



Australian Government  
Australian Fisheries Management Authority



**TORRES STRAIT TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER  
RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (TRLRAG)  
MEETING NO. 13  
27-28 AUGUST 2014**

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES BUILDING, BRISBANE

**MINUTES**

**CHAIR: MR JOHN POLLOCK**

These are **DRAFT** minutes and should not be considered final until ratified at the next meeting of the TRLRAG.

Prepared by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority on behalf of the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority



Queensland  
Government



TORRES STRAIT  
**PZJA**  
PROTECTED ZONE  
JOINT AUTHORITY

# AGENDA

1. Preliminaries (AFMA)
  - 1.1. Apologies/Adoption of Agenda
  - 1.2. Correspondence
  - 1.3. Ratification of TRLRAG 12 Minutes
  - 1.4. Action items from TRLRAG 12
  
2. Update on each jurisdiction
  - 2.1. Torres Strait (AFMA/TSRA)
  - 2.2. Queensland (QDAFF)
  - 2.3. PNG (NFA)
  
3. Stock assessment and TAC
  - 3.1. Report of the 2014 mid-year survey (CSIRO)
  - 3.2. Review 2013 Stock Assessment report and 2014 update (CSIRO)
  - 3.3. Preliminary TAC for 2014 (CSIRO)
  - 3.4. Forecast TAC for 2015 (CSIRO)
  - 3.5. Update regarding fishery dependent data (CSIRO)
  
4. Pre-season surveys for 2014 (CSIRO)
  
5. TSSAC Annual Operation Plan – review of TRL research priorities (AFMA)
  
6. Outcomes from PZJA Consultative Meetings (AFMA)
  - 6.1. TSSAC Meetings
  - 6.2. PZJA Standing Committee
  - 6.3. PZJA Meeting
  
7. Other business
  - 7.1. TRL Management Plan Update (AFMA)
  - 7.2. Queensland Fishery – Change of Season dates (QDAFF)
  - 7.3. Native Title Update (TSRA)
  - 7.4. Arrangements for 2015 (AFMA)
  - 7.5. Date of next meeting



### **DECISION RECORD – TRLRAG NO. 13 (27-28 AUGUST 2014)**

- 1.3 The TRLRAG **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of TRLRAG 12 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
- 3.2 The TRLRAG **AGREED** to accept the outcomes of the 2013 stock assessment report and 2014 update as presented.
- 3.3 The TRLRAG **AGREED** to accept the recommended preliminary TAC of 894t (90%CI, 563-1225t) for the 2015 season.

RATIFIED



The following members and observers were in attendance at TRLRAG No 12:

### **Members**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr John Pollock	TRLRAG Chairperson	Nil
Dr Eva Plaganyi-Lloyd	Scientific Member	CSIRO
Dr Darren Dennis	Scientific Member	CSIRO
Mr Nokome Bentley	Independent Scientific Member	Independent Scientist
Mr Jeremy Smith	TSRA Member	TSRA Staff
Mr Ned Larry	Central Islands Cluster Representative Member	Central Islands Cluster TIB Representative
Mr Yen Loban	Inner Islands Cluster Representative Member	Inner Islands Cluster TIB Representative
Mr Thomas Mooka	Far Western Cluster Representative Member	Far Western Cluster TIB Representative
Mr Les Pitt	Eastern Cluster Representative Member	Eastern Cluster TIB Representative
Mr Shane Fava	AFMA Member	Nil
Mr Brett Arlidge	Australian Industry Member	General Manager, M.G. Kailis Pty Ltd
Mr Darren Roy	QLD DAFF Member	QLD DAFF
Mr Andrew Cox	AFMA Executive Officer	Nil

### **Observers**

Mr Kenny Bedford	TSRA	TIB/TSRA Fisheries Portfolio
Mr Chalz David	Malu Lamar (TSI) Corporation RNTBC Representative	Malu Lamar Representative
Dr Robert Campbell	CSIRO	CSIRO
Dr Trevor Hutton*	CSIRO	CSIRO
Mr Roy Deng*	CSIRO	CSIRO
Mr Meremi Maina	PNG Industry Representative	PNG Industry Representative
Mr Ian Liviko	PNG NFA	PNG NFA Staff
Mr Joseph Posu	PNG NFA	PNG NFA Staff

