

# Impact Analysis Statement

## Summary IAS

### Details

Lead department	Department of Primary Industries
Name of the proposal	Implementation of wildlife trade operation (WTO) conditions for the Queensland sea cucumber fishery
Submission type	Consultation IAS
Title of related legislative or regulatory instrument	<i>Fisheries Legislation (Sea Cucumbers) Amendment Regulation 2025</i>
Date of issue	16 June 2025

Proposal type	Details
Minor and machinery in nature	<p><b><u>Management arrangements for sandfish</u></b></p> <p>The proposal is minor and machinery in nature as it does not involve substantive regulatory or policy change. The change is consistent with the approved decision rules of the <i>Queensland sea cucumber fishery harvest strategy: 2021–2026</i>.</p> <p>Harvest strategies are developed through extensive stakeholder consultation and include key objectives of the fishery, performance indicators and reference points, and decision rules outlining management responses.</p> <p>Under the harvest strategy, catch triggers are used to assess increases in fishing mortality for tier 2 species where the primary performance indicator (biomass) is not available. Annual catch levels are assessed against a reference level to detect changes in catch that may represent an unacceptable risk to an individual tier 2 species. The catch triggers are defined in the harvest strategy and have been informed by a management strategy evaluation. Decision rules provide that if the annual catch for a tier 2 species exceeds its trigger level, then a Total Allowable Catch will be set to maintain the annual catches of that species at, or below, the trigger level until a further assessment can be undertaken:</p> <p><b>3.0 Decision rules for commercial tier 2 species</b></p> <p>The following harvest control rules are to ensure that fishing does not result in unacceptable levels of fishing pressure on tier 2 species. The below rules are set to constrain catch of tier 2 species within harvest levels based on historical catch limits of within the fishery that have been evaluated as acceptable</p> <p><b>3.1</b> If the annual harvest of any tier 2 species is less than the prescribed trigger level, then no management action is required.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> If the annual harvest of any tier 2 species exceeds the prescribed trigger level, then a competitive Total Allowable Commercial Catch TACC will be set at the trigger level and an assessment will be required to determine the appropriate level of fishing to achieve a 60% biomass target.</p>



	<p>Sandfish (<i>Holothuria scabra</i>) is a tier 2 managed species where catch triggers are used to manage increases in fishing mortality. The trigger reference limit for sandfish is 15 tonnes per fishing season, informed by a management strategy evaluation.</p> <p>In the 2023-2024 fishing season, the total catch of sandfish by the commercial fishing sector was 17,903.4kg, which was 3 tonnes over the trigger reference limit, resulting in decision rule 3.2 being triggered and necessitating a competitive TACC being enforced for the following fishing season.</p> <p>Due to legislative timeframes, it was not possible to implement the decision rule in the 2024-2025 fishing season. It is therefore intended to be implemented in legislation for the 2025-2026 fishing season.</p> <p>As per the harvest strategy decision rules, sandfish is to be managed under species-level prescribed commercial catches (PCC) in the Fisheries Declaration 2019.</p> <p>Fisheries declarations in response to fishery harvest strategy decision rules are delegated to the Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry. Harvest strategies are developed in consultation with the commercial, recreational and Traditional fishing sectors to promote sustainable management of fishery resources.</p>
--	---

\*Refer to [The Queensland Government Better Regulation Policy](#) for regulatory proposals not requiring regulatory impact analysis (for example, public sector management, changes to existing criminal laws, taxation).

## What is the nature, size and scope of the problem? What are the objectives of government action?

### Management arrangements for amberfish and prickly redfish

*Thelenota* species (amberfish, *Thelenota anax*, and prickly redfish, *Thelenota ananas*) were listed on Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix II on 25 May 2024. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival. CITES requires the exporting country's Scientific Authority (for Australia, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – DCCEEW) to monitor exports of specimens of Appendix II-listed species and, whenever necessary, advises the CITES Management Authority of suitable measures to be taken to limit such exports in order to maintain such species throughout their range at a level consistent with their role in the ecosystems and well above the level at which they would qualify for Appendix I. In achieving this, DCCEEW must make a determination known as a non-detriment finding (NDF) prior to export of CITES listed specimens, which advises that such export will not be detrimental to the survival of the species. A positive NDF was finalised for *Thelenota* species by DCCEEW in May 2024 which included several recommendations to ensure sustainable harvest. A wildlife trade operation (WTO) declaration for all sea cucumber fisheries in effect at the time was updated in May 2024 to include additional conditions to reflect the recommendations in the NDF report. This included setting a catch limit for *Thelenota* species by 1 July 2025. In order to export Australian native animal or plant specimens and/or CITES listed specimens for commercial purposes, the specimens must come from an approved program such as a WTO.

