



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



**HAND COLLECTABLE WORKING GROUP  
MEETING NO. 3  
5-6 AUGUST 2009**

**TORRES STRAIT HAUS, THURSDAY ISLAND**

**MINUTES**

**CHAIR: MR KENNY BEDFORD**

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

## AGENDA

### **1 Meeting Administration**

- 1.1 Ratification of HCWG No. 1 and 2 meeting records (AFMA)
- 1.2 Actions Items from HCWG No. 2
- 1.3 HCWG Chairperson

### **2 Reports**

- 2.1 TSSAC update (AFMA)
- 2.2 Yorke Island Sponge Farm Update
- 2.3 Strategic Assessments of Beche de mer and Trochus (AFMA)

### **3 Research and Management**

- 3.1 Research Results '*Sustainable Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectable Fisheries*' (CSIRO)
- 3.2 Proposal for Warrior Reef Beche de mer survey (CSIRO – Tim Skewes)
- 3.3 Interim research results '*Livelihood benefits of co-management of hand collectable fisheries in the Torres Strait*' (MTSRF – Alifereti Tawake)
- 3.4 Marketing Opportunities

### **4 Community Based Harvest Strategies**

- 4.1 DEWHA Recommendations
- 4.2 Opportunities for development

### **5 Compliance**

- 5.1 Foreign compliance update (AFMA)

### **6 Other business**

- 6.1 Okinawa Pearls Update
- 6.2 Dates for next meeting



The following members and observers were in attendance at HCWG No. 3:

Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Kenny Bedford	Chairperson	Consultant
Mr Shaun Ossinger	Executive Officer (AFMA)	Senior Fisheries Management Officer, Torres Strait
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Member - Thursday Island Fisheries Manager	AFMA
Mr Mark Pearson	Warraber CFG	
Mr Francis Pearson	Poruma CFG	
Mr Gavin Mosby	Masig CFG	
Mr Charles David	Iama CFG	
Mr Steve Hall	TSRA	
Mr Neville Nakata	TSRA	
Mr Rick Torelli	Tasmanian Seafoods	Buyers boat license holder
Mr Nyall Ledger	TVH BDM Fisher	TVH BDM Fisher, buyers boat license holder
Mr Tim Skewes	CSIRO	Researcher

Observers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Alifereti Tawake	PhD Candidate (Researcher)	
Mr Adam Wade	AFMA	Administration
Mr Chris Parry (*)	AFMA Foreign Compliance	

Apologies

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Mr Shane Fava	QDPI & F
Mr Lyndon Peddell	QDPI & F Compliance

(\*) ATTENDED DAY TWO ONLY



### DECISION RECORD – HCWG NO. 3

- 1.1.1 The HCWG agreed that the minutes from HCWG meetings No. 1 and 2 were accurate records and were ratified with minor amendments.
- 2.2.1 The HCWG agreed in principle with the concerns raised for the local environment in regards to vessels anchoring in close proximity to the Yorke Island Sponge Farm project.
- 3.2.1 The HCWG agreed to support, in principle, a bêche de mer survey of Warrior Reef by CSIRO. (PI Tim Skewes)
- 4.1.1 The HCWG agreed in principle to the project plan and timeline for development of community based harvest strategies.
- 4.1.2 Representatives from Masig, Warraber, Poruma, Iama and Erub agreed to nominate their communities for development of a Community Based Harvest Strategy for their hand collectable fisheries.

### ACTION ITEMS

			Agenda Item	Due Date
1.	Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 will be redistributed with minutes from HCWG No. 3.	Shaun Ossinger	1.2	October 2009
2.	Shane Fava to redistribute the correspondence to Nyall Ledger regarding his licence and why it is not transferable.	Shaun Fava/ Neville Nakata	1.2	October 2009
3.	QDPIF application forms for Indigenous licences in east coast fisheries to be redistributed to CFG's via Neville Nakata.	Shaun Ossinger/ Neville Nakata	1.2	October 2009
4.	Members will be contacted out of session by email, to seek their agreement on recommending Mr Kenny Bedford as permanent Chair for the HCWG. Neville Nakata to distribute the correspondence to all CFG members.	Shaun Ossinger / Neville Nakata	1.3	November 2009
5.	AFMA to investigate if the issue of vessels anchoring in the vicinity of the Yorke Island Sponge Farm Project falls within the capacity of the PZJA to regulate.	Shaun Ossinger	2.2	
6.	A formal update on the progress of Okinawa Pearls interest in pearl farms around Erub be tabled at the next HCWG meeting.	Executive Officer	6.1.1	



