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Minutes

Meeting	Southern Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Resource Assessment Group (SESSFRAG)		
Meeting	Chairs' Meeting	Dates	20-22 nd May 2025
Location	Canberra/Online	Time	1pm- 5pm Tuesday 20 th 9am - 5pm Wednesday 21 st 9am-5pm Thursday 22 nd
Members	Dr Cathy Dichmont, Chair Dr Beth Fulton, Environment member, CSIRO Ms Sally Weekes, Senior Manager, AFMA Dr Lance Lloyd, Scientific member / GABRAG Chair Dr Paul McShane, Scientific member / SERAG Chair Mr Sandy Morison, Scientific member / SharkRAG Chair Mr Steven Rust, Interim Economics Member		
Apologies	Dr Sarah Jennings, Economics member		
Invited Participants	Dr Geoff Tuck, CSIRO Dr Pia Bessell-Browne, CSIRO Dr Paul Burch, CSIRO Dr Miriana Sporcic, CSIRO Dr Robin Thomson, CSIRO Dr Ian Knuckey, Fishwell Consulting (Apology for first two days) Mr Neil MacDonald, GABIA Mr Simon Boag, SETFIA / SSIA		



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	Dr Andrew Weeks, Cesar Australia Dr Andrew Penney, Pisces Australis Dr Kyne Krusic-Golub, Fish Aging Services Dr John Morrongiello, University of Melbourne Dr Andrew Weeks, Ecological Geonomics Ms Natalie Couchman, AFMA Dr Mark Grubert, AFMA Dr Lianos Triantafillos, AFMA Miss Audrey Kent, AFMA Miss Hannah Maude, AFMA Ms Rebecca Jol, AFMA Mr Anthony Coggan, AFMA Ms Michelle Henriksen, AFMA Dr David Smith, AFMA Ms Anna Willock, Deputy CEO AFMA Mr Samuel Langholz, AFMA Mr Tamre Sarhan, AFMA
Observers	Mr Daniel Wright, ABARES Mr James Woodhams, ABARES Mr Ross Bromley, ATLANTIS Dr Ashley Fowler, NSW DPI Ms Rikki Taylor, CSIRO Dr Geoff Liggins, NSW DPI
EO	Ms Jennifer Power-Geary

Agenda Item	Title/Topic/Issue	Notes, Action & Recommendations
1.	Preliminaries	1.1 Welcome and apologies The Chair, Cathy Dichmont, opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed participants. The Chair also facilitated the introduction of meeting participants and noted apologies, which is recoded in the table above. Meeting participants were informed that the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of assisting the preparation of meeting minutes. 1.2 Declarations of interests The SESSFRAG noted, in line with Section 15 of <i>Fisheries Management Paper 1 – Consultative Committees</i> (FMP1), the requirement for all meeting participants to declare relevant interests, not limited to pecuniary gain, regarding all agenda items proposed for SESSFRAG Chairs’ Meeting. Meeting participants discussed and agreed how declared interest would be managed. Declared interests and how they were managed at SESSFRAG Chairs’ Meeting 2025 are recorded in the register of interest at Attachment B. 1.3 Adoption of agenda The agenda was adopted as final (see Attachment A). 1.4 Minutes of previous meeting AFMA noted that the minutes from SESSFRAG Data meeting held in August 2024 were distributed to SESSFRAG members for feedback prior to finalisation and are available on the AFMA website. 1.5 Actions arising from previous meetings The minutes from previous meetings were endorsed, and actions arising were reviewed. Key updates regarding actions included: • Tissue sampling for CKMR analysis of redfish and blue-eye trevalla is progressing, with blue-eye trevalla included in SSIA’s co-management agreement. • A research priority on climate change impacts was proposed for closure, with ongoing voluntary reporting from skippers encouraged. • Spatial closures will be addressed under the Multi-Species Harvest Strategy project, with recognition of the increasing complexity of spatial constraints. • Epigenetic ageing trials were deprioritised due to methodological limitations, but available tissue samples from CMS voyages will be catalogued for future use. • The trigger species threshold in the harvest strategy will be revised to reflect “near target” status, with a proposed definition of within 10% of the TRP and no declining trend. • AFMA to create a table at the end of the Annual Research Statement to capture the list of species that have had independent reviews of stock assessments completed and reference (year, who did it and link).

		A summary of actions and recommendations from SESSFRAG Chairs' Meeting 2025 are at Attachment C. Action 1: Dr Beth Fulton to create a document that crew can fill out and include details of where to send it on completion. The purpose of this document is to detail on-water observations to better understand climate change impacts (e.g., fishing deeper, temp of water). Action 2: CSIRO to provide SESSFRAG with a list of available muscle tissue samples (by species) collected during previous SEA-MES voyages. The “rules of engagement” will also be provided to inform appropriate use of these samples. SESSFRAG will then consider how they may be used to inform management. Action 3: AFMA to include new wording relating to the concept of “near” target in future documents.
2	Update from the RAG Chairs and AFMA	SESSFRAG noted updates from AFMA and industry regarding current management arrangements and activities in the SESSF. Updates from other relevant jurisdictions were also provided. 2.1 AFMA Management • Budget constraints have led to more online meetings. • Proposal to merge GABRAG into SERAG and GABMAC into SEMAC under consideration. • EM implementation in GAB trawl fishery from July 2025. • Ministerial changes noted, ongoing engagement on spatial access issues. 2.2 Advisory Groups GABRAG: • Low participation (three vessels), strong ocean jacket catches • Research priorities include profitability and market trends • Crew-based data collection program initiated SERAG • Tier 1 assessments for pink ling and school whiting completed • Transition from CASAL to Stock Synthesis platform • Tier 4 assessments for several species accepted or deferred. • Blue-eye Trevalla identified as a candidate for Tier 1 transition. SharkRAG: • Gummy shark TAC adjusted to reduce school shark bycatch. • School shark bycatch TAC maintained at 207 t using logbook method and discard survival estimates. • Industry reports suggest increasing school shark abundance; scientific advice remains cautious. Action 4: AFMA to include a table in the SESSF research statement that summaries independent reviews of stock assessments over time.

