

Torres Strait Hand Collectables Working Group No.9

Meeting Record

20-21 June 2016

Note all meeting papers and record are available
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Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

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Meeting Participants

Members

Date	Name	Position	Declaration of interest
20-21 June 2016	Anne Clarke	Chairperson	Nil
20-21 June 2016	Steve Hall	FWG Executive Officer	Nil
20-21 June 2016	Selina Stoute	AFMA Member	Nil
20-21 June 2016	Tom Roberts	QDAF Member	Nil
20-21 June 2016	Mariana Nahas	TSRA Member	Nil
20-21 June 2016	Tim Skewes	Research Member	CSIRO/Independent Consultant. Previous principal scientist for TSSAC project to develop a harvest strategy for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery. Previous CSIRO researcher for TSSAC project investigating traditional take of finfish in Torres Strait.
20-21 June 2016	Maluwap Nona	Industry Member	TIB licence holder. Chairperson Malu Lamar.
20-21 June 2016	Patrick Mills	Industry Member	TIB licence holder. Chairperson, Torres Strait Fisheries Association.
20-21 June 2016	Simon Naawi	Industry Member	TIB licence holder
20-21 June 2016	Michael Passi	Industry Member	TIB licence holder
20-21 June 2016	Kenny Bedford	*TSRA Board - Fisheries Portfolio	TIB licence holder. President - Erub Fisheries Management Association.

* Permanent observer

Observers

Date	Name	Position	Declaration of interest
20-21 June 2016	John Ramsay	TSRA Program Manager, Fisheries	Nil
20-21 June 2016	Jim Prescott	AFMA	Nil
20-21 June 2016	Rocky Stephen	Fisher, Director of Kos & Abob	TIB licence holder.
20-21 June 2016	Cedric Pearson	Fisher, Director of Torres Blue	TIB licence holder.
20-21 June 2016	Kila Odo	Fisher, member, Mer, Dowar and Waier Fisheries Corporation	TIB licence holder.
20 June 2016	Phillip Ketchell	Fisher, member, TSFA.	TIB licence holder.
21 June 2016	John Mathews	Project Officer, TSRA	Nil
21 June 2016	Charles David	Project Officer, TSRA	Nil
21 June 2016	Sereako Stephen	Fisher, Member of Kos & Abob	TIB licence holder. Director Malu Lamar.

Apologies

Name	Position
Ian Liviko	National Fisheries Authority (PNG)

Action Items

Number	Action
1.	AFMA to review the size limits set for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery taking into consideration the size limits in place in Queensland and the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery.
2.	AFMA to provide conversion ratios used for estimating the weight of processed Beche-de-mer product.
3.	AMFA to convene a workshop including HCWG members and up to two fisheries representatives from Erub, Masig, Ugar, Mer lama, Prouma and Warraber to discuss immediate options to improve catch reporting. TSRA to support this approach through a cost sharing arrangement.
4.	AFMA to investigate the feasibility of seized catches to be used in research or re-stocking.

Recommendations

Number	Recommendation
1.	<p>Noting the 2015 TAC overcatch of black teatfish and risk of a future overcatch, HCWG recommended:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. that the fishery not be opened until measures are in place to improve reporting; 2. AFMA, with support from TSRA, convene a workshop including HCWG industry members and up to two fisheries representatives from Erub, Masig, Ugar, Mer lama, Poruma and Warraber to consider immediate options to improve catch reporting; 3. the workshop to consider the preliminary short and medium/long term management options to improve catch reporting as detailed in Table 1; and 4. the workshop outcomes to be considered by the HCWG.
2.	<p>Noting that further information and work will be required to inform possible management options and taking on board advice from the Research member that there is no apparent immediate stock risk (based on reported catches) the HCWG recommended that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. management options be considered as part of the harvest strategy project.; and 2. further work be undertaken to develop and/or refine weight conversion ratios for processed Beche-de-mer.

Agenda Item 1 - Preliminaries

1.1. Opening Prayer / Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners / Welcome / Apologies

Mr Simon Naawi opened the meeting in prayer.

