



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**



**TORRES STRAIT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING NO. 48**  
**17 AND 18 MARCH 2009**

**MINUTES**

**CHAIR: MR IAN CARTWRIGHT**

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

**TORRES STRAIT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING No. 48  
17 and 18 March, 2009: Commencing at 8.30am  
Venue: QDPI&F, 80 Anne St.  
Brisbane**

**FINAL AGENDA**

**1 Meeting Administration**

- 1.1 Preliminaries - Chair's opening remarks/Apologies/Adoption of Agenda/Disclosure of Interests
- 1.2 Minutes from the TSSAC Meeting No. 47
- 1.3 Action Items from TSSAC Meeting No. 47
- 1.4 Correspondence
- 1.5 Membership

**2 TSSAC Procedures**

- 2.1 Progress Report template

**3 Research in the Torres Strait (Past and present)**

- 3.1 Current Torres Strait Research Projects
- 3.2 Past Torres Strait Research Projects
- 3.3 Other Funding Bodies
- 3.4 Report on Forum to overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research.

**4 TSSAC Strategic Research Plan**

- 4.1 Discussion on the 5yr Strategic Research Plan

**5 Research Proposals**

- 5.1 Evaluation of full research proposals

**6 Other business**

- 6.1 Aquaculture
- 6.2 PNG Research
- 6.3 TRL RAG report
- 6.4 TSSAC No. 49



## **DECISION RECORD – TSSAC 48 (17 - 18 MARCH 2009)**

### **MEETING ADMINISTRATION**

1.2.1 The Committee **AGREED** to accept the minutes of TSSAC 47, circulated to members on 30 January 2009, as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### **TSSAC PROCEDURES**

2.1.1 The TSSAC **AGREED** to adopt the TSSAC Bi-annual/Milestone Progress Report template subject to the amendments listed in Item 2.1.

### **RESEARCH IN THE TORRES STRAIT (PAST AND PRESENT)**

3.4.1 The TSSAC **AGREED** that the initiatives identified at the *Overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research* Forum to be progressed by the working group were appropriate and would support these initiatives where possible.

3.4.2 The Committee **RECOMMEND** AFMA consider funding a consultant to develop a funding proposal required to progress the initiatives identified at the *Overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research* Forum.

3.4.3 The Committee **AGREED** compromise is needed between Torres Strait Islander engagement in research and the requirement for consistency and rigour in data collection.

### **TSSAC STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN**

4.1.1 The Committee **AGREED** to accept the 5-year Torres Strait Strategic Research Plan following minor amendments by the TSSAC secretariat.

### **RESEARCH PROPOSALS**

5.1.1 The TSSAC **RECOMMEND** to AFMA for funding the research project '*Population structure and genetic composition of green turtles sold in the Daru market*' subject to addressing the comments of the Committee to the satisfaction of AFMA

5.1.2 The TSSAC **RECOMMEND** to AFMA for funding the research project '*Refined pre-season surveys of the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population to support accurate TAC estimation*' subject to addressing the comments of the Committee to the satisfaction of AFMA.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **TSSAC 48 - RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PZJA**

4.1.2 The Committee **AGREED** to recommend that the PZJA endorse the Torres Strait 5-year Strategic Research Plan.



The following members and observers were in attendance at TSSAC No. 48:

### Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chairperson	Consultant
Ms Rebecca Williams	Acting Executive Officer (AFMA)	Fisheries Management Officer, Torres Strait
Dr Roland Pitcher	Research Member (CSIRO)	CSIRO researcher
Dr Michael O'Neill	Research Member elect (QDPI & F)	DPI&F Queensland Research/Stock Assessment
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Member elect - Thursday Island Fisheries Manager	AFMA
Dr Stephen Newman*	Scientific Member	WA fisheries researcher
Mr Tony Vass	Independent Industry Member	Ex Mackerel License Holder
Mr Shane Fava	QDPI&F	QDPI&F Senior fisheries manager
Mr Charles David*	Traditional owner	Iama Traditional Property Owner
Mr Augustine Mobiha	NFA - PNG	National Fisheries Authority
Ms Sevaly Sen	Research Member Social/Economics	FERM Pty Ltd

### Observers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Malawup Nona	Traditional Owner	Traditional Owner, Maluilgal Nation
Mr Lester Baule	NFA -PNG	
Ms Annie Lalancette	Ph.D student	
Mr Steve Hall	TSRA	
Mr Neil Bensley	BRS	BRS researcher

### Apologies

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Mr Shaun Ossinger	AFMA
Mr Gavin Begg	BRS

\* Dr Newman and Mr Charles David were unable to attend on Day 2 of TSSAC 48.