3	Update on climate and ecosystem research	CSIRO provided an update on the current climate status of the SESSF and considerations for future data collection. Presentation Highlights: - Continued marine heatwaves and shifting species distributions observed during 2024-25. - Shelf species (e.g., jackass morwong, ocean perch, blue warehou) are increasingly affected. - Changes in plankton dynamics and nutrient profiles noted. - Harmful algal blooms (HABs) observed in South Australia with significant mortality events. - Ecosystem Trait Index (ETI) remains in a “low integrity” state. - CMS voyages show increased oceanographic variability and deeper sampling. - Notable declines in CPUE for redfish and school shark; increases for blue grenadier and stingrays. - Emphasis on the need for timely data collection and adaptive management. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - CSIRO are interested in voluntary skipper reporting of unusual observations noting that a template and address of where to send the observations to would need to be developed. - Suggestion to integrate climate indicators into harvest strategies. - Noted that delays in data collection and response could lead to stock collapses under climate change.
4	Data limited assessment update	Presentation Highlights: - Simulation testing of catch-and-age models for long-lived, data-limited stocks (e.g., non-eastern orange roughy). - Stock Synthesis used as both operating and estimation model. - Preliminary results show that with nine years of age data, robust stock status estimates are possible. - Reduced age data leads to increased bias and uncertainty. - Sensitivity testing on natural mortality, steepness, and catch history is ongoing. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - Agreement that the method shows promise for data-limited stocks. - Further work needed to define appropriate harvest control rules and tier classification. - Results will inform whether assessments for non-eastern orange roughy proceed in 2025.
5	SESSF History document update	Presentation Highlights: - Updates proposed to the SESSF Management History Timeline: - Implementation of trigger species category. - Amendments to trawl closures and marine park zoning. - Observer notification requirements for deepwater trawl operations. - Seabird mitigation measures in the GAB.

		- Scientific permits for fishing in previously closed areas (e.g., Murray dogfish closure). - Additional updates proposed: - Data collection under co-management in western orange roughy fishery. - Initiation of GABIA crew-based data collection. - Cessation of Danish seine operations in the GAB. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - Strong support for maintaining the document as a living reference. Action 5: AFMA to include fishing activity under research permit including in the Murray Dogfish Closure for Orange Roughy and its impact on catches of Deepwater Sharks in terms of assessments. Recommendation 1: AFMA also include the following in the SESSF History document: i. The beginning of data collection by industry in the Murry Dogfish Closure given its potential implications on catch series for deepwater sharks (and CPUE series). ii. The beginning of the GABIA data collection program
6	Multi-Species Harvest Strategy Update	Presentation Highlights: - Outlined the rationale and structure of the proposed FRDC-funded project to develop a cost-effective, practical multi-species harvest strategy for the SESSF. - Emphasized the need to address technical interactions, cost constraints, and climate impacts. - Proposed a four-stage project: 1) fishery profiling and concept harvest strategy development, 2) stakeholder workshop, 3) MSE testing, and 4) final strategy refinement. - Noted the project would use the SE trawl sector as a testbed, with potential applicability to other sectors. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - Strong support for the project's scope and structure. - Emphasis on integrating climate indicators (e.g., Beth Fulton's ecosystem indices) and spatial closures. - Agreement on the need to define a "base case" harvest strategy early in the project to avoid scope creep. - Noted the importance of aligning with existing and emerging assessment tiers and tools (e.g., CKMR, low recruitment models). Recommendation 2: That the project agree on a 'base case' harvest strategy for specification and testing in stage 3, to avoid scope creep and ensure the final harvest strategy is consistent with what was agreed and MSE tested.

7	Whole Genome Sequencing for Stock Assessment	Presentation Highlights: • Introduced the use of whole genome sequencing to estimate effective population size (N_e) and reconstruct demographic histories. • Demonstrated applications in koalas, dingoes, and proposed fisheries species (e.g., school shark, John Dory). • Highlighted the method's potential to complement CPUE and CKMR by providing long-term population trajectories. SESSFRAG discussed the following: • Acknowledged the method's value for understanding historical bottlenecks and recovery trends. • Noted limitations in applying N_e directly to fisheries management due to its non-linear and changing relationship with census size noting census size is what catch limits are currently based on. A project to explore its use for fisheries would need to outline what would be required in order to use it for management. • Agreed the method is promising but best suited for complementary use, particularly in data-poor or long-lived species. • Recommended a "watching brief" approach, with interest in results from New Zealand applications before broader adoption. Recommendation 3: SESSFRAG agreed to keep a watching brief on the approach given the current uncertainty about how N_e relates to census population size (what current catch limits are based on) and therefore how it can be used for management purposes. Recommendation 4: Related to this method, SESSFRAG were interested in whether for any SESSF species being studied, if a bottle neck was found, did that coincide with a last inter-glacial period as this could inform if those species are impacted by climate.
8	Fish Ageing Update	Presentation Highlights: • Development of the ageing plans for 2024-25 and 2025-26. • Current progress: 9000 samples prepared, 6500 aged. • Key species: Blue Grenadier, Tiger Flathead, John Dory, Eastern Roughy, Gummy Shark, School Shark, and GAB species. • John Dory: 1000 samples to be aged, focusing on 2023 and 2024 collections. • Silver Trevally: Insufficient samples for useful update. • Western Roughy: 1000 samples to be aged, advice needed on sample selection. • Blue-eye Trevalla: Potential ageing required, budget and priority to be discussed. SESSFRAG discussed the following: • Prioritization of John Dory ageing to support 2025 assessment. • Coordination with NSW for Silver Trevally sampling. • Out-of-session action items for Western Roughy ageing. • Trade-offs between John Dory and Blue-eye Trevalla ageing based on budget and assessment needs.

		Action 6: CSIRO to decide which of the available John Dory otoliths should be aged and inform FAS of their decision. Action 7: AFMA to approach NSW DPI to assist in the sampling of Commonwealth landed Silver Trevally at NSW fish markets. Action 8: FAS to send an ageing summary to CSIRO to assist in forward planning. Action 9: AFMA, CSIRO and FAS work together to determine feasible ageing options for Western Orange Roughy. Action 10: AFMA, CSIRO and FAS to schedule ageing Blue-eye Trevalla, John Dory and Gummy Shark. Recommendations 5: 1000 John Dory otoliths should be aged first (for the 2025 assessment) and then 2024 collected Gummy Shark vertebrae aged for the 2026 assessment. Recommendation 6: Historical collection of Silver Trevally otoliths was too small to provide meaningful age data for a future assessment of this species
9	Novel Methods for Reconstructing Maturity and Reproductive Histories	Presentation Highlights: - Introduced an FRDC-funded project exploring the use of otolith proteins to estimate age at maturity and reproductive history in SESSF species. - The method uses antibody-based fluorescence microscopy to detect reproductive proteins (e.g., vitellogenin) in otoliths, offering a potential proxy for maturity and spawning frequency. - Target species include Blue Grenadier, Tiger Flathead, Pink Ling, and Jackass Morwong. - Preliminary results show promising alignment between protein expression and known maturity ages. - The project also explores statistical models (e.g., jerk index from growth trajectories) to estimate maturity from otolith growth patterns. - Aims to develop scalable, cost-effective assays and generate long-term maturity time series from archived otolith collections. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - Validation efforts are underway using known immature and mature samples to confirm assay accuracy. - Potential application to skip spawning analysis, with Blue Grenadier and school shark identified as candidates. - Interest in expanding the method to other species, including sharks and tunas, pending proof of concept. - The technique could significantly enhance stock assessments by reducing reliance on outdated or limited gonad data.
10	Transitioning the Blue-eye Trevalla Assessment to Tier 1	Presentation Highlights: - Proposal to review data and develop preliminary Tier 1 stock assessment models for the slope stock of Blue-eye Trevalla. - The species is economically significant (GVP ~\$4 million/year) and currently assessed using a Tier 4 method.