Apologies were received from Ian Liviko (NFA, PNG).

1.2. Adoption of Agenda

The Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG) adopted the agenda noting an update would be provided on the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery following Agenda Item 4.

1.3. PZJA requirements of WG members

The Chair noted that all meeting participants are required to participate in accordance with PZJA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1; the chair noted the roles and functions of the HCWG and the responsibilities of members and observers in the HCWG when providing recommendations and advice.

1.4. Declaration of Interests

The HCWG noted that there could be potential conflicts of interest for members and observers when providing information and advice on some agenda items. The Chair explained that members may be asked to leave the room for certain agenda items if specific conflicts were identified.

1.5. Actions Items

The HCWG noted the status of the previous action items.

The HCWG noted that Malu Lamar and TSRA may work out-of-session to consider how the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* might be amended to reflect native title sea rights.

Agenda Item 2 – Fishery Updates

2.1. AFMA Management

The HCWG noted the following updates as detailed in the Agenda paper:

- historical catch reported for trochus, pearl shell and Beche-de-mer;
- consistent with the recommendations from the HCWG meeting on 30 April 2015, the PZJA granted development permits to take under sized pearl shell; and
- the administrative process underway to remake the Trochus legislative instrument.

2.1.a. Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery

The HCWG noted an overview and update on the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery management arrangements for Beche-de-mer as detailed in the agenda paper. Similar to arrangements in the Queensland East Coast Fishery, the fishery is managed by limited

entry, a rotational harvest strategy, TACs, mandatory reporting and Vessel Monitoring System (VMS).

2.2. Native Title

The HCWG noted the outcomes of an industry meeting held at Masig on 18 June 2016 (**Attachment 1**) and an update on Native Title activities from the Malu Lamar Chairperson, including:

- Malu Lamar's preference to have membership on the PZJA and all Working Groups
- that Malu Lamar will be seeking legal advice on:
 - a) Traditional Owner (TO) property rights for the 130 tonnes of allowable catch of Beche-de-mer species;
 - b) the Beche-de-mer licence bought by the Government and how its monetary value was determined;
- TOs remain committed to working with PZJA agencies and community fisheries associations in pursuing their rights and interest.

2.3. PNG – National Fisheries Authority

The HCWG noted an update on the PNG Beche-de-mer Fishery (note, in the absence of a PNG-National Fisheries Authority representative the update was provided by the AFMA member based on outcomes of the Fisheries Bilateral Meeting held in October 2015), including:

- the PNG moratorium for Beche-de-mer fishing is ongoing; and
- four years of Beche-de-mer surveys have recently been completed.

2.4. Strategic overview and update (including economic and market trends)

Prior to commencing the agenda item, a vote was taken by industry members to not allow Beche-de-mer the invited processors/buyers to participate in the meeting. On the basis of this vote the HCWG recommended that the processors/buyers who were initially invited to attend the meeting as observers would not be permitted to attend. AFMA subsequently relayed the recommendation to the processors/buyers who had accepted the initial invitation and were waiting to join the meeting.

The HCWG noted the strategic overview and update from industry members and observers with the key focus being the Beche-de-mer fishery, including:

- there has been a steady increase in interest by fishers to target other Beche-de-mer species since the second trial opening of black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) in November 2015;
- beche-de-mer is now a popular talking point within and amongst Torres Strait communities;
- trials to improve the processing of curry fish (*Stichopus herrmanni*) continue following recent success on the QLD east coast fishery. There has been some mortality of curry fish during the trials that were not reported by fishers therefore not recorded in docket books completed by fish receivers;

- there are concerns amongst industry that there are large numbers of prickly redfish and curry fish being caught and not recorded;
- industry are eager to utilise the full 130t TAC (combined across all species). There is a need to consider licencing arrangements necessary to support the demands of a professional industry. For example, there is increasing support amongst the industry fishers for an allocation model where the allowable catch of Beche-de-mer is allocated either between communities or the TIB sectors (i.e. full-time/part-time/weekend operators);
- some industry fishers believe fishers are not getting decent prices for their product; and
- at the moment the industry is made up of several independent operations all negotiating different prices amongst many buyers. A co-operative/centralised model for setting/negotiating prices may be beneficial in increasing the return for product.