On 16 June 2024, the Queensland Department Agriculture and Fisheries (now the Queensland Department of Primary Industries – DPI) applied to DCCEEW for assessment of the Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (QSCF) under Parts 13 and 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The fishery was assessed against the EPBC Act, as well as the 'Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition'. Assessment under Part 13 relates to the sustainability and performance of a fishery regarding impacts on protected marine species, and assessment under Part 13A relates to the sustainability and performance of a fishery for the express purpose of export approval.



On 29 November 2024, DCCEEW made a new WTO declaration, commonly referred to as a WTO export approval or simply a WTO, under Part 13A of the EPBC Act for the QSCF. The WTO is valid for a period of three years until 30 November 2027. A WTO under Part 13A of the EPBC Act permits the export of Australian native animal or plant specimens and/or CITES listed specimens for commercial purposes. As the QSCF fishery is predominantly an export fishery, a WTO under Part 13A of the EPBC Act is critical to its profitability and continuing existence.

The WTO is subject to nine non-standard conditions, a number of which are required to be implemented by the commencement of the 2025-26 fishing season (1 July 2025) to permit ongoing export. Condition 5(a) and (b) requires a legislative amendment to implement new TACC limits to be implemented for CITES-listed amberfish and prickly redfish:

**Condition 5**

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries must:

- (a) by 1 July 2025, implement an annual 10-tonne total allowable commercial catch limit (TACC) for CITES-listed amberfish (*Thelenota anax*) in the Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (East Coast).
- (b) By 1 July 2025, implement an annual 40-tonne total allowable commercial catch limit (TACC) for CITES-listed prickly redfish (*Thelenota ananas*) in the Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (East Coast).

The necessary amendments to meet Condition 5(a) and (b) of the WTO will affect the way the QSCF is managed.

The Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (QSCF) is a commercial harvest fishery operating predominately within an area that encompasses the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Boot, Ashmore, Marion and Saumarez reefs in the Coral Sea Marine Park. The fishery is based on the collection of a defined list of sea cucumber species from the family Holothuridae. The commercial sector consists of a small number of quota holders targeting high and medium value sea cucumber species, including white teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*), black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*) and burrowing blackfish (*Actinopyga spinea*). Prickly redfish is targeted to a lesser degree, while amberfish catches in recent years have been low may only be taken opportunistically.

The QSCF is a quota managed fishery through a system of Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) for several species. Under an ITQ system, a fishery's total allowable commercial catch (TACC) is determined through scientific assessment and management decisions, then divided into quotas that are allocated to the fisheries quota holders. For quota managed fisheries, each commercial fisher holds shares, or ITQ units, in a fishery. These ITQs represent a share of the fishery, or a fixed percentage of the TACC (rather than a fixed weight of fish), and are a fisher's secure and ongoing asset within a fishery, which can be bought, sold or leased between other commercial fishers. The TACC is the total catch limit for the commercial sector in a fishery and does not include fish caught by recreational, charter or traditional fishers. The TACC can be lowered or raised in response to pre-approved management arrangements under approved harvest strategies and is the most direct method to control commercial harvest levels. The TACC can also be implemented through a PCC limit.

While the QSCF supplies to the domestic market, international export markets are the predominant focus. Maintaining export approval is critical for continued employment in the fishery as product is primarily for export markets. If the WTO conditions to implement TACCs for amberfish and prickly redfish are not met, there is a high risk DCCEEW will revoke the WTO approval and sea cucumber harvested from the fishery would not be permitted to be exported, resulting in significant financial and operational impacts to the QSCF.

**What options were considered?**

**Management arrangements for amberfish and prickly redfish**

**Maintain the status quo**

Under the status quo, TACCs for amberfish and prickly redfish would not be implemented, for example, in legislation. The take of amberfish and prickly redfish in the QSCF would continue to be managed under B10-ITQ quota with no additional output controls.

Take of amberfish and prickly redfish may therefore exceed 10,000kg and 40,000kg respectively. New quota unit fees will not be introduced, and fees for amberfish and prickly redfish will continue to be managed under the fees for B1O-ITQ units.