		• Previous Tier 1 attempts (early 2000s and late 2000s) were unsuccessful, but improvements in modelling (e.g., conditional age-at-length in Stock Synthesis) and additional data (15+ years) now support revisiting this. • A two-stage process is proposed: • Data review and preliminary modelling (to be reviewed by SERAG in 2025). • Development of full Tier 1 models for review by SESSFRAG in 2026, pending Stage 1 outcomes. SESSFRAG discussed the following: • Strong support for transitioning to Tier 1, given limitations of current Tier 4 methods. • Concerns noted about historical issues with seasonal variability in age/size composition and sampling coverage. • Potential for parameter borrowing to inform the Seamount stock (Tier 5), though direct benefits are limited. • Agreement to begin collecting additional length and otolith samples from trawl-caught Blue-eye Trevalla. • DNA sampling also underway to support related research. Recommendations 7: SESSFRAG agreed to the recommended methodology and timeline outlined by Dr Paul Burch.
11	Assessment Advice for selected Species/Stocks	Silver Warehou Assessment Presentation Highlights: • The Tier 1 assessment for Silver Warehou was rejected by SERAG in 2024 due to poor model fits and an implausibly high RBC (~5x current TAC). • The RAG recommended maintaining the 350 t TAC based on constant catch projections from the previous assessment. SESSFRAG discussed the following: • CSIRO noted persistent issues with data quality, including inconsistent length frequencies and unreliable discard estimates. • The species is no longer targeted, with low catches and increasing discards, compounded by low observer coverage. • Options for future assessment are limited; a weight-of-evidence (Tier 6) approach may be the only viable path forward. • The group discussed the potential to adopt Western Australia's formal weight-of-evidence framework, which is MSC-approved and used across all assessment tiers. • Action: AFMA to consult with WA Fisheries (e.g., Alex Hesp) to explore adapting their framework for SESSF use. RBC Expiry and Interim Advice Presentation Highlights: • Discussion on how to set RBCs once an agreed RBC period (e.g., 3-year MYTAC) has lapsed, as occurred with Pink Ling West.

		- In that case, the RAG adopted a stepped-down RBC based on projections from the previous assessment. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - Two precedents were identified: (1) stepped-down RBCs (e.g., 8.5% decline for Pink Ling), and (2) informal rollovers of constant catch projections. - The group agreed that a formal process is needed to guide future decisions, particularly for Tier 1 stocks. - Suggestions included: - Using precautionary projections from sensitivity models. - Considering stock status relative to reference points and climate risk. - Reviewing data annually to detect signals warranting earlier reassessment. Recommendation 8: That AFMA contact Western Australian Fisheries (specifically Alex Hesp) regarding the weight-of-evidence approach that they utilise (for potential application to Silver Warehou).
12	Discard Estimation Using Electronic Monitoring (EM)	Presentation Highlights: - AFMA is implementing EM in the GAB trawl sector from 1 July 2025, initially for seabird monitoring, with discard estimation to follow. - A trial compared two EM review methods: “snapshot” (random frames) vs. “whole event” (full discard footage). - The “whole event” method captured significantly more species and was not more time-consuming than snapshots. - Proposed discard estimation method: - Use EM to determine species composition (by weight) from full discard footage. - Estimate total discard weight as: logbook total catch weight – retained weight. - Apply EM-derived species proportions to estimate discard weight by species. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - Concerns raised about: - Reliability of logbook total weight estimates (not currently a required field). - Accuracy of EM reviewers estimating species weights. - Observer variability and lack of a “ground truth” for validation. - Suggestions included: - Enhancing EM footage (e.g., camera angles, calibration) to improve weight estimation. - Conducting structured trials with known discard weights (e.g., boxing discards). - Consulting with WA and Queensland programs (e.g., Darryl McPhee’s work) for best practices. SESSFRAG agreed: - Support for using the “whole event” method for species composition. - Further work needed to refine total discard weight estimation.

		AFMA to coordinate an out-of-session working group (including CSIRO and industry) to refine the method and report back to SESSFRAG or GABRAG. Action 11: That AFMA establish a working group with CSIRO and relevant others to develop an appropriate methodology to estimate discards from EM footage (that could be accepted for assessment), including consideration of whether calibration between observers and EM is require, and present this methodology to the relevant RAG for comment.
13	Artificial Intelligence in Commonwealth Fisheries	Presentation Highlights: - Provided an update on CSIRO's AI research to enhance cost-efficiency and data processing in electronic monitoring (EM) systems. - Two key projects were discussed: - Tuna fishery: AI used for catch event detection, species identification, and seabird interaction monitoring. - Sub-Antarctic fishery: AI applied to catch composition and length estimation of toothfish. - Demonstrated AI capabilities including: - Real-time detection of catch events and species (e.g., albacore, toothfish). - Seabird detection and counting, including Tory line deployment monitoring. - Length estimation using keypoint labelling and camera calibration. - Highlighted challenges: - Data storage (e.g., 28 years of video from one year of EM). - Image quality, species misidentification, and scalability across vessels and fisheries. - Human error in manual counts, reinforcing the value of AI as a consistent tool. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - AI is expected to be introduced incrementally, starting with tasks like Tory line detection. - Human validation will remain essential, especially for high-risk species (e.g., seabirds). - Potential for AI to reduce observer workload and improve discard estimation. - Acknowledged that while AI is not yet ready for full deployment in the SESSF, it is close for tuna and toothfish fisheries, with broader application expected within 1–2 years. - Emphasis on identifying "low-hanging fruit" for early AI adoption in the SESSF.
14	School Shark Close Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR) Update	Presentation Highlights: - Reviewed the history of school shark assessments, from early Tier 1 models to the current CKMR approach. - The CKMR model (based on 3,000 samples) estimates absolute adult abundance and a median population growth rate of ~3% per annum. - The model does not estimate B0 or relative biomass, but projections are used to cap annual removals.

