



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority



**HAND COLLECTABLE WORKING GROUP
MEETING NO. 5
29-30 NOVEMBER 2011**

AFMA CONFERENCE ROOM, THURSDAY ISLAND

MINUTES

CHAIR: ALIFERETI TAWAKE

These are **DRAFT** minutes and should not be considered as final until they are ratified at the next meeting of the HCWG.



Queensland
Government



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

TORRES STRAIT HAND COLLECTABLES WORKING GROUP (HCWG) MEETING #5
29-30 November 2011
AFMA Conference Room, Pearls Building, Thursday Island

MEETING TIMES: Tuesday 9:00am – 5:00pm; Wednesday 8:30am – 12:00pm

AGENDA

1. Preliminaries

- 1.1. Apologies/Adoption of agenda
- 1.2. Ratification of HCWG No. 4 Minutes
- 1.3. Action items from HCWG No. 4

2. 2011 Fishery update

- 2.1. Beche-De-Mer (AFMA)
- 2.2. Trochus (AFMA)
- 2.3. Pearl shell (AFMA)
- 2.4. FMI's (AFMA)
- 2.5. Strategic Assessment Update (AFMA)

3. Research

- 3.1. 2010 Sandfish Surveys (CSIRO)
- 3.2. Reef Gardens Assessment Update (CSIRO)
- 3.3. Sandfish Experimental Catch Survey Update (CSIRO)
- 3.4. Sea Cucumber Species Guide (CSIRO)
- 3.5. Decision Support Tool (CSIRO)
- 3.6. BDM Hookah Depth Loggers (verbal - AFMA)

4. Future Management Options

- 4.1. Final Harvest Strategies Warraber & Erub (Aliferiti Tawake)
- 4.2. BDM Boat Length Restrictions (QDEEDI)
- 4.3. BDM Future Management options (AFMA)

5. Compliance

- 5.1. Foreign compliance update (AFMA)
- 5.2. Domestic compliance update (verbal - QDEEDI)

6. Reports

- 6.1. TSSAC update (verbal – AFMA)

7. Other Business

- 7.1. Renewal of Membership (verbal - AFMA)
- 7.2. Traditional Inhabitant Representatives (verbal - TSRA)
- 7.3. Date of next meeting



Meeting start: 09:05

ATTENDANCE

The following members and observers were in attendance at Torres Strait Hand Collectables Working Group number 5:

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr Alifereti Tawake	Temporary Chairperson	Researcher
Mr Adam Leatherbarrow	Executive Officer (AFMA)	AFMA Senior Fisheries Management Officer
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA	AFMA Fisheries Manager
Mr Dimas Toby	IFAC	IFAC member
Mr Kiwat Lui	IFAC	IFAC member
Mr Shane Fava*	TSRA	
Mr Grant Leeworthy	Tasmania Seafoods (PHONE LINK UP)	Buyers boat licence holder
Mr Nyall Ledger	TVH Fisher	TVH Fisher, buyers boat licence holder
Mr Tim Skewes	CSIRO	Researcher
Mr Lyndon Peddell*	QDEEDI	Domestic Compliance officer
Mr Ian Jacobsen	QDEEDI (PHONE LINK UP)	

Observers

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr John Marrington*	AFMA Foreign Compliance	Foreign Compliance officer
Ms Alicia Sabatino*	AFMA	Observer

Apologies

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr Steve Hall	TSRA	
Mr Neville Nakata	TSRA	
Mr Kenny Bedford	Interim Chair	

*Day 1 Only



DECISION RECORD – HCWG NO. 5

The Hand Collectable Working Group agreed:

1.2.1 That the minutes from HCWG meetings No. 4 were an accurate record of the meeting and were ratified.

3.1.1 To accept the findings presented in Murphy *et al.* (2011) regarding the 2010 Warrior Reef Sandfish Surveys.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TSFMAC

The Hand Collectable Working Group agreed to recommend to the TSFMAC:

4.3.1 Introduction of a 15 tonne Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for black teatfish available for a maximum of one month during the Tropical Rock Lobster hookah season provisional on a quota monitoring system (including mandatory reporting of catch) being agreed to by the PZJA agencies.