## ACTION ITEMS

No.	Action	Agenda	Responsibility	Status
1	Amend the preamble information provided to researchers in the “calls for research proposals” to clearly inform researchers that utilisation of Torres Strait Islanders in research proposals, where appropriate, will be a criterion against which research proposals are assessed in both pre- and full proposals considered by the TSSAC	2.2 (TSSAC 47)	Executive Officer	Incomplete (carried over from TSSAC 47)
2	The AFMA report, detailing a set of assessment tools for prioritizing research projects based on cost/benefit analysis and risk assessment, to be provided, when available, to TSSAC members for discussion in the future.	2.2 (TSSAC 47)	Executive Officer	Still Unavailable (carried over from TSSAC 47)
3	The Committee agreed to provide a paper to the TSFMAC outlining the intention of the TSSAC to not provide a formal layer of decision making between the working groups, the TSSAC and the TSFMAC.	2.3 (TSSAC 47)	Executive Officer	Pending TSFMAC (carried over from TSSAC 47)
4	AFMA to investigate further options to commission a proposal to conduct an international expert consultation for indigenous fishing entrepreneurship.	4.1 (TSSAC 47)	Executive Officer	Incomplete (carried over from TSSAC 47)
5	Various Committee Members to contact identified funding bodies and provide information to the TSSAC on their priority areas and funding cycles at the next meeting.	4.1 (TSSAC 47)	Various	In progress (carried over from TSSAC 47)
6	A non-technical synopsis of the report (layman’s summary) be developed to be provided to the TRLRAG for their approval by the next TRL RAG meeting in March 2009.	5.3 (TSSAC 47)	Dr Jones Mr Tim Emery Ms R. Williams Mr Michael O’Neill	In progress (carried over from TSSAC 47)
7	Mr Stan Lui (AFMA TI), Ms Sevaly Sen and Mr Charles David develop a proposal to formally assess integration of Torres Strait Islanders in research projects, using an upcoming research project as a pilot study.  Research brief from this project to be circulated to TSSAC members for information.	4.1 (TSSAC 47)  1.3 (TSSAC 48)	Mr Lui, Ms Sen, Mr David  Now Stephen Newman instead of Mr Lui  Annabel Jones	Incomplete (carried over from TSSAC 47)



8	Further clarify the role of and relationship between TSSAC, MTSRF and TSRA LSMU.	1.3	Annabel Jones	
9	Draw up proposal requesting funds for holding a workshop on indigenous fishing entrepreneurship and circulate to TSSAC members out of session (relates to Action item 13 from TSSAC 47).	1.3	Chair Annabel Jones	
10	TSSAC to write letter to the economic development unit at TSRA indicating interest in their capacity for involvement in entrepreneurship.	1.3	AFMA	In progress
11	Report on the protocols for conducting research with Torres Strait Islanders (Torres Strait Islander) to be completed by June 30.	1.3	Prof Martin Nakata Shaun Ossinger	
12	TSRA to review their current budget and resource availability to coordinate a second Torres Strait Islander position on the TSSAC.	1.3	Steve Hall	
13	Amend the draft Progress/milestone report template for consideration of the Committee at TSSAC No. 49.	2.1	Executive Officer	In progress
14	Add an agenda item on Climate Change to future TSSAC meetings.	3.1	Executive Officer	
15	Request MTSRF Torres Strait Steering Committee to provide project proposals to the TSSAC and determine if they are open to input on the projects from the TSSAC.	3.1	Annabel Jones	In progress
16	Write to MTSRF to identify project areas that are in the TSSAC Strategic Research Plan identifying which are similar to the themes used by MTSRF to classify research proposals. Seek comments from MTSRF on the potential role of the TSSAC in the development of the themes at the project level.	3.1	Annabel Jones	In progress
17	Communicate the TSSAC interest in climate change to CSIRO to generate interest in future projects on this topic.	3.1	Roland Pitcher	
18	Edit list of alternate funding bodies for Torres Strait research to include JCU and CSIRO. Determine what common interests exist.	3.3	Executive Officer	In progress
19	Send the TSSAC Strategic Research Plan to Pew Charitable Trusts.	3.3	Chair	



