



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

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Minutes

Meeting	Squid Resource Assessment Group (SquidRAG)		
Meeting Number	31	Dates	9 October 2025
Location	Online, Microsoft Teams	Time	09:00 – 15:30
Members	Bruce Wallner Chair Rocio Noriega, Scientific member Stephen Leporati, Scientific member Robert Curtotti, Economic member John Cull, Industry member Yvette Lamont, AFMA member Rebecca Jol, Executive officer Sally Weekes, Invited participant, AFMA		
Apologies	Sally Weekes		
Invited Participants	Natalie Couchman, Invited participant, AFMA Presenter Steph Brodie, Invited participant, CSIRO Presenter Ryan Baring, Invited participant, Flinders University Lauren Meyer, Invited participant, Flinders University		
Observers	Krystle Keller, ABARES Observer Rosie Kutanar, NRE Tasmania Observer Adela O'Connor, NRE Tasmania Observer		

Agenda Item	Title/Topic/Issue	Notes, Action & Recommendations
1.	Preliminaries	<p>1.1 Welcome and apologies</p> <p>The Chair, Mr Bruce Wallner, formally opened the 31st meeting of SquidRAG with an Acknowledgement of Country, recognising the Traditional Owners of the various regions where participants were joining from. He welcomed all members, invited participants, and observers, noting that guest presenters Ryan Baring and Lauren Meyer from Flinders University would join later agenda items.</p> <p>A round of introductions followed, allowing attendees to reacquaint themselves given the time since the last meeting. An apology was received from Sally Weekes (AFMA) for not being able to attend the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair reminded participants that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of accurate minute-taking.</p> <p>1.2 Adoption of agenda</p> <p>The Chair sought confirmation from members regarding the proposed agenda. It was agreed that the agenda would be followed as written, with flexibility to adjust the timing of items to accommodate invited speakers. Members expressed support for this approach, noting that the agenda was comprehensive and well-structured.</p> <p>The agenda was adopted as final (see Attachment A).</p> <p>1.3 Declarations of interests</p> <p>The SquidRag noted, in line with Section 15 of Fisheries Management Paper 1 – Consultative Committees (FMP1), the requirement for all meeting participants to declare relevant interests, not limited to pecuniary gain, regarding all agenda items proposed for SquidRAG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair invited members to declare any new or changed interests relevant to the meeting. It was agreed that standing declarations, as circulated in the meeting papers, would be accepted unless otherwise noted. • Dr Stephen Leporati advised that he was no longer involved in MSC assessments, removing a previously declared potential conflict. This update was acknowledged and will be reflected in the register of interests. • No other variations were raised, and the group agreed to proceed based on the declarations as presented. • Declared interests and how they were managed at SquidRAG are recorded in the register of interest at Attachment B <p>1.4 Minutes of previous meeting</p> <p>AFMA noted that the minutes from SquidRAG meeting held on 17 October 2024, were distributed to SquidRag members for feedback prior to finalisation and are now available on the AFMA website.</p> <p>1.5 Actions arising from previous meetings</p>

