FACT SHEET:

Traditional Inhabitant Boat licences in the Torres Strait

What is a Traditional Inhabitant Boat licence?

- A Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence is a commercial fishing licence to fish in Torres Strait fisheries that can only be issued to Traditional Inhabitants.
- Traditional and recreational fishing does not require a commercial fishing licence.

Why were TIB licences introduced?

- The current TIB licensing system in the Torres Strait was implemented by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) on 1 April 1999.
- The system moved licensing from a community-based system to individually held TIB licences.
- Individual TIB licences were introduced to improve the management of Torres Strait fisheries. Benefits include:
  - better understanding of the potential fishing effort across the Torres Strait fisheries
  - better enforcement of commercial fishing regulations
  - improved communication with individual Traditional Inhabitant fishers.

How do I get a TIB licence?

Applicants must be traditional inhabitants of the TSPZ or adjacent coastal area of Australia.

- Before you can apply for a TIB licence, you must provide a completed Traditional Inhabitant Identification Form to the PZJA, which must be signed by a relevant Councillor and relevant Council Mayor.
- Evidence of Traditional Inhabitant status and residency in the region may also be required.
- Traditional Inhabitants may then apply for a TIB licence by filling in the TIB Licence Application Form.
- Licence application forms are available from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) or on the PZJA website.
- Completed forms should be submitted to AFMA, who will issue the licence to eligible applicants on behalf of the PZJA.

What are the conditions on a TIB licence?

Because the number of TIB licences is unlimited to Traditional Inhabitants, some input controls apply to ensure that fishing effort is kept at a sustainable level.

The nominated boat on the licence must be fully owned by the applicant:

- This condition is intended to reserve the expansion of growth in Torres Strait fisheries and the resulting benefits for Traditional Inhabitants.

Only traditional inhabitants are allowed to commercially fish from the boat:

- This condition is intended to reserve the expansion of growth in Torres Strait fisheries and the resulting benefits for Traditional Inhabitants.
- Exceptions can be granted by the PZJA for approved training programs.
The TIB licence is only valid for the TSPZ fisheries, including their ‘outside but near areas’.

- This is the area of management responsibility for the PZJA, established under the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984.

Boats cannot exceed 20 metres in length.

- This condition is intended as an input control to limit fishing effort.
- There are other specific boat size restrictions in some Torres Strait fisheries.

All TIB fishing vessels used in conjunction with a carrier vessel are licensed under the same name as the primary vessel licence holder.

- Introduced as a condition following a PZJA decision in September 2011.
- This condition is intended as an input control to prevent an uncapped increase in fishing effort and to prevent boats acting as a processor-carrier boat without restrictions. It was also hoped this would encourage ‘true’ primary-tender operations.

From 1 July 2017, all primary boats and licensed carrier boats are required to have an AFMA approved Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) unit installed.

- This condition will apply to both TIB and TVH licences.
- This condition will not apply to tenders/dinghies.
- Vessels under 6 metres or commercial freight vessels have been given an exemption from requirement to install a VMS.
- It is being implemented to improve monitoring and compliance of primary and carrier vessels, which can in turn lead to more flexible management arrangements.
- The installation of a VMS unit by 1 July 2017 is the responsibility of the licence holder.
- To assist current Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal fishers to comply with these new requirements, the TSRA is offering to supply VMS units to eligible fishers and arrange a day for installation of all units. If you wish to seek support from the TSRA you will need to contact the TSRA Fisheries Programme.

Contacts:

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