\*27 August only



## ACTION ITEMS

#	Action Item	Agenda	Champion	Due Date
1)	Agencies to review the effectiveness of certain TIB licensing arrangements.	2.1	PZJA Agencies (led by AFMA)	Pre RAG 14
2)	TSRA and Mr Dennis (CSIRO) to progress investigating the feasibility of engaging industry (primarily TIB licence holders) to conduct surveys.	3.5	TSRA and CSIRO	End of 2014
3)	Create a new sub-heading in the TSSAC AOP regarding product quality.	5	AFMA	Pre RAG 14
4)	Investigate the adoption/expansion of the use of smartphone technologies for data collection.	5	AFMA	Pre RAG 14
5)	Mr Dennis to contact Mr Bedford/My Pathway to investigate available training programs.	6.1	CSIRO	Pre RAG 14

The Chair invited Mr Kenny Bedford to open the meeting with a prayer at 9:10am.

### Agenda Item 1.1 Apologies/Adoption of Agenda

Apologies were received from Mr Trent Butcher (non-Traditional Inhabitant Industry Member), Mr Matthew Flood (ABARES), Mr Seri Stephen (Torres Strait Fishers Association Incorporated (TSFA)), Mr Philip Polon (PNG NFA Member), Mr Maluwap Nona (Malu Lamar (TSI) Corporation RNTBC (Malu Lamar)). Mr Chalz David attended in Mr Nona's absence.

Agenda adopted. The Chair invited the Malu Lamar Representative to speak briefly regarding developments relating to Native Title. Mr David gave a short explanation of the group in the context of the the recent High Court decision in *Leo Akiba on behalf of the Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim Group v Commonwealth and Ors* and the registration of the Malu Lamar corporation as a Registered Native Title Body Corporate. Mr David explained the aspirations of the group regarding membership on all PZJA consultative committees. Mr Kenny Bedford added that this is a significant outcome although still very early and roles and responsibilities are being worked through.

The AFMA Member mentioned that progress has been made and that AFMA is supporting Malu Lamar and the TSFA by facilitating representatives of both groups to attend recent community visits.

The TSRA Support Member mentioned that TSRA had been talking to Malu Lamar representatives and seeking comments about the roadmap to 100% ownership drafted by TSRA.

### Agenda Item 1.2 Correspondence

Nil reported.

### Agenda Item 1.3 Ratification of TRL RAG No.13 minutes

The AFMA Member stated that no comments had been received. The TRLRAG **AGREED** to adopt the minutes of TRLRAG No.13 as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The



motion to adopt was moved by the Australian industry member and seconded by Scientific Member Dr Eva Plaganyi.

#### **Agenda Item 1.4 Action items from TRL RAG No.12**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the progress against the action items from TRLRAG Meeting No. 12.

In addition, the following specific comments were recorded:

- Action Item 1 will occur at the next TRL Working Group meeting
- Action Item 2 has been completed. The AFMA Member thanked members of the TRLRAG for providing comments and mentioned that most comments were accepted and some would be discussed as part of other action items in the agenda.

#### **Agenda item 2.1 Torres Strait Update**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the update provided by AFMA.

The AFMA Member introduced the item and talked to the agenda paper. It was highlighted that AFMA has not received any logbooks from TIB sector fishers this year and AFMA is relying solely on data from processors to capture TIB sector catch. The AFMA Member added that although catch reporting in the TIB sector is not mandatory, in past years there were a significant number of fishers submitting logbooks and this important time series of data has now stopped. Scientific Member Dr Plaganyi explained the importance of logbook data for stock assessment purposes. The TSRA Support Member suggested that there should be a conversation within the TIB sector about how to increase the provision of catch data.

It was also added that there were issues with the Canberra based database and for that reason some logbook data was yet to be entered into the database.

Mr Bedford suggested that all TIB licenses should share a common expiry date. There was no disagreement to this from TRLRAG members. The Far Western Islands Cluster Representative added that licenses should last for longer than the current 12 month period.