		<p>SquidRAG noted the status of action items from previous meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One key action remained outstanding: <u>AFMA to explore the impacts of reducing the number of SFRs (Statutory Fishing Rights) per jigging machine.</u> <p>Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry member advocated for reducing SFRs to future-proof the fishery and limit speculative entry during boom periods noting that the current fleet is small and well-invested; reduction would not significantly impact active operators. That a shift in fishing practices to deeper waters and longer trips, requires more capable vessels. Concern was raised over the risk of market saturation from low-capacity vessels entering during good seasons. The RAG supported further exploration of the idea, noting it's rare for industry to propose entitlement reductions. Economic member expressed support for further exploration and committed to contributing with research to explore its feasibility. He noted the importance of addressing latency in fisheries and highlighted the potential benefits of industry buy-in, particularly in promoting efficiency and profitability. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Action 1 AFMA, in collaboration with ABARES to prepare a discussion paper on SFR reduction, including economic and operational impacts and to circulate the paper for feedback before the next SquidRAG meeting.</p> </div> <p>A summary of actions and recommendations from SquidRAG 31 are at Attachment C.</p>
2	Fishery Updates	<p>SquidRAG noted updates from AFMA and industry regarding current management arrangements and activities in the Southern Squid Jig Fishery (SSJF). Updates from other relevant jurisdictions were also provided.</p> <p>2.1 AFMA Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFMA provided an update on the 2025 fishing season, noting that seven vessels have been active with a total reported catch of 469 tonnes—down 260 tonnes from the same time last year. No protected species interactions were reported, and bycatch was minimal, though a retained southern bluefin tuna was flagged as likely misreported. AFMA confirmed that three vessels are currently using electronic logbooks (e-logs), while four remain on paper logs. Efforts are underway to transition all vessels to e-logs, with trials of more cost-effective systems in progress. Participants discussed the advantages and challenges of electronic logbooks (e-logs) compared to traditional paper-based systems. Concerns were raised about the flexibility of e-logs, particularly the ability to add or remove data fields, which can lead to

