

# Sustainable Fisheries Strategy

2017–2027

## Discussion Paper

### Management Review of the Harvest Fisheries, focussing on the Marine Aquarium Fish, Coral, Sea Cucumber and Tropical Rock Lobster fisheries.

#### Why is management review needed?

The Queensland Government released the *Sustainable Fisheries Strategy* (The Strategy) in June 2017, paving the way for Queensland to have a world-class fisheries management system. Key actions of the Strategy directly related to the harvest fisheries and this discussion paper are;

- implement harvest strategies for all sectors and key species by 2020
- review fishing rules, regulations and access arrangements as part of developing harvest strategies to minimise regulation and ensure rules are clear and practical.

A harvest strategy is a framework that specifies pre-determined management actions for a defined species necessary to achieve the agreed ecological, economic and/or social objectives (e.g. how much quota or bag limits should go up or down depending on the biomass of the fish stock).

For more information on Queensland's approach to harvest strategies see: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/sustainable-fisheries-strategy/harvest-strategy>

There are 15 identified commercial harvest fisheries within Queensland:

|                      |              |              |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Marine Aquarium Fish | Coral        | Sea Cucumber |
| Eel                  | Juvenile Eel | Shell Grit   |
| Shell                | Star Sand    | Trochus      |
| Oyster               | Pearl        | Bloodworm    |
| Beachworm            | Marine Yabby |              |

The Tropical Rock Lobster is referred to as a harvest fishery, however it is licenced as a commercial boat licence fishery.

The Marine Aquarium Fish fishery (MAFF), Queensland Coral fishery (QCF), Sea Cucumber fishery (SCF) and Tropical Rock Lobster fishery (TRLF) have been identified to develop harvest strategies for by 2020 and will be the predominate focus of this discussion paper. However, as work progresses on these priority fisheries all other harvest fisheries will be subject to a review of its rules and regulations over the next three years.

Many of the key elements for an effective harvest strategy are in place for the MAFF, QCF, SCF and TRLF. For instance, the QCF, SCF and TRLF have a total allowable commercial catch (TACC) and are managed through individual transferable quotas (ITQ). However, licence holders quota allocation is contained within the conditions of their licence, not unitised and not set via declaration by the chief executive like the Coral Reef Fin Fish fishery.

Modernising quota management for these fisheries would enable adjustments up and down in response to stock status to be considered in the future. Some quota within the QCF and SCF are grouped as 'Other Species' and contain commercially significant species sensitive to localised fishing pressure. Future management measures are required to ensure appropriate management arrangements are in place to ensure harvesting of individual species remain within sustainable limits. Quota management does not fit all fisheries, such as the MAFF because of the logistics of the fishery. Collection focusses on a wide variety of marine species, targeting 5 major families and is therefore more appropriately managed via input controls within a harvest strategy framework.

Some harvest fisheries like the QCF and SCF are subject to greater community scrutiny because of the ecological importance of the species they are harvesting within the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). The commercial harvest fishing community is already abreast of these concerns and have already developed tools, such as Stewardship Action Plans and Memorandum's of Understanding, committing to the highest standards of environmental practice within these fisheries. A harvest strategy will be able to formally recognise these arrangements and ensure that fishing is managed undertaken in a sustainable and responsible manner that recognises the interests of all Queenslanders.

The discussion paper also aims to review ineffective and outdated legislation along with aligning these fisheries with other quota-managed fisheries, like coral trout. Little work has been done to modernise Queensland's harvest fisheries since their inception. Some input controls still provide effective control of harvest, while others inhibit industry by over regulating and complicating the administration of the fishery. Any changes will be progressed concurrently so that changes to the input controls and management arrangements will become operational with the harvest strategies.

## About the Harvest Fisheries

### Queensland Coral Fishery

The QCF is almost exclusively a commercial harvest fishery, operating predominately within the GBR. Commercial fishers collect whole and/or parts of colonies of a wide variety of corals and related Cnidarian species. Most corals harvested are exported around the world as live specimens in public or private aquaria. Some product is dried to produce ornamental souvenirs or decorations. The fishery also harvests proportions of 'live rock' and coral rubble to supply the aquarium market.

The commercial fishery is a quota based, limited entry fishery based on the collection of Anthozoa and Hydrozoa species, harvested by hand using hand-held implements and breathing apparatus. The fishery is small scale, with only 59 authorities authorised to take under a 'D' fishery symbol, and has a current Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) of 200 tonnes (t). The quota is split between 'Speciality Coral' (60 t) and 'Other Coral' (140 t) and runs from 1 July to 30 June each year with no current closures.

## Marine Aquarium Fish Fishery

Similar to the QCF, the MAFF is almost an exclusively commercial fishery, and although the commercial fishing zone extends along the east coast of Queensland, the majority of fishing occurs within the GBR. The MAFF is a small scale fishery which includes the collection of a wide variety of fish and invertebrates for the live aquarium trade only, most of which is exported around the world.

Commercial fishers collect marine aquarium fish and invertebrates by hand-held fishing gear, including fishing lines, small nets and herding devices using scuba or hookah apparatus. There is currently 42 authorities authorised to take under an 'A1' or 'A2' symbol. The MAFF is not a quota managed fishery, instead using input controls such as fishing gear and tender boat number restrictions to limit effort placed on the resource.

## Sea Cucumber Fishery

The SCF is a hand collection, harvest fishery dominated by the commercial sector. Recreational and traditional take of sea cucumbers is considered negligible. The fishery is based on the collection of a defined list of sea cucumber species from the family Holothuriidae. Commercial fishers are permitted to take sea cucumber using SCUBA or Hookah apparatus.

The fishery operates within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) and Marion and Saumarez reefs. Harvest operations follow a rotational zoning plan, which divides the fishing area into 156 zones with 52 zones open to fishing each quota year, 1 July to 30 June. Each zone may be fished for a maximum of 15 days in every 3 years. Additional input controls are also in place such as diver and tender number restrictions.

Currently there are 18 authorities authorised to take under a 'B1' symbol, and is managed through a mixed species individual transferable quota (ITQ), based on a fixed TACC of 361 t. Quota is divided into 53.001 t of white teatfish and 307.999 t of other species. Currently the TACC for black teatfish is 0 t.

## Tropical Rock Lobster

The TRLF is a recreational and commercial hand collection harvest fishery where divers hand collect ground dwelling lobsters predominately destined for the live export market. The fishery consists predominately of one key high value species, the Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL). Most fishing occurs in reef-top waters deeper than 5m.

The fishery is divided into a northern and southern zone. Fishing is closed to all take of TRL in the northern zone between October and December annually. The commercial fishery is restricted to the northern zone, north of 14°S, and recreational catch within this zone is limited due to the remoteness from population centres.

