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Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Minutes

Meeting	Shark Resource Assessment Group (SharkRAG)		
Meeting Number	3 out of 3	Date	21 January 2026
Location	Microsoft Teams	Time	14:30 – 16:50
Members	Dr Rik Buckworth (Chair) Dr Robin Thomson (Scientific member) Dr Matias Braccini (Scientific member) Dr Charlie Huveneers (Scientific member) Dr Caleb Gardener (Economic member) Mr Kyriakos Toumazos (Industry member) Mr Anthony Harriss (Industry member) Ms Anissa Lawrence (Conservation member) Dr Lianos Triantafillos (AFMA member) Ms Michelle Henriksen (Executive officer – AFMA)		
Apologies	Mr Leigh Castle (Industry member) Mr Jamie Papas (Industry member)		
Invited Participants	Mr Ross Bromley (SSIA ¹) Dr Paul Burch (CSIRO ²) Dr Pia Bessell-Browne (CSIRO) Dr Miriana Sporcic (CSIRO)		
Observers	Mr James Woodhams (ABARES ³) Mr Kurt Davis (ABARES) Ms Sally Weekes (AFMA) Mr Anthony Coggan (AFMA)		

Agenda Item	Title/Topic/Issue	Notes, Action & Recommendations
1.	Preliminaries	1.1 Welcome and apologies

