



Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

Meeting #50

October 5-6 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

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 Protecting our fishing future

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Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

The 50th meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was held at the Novotel Oasis Resort, 122 Lake street Cairns on the 5-6 October 2009.

In attendance were:

Name	Role
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chairperson
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Representative
Ms Rebecca Williams	Acting Executive Officer (AFMA)
Dr Michael O'Neill	Scientist (QDPI&F)
Dr Roland Pitcher	Researcher (CSIRO)
Ms Sevaly Sen	Social/Economics Member
Mr Charles David	Iama Traditional Owner
Mr Ian Jacobsen	QDPI&F Representative – Fisheries Manager
Mr Tony Vass	Industry Representative
Mr Augustine Mohiba	PNG Representative
Mr Neville Nakata	Observer – TSRA Fisheries Coordinator

Apologies:

Mr Stephen Newman WA fisheries

Major outcomes

The TSSAC:

- Requested that the draft document 'Cultural Protocols for Researchers Working in the Torres Strait' be distributed for public comment. These comments will be considered at TSSAC 51.
- Reviewed one full proposal which was recommended for funding by AFMA
- Reviewed five pre-proposals, three of which were recommended to go to full proposal stage.
- Gave in principle support for an International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum.

TSSAC Procedures

The TSSAC noted the information provided in the document 'Framework for delivering cost effective research to AFMA'. The TSSAC agreed to consider and apply the general framework where possible but noted that Torres Strait fisheries have many differences to other Commonwealth fisheries, in particular the importance of social and cultural aspects that influence the decisions of the TSSAC.

Sustainable harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectable fisheries

The Committee noted the progress made on the research project conducted by CSIRO on developing *Sustainable harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectable fisheries*, in particular surveys of Bêche de Mer and trochus in eastern Torres Strait.

Interim results indicate that abundance of black teatfish has increased and the researchers will be recommending a conservative increase in Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for this species. Other medium to high value species of Bêche de Mer were also found to have stable densities since the previous surveys or had increased. Trochus was also found to be in "healthy" levels of abundance although CSIRO will recommend lowering the TAC to 100 t (from 150 t) to better reflect a sustainable TAC for this species.

The Committee requested that information be sought from the communities where research was undertaken to ascertain their responses to the research.

A final report on this research is expected to be delivered in the near future and will be distributed to members.

Cultural Protocols for Researchers Working in the Torres Strait

The final protocols were not available for the meeting as the author is incorporating information from a recently released relevant document. The progress reports from the author indicate that the document will be useful when finalised.

The Committee discussed the need for general acceptance of the protocols by both Torres Strait Islanders and researchers alike. The Committee will distribute the draft protocols document for public comment, and subsequent consideration at TSSAC 51. The document will then be provided to researchers submitting pre and full proposals for their guidance.

International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum

The Committee noted the preliminary work done to seek potential funding providers and interest in holding an international indigenous commercial fisheries forum. Substantial interest in funding the project was provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). In principal support will now be requested of relevant bodies such as AFMA, TSRA as the Torres Strait Islander representative body Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority (PNGNFA) and others to determine if the initiative will be developed further. Further work will be undertaken by the steering committee to secure funding and develop details for the forum.

Research Proposals

The Committee assessed five (5) researcher pre-proposals and one (1) amended full proposal for funding in the 2009/2010 AFMA Research Fund budget.

Two of the five submitted pre-proposals were ranked suitable by the Committee for further consideration and the Principle Investigators will be asked to submit a full proposal to the

TSSAC by February 12 2010. Each of these proposals must fully address specific criteria in their full proposals. The two suitable pre-proposals were:

- a. **An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population** – Principal Investigator (PI): Dr Eva Plaganyi-Lloyd (CSIRO).
- b. **Recovery of the *Holothuria scabra* (sandfish) population on Warrior Reef, Torres Strait** – PI: Mr Tim Skewes (CSIRO).

A further project **Bycatch reduction in the Torres Strait tiger prawn fishery** – PI: Mr David Maynard and Dr Troy Gaston (AMC), was recommended for funding from other funding bodies (outside AFMA). A number of recommendations for the investigators to consider were provided.

In addition, the Committee considered an amended full proposal, **Refined Stock assessment and TAC estimation for the Torres Strait rock lobster (TRL) fishery** (PI: Dr Eva Plaganyi-Lloyd (CSIRO)). Dr Plaganyi-Lloyd had received in principle support at TSSAC 48 and was required to address certain specified issues identified by the Committee and submit a revised proposal. The Committee agreed that the revised proposal had addressed these issues and confirmed their recommendation of the proposal for funding from AFMA.

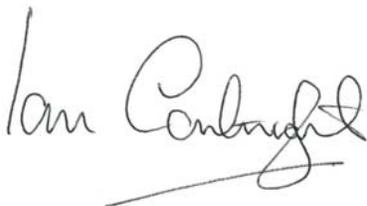
Climate change

The TSSAC discussed the need for research on the ecosystem effects of climate change in the Torres Strait and the direct effects of these changes on fisheries. Fine scale climate modelling currently underway in Hobart is studying the possible changes in water temperature and salinity levels due to climate change. It was agreed that the results of this research need to be viewed before looking at the possible effects climate change will have on key species and habitats in the Torres Strait.

Next Meeting

TSSAC 51 was tentatively set for early March in Cairns to coincide with the TRLRAG, date to be confirmed.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Cartwright', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mr Ian Cartwright
TSSAC Chair