Currently there are 28 authorities to take under an 'R' symbol, and is managed through an ITQ, based on a fixed TACC of 195 t. Only 7 licence holders hold quota.

## Fishery Objectives

Fishery objectives are designed to set out the direction and aspirations for the fishery. Effective harvest strategies rely on ecological, social and economic objectives that have been set in consultation with stakeholders to determine what the harvest strategy is trying to achieve. While each fishery is different, the Strategy and the *Fisheries Act 1994* specify certain policy objectives and targets that must be achieved. Ecological objectives will have priority over socio-economic objectives.

## Marine Aquarium Fish Fishery & Queensland Coral Fishery

For the purpose of this discussion paper The Marine Aquarium Fish fishery and the Queensland Coral fishery objectives have been combined. Many commercial licence holders participate in both fisheries, often fish them concurrently and both fisheries are very similar in nature. Considering this, both fisheries are represented by one working group assisted to develop the following draft fishery objectives.

### *Ecological objectives*

- Achieve sustainable biomass objectives for target species

This objective is to identify and achieve specific sustainable biomass targets for stocks. The specific targets for each species will be outlined in the operational components of the harvest strategy.

- Minimise risk of local depletion

Localised depletion describes significant and persistent reduction in the abundance of a species over a defined area, compared to the abundance of the species over its whole stock. It occurs when more fish are removed from an area by fishing than can be replaced by movement and migration. Species that are targeted most and don't move very much are the most vulnerable.

- Demonstrate there is no unacceptable risk to sustainability and the ecosystem

The fishery can be perceived as significantly risking overall reef sustainability and ecosystem resilience. A key component is the need for validating relevant data and information (catch logbooks, quota reporting) to demonstrate there are no unacceptable risks to bycatch, sustainability targets and the ecosystem from fishing.

- Actively pursue testing and implementation of new and effective technological to minimise ecological impacts

This objective is about minimising the risk of fishing and advancing fishing methods through new and effective technologies. Given community expectations around the impact of fishing and the importance of continued access to the fishery, it is important to actively seek solutions to minimise interactions with non-target and threatened, endangered and protected species through gear innovation and novel technologies.

### *Socio-Economic Objectives*

- Maximise value of the commercial product

This objective is intended to encourage the highest value of the commercial product, by ensuring it is caught at the best quality for market preferences, when supply is required and in the best condition.

- Improve the social benefits of the fishery to the community

This objective aims to recognise the flow-on effects and benefits of regional communities from fishing. These include direct employment as well as a range of support services that might otherwise cease to exist if fishing were not present.

### *Management Objectives*

- Ensure fisheries management is meeting the expectation of the sectors and community

The community want to have confidence in the management of the fishery. This includes appropriate monitoring. Stakeholder engagement, compliance and responsive management.

- Improve data and undertake more regular stock assessments to inform management decisions

This objective is identified in the Strategy and is intended to improve the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of data and stock assessments to support sustainable fisheries management.

- Manage excess capacity to improve socio-economic benefit and minimise the risk of overfishing  
This objective recognises that from time to time excess capacity within a fishery will have adverse impacts on sustainability as well as achieving the socio-economic objectives for the fishery.
- Reduce complexity of fishing rules  
The rules in place for this fishery are highly complex and need to be simplified. The volume of fisheries regulation should be reduced and fishing rules should be clear and practical.

## Sea Cucumber Fishery

### *Ecological objectives*

- Ensure sustainability for target species  
This objective is identified in the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy to achieve specific biomass targets for stocks. The aim is to achieve at least 40-50% of the original unfished biomass by 2020 and 60% by 2027. The specific targets for each species will be outlined in the operational components of the harvest strategy.
- Minimise risk of local depletion  
Localised depletion describes significant and persistent reduction in the abundance of a species over a defined area, compared to the abundance of the species over its whole stock. It occurs when more fish are removed from an area by fishing than can be replaced by movement and migration. Species that are targeted most and don't move very much are the most vulnerable.
- Demonstrate there is no unacceptable risk to sustainability and the ecosystem  
The fishery can be perceived as significantly risking overall reef sustainability and ecosystem resilience. This is recognised by the community and must be actively managed within community expectations to ensure sustainability and ongoing access to the fishery. A key component is the need for validating relevant data and information (catch logbooks, quota reporting) to demonstrate there are no unacceptable risks to bycatch, sustainability targets and the ecosystem from fishing.

### *Socio-Economic Objectives*

- Maximise value of the commercial product  
This objective is intended to encourage the highest value of the commercial product, by ensuring it is caught at the best quality for market preferences, when supply is required and in the best condition.
- Promote Stewardship across industry to maintain community confidence  
This objective aims to consider the community expectation of the industry and maintain community confidence about the sustainability of the fishery, environmental performance and the ability to respond to climate change.
- Maintain the social benefits of the fishery to the community  
This objective aims to recognise the flow-on effects and benefits of regional communities from fishing. These include direct employment as well as a range of support services that might otherwise cease to exist if fishing were not present and the recognition of commercial fishing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Maintain access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for traditional fishing  
Access to traditional fishing is important to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a way of remaining connected to culture and providing a source of food. The purpose of this objective is to ensure communication between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is continued to access fisheries resources and its sustainable management.

## *Management Objectives*

- Ensure fisheries management is meeting the expectation of the sectors and community  
The community want to have confidence in the management of the fishery. This includes appropriate monitoring, stakeholder engagement, compliance and responsive management.
- Improve data and undertake more regular stock assessments to inform management decisions  
This objective is identified in the Strategy and is intended to improve the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of data and appropriate stock assessments to support sustainable fisheries management.
- Manage increased regional fishing effort to improve socio-economic benefit and minimise the risk of localised depletion.  
This objective recognises that from time to time a fishery can experience increased fishing effort in regions which may have adverse impacts on sustainability as well as achieving the socio-economic objectives for the fishery.
- Reduce complexity of fishing rules  
The rules in place for this fishery are highly complex and need to be simplified. The volume of fisheries regulation should be reduced and fishing rules should be clear and practical.

## **Tropical Rock Lobster**

### *Ecological objectives*

- Achieve sustainable biomass objectives for target species  
This objective is identified in the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy to achieve specific biomass targets for stocks. The aim is to achieve at least 40-50% of the original unfished biomass by 2020 and 60% by 2027. The specific targets for each species will be outlined in the operational components of the harvest strategy.
- Demonstrate there is no unacceptable risk to sustainability and ecosystem resilience  
A key component of this objective is the need for validating relevant data and information (catch logbooks, quota reporting) to demonstrate there are no unacceptable risks to bycatch, sustainability targets and the ecosystem from fishing.

