



## Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

Meeting #48

March 17-18 2009

# CHAIR'S SUMMARY

Chair: Mr Ian Cartwright

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

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

 Protecting our fishing future

Box 7051, Canberra Business Centre, ACT 2610 Tel (02) 6225 5555 Fax (02) 6225 5500

AFMA Direct 1300 723 621

## Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

The 48th meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was held at Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Brisbane on 17-18 March, 2009.

In attendance were:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Mr Ian Cartwright	<i>Chairperson</i>
Dr Annabel Jones	<i>AFMA Representative</i>
Ms Rebecca Williams	<i>Acting Executive Officer (AFMA)</i>
Mr Shane Fava	<i>QDPI&amp;F Representative</i>
Dr Michael O'Neill	<i>Research Member (DPI &amp; F)</i>
Dr Roland Pitcher	<i>Research Member (CSIRO)</i>
Dr Stephen Newman	<i>Research Member (WA Fisheries)</i>
Mr Charles David	<i>Traditional Property Owner</i>
Mr Augustine Mohiba	<i>NFA, PNG</i>
Ms Sevaly Sen	<i>Social/Economics Consultant</i>
Mr Tony Vass	<i>Industry Representative</i>
Mr Lester Baule	<i>Observer - NFA, PNG</i>
Mr Malawup Nona	<i>Observer – Traditional Owner, Maluilgal Nation</i>
Mr Steve Hall	<i>Observer - TSRA</i>
Ms Annie Lalancete	<i>Observer – Ph.D student</i>
Mr Neil Bensley	<i>Observer - BRS</i>

Apologies:

Mr Gavin Begg

BRS

Mr. Shaun Ossinger

AFMA

## **Major outcomes**

The Committee:

- Acknowledged the contribution of Toshi Nakata to the TSSAC and his support of the TSSAC Torres Strait Islander member in 2008.
- Further amended the evaluation pro-forma used for assessing research proposals.
- Accepted the Five Year Torres Strait Strategic Research Plan with some small amendments, and agreed to the development of an annually updated Operational Plan to accompany the strategic plan.
- Reviewed two full research proposals and one pre-proposal. Both full proposals were recommended in principle to AFMA for funding, subject to the principal investigators addressing a number of amendments requested by the Committee. The pre-proposal was not recommended for progression to full proposal stage.

## ***Membership***

The Committee supported a move to include a second permanent Torres Strait Islander representative on the TSSAC. It was noted that this will be contingent on agreement by the PZJA and budget availability in TSRA to support two representatives on the TSSAC.

## ***TSSAC Procedures***

The pro-forma used by the Committee to objectively evaluate research proposals was amended by the Committee to better facilitate efficient and transparent assessment of proposals.

## ***Research in the Torres Strait (past and present)***

The TSSAC noted the range of research projects that have been conducted in the Torres Strait, and those currently underway. The variety of agencies funding research in the Torres Strait could lead to potential overlaps and greater co-ordination between agencies and research providers is needed to avoid this. Closer communication with TSRA could be a good option to reduce duplication.

The report on the AFMA Forum to overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research was presented to the TSSAC. A number of key objectives have been established for engaging Torres Strait Islanders in research and several strategies have been defined which will lead endeavours to meet these objectives. This work will be facilitated through a working group. A consultant will be engaged to develop a proposal seeking funding from relevant agencies to investigate and identify a best-practice model for Torres Strait Islander engagement in research.

The TSSAC stated their strong support in the initiatives identified at the forum and expressed thanks to Shaun Ossinger for co-ordinating the event. The TSSAC see that although the initiatives currently being considered are not a core activity of the TSSAC under their Terms of Reference, the outcomes will have major benefits to research outcomes and ultimately fisheries management in the long term. The TSSAC requested that they be kept informed on progress with this initiative and will assist wherever possible, including through the encouragement of relevant agencies to support the initiative.

### **Torres Strait 5-Year Strategic Research Plan**

The Committee discussed and amended the 5-year Strategic Research Plan developed by consultant Mr Tony Kingston (FERM) following discussions at TSSAC Meeting 47. Further edits were suggested and will be incorporated by the TSSAC secretariat. The Committee agreed that the plan, with minor amendments, would provide a strategic guide to research priorities for the next five years.

The Committee agreed to develop an Operational Plan to accompany the Strategic Plan that will include more specific examples of research priorities and provide criteria on how research tasks are prioritised. The Operational Plan will be revised on an annual basis with the Strategic Plan being revised mid term (ie. in 2.5 years) and at end of term (ie. 5 years).

The revised Strategic Research Plan and draft Operational Plan will be distributed to committee members out of session for consideration at the next TSSAC meeting.

### **Research Proposals**

The Committee assessed two full proposals and one pre-proposal for funding in the 2009/2010 and beyond AFMA Research Fund budget.

The two full proposals were recommended in principal to AFMA for funding subject to specific amendments being undertaken by the Principal Investigators. These two proposals must fully address specific criteria discussed and determined by the Committee in their amended full proposals. The two proposals were:

**Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) pre-season survey** - Principal investigator: Mr Darren Dennis, CSIRO;

**Population structure and genetic composition of green turtles sold in the Daru market** - Principal investigator: Dr Mark Hamann, James Cook University.

In addition, the Committee considered a pre-proposal *'Determining baseline health and disease parameters for wild dugongs and turtles in urban and non-urban waters of northern Australia and Torres Strait'*. This proposal was not recommended by the Committee for progression to full-proposal stage.

### **Other Business**

#### Aquaculture

Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) is interested in pursuing an aquaculture plan for Torres Strait in a similar way to the draft Great Sandy regional marine aquaculture plan being developed by QDPI&F in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry (DTRDI). The aim of the plan is to establish guidelines for sustainable marine aquaculture development, and to streamline and standardise assessment processes for future aquaculture applications for the area.

#### PNG Research

The PNG representative reiterated their interest in being involved in research surveys in the Australian jurisdiction of Torres Strait.

Torres Strait Islander members voiced their interest in having PNG traditional inhabitants (from Treaty Villages) employed on TIB boats. Current legislation does not allow this. PNG would also like to enter into discussions regarding this as it would improve economic prospects for their people and provide additional source of income.

***Next Meeting***

TSSAC 49 was tentatively set for 25 June 2009 in Brisbane. Venue and meeting dates to be confirmed.