**Preliminaries: Chair’s Opening Remarks/Apologies/Adoption of Agenda/Disclosure of Interests**

Meeting start: 11.10am

Mr. Kenny Bedford acknowledged the traditional owners and ancestors of the region in which the meeting was being held. The agenda was adopted and interests disclosed.

**1.1 Ratification of HCWG No. 1 and 2 meeting records (AFMA)**

The HCWG noted that due to time constraints, the minutes from HCWG No.1 held in 2007, were not ratified at HCWG meeting No. 2. Concern was raised by the CFG members that members at both HCWG meeting 1 and 2 were not present at this meeting and had not provided any comments on the minutes. The HCWG was advised the minutes were distributed by email to TSRA and working group members following both previous working group and member had time to read and comment on those minutes. No comments from members had been interpreted as acceptance of the minutes. The Chair noted that some of the working group members present had not had a chance to review the minutes from HCWG meetings 1 and 2. The working group reviewed the minutes over the two days of the meeting and one minor amendment was identified.

1.1.1 The HCWG **AGREED** that the minutes from HCWG meetings No. 1 and 2 were accurate records and were ratified with minor amendments.

**1.2 Actions Items from HCWG No. 2**

The group noted that the majority of the action items from HCWG No. 2 have been executed.

	Action	Responsibility	Progress
1	Mr Nakata will approach potential candidates for the position as Chair including Kerrod Beattie, George Pitt, Stan Lui and investigate their availability in interest in the position of Chair for the HCWG.	Toshi Nakata	Complete – (Agenda Item 1.3)
2	New members of the HCWG are to familiarise themselves with the PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 and to formally acknowledge their roles and responsibilities as a working group members by signing the formal letter of acknowledgement and return to the HCWG secretariat.	New Members	Incomplete – Fisheries Management Paper No. 1 will be redistributed with Minutes from HCWG No. 3 ( <b>ACTION ITEM 1</b> )
3	Mr Nakata will approach the TSRA economic development program about providing an update on issues pertaining to capacity building to the HCWG or the TSFMAC.	Toshi Nakata	See Agenda Item 3.4
4	All working group members to provide options for employing Traditional Owners to participate in research projects at the next HCWG meeting for to participate in research projects.	TPO	Actioned by TPO’s at ‘impediments’ working group forum in Feb 09
5	Mr Skewes to include the recommendations from the TSSAC to the current beche-de-mer	T. Skewes	Completed



	research proposal.		
6	On receiving letters of support from relevant PBCs of participating communities, CSIRO is to visit each community and meet with the PBCs and other community members to discuss the proposed research on trochus and beche-de-mer, the budget and the engagement of Traditional Owners. The PBCs will determine the most appropriate participants for each project (Tim Skewes)	T. Skewes	Completed
7	TSRA is to provide the relevant PBCs with more information on the MTSRF/CSIRO researcher and the proposed research funded by MTSRF on developing harvest strategies with communities.	TSRA	Completed
8	Shane Fava to provide information on why Nyall Ledger's TVH licenses in the beche-de-mer fishery are not transferable.	Shane Fava	Completed – redistribute as correspondence to Nyall Ledger <b>(ACTION ITEM 2)</b>
9	That the QDPI&F provide information to the TSFMAC on the arrangements in place for Torres Strait Islander fishers to operate outside the protected zone and reciprocal arrangements for Cape York inhabitants to access the protected zone.	Shane Fava/ Neville Nakata	Completed – QDPIF application forms for Indigenous licences in east coast fisheries to be redistributed to CFG's via Neville Nakata. <b>(ACTION ITEM 3)</b>
10	Invite an AIMS representative working on the Masig Is sponge farm to the next HCWG meeting to give a presentation on Torres Strait sponge, specifically spatial distribution of sponges in the Torres Strait.	TSRA	Will provide update (Agenda Item 2.2)
11	AFMA, DPI and TSRA staff identified available and appropriate courses on indigenous studies/native title for PZJA agency staff.	AFMA, DPI and TSRA	Pending
12	AFMA to seek funding for a dedicated pearl shell workshop to discuss the future of the fishery.	AFMA	Pending budget availability
13	To include an agenda item at the next HCWG meeting to discuss removal of the restriction on use of hookah apparatus in the beche-de-mer fishery in the Torres Strait	AFMA	Completed (agenda 3.4)