20	Follow up for more information on the Coral Triangle initiative and Conservation International (CI) as potential funding bodies for Torres Strait research.	3.3	Annabel Jones	
21	Send the project on indigenous rights and benefits and entrepreneurship to the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) once underway.	3.3	Annabel Jones	
22	Address the issue of PNG funding for research at the next Bi-lateral meeting.	3.3	AFMA/PNG	
23	Circulate minutes from the forum on overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research to Committee members when finalised.	3.4	AFMA	
24	Edit the TSSAC Strategic Research Plan.	4.1	Chair AFMA	In progress
25	Review research priorities in the Strategic Research Plan (previously attachment B).	4.1	Executive Officer	
26	Circulate TSSAC Strategic Research Plan to members out of session.	4.1	AFMA	
27	Edit the TSSAC Project Evaluation Pro-forma.	5.1	Executive Officer	Complete
28	Charles David to provide comment on the evaluation pro-forma as to how it can better specify Torres Strait Islander engagement.	5.1	Charles David	
29	Advise Dr Hamman of the Committee's decisions outlining the areas of the proposal which require amendment prior to funding being recommended to AFMA.	5.1	AFMA	Complete
30	Investigate if TSRA would be the entity to take responsibility for employing Torres Strait Islanders in CSIRO lobster surveys.	5.1	Steve Hall	
31	Advise Mr Dennis of the Committee's decisions outlining the areas of the proposal which require amendment prior to funding being recommended to AFMA.	5.1	AFMA	Complete
32	Add a new section to the proposal/pre-proposal templates titled 'engagement of Torres Strait Islander/Prescribed Body Corporates' which would require researchers to specifically include details of consultation and engagement with Torres Strait Islanders.	5.1	Executive Officer	In progress



33	Advise Dr Lanyon of the Committee's decisions.	5.1	AFMA	Complete
34	Include an item on employment of PNG treaty members on Torres Strait Islander vessels at the next TSFMAC meeting.	6.2	AFMA	
35	The TSSAC to write to the RAG communicating its concerns with the changes to the TAC setting process.	6.3	AFMA	In progress
36	Use previous reporting procedures to produce a template for the evaluation of the TRL RAG half yearly and final reports. To be circulated to the TSSAC out of session for comment.	6.3	AFMA	





### **Agenda Item 1.1: Chair's Opening Remarks/Apologies/Adoption of Agenda/Disclosure of Interests**

The Chair welcomed all attendees. The Committee adopted the meeting agenda with the view to change proceedings slightly due to the early departure of Dr Stephen Newman.

The Committee acknowledged the contribution of Mr Toshi Nakata to the TSSAC during his time as observer and support for the Islander representative. A replacement for Mr Nakata is currently being sought by TSRA.

### **Agenda Item 1.2 Minutes from TSSAC Meeting No. 47**

**1.2.1** The Committee **AGREED** to accept the minutes of TSSAC 47, circulated to members on 30 January 2009, as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### **Agenda Item 1.3: Action Items from TSSAC Meeting No. 47**

The Committee noted the action items from TSSAC 47 which had been completed and would be considered at this meeting. Action items 2, 3, 5, 11, 13, 17 and 18 were carried over and are now classified as **ACTION ITEMS 1-7** from TSSAC 48.

Mr David sought comments from his constituents with respect to the TSSAC acting as an advisory steering committee for fisheries research funded outside the AFMA Torres Strait research budget (TSSAC 47 Action item 7). The Torres Strait community members are happy with the current work of the TSSAC and potential to provide advice and become a steering group for Torres Strait fisheries research. However, there was confusion from Torres Strait Islander community members regarding clarity of roles of and the relationships between MTSRF, the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit and the TSSAC and overlapping interests. Further clarification on the roles of these organisations with relation to each other will be provided at the next meeting, particularly with relation to proposals for research funding in the Torres Strait (**ACTION ITEM 8**).

Action Item 7 (TSSAC 47) also initiated some discussion on development and capacity building for Torres Strait Islanders and encouraging researchers to communicate and collaborate with regards to Torres Strait Islander involvement in research. These discussions were deferred to Agenda Item 3.

Action item 10 from TSSAC 47 was completed with a letter sent to the researchers requesting further clarification on their research proposals but AFMA has not received a reply. The letter requested that timeframes for the research were provided as well as details on other sources of funding that they have received, which projects specifically requested funding from the TSSAC and that the projects were submitted to the TSSAC singularly and not as a package of several projects. Discussion on the role of the TSSAC in current projects that have already received funding highlighted the opportunities to consider collaboration and value adding in considering funding applications.

Mr Baule provided copies of comics developed to provide fisheries messages to fishers in English and Creole (Action item 19).

It was noted that the project developed under action item 11 (TSSAC 47) on assessing the effectiveness of researchers in the Torres Strait was still a priority for the TSSAC but had met several hurdles and had not progressed since the last meeting. A full proposal (2 pages) will be developed for this project so that other funding bodies may be approached to back the project due to limited resources from AFMA and TSRA. This proposal is to be circulated out of session to members for comment (**ACTION ITEM 7**).