¹ Southern Shark Industry Association

² Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

³ Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences

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		<p>The Chair, Dr Rik Buckworth, opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed participants. The Chair also facilitated the introduction of meeting participants and noted apologies, which are recorded in the table above. Meeting participants were informed that the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of assisting the preparation of meeting minutes.</p> <p>1.2 Declarations of interests The SharkRAG noted, in line with Section 15 of <i>Fisheries Management Paper 1 – Consultative Committees (FMP1)</i>, the requirement for all meeting participants to declare relevant interests, not limited to pecuniary gain, regarding all agenda items proposed for SharkRAG. Declared interests are recorded in the register of interest at Attachment A.</p> <p>1.3 Adoption of agenda The agenda was adopted as final (see Attachment B).</p> <p>1.4 Minutes of previous meeting AFMA noted that the minutes from the SharkRAG meeting held on 26-27 November 2025 have been circulated to SharkRAG members for comment and are scheduled to be published on the AFMA website in February 2026.</p>
2	Interim harvest strategy	<p>Ms Michelle Henriksen (AFMA) presented an update to the interim Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF) Harvest Strategy Framework (HSF).</p> <p>SharkRAG noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The existing HSF, first developed in 2005, has undergone several revisions with the most recent update incorporating the trigger species category in 2025. b. The interim HSF will remain in place until the new Multi-Species Harvest Strategy (MSHS) is implemented from 2029. c. The objective of the update is to improve clarity on capturing uncertainty, apply precautionary measures, and incorporate trigger species into the tier structure. The proposed update includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Re-introduction of Tier 2 assessments (same modelling approach as Tier 1 but classified separately due to reduced robustness and subject to a 5% buffer); ○ Expanded Tier 3 definition to include data-limited stock synthesis models with some ageing data and simple surplus production models. ○ Revised buffers applied to each Tier (Tier 1: 0%, Tier 2: 5%, Tier 3: 10%, Tier 4: 15%, Tier 5: 20%, trigger species effectively 25% buffer via Total Allowable Catch (TAC) trigger mechanism). ○ Updated TAC-setting guidelines for scenarios where an assessment is rejected, Multi-Year Recommended Biological Catch (MYRBC) periods are extended, or TACs must constrain catch of companion species to protect depleted stocks. d. Buffers aim to account for uncertainty and will be tested under Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) as part of the MSHS project; trigger species remain under current rules (75% TAC trigger and six-year review). e. AFMA highlighted that expected impacts of the revised HSF on fishing activity are minimal, with a small number of SESSF species affected by changes in the Tier classifications:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bight redfish and Silver warehou are now classified as Tier 2 assessments and subject to a 5% buffer; however, current catch is well below the TAC. ○ Silver trevally remains classified as Tier 3 but is now subject to a 10% buffer which is an increase from the original 5%. This increase is also not expected to constrain current fishing activity. <p>f. The update to the interim SESSF HSF will be considered by the AFMA Commission at its March 2026 meeting.</p> <p>SharkRAG discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Tier classification is determined through expert judgement by assessment scientists, with endorsement by the RAG, rather than through predetermined quantitative thresholds. b. The proposed buffers were considered to be appropriate and consistent with the intent of more explicitly accounting for uncertainty in stock assessments. c. The interim HSF provided clear guidance for multi-year RBC extensions where assessments cannot be updated within planned timeframes. d. Members sought clarification regarding constraints applied to target species when catches may result in unsustainable incidental mortality of depleted companion species, particularly in circumstances where a metier-based analysis is not available. AFMA clarified that the intent is not to limit application to metier-based analysis alone and that equivalent alternative analytical approaches may be applied. e. Concerns were raised about wording suggesting that maintaining the TAC setting could be interpreted as a default position when a Tier 3–5 assessment is rejected. Members emphasized that maintaining the TAC should not be assumed as the default position. f. SharkRAG agreed that TAC decisions in certain circumstances are highly context-specific and depend on the reasons for rejecting the assessment, including whether new information introduces additional sustainability concerns (i.e. changes in fishing dynamics and/or fishing methods and how this impacts data inputs into assessments). <p>SharkRAG recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. SharkRAG supported the proposed interim revisions to the SESSF HSF, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The re-introduction of Tier 2 ○ Revised Tier 3 definitions ○ Revised buffers to each tier level b. SharkRAG recommended AFMA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarify wording relating to TAC setting when Tier 3–5 assessments are rejected, to avoid any unintended interpretation that a TAC rollover is the default ○ Expand text relating to constraints for companion species to recognise that TAC setting decisions will be informed by metier-based or equivalent alternative analyses. c. SharkRAG noted that the interim framework is appropriate to guide decision-making until the outputs of the MSHSP project are finalised and implemented.
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		<p>Action 1: AFMA to clarify wording related to TAC setting when Tier 3–5 assessments are rejected, to avoid any unintended interpretation that a TAC rollover is the default outcome, and to update text relating to setting TACs for species that are companion species to depleted stocks so that metier-based analysis and equivalent alternative analysis should be considered.</p>
3	Research priorities	<p>Dr Lianos Triantafillos (AFMA member) presented an overview of the proposed research priorities submitted under the AFMA Research Council (ARC) call for research for funding in the 2026-27 financial year.</p> <p>SharkRAG noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The purpose of this agenda item was to consider research priorities for the SESSF to support evidence-based management decisions, with a focus on aligning research priorities with the Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy (CFHSP), rebuilding strategies for conservation-dependent species, and emerging challenges such as climate change impacts and Electronic Monitoring (EM) advancements. b. There were 4 research projects relevant to SharkRAG submitted to ARC for funding in 2026-27. These were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) testing of a novel Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR) based approach to determine stock status and set the by-catch TAC for school shark:</i> SharkRAG identified this project as the highest funding priority for the Gillnet Hook and Trap (GHAT) sector. 2. <i>Ageing of SESSF quota species for 3 years</i> 3. <i>Stock assessments and data services for SESSF species for 3 years</i> 4. <i>Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) for selected SESSF sectors/gears (including GHAT gillnet, manual longline and automatic longline)</i> c. Feedback from SharkRAG will be used to inform a proposal review by the AFMA Research Committee in March 2026. d. Conflicted members were asked to exit the meeting during the ranking of each research priority completed by the RAG members. <p>SharkRAG discussed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. SharkRAG supported the <i>MSE testing of a novel SPR based approach for school shark</i> proposal as the highest priority project for the shark fishery, noting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This project directly addresses the challenge of determining stock status and appropriate catch limits for school shark under changing productivity conditions, particularly where traditional reference points based on unfished biomass are no longer appropriate. ○ SharkRAG discussed the importance of developing a scientifically robust method to determine whether school shark has rebuilt above the limit reference point and to support future TAC setting, including eventual transition from a bycatch only framework should stock status improve. ○ Members acknowledged the project cost but noted that it aligns with the complexity of the work and the importance of