The HCWG noted the following market/economic updates from the Research Member:

- when considering investment in the fishery industry should keep in mind the overall value of the fishery. Whilst some Beche-de-mer species are highly value it is unlikely the Torres Strait fishery (stocks) is large enough to sustain many full-time operations (businesses). Rather a more sound approach may be to consider Beche-de-mer just one part of diversified fishing business (i.e. inclusive of other interests – for example TRL & finfish). Based on a crude beach price average across species of \$5/kilo, the combined 130 tonne allowable catch of Beche-de-mer would be worth approximately \$650,000 which equates to 10 operators earning about \$65k per year. Diversification may minimise the risk of over investment/over capitalisation. Over capitalisation of a fishery (i.e. too many operators/fishing effort from over investment in boats) can increase the risk of overfishing and result in bad fishing practices by fishers (e.g. through increased incentive to underreport catches); and
- a new processing approach for some medium and low value species such as burrowing blackfish have been developed by Australian processors which may increase the value and demand on these species;
- China's aquaculture sector is now producing around 200,000 tonnes of Japanese sea cucumber a year in old prawn farm ponds. It is high intensity farming;
- Sandfish is the best tropical species for aquaculture grow-out however work has been ongoing for 15 years and the process is still not proven to be economically viable for commercial operations. Sandfish beach price is approximately \$10 per kilogram (however some industry members and observers reported prices of \$20+ per kg)]
- White teal fish seeding trials have commenced in Kirabati on a trial basis.

One industry member also sought support from AFMA and TSRA to fund a meeting of Beche-de-mer buyers and fishers. AFMA advised that it does not have a role in facilitating private sector arrangements however would be open to aligning travel arrangements for industry members to support their attendance at industry meetings held alongside Working Group meetings.

The HCWG noted that it would be beneficial to get an updated estimate of the market value all (high, medium and low value) Beche-de-mer species in the Torres Strait.

Agenda Item 3 – Sea cucumbers and traditional fishing in the Timor Sea

The HCWG noted the presentation by Mr Jim Prescott, AFMA Manager, on sea cucumbers and traditional fishing in the Timor Sea, including:

- Indonesian fishers have been allowed continued access to 'MoU box' area including Scott Reef through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indonesia Government the was negotiated in 1974;
- the fishery is largely unregulated (i.e. only requirement is that Indonesian fishers cannot use motorised vessels (sail only), or underwater breathing apparatus such as hookah (free diving only));
- the minimal regulation under the MoU allowed opportunity for hundreds of vessels and fishermen to remain engaged in the fishery and has resulted in the collapse of most species;
- in more recent years AFMA, in consultation with fishers and the Indonesian Government, has established a research and data collection program; and
- the response by industry has been positive with fishers demonstrating their commitment to better regulate the fishery and protect it into the future by voluntarily engaging in the research projects and recording logbooks of their catch including information on prices.

Agenda Item 4 – Queensland Bêche-de-mer Fishery – overview of management and stock status

The HCWG noted an update on the Queensland East Coast Beche-de-mer Fishery (ECF) including an overview, including:

- In 1991 a TAC of 500 tonnes (wet weight) was introduced in 1998 the TAC was reduced to 380 tonnes. In 1999 the Black teatfish was closed due to continuing decline in catch and catch rate.
- Industry has played a central role in gathering additional data and developing management arrangements needed for the continued harvest BDM in the GBR including:
 - an industry developed spatial management regime based on the rotational harvest of areas. This approach was accepted by QDAF and now forms a central part of the management framework for the fishery.
 - the selection of zones to be fished by each operator each year is agreed by industry in line with the management framework;