### *Socio-Economic Objectives*

- Maximise value of the commercial product  
This objective is intended to encourage the highest value of the commercial product, by ensuring it is caught at the best quality for market preferences, when supply is required and in the best condition. To achieve this flexibility should be given to fishers to enable a response to available lobster at different times, environmental conditions and market issues.
- Improving Stewardship across industry to increase community confidence  
This objective aims to consider the community expectation of the industry and build community confidence about the sustainability of the fishery, environmental performance and the ability to respond to climate change.
- Improve the social benefits of the fishery to the community  
This objective aims to recognise the flow-on effects and benefits of regional communities from fishing. These include direct employment as well as a range of support services that might otherwise cease to exist if fishing were not present.

- Maintain access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for traditional fishing

Access to traditional fishing is important to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a way of remaining connected to culture and providing a source of food. The purpose of this objective is to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s access to fisheries resource is recognised in Queensland and they are involved in the sustainable management of fisheries.

#### Management Objectives

- Ensure fisheries management is meeting the expectation of the sectors and community

The community want to have confidence in the management of the fishery. This includes appropriate monitoring. Stakeholder engagement, compliance and responsive management.

- Improve data and undertake more regular stock assessments to inform management decisions

This objective is identified in the Strategy and is intended to improve the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of data and stock assessments to support sustainable fisheries management.

- Reduce complexity of fishing rules

The rules in place for this fishery are highly complex and need to be simplified. The volume of fisheries regulation should be reduced and fishing rules should be clear and practical.

## Management Options

The purpose of this discussion paper is to identify whether all the existing management arrangements remain appropriate or applicable in the harvest fisheries. **Attachment 5** summarises the current input and management arrangements for the fishery. Any amendments will be progressed in parallel with developing the harvest strategy.

### Issue 1: Licence inconsistencies between commercial harvest and commercial boat fishing licences

All harvest fisheries, excluding the TRLF, operate under a commercial harvest fisheries licence, resulting in differences in the way they are managed due to outdated and inconsistent regulation and licence conditions. Aligning harvest fisheries licences with commercial fishing boat licences would help achieve higher rates of compliance, understanding and consistency between all fisheries by implementing standard rules across all licences.

| Issue  | Options  | Things to consider  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Licence inconsistencies between commercial harvest and commercial boat fishing licences</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Align harvest fisheries licence rules and regulation with commercial fishing boat licences.</li> <li>2. Maintain current harvest licence rules and regulations.</li> </ol> | Should regulation specify foundation rules with all licences, with harvest licences aligning with commercial boat licences? |

## Issue 2: Quota inconsistencies

Currently the SCF, QCF and TRLF are managed by a TACC and ITQ via conditions on each individual licence. Although this allows the fishery to be managed by quota, management via licence conditions is clumsy, difficult to administer and often prohibits timely management responses. To enable a truly dynamic TACC which has the ability to increase and decrease in response to new science, changing environmental factors and biomass estimations as well as transparently track quota transfers between fishers the TACC may be unitised and declared via the chief executive through regulation.

| Issue                        | Options   | Things to consider   |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Quota inconsistencies</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Maintain ITQ's within licence conditions</li><li>2. Unitise and declare quota via regulation</li></ol> | <p>Should a TACC be responsive to science and environmental conditions?</p> <p>Should transfers of quota between licence holders be transparent and easily accessible?</p> |

## Issue 3: Commercial tender distance limitation from primary vessel

Requirements for tenders to operate within proximity of the primary vessel is vague across the SCF and MAFF, stating that tenders can be operated within the same 'location' as the primary vessel. TRLF tenders are required to operate within 5 nautical miles of the primary vessel or a greater distance as long as the tender is operating on the same reef. The original intent centred around compliance so that Queensland Boating Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) could reasonably inspect the whole commercial operation (both primary and tenders). With the introduction of vessel tracking this requirement becomes outdated from a fisheries management perspective.

| Issue  | Options   | Things to consider  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Commercial tender distance limitation from primary vessel</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Remove tender distance limits.</li><li>2. Align all harvest fisheries with TRLF (5nm).</li><li>3. Maintain existing limits for each fishery.</li></ol> | <p>Should tenders be regulated by distance from the primary vessel?</p> <p>If yes what is the appropriate distance and why?</p> |

## Issue 4: Commercial tender vessels are limited to a size of seven meters

A larger tender limit may provide opportunities to improve efficiency and allow operators to fish more safely. Quota management and strong input controls already provide a robust management framework. It is also important to note that the implementation of vessel tracking at the end of 2020, an action under the Strategy, will give greater scrutiny of commercial fishing activities that will assist in managing harvest issues.

| Issue  | Options  | Things to consider  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Commercial tender vessels are limited to a size of seven meters</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Maintain existing rule.</li><li>2. Increase the maximum size limit.</li></ol> | <p>Do you support a maximum size for tender vessels?</p> <p>Is the exiting size limit (7m) limit appropriate?</p> <p>If no what size is appropriate?<br/>Why?</p> |

## Marine Aquarium Fish Fishery

### Issue 5: Clarify and make consistent the number of people allowed to take

An increase in the maximum limit of persons allowed to take fish within the MAFF may provide additional opportunities to improved efficiency and allow operators to fish more safely. Currently a maximum of 3 persons may take fish at the same time. Of those 3 persons, at least one of them must be the licence holder or 1 of the 3 nominated persons within the harvest authority conditions. However, quota via a TACC and ITQ's does not control catch within the MAFF, which is restricted via input controls alone.

Due to the links between the MAFF and QCF, efforts must be made to align appropriate input controls across both fisheries to reduce confusion for fishers and compliance officers. Currently 3 persons may take coral at the same time within the QCF.

| Issue   | Options  | Things to consider  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Maximum limit of 3 persons allowed to take</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Maintain existing rule.</li><li>2. Decrease the number of people allowed to take.</li><li>3. Increase the number of people allowed to take.</li></ol> | <p>Do you support a maximum number of fishers?</p> <p>Is the existing limit (3 people) appropriate?</p> <p>If no what limit is appropriate? Why?</p> <p>Considering the intricate link between the MAFF and QCF should the number of persons allowed to take be the same across both fisheries?</p> |

### Issue 6: Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited

An increase or uncapped amount of tenders permitted in a commercial MAFF operation may allow operators to increase the efficiency of their businesses. Commercial primary vessel survey requirements will limit the number of tenders that can practicably and safely used. In addition, diving logistics (depth and bottom times) naturally restrict the waters that can be fished as well.