The AFMA Member responded to a question from the TSRA Support Member about a transition of licensing functions from Fisheries Queensland to AFMA. The AFMA Member explained that discussions between Fisheries Queensland and AFMA are ongoing and initial discussions regarding such a transition had been promising.

<b>Action Item 1</b>	Agencies to review the effectiveness of certain TIB licensing arrangements.
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#### **Agenda item 2.2 Queensland Update**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the Queensland Fisheries update provided by the Queensland Fisheries Member.

The Queensland Fisheries Member introduced the paper and highlighted that the catch in 2014 would be close to the 195t TAC.

#### **Agenda item 2.3 PNG Update**



The TRLRAG **NOTED** the PNG update provided by the PNG NFA Representative. A key point highlighted was that catches of trawl caught lobsters had recently been confiscated from vessels found to in possession of a total of approximately 70t of lobster tails and less than 30t of whole lobsters. It was added that these vessels were not using bycatch reduction devices.

Mr Meremi Maina stated that internal delays with the granting of cross-endorsements meant that PNG vessels could only access the Australian waters of the Protected Zone near the end of the fishing season during 2013 and 2014.

### **Agenda item 3.1 Report of the 2014 mid-year survey**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the update provided by Scientific Member Mr Darren Dennis and Mr Robert Campbell on the 2014 mid-year survey conducted in June. The following points were highlighted:

- Abundance of fished (2+) lobsters were patchy and generally in higher in eastern Torres Strait;
- abundance of 2+ lobsters in the TI Bridge stratum was lower this year however the 1+ year class was higher;
- abundance of both recruiting (1+) and 2+ lobsters increased to record highs in the Warraber stratum;
- there was very little change in seabed composition and water temperature for all sites;

Mr Campbell gave a presentation about CPUE-based annual abundance indices and described the means of obtaining indices such as fishery independent (e.g. surveys) or fishery dependent (standardised CPUE eg. logbooks).

Mr Campbell explained the reasons and methodology for standardising in main effects catch models. Some attendees mentioned that other specific data relating to the Torres Strait might also be beneficial to include in models. Suggestions included water temperature, vessel symbol and the percentage of live vs tailed lobsters taken in a particular area.

The Australian Industry Member suggested that it might be beneficial to use vessel symbol rather than vessel name to provide a better indication of CPUE over time. This is because when an operator changes vessels it is more likely that the symbol will follow than the vessel name.

Mr Campbell stressed that TIB catch and effort data reporting levels are not currently satisfactory for use in assessment modelling and that even if one third of TIB fishers completed and submitted logbooks and docket books the data would be useful.

### **Agenda item 3.2 Review 2013 Stock Assessment Report and 2014 Update**

The TRLRAG **REVIEWED** and **NOTED** the revised stock assessment models presented by the CSIRO. The TRLRAG **AGREED** to accept the outcomes of the 2013 stock assessment report and 2014 update as presented and calculated using the main effects TVH CPUE data and the nominal TIB CPUE data.

Scientific Member Dr Plaganyi provided an update on the review of the 2013 stock assessment report and the 2014 stock assessment process. Various modelling options were explained and technical discussions covered how the various parameters for part of the assessment. It was explained that mid-year surveys continue to provide vitally important data for the stock assessment, with the surveys now in their 26<sup>th</sup> year.



Dr Plaganyi explained the key sensitivities associated with stock assessment modelling for the fishery including alternative CPUE standardisation for both TVH and TIB data. It was also suggested that the TRLWG could discuss alternative harvest control rules to test.

The AFMA member asked about changes to the recommended TAC levels should surveys be reduced to once every three years. Dr Plaganyi suggested that it is likely that TACs would be reduced significantly due to much higher levels of uncertainty. The Australian Industry Member suggested that it might be a good idea to investigate if future surveys should be industry funded.

The independent scientific member highlighted that for the TIB sector, the standardised CPUE index was quite different to the non-standardised nominal CPUE index. There were no clear indications from the diagnostics present why this was the case. Furthermore, the non-standardised TIB CPUE index was more similar to the survey and TVH indices. For these reasons, and given that the TIB standardisation methodology was new, it seemed more appropriate to use the non-standardised TIB CPUE in model fitting.

