Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Minutes

Meeting	**Northern Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC)**		
Meeting Number	NORMAC 92	**Date**	29 June 2026
Location	Online (Teams)	**Time**	1pm-4pm (AEST)
Members	Mr Geoff Richardson – Chair Mr Brodie Macdonald – AFMA Member Dr Denham Parker – Scientific Member Dr Ian Knuckey – Scientific Member Dr Geoffrey Muldoon – Environment/Conservation Member Mr Phillip Robson – Industry Member Mr Bryan van Wyk – Industry Member Mr Michael O'Brien – Industry Member Mr Gregory Albert – Industry Member		
Executive Officer	Ms Lauren Crowley – AFMA		
Apologies	Mr Ian Boot – Industry Member		
Invited Participants	Ms Annie Jarrett – NPFI		
Observers/Presenters	Ms Darci Wallis – AFMA Mr Tamre Sarhan – AFMA Ms Rebecca Darcy – AFMA Ms Sally Troy – AFMA	Mr Brandon Meteyard – NPFI Dr Éva Plagányi – CSIRO Dr Gary Fry – CSIRO Mr Scott Spencer – AFMA	

1. Preliminaries

1a. Welcome and apologies

The Chair, Mr Geoff Richardson, 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.

1b. Declarations of interests

NORMAC noted, in line with Section 3.4.3.1 of Fisheries Management Paper 1 – Management Advisory Committees (FMP1), the requirement for all meeting participants to declare relevant interests, not limited to pecuniary gain, regarding all agenda items proposed for the NORMAC. Meeting participants discussed and agreed how declared interest would be managed. Members noted potential conflicts or interests for industry members with Agenda Item 2b (2026 Total Allowable Effort [TAE] Setting) and Agenda Item 3 (Sawfish Strategy), researchers with Agenda Item 5 (2027/28 Research) and Dr Ian Knuckey with Agenda Item 4 (Electronic Monitoring [EM] Directions). NORMAC agreed to the following approach to manage these was:

- Industry members could be present for discussion but not for the final TAE recommendation. Members, invited participants, and observers representing industry interests left the room at 2:04 pm on the 29th of June 2026.
- There was no need to exclude industry from the final sawfish strategy recommendation, as this had been developed collaborative with (including trial of mitigation measures) and was supported by industry.
- While Dr Ian Knuckey's interest in EM implementation in state fisheries was noted, this does not necessitate exclusion from discussions or decisions.
- As there were no specific recommendations relating to approval or funding of specific projects, there was no need to exclude scientific members and observers from any discussions.

The register of interests can be found at **Attachment A**.

1c. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as final (**Attachment B**).

A summary of actions and recommendations from NORMAC are at **Attachment C**.

Agenda item 2. NPF Stock Assessment 2026

2a. Tiger Prawn Stock Assessment

Scientific member Dr Denham Parker (CSIRO), provided a presentation on the 2026 tiger prawn stock assessment, summarised below.

- Two base cases were undertaken, one model assumes a productivity change in brown tiger prawns around 2000 (regime-shift), in line with the results of the Tiger MICE project, and one model excluding this change, using the full time series data to define the stock-recruit relationship.
- The key inputs into the model were:
    - NPF logbook catch and effort data and fishing power series up to 2025.

- Fishery independent survey indices and length frequency (LF) data from the 2024 & 2025 recruitment surveys and 2024 spawning survey.
- 2025 economic data based on the latest fishery survey.
- Fuel price input based on Prof Tom Kompas' AI fuel projection model, as presented to the NPRAG in March.
- 36 vessels were input rather than the previous 52, due to expected changes in fleet size from the revised fishing capacity determination and uncertainty around the Raptis fleet.