		<p>inconsistencies and reduce the long-term statistical relevance of certain data. This variability may also create additional burden for fishers required to record new, potentially non-essential information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted that paper logbooks, while less adaptable, offer greater consistency over time, which supports more reliable data analysis. Another issue highlighted was the difficulty in accessing elog transcripts, making it harder to verify what information fishers are actually reporting. Suggestions included maintaining access to both paper records and elog transcripts to improve transparency and understanding of data collection practices. • The update also included reference to recent Commonwealth Government correspondence on national productivity priorities. • AFMA advised that RAGs and MACs should consider opportunities to support productivity improvements in their management advice. • The Chair noted that the earlier discussion on reducing SFRs aligns with this direction and should be referenced in any future proposals. • AFMA is expected to provide a statement of intent in response to the government's initiative. No further questions were raised on the correspondence. <p>2.2 Industry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2025 season saw mixed results across the fleet. While catch volumes were lower than previous years, prices were significantly higher, driven by improved grading practices and increased demand from bait markets. • The fleet has shifted away from traditional nearshore grounds, now operating in deeper waters with larger vessels and increased freezing capacity, allowing for better product handling and market timing. • The departure of the vessel Carol Marie to New Zealand was highlighted, attributed to crew and skipper shortages, while other boats exited the fishery for similar reasons. Despite these changes, the remaining fleet reported improved economic returns, particularly through niche bait markets such as recreational broadbill fishing, where prices reached up to \$10/kg. • Discussion also covered the challenges and benefits of transitioning to electronic logbooks (e-logs). While some vessels have adopted e-logs, others continue to use paper due to usability issues and lack of familiarity. • Concerns were raised about data consistency and the risk of losing valuable information during the transition. Members suggested maintaining parallel paper logs during trials and improving transparency around e-log data fields to ensure continuity and usability for future analysis. <p>2.3 Economic Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RAG noted that although total catch was down, average prices rose to around \$6/kg, resulting in higher per-boat revenue. Fuel
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3	<p>Climate and Ecosystem Status Report</p> <p>Presenters: Natalie Couchman (AFMA) and Dr Steph Brodie (CSIRO)</p>	<p>AFMA Climate Adaptation Program Overview:</p> <p>AFMA provided an overview of the Climate Adaptation Programme, initiated in 2022 to integrate climate impact data into fisheries management and decision-making. The programme aims to develop and implement adaptation strategies in response to changing environmental conditions, particularly warming waters affecting Commonwealth fish stocks.</p> <p>Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 60% of target species are sensitive to climate change. Squid stocks are expected to become more variable. Collaboration with CSIRO has produced projections to 2040, indicating significant challenges for many species. Development of a Climate Adaptation Handbook to assess risks and identify adaptation options, with workshops already held for several fisheries. Ongoing research includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMS long-term ecosystem surveys. Futures of Seafood project (updated projections expected by year-end). Fish Soup project (fine-scale temperature data collection via fishing vessels).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finalisation of the Climate Risk Framework, trialled in the squid fishery, which rated squid as very low risk. Full rollout expected next year. <p>CSIRO Climate & Ecosystem Status Report (Key Presentation Points):</p> <p>CSIRO presented the 2025 Climate and Ecosystem Status Report, highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record-high global sea surface temperatures over the past three years. • Revised ENSO classification by the Bureau of Meteorology, reclassifying last year as La Niña. • Marine heatwaves observed off South Australia and Tasmania, contributing to harmful algal blooms. • Bottom temperature anomalies and chlorophyll-a data indicating ecosystem changes. • Fish Soup data showing seasonal stratification and subsurface temperature dynamics. • Long-term phytoplankton biomass trends showing regional variability. • Industry observed a shift in fishing effort to deeper waters with the driver potentially being thermal or tuna driven. • The future outlook is for continued warmer than average temperatures forecast across the region. <p>Discussion Highlights:</p> <p>Industry Feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Cull noted poor squid catches near Portland despite upwelling and observed deeper warm water layers. • Anecdotal evidence suggests increased early squid sightings and catches this year with Industry optimistic of improved squid availability following marine heatwaves. • No observed changes in squid size, but fishing effort has shifted to deeper waters, possibly due to tuna movements. Tuna now found in shallower waters, potentially disrupting squid schooling behaviour. <p>Additional Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steph proposed refining the report's geographic focus based on actual fishing activity. A heat map of catch and effort was suggested as a reference. • NRE Tasmania discussed impacts of marine heatwaves which led to calamari spawning and fishery closures. Extended closures in 2023–24 likely affected catch rates due to early spawning. Tasmania are undertaking sampling and temperature logging to better understand spawning dynamics. • Concerns were raised about data consistency between paper and e-logs, highlighting the need for improved data consistency.
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4	Harvest Strategy Update	<p>AFMA provided an update on the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy, noting the initial public consultation phase has concluded, with further feedback expected in 2025/26.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RAG was informed that the Gould's squid catch in the SSJF has exceeded the lower end-of-year catch and effort trigger (360 tonnes and 213 days), reaching 469 tonnes and 366 days as of September 2025. Members discussed the potential risks and benefits of setting the Total Allowable Effort (TAE) for a three-year period. While this could streamline processes, offer certainty to fishers and addresses the Ministers letter to seek productivity increases through efficiencies, concerns were raised about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual nature of the squid species and its susceptibility to environmental variability. The importance of maintaining annual meetings to monitor changes, share observations, and respond to emerging issues. The risk of reduced flexibility and responsiveness if meetings were held less frequently. There was strong support from members to continue annual meetings regardless of whether the TAE is set for one or multiple years. The group agreed that regular engagement is valuable for monitoring environmental changes, fleet dynamics, and economic factors affecting the fishery. Discussion acknowledged that upper catch triggers remain high and have not been approached. Members agreed that these limits should remain unchanged to allow flexibility in case of a strong fishing season. Economic Considerations: It was noted that the jig fishery is largely self-regulating due to economic factors such as fuel costs and market prices. If catch volumes are high but prices are low, fishing effort naturally decreases.

