



## FISHERIES REEF ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FRAC)

### 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting

28 and 29 November 2007 – Townsville

## SUMMARY DOCUMENT

The 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the FRAC was held in Townsville on 28 and 29 November 2007. A summary of the outcomes of the main items discussed is set out below.

### INSHORE FINFISH FISHERY (IFF) – GBRMPA POSITION STATEMENTS

Members were provided with copies of position statements concerning sharks and rays, protected species and regional management issues in the Queensland East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery. Members were asked to provide feedback, noting the positions stemmed from previous FRAC discussions about the IFF and the GBRMPA's roles and responsibilities as managers of the GBRMP. The positions have been developed as a means of identifying legitimate concerns and encouraging public debate regarding the possible solutions; it is expected that they will be updated from time to time as the debate proceeds. This approach is being trialled for possible application to other policy issues. Members noted that debate across all three papers had been very useful.

#### SHARKS

During the session, extensive discussion revolved around concerns about the take of shark using nets. Key points included:

- All net fishers can currently take and retain shark, however a small core of these target shark, taking about 50% of the total shark catch (from netting).
- QDPI&F believes that creating a dedicated shark fishery (symbol) for this group would be the best way to constrain the catch and get good data on sharks to underpin future management decisions.
- The GBRMPA's position does not support a 'targeted' take of shark but it acknowledges that shark will always be a bycatch of a net fishery. A particular issue is that the nets used are not selective for low risk species of shark. The possibility that the significant latent effort in the fishery may activate makes the risk greater.
- The GBRMPA believes that good data can still be obtained from a bycatch fishery.
- If a shark symbol were created, this would be a multispecies fishery (approximately 56 species of sharks and rays) that includes a number of high risk and vulnerable species. Given the lack of knowledge about most of these species, a risk-based management approach is to be taken, thus the proposal to create this fishery cannot be supported by the GBRMPA.
- In a global context, there is not a single example of a sustainable multispecies tropical shark fishery.

The FRAC reached consensus regarding the need for more/better data on shark caught, but held differing views on how this could be achieved. It was agreed that a precautionary approach was appropriate.

#### PROTECTED SPECIES

Significant progress has been made regarding the QDPI&F Management Advisory Committee (MAC) working group position on protected species. Some issues raised at Ministerial Council in 1997 have been addressed, including proposals for more effective net attendance. However the issue of latency is unresolved – there is still the potential for a large amount of net in the water. Committee members' comments included:

- In the light of current information on dugong populations and mortality, the position statement is not satisfactory. There is no substantial change to Dugong Protection Areas (DPAs) and further protection may be required.
- The plight of dugong is significant and concern was expressed about the disinclination of fishers to report interactions with them. Particular mention was made about the large number of reported strandings this year and whether this might be related to regional net fishing activity.
- It is unclear also, to what extent mortality rates are being driven by the cumulative impact of a range of activities including fishing impacts and boat strikes.
- Current tools for dealing with this (through changing people's behaviour) – such as codes of conduct – are difficult to regulate or enforce and further refinement of the management arrangements is likely to be required.

#### REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

Essentially this is an issue of resource allocation. The key problem is that even when different fishing sectors reach agreement, locally, about how the resources should be used/shared, the agreement is unenforceable when outsiders come in and fish the area. The following points were noted:

- From the QDPI&F's perspective, regional management defines the rules about activities that occur in an area, while zoning can be used to restrict people to specific areas and prevent them from moving elsewhere.
- Currently in the ECIFF there is no mechanism to prevent effort moving into an area and this will not be considered until the stage 2 of the management arrangements.
- This problem is found across several fisheries and it was agreed that there needs to be further discussion at the FRAC on the matter.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND FISHERIES IN THE GBRMP

The GBRMPA has released a significant new body of work, "Climate Change and the GBR: A Vulnerability Assessment". A copy of the document is available at: [http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp\\_site/info\\_services/publications/misc\\_pub/climate\\_change\\_vulnerability\\_assessment/climate\\_change\\_vulnerability\\_assessment](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications/misc_pub/climate_change_vulnerability_assessment/climate_change_vulnerability_assessment). The assessment provides a good overview of the likely range of climate change impacts. Members were given a comprehensive presentation of some key chapters – some points included:

- There will be serious trophic implications as an impact of coral bleaching, inevitably this will impact on some fisheries resources and fishers.
- Direct climate change impacts will be more than just coral bleaching; they may not all be negative.
- Climate change impacts may not be gradual – this concept should shape our preparation.