Changes to tender vessel numbers needs to be considered in conjunction with the changes made to the amount of persons allowed to take (Issue 5). As previously mentioned, the MAFF's current management framework relies on input controls to constrain catch, not quota. Consideration would only be given to increasing tender vessel numbers if the fishery moves to some control over catch, rather than relying only on input controls. It is important to note that the implementation of vessel tracking will be required on all boats, including any additional tenders by 2020.

| Issue   | Options   | Things to consider   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Remove commercial tender vessel limits for licence holders.</li><li>2. Maintain a tender limit of 1 per licence.</li><li>3. Use primary vessel surveys to inform limits.</li></ol> | <p>Should tender numbers be capped for the whole fishery?</p> <p>If a cap remains should there be a limit to the number of tenders attached to an individual licence?</p> <p>What is an appropriate number of tenders to be attached to an individual licence?</p> |

## Queensland Coral Fishery

### Issue 7: Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited

Currently tenders are not permitted to be used within the QCF. Anecdotal evidence suggests that due to the linked fishing nature of the QCF with the MAFF, which can use 1 tender, this rule is not well understood and often not maintained.

Introducing tenders to the QCF and aligning the QCF and MAFF would permit operators to increase efficiency within their business, remove confusion and provide a consistent management framework between harvest fisheries. Current quota arrangements with the QCF will limit harvest regardless of the use of tenders.

| Issue   | Options   | Things to consider  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Remove tender limits for licence holders.</li><li>2. Allow a limit of 1 tender to be used by licence holders which would align the QCF with the MAFF.</li><li>3. Maintain existing arrangements.</li></ol> | <p>Should the QCF align tender limits with the MAFF?</p> <p>Should tender numbers be capped for the fishery?</p> <p>If there is a cap should there be a limit to the number of tenders attached to an individual licence?</p> <p>What is an appropriate number of tenders to be attached to an individual licence?</p> <p>If tenders were introduced, what would be an appropriate attendance rule to the primary vessel?</p> |

### Issue 8: Non-compliance

Anecdotal reports have indicated an amount of non-compliance within the QCF, specifically quota avoidance and fishing within Green Zones of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Limiting the collection of coral to declared quota limits across licence holders, maintaining accurate logbook data and providing protected refugia from collection is crucial to the sustainable management of the fishery. The mandatory introduction of vessel tracking by the end of 2020 will make non-compliance more difficult. However, other actions could be considered such as traceability initiatives like tagging and requiring Commonwealth Government export documentation.

| Issue                 | Options   | Things to consider   |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>Non-compliance</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. "Tagging" or similar traceability initiatives for collected stock.</li><li>2. Require export documents to allow validation against logbook data.</li><li>3. Mandatory training program for commercial fishers to increase the adoption of best practice.</li></ol> | <p>Will vessel tracking combat most non-compliance issues?</p> <p>Is tagging of stock practical when fragging and growing out coral over long periods of time?</p> |

## Issue 10: Smaller scale spatial management

The QCF is currently managed at a reef-wide scale. Managing at this scale does not allow or support regional or smaller scale fishery management interventions that may be required should fishing effort or harvest need to be constrained in just one or more regions that the fishery operates. It is expected with the introduction of vessel tracking, improved data will be available to better inform scientists and managers.

Export demand for GBR corals is driven fundamentally by fewer than 10 species of coral. Within key target species, what is commonly referred to as an 'ultra' colour morphs specimens are the most sort after and drive sales. Ideally, the spatial distribution of harvest should be linked to the genetics of the stock, biomass and hotspots of key target species. Regional or smaller scale fishery management intervention may be required in circumstances where a stock may have been unacceptably affected by fishing, but also by extreme weather events including cyclones, deteriorating reef condition or health, coral bleaching and mortality, crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and other environmental impacts.

| Issue                                   | Options  | Things to consider   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Smaller scale spatial management</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual species TACC's or catch limits implemented at a finer spatial scale (such as a management region).</li> <li>2. Rotational harvest strategy and/or spatial closures for key target species.</li> <li>3. Reference or trigger points apply to each species at a finer spatial scale that reflects biomass or stock abundance objectives.</li> <li>4. Min/max size limits</li> <li>5. Harvest strategies outline management action to apply once trigger/reference points reached at the given spatial scale.</li> <li>6. Harvest strategies incorporate external triggers relating to reef health or extreme weather events.</li> </ol> | <p>Is smaller scale spatial management required?</p> <p>How would you cap fishing on a smaller spatial scale?</p> <p>Should the harvest strategy respond when extreme weather events impact harvest?</p> <p>Are there significant data/science gaps that will inhibit the smaller scale spatial management of coral harvest?</p> |

## Issue 11: Reintroduction of coral to the marine environment

Currently a condition on all QCF licences prohibits the release of coral and substrate back into the natural marine environment. The intention of the condition is to prohibit unwanted coral being discarded when landed on the boat. Recent interest of commercial fishers in reef rehabilitation efforts and mariculture has provoked the need to define this condition further and limit the activity to pre-unload notice activities. Modifying this condition would therefore permit the placement of collected corals by the licence holder into mariculture grow out facilities and within reef rehabilitation sites across the GBR with the appropriate development and aquaculture approvals.

| Issue  | Options   | Things to consider   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Reintroduction of coral to the marine environment</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change the condition to allow commercial fishers to use collected coral for authorised reef restoration projects and grow out in mariculture sites.</li> <li>2. Maintain existing arrangements</li> </ol> | <p>Mariculture and reef restoration are strictly controlled through additional permitting and approvals.</p> <p>Currently the practise is permitted if the coral is purchased from a commercial coral collector.</p> <p>Are there additional risks to coral populations by permitting this activity?</p> |

## Sea Cucumber Fishery

### Issue 12: Expansion of fishing zone

The SCF area originally did not extend to Ashmore and Boot reefs as they were outside Queensland jurisdiction. In the late 2000's these waters came under Queensland management. Consultation between state and federal agencies determined no stock sustainability issues for these areas at the time. Since then, general fisheries permits have been granted to licence holders to fish Ashmore and Boot reefs within the current 3 year cycle of the rotational zoning plan.

| Issue  | Options  | Things to consider   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Expansion of fishing zone to include Ashmore and Boot Reefs</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Change the fishery area within the regulation to include Ashmore and Boot Reefs.</li> <li>2. Do not issue further general fisheries permits to fish the area and maintain the current fishing zone.</li> </ol> | <p>Is the use of general fisheries permits appropriate for the management of commercial fisheries?</p> <p>Will formalising the expansion of the fishery area increase risk to sea cucumber stocks?</p> |

### Issue 13: Limit on number of people allowed to take

Unlimited amounts of people allowed to take sea cucumber at the same time may provide opportunities to improve efficiency and allow operators to fish more safely. Quota management through the rotational zone plan provides strong input and output controls. Currently a limit of 10 persons are allowed to take fish at the same time. Considering logistical limitations and stringent catch controls already imposed on the fishery this limit may not be providing any advantages.

