



Ref: NTN2025-02

20 January 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Comment on a proposed management action in line with section 24HA(2) of the *Native Title Act 1993***

I am writing to you on behalf of the Secretariat of the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) regarding the proposed management action to vary licence conditions for Traditional Inhabitant Boat licences to permit retention of black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) in the area of waters of the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery. This variation will also permit Fish Receiver licence holders to receive black teatfish. Further details of the proposed action can be found in **Attachments A-D - Class Notification under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993***.

Under section 24HA(7), the PZJA must give the recipient of this notice an opportunity to comment on the action within a period defined by this notice. Please provide any comments on the proposed management action by **close of business 19 February 2025**, in writing, to the addressee below:

Australian Fisheries Management Authority  
PO Box 376  
Thursday Island, QLD, 4875

Email: [FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au](mailto:FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au)

Since 2019, AFMA has been publishing the native title notifications on the [PZJA website](#). With your agreement, AFMA is also seeking to publish any comments received in response to proposed management actions. Please let us know if you have any concerns with this.

If you have any problems meeting the timeframe or if you have any additional questions regarding the proposed management action, please contact me by phone on 07 4069 1990 or email [FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au](mailto:FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,

Brodie Macdonald  
PZJA Secretariat  
AFMA

**Attachments**

A-D - Class Notification under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993*

**Class Notification under the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993***

**Proposed variation of licence conditions on Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery Traditional Inhabitant Boat Licences and Fish Receiver Licences to implement black teatfish management arrangements for the 2025 fishing season**

Date of Issue: 20 January 2025

<b>SECTION OF NTA</b>	Section 24HA(7) of the Commonwealth <i>Native Title Act 1993</i>
<b>DEPARTMENT/AGENCY</b>	Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) on behalf of the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA)
<b>CONTACT NAME</b>	Brodie Macdonald
<b>E-MAIL</b>	<a href="mailto:FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au">FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au</a>
<b>TELEPHONE NO.</b>	(07) 4069 1990
<b>REFERENCE NO.</b>	NTN2025-02 – Proposed variation of licence conditions on Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery Traditional Inhabitant Boat Licences and Fish Receiver Licences to implement black teatfish management arrangements for the 2025 fishing season

The Protected Zone Joint Authority intends to do the following act:

<b>TYPE OF APPROVAL</b>	Variation of Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery (BDM Fishery) Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) and Fish Receiver licence conditions under section 22 of the Commonwealth <i>Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984</i> (the Act)
<b>NUMBER OF APPROVALS</b>	All TIB licences in the area of waters of the BDM Fishery and Fish Receiver licences.
<b>UNDER WHAT ACT</b>	<i>Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984</i>

The approvals, if granted, will permit the following activity to happen:

<b>NATURE OF ACTIVITY</b>	<p>Under subsection 22(1) of the Act a licence granted under section 19 is subject to conditions specified in the licence. Subsection 22(2) allows AFMA, as a PZJA delegate, to vary or revoke the conditions of the licence or specify further conditions to which the licence is subject to.</p> <p>The management action that is the subject of this notification, proposes to vary licence conditions for TIB licences to permit retention of black teatfish (<i>Holothuria whitmaei</i>), which is currently prohibited. This variation will also permit Fish Receiver licence holders to receive black teatfish. Subject to PZJA delegate approval, and in line with the <a href="#">BDM Fishery Harvest Strategy</a> (the Strategy) the proposed condition variations will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide for an opening date of 3 March 2025.</li> <li>• Set a total allowable catch (TAC) of 20 tonnes for black teatfish (allowing for 2 tonnes under catch carried over from the 2024 fishing season).</li> <li>• Allow for the closure of fishing for black teatfish when there is a reasonable belief that the TAC will be reached, providing TIB and Fish Receiver licence holders notification when a closure date is determined.</li> <li>• Require TIB licence holders to land all commercial catches of black teatfish daily to a licenced Fish Receiver.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require Fish Receiver licence holders to report all landed commercial catch of black teatfish to AFMA daily.</li> </ul> <p>The proposed management actions outlined above are unchanged from the management arrangements in place for the 2021-2024 black teatfish openings, with the exception of the opening date and proposed under catch provision. AFMA have previously issued a notification with regards to the proposed TAC under catch carryover provision for black teatfish (NTN2024-06).</p> <p>Further information on the proposed management actions are provided in <b>Attachment B</b>.</p>
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The above activity will be located within:

<b>LOCATION OF ACTIVITY</b>	<p>The proposed activity would apply to the area of the BDM Fishery (<b>Attachment C</b>). The extent of the BDM Fishery is described in Item 1, Schedule 2 of the <i>Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985</i> (the Regulations). The Regulations can be accessed online at: <a href="https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2016C00633">https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2016C00633</a></p> <p>Black teatfish has a distribution predominantly in the eastern Torres Strait with fishing occurring in the areas of the Great North East Channel, Darnley, Cumberland, Seven Reefs, Don Cay and Barrier. A map showing these areas is provided at <b>Attachment D</b>. These areas include waters surrounding the islands of Masig, Erub, Mer, Ugar and Poruma.</p>
<b>MAPS/PLANS</b>	<p><b>Attachment C</b> shows the area of the BDM Fishery, as described in Item 1, Schedule 2 of the Regulations.</p> <p><b>Attachment D</b> shows the areas used by TIB licence holders for reporting locations of catch in the BDM Fishery.</p>
<b>NAME OF REGISTERED NATIVE TITLE CLAIMANT GROUP/S OR NAME OF REGISTERED NATIVE TITLE BODY CORPORATE</b>	<p>Torres Strait Regional Sea Claim Kaurareg People #1 Kaurareg People #2 North Eastern Peninsula Sea Claim Group (Cape York Land Council Aboriginal Corporation) Torres Strait Regional Sea Claim (Malu Lamar Corporation RNTBC) Northern Cape York Group #1 (Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC) Torres Strait Regional Seas Claim (Gudang Yadhaykenu Native Title Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC, Northern Cape and Torres Strait United Indigenous Corporation RNTBC and Seven Rivers Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC)</p>
<b>NAME OF NATIVE TITLE REPRESENTATIVE BODY</b>	<p>Cape York Land Council Aboriginal Corporation Gur A Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council</p>

If approved, after consideration of all comments, the management option will be implemented for the following period of time:

<b>DURATION OF APPROVAL</b>	The proposed management action will occur in March 2025.
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**You are invited to comment upon the class of proposed future acts outlined above by close of business 19 February 2025.**

Any comments must be **in writing**:

By email to: [FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au](mailto:FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au)

Or by mail addressed to:

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

PO Box 376

Thursday Island, QLD, 4875

## **Background Information**

### **What are the proposed changes to Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence and Fish Receiver licence conditions?**

The proposed condition variations will:

- Provide for an opening date of 3 March 2025.
- Set a total allowable catch (TAC) of 20 tonnes for black teatfish.
  - Allowing for 2 tonnes under catch carried over from the 2024 fishing season.
- Allow for the closure of fishing for black teatfish when there is a reasonable belief that the TAC will be reached.
  - Fishing for and receiving of black teatfish will be prohibited past the TAC Date.
  - The TAC Date is the specific date and time that the PZJA delegate will determine as the last day of fishing based on their reasonable belief that the TAC will be reached, to avoid an over catch of the black teatfish TAC.
  - All TIB and Fish Receiver licence holders will be provided with notification when the TAC Date is determined. This notification will be provided by mail, email, SMS and will also be published on the PZJA website and AFMA Facebook page.
- Require TIB licence holders to land all commercial catches of black teatfish daily to a licenced Fish Receiver.
- Require Fish Receiver licence holders to report all landed commercial catch of black teatfish to AFMA daily.