### **Agenda item 3.3 Preliminary TAC for 2015**

The TRLRAG **AGREED** to accept the recommended preliminary TAC of 894t (90%CI, 563–1225t) for the 2015 season. It was explained that work completed by CSIRO indicates that the resource is in good shape

### **Agenda item 3.4 Forecast TAC for 2015**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the forecast TAC for 2016 was recommended to be 719t (90%CI; 515–923t), to be refined in 2015 following the 2015 mid-season survey. The forecast TAC will be reassessed at the TRLRAG meeting in 2015.

### **Agenda item 3.5 and 4.0 Update Regarding Fishery Dependent Data and pre-season surveys for 2014**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the presentation provided by Mr Dennis.

Scientific Member Mr Dennis explained that the TRLRAG has previously identified the need to move to pre-season surveys if the fishery is to move to output controls to improve accuracy and precision of the recruiting (1+) year classes. It was explained that pre-season surveys are perceived to be superior to mid-season surveys because abundance index precision can be improved due to a greater number of sites surveyed over a greater spatial extent, and also that logistics should be improved due to better prevailing weather conditions and increased underwater visibility. Mr Dennis' presentation explained that the downside is that abundance of 2+ lobsters cannot be measured during pre-season surveys and therefore more reliance must be placed on standardized CPUE.

The TRLRAG discussed options for conducting pre-season surveys. Discussions generally focused on timing and participation. There were suggestions that TIB involvement would be very worthwhile and that CSIRO could conduct training for those wishing to participate. Mr Dennis highlighted that indemnity and insurance issues prohibit non-CSIRO staff from diving from CSIRO vessels and that those conducting the surveys would need to dive from their own vessels. Mr Bedford added that covering the cost of fuel would be a good idea. Mr Dennis added that a payment per site could be paid and experienced divers could easily conduct surveys at ten sites per day after receiving training in survey methods.





The AFMA Member asked how this should be moved forward and suggested that scientific permit applications would have to be submitted soon to allow for the required consultation to be conducted in time for the training/surveys to be conducted in early 2015. The Chair queried who would champion progressing this and the AFMA Member and CSIRO Member Mr Dennis agreed to progress.

<b>Action Item 2</b>	<b>TSRA and Mr Dennis (CSIRO) to progress investigating the feasibility of engaging industry (primarily TIB licence holders) to conduct surveys.</b>
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#### **Agenda item 5 TSSAC Annual Operation Plan (AOP) – review of TRL research priorities**

*Note: This agenda item was discussed after item 6.3 but is included here to ensure continuity of the minutes.*

The TRLRAG **NOTED** that no specific comments were received regarding the TSSAC AOP at the TRLRAG meeting however comments previously received has been incorporated.

It was suggested that Item 4 of the AOP (Movement and recruitment connectivity between areas within Torres Strait and between Torres Strait and neighbouring jurisdictions, including QLD and PNG) was attractive but probably not feasible within the current budget.

The Australian Industry Member suggested that a new sub-heading be created under Item 3 regarding providing advice to industry about product quality. This was followed by a short discussion about product quality and the importance of adequate oxygen levels to maintain product quality post-capture.

A short discussion followed regarding the extension/adoption of smartphone technologies and the TRLRAG agreed to add an action item in this regard.

<b>Action Item 3</b>	Create a new sub-heading in the TSSAC AOP regarding product quality
<b>Action Item 4</b>	Investigate the adoption/expansion of the use of smartphone technologies for data collection

#### **Agenda item 6.1 Outcomes from PZJA Consultative Meetings – TSSAC**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the update on the TSSAC meetings provided by the AFMA Member.

The AFMA Member introduced the item and explained that there have been two face to face and one teleconference meetings of the TSSAC since the last TRLRAG. The following points were highlighted:

- A call for research proposals is currently open to applications for the 2015/16 financial year
- The TSSAC is seeking research co-funding from other agencies including the Indigenous Reference Group of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation
- Other research projects coming up include the tagging and electronic monitoring of Spanish mackerel which was funded in 2013/14 and involves two main tasks:
  - Studying the spatial distribution of Spanish mackerel; and
  - Revisiting the 2006 stock assessment.