The commissioning of a proposal to conduct an international expert consultation for indigenous fishing entrepreneurship (TSSAC 47, Action Item 13) was also incomplete due to



the unavailability of resources. It was communicated to the TSSAC from the Islander representatives that Torres Strait Islanders would like to take full control of the commercial sector in fisheries but need to be guided by other examples of entrepreneurship in Indigenous communities around the world. A proposal requesting funds for holding a workshop on indigenous fishing entrepreneurship will be developed by TSSAC executive and sent out of session to the Committee for approval **(ACTION ITEM 9)**.

TSRA indicated that they also play a substantial role in Torres Strait Islander capacity building and are keen to be involved in this project but are unsure as to their capacity for involvement with current resources.

A letter will also be written to the Economic Development Unit at TSRA indicating TSSAC interest in their involvement in this project and seeking clarification on TSRA's capacity for involvement **(ACTION ITEM 10)**.

The layman's summary of the tropical rock lobster TAC setting process (TSSAC 47 Action Item 18) is in progress by staff from AFMA in conjunction with the Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group.

Annabel Jones has contacted Professor Martin Nakata regarding the development of the 'guiding protocols' document as per TSSAC 47 Action Item 20 which will bring information from a variety of sources together to produce a guide for researchers on what cultural protocols they will abide by whilst conducting research in the Torres Strait. Professor Nakata has recently agreed to conduct the research in the time frames provided, and has been requested to provide a costed research plan for completion to progress the contractual agreement **(ACTION ITEM 11)**.

**Agenda Item 1.4: Correspondence**

The following correspondence were provided at the meeting

	<u>To</u>	<u>Regarding</u>
1	Mr Darren Dennis	Notice of TSSAC consideration of pre-proposal on Connectivity of rock lobster populations in Australia and PNG fishery jurisdictions.
2	Mr Darren Dennis	Notice of TSSAC consideration of pre-proposal on refined pre-season surveys of rock lobster populations in Torres Strait.
3	Prof Marsh, Dr Hamman and Dr Coles	Request for clarification on pre-proposal submitted to the TSSAC.
4	TSSAC (for noting at Agenda Item 5)	Notice of withdrawal of proposal on connectivity of rock lobster populations in Australia and PNG fishery jurisdictions from Mr Darren Dennis.
5	TSSAC (for information)	Final CSIRO report ' <i>Commercial catch age composition and conversion ratio for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock lobster fishery</i> '.
6	TSSAC (For information)	Half-yearly progress report from CSIRO on " <i>Estimation of Total Allowable Catch and Stock Abundance of the Torres Strait tropical Rock Lobster fishery – 2008.</i> "
7	TSSAC (for information)	Research Project information from Dr Cinner (ARC Centre for Excellence on Coral Reefs Studies) entitled ' <i>How can communities sustainably manage coral reefs?</i> '



Due to some confusion with regards to correspondence, it was requested that the Secretariat send out all correspondence to Committee members before subsequent meetings.

### **Agenda Item 1.5: Membership**

The Torres Strait Islander member and observers expressed a desire for there to be a second permanent Torres Strait Islander representation on the TSSAC Committee.

It was re-iterated that the TSSAC is an expert body set up as a PZJA consultative body. The membership structure was agreed on by the PZJA at (21.5.1.3c). Any change to the membership structure of the TSSAC would need to be formalised as a PZJA decision.

In addition, the TSRA is responsible for coordinating Torres Strait Islander representation on PZJA consultative meetings, and as such would need budget to allow for an additional Torres Strait Islander representative to attend TSSAC meetings. TSRA is currently looking at capacity building and Islander participation in meetings and is developing several different options to facilitate this. It was re-iterated that all members should be appointed based on their appropriate skills and knowledge.

The Committee supported the recommendation that a second permanent Torres Strait Islander position with the appropriate skill base be recommended for the TSSAC contingent on budget availability by TSRA and formal approval by the PZJA.

The TSSAC requested that TSRA review their current budget and resource availability to coordinate a second Torres Strait Islander position on the TSSAC (**ACTION ITEM 12**).

### **Agenda Item 2.1 TSSAC Procedures – progress report template**

A draft template for use by researchers to report progress of relevant research projects to the TSSAC was discussed by the Committee. The following amendments were suggested by the Committee to better facilitate efficient and transparent assessment of the progress of research projects:

- 1) Title to read 'Bi-Annual or Milestone Progress Report for [please insert report period by month/year]'
- 2) 'Variations to Project' section to be added.
- 3) 'Islander engagement' to read 'Stakeholder Engagement'
- 4) Amend the instructions for the section titled 'Milestone' to specify that all milestones of the project are to be listed and reported against.