If the WTO conditions are not met, DCCEEW are empowered to revoke the WTO, and approval to export product harvested from the QSCF will no longer be permitted. This would result in significant operational and financial impacts to the QSCF.

#### *Legislative amendments*

For the legislative options under consideration, there are two different types of quota management (output control) used for commercial fisheries where TACCs apply – individual transferrable quota and prescribed commercial catch.

Individual transferrable quota (ITQ) is proportional shares of a species' TACC prescribed in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 that are allocated to eligible licenced fishers in a fishery as ITQ units. ITQ units can be permanently transferred (bought or sold) or temporarily transferred (leased) between eligible licenced fishers in a fishery. As a TACC is set by weight in kilograms, ITQ units can be converted to into a weight equivalent for the fishing year. For ITQ, when a TACC increases or decreases, the value of quota units will increase or decrease, but each fisher's proportion remains the same. In fisheries managed with ITQ, fishers can calculate their allowed catch in weight based on the number of ITQ units they hold once the TACC is determined.

A PCC is a total catch limit for a species prescribed in the Fisheries Declaration 2019. A PCC is not allocated like ITQ, it is instead a competitive maximum limit that all eligible licenced fishers for that species and fishery may access. Once the PCC for the species is reached, the species becomes no-take for the remainder of the fishing year.

Three legislative options are under consideration to implement the WTO Condition 5(a) and (b):

1. PCC management for both amberfish and prickly redfish.
2. ITQ management for both amberfish and prickly redfish
3. PCC management for amberfish and ITQ management for prickly redfish.

#### **Option 1**

Amendments are proposed to the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019 and Fisheries Declaration 2019 by 1 July 2025 to:

- implement an annual 10,000kg TACC for amberfish as a PCC in the Fisheries Declaration 2019
- implement an annual 40,000kg TACC for prickly redfish as a PCC in the Fisheries Declaration 2019
- maintain the 'other sea cucumber' TACC at 307,999kg with corresponding 307,999 B1O-ITQ units.

Option 1 proposes to manage the take of amberfish and prickly redfish and meet the WTO Condition 5(a) and (b) by implementing species-level competitive prescribed commercial catches (PCC) in the Fisheries Declaration 2019.

While PCCs for prickly redfish will be introduced under the Fisheries Declaration 2019, ITQ management of both species will remain through the category of 'other sea cucumber' (B1O-ITQ units) under the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019. This management approach operates as a 'parent-child quota', which provides flexibility to commercial fishers while also setting a maximum catch limit for both species. Under Option 1, commercial fishers will continue to use their B1O-ITQ units to take amberfish and prickly redfish, with take recorded against both the usage of B1O-ITQ quota and the PCC for each species. Once the PCC for a species is reached, commercial fishers will no longer be permitted to take that species in the QSCF for the remainder of the fishing year.

Commercial fishers may, however, also choose to use their B1O-ITQ units to target species other than amberfish and prickly redfish in response to market and fishery conditions, with no impacts related to availability of quota units.

PCCs for amberfish and prickly redfish are not transferrable, and an allocation process does not apply. This is not dissimilar to existing management arrangements under the harvest strategy and its use of trigger reference levels for tier 2 species, in which catch shares are not allocated to commercial fishers.

Management of amberfish and prickly redfish as PCCs means that new quota unit fees will not be introduced. Fees for amberfish and prickly redfish will continue to be managed under the fees for B1O-ITQ units.

### **Option 2**

Amendments are proposed to the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019, Fisheries (Commercial Fisheries) Regulation 2019 and Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 by 1 July 2025 to:

- implement an annual 10,000kg TACC for amberfish in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 with the allocation of 10,000 relevant quota units using existing proportional holdings
- implement an annual 40,000kg TACC for prickly redfish in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 with the allocation of 40,000 relevant quota units using existing proportional holdings
- change the 'other sea cucumber' TACC from 307,999kg to 257,999kg to account for the separation of amberfish and prickly redfish from this category.
- apply quota unit fees for ITQ units for both amberfish and prickly redfish.

Option 2 proposes to implement species-level ITQ in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 for amberfish (proposed as B1A-ITQ units) and prickly redfish (proposed as B1P-ITQ units), in addition to the existing quota units for black teatfish, white teatfish and other sea cucumber. The establishment of amberfish and prickly redfish as species managed under ITQ will involve the creation of 10,000 B1A-ITQ units and 40,000 B1P-ITQ units. At the same time, B1O-ITQ quota units will be maintained at 307,999.