4.3.2 To removed blackfish and deepwater redfish from the current 80 tonne 'other species' TAC and introduce individual 5 and 25 tonne TACs respectively for these species.

7.1.1 That the expired memberships for members of the HCWG be renewed for a further three year term.



ACTION ITEMS

#	Action Item	Agenda	Champion	Due Date
1)	AFMA and TSRA to hold a workshop, including all relevant IFAC groups in the Torres Strait to plan for development of Harvest Strategies for trochus and Sea Cucumber for the remaining relevant Torres Strait communities.	HCWG 4	AFMA TSRA members	TBD
2)	AFMA to write a letter to Kailag Enterprise expressing support for the project and the community economic development that the project could bring.	HCWG 4	AFMA/ PZJA	Pending update from Kailag
3)	IFAC members to consult with relevant communities on opportunities in harvesting coral and live rock in Torres Strait and seek level of support to remove the current prohibition.	2.4	TSRA/ IFAC	HCWG 6
4)	TSRA to include information regarding the Status Reports and Wildlife Trade Operation process for Torres Strait fisheries in TSRA newsletters including progress against SEWPAC recommendations.	2.5	TSRA	HCWG 6
5)	TSRA, AFMA and IFAC members along to work with CSIRO to engage with Traditional Inhabitant fishers to identify appropriate research participants for the experimental fishing survey.	3.3	TSRA/ IFAC & CSIRO with AFMA assistance	February 2012
6)	AFMA to work with CSIRO to finalise a Torres Strait Sea Cucumber Species Guide in a user-friendly format. AFMA will investigate options to print a limited number of the guides for fishers (pending available funds).	3.4	AFMA/CSIRO	June 2012
7)	Tim Skewes to provide TSRA copies of the Decision Support Tool distribute to IFAC members.	3.5	Tim Skewes TSRA/ IFAC	HCWG 6
8)	IFAC to consult with communities regarding removing the 7m boat restriction for the Beche de mer TIB sector.	4.2	IFAC/TSRA	HCWG 6
9)	TSRA and IFAC to consult with communities about conditions for increasing the black teatfish TAC, particularly reporting of catch of Beche de mer as part of a quota monitoring system.	4.3	IFAC/TSRA	HCWG 6
10)	AFMA to prepare a paper for HCWG 6 on the introduction of a 5 tonne trigger for the 'other' Beche de mer species in the 80 tonne TAC basket.	4.3	AFMA	HCWG 6
11)	AFMA to propose to TSSAC the timeframe set for research area 1a) (Complete stock assessment and estimate TAC for target species) in the 2011 Annual Operation Plan should be brought forward to 2013.	6.1	AFMA	June 2012
12)	CSIRO to present the Torres Strait Beche de mer Management Strategy Evaluation at the next HCWG meeting.	6.1	CSIRO	HCWG 6



Agenda Item 1: Preliminaries

1.2 Ratification of HCWG No. 4 meeting records (AFMA)

1.2.1 The Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG) **AGREED** that the minutes from HCWG meetings No. 4 were an accurate record of the meeting and were ratified.

1.3 Actions Items from HCWG No. 4

The HCWG noted the progress towards completing the action items arising from HCWG No. 4. Most were completed with the exception of the workshop to plan for the development of community based harvest strategies and the letter to be addressed to Kailag Enterprises in support of their sponge farm venture. AFMA explained that resource constraints had hampered progress on development of the harvest strategies and that discussions at this HCWG meeting may provide further guidance to AFMA on progressing this action item.

Agenda Item 2: 2011 Fishery update

2.1 Beche-de-mer

The HCWG noted that 2011 has seen a growing interest in the collection of a number of Beche de mer species, in particular white teatfish. It is likely the renewed interest is influenced by the issuing of two developmental permits, one to a non-traditional inhabitant licence holder and the other to a TIB (Traditional Inhabitant Boat) licence holder. These permits allowed for restricted use of hookah gear to collect Beche de mer. As of mid-November the white teatfish Total Allowable Catch (TAC) (15 tonnes) was close to being fully utilised. Prickly redfish have also been taken with over 50% of the 20 tonne TAC has been utilised. Other species of interest to collectors for the 2011 season include blackfish, curryfish and golden sandfish.