The TSSAC executive was requested to undertake the recommended amendments to the progress report template (**ACTION ITEM 13**).

**2.1.1** The TSSAC **AGREED** to adopt the TSSAC Bi-annual/Milestone Progress Report template subject to the amendments listed in Item 2.1.

### **Agenda Item 3.1 Current Torres Strait Research Projects**

The TSSAC noted the range of research projects that have been conducted in the Torres Strait, and those currently underway funded by AFMA, MTSRF, TSRA, JCU, CSIRO, QDPI&F, DAFF and others.



The variety of funding agencies funding research in the Torres Strait could lead to potential overlaps and it was highlighted that greater co-ordination between agencies and research providers is needed to avoid this. It was suggested that closer communication with TSRA could be a good option to facilitate this, but noted there were no formal processes in place at the moment for research providers to follow. It was suggested that any such procedures could be included in the 'guiding protocols' document being negotiated with Prof Nakata (Action Item 11 TSSAC 48).

It was noted that the role of the TSSAC in research projects has broadened with the development of a new Terms of Reference (TOR) but the TSSAC must distinguish between projects that it should actively be involved in, and others that should just be noted as of interest to the TSSAC, such as the MTSRF Sponge project. Climate change was also raised as an issue and potential project area that impact fisheries in the Torres Strait and thus is of interest to the TSSAC.

The Committee requested an agenda item on climate change be added to future TSSAC meetings. (**ACTION ITEM 14**).

The Committee generally agreed that it had an interest in the current research projects but at this time would not seek further involvement in these projects. However, The Committee generally agreed that the TSSAC should keep abreast of relevant research projects, including those concerning the East Coast of Australia, James Cook University (JCU) and other projects being carried out by PhD students.

The Committee agreed that it is advisable that in the future the TSSAC consider other projects currently underway or being proposed to determine common interest and potential for involvement of TSSAC funded research.

The Committee agreed that it would request MTSRF Torres Strait Steering Committee to provide project proposals to the TSSAC and determine if they are open to input on the projects from the TSSAC (**ACTION ITEM 15**).

To provide for more streamlined communication processes, the TSSAC will write to MTSRF to identify project areas that are in the TSSAC Strategic Research Plan, identifying which are similar to the themes used by MTSRF to classify research proposals. Comments from MTSRF will also be sought on the potential role of the TSSAC in the development of the themes at project level (**ACTION ITEM 16**).

Discussions were held regarding TSSAC involvement in CSIRO research projects. The Committee agreed that it does not want to influence the themes used by CSIRO. The issue of climate change research in the Torres Strait was discussed as a potential project area for collaboration and co-funding with CSIRO. The CSIRO representative on the Committee will communicate the TSSAC interest in climate change to CSIRO to generate interest in future projects on this topic (**ACTION ITEM 17**).

### **Agenda Item 3.2 Past Torres Strait Research Projects**

The list of past Torres Strait research projects was noted by the Committee but was not analysed in detail.

### **Agenda Item 3.3 Other Funding Bodies**

The Committee discussed other funding organisations with respect to areas of interest and funding processes. A list of this information, circulated to members with the papers for TSSAC 48, will be updated and maintained by the Executive (**ACTION ITEM 18**). It will be used as a reference tool for future consideration of research projects by the TSSAC.



The TSSAC Strategic Research Plan will be sent to PEW Charitable Trusts to facilitate better understanding of common research goals (**ACTION ITEM 19**).

More information will be sought on the Coral Triangle Initiative and Conservation International (**ACTION ITEM 20**).

A funding proposal to coordinate a forum on Indigenous rights and entrepreneurship (TSSAC 48 Action Item 10) will be sent to ACIAR once developed (**ACTION ITEM 21**).

It was suggested that the issue of PNG funding for research would be addressed at the next Bi-lateral meeting (**ACTION ITEM 22**).

### **Agenda Item 3.4 Report on Forum to overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research**

A forum to investigate ways to overcome impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research was facilitated by AFMA on the 23 and 24 February 2009 on the recommendation of the TSSAC. The Forum was, overall, very successful and the following key objectives were identified for engaging Torres Strait Islanders in research:

1. Employment for Traditional Property Owners in research projects.
2. Full engagement of Traditional Property Owners as co-researchers in research projects.
3. More effective and efficient research in Torres Strait.
4. Increased mutual benefits from research outcomes including capacity building and skills transfer.