- The key outputs from the stock assessment model were:
  - All species were above limit reference point of 0.5 of the last 5 years average of S_{MSY}.
  - Including regime-shift assumes lower productivity for the brown tiger prawns, thus the model will no longer attempt to rebuild the stock to the levels from pre-2000.
  - Including the regime-shift into the model does not influence the endeavour prawn species outputs much as it mostly affects brown tiger prawns.
  - Red endeavour prawns were included as a sensitivity with marginal changes between the two model outputs.
  - The TAE recommendations were not constrained by the minimum effort threshold (MET) of 4,004 days.
  - The regime-shift scenario had higher initial effort in 2026 relative to original base case excluding the regime shift. The inverse applied for 2027 where the projected effort was higher when the regime shift was excluded (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Effort projections (no. of fishing days) from the tiger prawn stock assessment model for 2026 and 2027 including and excluding the regime-shift.

Scenario	2026 projected effort (exc. regime-shift)	2027 projected effort (exc. regime-shift)	2026 projected effort (inc. regime-shift)	2027 projected effort (inc. regime-shift)
Grooved tiger prawn	3,429	3,579	3,858	2,825
Brown tiger prawn	885	972	688	1,472
Total	**4,314**	**4,551**	**4,546**	**4,297**

  - Projections indicated positive profits from 2026 onwards under both base case scenarios.
    - The model excluding the regime-shift assumes a higher productivity of brown tiger prawns in the future, thus records an output of higher net profit.
    - The model excluding regime-shift attempts to rebuild brown tiger prawn stocks such that future catches reach 800 tonnes per year, while including the regime shift assumes MEY is reached with catches around 400 tonnes per year, more in line with observed catches since 2000.
  - The TAE outputs would equate to full seasons for both years if 36 vessels fish, noting that the regime-shift model TAE for 2026 would be 126 days per vessel (longer than the total days in the second season) and 119 days per vessel for 2027.
  - NPRAG agreed at the May meeting to include the regime-shift into the base case, as the best available science.

NORMAC considered the 2026 assessment outcomes, discussing the following points:

- NPRAG had previously discussed that the model outputs had not been consistent with catches and observations of brown tiger prawns, with the model outputs including the regime-shift better reflecting realised catches since 2000.
- CSIRO advised against conducting two base cases in the future due to the additional complexity and workload, as well as the potential for TAE shopping. It was suggested that a sensitivity excluding the regime shift should be included in future assessments.
- It was noted that including the regime-shift into the model is not penalising the effort outputs, it is changing the expected future productivity of the brown tiger prawn stocks.
    - The regime-shift model outputs a lower expected catch of brown tiger prawns at MEY, as B_0 has been shifted. As a result, the model does not penalise effort in an attempt to rebuild the stock to pre-2000 levels.
    - The stock carrying capacity is currently reduced based on the last 20 years of data, although there is potential productivity could increase in coming years, particularly with the upcoming El Niño (offering more favourable conditions for tiger prawns).
    - Including the regime-shift into the model does not mean the model is permanently changed as species abundance and trends could be re-assessed in 5-10 years.
- NORMAC noted the information provided by CSIRO and that NPRAG had agreed to adopt the regime-shift into the base case.

2b. TAE Setting

NORMAC noted the previous presentation by CSIRO on the outcomes of the 2026 tiger prawn stock assessment (using the base case including regime-shift), with considerations summarised below.

- The recommended 2026 TAE was 4,546 boat days (a 24.6% increase on the 2025 observed effort of 3,648 days).
- The recommended 2027 TAE was 4,297 boat days (a 17.8% increase on the 2025 effort).
- The redleg banana prawn TAE recommendation for 2026 is a total of 372 boat days, with a total estimated catch of 396 tonnes.
- NPRAG endorsed the outputs of the stock assessment including regime-shift and the redleg banana prawn TAE recommendation.
- NORMAC and NPRAG recommendations will be considered in the AFMA Commission decision in July on the 2026 and 2027 TAE.