| Issue  | Options   | Things to consider  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Limit on number of people allowed to take</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain existing rule.</li> <li>2. Remove limit of 10 altogether.</li> </ol> | <p>Do you support a maximum number of fishers?</p> <p>Is the exiting size limit (10 people) appropriate?</p> <p>If no what limit is appropriate? Why?</p> |

## Issue 14: Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited

An increase or uncapped amount of tenders permitted in a commercial SCF operation would allow operators to increase the efficiency of their businesses. Commercial primary vessel survey requirements will limit the number of tenders that can be practicably and safely used. In addition, diving logistics (depth and bottom times) naturally restrict the waters that can be fished as well as the rotational zone plan and ITQ management.

| Issue   | Options   | Things to consider   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Remove commercial tender vessel limits for licence holders.</li><li>2. Maintain a tender limit of 4 per licence.</li><li>3. Use primary vessel surveys to inform limits.</li></ol> | <p>Should tender numbers be capped for the whole fishery?</p> <p>If a cap remains should there be a limit to the number of tenders attached to an individual licence?</p> <p>What is an appropriate number of tenders to be attached to an individual licence?</p> |

## Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery

### Issue 15: Additional recreational fishing gear options

Recreational take of lobster is either by hand or spearfishing. Egg bearing lobsters and lobsters with tar spots must not be possessed. Spearfishing of lobster often means the lobster is killed before it can be checked for eggs or tar spots. The practise of using a cray loop to catch lobster from crevices may provide recreational fishers the ability to assess their catch for eggs and tar spots and release them alive as opposed to using spearfishing as a means of capture. Cray loops are currently not listed as a permitted recreational apparatus.

| Issue   | Options   | Things to consider  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Additional recreational fishing gear options</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Permit additional recreational fishing gear to enable use of cray loops to capture lobster.</li><li>2. Maintain current recreational fishing gear.</li></ol> | <p>Should recreational fishers be able to capture lobster without killing them?</p> <p>Do you consider the ability to capture and check lobster for eggs or tar spots a benefit to the lobster stock?</p> <p>Is there a risk to enabling recreational fishers to use 'cray loop' devices?</p> |

### Issue 16: Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited

The number of tenders restricted the TRLF prior to the introduction of quota and there is an historical aspect to their allocation and use.

Introduction of flexibility in the number of tenders permitted in a commercial TRLF operation would allow operators to increase the efficiency of their businesses. Commercial primary vessel survey requirements will limit the number of tenders that can practicably and safely used. In addition, diving logistics (depth and bottom times) naturally cap the waters that can be fished.

| Issue   | Options  | Things to consider   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Commercial tender vessel numbers are limited</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove commercial tender vessel limits for licence holders.</li> <li>2. Maintain historical tender limits.</li> <li>3. Use primary vessel surveys to inform limits.</li> </ol> | <p>Should tender numbers be capped for the whole fishery?</p> <p>If a cap remains should there be a limit to the number of tenders attached to an individual licence?</p> <p>What is an appropriate number of tenders to be attached to an individual licence?</p> |

### Issue 17: Limit on number of people allowed to take

Unlimited amounts of people allowed to take tropical rock lobster at the same time may provide opportunities to improve efficiency and allow operators to fish more safely. Quota management and diving restraints provide robust input and output controls. Currently a limit of 1 persons allowed to take at the same time exists, considering logistical limitations and stringent catch controls already imposed on the fishery this limit may not be providing any advantages.

| Issue  | Options  | Things to consider  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Limit on number of people allowed to take</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain existing rule.</li> <li>2. Remove limit of 1 altogether.</li> <li>3. Increase the limit.</li> </ol> | <p>Do you support a maximum number of fishers?</p> <p>Is the existing fisher limit (1 person) appropriate?</p> <p>If no what limit is appropriate? Why?</p> |

### Issue 18: Review of size limits (all sectors) and adjustment of recreational possession limits in line with a harvest strategy

Generally, the existing size limit afford most species an opportunity to breed at least once before reaching size limit and some may need to be updated to reflect current research. Possession limits will also be reviewed to ensure they are simple and consistent between the northern and southern recreational fishing zones. Wholesale reductions to possession limits are not proposed, but consideration may be given to options which can keep recreational catch within sustainable limits. Currently a recreational fisher can possess 3 lobster (all species) per person and 6 lobster per boat in total above 14° south latitude (northern zone) and in the Gulf waters. Below 14° south latitude (southern zone) the possession limit is 5 lobster per person and 10 per boat in total.

Increasing the northern recreational possession limit and thus aligning within the southern possession limit for lobster may reduce confusion and aid in fishing compliance whilst still maintaining a low total boat limit to deter black market trade. Changes to possession limits for individual species would be adjusted over time as part of harvest strategies if there are concerns about biomass.

| Issue  | Options   | Things to consider   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Review of size limits and adjustments of recreational possession limits</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review size at maturity information and assess suitability of current limits.</li> <li>2. Consider changes to possession limits over time as part of harvest strategies if there are concerns about biomass.</li> <li>3. Align the northern and southern recreational possession limit to the southern limit (5 per person in possession and 10 per boat).</li> </ol> | <p>Are you concerned about the current possession limits?</p> <p>Do you think there are advantages to having recreational possession limits consistent across all Queensland waters?</p> |



## Next steps

While there have been initial discussions on review of the management arrangements for this fishery, no decisions have been made. This discussion paper is the basis for the initial round of engagement on the review of the current management framework for harvest fisheries, specifically the Marine Aquarium Fish Fishery, Queensland Coral Fishery, Sea Cucumber Fishery and tropical Rock Lobster Fishery. No allocation process is required as part of this management review.

The feedback from this discussion paper will be provided to the harvest fishery working groups to provide advice on a preferred management review options and development of harvest strategies. Some changes, if progressed, will require amendments to the *Fisheries Regulation 2008* and will be progressed with the priority fishery reforms for trawl, east coast inshore and crab fisheries in 2019.

There will be plenty of opportunity for you to provide further input over the next 12 months, including:

**In Late 2018:** Consultation on draft harvest strategies which will set out the pre-determined management actions for a defined species necessary to achieve the agreed ecological, economic and/or social objectives. This will include an implementation plan on how harvest strategies can be operationalised.