2.2 Trochus

The HCWG noted that there were no reports of trochus harvested up to mid-November 2011, thus it would appear that 2011 will continue the trend of low effort in the fishery. Effort in the Trochus fishery in 2010 was also low with less fishers reporting catch of trochus than in previous years. The HCWG attributed the current low price of mother of pearl to the low effort in the fishery, but hoped that if the price returned so would a viable fishery.

2.3 Pearl shell

The HCWG noted that there were insignificant amounts of pearl shell harvest reported in 2011, thus it would appear that 2011 will continue the trend of low effort in the fishery.

2.4 Fisheries Management Instruments (FMI)

The HCWG noted two FMI's (formerly termed Fisheries Management Notices) relevant to Hand Collectable Fisheries have recently been implemented. These include Torres Strait FMI No.6; prohibiting the taking of coral and live rock and Torres Strait FMI No.7; replacing Fisheries Management Notice No. 69 to include the genus *Pteria* for the Pearl Shell Fishery.

A business proposal provided to TSRA for consideration involving the take of live coral was also presented to the HCWG. The Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) members present were strongly against endorsing any new proposal that conflicts with decisions made from previous HCWG meetings. The HCWG felt that consultation with the relevant



communities that would be affected by the business proposal was required before reconsideration of the prohibition on the take of coral.

Action item 3	IFAC members to consult with relevant communities on opportunities in harvesting coral and live rock in Torres Strait and seek level of support to remove the current prohibition.
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2.5 Strategic Assessment Update

The HCWG noted that a Strategic Assessment had been completed by AFMA and provided to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPAC) for the Torres Strait Beche de mer Fishery and the subsequent Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) endorsement that had been provided to the fishery. The WTO endorsement is valid until June 2014. The HCWG noted the recommendations that had been made by SEWPAC for the fishery to ensure continued WTO endorsement.

The HCWG also noted that a Final Status Report for the Torres Strait Trochus Fishery was currently out for public comment. WTO endorsement for the fishery lapsed on 25 November 2011 and an extension to 31 May 2012 had been provided by SEWPAC. IFAC member Mr. Dimas Toby requested that information regarding the Annual Status Reports and WTO process for Torres Strait fisheries to be communicated to IFAC members and communities. The HCWG noted that the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) newsletters would be a suitable forum to distribute this information to the communities.

Action item 4	TSRA to include information regarding the Status Reports and WTO process for Torres Strait fisheries in TSRA newsletters including progress against SEWPAC recommendations.
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Agenda Item 3: Research

3.1 2010 Sandfish Surveys

The HCWG noted the 2010 sandfish surveys conducted on Warrior Reef by CSIRO. The abundance survey of sandfish on Warrior Reef found densities of sandfish were at similar levels to 2004 surveys and ~ 80% less than observed in 1995/96; at which time the population was considered to be overexploited. However, there were some signs of population recovery with numbers of juveniles showing a large increase in abundance compared to 2004 and larger range of size distribution of individuals than previous surveys. CSIRO member Tim Skewes explained that the sandfish population on the PNG side of Warrior Reef was potentially important to the health of the populations on the Australian side as they are the same stock as those found on the PNG side. It is thought that this may be important particularly if the PNG are of the fishery accommodates a large population of juvenile sandfish due to large areas of preferable habitat for juveniles.

A sandfish experimental survey will be carried out in early 2012 to further investigate possible survey bias due to burrowing by sandfish. The HCWG were in full support of the sandfish experimental fishing survey (see agenda item below).



3.1.1 The HCWG **AGREED** to accept the findings presented in Murphy *et al.* (2011) regarding the 2010 Warrior Reef Sandfish Surveys.