The Inner Islands Cluster Representative asked if there was a likelihood of further barramundi research for the top western islands. The AFMA Member informed that people can contact AFMA or researchers with ideas for research and added that the TSSAC requires research proposals to be submitted and reviewed before funds can be committed.

The Chair asked if there was any work being done on extending the smartphone program. The AFMA Member explained that electronic monitoring is being rolled out in various fisheries around the country and that an extension component to the current program (using smartphones) exists and is funded. The Chair added that the use of such technologies is important for business management.

Mr Bedford added that encouraging investment in training through programs like My Pathway is important. CSIRO Member Mr Dennis suggested that he would contact My Pathway through Mr Bedford to see what might be available. CSIRO Member Dr Plaganyi added that it is important for the TRLRAG to recommend to the TSSAC the importance of training programs.

<b>Action Item 5</b>	CSIRO Member Mr Dennis to contact Mr Bedford/My Pathway to investigate available training programs
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#### **Agenda item 6.2 Outcomes from PZJA Consultative Meetings – PZJA Standing Committee**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the update on the PZJA Standing Committee meetings provided by the AFMA Member.

#### **Agenda item 6.3 Outcomes from PZJA Consultative Meetings – PZJA Meeting April 9 2014**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the update on the PZJA meeting held on April 9 2014 provided by the AFMA Member.

The AFMA Member explained that a visit to the Torres Strait by representatives of the Maori Fishing Trust at the same time as the PZJA was well received and the representatives explained to fishers and PZJA members how the Maori Trust generates revenue from the management of fisheries resources in New Zealand.

The Australian Industry Member highlighted that Outcome 10.4 in the paper provided (the need for consistent management arrangements between the TIB and TVH sectors of the industry) contradicted Outcome 15.1 (Standing Committee to investigate the request to increase TIB maximum boat length to 23m). The AFMA Member explained that the request to add the item regarding TIB boat length to the agenda was received very shortly prior to the meeting and was therefore included as an 'other business' item. It was further explained that the recommendation from the PZJA to the Standing Committee was to investigate the request and was not a reflection of endorsement of the proposal.

#### **Presentation – Mr Nokome Bentley – Management Strategy Evaluation**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the presentation provided by the Independent Scientific Member regarding Management Strategy Evaluations (MSEs).

The Independent Scientific Member explained the background and processes associated with MSEs. Various simulations and how they are evaluated were presented. Mr Bentley also described how MSEs can be used to simulate various models and inform monitoring strategies.



Scientific Member Dr Plaganyi explained that CSIRO have the capability to complete the body of work associated with MSE in the context of harvest control rules however the work would require a significant body of work and would require funding. The Inner Islands Cluster Representative queried if quota should be implemented before an MSE is conducted. The Chair suggested that we need good, science-based harvest control rule parameters before implementing quota in the fishery. The Independent Scientific Member agreed and noted that this was required to comply with the harvest strategy policy. The AFMA Member suggested that it would be hard to justify funding for large bodies of work when catch levels are not currently approaching the recommended TAC in the fishery however it would definitely be important if the fishery was closer to becoming fully utilised. The Australian Industry Member suggested that the type of MSE described appears very much science based and is worth exploring.

The Malu Lamar representative queried if localised impacts such as fuel price in outer island communities is taken into account through MSEs. Scientific Member Dr Plaganyi explained that it is something that could be done however the main body of work conducted to date was broader scale than focusing on individual communities or reefs. The Chair reiterated that this could be assisted by better levels of TIB data.

The AFMA Member suggested that even if the fishery does not go to quota, it could be possible to investigate harvest control rule parameters. CSIRO Member Dr Plaganyi suggested that simple harvest control rules could potentially be developed based on pre-season results.

### **Update on presentation given at agenda item 3.2**

For the information of the TRLRAG, CSIRO Member Dr Plaganyi presented updated reference case estimates following on from the presentation given at agenda item 3.2, using the main effects TVH CPUE data and the nominal TIB CPUE data and including the results of the mid-year survey.