The working group discussed access of NPA communities to commercial fisheries in the Torres Straits. Access for these communities is provided for in the Treaty and management strategies, including Community Based Harvest Strategies will need to be in line with the Treaty.

### **1.3 HCWG Chairperson**

The working group noted that Mr Toshi Nakata had ceased his role as Chair of the HCWG when he retired from TSRA. Kenny Bedford has agreed to Chair this meeting as interim Chair and would consider accepting a position as permanent chairperson if the HCWG requested. The Group discussed the need to recommend to the PZJA a permanent chairperson.

The Group was concerned that not all members were present at this meeting and, therefore, could not recommend a Chair. It was stated that as per PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No.1, recommendations do not require unanimous agreement to make decisions, ie not all members are required to vote or agree on a recommendation, however, the group did not make a recommendation for a permanent Chair at this meeting.

To progress the appointment of a permanent chair the HCWG agreed that all members will be contacted out of session by email, to seek their agreement on recommending Mr Kenny Bedford as permanent Chair for the HCWG. Neville Nakata will ensure email goes to all CFG members (**ACTION ITEM 4**).

### **2.1 TSSAC Update (AFMA)**

An overview of the role of the TSSAC, membership and recent research projects was provided, including release of the Strategic Research and Annual Operational Plans for Torres Strait Fisheries which can be found on the PZJA website ([www.pzja.gov.au](http://www.pzja.gov.au)).

Concerns were raised that researchers don't discuss research requirements with traditional property owners (TPO's) regarding research they wish to be conducted in their land and sea country.

The group discussed the opportunities available to facilitate Torres Strait Islanders to participate in research in Torres Strait, including Torres Strait Islander representation on all PZJA consultative groups. There is a Torres Strait Islander representative (currently Charles David) on the TSSAC. This member provides advice to the committee including research priorities for Torres Strait Islanders and consultative processes for researchers to follow. The Working Groups and MAC's also have Torres Strait Islander representatives who are responsible for bringing to the meeting the views of their constituents including research needs.

### **2.2 Yorke Island Sponge Farm Update**

Neville Nakata gave an update on the progress of the Yorke Island Sponge Farm. This project was driven by Kailag Enterprise of Masig Island community through four years of research conducted by CSIRO and AIMS. This project was funded by MTSRF and TSRA.

Concern has been expressed regarding commercial vessel traffic in the area close to the sponge farm commonly, known as the 'Crabpot', and the potential for damage to the marine environment where the sponge farm is located.

The Kailag Enterprise is currently working with Marine Safety Queensland on the issue, to investigate the possibility of an anchorage closure around Masig. The HCWG agreed in



principle with the concerns raised for the local environment in regards to vessels anchoring in close proximity to the Yorke Island Sponge Farm project.

The HCWG requested AFMA investigate if the issue of vessels anchoring in the vicinity of the Yorke Island Sponge Farm Project fell within the capacity of the PZJA to regulate (**ACTION ITEM 5**).

### 2.3 Strategic Assessments of Beche de mer and Trochus (AFMA)

The HCWG noted DEWHA have provided WTO endorsement until 2011 for the Torres Strait Beche de mer and Trochus fisheries. Continued WTO endorsement will be contingent on the PZJA addressing the recommendations of DEWHA for the fisheries.

The HCWG noted the current DEWHA Recommendations for the TSTF and TSBDMF.

### 3.1 Research Results ‘Sustainable Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectable Fisheries’ (CSIRO)

Tim Skewes provided interim results of the stock abundance survey conducted by CSIRO on Hand Collectable Fisheries in eastern Torres Strait. Mr. Skewes made note that future prospects for the fishery were bright, as Australia currently has good quantities of high value species and current demand is likely to increase.