- within the legal basket TAC for 'other' species industry has voluntarily adopted species specific TACs;
- Licence holders have agreed through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to limit the number of divers per primary/tender operation to 4 (the legal limit is 10 divers).
- industry funded research:
 - Mid-2000's - industry entered into a MoU with QDAF to fund an independent survey of burrowing blackfish;
 - 2015 - industry funded a survey of black teatfish (remains closed);
- One third of the fishery overlaps with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park meaning the management framework must also satisfy the requirements of the GBRMPA objectives to harvest in the marine park;
- The overall management framework is based on both input and output controls and a minimum standard of reporting. Including:
 - Limited entry: 18 licences (owned by two operators, with 6 licences active);
 - Maximum 20m primary boat length, 4 tenders per primary vessel and 10 divers per primary/tender operation;
 - mandatory catch reporting and prior reporting system (prior reporting includes notification of where, when and how much is to be unloaded)
 - vessel monitoring system (VMS)
 - rotational fishing zones (156 zones fished over a 3-year rotational schedule)
 - minimum size limits for Beche-de-mer species (which for some species is smaller than the limits applied in Torres Strait)
- Management Strategy Evaluation of the rotational approach found that 3-years was the most effective period. The approach however must be supported by size limits and TACs. Spatial management is considered to allow some individual animals to reach larger size classes and therefore increasing spawning.

The HCWG noted that the Beche-de-mer size limits in the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery (CSF) also differed to those in the Torres Strait and agreed to the following

ACTION:

1. AFMA to review the size limits set for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery taking into consideration the size limits in place in Queensland and the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery.

Industry members reiterated their support for mandatory reporting in the Torres Strait BDM Fishery. Some industry members debated whether current reporting standards in the fishery related to whether or the fisher was fulltime, part-time or a 'weekend warrior'. Others considered that more community control of access to the fishery would encourage better reporting. It was noted by one industry member that the Akiba high court decision made it clear the native title sea rights were not exclusive and that any future access arrangements could not discriminate against existing licence holders.

Agenda Item 5 – Research and stock assessment

5.1. Overview of Bêche-de-mer research in the Torres Strait and estimates of stock status

The HCWG noted an update on research outcomes for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery and estimates of stock status from the Research member.

Black teatfish

The Torres Strait Black teatfish may arguably be the only proven sustainable black teatfish fishery in the world.

Sandfish

Current status in Torres Strait is unknown. Warrior Reef surveys were completed in 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2009 across 49 sites. An experimental fishing survey was conducted in 2012.

The HCWG noted advice from an observer that during a Turtle Survey undertaken two years ago sandfish were observed at Dungeness Reef (where they were absent in 2009). It was further noted that sandfish was an important resource for central island communities and there would be support for re-seeding trials in the region. The Research member noted that one of the recommendations of the experimental survey was to consider re-seeding Dungeness Reef with sandfish and monitor the population. The point was made that re-seeding should use broodstock sourced from Torres Strait to maintain genetic integrity of the Torres Strait populations.

There was a short discussion on genetics, including:

- there are a number of known separate genetic stock amongst sandfish populations of northern Australian (i.e. Morton Bay, Harvey Bay, two in the Northern Territory, as well as PNG); and
- that any re-seeding should use broodstock sourced from Torres Strait to maintain genetic integrity of the Torres Strait populations.

Prickly red

The HCWG noted the following industry advice in relation to for prickly redfish catches:

- concern that catches may be exceeding the TAC and resulting in depletion of stocks as prickly redfish are now the most targeted species (outside of the black teatfish opening) and fishing pressure is increasing;
- speculation that more than the reported 16 tonnes was caught in 2015; and
- observations that prickly redfish have been harder to find over the last few years. Fishers are travelling further out.

The Research member advised it is of concern from a stock status point-of view if the catches are exceeding the 20 tonne TAC.

Surf redfish

An industry member mentioned that they had observed many surf redfish in the eastern Torres Strait region. Another industry member suggested that reopening surf redfish would take pressure of other species.

The HCWG supported the advice of the Research member that survey data would be required to justify any level of fishing for the species and should be done as part of a formal recovery strategy.