3.2 Reef Gardens Assessment Update

The HCWG noted progress of a reef gardens assessment research project being conducted by CSIRO. This project will collate information to assist Traditional Owners in identifying suitable locations, and stocking rates for valuable hand collectable species including sandfish, black teatfish and trochus in reef gardens throughout the Torres Strait. Reef gardens are identified as important components in the two community based harvest strategies developed by Warraber and Erub communities. In addition, the IFAC members present at the HCWG meeting were pleased to see this work being carried out and eager to be informed of the results.

3.3 Sandfish Experimental Catch Survey Update

Experimental catch surveys for sandfish at Warrior Reef are planned for February 2012 by CSIRO. This experiment will include a small number of Islander fishers collecting sandfish using normal commercial fishing conditions over a limited period to determine current catch rates. The catch rates will be compared with those from the mid-1990s when the fishery was at its peak and fish stocks were considered to be at unfished levels. The catch will be restricted to 2 tonnes or less to minimise risk to the recovery of sandfish on Warrior Reef. This will be a new cooperative approach to research on Torres Strait Fisheries, and the outcomes will important in future management decisions for the sandfish fishery.

CSIRO indicated that they require the assistance of the IFAC members, AFMA, TSRA and Traditional Inhabitant fishers to identify community fishers to participate in the experiment.

Action item 5	TSRA, AFMA and IFAC members along to work with CSIRO to engage with Traditional Inhabitant fishers to identify appropriate research participants for the experimental fishing survey.
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3.4 Sea Cucumber Species Guide

Tim Skewes and associates from CSIRO have developed a Sea Cucumber Species Guide providing photo identification of Beche de mer species, identifying characteristics, species distribution and environmental and habitat preferences particular to the Torres Strait region. AFMA agreed to work with CSIRO to progress the species guide into a user-friendly format with limited hard-copies available to fishers and wider distribution available in electronic form via the PZJA website.

Action item 6	AFMA to work with CSIRO to finalise a Torres Strait Sea Cucumber Species Guide in a user-friendly format. AFMA will investigate options to print a limited number of the guides for fishers (pending available funds).
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3.5 Hand Collectable Decision Support Tool

CSIRO have implemented a number of changes to the Decision Support Tool developed by them in 2010 (HCWG 4.2.2). The tool was developed to assist managers and communities in identifying effective management strategies by mapping out abundance and standing stock estimates of each species of Beche de mer and Trochus on individual reefs throughout Torres Strait. The updated Decision Support Tool was presented to the HCWG and is now available on CD. The IFAC members requested copies of the Decision Support Tool for their use. Tim



Skewes informed the HCWG that he would make available copies of the Decision Support Tool through AFMA.

Action item 7	Tim Skewes to provide TSRA copies of the Decision Support Tool distribute to IFAC members.
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3.6 Hookah Depth Loggers

AFMA presented fine scale effort information that had been captured as part of the two developmental permits issued for the use of hookah gear in the Beche de mer Fishery. The dive information collected includes average depth per collection species along with catch rate information such as the numbers of individuals collected per minute. AFMA pointed out that this type of fishery dependant data is very useful for species such as white teatfish, which are generally found in higher densities outside the depths covered through CSIRO surveys. The HCWG noted that repetitive sampling of this kind of information has great potential to be used as a basic index of abundance for target species.

Agenda Item 4: Future Management Options

4.1 Final Harvest Strategies Warraber & Erub

The HCWG noted the Community-based Hand Collectable Fisheries Harvest Strategies have been finalized with the communities from Erub and Warraber as part of a project by CSIRO/JCU researcher Alifereti Tawake. The strategies detail desired co-management arrangements, harvesting practices and protocols identified by communities. Further development of these harvest strategies including implementation of the finalized strategies and development of harvest strategies for other Torres Strait communities will be investigated at future HCWG meetings.

The HCWG acknowledged the work of Alifereti Tawake and were appreciative of the effort that Mr Tawake had put in throughout his studies. There was much discussion at the meeting around the potential for legislating the Harvest Strategies or parts thereof, and how they could be enforced once implemented. CSIRO member, Tim Skewes, expressed the need to explore avenues to implement these community based harvest strategies to promote the sustainable management of the Traditional Inhabitant commercial fishing sector. Mr Tawake at this point and also expressed the need for all involved to promote the active involvement of youth throughout the communities within fisheries management.

