

# Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group and Working Group

Meeting Record

11 March 2016

Teleconference

Note all meeting papers and record available on  
the AFMA and PZJA webpages:

[www.pzja.gov.au](http://www.pzja.gov.au)



**Australian Government**

**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**

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Ratified

## Meeting Participants

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Name	Role
<b>MEMBERS</b>	
Selina Stoute	AFMA Member
Dean Pease	AFMA, Executive Officer
Eva Plaganyi	CSIRO Scientific Member (TRLRAG)
Tom Roberts	QDAF Member
Nokome Bentley	Independent Scientific Member
Mark David	Industry Member
Terrence Whap	Industry Member
Luke Dillon	Industry Member
<b>OBSERVERS</b>	
Ray Moore	Industry Observer
Suzannah Salam	Industry Observer

## Action Items

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Number	Action
1.	CSIRO to provide further information on the assessment cycles (annual or three-year) and include the work schedule proposed under each cycle.
2.	CSIRO to amend the proposal to include the harvest strategy component in the objectives, methods and outcome of the paper.
3.	CSIRO to amend the proposal to include costings of the travel component under the project.
4.	AFMA to follow up with the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Land and Seas Management Unit (LSMU) regarding opportunities to combine monitoring programs to reduce costs.
5.	The QDAF Member to circulate to the TRLRAG and TRLWG members the contact details Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries officer responsible for aquaculture.

## Preliminaries

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### Apologies / declaration of interest / Adoption of Agenda

Apologies were received from John Pollock (Current TRLRAG Chair) Ian Knuckey (newly appointed TRLRAG Chair), Darren Dennis (CSIRO Scientific Member), Brett Arlidge (Industry Member), Mark Dean (Industry Member), Les Pitt (Industry Member), Aaron Tom (Industry Member), Phillip Ketchell (Industry Member), John Ramsay (TSRA Member), Kenny Bedford (TSRA fisheries portfolio observer).

The TRLRAG and Working Group noted the potential conflict of interest for the CSIRO Scientific Member when providing information and advice on CSIRO research funding proposals, but members agreed for the member to remain present for the discussion noting the important contribution of their scientific expertise. The CSIRO member did not participate in the making of recommendations.

### Agenda Item 1 – Torres Strait TRL fishery surveys, stock assessment, harvest control rules and recommended biological catch

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The TRLRAG and TRLWG noted an update on the stock assessment research pre-proposal as presented by CSIRO and detailed in the papers (**Attachments A and B**).

Members noted the following updates provided by the CSIRO Scientific Member:

- A number of assessment options were identified by the TRLRAG at its meeting on 26-27 August 2015.
- Option 1 does not include fishery-independent surveys to be conducted by CSIRO, however under this option surveys could be completed by a third-party. This option provides for a stock assessment to be run every 3 years and the development of an empirical harvest control rule to inform the TAC in between stock assessment years.
- Option 2 includes annual pre-season and mid-season surveys to be completed by CSIRO. The option provides for a stock assessment to be run annually to inform the RBC and TAC, it does not include the development of empirical harvest control rules.
- Option 3 includes an annual pre-season survey to provide an estimate on the number of recruits in the fishery; the spawning stock biomass will be informed by catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) information. This option provides for a stock assessment to be run every 3 years and the development of an empirical harvest control rule to inform the TAC in between stock assessment years.

- Option 4 includes annual pre-season and mid-season surveys to be completed by CSIRO. This option provides for a stock assessment to be run every 3 years and the development of an empirical harvest control rule to inform the TAC in between stock assessment years.
- Option 5 includes an annual mid-season survey to provide an estimate on the spawning stock biomass of the fishery, the number of recruits in the fishery will not be estimated. The option provides for a stock assessment to be run annually to inform the RBC and TAC, it does not include the development of empirical harvest control rules.

The TRLRAG/WG could not agree on a single preferred assessment option due to uncertainty around the risk-catch-cost trade-off with reducing survey frequencies. Members however noted the need to acquire effective scientific information at least cost. AFMA's research budget is limited and is used to meet research priorities across all Torres Strait Fisheries.

One industry member noted they were not supportive of a three-year assessment cycle due to the potential for changes in the fishery and potential impacts to the stock assessment if a 12 month open season for free-dive and lamp fishing is approved.

The TRLRAG/WG recommended the following:

- stock assessment options inclusive of a pre-season be given highest priority;
- further information be provided to explain why there is no significant saving when comparing some options with an annual stock assessment and some with a three year cycle. Members noted initial advice that an annual stock assessment cycle provides for a relatively simple update of the stock assessment model. The three year assessment cycle allows for a more in-depth review of the stock assessment, and it is likely that a similar amount of time would be spent refining the assessment over an intensive period;
- a review be completed to identify any correlations or relationships between years when both pre-season and mid-season survey were completed. Results from this analysis could assist future decisions to phase out mid-season surveys as the fishery transitions to quota management;
- the proposal be amended to include the harvest strategy component in the objectives, methods and outcomes noting that the development of a final harvest strategy for the TRL Fishery was recognised as a high research priority; and
- a breakdown of travel costs be provided.

The TRLRAG and TRLWG also agreed to the following **action**:

- AFMA to follow up with the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Land and Seas Management Unit (LSMU) regarding opportunities to combine seagrass monitoring programs to reduce overall research costs.

## **Agenda Item 2 – Development and opportunities for the Torres Strait TIB sector**

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The TRLRAG and TRLWG noted an update on the TIB development opportunities research pre-proposal as presented by CSIRO and detailed in the papers (**Attachments C and D**).

Members noted that the pre-proposal was supported by the TSSAC in 2015 on the basis it received co-funding from industry and/or the TSRA. CSIRO revised the proposal in 2016 to focus the project scope on capability development, grow-out opportunities and business case development.

Members provided the following observations and advice:

- the scope of the research proposal is broad and that for example work on grow-out opportunities may be better suited to a single project;
- further discussions with industry and consideration of the findings from past studies could assist in identifying high priority initiatives;
- based on experience some industry members recommended that a TIB development project focus on increasing the number of live TRL from TIB fishers on outer islands while others noted they had trialed TRL grow-out and in their experience it was not economically viable; and
- R&D initiatives focused on industry practices such as developing grow-out opportunities in the TRL Fishery should ideally be partnered with industry.

The TRLRAG and TRLWG agreed to the following **action**:

- The QDAF Member to circulate to the TRLRAG and TRLWG members the contact details Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries officer responsible for aquaculture.