



## Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

Meeting #56

October 5-6 2011

# 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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The 56<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) was held at the Ecosciences Precinct in Brisbane on 5-6 October 2011.

### **Major outcomes**

The TSSAC:

- Assessed five pre-proposals for research in the Torres Strait for the 2012/13 financial year
- Agreed on a process to conduct a mid-term review of the 5 Year Strategic Research Plan
- Received presentations from a number of researchers currently conducting research in the Torres Strait

### **Current Project Updates**

#### **CSIRO – Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) Stock Assessment Surveys and Management Strategy Evaluation**

Mr Darren Dennis and Dr Trevor Hutton from CSIRO presented a progress report on work being undertaken for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster fishery including the stock assessment, Total Allowable Catch (TAC) setting and Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE).

*Stock Assessment surveys:*

- The mid-year surveys have been conducted annually since 1989; pre-season surveys were conducted from 2005-2009.
- CSIRO have undertaken a cost/benefit analysis to assess the cost-effectiveness of mid-season and pre-season surveys.
- Initial results indicate that the benefits of conducting surveys far exceed the cost of the surveys. While one survey (either pre-season or mid-season) on its own has benefit, having both surveys has greater value. There is no clear indication as to which survey would be of most value to the fishery if only one survey can be funded.

*Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE):*

- The MSE model will test the relative performance of a range of current and potential management arrangements to meet the objectives of the fishery and fishery stakeholders.
- The MSE will be used to test harvest control rules (used to set the TAC), management strategies such as moving to quota and scenarios, for example, the increased capacity of Traditional Inhabitant fishers to harvest Tropical Rock Lobster.
- A number of workshops have been held at different Torres Strait Island communities to gather social, economic and cultural information for input into the model and further workshops are planned for November 2011 and early 2012.

The Committee highlighted the need for the researchers to manage expectations of communities regarding the research and communicate that the MSE will be looking at many different management options, with no particular one being advocated.

*Future research for Lobster Fishery:*

The CSIRO identified three areas of need for future investigation being:

- A review of Traditional Inhabitant catch data to remove errors and duplications that are likely to be evident;
- Investigation of the environmental drivers of recruitment in the Torres Strait and East Coast, within and cross jurisdictional movement of TRL; and
- Extension of the MSE to Papua New Guinea.

#### FRDC and Social Sciences research in Indigenous Communities

The Committee noted the presentation from Dr Kate Brooks, Program Manager of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) Social Science Research Coordination Program, on research in Indigenous communities. This program was set up in 2009 to help address knowledge gaps surrounding social aspects of the fishing and aquaculture industries.

The Committee discussed broadening the FRDC objectives to include commercial Indigenous objectives. The TSSAC undertook to continue communication with Dr Brooks and will provide her with TSSAC meeting minutes and the Annual Operational Plan and Strategic Research Plan to identify potential areas of collaboration on research.

#### Other projects

*Reef Gardens:* This project is currently behind schedule due to unavoidable difficulties for the Principal Investigator and they will be contacted to provide an update.

*Sandfish experimental catch surveys on Warrior Reef:* This project is currently on track, although planned field surveys scheduled for November 2011 have been delayed until February 2012 which may require a variation to milestone dates.

*Torres Strait Islander involvement in Research, Development and Education:* Progress is behind schedule and the Principal investigator will be contacted to provide an update.

*Characterising traditional fishing in PNG:* This project is currently on track.

#### **Assessment of pre-proposals for the 2012/13 financial year**

The TSSAC assessed five pre-proposals for Torres Strait research in the 2012/13 financial year. Three of the pre-proposals were considered of interest and the Principal Investigators will be requested to develop full proposals for consideration by the TSSAC.

#### **Strategic Research Plan mid-term review**

The Committee noted a previous agreement to undertake a mid-term review of the five year Strategic Research Plan, due in 2012. The Committee discussed an appropriate process to achieve this and agreed to make preliminary revisions to the document out-of-session for finalisation at TSSAC 57.

## **Other business**

### National Environment Research Program e-atlas project

The TSSAC discussed information about the National Environment Research Program (NERP) e-atlas and possible applications of the e-atlas as a central web-based repository for Torres Strait Research. The e-atlas is only a tool to provide on-line access to research data and publications and is not currently certain to be a long-term facility. The TSSAC will encourage researchers to submit their data to the e-atlas as well as having it in a Torres Strait repository (if available) providing it is appropriate to do so.

### Turtle and Dugong research

Damien Miley and Frank Loban from the TSRA on Thursday Island gave the Committee an overview of current work being undertaken on turtle and dugong in the Torres Strait, via video-link. Current research includes species habitats and the impact of climate change on the species and their habitats as well as work on the genetics of the Northern Great Barrier Reef stock.

The TSRA are planning to conduct a focussed workshop on turtle and dugong research in early 2012 to investigate current depth of knowledge and potential information gaps. The outcomes from this meeting will be conveyed to the Committee at TSSAC 57. It was also agreed that at TSSAC 57, several researchers undertaking work on turtle and dugong in the Torres Strait would present their research directly to the TSSAC. This would better inform the Committee in their consideration of an independent review of turtle and dugong research and data previously proposed by the TSSAC (TSSAC 54).

### Change in Traditional Inhabitant representative

The TSRA advised that Mr Gavin Mosby has been endorsed as one of the new Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) members and is the proposed Traditional Inhabitant representative on the TSSAC. The TSSAC agreed to recommend this membership to the PZJA.

### Climate Change

The TSSAC was made aware of a CSIRO project, funded through NERP, looking at the broader impacts of environmental change on habitats and livelihoods in Torres Strait. The project is not fisheries specific but the Committee undertook to investigate possible ways in which fisheries specific research on environmental change could be linked with this research.



**Mr Ian Cartwright**

**TSSAC Chair**

In attendance at TSSAC 56 were:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chairperson	Consultant, AFMA Commissioner
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Representative	Manager, Thursday Island
Ms Rebecca Williams	Executive Officer (AFMA)	Senior Management Officer, Canberra
Dr Michael O'Neill	Scientist	Agri Science QLD, DEEDI
Dr Roland Pitcher	Scientist	CSIRO researcher
Dr Stephen Newman	Scientist	WA fisheries scientist
Ms Sevaly Sen	Social/Economics Member	Consultant
Mr Ian Jacobsen	Fisheries Queensland Representative	Fisheries Queensland Fisheries Manager
Mr Shane Fava	TSRA representative	Project Manager, Fisheries
Mr Gavin Mosby <sup>1</sup>	Traditional Inhabitant representative	TIB fisher (Masig), Traditional Owner
Mr Tony Vass	Industry Representative	Ex Mackerel Licence Holder
Dr Kate Brooks <sup>2</sup>	Presenter - KAL Analysis	
Mr Darren Dennis <sup>1</sup>	Presenter - CSIRO	
Dr Trevor Hutton <sup>1</sup>	Presenter - CSIRO	
Mr Damian Miley <sup>3</sup>	Presenter – TSRA	TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit
Mr Frank Loban <sup>3</sup>	Presenter – TSRA	TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit

### **Apologies**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>
Mr Ludwig Kumoru	PNG Representative	PNG National Fisheries Authority

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<sup>1</sup> Present on 6 October only

<sup>2</sup> Present on 5 October only

<sup>3</sup> Present from 1:30-2:30pm on 6 October only