The discussion following the presentation touched on many areas, including: how to tap into local knowledge bases (fishers have been noticing changes over time in the places they regularly work); the issue of timeliness (how to empower people to drive behavioural change quickly); early examples of industry-led change (noting that industry want guidance regarding effective strategies to mitigate against impacts); and questions regarding how possible scenarios may challenge the resilience or health of reefs. There was strong support for further detailed, collaborative discussion on the matter during a proposed workshop in mid 2008.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF FISHERIES IN THE GBRMP

The Committee was provided with an overview of current GBRMPA social science research priorities that relate to the use of fisheries resources. One growth area has been exploring the use of market mechanisms in managing people and their interactions with the environment. Another current project aims at improving understanding of different sectors within the recreational fishing sector. Some comments were:

- When considering the economics of fishing, it is necessary to look at more than just gross value of production (GVP), there is also a need to consider expenditure in the community (from different fishing sectors) and how all the information is used.
- The social aspects of fishing need to be representative of the views of the whole community and are likely to be about finding the balance between use and conservation.
- Previous management discussion was more often focussed on biophysical impacts, without taking into account positive social and economic benefits. Future decisions need to be informed by rigorous analysis of sound socio-economic data.

The use of market mechanisms as possible tools to manage access to fisheries resources in the GBRMP will be discussed further at the next FRAC.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR FISHERIES IN THE GBRMP

The FRAC was advised that:

- There are a number of key issues including the relationship between the QDPI&F, the DEWHA and the GBRMPA. There is considerable similarity between the mandates of the 3 agencies regarding ecologically sustainable use of the

marine environment. However, there is some work to be done in terms of defining the shared vision and how the goals can be achieved.

- Increased use of independent monitoring will be critical.
- Stewardship initiatives such as Environmental Management Systems (EMSs) will be a key path for the future. Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) will be another important tool.

Members' comments included:

- Competition between resource-users within the GBRMP (resource allocation) is a difficult issue for everyone and, currently, is not being addressed effectively by anyone. This will only increase as the Queensland population continues to grow.
- The FRAC could be a powerful tool to incorporate the wealth of expertise from the Committee into more of a decision-making role.

Members requested that the GBRMPA provides the FRAC with a position statement on fishing in the GBRMP that clearly documents the GBRMPA's future intentions with respect to all forms of fishing.

## OUTLOOK REPORT

In further preparation for the production of the first Outlook Report (required by June 2009), FRAC members advised the Outlook Report Taskforce on what they considered to be the most significant pressures facing fisheries use of the GBR. The major groups identified by members were:

- Rural/agricultural development and catchment runoff
- Governance and resourcing
- Climate change
- Marine derived pollution
- Fishing
- Community awareness
- Urban/industrial development and runoff
- Tourism
- Biodiversity issues
- Broad global and national issues.

It was suggested that some additional pressures be included in the list, including political intervention and atmospheric inputs, and that cumulative pressures should be considered also.

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is proposed for 6 and 7 March 2008.

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr David Bateman .....	Recreational Fishing
Mr Craig Bohm .....	Conservation
Mr Wayne Butcher .....	Indigenous
Mr Bruce Wallner .....	GBRMPA
Mr Kevin Chard .....	Spear fishing
Dr Mark Fenton .....	Socio-economics
Mr James Gillespie .....	Qld Dept Primary Industries and Fisheries
Mr Bob Grimley .....	Qld Boating and Fisheries Patrol
Mr Ray Joyce .....	Charter Fishing
Mr Richard Leck .....	Conservation
Mr Andrew McNee ...	Dept of the Environment and Water Resources
To Be Appointed .....	Qld Environmental Protection Agency
Mr Lyle Squire Jnr .....	Commercial Dive-based Fishing
Ms Diane Tarte .....	Independent Chairman
Dr Andrew Tobin .....	Commercial Fishing
Mr Gary Wicks .....	Commercial Fishing
Dr David Williams .....	Scientific Community