		• A new set of 3,000 samples has been collected, with plans to integrate all 6,000 samples in an updated model by the end of 2025. • Key developments: ○ Use of full sibling pairs to calibrate age estimates. ○ Investigation of potential stock structure (e.g., shallow vs. deep water populations). ○ Identification of spatial clustering in kin pairs, particularly in eastern Bass Strait. ○ Plans to model skip spawning and potentially include additional kin types (e.g., grandparent-grandchild). SESSFRAG discussed the following: • The CKMR model's low abundance estimates contrast with historical Tier 1 models, possibly due to loss of historical subpopulations (e.g., Port Phillip Bay). • Trawl CPUE shows a faster increase than CKMR estimates; however, its reliability is questioned due to spatial limitations and discard underreporting. • Agreement that the CKMR-based method remains the best available for setting TACs, with annual updates based on projected exploitation rates. • Future options include: i. Continuing with the current CKMR-based approach. ii. Using metier-based modelling to assess gear-specific impacts. iii. Transitioning to a new harvest control rule under development. Action 12: In order to be able to use the HCR for school shark, SESSFRAG recommended the following process: i. Formal documentation of evidence supporting changes in school shark productivity; ii. A review of global applications of SPR-based HCRs and alignment with the HSP; iii. Determination of appropriate target reference points and τ values for school shark; and iv. Agreement to adopt the SPR approach for assessing stock status and setting the TAC for school shark in the interim, recognising its international acceptance and the robust testing it has undergone through Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), until a full MSE can be conducted.
15	Harvest Control Rule Project	Presentation Highlights: • Presented outcomes of an FRDC-funded project to develop harvest control rules (HCRs) that do not rely on traditional B0 estimates, with a focus on application to school shark. • Introduced the use of Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR) as a basis for HCRs, which compares spawning biomass under fishing to that under unfished conditions.

		- Developed a method using close kin mark-recapture (CKMR) data to estimate absolute abundance and natural mortality, enabling SPR-based HCRs. - The approach incorporates uncertainty via MCMC simulations and allows for probabilistic thresholds (τ) to determine acceptable catch levels. - Demonstrated that increased sampling reduces uncertainty and can support higher RBCs, providing an incentive for data collection. - Proposed a method to estimate a “future B0” by projecting the population forward under $F = 0$, enabling relative depletion estimates under current productivity conditions. SESSFRAG discussed the following: - The method offers a viable alternative for stocks where historical B0 is no longer meaningful due to productivity shifts (e.g., school shark). - Participants emphasized the need for: - Formal documentation of evidence for productivity change (using dynamic B0 guidelines). - A review of global applications of SPR-based HCRs and alignment with Australian harvest strategy policy, - Determination of appropriate target reference points and τ values for school shark. - Agreement that a full Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) is needed to validate the method before implementation. - Action: AFMA and CSIRO to lead development of documentation for steps 1 and 2; MSE testing to be considered as a future research priority. Action 13: SESSFRAG agreed in-principle to the revised interim Harvest Strategy for the SESSF but recommended the following work be undertaken before it could be considered for adoption: - AFMA to establish a writing team (David Smith, Dan Corrie, Paul Burch, Beth Fulton and potentially others) to develop a paper to address the proposed interim harvest strategy tiers (and their buffers) and present this at the 2026 SESSFRAG Chairs' meeting. SESSFRAG requested that the following points be addresses in the paper - Develop a clear definitions Tier 1 and 2 assessments including case studies of ‘difficult species’ including low recruitment, CKMR, Gummy, and - Consider species potentially impacted by this decision and determine if there are unintended impacts SESSFRAG also recommended that as part of the MSHS project, that Tier 3 assessments be compared and contrasted with Tier 4 assessments (why is Tier 3 better than Tier 4), and the principle of risk catch cost be considered. SESSFRAG noted the related action (agreed under Item 11) regarding the Interim Harvest Strategy, to provide advice on an MYRBC-setting method once the initial, agreed RBC period has elapsed (e.g., western Pink Ling) (outcome from item 11).
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16	SESSF Interim Harvest Strategy	Presentation Highlights: - Proposed reintroducing a formal Tier 2 category for integrated stock assessments that are less robust than Tier 1 (e.g., poor fits, conflicting data). - Suggested a revised tier structure: - Tier 1: Stable, data-rich integrated assessments (no buffer). - Tier 2: Integrated assessments with uncertainty or poor diagnostics (5% buffer). - Tier 3: Surplus production models or SSSMs with limited data (10% buffer). - Tier 4: CPUE-based assessments (15% buffer). - Emphasized the need for clearer categorization to improve transparency and rigor in advice to the Commission. - Noted that the proposed buffers align with historical practice but have not been formally tested. SESSFRAg discussed the following: - General support for the concept, but concerns raised about: - Defining objective criteria to distinguish Tier 1 from Tier 2. - Ensuring consistent application across RAGs. - Avoiding unintended consequences (e.g., unnecessary discards). - Agreement that a working group should develop a paper to: - Define Tier 1 and Tier 2 criteria. - Conduct a meta-analysis of current Tier 1 assessments. - Identify species likely to be affected and assess implications. - Action: Writing group formed (David Smith, Dan Corrie, Paul Burch, Beth Fulton) to prepare a paper for the March 2026 SESSFRAg meeting.
17	JABBA Assessment of Royal Red Prawn	Presentation Highlights: - Dr Penney outlined a plan to address Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification conditions for Royal Red Prawn, following concerns about the appropriateness of the Tier 4 assessment and reference period assumptions. - The MSC audit team requested a reassessment of reference points and harvest strategy, particularly questioning the assumed reference period (1986–1995) and the validity of recent CPUE data. - Proposed approach includes: - Replacing the Tier 4 CPUE ratio method with a biomass dynamic model (JABBA or JABBA-Select). - Reviewing and correcting historical catch series and depth data. - Down-weighting or excluding anomalous CPUE years (2021–2022) due to gear trials and non-representative fishing effort. - Conducting a production model-based assessment to estimate biomass and apply the SESSF harvest control rule. SESSFRAg discussed the following: - Concerns raised about: - The suitability of CPUE as an index of abundance given fleet changes and data anomalies.