4.2 BDM Boat Length Restrictions

The HCWG discussed the relevance and applicability of the current 7m boat length restriction for TIB fishers currently in place for the Beche de mer Fishery. There was much discussion regarding the reason for the original introduction of the restriction, the motivations of TIB fishers to lift the restriction and the potential impact on sustainability as well as the objectives for development of the fishery. Ian Jacobsen from Fisheries Queensland expressed concern around the overexpansion of the fishery in the current atmosphere of fishery development. The HCWG agreed that a decision could not be made on removing this restriction until TSRA and the IFAC had consulted with affected communities. The HCWG agreed to review the restriction on use of vessels 7m or larger by Traditional Inhabitant fishers in the Beche de mer Fishery in twelve months time following consultation with communities by IFAC members assisted by TSRA,.

Action item 8	IFAC to consult with communities regarding removing the 7m boat restriction
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for the Beche de mer TIB sector.

4.3 Beche de mer Future Management Options

The HCWG discussed possible future development and management options for the Torres Strait Beche de mer Fishery based on the recommendations of Skewes *et al.* (2010) from the 2010 Torres Strait Hand Collectables survey. The HCWG considered options for introducing a TAC for black teatfish based on the recommendation for a 25 tonne TAC for this species in Skewes *et al.* (2010). As it is likely that implementing a TAC for black teatfish will result in increased effort in the fishery, the group felt that appropriate conditions on fishing activities were required to ensure that any development was sustainable in the long term. The HCWG agreed that daily reporting of fishing activity and catch was essential for monitoring quotas and should be mandatory for increasing TACs for high value species such as black teatfish. The HCWG further acknowledged that such conditions would be required to meet the recommendations set by SEWPAC to continue their WTO endorsement for the fishery. If these conditions could be put in place, the HCWG were keen to see the TAC for black teatfish increased in 2012 to encourage development of the fishery. However, as a precautionary measure while an effective quota monitoring system was developed, the HCWG agreed that the TAC should not be immediately increased to the full recommended level of 25 tonne. Similarly, the HCWG felt that a short fishing season for black teatfish conducted during the lobster hookah season (February to September) would be a further measure to ensure catch is in sustainable limits.

4.3.1 The HCWG **AGREED** to recommend to the TSFMAC introduction of a 15 tonne Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for black teatfish available for a maximum of one month during the Tropical Rock Lobster hookah season provisional on a quota monitoring system (including mandatory reporting of catch) being agreed to by the PZJA agencies.

Options for quota monitoring, particularly catch reporting members will be presented by the IFAC members to the next HCWG meeting following consultation with communities with assistance from TSRA.

Action item 9	TSRA and IFAC to consult with communities about conditions for increasing the black teatfish TAC, particularly reporting of catch of Beche de mer as part of a quota monitoring system.
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The HCWG also discussed removing blackfish and prickly redfish from the 'other species' TAC basket and assigning them individual TACs as recommended in Skewes *et al.* (2010). The reasons for the discussions were based on the findings from the latest survey combined with the knowledge both had been key commercial species throughout the Torres Strait previously.

4.3.2 The HCWG **AGREED** to recommend to the TSFMAC to removed blackfish and deepwater redfish from the current 80 tonne 'other species' TAC and introduce individual 5 and 25 tonne TACs respectively for these species.

There was discussion about the inclusion of a 5t trigger limit for those species managed under the 80 tonne 'other species' basket (as recommended in Skewes *et al.* 2010). The group heard that the potential for 80 tonnes of one of those species in the 'other species' to be taken in a single year could be detrimental to that particular stock. CSIRO explained that there was a precedent for trigger limits through commonwealth managed fisheries. AFMA and Fisheries Queensland stated that they would support a 5 tonne trigger being implemented if appropriate actions that would be triggered if the 5 tonne limit for a species was reached were identified. The



HCWG felt that a discussion at the next HCWG meeting to on option for what actions would follow a trigger, particularly the impact on fishers and managers was required prior to the group making a recommendation on setting a 5t limit for the 80t TAC on 'other' Beche de mer species.

