



MOONTIDE HOOKAH CLOSURES

Frequently Asked Questions

What is moontide hookah closure?

There are two types of hookah closures in the TRL fishery:

- 1) A permanent hookah closure during the months of December and January each fishing season; and
- 2) Periodic moontide hookah closures that occur each month between February and September (the *Hookah season*).

A moontide hookah closure is a specified period in which the use, possession or control of hookah gear on a boat that is used to take, process or carry tropical rock lobster (TRL) in the TRL Fishery is not permitted.

Why were moontide hookah closures implemented?

Moontide hookah closures were first implemented in 2005 as a way to reduce fishing effort to levels recorded in 2002. In 2013 the closures were removed following a buy-out of Transferrable Vessel Holder (TVH) licences. However concerns were raised about spatial concentration of effort from primary/tender operations in the fishery impacting on free dive and reef top operations. This resulted in an agreement from both the Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) and TVH sectors to reintroduce the closures in 2014 to manage effort in the fishery and the closures have remained in place since. At its 28th meeting on 26 November 2018, the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) reaffirmed that existing management controls including moontide hookah closures will continue to apply in the Fishery until their future utility can be properly considered and consulted on.

How are moontide hookah closures implemented?

Moontide hookah closures are implemented through the *Torres Strait Fisheries (Tropical Rock Lobster) Management Instrument 2018* (the TRL Management Instrument).

The AFMA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) decides when the closures will be based on the methodology outlined below and provides this notice to licence holders in writing.

AFMA also issues a moontide hookah closure calendar to licence holders each year which is downloadable from the Protected Zone Joint Authority website pzja.gov.au

How are moontide closures selected?

The moontide closure period is selected based on the greatest tidal difference between high and low water on either the full moon or new moon phase of each month between February and September. The closure period is then set for three days either side of the selected moon phase.

The times and heights of high and low waters is based on the Bureau of Meteorology tide predictions for Thursday Island (latitude 10°35'S and longitude 142°13'E).



Example:

In the table to the right, you need to consider the difference between the new moon highest tide on the 7th (3.13m) with the lowest tide (0.95m) which is **2.18m** compared to the full moon highest tide on the 21st (2.95m) to the lowest tide (0.98m) which is **1.97m**.

As **2.18m** is the greatest difference between the two moon phases, the moontide closure would be selected on the **new moon** in this instance.

6	0727	0.85	21	0033	2.95
	1212	1.85		0759	0.98
MO	1811	1.36	TU	1253	2.00
			○	1904	1.57
7	0027	3.13	22	0053	2.71
	0756	0.95		0825	1.24
TU	1240	1.91	WE	1316	2.01
●	1559	1.28		1606	1.57

Moon Phase Symbols ● New Moon ○ Full Moon

Because the closures are based on the largest difference between high and low waters, the closures can change between occurring on the full moon or the new moon across different years.

For more information on moontide hookah closures contact AFMA

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