		<p>resolving longstanding management uncertainty for conservation dependent species.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. SharkRAG supported the proposal for <i>Ageing of SESSF quota species</i> proposal, noting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ongoing ageing is fundamental to Tier 1 stock assessments, particularly for gummy shark ○ Continuity of age structured time series is critical for robust stock assessment and harvest strategy application ○ Delaying ageing would have flow on consequences for assessments and management decisions. c. SharkRAG supported the <i>Stock assessments and data services for SESSF species for 3 years</i> proposal as essential, ongoing work underpinning TAC setting and harvest strategy application across the SESSF, noting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The project proposal represents high value for money given the number, complexity and importance of assessments delivered, including bespoke assessments for key shark species. e. SharkRAG supported the <i>ERAs for selected SESSF sectors/gears (including GHAT gillnet, manual longline and automatic longline)</i> proposal, noting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ERAs are an important component of ecosystem-based fisheries management and provide a systematic framework for identifying high risk species and interactions ○ ERA outputs support management responses to protected species listings and third-party certification requirements (e.g. MSC) ○ Although this work is important, ERAs are less time critical than projects directly underpinning stock assessments and TAC setting. <p>SharkRAG recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. SharkRAG endorsed all four research proposals submitted for potential ARC funding in 2026–27 as being relevant and important to the SESSF. b. SharkRAG identified the following priority order for the four proposals, noting that the MSE testing of a novel SPR was the highest priority and that the remaining 3 proposal were equally important, but lesser than MSE testing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>MSE testing of a novel SPR based approach for school shark</i> 2. <i>Ageing of SESSF quota species</i> 3. <i>Stock assessments and data services for SESSF species</i> 4. <i>Ecological Risk Assessments for selected SESSF sectors/gears.</i>
13	Other business	<p>SharkRAG noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The next meetings for 2026 as follows: b. SharkRAG 1: 16-17 September 2026 c. SharkRAG 2: 18-19 November 2026
Close of meeting		The Chair closed the meeting at 16:50pm

Attachment A – Register of interests

Table 1. Members', invited participants' and observers' declarations of interest

Member	Position	Interest declared
Rik Buckworth	Chair	<p>Chair of SharkRAG.</p> <p>Director of Sea Sense Australia Pty Ltd</p> <p>Scientific Member – NPRAG</p> <p>Member – Data Working Group for the GABTF</p> <p>Adjunct Professor – Charles Darwin University</p> <p>Current or anticipated projects with government agencies, CDU and fishing industry for projects in the NT, Qld and Commonwealth fisheries.</p> <p>Researcher involved particularly in stock assessment research. No pecuniary or other interest in the SESSF shark fishery.</p>
Robin Thomson	Scientific Member	<p>CSIRO, Assessment scientist. Acquiring funding for research purposes.</p> <p>PI of AFMA-CSIRO co-funded project 'Ongoing monitoring of school shark abundance and rebuilding in the SESSF using close kin mark recapture'.</p> <p>PI of the AFMA-funded project 2022/0806: "CKMR assessment design for selected key and rebuilding species in the SESSF and development of a CKMR tool for by-catch stocks".</p> <p>Co-investigator on FRDC project to develop harvest strategies for CKMR assessments for school shark and scalefish.</p>
Charlie Huveneers	Scientific Member	<p>Associate Professor and research scientist. Potential interest in funding for research. No pecuniary interest or otherwise.</p>
Matias Braccini	Scientific Member	<p>Employed by WA DPI</p> <p>Senior research scientist for the Shark and Ray Sustainability research group</p> <p>Potential interest in funding for research. No pecuniary interest or otherwise.</p>

Member	Position	Interest declared
Caleb Gardner	Economic Member	Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. Organisation is known to submit research funding applications for consideration by AFMA Committees
Kyriakos Toumazos	Industry Member	Chief Executive Officer (South Australian Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association Inc.); Director of Southern Sea Eagles Pty Ltd; Director of Southern Fisheries Pty Ltd; Director Health Balance Pharmacies Pty Ltd; Member South Australian Boating Facility Board; Member of Shark Resource Assessment Group (AFMA); Member of South East Management Advisory Committee; Member of AMSA Regional Safety Committee; Director Southern Shark Industry Alliance; Director PACK Investments Pty Ltd; Director Cruickshank's Corner Developments Pty Ltd; Director Cruickshank's Corner Commercial Pty Ltd; Director Seafood Industry Australia;
Leigh Castle	Industry Member	Tasmanian shark hook, scalefish hook and tuna minor line fisher. Owns SESSF quota and vessel statutory fishing rights. Has a declared interest in shark hook items and RBC recommendations
Anthony Harriss	Industry Member	Gillnet fisher and SFR holder.
Jamie Papas	Industry Member	Gillnet fisher and SFR holder. Board Director San Remo Fishermen's Co/Op
Anissa Lawrence	Conservation Member	Director of TierraMar Ltd, registered charity.