		○ The use of JABBA, which is not currently an approved method in the SESSF, and the absence of MSE testing in this context. ○ The need for transparency in prior development and model assumptions. • It was noted that JABBA is widely used internationally and has been applied in Australian prawn fisheries. • Agreement that the method is conceptually similar to accepted Tier 4 surplus production models and could be considered acceptable if implemented transparently. • The assessment should proceed with oversight from a small intersessional working group to review data corrections, CPUE standardization, and model assumptions. • CSIRO expertise (e.g., Denham Parker) should be engaged to support the process. • Data review and standardisation: ○ A thorough review of corrected catch and CPUE data is essential before proceeding with the assessment. ○ Resolve CPUE continuity issues, particularly due to fleet changes and gaps in data ○ Locate or reconstruct a corrected catch series for RRP. • Model development and oversight: ○ Proceed with oversight from a small intersessional working group to review data corrections, CPUE standardisation and model assumptions. ○ Engage CSIRO expertise to support the process and ensure methodological rigor. • Model acceptance and integration: ○ While JABBA is not formally approved in the SESSF, biomass dynamic models are an accepted method under Tier 4. ○ JABBA could be accepted if it aligns with previously MSE-tested models and is implemented transparently. ○ Provide multi-year TAC advice using the SESSF harvest control rule programmed into JABBA. • The assessment will be reviewed by SERAG, with SESSFRAG noting the process and supporting the method in principle. Action 14: CSIRO to investigate if there is a corrected catch series for RRP. Recommendation 9: SESSFRAG accepted the JABBA modelling framework on the basis that it was similar to other biomass dynamic models that have been MSE tested and applied to the SESSF. Recommendation 10: SESSFRAG deferred the discussion regarding priors and other data inputs to SERAG and suggested that a working group be formed to consider these items before the October SERAG meeting.
18	2026-27 Research Statement	Presentation Highlights: • Presented the draft research priorities for 2026–27, including core business projects and additional proposals from RAGs. • Core business projects (Essential priority): • SESSF stock assessment and data services (2026–29). • Ageing of quota species (2026–29).

		• ERA updates for SESSF sectors (2026–27). Additional Priorities Discussed: • Survey of the 60 nm Dogfish Closure (GAB): • Deferred in previous years due to budget constraints. • Strong support to proceed in 2026–27 to align with other baseline surveys and maintain survey expertise. • Review of Tier 1 Assessments: • Eastern Orange Roughy and Bight Redfish were proposed. • Eastern Orange Roughy review deferred to align with 2029 assessment. • Bight Redfish review supported for 2026–27 to inform 2028 assessment. • Economic Project: • Evaluation of profitability, market trends, and price elasticity in Southern Australian trawl fisheries. • Discussion on whether this falls under ABARES core business; action taken to clarify with ABARES. FRDC Priorities: • Reaffirmed support for two previously submitted but unfunded proposals. • Multi-species harvest strategy development. • Best-practice approaches for low recruitment stock assessments. • Noted a potential future proposal on whole genome sequencing (WGS) for school shark, but consensus was to observe international applications (e.g., hoki in NZ) before committing. Action 15: ABARES to confirm that an economic analysis of the CTS buyback is part of their core business. Action 16: AFMA to approach Dr Moninya Roughan (UNSW) and request a presentation on the FishSOOP program at a future SESSFRAG meeting. Recommendation 11: Where applicable, all RAGs identify a stock assessment for independent review when considering research priorities each year. Recommendation 12: The review of the Eastern Zone Orange Roughy be deferred until the year prior to the assessment after next (i.e. 2028 for the review and 2029 for the assessment). Recommendation 13: An independent review of the Bight Redfish assessment be undertaken in 2026–27. Recommendation 14: The research priority “Survey of protected dogfishes in the 60-mile dogfish closure” be ranked as a high priority. Recommendation 15: SESSFRAG ranked the research priorities for 2026–27 as follows: i. Stock assessments and data services for SESSF species for three years (ending 30 June 2029) ii. Ageing of SESSF quota species for three years (ending 30 June 2029)
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		iii. Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) for selected SESSF sectors/gears (RAGs and AFMA to priorities which sectors/gears are assessed in 2026–27) iv. Survey of protected dogfishes in the 60-mile dogfish closure/ MSE testing; and v. Review of Tier 1 assessments of SESSF stocks (the RAG nominated Bight Redfish). FRDC Recommendation 16: That the research titled “Development of Best Practice Approach for stock assessments dealing with low recruitment models” and the “Evaluation and application of a preferred multispecies harvest strategy in the SESSF” continues to be listed as research for funding as a high priority Recommendation 17: That Dr Pia Bessell-Browne’s B₀ work should be MSE tested. This was considered a candidate for joint funding from FRDC due to the “newness” of the MSE testing and AFMA’s component being the SPR. This project was considered by members to be on the same priority scale as the Dogfish project. Recommendation 18: That the proposed MSE project to be of High Priority, the cost needs to be provided by Pia Bessell-Browne with a timeframe of 18 months for the 2026-27 round of funding. Recommendation 19: That the genomics project to be of low priority but are interested in being updated on the utility of this project for future considerations. Recommendation 20: That FRDC asks them those working on the whole genomic research project to add a component that links the method to management actions.
19	Stock Assessment Timetable	Presentation Highlights: • Provided an overview of the updated SESSF stock assessment schedule. • Noted that Cascade Orange Roughy has been formally designated a trigger species, with a 200-tonne catch trigger. No trigger species are scheduled for review in 2025. • Proposed deferral of the Bight Redfish assessment to 2028 to allow CSIRO capacity for a data-limited assessment of GAB Orange Roughy in 2025. • Confirmed upcoming assessments: • 2025: Blue Grenadier (full assessment), Royal Red Prawn (JABBA), Eastern Orange Roughy (preparatory work). • 2026: Oreo Basket, Deepwater Shark (East and West), and potentially Western Roughy (pending data and ageing capacity). • 2027–2028: Bight Redfish, Deepwater Flathead (full Tier 1 in 2028), and other Tier 1s spaced to avoid overlap. SESSFRAG discussed the following: • Agreement to defer Bight Redfish to 2028 to avoid conflict with the multi-species harvest strategy project in 2027. • Western Roughy assessment remains in the schedule pending further discussion with Fish Ageing Services and CSIRO.