**In Early 2019:** Consultation on proposed changes to the Fisheries Regulation to implement the proposed management changes that have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and reflect the new approach using harvest strategies

## How to provide feedback

This discussion paper is designed to provide all stakeholders with the opportunity to have a say about the future management of harvest fisheries. You can provide feedback by submitting your response to:

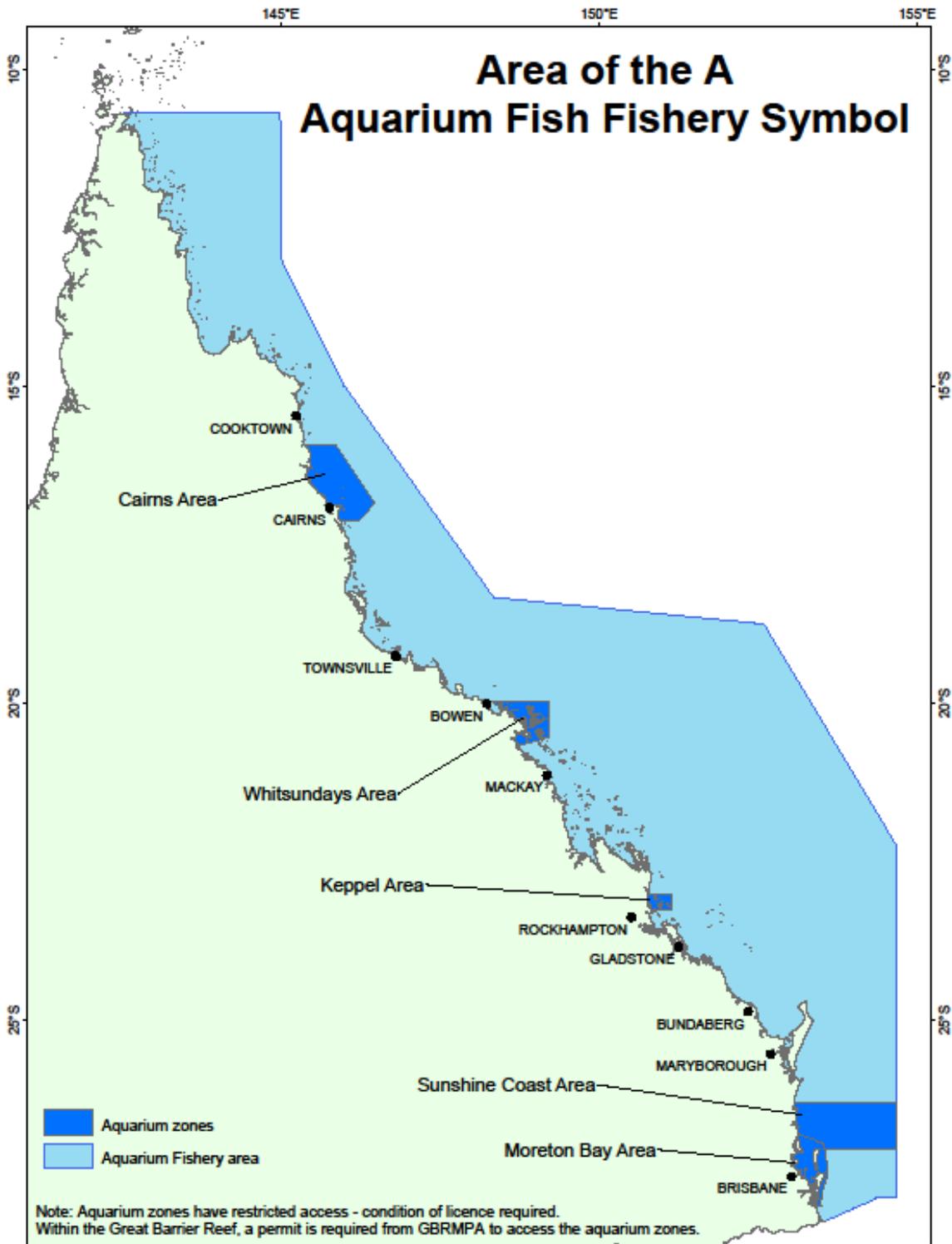
**Email:** [fisheriesmanagers@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:fisheriesmanagers@daf.qld.gov.au)

**Post:** Harvest Fisheries Discussion Paper  
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries  
GPO Box 46  
Brisbane Qld 4001

Submission of feedback closes **Monday 9 July 2018**.

For more information, visit [www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries](http://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries) or call 13 25 23

Attachment 1 – Area of the MAFF fishery



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Department of Agriculture  
and Fisheries