Industry members left the meeting for the final TAE recommendation-setting discussions at 2:04 pm. NORMAC accepted the outcomes of the 2026 tiger prawn stock assessment base case, using the regime-shift evidence, and the redleg banana prawn stock assessment, noting:

- In-season TAE monitoring was required in recent years due to ensure TAEs were not exceeded concerns about the number of fishing days, however, was not previously a standard practice.
    - NORMAC agrees in-season monitoring of fishing days is not required on an ongoing basis due to the reduced fleet size and higher TAE.
        - NORMAC noted that the in-season monitoring of the MEY trigger in weeks 12 and 13 would still occur in 2026.
        - The effectiveness of the in-season monitoring of the MEY trigger in weeks 12 and 13 was raised considering the response (close the fishery early) is not implemented until week 16. It was agreed the current MEY tiger prawn season trigger rules should be reviewed in the future.

Action 1: AFMA and NPFI to review the in-season MEY trigger and present to the NPRAG.

Recommendation 1: NORMAC made the following recommendations based on the outcomes of the tiger and redleg banana prawn stock assessments:

- 2026 tiger prawn TAE of 4,546 boat days.
- 2027 tiger prawn TAE of 4,297 boat days.
- 2026 redleg banana prawn TAE of 372 boat days.

In- season monitoring of effort levels of the tiger prawn TAEs was not required as these are sufficient to cover the full season (based on the expected number of boats fishing). The tiger prawn MEY catch trigger would be monitored and reported against by NPFI in the 2026 tiger prawn season. The MAC noted the fishery would close early if the catch trigger was not met.

Agenda item 3. Sawfish Mitigation Strategy

AFMA provided a presentation on the current draft of the Sawfish Mitigation Strategy (SMS), with the following key points:

- The NPF Sawfish Mitigation Strategy was developed based on the outcomes of the FRDC funded Sawfish Workshop in November 2025.
- NPRAG considered the key objectives, actions, performance indicators and proposed strategy review at the May 2026 meeting and endorsing the primary inclusions.

Comments were sought through a targeted external consultation process, with feedback provided by NPRAG and NORMAC members, DCCEEW and CSIRO researchers. These comments were compiled, with the following key changes proposed:

- More specific requirements around estimating sawfish population and status were suggested.
  - Further emphasis on the importance of ongoing sawfish research such as the Close-Kin-Mark-Recapture project (CKMR) and satellite tagging project for understanding sawfish populations and movement.
  - Continued sampling collection is needed to reduce confidence intervals.
  - This data will be useful to assess the performance of the strategy.
- Suggestion to include a timeframe for the development of the sawfish safe handling practice.
  - Sawfish ID guides are on board every vessel each season and provided to CMOs, which is suggested to be included in the strategy.
  - The sawfish safe handling practices will be developed through NPFI in collaboration with skippers and CMOs, and informed by AFMAs bycatch safe handling policy.
  - NORMAC supported these guidelines being developed by the 2027 tiger prawn season, in line with the 100% mandatory use of sawfish gear mitigation devices in all nets.
- An additional performance indicator on using sawfish abundance and trends to inform adaptive management measures.
  - It was noted that this is similar to the following performance indicator already included in the strategy, suggested the following update to the wording: *'The most current population abundance estimates **[and trends]** are considered as part of the ongoing Strategy review process'*.

- Recovery for longer-lived species, such as sawfish, is slow and therefore annual review of this information isn't required, with reviews to occur when new information becomes available.

NORMAC noted the strategy will be provided to NORMAC and NPRAG once comments were incorporated, with the AFMA Commission to consider the Strategy at its late July meeting.

Action 2: AFMA to update the draft sawfish mitigation strategy prior to Commission consideration.

Recommendation 2: NORMAC endorsed the draft sawfish mitigation strategy, with the agreed changes from the consultation process and NORMAC advice incorporated.

Agenda item 4. Electronic Monitoring Directions

The AFMA Electronic Monitoring team, Mr Tamre Sarhan and Ms Rebecca Darcy, provided the draft EM directions for endorsement in the NPF, with NORMAC noting the following key discussion points:

- NORMAC advice was sought on the draft directions to introduce EM from 1 April 2027. The directions cover the approved types of systems and operator obligations.
  - The approved system types are sorted by fishery and will be uploaded onto the AFMA website. Approved systems differ between fisheries based on data and boat requirements.
  - The second direction is specific to the NPF and sets out criteria for system set up and operation.

