

TSRA Media Release 552



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Positive outlook for Torres Strait Fisheries

The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) met today on Thursday Island to discuss management of fisheries resources in the Torres Strait region.

Chair of the PZJA, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Senator Richard Colbeck, said the opportunity to engage with local fishers and other stakeholders was invaluable.

“The PZJA is an important forum for recognising the potential of the region’s fisheries resources and how they contribute to employment and economic development,” he said.

“I’m encouraged by the positive outcomes of this meeting, such as committing to more regular meetings of the PZJA and importantly, recognising and supporting the 100 per cent ownership aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders”.

Senator Colbeck said “the Australian Government is committed to improving the circumstances for Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people and supports the positive work underway by the authority”.

Queensland Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry John McVeigh reiterated his commitment to include traditional fishing interests in the Queensland government's review of fisheries management.

"The Queensland government will take into account any implications our fisheries management review will have for indigenous fishers in the Torres Strait.

"Good consultation with all parties including the PZJA will be essential to progress," he said.

Mr Elu said holding the meeting in the Torres Strait was an important part of the PZJA respecting our Ailan Kastom and recognising and understanding both the region and its people.

“The Chair of the PZJA, Ministers and delegates have all gained invaluable insights into the Torres Strait and how important the fisheries industry is to us by meeting here,” Mr Elu said.

“Regular meetings in the region would greatly assist us to work towards our goal of ownership for Torres Strait Islanders for all commercial fisheries.

“The TSRA will now move forward to consult with stakeholders to progress the outcomes and recommendations of the meeting.”

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The PZJA noted the positive contribution the Management Advisory Committees and working groups made in providing sound, well thought out and considered advice on future management of the Torres Strait fisheries resources.

Observers to the meeting included the Hon. Nigel Scullion, Commonwealth Minister for Indigenous Affairs and delegates from the Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority.

Outcomes of the meeting include:

- The TSRA will shortly be releasing a draft roadmap towards 100 per cent ownership for Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people for consultation with all stakeholders.
- In line with the road map development, the PZJA agreed to consult on the draft Tropical Rock Lobster Management Plan, which aims to ensure that this valuable and important species continues to be sustainably harvested and that communities are kept up to date on management arrangements.
- Other important decisions include the agreement to reintroduce moon tide closures for the 2014 Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery and to no restrictions through fisheries management arrangements on Traditional Inhabitant tender numbers.
- The PZJA also requested assistance from the Commonwealth Minister for Indigenous Affairs to support access financial support from Indigenous Business Australia and the Indigenous Land Fund in pursuit of the 100 per cent ownership aspirations.