Conversion ratio's for salted and dried

The HCWG noted a request from industry members for an update on current conversion ratios used for estimating the weight of processed (i.e. salted or dried) Beche-de-mer product and agreed to the following **ACTION**:

1. AFMA to provide conversion ratios used for estimating the weight of processed Beche-de-mer product.

Beche-de-mer spawning closure

Industry were interested in whether or not it would be beneficial (i.e. in protecting the stock and improving recruitment) in having closures over December/January during the summer spawning period for most Beche-de-mer species

The Research member indicated that a spawning closure for the purpose of protecting the stock and improving recruitment would not necessarily be effective. This is because it would depend on when the beche-de-mer were caught – noting that catching a sea cucumber before they spawn is still taking a potentially breeding individual out of the population. Also, it is important to consider if there was aggregating behaviour or some other behaviour during the spawning season that made the sea cucumbers more susceptible to fishing. Before putting another management strategy in place, it would be worth carrying out some analysis to guide actions – such as an egg per recruit analysis.

Pearl shell

Based on surveys for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery it is estimated that there are 1.2 – 2.5 million golden lip pearl shell in the Torres Strait.

5.2. Potential stock impacts from overfishing the Black teatfish TAC

The HCWG noted the following advice from the Research member:

- the sustainable harvest of black teatfish is still likely to be 25t despite the time elapsed since the last survey (2009). The risk of natural overall stock level decline since 2009 was low although densities may be variable at the reef level. The natural carrying capacity for black teatfish is estimated to be 12.5 per hectare;
- the sustainable harvest estimate (i.e. 25t) is based on a conservative yield target (6 percent yield of the bottom 90 percent confidence limit biomass estimate of 395 tonnes). A 6% yield target is also used to set the east coast burrowing blackfish TAC. East Coast black teatfish depletion was reported to be at less than 10% - which lead led to overfishing, so caution is required. Purcell *et al.* (2015) have recommended 3-4% for the Queensland east coast fishery but the scientific member considered that this was very conservative; and
- determining whether or not the fishery is or will be sustainable into the future is largely dependent on whether or not the estimates of catch are accurate and management responses to overruns of the Total Allowable Catch (TAC).

5.3. Future Research Priorities

The HCWG agreed that future research priorities would be guided by the Harvest Strategy to be developed over the coming 18 months.

Agenda Item 6 – Management

6.1. Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy

The HCWG noted the research proposal submitted by CSIRO to develop a harvest strategy for the fishery. The proposal was submitted in response to the TSSAC 2016/17 call for research and reflects an identified research priority recommended by the HCWG (Meeting 9, 30 April 2016). The members noted a harvest strategy is a pre-agreed management procedure for recommending TACs and sets out data and monitoring requirements for the fishery. The [Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy and Guidelines 2007](#) provides a framework for developing harvest strategies.

The HCWG noted the following advice provided by members and observers on the development of a harvest strategy:

- consultation and communication on the harvest strategy with communities is important. Regional workshops may be effective;
- a non-technical summary of the HCWG meeting outcomes to key community stakeholders would be beneficial; and
- consultation with stakeholders should include further explanation of how the final harvest strategy will be used (i.e. by AFMA, HCWG and community/fishers).

The HCWG was adjourned to allow industry members and observers to discuss issues of resource allocation and observance of culture lore in the fishery out-of-session. It was later reported back to the Working Group members that issues were raised around the rights of TIB licence holders to fish to full breadth of the fishery, the non-exclusive nature of the native title sea rights and cultural lore requirements.

On return to the agenda members were reminded by the Chairperson of the need to conduct themselves professionally during the meeting.

The following key outcomes of the industry discussion were then noted:

1. further work by communities is required to identify traditional boundaries;
2. all fishers need to have a fishing licence;
3. leaders must contribute by listening to fishers associations;

4. quotas for the three groups (fulltime, part-time and 'weekend warrior' fishers) – it is for them to decide if they support that approach;
5. TSRA Chair to follow up native title issues and be out in the community discussing them;
6. community involvement in consultation – TSRA should fund members to go around to communities to discuss issues (in particular for the harvest strategy development); and
7. Malu Lamar representation at the Working Group

The HCWG **agreed** to support the implementation of a public licence register and reiterated support for mandatory reporting.