A number of strategies were identified at the forum which will endeavour to achieve these objectives including: analysing the number of Torres Strait Islander researchers needed to meet future research needs; skills audit for these researchers; gap analysis between OH&S policies and standard operating procedures for the Torres Strait and seeking funding to investigate, assess and develop a best-practice model for supporting Indigenous employment in the Torres Strait and its implementation. A consultant will be hired to develop a funding proposal to provide funding for the work included in the investigation and development of a best practice model.

A working group was formed to progress these strategies in the short term until a lead agency takes on the role. It was suggested by the Committee that TSRA or Torres Strait Island Regional Council is the logical entity to lead this project into the future. TSRA indicated that at this time it does not have the resources to commit to this project. The Committee strongly encouraged the TSRA representative to lobby for resources to support the project.

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 medium to long term. The TSSAC requested to be kept informed on progress with this initiative and will assist wherever possible as well as further encouraging relevant agencies to support the initiative wherever possible.

The minutes from the forum will be circulated to Committee members when finalised (**ACTION ITEM 23**).

**3.4.1** The TSSAC **AGREED** that the initiatives identified at the “*Overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research*” Forum to be progressed by the working group were appropriate and would support these initiatives where possible.



**3.4.2** The Committee **RECOMMEND** AFMA consider funding a consultant to develop a funding proposal required to progress the initiatives identified at the forum on “*Overcoming impediments to Torres Strait Islander engagement in research*”.

There was concern raised for the need to balance involvement of Torres Strait Islanders (or any personnel) in research on a short term basis, against the requirement for consistency and rigour in data collection. The TSSAC agreed that this was a significant consideration and, at times, compromise between collection of accurate data in a timely fashion and the desire to involve Torres Strait Islander researchers would be required.

**3.4.3** The Committee **AGREED** compromise is needed between Torres Strait Islander engagement in research and the requirement for consistency and rigour in data collection.

It was raised that a Community Fisher Group representative should be on the working group developed from the Forum. It was stated that an offer for a Torres Strait Islander (who were CFG members) to be on the working group was presented at the forum but none accepted at that time. In addition, Mr Kenny Bedford, a previous CFG and current Fisheries portfolio member on the TSRA, is a working group member. The TSSAC supported having a CFG representative on the working group.

AFMA expressed thanks towards the TSSAC for recommending the project to AFMA for funding.

The Committee expressed their thanks to Mr Shaun Ossinger in coordinating the Forum.

#### **Agenda Item 4.1      5yr 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 minor edits were suggested and will be incorporated by the TSSAC secretariat (**ACTION ITEM 24**).

The Committee agreed that the plan as provided by Mr Kingston, with minor amendments, would provide a strategic guide to research priorities for the next five years. The Strategic Plan will be revised mid term (ie. in 2.5 years) and at end of term (ie. 5 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. This Operational Plan will be revised on an annual basis and will include attachments A & B from the draft 5-year Strategic Research Plan. The Operational Plan will also include an introductory paragraph on how it is to be used, how research priorities are assessed as high, medium or low priority, what criteria are used to assess research priority and how projects are assessed against these criteria.

The Committee discussed how to rank or prioritise research projects. A proposed table to be included in the report detailing information used for ranking projects will be included as part of the Operational Plan. The research priorities (previously attachment B) will be reviewed currently by the TSSAC (**ACTION ITEM 25**) and then annually in March.

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 (**ACTION ITEM 26**).

**4.1.1** The Committee **AGREED** to accept the 5-year Torres Strait Strategic Research Plan following minor amendments by the TSSAC secretariat.



**4.1.2** The Committee **AGREED** to recommend that the PZJA endorse the Torres Strait 5-year Strategic Research Plan.

#### **Agenda Item 5.1 Evaluation of full research proposals**

The Committee received two full proposals from Dr Darren Dennis and Dr Mark Hamman as per requests to these researchers following assessment of pre-proposals at TSSAC 47 (47.4.1.3). The Committee noted that Dr Darren Dennis had withdrawn his research proposal '*Connectivity of ornate rock lobster Panulirus ornatus populations in the Australian and PNG fishery jurisdictions*' due to more pressing commitments as per correspondence No. 4.

The Committee noted that one pre-proposal submitted by Dr J Lanyon (University of Queensland) to the TSSAC had not been assessed at TSSAC meeting No. 47 and required assessment.

The Committee assessed two full proposals and one pre-proposal for funding in the 2009/2010 and beyond. These were

Proposal 1: *Population structure and genetic composition of green turtles sold in the Daru market*. Dr Mark Hamman, James Cook University

Proposal 2: *Refined pre-season surveys of the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population to support accurate TAC estimation*. Mr Darren Dennis, CSIRO.