		Recommendation 4: Maintain annual SquidRAG meetings regardless of whether TAE is formally reviewed each year.
5	2026 TAE Recommendation	<p>The RAG reviewed the current TAE setting for the Southern Squid Jig Fishery, which has remained at 550 standard jigging units since 2013.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members agreed there was no compelling biological, economic, or climate-related reason to alter the existing level. While the lower catch and effort trigger had been exceeded, the group noted that recent climate variability had not clearly impacted stock availability. Industry feedback confirmed stable fishing conditions, with high catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) in the jig sector and no significant changes in fleet dynamics. Some variability in CPUE across vessels was attributed to differences in gear quality and experience. Members discussed the potential value of spatial tracking using heat maps, particularly around King Island, and supported further refinement of this data. Industry member left the meeting before the RAG discussed their final recommendation. The RAG unanimously agreed to recommend rolling over the current TAE of 550 units for the 2026 season. <p>Action 4: AFMA to continue providing spatial heat maps and consider tracking hotspot areas for future analysis.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: Maintain the TAE at 550 standard jigging units for the 2026 season.</p>
6	Data and Monitoring Strategy	<p>SquidRAG noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFMA provided an update on efforts to improve data collection in the Southern Squid Jig Fishery, noting ongoing discussions to revise both paper (SQ05) and electronic logbooks to include fields for squid counts, spawning observations, and mortality events. The group acknowledged the fishery's data-poor status and supported enhancements to improve monitoring. Members discussed the importance of capturing trip-level data, including departure and return times, to support economic assessments such as fuel use. Suggestions were made to include skipper details such as experience levels, start and finish time and gear type as variables to help standardize CPUE data. While some of this information is available via VMS and AFMA systems, limitations in data integration and consistency were noted. The RAG agreed to review the draft Data and Monitoring Strategy and provide final feedback out of session to enable its completion.

		<p>The group also acknowledged that annual updates on actions will continue to be shared.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AFMA will consider distributing a flyer to industry to encourage consistent reporting practices. <p>Action 5: AFMA to explore integrating skipper information and gear type into data collection.</p> <p>Note: Departure and return times should be clearly recorded to support trip-level analysis.</p> <p>Action 6: SquidRAG to review the Data and Monitoring Strategy and provide final recommendations and endorsement to AFMA (Out of Session).</p> <p>Recommendation 6: Consider issuing a flyer to industry to improve consistency in logbook reporting.</p>
7	<p>Agenda Item 7. Presentation: Trophic Ecology and Food Web Interactions of Cephalopods</p> <p>Presenters: Dr Lauren Meyer and Dr Ryan Baring (Flinders University)</p>	<p>Presentation Highlights:</p> <p>Dr Meyer and Dr Baring presented a suite of proposed research approaches to better understand Gould's squid ecology, diet, and habitat use. Their work focuses on biochemical tools including stable isotopes, fatty acids, trace metals, and environmental DNA (eDNA) to trace squid diet and movement across life stages and regions.</p> <p>They highlighted the potential to use squid beaks and mantle tissue to reconstruct feeding history and identify spawning and foraging habitats. The team also discussed tagging technologies, including new micro satellite tags, to track squid depth and movement.</p> <p>Habitat suitability modelling was proposed as a way to integrate environmental data with biological insights to identify productivity hotspots. The presentation also noted the nutritional value of squid and its potential market implications.</p> <p>Key Discussion Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members expressed strong interest in the proposed research, particularly in understanding spawning grounds, diet variability, and environmental drivers of squid distribution. Industry member shared anecdotal evidence of historical spawning near Portland and the shift to deeper fishing grounds, reinforcing the need for updated ecological data. The potential role of tuna predation or competition in shifting squid distribution was discussed, with presenters confirming they could explore tuna diet overlap using existing data. The importance of integrating industry knowledge and samples into research was emphasized, with Flinders University expressing commitment to collaborative approaches.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members discussed the feasibility of tagging squid and the limitations of acoustic arrays in Bass Strait, supporting the use of satellite tags for fine-scale tracking. <div> Action 7: Presentation materials presented at Agenda item 7 on Trophic Ecology and Food Web Interactions of Cephalopods, to be circulated to RAG members for further review and input. </div> <div> Recommendation 7: SquidRAG expressed its support for Flinders University's development of an FRDC research proposal focused on the diet, habitat use, and environmental interactions of Gould's squid. Recommendation 8: AFMA to assist in connecting researchers with industry participants for sample collection, particularly in eastern parts of the fishery. </div>
8	Research Priorities	<p>The RAG reviewed current and future research priorities for the Southern Squid Jig Fishery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new projects were formally proposed for 2026–27, but ongoing initiatives such as the FRDC-funded Southern Calamari project and the Fish Soup program were noted. The Fish Soup project, now extended for another three years, continues to collect temperature and depth data via commercial vessels, with industry participation confirmed. Discussion focused on the need to improve understanding of Gould's squid biology, particularly spawning behaviour, environmental drivers of movement, and growth variability. Members highlighted the limitations of current data for depletion analysis and stock assessment, citing a lack of reliable biological parameters such as size, sex ratio, and spawning locations. Anecdotal evidence from industry suggested historical spawning grounds near Portland are no longer active, with spawning behaviour now poorly understood. The RAG supported the development of a FRDC research proposal by Flinders University, which would use biochemical tools (e.g. stable isotopes, fatty acids) and tagging to investigate squid diet, habitat use, and movement. Members emphasized the importance of linking research outputs to fishery data and management needs and encouraged collaboration between university researchers and agencies such as CSIRO to ensure practical application of findings.