Action item 10	AFMA to prepare a paper for HCWG 6 on the introduction of a 5 tonne trigger for the 'other' Beche de mer species in the 80 tonne TAC basket.
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Agenda Item 5: Compliance

5.1 Foreign Compliance Update

The HCWG noted the update on foreign compliance activities in respect to the hand collectable fisheries in the Torres Strait region. Ongoing monitoring of the Warrior Reef area by Australian authorities has not revealed any evidence of harvesting by PNG fishers on either side of the fisheries jurisdiction line. However AFMA advised they have expressed their concern that incursions into Australian waters will occur again if PNG National Fisheries Authority (NFA) does not have an effective monitoring and compliance program. AFMA advised the HCWG that they were not aware of any foreign compliance issues in respect to the Trochus, Pearl Shell or Sponge Fisheries in recent times.

The HCWG discussed the possibility of a potential reopening of the Beche de mer fishery on the PNG side and its effects on the populations of Beche de mer on the Australian side. The HCWG expressed support to PNG NFA to keep the closure in place until stocks had recovered and appropriate management and enforcement was in place.

5.2 Domestic Compliance Update

Lynden Peddell from Queensland Fisheries & Boating Patrol informed the HCWG of the current domestic compliance activities for hand collectable fisheries in the Torres Strait. The HCWG noted that there have been no known domestic compliance issues relevant to hand collectable fisheries since the last HCWG meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Reports

6.1 TSSAC Update

HCWG noted the TSSAC research priorities for the 2011 Annual Operational Plan relevant to hand collectables as outlined below.

RESEARCH AREA	RESEARCH NEED
1) Stock abundance/assessment for TAC setting	a) Complete stock assessment and estimate TAC for target species. b) Improved monitoring of catch and effort in all sectors of the fishery.
2) Efficacy of management arrangements	a) Provide information for community based harvest strategies and/or management plans. b) Address uncertainties regarding trochus and Bêche de Mer stock status and/or recovery. c) Impact of overfishing on PNG Warrior Reef.
3) Knowledge of biology, ecology and distribution of target species	a) Assessment of trochus habitat using Indigenous knowledge or remote sensing to inform stock



4) Effective recovery strategies	assessment. a) Modeling recovery strategies using tools such as Management Strategy Evaluation.
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The HCWG were pleased that the research priorities from the 2011 Annual Operational Plan were in line with those recommendations agreed upon through the SEWPAC strategic assessment process. CSIRO member Tim Skewes suggested that the time frame for research area 1a) was set unreasonably long (2015) and went on to recommend to the TSSAC this be changed to 2013 given the current development activities of the fishery. The HCWG agreed with the comments made by Mr Skewes.

Action item 11	AFMA to propose to TSSAC the timeframe set for research area 1a) (Complete stock assessment and estimate TAC for target species) in the 2011 Annual Operation Plan should be brought forward to 2013.
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The HCWG also noted that CSIRO will be in a position to present findings from their Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for Beche de mer at the next HCWG meeting. Mr Alifereti Tawake mentioned that he would like to look into the possibility of extending such MSE work to test Community based harvest strategies.

Action item 12	CSIRO to present the Torres Strait Beche de mer Management Strategy Evaluation at the next HCWG meeting.
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Agenda Item 7: Other Business

7.1 Renewal of Membership

The HCWG noted that all memberships on the HCWG had ceased on 27 August 2011. The HCWG also noted that discussions around a replacement chair needed to be had.

7.1.1 The HCWG **AGREED** to recommend to the TSFMAC that the expired memberships for members of the HCWG be renewed for a further three year term.

7.2 Traditional Inhabitant Representatives

The IFAC members present stated that they would feel more comfortable having an additional IFAC member present at the meeting. However the HCWG noted that the IFAC structure was relatively new and that the full compliment of IFAC members had not yet been employed. The current membership structure of the HCWG would accommodate an additional HCWG member.

7.3 Date of Next Meeting

The HCWG agreed that the date of the next HCWG meeting would be in the first half of 2012. Meeting finished 12.35pm