Apart from the opening date and carryover of under catch, the proposed management arrangements are unchanged from those in place for the 2021-2024 black teatfish openings.

### **Why are the licence conditions being changed?**

At meetings held from 17-19 September 2024, the Hand Collectables Resource Assessment Group (HCRAG) and Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG) recommended the arrangements for the 2025 black teatfish opening remain the same as 2024, with further consultation to be undertaken in key communities with regards to an opening date. The HCRAG and HCWG also recommended the adoption of a TAC under catch carryover provision for black teatfish. The PZJA will consider this advice on 13 February 2025. If supported, AFMA, as a PZJA delegate, will undertake the relevant administrative processes to implement the arrangements for the 2025 opening.

Following community consultations on Mer, Erub, and Masig in November 2024, AFMA agreed to an opening date of 3 March 2025. AFMA provided notification of this opening date to all BDM TIB licence holders in a letter sent on 23 December 2024 and an SMS sent on 16 January 2025. Fish Receiver licence holders were also notified by SMS on 16 January 2025.

### **How may the proposed activity impact the environment or other fisheries?**

The proposed arrangements for the 2025 black teatfish opening are designed to pursue objectives under the Act, including to protect and preserve the marine environment and indigenous fauna and flora in and in the vicinity of the Torres Strait Protected Zone. The proposed TAC was derived by applying the decision rules detailed in the Strategy. The objectives of the Strategy include:

- To provide for the sustainable use of all sea cucumbers (beche-de-mer) in Torres Strait to take account of long-term sustainability for future generations.
- Where possible, to consider an ecosystem approach to management that reduces impacts on, or optimises interactions with, other harvested and dependent species and acknowledges the important ecological role of sea cucumbers.

Due to the highly targeted nature of the BDM Fishery and the highly selective fishing method used (hand collection only), there are no bycatch species or reported interactions with protected species. Further, an Ecological Risk Assessment for the BDM Fishery, completed in December 2021, found risks to all ecological components of the BDM Fishery to be low.