		- Blue-eye Trevalla and John Dory assessments discussed in the context of ageing budget constraints; potential to defer ageing of non-assessed species to accommodate these. - Noted that the current assessment project ends in 2025; the next project (2026–2028) may have reduced flexibility due to fewer funded years. - Recommendation to consider a four-year assessment project to maintain flexibility and continuity. Recommendation 21: Deferring the Bright Redfish assessment from 2025 to 2028, leaving 2027 free for the Multi-Species Harvest Strategy project work.
	Other Business	Meeting Documentation Templates - Introduced new standardized templates for: - Meeting agendas (including standing items such as economic updates and jurisdictional reports). - Paper submissions (including sections for economic, sustainability, and climate considerations). - Meeting minutes (streamlined to focus on key discussion points, recommendations, and actions). - Aim is to improve consistency, reduce administrative burden, and expedite minute finalization. Discussion Points: - General support for the streamlined format. - Request to retain meeting transcripts (non-public) for internal reference and historical context. - Agreement that minutes should summarize key discussions leading to recommendations, not verbatim records. - Suggestion to trial AI-generated summaries with EO review and member feedback. Other Items - Reminder of the FRDC Biological Parameters Symposium (23 May 2025). - Confirmation of August 2025 data meeting dates: 26–28 August in Hobart (in-person). - Acknowledgement of Sandy Morison's retirement and his decades of contribution to SESSF science and management. Recommendation 22: SESSFRAG noted the new template for RAG meeting minutes and reiterated that these minutes should be concise and include clearly defined action items and recommendations.
	Close of meeting	The Chair closed the meeting at 3:22pm

Attachment A – Adopted agenda

SESSFRAG Chairs' meeting (20–22 May 2025)

Day 1: 20 May 2025 / 13:00 to 16:45

Time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
13:00	1. Preliminaries - Acknowledgement of Country, welcome and apologies - Adoption of Agenda - Declarations of Interest - Minutes from previous meetings - Actions arising from previous meetings	For Noting	Chair / EO (45 mins)
13:45	2. Update from the RAG Chairs and AFMA	For Noting	RAG Chairs (30 mins)
14:15	3. Update on climate and ecosystem research	For Noting	Beth Fulton (30 min)
14:45	<i>Afternoon Tea – 15 mins</i>		
15:00	4. Data limited assessment update	For Advice	Paul Burch (45 mins)
15:45	5. SESSF History document update	For Advice	Sally Weekes (15 mins)
16:00	Collation and review of the day's action items and advice		Chair / EO (45 min)
16:45	<i>End of Day 1</i>		

Day 2: 21 May 2025 / 09:00 to 17.05

Time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
9:00	6. Multi Species Harvest Strategy update	For Discussion	Daniel Corrie (1.5 hrs)
10:30	7. Revolutionising fisheries stock assessments using whole genome sequencing	For Advice	Andrew Weeks (30 mins)
11:00	<i>Morning Tea–10 min</i>		
11:10	8. Fish ageing update	For Advice	Kyne Krusic-Golub (30 mins)
11:40	9. Novel methods to recreate the maturation and reproductive histories of SESSF fishes using otoliths	For Noting	John Morrongiello (45 mins)
12:25	<i>Lunch – 30 mins</i>		
12:55	12. Discard estimation using EM	For Advice	Euan Provost (45 mins)

13:40	13. Artificial Intelligence in Commonwealth fisheries	For Noting	Geoff Tuck (45 mins)
14:25	<i>Afternoon tea – 10 mins</i>		
14:35	10. Transitioning the Blue-eye Trevalla assessment to a Tier 1	For Advice	Paul Burch (45 mins)
15:20	11. Assessment advice for selected species/stocks	For Advice	AFMA/CSIRO (1 hour)
16:20	Collation and review of the day's action items and advice		Chair / EO (45 min)
17:05pm	<i>End of Day 2</i>		

Day 3: 22 May 2025 / 9:00 to 16:30

Time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
9:00	14. School Shark CKMR	For Advice	Robin Thomson (1 hour)
10:00	15. Harvest control rule project	For Noting	Pia Bessell-Browne (1 hour)
11:00	<i>Morning Tea–10 min</i>		
11:15	16. Revised interim Harvest Strategy for the SESSF	For Advice	AFMA (1 hour 15 mins)
12:30	<i>Lunch – 30 mins</i>		
13:15	17. JABBA assessment of Royal Red Prawn	For Advice	Andrew Penney (30 mins)
13:45	<i>Afternoon tea – 10 mins</i>		
14:00	18. 2026-27 Research Statement	For Advice	Sally Weekes (45 mins)
14:45	19. Stock assessment timetable	For Advice	AFMA (15 mins)
15:00	Other Business	For Advice	EO (10 mins)
15:10	Confirmation of August 2025 Data meeting Dates	For Advice	EO (5 mins)
15:15	Collation and review of the day's action items and advice		Chair / EO (15 min)
15:30	<i>End of Day 3</i>		

Attachment B – Register of interests

Name	RAG/MAC position / organisation	Declared interests
Dr Cathy Dichmont	Cathy Dichmont Consulting	Director of Cathy Dichmont Consulting. Chair of ComRAC (FRDC) Contracted by various state and Commonwealth agencies to undertake various reviews and consultancies not related to SESSF. FRDC 2021-002 PI – Investing in our future stock assessment and next generation. FRDC 2019-118 – Drawing strength from each other: simulation testing of Australia’s abalone harvest strategies. No pecuniary interest in the SESSF.
Mr Lance Lloyd	Lloyd Environmental	GABRAG Chair Member of GABMAC Board Chair, AwF – Aquaculture without Frontiers (Australia) Director; Lloyd Environmental Pty Ltd. Research Fellow; Federation University Australia Member, Scientific Advisory Committee, FFG Act (DEECA) Member, Centre for Freshwater Ecology Advisory Committee No pecuniary interest.

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Dr Paul McShane	Global Marine Resource Management	Chair of SERAG and a member of SEMAC and SESSFRAG. No pecuniary interest in the SESSF. Principal of Global Marine Resource Management Pty Ltd. Adjunct Professor (Fisheries and Aquaculture) College of Science and Engineering, James Cook University
Mr Sandy Morison	Morison Aquatic Sciences	Director of Morison Aquatic Sciences Chair of SharkRAG Contracted by government departments, non-government agencies and companies for a range of fishery related matters including research and for MSC assessments of AFMA managed and other Australian and international fisheries. No pecuniary or other interest in the SESSF.
Dr Beth Fulton	CSIRO	Ecosystem and climate scientist, Portfolio Leader for Integrated Marine Management. Adjunct with the University of Tasmania (Deputy Director for the Centre of Marine Socioecology). Acquiring funding for research purposes Lead researcher for the CSIRO sub-contracted component of the Futures of Seafood project led by Seafood Industry Australia and Blue Economy CRC (FRDC and government funded)
Mr Simon Boag	SETFIA (trawl) SSIA (sharks)	EO SETFIA (trawl) EO SSIA (sharks)