Co-ord Sys: GCS GDA 1994  
Datum: GDA 1994  
Unit: Degree

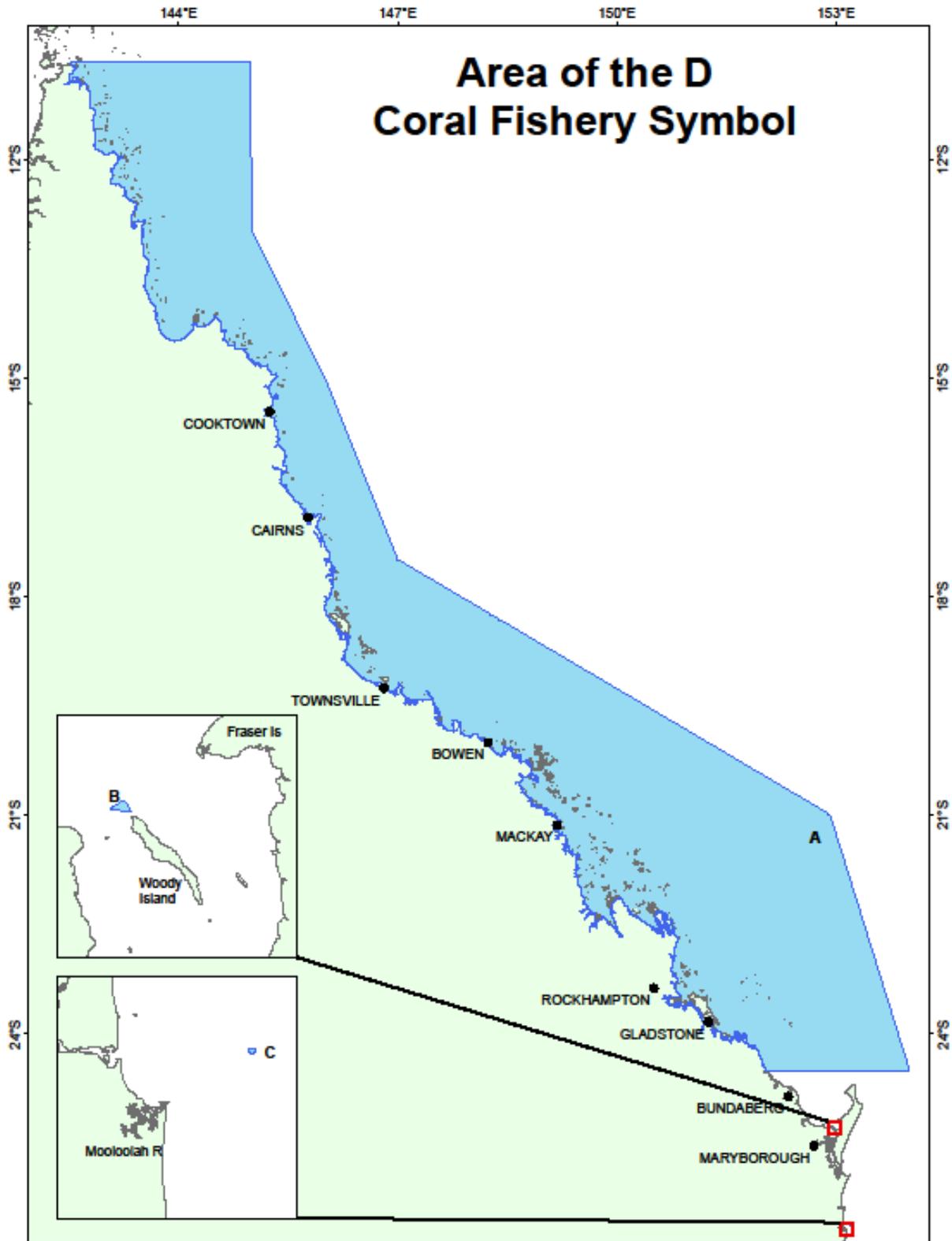


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**This map represents the approximate fishery area where fishing operations are permitted under the fishery symbol. Please refer to the relevant fisheries legislation (eg Regulation or Management Plan) for the exact boundaries of an area.**

Attachment 2 – Area of the QCF fishery



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Co-ord Sys: GCS GDA 1994  
Datum: GDA 1994  
Units: Degree

0 60 120 240 Km

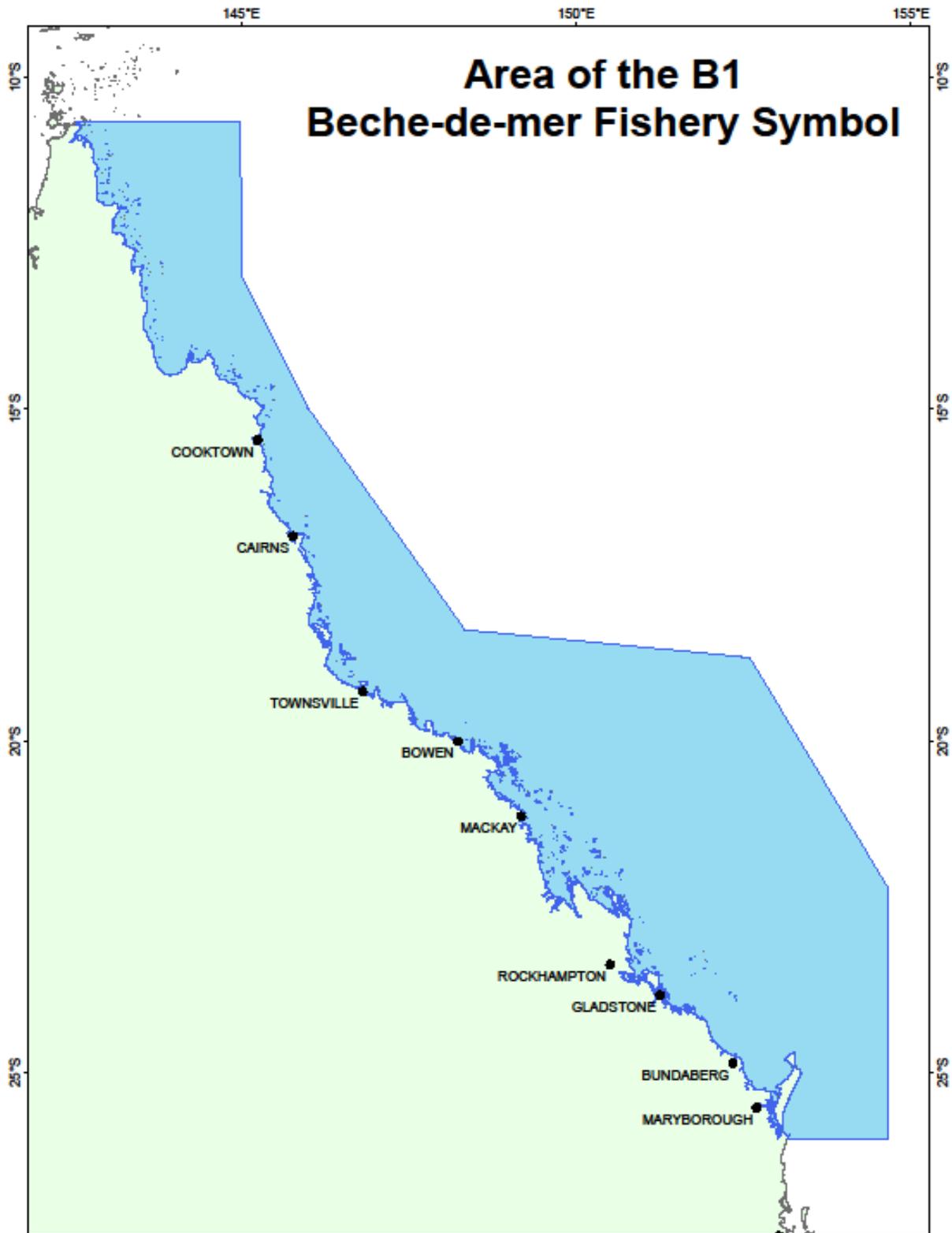


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Datum: GDA 1994  
Units: Degree