Proposal 3: *Determining baseline health and disease parameters for wild dugongs and turtles in urban and non-urban waters of northern Australia and Torres Strait*. Dr Janet Lanyon, University of Queensland.

Prior to evaluation of the research proposals further amendments were made to the TSSAC research proposal evaluation pro-forma as per discussions (**ACTION ITEM 27**).

The Torres Strait Islander members felt that the evaluation pro-forma did not adequately specify the requirements for Torres Strait islander engagement. The Torres Strait Islander members will discuss as to what criteria can further specify Torres Strait islander involvement with their constituents for discussion at the next meeting (**ACTION ITEM 28**).

The Committee used the amended pro-forma to evaluate the two research proposals and one pre-proposal. It was agreed that where a proposal was given a collated ranking of 5 (out of 10) or less for any criteria on the evaluation pro-forma then the researcher would be specifically asked to address the criteria if the proposal is to be progressed.

Proposal 1: Population structure and genetic composition of green turtles sold in the Daru market. PI: Dr Mark Hamman, (JCU).

The following comments were raised by the committee:

- It was felt that there should be more relationships drawn between the research and management of the stock. More explicit detail was needed in stating collaboration with management and also how the research will inform future management of the stock. The Committee request that outputs and outcomes be more clearly stated.
- Well developed and appropriate extension and communication, particularly with respect to Torres Strait Islanders were required. The proposed activities were not well developed and were unclear.
- More information was needed on the background of turtle catch in Torres Strait and those sold in Daru, if available.
- There is a need to provide evidence that PNG has been consulted and the relevant permits acquired. Updated information on the project approval from Daru hunters and



PNG Environment and Conservation and Department of Conservation agency staff is requested.

- The Committee requested more information on the methods to be used.
- Further information is needed on data management and amendments made to the “flow of benefits”.
- The Committee felt that the budget specified in the proposal was not appropriate to meet the outputs and outcomes of the research. Careful consideration should be given to ensuring that the budget is sufficient to conduct the work adequately.

**5.1.1** The TSSAC **RECOMMEND** to AFMA for funding the research project ‘*Population structure and genetic composition of green turtles sold in the Daru market*’ subject to addressing the comments of the Committee to the satisfaction of AFMA

The TSSAC secretariat will advise Dr Hamman of the Committee’s decisions outlining the areas of the proposal which require amendment prior to funding being recommended to AFMA (**ACTION ITEM 29**).

Proposal 2: Refined pre-season surveys of the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population to support accurate TAC estimation. PI: Mr Darren Dennis (CSIRO).

The TSSAC considered the declared interest of Dr Roland Pitcher with regards to this research proposal in that the PI (Mr Darren Dennis) and Dr Pitcher are both employees of CSIRO. The Committee agreed that Dr Roland Pitcher was not compromised in his assessment of this project and he was not required to leave the room.

It was clarified that this research project discusses research to undertake the pre-season surveys for tropical rock lobster and is not to address the potential discontinuation of the mid-year survey.

The following comments were raised by the committee:

- The principal investigator should develop a communication strategy detailing how dissemination of information to Torres Strait Islanders can be better achieved
- Specific links be drawn between proposed Management Strategy Evaluation work discussed at the TRL RAG and this proposal.
- Overall, the Committee felt that this application did not meet the level of Torres Strait Islander involvement sought the Committee. The Islander representatives agreed that co-operation between researchers and Torres Strait Islander is a key priority and wished to re-iterate that they are dedicated to this cause and realise the importance of Islander training by researchers.
- The Committee discussed ways in which this research could increase Torres Strait Islander engagement. The Committee recommended incorporating the following initiatives to the research proposal. These initiatives are considered to be feasible and should not adversely affect the outcomes of the research.
  1. Incorporate, in a phased approach, Torres Strait Islander participation in the research surveys to enable adequate training of Torres Strait Islanders whilst also ensuring the scientific research carried out by CSIRO is not jeopardized.
  2. The initial aim is to employ one diver each from the Central and Western island groups who will be an additional member of the CSIRO team and will not replace any CSIRO member. The Torres Strait Islander divers would only participate in surveys in their own areas.
  3. CSIRO will work alongside divers instructing in the methods used to carry out pre-season surveys for Tropical Rock Lobster. The first year (November 2009)





would focus on full training and knowledge building. Subsequent years would see the Islanders able to effectively contribute to the scientific process.