Agenda 6.1.1 Leadership, social Capital and Incentives promote Successful Fisheries

The HCWG noted a presentation (**Attachment 2**) by Mr Jim Prescott on the publication *Leadership, social Capital and Incentives promote Successful Fisheries* (Gutierrez et.al, 2011). The study examined 130 co-managed fisheries in a wide range of countries with different degrees of development, ecosystems, fishing sectors and type of resources to identify the conditions for social, economic and ecological success. The study identified the following findings:

- strong leadership as the most important attribute contributing to success, followed by individual or community quotas, social cohesion and protected areas;
- Less important conditions included enforcement mechanisms, long-term management policies and life history of the resources;
- Fisheries were most successful when at least eight co-management attributes were present, showing a strong positive relationship between the number of these attributes and success, owing to redundancy in management regulations;
- prominent community leaders and robust social capital, combined with clear incentives through catch shares and conservation benefits derived from protected areas were critically important for successfully managing aquatic resources and securing the livelihoods of communities depending on them; and
- co-management can solve many of the problems facing global fisheries.

6.2. Black Teatfish – Outcomes of 2015 trial opening and future arrangements

The HCWG noted the outcomes of the 2015 trial opening, including that there were significant improvements in catch reporting by many fishers. However not receiving catch reports on a daily basis undermined the ability to manage the fishery appropriately and resulted in the large overshoot of the TAC. The HCWG further noted that with likely increasing interest in the fishery and size of the TAC, the risk of a future over catch is high unless accurate and timely catch reporting was taken as a priority by all fishers.

Noting the 2015 TAC overcatch of black teatfish and risk of a future overcatch, HCWG **recommended**:

- that the fishery not be opened until measures are in place to improve reporting;
- AFMA, with support from TSRA, convene a workshop including HCWG industry members and up to two fisheries representatives from Erub, Masig, Ugar, Mer lama, Poruma and Warraber to consider immediate options to improve catch reporting;
- the workshop to have regard to the short and medium/long term management options to improve catch reporting as detailed in **Table 1**. These are the preliminary options canvassed by members and observers; and
- the workshop outcomes to be considered by the HCWG.

Table 1. Possible short-term and medium/long-term management options for improving catch reporting for black teatfish suggested by members and observers

Short term or medium/long term	Management tool	Description
Short-term	Mandatory Fish Receiver System	Make it a requirement for fishers to land to a licenced fish receiver and for fish receivers to report landings daily to AFMA. One possible option suggested was for landing reports to be made at 9am each day with all catches to be landed to a buyer onshore, not to carrier vessels.
	Landing restrictions by location	Restrict landings to the four eastern communities (Erub, Masig, Mer & Ugar).
	Change season dates to reduce potential effort	Change season dates to coincide with the open season for the TRL/Kaiar Fishery to reduce the number of fishers participating in the fishery.
	Prohibition on carrier boats	Do not permit carrier boats to operate in the fishery. The fishery should instead be a small boat fishery with fishers working from the community.
	Close fishing of all Beche-de-mer for 1 month after the closure	This means the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery (i.e. all species) closes for on month once black teatfish is closed. This would assist compliance but not necessarily address catch reporting issues.
	Reduce TAC to 10 tonnes	This adds further precaution to the TAC, however based on 2015 catch rates the TAC is likely to be exceeded within 3 days.
	Limited opening time to 3-4 days	The maximum daily recorded catch during the 2015 season was 4341kg. After allowing for a 10% increase in participants the total catch expected over

		3 days would be around 14 tonnes.
	Limited entry	Access only developmental permit
Medium to longer-term	Mandatory logbook reporting by fishers	Make it mandatory for fishers to report catches. (would require a legislative amendment which will take over 12 months).
	Community catch share allocations	Allocate catch shares to communities to provide community flexibility to develop catch reporting arrangements. (requires a dedicated consultation process)
	Penalties for misreporting	1. For example: reporting performance could be reflected in subsequent year's allocation if a community allocation was to be introduced. (requires a dedicated consultation process) 2. Fisheries Infringement Notices