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		Industry member on both SERAG and SEMAC. SSIA is engaged by AFMA to collect shark industry biological data SETFIA is the PI on the orange roughy east AOS and ORS Cascade survey SETFIA is engaged by participants within the W ORS research fishery to collect biological samples SETFIA is engaged by AFMA under co-management to undertake a variety of tasks including snapper management, ling management and consultation SETFIA is the PI on the grenadier survey
Mr Neil MacDonald	GABIA	PECUNIARY INTEREST Director NMAC(SA) P/L ORGANISATION SUPPORT • Executive officer Great Australian Bight Industry Association (GABIA) • Executive officer Charter Boat Association South Australia (CBASA) • Executive officer Southern Fishermen's Association (SFA) • Executive officer Saint Vincent Gulf Prawn Boat Owner's Association (SCGPBOA) • Executive officer Marine Scale Net Fishers Association (MSNFA) • Support services South Australian Professional Fishers Association COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP • Great Australian Bight Management Advisory Committee (AFMA) - Member

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		• Great Australian Bight Research Advisory Committee (AFMA) - Member • Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (SVGPBOA) - Member • Gulf St Vincent Prawn Fishery Research Sub-Committee (SVGPBOA) - Member • Lakes & Coorong Fishery Management Advisory Committee (LCFMAC) - Member Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries - Director
Dr Paul Burch	CSIRO	Employed by CSIRO, assessment scientist. CSIRO representative on the Fisheries Statistics and Information Working Group. Acquiring funding for research purposes. Principle investigator on the SESSF stock assessment project.
Dr Pia Bessell-Browne	CSIRO	CSIRO assessment scientist. Acquiring funding for research purposes. PI on FRDC project: Developing a harvest control rule to use in situations where depletion can no longer be calculated relative to unfished levels.
Dr Miriana Sporcic	CSIRO	Assessment scientist. Acquiring funding for research purposes Project Leader CSIRO Ecological Risk Assessments
Dr Robin Thomson	CSIRO	Assessment scientist.

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		Acquiring funding for research purposes PI on close kin project for school shark. PI on blue-eye trevalla close kin scoping project
Dr Geoff Tuck	CSIRO	Involved in Stock assessments. Interest in obtaining funding for future research. Project leader CSIRO Marine Visual Technologies project team on automated catch detection and species identification
Dr Ian Knuckey	Fishwell Consulting	Positions: Director – Fishwell Consulting Pty Ltd Director – Olrac Australia (Electronic logbooks) Chair – Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group Chair – Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group Chair – Victorian Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Assessment Group Chair – Gulf of St Vincent’s Prawn Fishery MAC Research Scientific Committee Chair – Spencer Gulf economic optimisation subcommittee Scientific Member – Northern Prawn Management Advisory Committee

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		Scientific Member – Gulf of St Vincent Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee Scientific Member – Tropical Tuna Resource Assessment Group Member – The Agri Collective Current projects: IMOS Project – FishSOOP – oceanographic data collection on commercial fishing vessels in SE Australia PZJA – Tropical Rock Lobster surveys and assessment (TBC) FRDC 2023-063 – Design of a fishery independent longline survey for chondrichthyans in Northern Australia FRDC 2024-012 – Capturing fisher ecological knowledge of climate change: a Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery case study AFMA 2020-0807 – Bass Strait Scallop Fishery Survey – 2025 NSW2021-1238 – Developing a harvest strategy framework for Aboriginal cultural fishing in NSW SharkTrace – Shark Product Traceability software and hardware Sea Cucumber – Design and implementation of various sea cucumber dive surveys. Australia Bay – Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Developmental Fin Fish Trawl Fishery (observer and EM observing)
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Dr Andrew Penney	Pisces Australis Pty Ltd	Director of Pisces Australis Pty Ltd, an Australian registered marine/coastal research and management consultancy based in Canberra – interests in any opportunities in this regard. Deputy Scientific Member on the New South Wales Fisheries Total Allowable Fishing Committee Sep 2020 to Sep 2023. No shareholding and hold no position relating to any other companies, including any fishing companies or industry associations.
Dr Kyne Krusic-Golub	Fish Ageing Services	Director – Fish Ageing Services Pty Ltd No pecuniary or financial interest in the fishery other than securing funds for potential projects related to age and growth studies. Current Related Projects Project collaborator on FRDC 2019-030. An updated understanding of Eastern School Whiting stock structure and improved stock assessment for cross-jurisdictional management Currently the service provider for supplying the age data for the SESSF Project 2022-0812.
Dr John Morrongiello	University of Melbourne	Associate Professor of Marine and Freshwater Biology at the University of Melbourne.
Dr Andrew Weeks	Cesar Australia	Director of Cesar Australia
Mr Daniel Wright	ABARES	Employed by ABARES. No pecuniary interest in the fishery. Any future interests in projects or research will be declared as required.

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Mr James Woodhams	ABARES	Employed by ABARES. No pecuniary interest in the fishery. Any future interests in projects or research will be declared as required.
Dr Ashley Fowler	DPI NSW	Employed by DPI NSW, No pecuniary interest in the fishery. Any future interests in projects or research will be declared as required.
Ms Sally Weekes	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Mr Dan Corrie	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Dr Mark Grubert	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Dr Lianos Triantafilos	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Mr Tamre Sarhan	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Ms Hannah Maude	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Ms Adabpreet Sekhon	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Miss Audrey Kent	AFMA	Employed by AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise

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Attachment C - Summary of Actions and Recommendations

Agenda Item	No.	Action	Agency/Person Responsible	Timeframe
1.e	1	Dr Beth Fulton to create a document that crew can fill out and include details of where to send it on completion. The purpose of this document is to detail on-water observations to better understand climate change impacts (e.g., fishing deeper, temp of water).	Dr Beth Fulton	As soon as possible
1.e	2	CSIRO to provide SESSFRAG with a list of available muscle tissue samples (by species) collected during previous SEA-MES voyages. The “rules of engagement” will also be provided to inform appropriate use of these samples. SESSFRAG will then consider how they may be used to inform management.	CSIRO	SESSFRAG Data meeting
1.e	3	AFMA to include new wording relating to the concept of “near” target in future documents.	AFMA	As soon as possible
2	4	AFMA to include a table in the SESSF research statement that summaries independent reviews of stock assessments over time.	AFMA	As soon as possible
5	5	AFMA to include fishing activity under research permit including in the Murray Dogfish Closure for Orange Roughy and its impact on catches of Deepwater Sharks in terms of assessments.	AFMA	SESSFRAG Chairs’ meeting 2026
8	6	CSIRO to decide which of the available John Dory otoliths should be aged and inform FAS of their decision.	CSIRO	As soon as possible
8	7	AFMA to approach NSW DPI to assist in the sampling of Commonwealth landed Silver Trevally at NSW fish markets.	AFMA	As soon as possible
8	8	FAS to send an ageing summary to CSIRO to assist in forward planning.	FAS	As soon as possible
8	9	AFMA, CSIRO and FAS work together to determine feasible ageing options for Western Orange Roughy.	AFMA/CSIRO/FAS	As soon as possible
8	10	AFMA, CSIRO and FAS to schedule ageing Blue-eye Trevalla, John Dory and Gummy Shark.	AFMA/CSIRO/FAS	As soon as possible