The Committee acknowledged that the minimum requirements for employment of a Torres Strait Islander on a CSIRO vessel include:

- a. Appropriate diving qualifications;
- b. A separate entity which will take responsibility for employment of the Torres Strait Islanders divers and OH&S, insurance etc;
- c. Miscellaneous additional training as required.

The Committee further acknowledged that while such qualifications, training and HR requirements may be difficult to accomplish in Torres Strait with available time and resources, every effort will be made to achieve them. The TSSAC does not consider that CSIRO would be required to undertake the necessary training in the first year, and the TSSAC will undertake to identify support from other agencies to assist in provision of necessary training to the individuals. However, it should be noted that this will not be an ongoing activity and that in following years the same trained individuals or, funds permitting, alternative trained individuals, would be used. For subsequent contracts, CSIRO will need to cost the entire process into the proposal including the acquisition of a suitable qualified Torres Strait Islander and related on-board costs.

It will be investigated if TSRA would be the entity to take responsibility for employing these Torres Strait Islanders in this research project (**ACTION ITEM 30**).

**5.1.2** The TSSAC **RECOMMEND** to AFMA for funding the research project '*Refined pre-season surveys of the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population to support accurate TAC estimation*' subject to addressing the comments of the Committee to the satisfaction of AFMA.

The TSSAC secretariat will advise Mr Dennis of the Committee's decisions outlining the areas of the proposal which require amendment prior to funding being recommended to AFMA (**ACTION ITEM 31**).

It was requested that a new section be added to the proposal/pre-proposal templates titled 'engagement of Torres Strait Islander/Prescribed Body Corporates' which would require researchers to specifically include details of consultation and engagement with Torres Strait Islanders (**ACTION ITEM 32**).

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.* Dr Janet Lanyon (UQ).

This pre-proposal was assessed against essential criteria and was found to be unsuitable as it was assessed as having very low relevance to key research areas of the TSSAC, PZJA or AFMA. This proposal was not recommended to progress to full proposal stage.

The TSSAC secretariat will advise Dr Lanyon of the Committee's decisions (**ACTION ITEM 33**).

## **Agenda Item 6.1 Aquaculture**

Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) is interested in pursuing an aquaculture plan for the 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.



It was made clear that the TSSAC only has an interest in wild fisheries interactions with regards to aquaculture such as the farming of Beche de Mer and then re-stocking into the wild.

#### **Agenda Item 6.2 PNG research**

Mr Baule from PNG NFA indicated that currently research work in PNG focuses on Bio-security extending to for both PNG and Australia.

Lobster research and data collection is being conducted in collaboration with Daru processors and university students. This same program is also being used for barramundi research and PNG are keen for this program to continue.

PNG expressed their willingness to collaborate with Darren Dennis on the TRL connectivity project as it has relevance with catch sharing between PNG and Australia. However, PNG were advised that this proposal has been withdrawn at this time (Agenda Item 1.4)

Torres Strait Islander members voiced their interest in having PNG Traditional Inhabitants (from Treaty Villages) employed as commercial fishers 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. The Committee requested AFMA to include an item on employment of PNG treaty members on Torres Strait Islander vessels at the next TSFMAC meeting (**ACTION ITEM 34**).

PNG also indicated that climbing perch (*Anabas testudineous*) migrating from Indonesia is becoming a greater problem as it fouls the water and kills off barramundi and other species. There have been reports of sightings of climbing perch at Saibai.

#### **Agenda Item 6.3: TRL RAG**

Information was provided to the TSSAC on the outcomes of the latest TRL RAG held on the 10-11 March 2009.

A new/modified approach for conducting the lobster stock assessment and setting the TAC for the fishery is being developed. Concerns were raised by the Islander representatives on the TSSAC regarding this new process indicating that there may be a perception in the Torres Strait Islander community that if the mid-season survey were stopped then it may result in a more conservative TAC setting process. The Committee heard that the refined pre-season surveys would be assessed to see if this actually improved the accuracy of the TAC setting process and that this analysis could be carried out with management strategy evaluation work being undertaken through the TRL RAG. The Committee agreed to write to the TRL RAG highlighting its concerns (**ACTION ITEM 35**).

The Committee agreed that in future meetings to discuss and provide comment on the TRL RAG half yearly report.

The Committee agreed to produce a template to be able to evaluate and provide comment on the half yearly and annual reports provided by the TRL RAG (**ACTION ITEM 36**).

#### **Agenda Item 6.4 TSSAC 49**

TSSAC 49 meeting to be held on 25 June 2009 in Brisbane. Venue and dates to be confirmed.

Meeting Closed 1:30pm 18 March 2009.