NORMAC members expressed the following concerns with the draft directions:

- The expectations for industry to ensure the security and quality of the data (reliability, accuracy and secure data) noting that concession holders do not have access to the footage and thus do not have a way of ensuring the quality of the footage being taken. It was also questioned if identification of species should be part of industry's requirements.
  - AFMA EM team noted the following:
    - Maintaining and looking after hard drives is part of security and there is a feedback loop between the EM team and industry that allows for operators to view samples of footage which is part of the EM process, not a matter for the direction.
    - Identification needs to meet minimum requirements, but there is not an expectation that every animal needs to be identified.
- Industry members noted support for EM but were concerned about the obligations on industry, specifically around the expectations on concession holders within the EM direction.
  - The first 12 months of operational change may be challenging and there are a large number of legally binding tasks for industry in the direction.
  - There are important aspects of the EM process that require more clarity, including data protection, security and ownership, responses to system failures, and how industry can access the data.
- AFMA noted the directions are standard across all fisheries and they are used as a regulation tool in the same way as VMS. Further procedures are to be developed on critical aspects of EM, such as review processes, which are outside of the legal requirements of the direction and these documents will be shared in due course.

Noting EM implementation isn't until 1 April 2027, NORMAC agreed that members should provide further comments on the EM directions out of session and reconvene discussions later in 2026 to ensure a streamlined, robust consultation process.

Action 3: AFMA to take out-of-session comments by MAC members on the EM directions and set a meeting for further discussion on various policy aspects of EM pertaining to the NPF in the second half of 2026.

Agenda item 5. 2027/2028 Research Priorities

5a. Research Scopes

NORMAC noted the presentation from AFMA outlining the four draft NPF research scopes for inclusion into the 2027/28 annual call for research:

- '*Advancing Sustainability in the Northern Prawn Fishery*' (NPF Stock Assessments).
- '*Integrated fishery-independent data for multispecies Northern Prawn Assessments and Ecosystem Modelling*' (IMP Survey and vessel charter).
- '*Integrating long-term catch trend analysis of bycatch species into ecosystem-based sustainability of the Northern Prawn Fishery*' (Bycatch Monitoring Program).
- '*Further investigation of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for automation of large TEP identification in electronic monitoring*' (EM/AI automation project).

NORMAC reviewed the four draft research scopes, discussing the following key points:

- Consideration of the need to continue the biennial 'mini' stock assessment, noting the recent discussions about the need to reduce overall research and management costs in the fishery.
    - NPRAG has discussed an additional assessment by CSIRO to review the timing and frequency of the two surveys, which will be undertaken through a variation in the current stock assessment contract.
    - Review of the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf (JBG) closure will be considered by NPRAG at the November meeting, with potential implications for the redleg banana prawn stock assessment.
    - Members supported these discussions occurring through NPRAG, with NORMAC advice to be sought as required.
- Changes to the NPF data collection systems with the implementation of EM will need to be considered in the projects, particularly the bycatch monitoring program.
    - The CSIRO team highlighted that collecting more sawfish tissue samples for CKMR analysis should remain a priority, which can only be done by observers or crew, and that EM cannot replace this function. Quantifying the impact of trawling on sawfish populations will require annual estimates of total interactions (via EM) as well as an estimate of total population size (via CKMR).
- The research scopes will require any project applications to break down the costs of the individual elements of proposals, to support potential changes to the included components in the final projects.
- The EM/AI work is a broader priority across fisheries, with similar proposals in other Commonwealth fisheries.

Recommendation 3: NORMAC endorsed the research scopes as provided by AFMA.