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12	11	That AFMA establish a working group with CSIRO and relevant others to develop an appropriate methodology to estimate discards from EM footage (that could be accepted for assessment), including consideration of whether calibration between observers and EM is require, and present this methodology to the relevant RAG for comment.	AFMA	As soon as possible
14	12	In order to be able to use the HCR for school shark, SESSFRAG recommended the following process: I. Formal documentation of evidence supporting changes in school shark productivity; II. A review of global applications of SPR-based HCRs and alignment with the HSP; III. Determination of appropriate target reference points and τ values for school shark; and IV. Agreement to adopt the SPR approach for assessing stock status and setting the TAC for school shark in the interim, recognising its international acceptance and the robust testing it has undergone through Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE), until a full MSE can be conducted.	Steering Committee	As soon as possible
15	13	SESSFRAG agreed in-principle to the revised interim Harvest Strategy for the SESSF but recommended the following work be undertaken before it could be considered for adoption: • AFMA to establish a writing team (David Smith, Dan Corrie, Paul Burch, Beth Fulton and potentially others) to develop a paper to address the proposed interim harvest strategy tiers (and their buffers) and present this at the 2026 SESSFRAG Chairs' meeting. SESSFRAG requested that the following points be addresses in the paper • Develop a clear definitions Tier 1 and 2 assessments including case studies of 'difficult species' including low recruitment, CKMR, Gummy, and • Consider species potentially impacted by this decision and determine if there are unintended impacts SESSFRAG also recommended that as part of the MSHS project, that Tier 3 assessments be compared and contrasted with Tier 4 assessments (why is Tier 3 better than Tier 4), and the principle of risk catch cost be considered. SESSFRAG noted the related action (agreed under	AFMA	As soon as possible

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		Item 11) regarding the Interim Harvest Strategy, to provide advice on an MYRBC-setting method once the initial, agreed RBC period has elapsed (e.g., western Pink Ling) (outcome from item 11).		
17	14	CSIRO to investigate if there is a corrected catch series for RRP.	AFMA	As soon as possible
18	15	ABARES to confirm that an economic analysis of the CTS buyback is part of their core business.	ABARES	As soon as possible
19	16	AFMA to approach Dr Moninya Roughan (UNSW) and request a presentation on the FishSOOP program at a future SESSFRAG meeting.	AFMA	As soon as possible

Agenda Item	No.	Recommendation
5	1	SESSFRAG recommended that AFMA also include the following in the SESSF History document: i. The beginning of data collection by industry in the Murry Dogfish Closure given its potential implications on catch series for deepwater sharks (and CPUE series). ii. The beginning of the GABIA data collection program.
6	2	That the project agree on a 'base case' harvest strategy for specification and testing in stage 3, to avoid scope creep and ensure the final harvest strategy is consistent with what was agreed and MSE tested.
7	3	SESSFRAG agreed to keep a watching brief on the approach given the current uncertainty about how NE relates to census population size (what current catch limits are based on) and therefore how it can be used for management purposes.
7	4	Related to this method, SESSFRAG were interested in whether for any SESSF species being studies, if a bottle neck was found, did that coincide with a last inter-glacial period as this could inform if those species are impacted by climate.
8	5	SESSFRAG recommended that 1000 John Dory otoliths should be aged first (for the 2025 assessment) and then 2024 collected Gummy Shark vertebrae aged for the 2026 assessment
8	6	SESSFRAG considered the historical collection of Silver Trevally otoliths was too small to provide meaningful age data for a future assessment of this species

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10	7	SESSFRAG agreed to the recommended methodology and timeline outlined by Dr Paul Burch.
11	8	That AFMA contact Western Australian Fisheries (specifically Alex Hesp) regarding the weight-of-evidence approach that they utilise (for potential application to Silver Warehou).
17	9	SESSFRAG accepted the JABBA modelling framework on the basis that it was similar to other biomass dynamic models that have been MSE tested and applied to the SESSF.
17	10	SESSFRAG deferred the discussion regarding priors and other data inputs to SERAG and suggested that a working group be formed to consider these items before the October SERAG meeting.
18	11	Where applicable, all RAGs identify a stock assessment for independent review when considering research priorities each year.
18	12	The review of the Eastern Zone Orange Roughy be deferred until the year prior to the assessment after next (i.e. 2028 for the review and 2029 for the assessment).
18	13	An independent review of the Bight Redfish assessment be undertaken in 2026–27.
18	14	The research priority “Survey of protected dogfishes in the 60-mile dogfish closure” be ranked as a high priority.
18	15	SESSFRAG ranked the research priorities for 2026–27 as follows: i. Stock assessments and data services for SESSF species for three years (ending 30 June 2029) ii. Ageing of SESSF quota species for three years (ending 30 June 2029) iii. Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) for selected SESSF sectors/gears (RAGs and AFMA to priorities which sectors/gears are assessed in 2026–27) iv. Survey of protected dogfishes in the 60-mile dogfish closure/ MSE testing; and v. Review of Tier 1 assessments of SESSF stocks (the RAG nominated Bight Redfish).
18	16	That the research titled “Development of Best Practice Approach for stock assessments dealing with low recruitment models” and the “Evaluation and application of a preferred multispecies harvest strategy in the SESSF” continues to be listed as research for funding as a high priority
18	17	That Dr Pia Bessell-Browne’s B_0 work should be MSE tested. This was considered a candidate for joint funding from FRDC due to the “newness” of the MSE testing and AFMA’s component being the SPR. This project was considered by members to be on the same priority scale as the Dogfish project.

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18	18	That the proposed MSE project to be of High Priority, the cost needs to be provided by Pia Bessell-Browne with a timeframe of 18 months for the 2026-27 round of funding.
18	19	That the genomics project to be of low priority but are interested in being updated on the utility of this project for future considerations.
18	20	That FRDC asks them those working on the whole genomic research project to add a component that links the method to management actions.
19	21	Deferring the Bright Redfish assessment from 2025 to 2028, leaving 2027 free for the Multi-Species Harvest Strategy project work.
Other Business	22	SESSFRAG noted the new template for RAG meeting minutes and reiterated that these minutes should be concise and include clearly defined action items and recommendations.

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