The establishment of ITQ units for amberfish and prickly redfish requires the use of a proportional allocation to maintain each commercial fisher's relative economic position in the QSCF. Allocation of amberfish (B1A-ITQ) units and prickly redfish (B1P-ITQ) units is proposed to be based on the proportion of other sea cucumber (B1O-ITQ) units held on a nominated date. Commercial fishers will retain their proportional holding of B1O-ITQ units and the total number of B1O-ITQ units will not change. However, the total catch limit (in kilograms) for B1O-ITQ will reduce from 307,999kg to 257,999kg in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 in line with the establishment of amberfish and prickly redfish TACCs and their removal from the 'other sea cucumber' TACC. As a result, 1 unit of B1O-ITQ will now represent less than 1kg (0.838kg).

$$\text{Prickly Redfish (B1P – ITQ)} = \frac{\text{B1O – ITQ units held at eligibility date} \times 40,000}{307,999}$$

$$\text{Amberfish (B1A – ITQ)} = \frac{\text{B1O – ITQ units held at eligibility date} \times 10,000}{307,999}$$

Once established, each species-level ITQ will have prescribed quota unit fees. However, DPI proposes to apply a quota unit fee to ITQ units for amberfish (B1A-ITQ units) and prickly redfish (B1P-ITQ units) of **nil fee units**. This is because under the proposed allocation method, the number of B1O-ITQ units will remain at 307,999. The B1O-ITQ units are subject to the existing fee structure of 0.14 fee units per ITQ unit, the current value per fee unit is \$1.06 (as of 1 July 2024), B1O-ITQ units are valued at \$0.15 per ITQ unit.

### **Option 3**

Amendments are proposed to the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019, Fisheries (Commercial Fisheries) Regulation 2019 and Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 by 1 July 2025 to:

- implement an annual 10,000kg TACC for amberfish as a PCC in the Fisheries Declaration 2019
- implement an annual 40,000kg TACC for prickly redfish in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 with the allocation of 40,000 relevant quota units using existing proportional holdings



- change the 'other sea cucumber' TACC from 307,999kg to 267,999kg to account for the separation of prickly redfish from this category.
- apply quota unit fees for ITQ units for prickly redfish.

Option 3 proposes to implement a species-level ITQ in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 for prickly redfish only (proposed as B1P-ITQ units). To manage the take of amberfish and still meet the WTO Condition 5(a) to implement a 10,000kg TACC, Option 3 also proposes to implement a species-level prescribed commercial catch (PCC) for amberfish in the Fisheries Declaration 2019. The establishment of prickly redfish as species managed under ITQ will involve the creation of 40,000 B1P-ITQ units. At the same time, B1O-ITQ quota units will be maintained at 307,999.

While a PCC will be introduced for amberfish under the Fisheries Declaration 2019, ITQ management of the species will remain through the category of 'other sea cucumber' (B1O-ITQ units) under the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019. This management approach operates as a 'parent-child quota', which provides flexibility to commercial fishers while also setting a maximum catch limit for a species. Under Option 3, commercial fishers will continue to use their B1O-ITQ units to take amberfish with take recorded against both the usage of B1O-ITQ quota and the PCC for amberfish. Commercial fishers may, however, also choose to use their B1O-ITQ units to target species other than amberfish in response to market and fishery conditions. Once the PCC for amberfish is reached, commercial fishers will no longer be permitted to take amberfish in the QSCF for the remainder of the fishing year. B1O-ITQ quota can still be used to take all other species included in the category.

The establishment of ITQ units for prickly redfish requires the use of a proportional allocation to maintain each commercial fisher's relative economic position in the QSCF. Allocation of prickly redfish (B1P-ITQ) units is proposed to be based on the proportion of other sea cucumber (B1O-ITQ) units held on a nominated date. Commercial fishers will retain their proportional holding of B1O-ITQ units and the total number of B1O-ITQ units will not change. However, the total catch limit (in kilograms) for B1O-ITQ will reduce from 307,999kg to 267,999kg in the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 in line with the establishment of the prickly redfish TACCs and its removal from the 'other sea cucumber' TACC. As a result, 1 unit of B1O-ITQ will now represent less than 1kg (0.870kg).

$$\text{Prickly Redfish (B1P – ITQ)} = \frac{\text{B1O – ITQ units held at eligibility date} \times 40,000}{307,999}$$

The PCC for amberfish is not transferrable and an allocation process does not apply. The PCC will be available on a competitive basis to commercial fishers in the QSCF until it is reached. This is not dissimilar to existing management arrangements under the harvest strategy and its use of trigger reference levels for tier 2 species, in which catch shares are not allocated to commercial fishers.