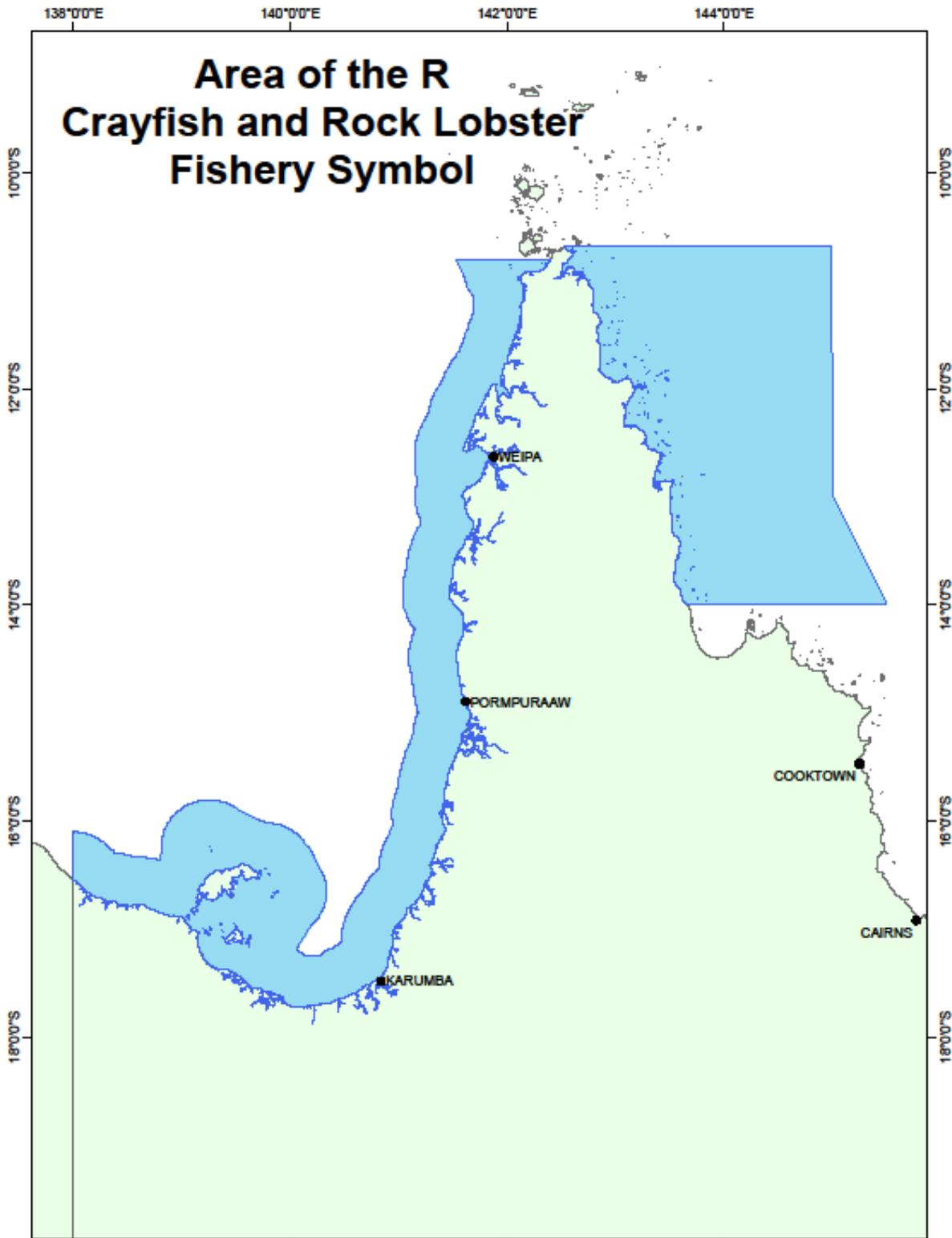


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# Attachment 4 – Area of the Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery



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**This map represents the approximate fishery area where fishing operations are permitted under the fishery symbol. Please refer to the relevant fisheries legislation (eg Regulation or Management Plan) for the exact boundaries of an area.**



Queensland  
Government

**Attachment 4 – Current input controls in the harvest fisheries**

| Measure/Description  | MAFF   | QCF  | SCF   | TRLF   |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>Limited Entry:</b><br/>Participation in the fishery is limited to those individuals who hold a commercial fishing boat licence or a harvest fishery licence, endorsed with a symbol.</p> | <p>Commercial harvest fishery licence – symbol A1 and A2.<br/>Currently licences:<br/>A1 = 42 A2 = 2</p>   | <p>Commercial harvest fishery licence – symbol D<br/>Currently licences = 59</p>   | <p>Commercial harvest fishery licence – symbol B1<br/>Currently licences = 18</p>   | <p>Commercial fishing boat licence – symbol R<br/>Currently licences = 28</p>  |
| <p><b>Vessel restrictions:</b><br/>Maximum size of primary and tender vessels and total number of vessels permitted to be used.</p>  | <p><u>Primary</u><br/>Replacement maximum size limit of 20m.<br/>Boat mark must be listed on licence<br/><u>Tenders</u><br/>Maximum size limit of 7m<br/>Total of 1 tender can be used at one time.<br/>Tender must identify with the primary boat mark followed by a dash and number.</p> | <p><u>Primary</u><br/>Replacement maximum size limit of 20m.<br/>Boat mark must be listed on licence<br/><u>Tenders</u><br/>Cannot use tenders</p> | <p><u>Primary</u><br/>Replacement maximum size limit of 20m.<br/>Primary boat must be listed on licence<br/><u>Tenders</u><br/>Maximum size limit of 7m<br/>Industry imposed limit of 4 tenders to be used at any one time.</p> | <p><u>Primary</u><br/>Primary boats must not be longer than 25m.<br/><u>Tenders</u><br/>As stipulated on licence<br/>Only 1 person can take fish from a primary boat or tender at the same time.</p> |

|   |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b><i>Gear Controls:</i></b></p>     | <p><u><i>Commercial</i></u></p> <p>Fish may be taken by hand, using SCUBA or Hookah using a herding device, fishing line, or a cast, scoop or mesh net.</p> | <p><u><i>Commercial</i></u></p> <p>May only be taken by hand using hand-held implements, other than mechanical implements.</p> | <p><u><i>Commercial</i></u></p> <p>May only be taken by hand, using SCUBA or Hookah.</p> | <p><u><i>Commercial</i></u></p> <p>May only be taken by hand or using hand-held non-mechanical implements or spear or spear guns. SCUBA or Hookah can also be used.</p> <p><u><i>Recreational</i></u></p> <p>May only be taken by hand or using a spear or spear gun. Only snorkels can be used.</p> |
| <p><b><i>Seasonal Closures:</i></b></p> | <p>Nil</p>  | <p>Nil</p>   | <p>Nil</p>   | <p><u><i>Commercial &amp; Recreational</i></u></p> <p>Closed 1 October to 31 January for all zones and sectors.</p> <p><u><i>Recreational</i></u></p> <p>Some tidal waters closed permanently to spear fishing.</p>  |

|  |   |            |  |  |
|--|---|------------|--|--|
| <p><b><i>Size and Possession Limits:</i></b></p> | <p>Standard regulated fish size and possession limits with some exclusions.</p> | <p>Nil</p> | <p><u><i>Commercial</i></u></p> <p>Minimum size limits for certain species as per licence conditions.</p> <p><u><i>Recreational</i></u></p> <p>Black teatfish – no take.</p> <p>Other species – possession limit of 5.</p> | <p><u><i>Commercial &amp; Recreational</i></u></p> <p>Cannot possess egg bearing or tar spot TRL.</p> <p><u><i>Recreational</i></u></p> <p>Painted crayfish - 11.5cm tail &amp; 9cm carapace minimum length.</p> <p>Red champagne lobster - 7.5cm carapace length.</p> <p>Northern zone - 3 per person and 6 per boat in total.</p> <p>Southern zone - 6 per person and 10 per boat in total.</p> <p>Cannot possess live lobster</p> |
|--|---|------------|--|--|