		<p>Action 8: AFMA to draft and circulate to RAG members, a research scope incorporating Dr Meyer and Dr Baring's research approaches to better understand Gould's squid ecology, diet, and habitat. This is to be included in the Research Statement to reinforce AFMA's endorsement of the project.</p> <p>Note: Members emphasized the need for future research to be aligned with fishery data and management applications.</p>
		<p>Recommendation 7: Endorse the Flinders University's proposal as a priority research item for the squid fishery.</p>
9	Other Business	<p>The RAG noted that no formal items had been raised under other business. However, an update was provided regarding the vacant industry member position. Despite outreach efforts by AFMA and current industry member John Cull, no expressions of interest had been received.</p> <p>The group acknowledged the importance of filling the position to ensure broader industry representation and reduce reliance on a single voice. Members suggested stronger encouragement or rotation among operators to ensure participation. The Chair recommended keeping the matter as an ongoing action item.</p> <p>The meeting concluded with acknowledgements to all participants, including guest presenters and observers. Yvette Lamont confirmed she would continue supporting the squid, scallop, and SPF fisheries, pending recruitment of a permanent manager.</p> <p>Action 9: Continue efforts to fill the vacant industry member position, with AFMA and current members to encourage participation.</p>
Close of meeting		The Chair closed the meeting at 2.26 pm.

Attachment A – Adopted agenda

Approximate time	Item	Purpose	Lead presenter
9:30 (30 min)	Agenda item 1. Preliminaries		
	1.1 Welcome and apologies	For action	Chair
	1.2 Declaration of interests	For action	Chair
	1.3 Adoption of agenda	For action	Chair
	1.4 Minutes from previous meeting	For noting	Chair
	1.5 Actions arising from previous meetings	For noting	Executive officer
10:00 (30 min)	Agenda item 2. Fishery update		
	2.1 AFMA Management	For noting	AFMA member
	2.2 Industry	For noting	Industry members
	2.3 Economic	For noting	Economic member
	2.4 Other jurisdictions	For noting	NRE Tasmania
10:30 (15 min)	Break		
10:45 (30 min)	Agenda item 3. Climate Change		
	3.1 Climate and Ecosystem Status Report	For discussion	Natalie Couchman and Steph Brodie
11:15 (20 min)	Agenda item 4. Harvest Strategy update		
11:35 (60 min)	Agenda item 5. 2026 TAE Recommendation		
12:35 (45 min)	Lunch		
13:20 (20 min)	Agenda item 6. Data and Monitoring Strategy		
13:40 (30 min)	Agenda 7. Presentation – Trophic ecology, and food web interactions of cephalopods		
		For noting	Flinders University, Dr Ryan Baring & Dr Lauren Meyer
14:10 (60 min)	Agenda item 8. Research Priorities		
15:10 (15 min)	Agenda item 9. Other Business		
	8.1 Industry Member	For discussion	AFMA
15:25	Close		

Attachment B – Register of interests

SquidRAG meeting 31 - Member, Invited Participant and Observer declarations of interest.