Once established, prickly redfish (B1P-ITQ) units will have prescribed quota unit fees. However, DPI proposes to apply a quota unit fee to ITQ units for prickly redfish (B1P-ITQ units) of **nil fee units**. This is because under the proposed allocation method, the number of B1O-ITQ units will remain at 307,999 and each of these units remains subject to the existing fee structure of 0.14 fee units per ITQ unit (\$0.15 per ITQ unit). Fees associated with amberfish as a PCC will continue to be charged for holdings of B1O-ITQ units.

*Alternative options to legislative amendments have not been examined in detail as they are not considered feasible to meet the WTO conditions.*

For example, as the QSCF operates under an approved harvest strategy (Queensland sea cucumber fishery harvest strategy: 2021–2026), administrative arrangements could be considered to manage the fishery. The harvest strategy provides for moving to assessment-based decision-making through clear fishery objectives, performance indicators, triggers for management action, and appropriate management responses based on the status of Queensland's sea cucumber stocks.

The harvest strategy is approaching its requirement to be fully reviewed in accordance with the Fisheries Act 1994. This provides the opportunity to update the management of the fishery via the harvest strategy to meet the WTO conditions. However, this is not preferred. The Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 is the instrument prescribing existing quota and TACC declarations.



An informal declaration of a TACC outside of the Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 would not be enforceable or be subject to the compliance action and tools available under the Fisheries Act 1994. This would not satisfy the intent of the WTO Condition 5(a) and (b) and subsequently the WTO conditions would not be met.

### **What are the impacts?**

#### **Management arrangements for amberfish and prickly redfish**

##### **Maintain the status quo.**

Maintaining the status quo, or taking no action, would not meet the WTO conditions. A revocation of the WTO from not meeting the conditions will result in sea cucumber harvested from the fishery not having permission to be exported, resulting in significant financial and operational impacts to the QSCF. While not immediately quantifiable, the financial impacts to Queensland's export fishery value of \$13.9 million ('Other fishery' group as per BDO EconSearch) is likely to be that of a reduction. Without sufficient domestic markets to then absorb the remaining market share, it is expected that the QSCF would become unviable for operators to continue, and the fishery would cease to operate. This has negative flow on effects for commercial fisheries employment opportunities and business confidence.

Maintaining the status quo has no impacts on the recreational or Traditional fishing sectors.

##### **Option 1**

DPI's catch disposal record data indicates that in the fishing years from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2024, the take of prickly redfish was an average of approximately 40,000 kg per year. This indicates that a 40,000 kg TACC for prickly redfish is appropriate as an upper harvest limit to manage risks to the species.

As the QSCF is currently managed wholly through ITQ, implementing species-level PCCs for amberfish and prickly redfish may disrupt the existing fishery practices for commercial fishers, such as maintaining existing market shares and flexibility for ITQ transfers for all species. However, the 'parent-child quota' management of amberfish and prickly redfish maintains the ability for the total number of ITQ units in the QSCF to be available for transfer, and any associated impacts are not expected to be significant.

PCCs provide commercial fishers with flexibility to harvest other species under the 'other sea cucumber' ITQ category without a firm allocation of amberfish (which may be underutilised) and prickly redfish. PCCs for these species also negates the need to establish quota unit fees. This removes the probability of negative financial impacts which may result for commercial fishers paying fees on quota that may not be utilised.

As noted above, the total number of ITQ units in the QSCF will remain unchanged and there is no impact on total fees charged for ITQ units in the QSCF.

As there is no allocation nor catch limitations on other sectors associated with Option 1, impacts on the recreational or Indigenous fishing sectors is not anticipated.

In addition to the benefits above, Option 1 presents the most streamlined process with the least implications to fishers in the QSCF. Tier 2 species in the QSCF are managed through trigger reference points under the harvest strategy. These reference points are 'competitive' between operators and nested within B10-ITQ units. Such reference points can be considered 'informal PCCs' under the harvest strategy and the implementation of PCCs in legislation simply formalises them.