To date there have been eight known beche de mer surveys in the Torres Straits from 1995 to 2009 with four of these surveys concentrating on the Warrior Reef area.

The 2008/2009 survey concentrated on Barrier, Cumberland, Darnley, Don Cay, Great North East Channel and Seven Reefs. The major outcomes of the survey were:

- Estimates of the size, status and spatial structure of trochus and beche de mer stocks in the Torres Strait;
- Evidence of black teatfish recovery in eastern Torres Strait;
- Resolution of taxonomy of surf redfish;
- Development of a ‘Decision Support Tool’ to provide local communities. The tool will hold existing stock abundance, can be used as a guide in development of management strategies and hold new information collected by local observers; and provide
- 12 Torres Strait Islanders trained in benthic surveys.

Overall, it would appear that the lack of fishing effort since the closure of sandfish, black teatfish and surf redfish has benefitted the population density of beche de mer in the sites surveyed.

The recommendations for catch limits for beche de mer species (excluding sandfish) from the survey are: (Note: **THESE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE PRELIMINARY AND ARE SUBJECT TO FURTHER ANALYSIS**):

Species	(t)
Black teatfish	25
Redfish	40*
White teatfish	15
Prickly redfish	20
Hairy Blackfish	20*
Amberfish	32*
Leopardfish	34*
Lollyfish	100*
Pinkfish	17*





Elephant trunk	30*
Greenfish	25*
Curryfish	83*

\* - post meeting note: further analysis of the survey data resulted in these preliminary recommendations of TAC's being removed from the final recommendations in Skewes et al (2010)<sup>1</sup> and subsequently included in the 80t TAC for all "other species" of beche de mer with a 5t trigger for any one species to initiate a species review.

Further discussion ensued regarding possible future setting of TAC's and the economical feasibility of a buying boat (e.g. Tasmanian Seafoods) to remain on site in order take the TAC. Discussion points were:

- Setting of a trigger point for all species (eg 100 tonne) which would prompt AFMA to close the fishery.
- Development of a MOU with buyer (Tasmanian Seafood) to report fish purchases, area and fisher of beche de mer to AFMA.
- Tasmanian Seafood buying boat to remain on site for limited time each year (approximately 2-4 months during doldrums), during TRL closure (possibly two locations). Communities would agree to fish beche de mer at that time of year with the aim of harvesting the TAC in this time to make trip cost feasible for buyers.
- Lifting of hookah diving ban for beche de mer to access deeper species such a deepwater red fish. However, it was noted that not all CFG representatives were supportive of lifting this restriction in their community. It was noted that this could be considered for particular regions in community based management arrangements.
- AFMA advised that DEWHA may be unwilling to provide WTO endorsement in future if higher TAC's for species such as black teat fish or lifting the hookah ban are introduced in the absence of a sustainable Community Based Harvest Strategy .
- Currently the quota for beche de mer and trochus is competitive; licensed fishers can fish currently at any time of the year for species with a TAC.
- Quota would be difficult to monitor currently as there were no compulsory records (log books) for the TIB fishers.
- TIB fishers said they would not be prepared to fill out daily records of catch due to concerns of time taken to complete logbooks.

Concerns were raised by AFMA over the current gap in catch reporting and raised the importance of that data for fishery monitoring and research purposes. It was noted that compulsory catch reporting by all fishers may be required to meet DEWHA strategic assessment recommendations and maintain WTO endorsements. Complete and accurate reporting would fulfill the recommendation.

CFG representative, Mr. Charles David advised that TIB fishers are unlikely to provide this information or may provide inaccurate information in logbooks.

Concerns were expressed that AFMA had provided confidential catch information to other fishers. AFMA is not aware of this occurring and has policies in place regarding disclosure of catch and effort information.

---

<sup>1</sup> Skewes TD, Murphy NE, McLeod I, Dovers E, Burridge C, Rochester W. 2010. Torres Strait Hand Collectables, 2009 survey: Sea Cucumber. CSIRO Cleveland.