6.3. Bêche-de-mer basket TACs

At the last HCWG meeting the Research member advised that the basket TAC for the majority of species may not be effective should effort on those species increase and trigger limits should be placed on each species within the basket. The HCWG further noted that:

- many of the species do not have appropriate size limits; and
- advice from industry that it is difficult to get wet weight for stony fish, black fish and elephant as they must be processed (boiled then either salted or frozen) immediately after harvest.

Noting that further information and work will be required to inform possible management options and advice from the Research member that there is no immediate stock risk (based on reported catches) the HCWG **recommended** that:

1. management options be considered as part of the harvest strategy project; and
2. further work be undertaken to develop and/or refine weight conversion ratios for processed Beche-de-mer.

6.3. Fish Receiver System

The HCWG supported the proposal to replace the current Torres Strait Seafood Buyers and Processors Docket Book system with a mandatory Fish Receiver System for the all Torres Strait Fisheries, excluding Torres Strait Prawn Fishery by 1 December 2017 noting that the system will require:

- a) all licence holders (including Traditional Inhabitants) to only dispose of commercially caught fish in those fisheries (not including fish caught during the course of traditional fishing) to a holder of a Fish Receiver licence; and
- b) it will be mandatory for holders of Fish Receiver licences to comprehensively report details of all fish received (landed) for each fisher.

The HCWG noted that AFMA would work with stakeholders to finalise the operational details of the Fish Receiver System

6.3. Vessel Monitoring System

The HCWG supported the proposal to implement mandatory Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) for all commercially licenced primary and carrier vessels operating under the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* by 1 July 2017 where;

- a) a primary boat is the boat nominated to the licence as the primary commercial fishing boat for the licence from which tender boats are authorised to operate;
- b) freight shipping vessels are exempt; and
- c) exemptions may be provided for carrier vessels that are 6 meters or less in length.

The HCWG noted that industry would be responsible for the installation and maintenance cost for VMS units whilst AFMA would be responsible for monitoring costs. AFMA's costs would be covered within AFMA's existing budget.

6.3. Future Management Priorities

The HCWG agreed on the following future management priorities:

- development of a harvest strategy and recovery plans for overfished species;
- future management arrangements for black teatfish and white teatfish;
- review the size limits set for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery taking into consideration the size limits in place for the Queensland and the Commonwealth Coral Sea Fishery;
- review conversion ratios for gutted and dried Beche-de-mer species; and
- Develop communication materials to assist industry members.

Agenda Item 7 – AFMA Hand Collectable Fisheries Budget 2016/17

The HCWG noted AFMA's 2016/17 Hand collectable Fisheries Budget. An industry observer recommended that future budgets make provision for AFMA officers to meet with Ugar fishers in Ugar. AFMA advised that resourcing could be directed for that purpose but that it would seek advice from the HCWG on reallocating resources from within the budget.

Agenda Item 8 – Compliance

8.1. Foreign Compliance Update

The HCWG noted an update from AFMA on foreign compliance activities and concern from some industry members on the impact of suspected illegal Beche-de-mer fishing in neighboring PNG waters. The industry members advised that Indonesian buyers were

active in the region. Industry members were encouraged to report any suspected illegal fishing to AFMA.

Noting the increase in Beche-de-mer catch seizures from illegal foreign fishing vessels but also recognizing the priority on compliance functions, the HCWG **agreed** on the following

ACTION:

1. AFMA to investigate the feasibility of seized catches to be used in research or re-stocking.

8.2. Domestic Compliance Update

The HCWG noted an update from QDAF on domestic compliance activities.

Industry members expressed a need for more compliance presence on the water.

The AFMA and QDAF members expressed the importance in receiving prompt and detailed reports from the public and encouraged industry and members of the community to continue reporting any alleged illegal fishing activities.

Agenda Item 9 – Other Business

There was no other business.