When compared to the status quo, Option 1 is of greater benefit as it enables exports to continue.

##### **Option 2**

As the QSCF is managed wholly through ITQ, implementing species-level ITQ for amberfish and prickly redfish allows for a familiar for existing fishery practices for commercial fishers. This includes maintain existing market shares and flexibility for ITQ transfers.

Allocation of amberfish and prickly redfish may impact fishing behaviours and target species in the QSCF. Currently, the take of amberfish and prickly redfish is only limited by the 'bucket' ITQ of 'other sea cucumber'. Theoretically, this allows the take of amberfish and prickly redfish to greatly exceed the new TACCs proposed under Condition 5(a) and (b) of the WTO. However, logbook data and catch disposal records for the QSCF show that commercial fishers have taken between 35,000 kg and 43,000 kg of prickly redfish annually in the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2024.



Average annual take of prickly redfish in this period, according to catch disposal records, is approximately 40,000 kg. Therefore, the business impacts from the implementation of TACCs for prickly redfish are not expected to be significant.

In the same period, however, take of amberfish as recorded in commercial fishing logbooks and catch disposal records shows that there was no or very minimal take indicating that an accurate assessment of annual take of the species is not available. Therefore a 10,000 kg TACC managed through ITQ may have impacts on commercial fishers.

Firstly, the management of amberfish under 'other sea cucumber' (B1O-ITQ units) provides flexibility for commercial fishers about the amount of amberfish they take in the QSCF. Currently, commercial fishers may decide to utilise B1O-ITQ units for species other than amberfish in response to market and fishery conditions. Establishing amberfish as an ITQ managed species will remove 10,000 kg available to fishers to use flexibly and assign it to amberfish only. Given that take of this species in recent fishing years is very low, this may negatively affect fishers in the QSCF.

The proposed amendments include the introduction of new fees of \$0.00 for amberfish (B1A-ITQ units) and prickly redfish (B1P-ITQ units), therefore there are no financial impacts to commercial fishers in the QSCF. DPI will also not be impacted as revenue collected from relevant quota authorities will remain the same.

As there is no allocation nor catch limitations on other sectors associated with Option 2, there are no impacts on the recreational or Indigenous fishing sectors.

Option 2 has generally minor impacts on, and deliver benefits to, the QSCF compared to the status quo.

### **Option 3**

DPI's catch disposal record data indicates that in the fishing years from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2024, the take of prickly redfish was an average of approximately 40,000 kg per year. This indicates that a 40,000 kg TACC for prickly redfish is appropriate as an upper harvest limit to manage risks to the species.

As the QSCF is managed wholly through ITQ, implementing species-level ITQ for prickly redfish and a PCC for amberfish may disrupt the existing fishery practices for commercial fishers, such as maintaining existing market shares and flexibility for ITQ transfers for all species. However, the 'parent-child quota' management of amberfish maintains the ability for the total number of ITQ units in the QSCF to be available for transfer, and any associated impacts are not expected to be significant.

However, given that take of amberfish as recorded in commercial fishing logbooks and catch disposal records shows that there was no or very minimal take, a PCC provides commercial fishers with flexibility to harvest other species under the 'other sea cucumber' ITQ category without a firm allocation of amberfish, which may be underutilised. A PCC for amberfish also negates the need to establish a new quota unit fee. This removes any probability of negative financial impacts which may result for commercial fishers paying fees on quota that may not be utilised.

The proposed amendments include the introduction of new fees of \$0.00 for prickly redfish (B1P-ITQ units), therefore there are no financial impacts to commercial fishers in the QSCF. DPI will also not be impacted as revenue collected from these quota authorities will similarly remain the same.

As there is no allocation nor catch limitations on other sectors associated with Option 3, there are no impacts on the recreational or Indigenous fishing sectors.

Option 3 has generally minor impacts on, and deliver benefits to, the QSCF compared to the status quo.

### **Who was consulted?**

#### **Management arrangements for amberfish and prickly redfish**

As part of DPI's application to DCCEEW, public comments were invited were received on DPI's application for export approval under the EPBC Act. The submissions expressed concerns about the extent to which environmental risks (e.g. climate related) were considered in the relevant environmental risk assessment (ERA), the role sea cucumbers play in coral reef ecosystems, the reliability of independent survey data, stock assessments and management strategy evaluations (MSEs). Concerns were also expressed regarding the potential risks for concentrated harvest in various areas of the fishery and risks of stock decline for CITES-listed black and white teatfish.

