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Torres Strait  
**PZJA**  
Protected Zone  
Joint Authority

## Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

Meeting #45

June 17-18 2008

# 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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## Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

The 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was held at the Pearls Building, AFMA, Thursday Island on the 17– 18 June 2008. This is the first meeting of the TSSAC for two years.

In attendance were:

Name	Role
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chairperson
Dr Annabel Jones	Executive Officer (AFMA)
Dr Yimin Ye	Research Member (CSIRO)
Dr Roland Pitcher	Research Member (CSIRO)
Dr Stephen Newman	Research Member (WA Fisheries)
Ms Sevaly Sen	Social/Economics Research Member
Dr David Wilson	AFMA Representative
Mr Charles David	Traditional Inhabitant Representative
Mr Shane Fava	QDPI&F Representative
Mr Tony Vass	Industry Representative
Mr Toshi Nakata	Observer - TSRA
Mr Neil Bensley	Observer - BRS

### Major outcomes

The Committee agreed to:

- review its terms of reference and make suggestions to the PZJA on amendments that will more adequately reflect the strategic role of the Committee;
- develop a draft strategic research plan by October 2008;
- give in principle support to a CSIRO research proposal '**Sustainable harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectable Fisheries**', subject to the Principal Investigator adequately addressing the amendments recommended by the TSSAC; and
- strongly support and actively facilitate community based approaches to research and management in Torres Strait hand collectables and traditional fisheries.

An additional key outcome was that following a number of presentations on individual fisheries by AFMA officers and the discussions following, TSSAC members now have a common understanding of the research issues for Torres Strait fisheries

### Meeting procedures

To ensure new members were provided with adequate background, an emphasis was placed at this meeting on discussion of policy and procedures relevant to the TSSAC.

The Committee discussed the current membership and in particular the role of observers (permanent and casual) at TSSAC meetings. It was agreed that casual observers and in particular Torres Strait Islanders, are to be welcomed at meetings where possible and appropriate, as they have considerable potential to add to discussions. Permanent observers will also be considered, balancing the need for additional input with the requirement to keep the Committee at a manageable size.

The Committee agreed to appoint two permanent observers: i) a TSRA nominee to support the Islander Member and ii) a Bureau of Rural Sciences (a division of DAFF) nominee in recognition of their interest in the status and information needs of Torres Strait fisheries.

All observers (casual and permanent) must follow the procedures detailed in PZJA Fisheries Management Paper (FMP) No. 1 (May 2008).

The Committee discussed the role and responsibilities of the Committee as a whole, and individual members, as set out in PZJA FMP No. 1 (May 2008). Managing conflict of interest was discussed in some depth and it was agreed that this issue required careful attention during all work of the Committee.

The Committee did a preliminary review of the current terms of reference (TOR) for the TSSAC and agreed that they required amendment. In particular, it was felt that they could better reflect the broader strategic role they felt the Committee should be taking including the role to make recommendations on funding sources and linkages with other research organisations. The Committee agreed to suggest amendments/inclusions to the TOR at the next TSSAC meeting for endorsement by the PZJA.

### **Meeting schedules and research calendar**

The Committee discussed and agreed upon the need for three TSSAC meetings per year for the next year or two to get some momentum in fisheries research in Torres Strait. A tentative 12 month timetable for TSSAC meetings was designed to fit in with other PZJA meetings, AFMA and other funding organisations. The following tentative schedule and objectives for each meeting were agreed upon:

July Meeting:	Develop Annual research needs and call for pre-proposals
Oct/Nov meeting:	Evaluate pre-proposals and call for full proposals
March Meeting:	Evaluate full proposals and recommend research projects for funding to AFMA and/or other funding bodies eg FRDC, MTSRF, ARC

### **Project evaluation**

The Committee discussed and agreed that a transparent, equitable and open process for evaluation of research proposals submitted to the TSSAC was essential. The Committee agreed to consider past TSSAC processes and those of other agencies at a future meeting to ensure the most effective process was developed for the TSSAC, including agreed procedures for addressing Conflict of Interest (COI) of Committee members (perceived or direct). In the short term, in order to evaluate two research proposals submitted to the TSSAC at this meeting, an interim set of evaluation criteria were discussed and adopted for this meeting only.

### **Research plan**

The previous TSSAC had developed a Torres Strait Strategic Research Plan for 2005-2010 (TSSRP 05-10). The TSSAC felt that the TSSRP 05-10 was too broad to be effective in guiding the TSSAC and needed updating. The revised plan should be developed in two parts: Part one would include themes, overall research strategies and potential funding sources for the next five years; Part 2 would be more operational in nature, and be revised on an annual basis to reflect changing priorities and activities. The Committee agreed it would be most efficient to engage a suitably qualified and experienced, independent consultant to review a

number of existing documents including the TSSRP 05-10 and develop Part one of the new TSSRP. TSSAC members agreed to rank a list of research priorities developed as part of TSSRP at a future TSSAC meeting.

### **Research proposals**

Two research proposals on developing community based harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectible fishery (including beche-de-mer) were considered. These proposals had been submitted on invitation from AFMA based on tactical research requirements. It was recognised that the process for calling for these proposals was not ideal but acceptable given the absence of agreed TSSAC guidelines for appropriate submission of proposals to the Committee.

The two CSIRO researcher members on the TSSAC were not present for discussion of the two projects.

The two research proposals were evaluated on the basis of feasibility and attractiveness using criteria discussed and agreed upon earlier in the meeting. The Committee agreed in principle to recommend one proposal from CSIRO for funding by AFMA subject to the Principal Investigator making a number of amendments suggested by the Committee to the approval of the TSSAC secretariat and AFMA.

### **Involvement of Torres Strait Islanders in research**

The importance of gaining support for the outcomes of research by engaging Torres Strait Islanders in research was emphasised, as was the importance of reconciling 'western science' with traditional knowledge. A range of strategies to involve Islanders before, during and after research projects were discussed.

The Committee agreed to review and consider appropriate cultural protocols for researchers working in Torres Strait and how these could be incorporated into research recommended by the TSSAC. Such protocols/procedures would require to be incorporated in research proposals.

In summary, the TSSAC expressed strong support for community based approaches for research and management in Torres Strait hand collectables and traditional fisheries. Further, it was considered that without community support, research activities and their associated outcomes were likely to be ineffective.

### **Communications**

The Committee discussed communication of the TSSAC with the PZJA and its consultative bodies including the Fisheries MAC and Working Groups. It was generally accepted that the most efficient way to do this was through the Chairs Summary and recommendations.

### **Next Meeting**

The Committee AGREED to set TSSAC 46 for August 27 2008, QDPI&F Building, Anne St, Brisbane and TSSAC 47 for November 3-4 2008 in Cairns, Northern Fisheries Office QDPI&F (to be confirmed).