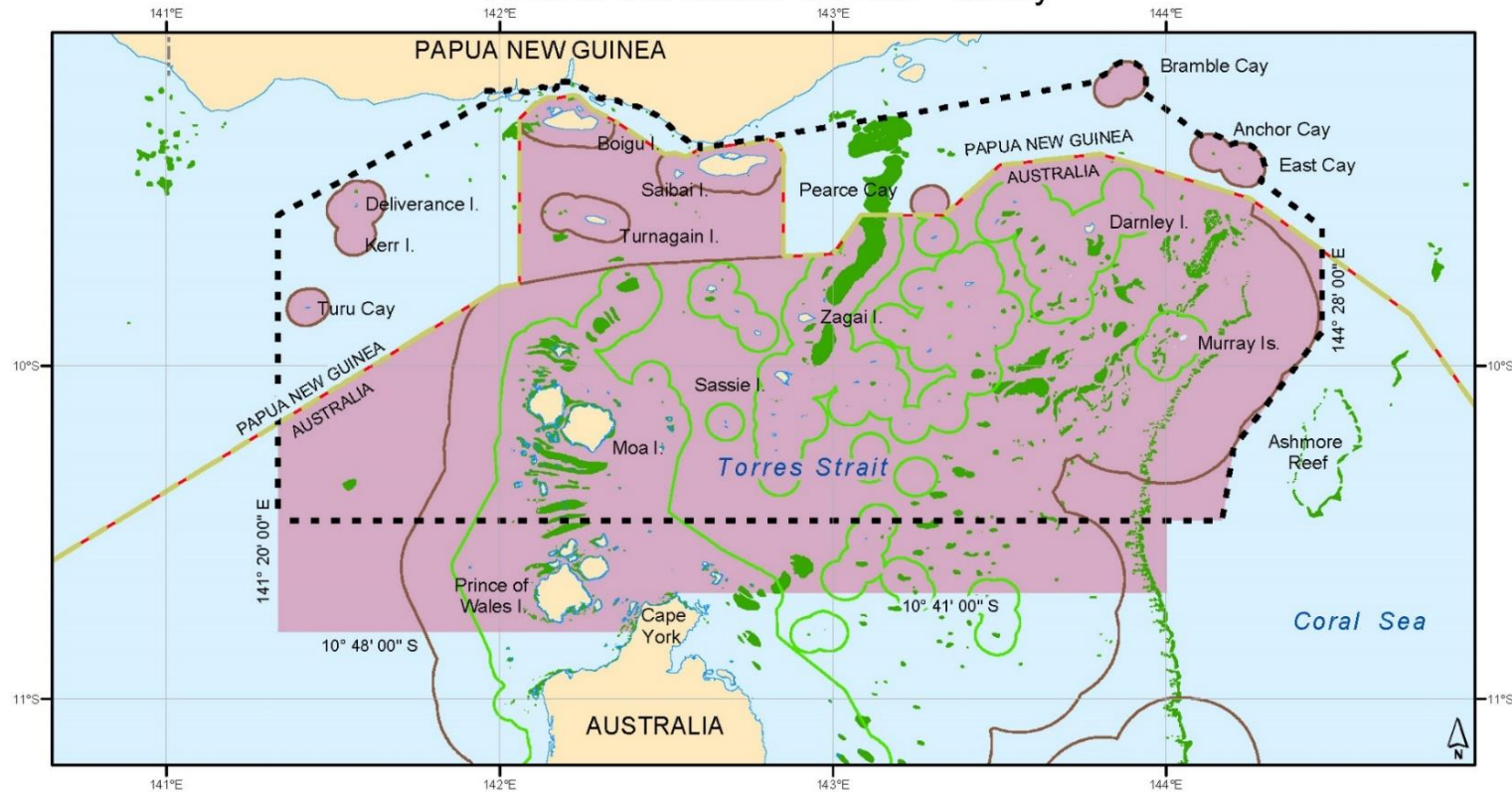
**How may the proposed activity impact Traditional Inhabitants?**

The proposed arrangements for the 2025 black teatfish opening are consistent with the objective of the Act to have regard in developing and implementing licensing policy, to the desirability of promoting economic development in the Torres Strait area and employment opportunities for Traditional Inhabitants.

Access to the BDM Fishery is reserved for Traditional Inhabitants. Varying licence conditions to implement a TAC for black teatfish, with daily reporting of landed catches, will provide Traditional Inhabitants with access to a previously closed, high value species. This will provide a direct economic opportunity to Traditional Inhabitants.

# Torres Strait Fisheries

## Area of the Beche-de-mer Fishery



- Coastal Waters limit (3nm)
- Exclusive Economic Zone limit (200nm)
- Fisheries Jurisdiction line
- Protected Zone Boundary
- Territorial Sea limit (12nm)
- Low tide elevations and reefs
- Torres Strait Fisheries**
- Beche-de-mer Fishery