Member	Position	Interest declared
		<p>Independent consultant TierraMar Consulting Pty Ltd</p> <p>Undertakes contracts for a number of Conservation Non-Government Organisations, government departments, non-government agencies and the private sector on a range of fishery related matters.</p> <p>No pecuniary interest. Conservation member on SPFRAG. Conservation member on SEMAC</p> <p>Conservation member on South Australia Rock Lobster MAC and RSC. Conservation member on Spencer Gulf Prawn RSC</p> <p>Director and Chair of Ocean Future Fund Inc</p>
Ross Bromley	Invited Participant	<p>Principle of Girella Fisheries Services.</p> <p>Engaged by SSIA as SIDaC manager.</p> <p>Engaged by SETFIA as western orange roughy project manager. Member of Victorian Rock Lobster RAG.</p> <p>EO of Eastrock (Eastern Zone Rock Lobster Industry Association Inc.).</p> <p>Client representative of various MSC Certificates (none are shark <i>spp.</i>).</p> <p>No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.</p>
Pia Bessell-Browne	Invited Participant	<p>CSIRO assessment scientist.</p> <p>Acquiring funding for research purposes.</p> <p>PI on FRDC project: Developing a harvest control rule to use in situations where depletion can no longer be calculated relative to unfished levels.</p>
Paul Burch	Invited Participant	<p>Employed by CSIRO, assessment scientist. CSIRO representative on the Fisheries Statistics and Information Working Group. Acquiring funding for research purposes.</p> <p>Principle investigator on the SESSF stock assessment project.</p>
Miriana Sporcic	Invited Participant	<p>Employed by CSIRO, assessment scientist. CSIRO representative on the Fisheries Statistics and Information Working Group. Acquiring funding for research purposes.</p>

Member	Position	Interest declared
Lianos Triantafillos	AFMA Member	AFMA member, Manager of the Gillnet, Hook and Trap fishery. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.
Michelle Henriksen	Executive Officer	AFMA EO. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.
Kurt Davis	Observer	Employed by ABARES. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
James Woodhams	Observer	Employed by ABARES. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Anthony Coggan	Observer	Employed by AFMA. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.
Sally Weekes	Observer	Employed by AFMA. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.

Attachment B – Adopted agenda

Location: Online, Microsoft Teams

Chair Name: Dr. Rik Buckworth

21.01.26 14:30 – 16:30

Time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
14:30	1. Preliminaries 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country 1.2 Declarations of interest 1.3 Adoption of Agenda 1.4 Minutes from previous meetings 1.5 Actions arising from previous meeting	For noting	Chair (15 min)
14:45	2. Interim harvest strategy framework	For advice	AFMA (45 min)
15:30	3. Research priorities 3.1. ARC call for research 2026-27 evaluation	For advice	AFMA/CSIRO (45 min)
16:15	4. Other business 4.1. 2026 meeting dates	For advice	AFMA (15 mins)
16:30	<i>End of Day</i>		

Attachment C - Summary of Actions and Recommendations

Agenda item	Responsibility	Action/recommendation
2.0 Interim harvest strategy	AFMA	Action 1: AFMA to clarify wording related to TAC setting when Tier 3–5 assessments are rejected, to avoid any unintended interpretation that a TAC rollover is the default outcome, and to update text relating to setting TACs for species that are companion species to depleted stocks so that metier-based analysis and equivalent alternative analysis should be considered..
3.0 Research Priorities	AFMA	<p>Recommendation 1: SharkRAG endorsed all four research proposals submitted for potential ARC funding in 2026–27 as being relevant and important to the SESSF. SharkRAG identified the following priority order for the four proposals, noting that the MSE testing of a novel SPR was the highest priority and that the remaining 3 proposal were equally important, but lesser than MSE testing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>MSE testing of a novel SPR based approach for school shark</i> 2. <i>Ageing of SESSF quota species</i> 3. <i>Stock assessments and data services for SESSF species</i> 4. <i>Ecological Risk Assessments for selected SESSF sectors/gears.</i>
Next meeting	AFMA	SharkRAG 1 2026: 16-17 September SharkRAG 2 2026: 18-19 November