication in the past have created blockages to projects and objectives moving forward. Communication must be tailored carefully to the communities; recognising their different preferences and abilities to access, understand and share information in communities.
- Ensure there are no hidden agendas in the project as transparency and trust are essential to good outcomes and sustainable future benefits.
- People recognised that some of the negative views about the TSPF may be based on old information, or ways the fishery use to operate in the past. Efforts must be made to illustrate the way the fishery currently operates, particularly fishery impacts on issues that are highly valued by traditional owners (i.e. TRL, habitat effects, TEDs).
- The timeframe for the project and likely timeframes for follow-on capacity development work or other benefits should be as clear as possible to fishers and traditional owners.
- Some of the ideas to improve the flow of benefits to communities and build shared value for the fishery would take time to develop, so focusing on practical suggestions

that can deliver shared benefits as soon as possible were also important. This means focusing on ideas that require the least impact to current fishing arrangements as these would be more time consuming. Where possible this should be done in a logical step by step way.

- MyPathways could be a valuable asset moving forward, as they assist with funding projects to train and get community members into the workforce and business development.
- Some examples of shared benefits included:
  - Filling skills gaps in the region. For example training community members as mechanics, engineers and net makers will provide work for these community members, and reduce costs to fishers who would usually have to fly in skilled workers to fix boats and gear.
  - Traditional Owners creating a Torres Strait brand of product that fishers could pay royalties to use. This would bring money back to communities and create a sense of pride and ownership of great product harvested in the region.
  - Possible training for some community members to be scientific observers for the TSPF.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Stuart Richey

Meeting Chairperson

**Attachment A – community meeting attendees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Who they represent</b>
Stuart Richey	Chairperson
Andy Bodsworth	Project primary investigator
Victor Mabo	Murray Island
John Mosby	Yorke Island
John Morris	Yorke Island
Ned Mosby	Yorke Island
Percy Misi	Yorke Island
Jack Pearson	Yorke Island
Simon Naawi	Yorke Island
Mary Savage	Yorke Island
Patrick Mills	Torres Strait Fisheries Association
Daniel Stephen	Ugar Island
Francis Pearson	TSRA board member – Coconut Island
Cedric Pearson	Coconut Island
Michael Passi	TSRA board member – Murray Island
Pastor Kiwat Lui	TSRA board member St Pauls (Moa) Island
Hilda Mosby	TSRA board member – masig island
Kenny Bedford	TSRA board member, MyPathways and Erub Fisheries Management Association
Jerry Stephen	TSRA Board member Ugar Island
Darren Roy	Queensland Fisheries
Tom Roberts	Queensland Fisheries
Steve Bolton	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
Lisa Cocking	Australian Fisheries Management Authority and Executive Officer
Alicia Sabatino	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
Clive Turnbull	Fisheries consultant TSPMAC scientific mber
Ron Earle	TSPMAC industry member and licence holder
Ed Morrison	TSPMAC industry member and licence holder
Nick Schultz	TSPMAC industry member and licence holder
Marshall Betzal	TSPMAC industry member
Mariana Nahas	Torres Strait Regional Authority
Aaron Smith	Torres News