### 3.2 Proposal for Warrior Reef Beche de mer Survey (CSIRO – Tim Skewes)

Tim Skewes gave a presentation regarding a proposed survey of sandfish and redfish on Warrior Reef as part of the November pre-season lobster survey. There has not been a survey of Warrior Reef since 2005. The survey would be conducted over 2-4 days and would visit sites surveyed previously and some additional survey sites in previous unsurveyed reef. It was noted that the survey was conditional on receiving funding.

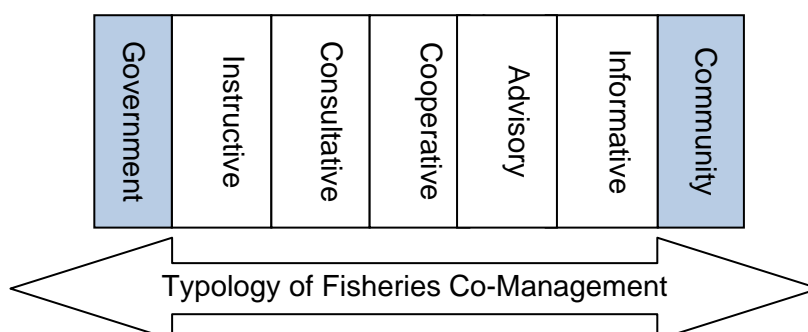
3.2.1 The HCWG **AGREED** to support, in principle, a bêche de mer survey of Warrior Reef by CSIRO. (PI Tim Skewes)

### 3.3 Interim research results ‘Livelihood benefits of co-management of hand collectable fisheries in the Torres Strait’ (MTSRF – Alifereti Tawake)

Mr. Tawake is a PhD student with JCU and is examining the livelihood benefits at the community level of co-management in hand collectable fisheries. The aim of the project is to assist two communities (Warraber and Erub) develop and pilot community based harvest strategy plans for trochus and beche de mer. He has performed several surveys and consultations with community members from Erub and Warraber. Interim outcomes from the research were provided to the Group.

Torres Strait Islanders listed trochus and beche de mer in the top five most important fisheries.

There was a spectrum of co-management arrangements:



A description of the types of co-management arrangements were:

1. Instructive-Government informing fisheries on decisions they plan to make. Mechanisms exist for dialogue between Government and fishers, but only minimal exchange of information.
2. Consultative-All decisions are taken by government but mechanisms exist for government to consult with fishers.
3. Cooperative-Gov and fishers cooperate together as equal partner in decision making (50%-50%).
4. Advisory-Fishers advise government of decisions to be made and government endorses these decisions.
5. Informative-Gov delegated authority to make decisions for fisher groups who are responsible for informing government.

The HCWG generally agreed that they were in the ‘Instructive’ to ‘Cooperative’ area of the spectra and would like to move to a more advisory management framework in the future.

Elements of effective fisheries co-management were identified as follows:

1. Defined management boundaries or tenure system.



2. Development and enforcement of rules that limit resource use.
3. Congruence between rules and local condition.
4. Users have opportunity or rights to make, enforce and change the rules.
5. Individuals affected by the rules can participate in changing the rules.
6. Local monitoring of the resources.
7. Presence of accountability mechanisms for those monitoring the resources and rules.
8. Penalties that increase with severity of offences.
9. Presence of conflict resolution mechanisms.
10. Nested and Networking with other institutions.

A potential spatial management approach to effective fisheries co-management was considered and discussed. For example, the 'home reef' area to be managed through Informative arrangement and outside the home reefs boundary to be managed through Advisory arrangement that is built on the 'Gentlemen's Agreement'.