Name	SquidRAG position / organisation	Declared interests	Relevant agenda item(s) and how they will be managed
Bruce Wallner	Chair	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise in the SSJF.	
Rocio Noriega	Scientific member	Undertakes research on a range of commonwealth fisheries related matters. No interest declared, pecuniary or otherwise in the SSJF.	
Stephen Leporati	Scientific member	No longer involved in MSC assessment.	No conflict
Robert Curtotti	Economic member	ABARES undertakes research on a range of commonwealth fisheries related matters. No interest declared, pecuniary or otherwise in the SSJF.	
John Cull	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.	Will leave the meeting during decisions on TAE Recommendations (Agenda 5).
Yvette Lamont	AFMA member	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise.	
Rebecca Jol	AFMA, Executive officer	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise.	
Natalie Couchman	AFMA	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise.	
Steph Brodie	CSIRO	Employed by the CSIRO and through the organisation either has in the past or may in the future, receive funding for research related to the fishery.	

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Ryan Baring	Presenter - Flinders University	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise	
Lauren Meyers	Presenter – Flinders University	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise	
Krystle Keller	Observer, ABARES	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise	
Rosie Katunar	Observer, NRE Tas	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise	
Adela O'Connor	Observer, NRE Tas	No interests declared, pecuniary or otherwise	

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Attachment C - Summary of Actions and Recommendations

Agenda Item	No.	Action	Agency/Person Responsible	Timeframe
1.5	1.	AFMA with assistance from ABARES to prepare a discussion paper on SFR reduction, including economic and operational impacts and to circulate paper to active operators for feedback before next SquidRAG meeting.	AFMA	SquidRAG 32
2	2.	AFMA to reference government productivity priorities in the proposed SFR reduction discussion paper.	AFMA	As soon as possible
3.	3.	AFMA to share relevant spatial data with CSIRO for improved regional analysis.	AFMA	As soon as possible
5.	4.	AFMA to continue providing spatial heat maps and consider tracking hotspot areas for future analysis.	AFMA	On going
6.	5.	AFMA to explore integrating skipper experience level and gear type into data collection and to consider issuing a flyer to industry to improve consistency in logbook reporting. Note: Departure and return times should be clearly recorded to support trip-level analysis	AFMA/Industry	On going work to improve reporting
	6.	SquidRAG to review the Data and Monitoring Strategy and provide final recommendations and endorsement to AFMA (Out of Session).	AFMA	SquidRAG 32
7.	7.	Presentation materials presented at Agenda 7 on Trophic Ecology and Food Web Interactions of Cephalopods, to be circulated to RAG members for further review and input.	AFMA	As soon as possible
8.	8.	AFMA to draft and circulate to RAG members, a research statement incorporating Dr Meyer and Dr Baring's proposed research approaches to better understand Gould's squid ecology, diet, and habitat.	AFMA	Out of Session
9.	9.	Continue efforts to fill the vacant industry member position, with AFMA and current members to encourage participation.	AFMA	SquidRAG 32
Agenda Item	No.	Recommendation	Agency/Person Responsible	Timeframe
2	1.	Maintain paper logs alongside e-log trials to ensure data continuity.	AFMA	On going

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3.	2.	AFMA to continue monitoring squid variability and environmental indicators.	AFMA	On going
	3.	Industry to report anecdotal observations as part of annual reporting to track emerging trends.	Industry	On going
4.	4.	AFMA to maintain annual SquidRAG meetings regardless of whether TAE is formally reviewed each year.	AFMA	On going
5.	5.	Maintain the TAE at 550 standard jigging units for the 2026 season.	AFMA	Prior to season start
6.	6.	Consider issuing a flyer to industry to improve consistency in logbook reporting.	AFMA	Discuss with paper and elog users prior to issuing flyer
7.	7.	SquidRAG expressed its support for Flinders University's development of an FRDC research proposal focused on the diet, habitat use, and environmental interactions of Gould's squid.	AFMA/Flinders University	As soon as possible
	8.	AFMA to assist in connecting researchers with industry participants for sample collection, particularly in eastern parts of the fishery.	AFMA/Flinders University/Industry	Upon project funding and prior to project start
8.	9.	Endorse the Flinders University proposal as a priority research item for inclusion in the 2026–27 Research Statement.	AFMA/Members	As soon as possible

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