### **Agenda item 7.1 Other business - TRL Management Plan Update**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the update regarding the implementation of the TRL management plan.

The AFMA Member explained that community and native title consultation is yet to occur but will happen in the near future. Because there has generally been a lack of agreement on some of the content of the draft plan, the draft has been revised many times. The latest version of the draft plan does little more than allow for the implementation, allocation and trading of quota. AFMA and TSRA are planning to visit four or five communities where the majority of TRL fishing occurs, to seek initial views on the management plan. Consultation will also occur with TVH sector operators. These initial consultations will occur prior to any formal community or native title consultations being conducted.

The Chair highlighted that it is important for community members to be satisfied that there is nothing in the draft plan that is contradictory to the aspirations for 100 per cent ownership. The Malu Lamar representative asked if the objectives of the management plan be modified in light of the recent High Court decision and developments regarding Native Title, and added that he will be speaking with the Chair of Malu Lamar about the objectives. It was also added that Malu Lamar and fishers associations should have an agreed position to take to communities. The AFMA Member suggested that the objectives could be simplified and revised however the plan will be taken to communities for initial comment in its current form and the reason for the initial consultations was to gather thoughts from communities to shape



the document prior to a formal consultation period which will occur once the Minister has provided approval.

CSIRO Member Mr Dennis asked if PNG had any issues with the draft management plan. The AFMA Member explained that PNG will definitely be involved through the various existing consultative committees.

#### **Agenda item 7.2 Other business – Queensland Fishery – Change of Season dates**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** the update provided by the Queensland Fisheries member.

Queensland Fisheries Member Mr Roy explained that the Queensland TRL fishery will open one month earlier from 2015 and Queensland Fisheries believe this will provide significant economic benefit to east coast operators at very little sustainability risk to the fishery. The change to the season date was requested by industry to align with peak market demand in the lead up to the Chinese New Year. The Malu Lamar representative expressed concern about the opening being one month earlier than the Torres Strait fishery and the impact it will have on catches for Torres Strait fishers. Mr Dennis explained that the TAC in the east coast fishery is very conservative and spread over a very large area and will therefore have very little impact. The Inner Islands Cluster Representative added that east coast fishers can work very close the Torres Strait fishery and this could impact on Torres Strait stocks. The Chair acknowledged these concerns.

Mr Bedford asked if the economic benefit to east coast operators will be measured. Brett Arlich explained that it will be simple for processors to compare average price between seasons and between months within seasons.

Mr Dennis explained that the early opening shouldn't have an impact on the numbers of rock lobsters in the Torres Strait fishery as the peak breeding season is in November and because of existing management arrangements including size limits and a ban on taking berried females.

#### **Agenda item 7.3 Other business – Native Title Update**

This item was moved forward and is included in the minutes at agenda item 1.1.

#### **Agenda item 7.4 Other business – Arrangements for 2015**

The TRLRAG **NOTED** that management arrangements will remain unchanged for the 2015 season.

#### **Agenda item 7.5 Other business – Date of next meeting**

Meeting date to be advised. Possibly in March 2015 depending on the pre-season survey.

#### **Additional discussion**

Prior to the close of the meeting, the PNG Industry Representative raised the following issues regarding the allocation of days to PNG cross-endorsed vessels:

- The number of days allocated is not sufficient for cross-endorsed vessels to take the allocated quota;



- Days are subtracted from the total amount when tenders are broken down and during times of bad weather during a trip; and
- Vessels waste days searching for fishing areas as many do not have a good level of knowledge of fishing areas within the protected zone.

The AFMA Member responded stating that the TAC is allocated based on agreed percentage and that the number of days allocated is influenced by the difficulties associated with monitoring compliance. It was suggested that if monitoring levels could be increased then the number of days may be able to increase. This could be done in conjunction with PNG NFA. It was suggested that CPUE estimations could be refined based on analysis of logbook data to potentially revise the number of days. The AFMA Member further suggested that PNG representatives are able to disagree with the allocation of days at fisheries bilateral meetings.

The Chair thanked attendees for their assistance during the meeting and invited Mr Bedford to close the meeting with a prayer at 12:00pm.