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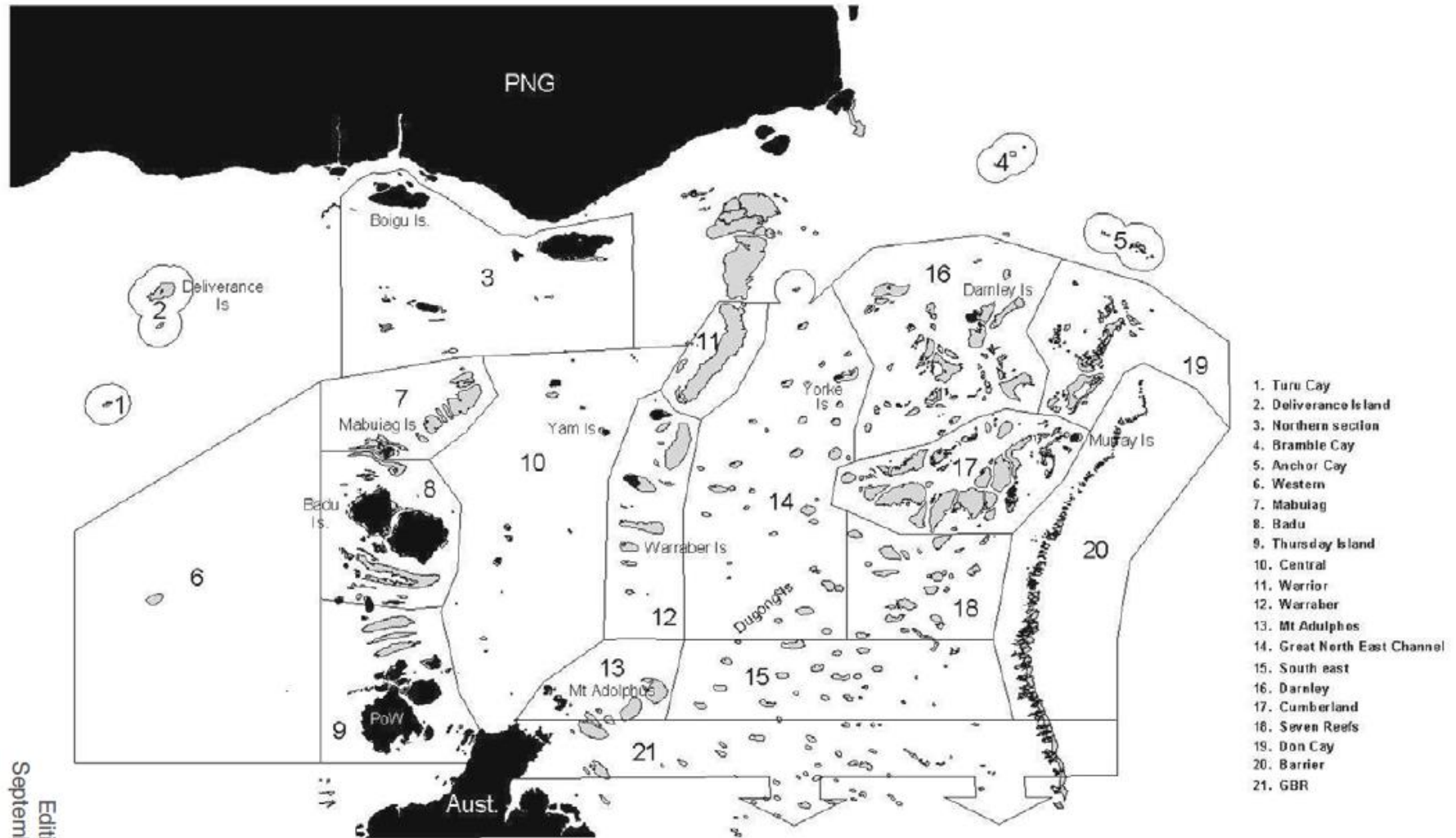
Geographic  
Datum: WGS84

**NOTES:**

1. The area of the Fishery is sourced from the Torres Strait Fisheries Regulations 1985
2. Within this fishery, arrangements exist between the Commonwealth and QLD, whereby the Coastal Waters of that State are deemed part of the AFZ
3. The Fisheries Jurisdiction Line and Protected Zone shown on this map are established under the Treaty between Australia and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea. This Treaty entered into force on 15 February 1985
4. The maritime zone boundaries shown on this map are sourced from the "Australian Maritime Boundaries (AMB) v2.0"

GeoCat #: 64841

# AREAS FOR TORRES STRAIT CATCH DISPOSAL RECORD



Edition Date:  
September 2017

**Use area where most catch was taken**