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LIMITED RESPONSE TO KAIAR (TROPICAL ROCK LOBSTER) LICENCE BUYOUT DISAPPOINTING

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has expressed disappointment at the outcome of the voluntary buyout of licences from the Torres Strait Kaiar (Tropical Rock Lobster) Fishery.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu said the share of the fishery allocated to the traditional inhabitant sector has increased by a little over two per cent to a total of approximately 56 per cent of the Australian share of the fishery.

“Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal stakeholders were hoping for a result closer to 70 per cent of the fishery,” Mr Elu said.

The fishery is managed by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA), which is made up of the Commonwealth Fisheries Minister, Queensland Fisheries Minister and Chairperson of the TSRA.

The PZJA offered the buyout to holders of transferable licenses to increase the ownership and participation of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people in the fishery.

“There have been big catches of TRL recorded over the last two years and with further large catches predicted in 2013 the financial returns in the fishery are high.

“Because of these favorable conditions many license holders are happy to remain in the fishery and did not offer their license for sale which means a high level of fishing effort will continue.”

Mr Elu said that because of the high level of fishing effort it was important for all stakeholders to work on developing long term management arrangements for the fishery.

“The PZJA agreed in May 2011 that a management plan including a move to limit catches by each sector would be developed.

“The PZJA decided that after the buyout was finished the moon-tide closures and tender reductions would not be reapplied.

“These measures have been protecting the interests of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal licence holders in the fishery by placing some limits on the effort of other licence holders.

“A management plan that includes limits on the amount of Kaiar taken is the best way to sustain the fishery and to protect the 56 per cent of the fishery that we now own,” Mr Elu said.

Mr Elu encouraged stakeholders to continue to work cooperatively to develop secure, sustainable access to the fishery through the management planning process. Following the implementation of a management plan in the fishery I will be looking for opportunities to talk to my PZJA colleagues about options to increase our ownership of the fishery” Mr Elu said.

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