Fisher's collective suggestions for Community Based Sustainable Hand Collectable (Beche de mer and Trochus) Fisheries Harvest Strategies for Torres Strait were:

1. Harvesting Effort and Gear Restrictions
  - a. Continue to ban diving with hookah within defined boundaries for local fishers as well as commercial fishers
  - b. Limit harvesting to hand collectables
  - c. Current seasonal harvest on trochus – Sept to December when it is calm
  - d. Rotational harvest, which is the current fishing practice – depending on trade winds.
  - e. Commercial fishers to respect their boundaries and to seek permission from the councilor or CFG rep if they want to fish inside- 'respect our backyard'.
  - f. General TAC
2. Restoration (reseeding/farming 'home' reefs- bring stocks from other reefs) using wild breeding stocks
  - a. Trochus garden concept – tidal
  - b. Trochus circles
  - c. Beche de mer farms – deep lagoons in the middle of the nearby reefs
3. Stock Enhancement
  - a. Wild restocking of reefs – bring stocks from other reefs
  - b. Bring juveniles or fingerlings from hatcheries – Expensive
  - c. Setting up a hatchery – More Expensive
4. Protection Tools
  - a. Pockets of 'no take areas' within some reefs and bring mother/breeding stocks together to enhance breeding
  - b. Ban/closure during spawning seasons.
  - c. Protecting productive reefs ('gold mine', 'bank' ) as source to other reefs (zogo)
    - i. 3-5 year period and rotate it
    - ii. Permanent closures

#### **4.1 DEWHA Recommendations (Community Based Harvest Strategies)**

This agenda item was discussed under Agenda item 2.3

#### **4.2 Opportunities for Development (Community Based Harvest Strategies)**

The following timeline was discussed on the implementation and target dates for development of Community Based Harvest Strategies:



1. CSIRO deliver results from TSSAC recommended project 'Sustainable Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectable Fisheries'.	Completed
2. Provide harvest strategy options to Community stakeholders.	Completed
3. Proactively seek consultant to submit pre-proposal to the TSSAC for consideration at October TSSAC meeting.	August
4. Research harvest strategy options and consult with successful champions of relevant harvest strategies	August-September 2009
5. Prepare harvest strategy options for communities	30 September 2009
6. Present paper to MAC (provided we have HCWG agreement) seeking endorsement to draft revised FMN 54 by revoking section 8 – Thus allowing use of underwater breathing apparatus to collect beche de mer (on the condition it is endorsed by the PZJA)	October 2009 (TSFMAC)
7. Site visits to Communities. Present Options. Train Communities in decision support tool use. Assist communities to decide upon Harvest strategy options	October-November 2009
8. Present DRAFT Harvest Strategy to Community for comment/feedback at HCWG No. 4.	October-November 2009
9. Develop MOU with AFMA legal (will govern framework harvest strategy sits in – covering traditional property rights, data sharing, etc.).	15 April 2010
10. Present FINAL Harvest Strategy to Community for endorsement.	May 2010
11. MOU/Harvest Strategy prepared for signing at next PZJA meeting.	30 June 2010

4.1.1 The HCWG **AGREED** in principle to the project plan and timeline for development of community based harvest strategies.

4.1.2 Representatives from Masig, Warraber, Poruma, Iama and Erub **AGREED** to nominate their communities for development of a Community Based Harvest Strategy for their hand collectable fisheries.

## 5.1 Foreign Compliance Update

There has been an increased focus on compliance efforts in the vicinity of Warrior Reef. There had been 19 PNG apprehensions in the Torres Strait in 2008 (up from 3 apprehensions for 2007).

Other notable points included:

- Charges against 34 Beche de mer fishers have been processed in the Daru court recently.
- All prosecuted fishers received fines of 600 Kina each (default of payment would result in one year imprisonment).
- Crew members were prosecuted as well as masters.



- There is now a magistrate permanently based in Daru making prosecution action quicker.
- The PNG Beche de mer fishery will be closed for 3 years from 1 October 2009, by the National Fisheries Authority (PNG).
- Four PNG Fisheries Officers will perform joint patrols with AFMA in the upcoming year.

### **6.1 Okinawa Pearls Update**

Mr. Bedford gave a briefing on a recent visit by delegates of Okinawa Pearls, Japan and their interest in setting up a pearl farm in the vicinity of Erub. This was their second visit. They said the waters of the region were good for growing pearls and the Torres Straits was a 'marketable name'.

The HCWG requested that a formal update on the progress of Okinawa Pearls interest in pearl farms around Erub be tabled at the next HCWG meeting. **(ACTION ITEM 6)**.

### **6.2 HCWG No. 4 Meeting Date**

A meeting date for next meeting was not agreed on.

Meeting Closed: 3.35pm