5b. 2027/28 Annual Research Statement

The NPF annual research statement, to be considered by the AFMA Research Committee (ARC) meeting in August, sets out the proposed research priorities for the 2027/28 funding period. NORMAC noted the following update from AFMA on the annual research process:

- Research priorities were identified by NPRAG in line with the five-year Strategic Research Plan (*NPF Strategic Research Plan 2024-28*).
- ARC-approved research scopes are included in the annual call for research proposals in September/October for potential AFMA funding or Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) funding.
    - Project proposals for NPF scopes will be considered by NORMAC and NPRAG later this year.
- The current projects for the three key NPF research work conclude in 2027, with these projects therefore needing to be included in the 2027/28 research priorities, along with the new AI/EM scope.
- The following project was identified at the March NPRAG meeting for inclusion in 'Research projects identified for inclusion in future research statements':

    - *Formal appraisal of management changes (including gear SFR adjustments and fleet restructuring) to understand implications of major structural changes in the NPF.*

NORMAC discussed the following:

- Business-as-usual work is prioritised as there is a desire to reduce research costs due to recent poor economics within the fishery, as well as a reduced fleet size/levy payers expected in upcoming seasons.
    - Industry reiterated their strong support for the new EM/AI research scope, due to the potential future cost savings.
- The RAG had additionally identified a potential future research priority for a formal appraisal of management changes and the implications of the major structural changes occurring within the NPF.
    - It was noted that this project had not been included in the current round of priorities due to the higher priority of the four other projects and because it would be more appropriate to undertake the work once fleet restructuring is further advanced.
    - This project is intended to review changes in fleet size due to the reduction in gear SFR holdings. Details are to be developed once the project is identified as a priority.
- AFMA advised that the research scopes and Annual Research Statement will be submitted to the ARC, in line with the MAC and RAG recommendations.

Recommendation 4: NORMAC endorsed the draft Annual Research Statement for submission to the AFMA Research Committee.

Agenda item 6. Other Business/Next Meeting

NORMAC noted no items raised under Other Business.

A specific date is not set for the next NORMAC meeting, noting that AFMA will set the next online meeting for later in 2026 to further review the EM directions.

Close of meeting

The Chair closed meeting at 4:05pm (AEST).

Attachment A – Register of Interests

Table 2. NORMAC meeting 92 member, invited participant and observer declarations of interest.

Name	MAC position / organisation	Declared interests
Mr Geoff Richardson	Chair	Mr Richardson is the Chair of the Northern Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC), Torres Strait Prawn MAC (TSPMAC) and Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC). Mr Richardson has no interests pecuniary or otherwise.
Mr Brodie Macdonald	AFMA Member	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Mr Bryan van Wyk	Industry Member	Industry member – NPRAG Employed by Austral Fisheries, a company with SFR holdings in the fishery.
Mr Gregory Albert	Industry Member	NPF Statutory Fishing Right (SFR) holder
Dr Denham Parker	Scientific Member	Scientific member – NPRAG & NORMAC Employed by the CSIRO and through the organisation has in the past, and may in the future, receive funding for research related to the fishery. Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF.
Dr Ian Knuckey	Scientific Member	**Positions:** Director – Fishwell Pty Ltd Director – Olrac Australia (Electronic logbooks) Chair – Northern Prawn Fishery 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 King Prawn Fishery Economic Sub-committee Chair – Impacts of algal bloom on SA fisheries Scientific Member – Northern Prawn Management Advisory Committee

Name	MAC position / organisation	Declared interests
		Scientific Member – Gulf of St Vincent's Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee Scientific Member – Tropical Tuna Resource Assessment Group Scientific Member – SESSF Resource Assessment Group Member – The Geelong Agri Collective Involved in Fish for All Campaign Western Australia Involved in electronic monitoring implementation in state fisheries.
Mr Ian Boot	Industry Member	Industry member – NPRAG & NORMAC Managing Director of Austfish, a company that operates NPF vessels. Has a commercial interest in the fishery. NPF broodstock permit holder. Participates in scampi fishing.
Mr Phillip Robson	Industry Member	Industry member – NPRAG Employee of A Raptis and Sons. Has provided charter for scientific surveys in NPF in the past and may in the future.
Mr Michael O'Brien	Industry Member	Commercial fishing licence holder in the NT Demersal Fishery. General Manager, Australia Bay Seafoods Pty Ltd FRDC Seafood Industry Safety Initiative (SISI), Member. Stay A Float trusted Advocate.
Dr Geoffrey Muldoon	Environment/ Conservation Member	Employed by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Australia, Senior Manager, Blue Foods. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Ms Lauren Crowley	AFMA – Executive Officer	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Ms Annie Jarrett	NPFI – Invited Participant	CEO – NPFI Commonwealth Fisheries Association Director Chair – Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries (ACPF)