DPI provided DCCEEW with a response to the issues raised in the public submissions and this information as well as all public submissions were considered in DCCEEW's assessment.





All feedback received during the reassessment consultation phase was considered by DCCEEW during the development of draft conditions for the fishery.

QSCF commercial industry members have been engaged to discuss the WTO conditions throughout their development and finalisation. Meetings were held with industry members on 13 November 2024 when the draft conditions were first received, and further discussions were undertaken on 18–19 November 2024 as discussions between DPI and DCCEEW progressed. Industry members provide general in-principle support for Condition 5(a) and (b) of the WTO.

A consultation paper and survey questionnaire was sent to QSCF Working Group members and Cape York Special Fisheries Working Group members directly via email. The consultation period ran from 12 March 2025 to 28 March 2025.

A total of three (3) survey questions relating to the QSCF management arrangements were asked and included 'Yes/No' answers. An opportunity was provided at the end of each question to add comments.

In total, 3 submissions were received. Survey respondents included commercial industry members and Traditional Owner groups.

- 100% of survey respondents agreed with setting a TACC via implementation of PCCs for prickly redfish and amberfish.
- 100% of survey respondents disagreed with proportional allocation method for the ITQ units for prickly redfish and amberfish.

Further feedback regarding the necessary management arrangements for sandfish:

- Concerns raised over the future allocation process of all species of Queensland Sea Cucumber fishery quota for small operations, First Nations communities and new entrants into the fishery. Consideration of allocating quota to First Nations fishers for commercial purposes and recognising Traditional Owners as essential stakeholders.
- Proposal to include Traditional Owners in the commercial fishery to pass on their knowledge of cultural monitoring and sustainable fishing to aid in the current management of the QSCF.

#### **What is the recommended option and why?**

##### **Management arrangements for amberfish and prickly redfish**

A legislative option is the preferred option to achieve the objective of Government management action to meet the WTO Condition 5(a) and (b).

Of the proposed legislative options, Option 1 is the preferred option to achieve the objective of Government management action to meet the WTO Condition 5(a) and (b). Option 1 presents the most streamlined process with least impacts to fishers in the QSCF and provides them with the greatest flexibility to continue to harvest sea cucumber species to respond to market and fishery conditions. Option 1 also does not increase administrative burden on administration by DPI and therefore presents the greatest net benefit to Queensland.

**Under Option 1**, PCCs provide commercial fishers with flexibility to harvest other species under the 'other sea cucumber' ITQ category without a firm allocation of amberfish (which may be underutilised) and prickly redfish. PCCs for these species also negates the need to establish quota unit fees. This removes the probability of negative financial impacts which may result for commercial fishers paying fees on quota that may not be utilised.

**Under Option 2**, establishing amberfish as an ITQ managed species will remove 10,000 kg available to fishers to use flexibly and assign it to amberfish only. Given that take of this species in recent fishing years is very low, this may negatively affect fishers in the QSCF.

**Under Option 3**, implementing species-level ITQ for prickly redfish and a PCC for amberfish may disrupt the existing fishery practices for commercial fishers, such as maintaining existing market shares and flexibility for ITQ transfers for all species.

Given that take of amberfish as recorded in commercial fishing logbooks and catch disposal records shows that there was no or very minimal take, a PCC provides commercial fishers with flexibility to harvest other species under the 'other sea cucumber' ITQ category without a firm allocation of amberfish, which may be underutilised. A PCC for amberfish also negates the need to establish a new quota unit fee. This removes any probability of negative financial impacts which may result for commercial fishers paying fees on quota that may not be utilised.

## Impact assessment

	First full year	First 10 years**
<b>Direct costs – Compliance costs*</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Direct costs – Government costs</b>	N/A	N/A

\* The *direct costs calculator tool* (available at [www.treasury.qld.gov.au/betterregulation](http://www.treasury.qld.gov.au/betterregulation) ) should be used to calculate direct costs of regulatory burden. If the proposal has no costs, report as zero. \*\*Agency to note where a longer or different timeframe may be more appropriate.

## Signed



**Rachel Chay**

Acting Director-General  
Department of Primary Industries

Date: 13/6/2025



**Anthony Perrett MP**

Minister for Primary Industries

Date: 15/6/2025