Name	MAC position / organisation	Declared interests
		Member of the FRDC selection panel. Invited participant - NORMAC No pecuniary interests Represents the interests of industry
Mr Brandon Meteyard	NPFI - Observer	Employed by NPFI. No pecuniary interests. Represents the interests of industry.
Ms Darci Wallis	AFMA – Observer	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Ms Sally Troy	AFMA - Observer	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Mr Scott Spencer	AFMA – Observer	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Dr Éva Plagányi	CSIRO - Observer	Scientific member – NPRAG Employed by the CSIRO and through the organisation has in the past, and may in the future, receive funding for research related to the fishery Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF Also currently receiving FRDC funding related to development of a GoC ecosystem model. Scientific member of TRLRAG and TS HCRAG
Dr Gary Fry	CSIRO - Observer	Employed by the CSIRO and through the organisation has in the past, and may in the future, receive funding for research related to the fishery
Mr Tamre Sarhan	AFMA – Observer	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Ms Rebecca Darcy	AFMA – Observer	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.

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Attachment B – Adopted Agenda

AGENDA – 29 June 2026 / Time: 13:00 to 16:00 AEST

Time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
10 mins	**1. Preliminaries** a. Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and apologies b. Declarations of interest c. Adoption of Agenda	For action	Chair
45 mins	**2. Tiger Prawn Stock Assessment** a. Stock Assessment b. 2026 TAE Recommendation	For recommendation	AFMA/CSIRO
45 mins	**3. Sawfish Mitigation Strategy**	For endorsement	AFMA
30 mins	**4. Electronic Monitoring Direction**	For endorsement	AFMA
45 mins	**5. 2027/28 Research Plan** a. Research Scopes b. 2027/28 Annual Research Plan	For information	AFMA/CSIRO
5 mins	**6. Other business / Next Meeting**	For information	AFMA

Attachment C: Actions and Recommendations

Agenda no.	Action item.	Action	Responsible party
2b	1	AFMA and NPFI to review the in-season MEY trigger and present to the NPRAG.	AFMA/ NPFI
3	2	AFMA to update the draft sawfish mitigation strategy prior to Commission consideration.	AFMA
4	3	AFMA to take out-of-session comments by MAC members on the EM directions and set a meeting for further discussion on various policy aspects of EM pertaining to the NPF in the second half of 2026.	AFMA

Agenda no.	Recommendation no.	Recommendation
2b	1	NORMAC made the following recommendations based on the outcomes of the tiger and redleg banana prawn stock assessments: • 2026 tiger prawn TAE of 4,546 boat days. • 2027 tiger prawn TAE of 4,297 boat days. • 2026 redleg banana prawn TAE of 372 boat days. In- season monitoring of effort levels of the tiger prawn TAEs was not required as these are sufficient to cover the full season (based on the expected number of boats fishing). The tiger prawn MEY catch trigger would be monitored and reported against by NPFI in the 2026 tiger prawn season. The MAC noted the fishery would close early if the catch trigger was not met.
3	2	NORMAC endorsed the draft sawfish mitigation strategy, with the agreed changes from the consultation process and NORMAC advice incorporated.
5a	3	NORMAC endorsed the research scopes as provided by AFMA.
5b	4	NORMAC endorsed the draft Annual Research Statement for submission to the AFMA Research Committee.