

TORRES STRAIT FISHERIES

Torres Strait Treaty

The Torres Strait Treaty, ratified in 1985 between Australia and Papua New Guinea, defines the areas of jurisdiction for swimming and sedentary marine species in Torres Strait and established an area known as the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ). The Treaty sets out a framework to guide both countries in providing for the management, conservation and sharing of fisheries resources in and around the TSPZ including the 'Outside but near Area' adjacent to the TSPZ. It also sets out guidelines for the enforcement of fisheries legislation. Map 3 provides an overview of jurisdictional arrangements under the Torres Strait Treaty.

The principal purpose in establishing the TSPZ is to acknowledge and protect the traditional way of life and livelihood of the indigenous inhabitants of the area including their traditional (subsistence) fishing and their traditional right of free movement. The Treaty also requires the Australian and PNG Governments to protect and preserve the marine environment and indigenous fauna and flora of the area.

Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority

In the Australian area of jurisdiction, traditional fishing and the commercial fisheries are managed by the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA). The PZJA, established under the Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984, comprises the Australian and Queensland Government Ministers responsible for fisheries and the Chair of the Torres Strait Regional Authority. The fisheries currently under management are prawn, tropical rock lobster, pearl

shell, Spanish mackerel, beche-de-mer, trochus, finfish, barramundi and traditional fishing for turtle and dugong. Five of these fisheries are known as Article 22 fisheries and are jointly managed by PNG and Australia: prawn, tropical rock lobster, pearl shell, Spanish mackerel, and dugong and turtle. The two countries share the catches of the three Article 22 commercial fisheries according to formulae set out in the Treaty.

Torres Strait Fisheries

Detailed spatial data are unavailable for some Torres Strait Fisheries. Accordingly, catch and GVP for Torres Strait Fisheries, other than the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery, are not depicted on maps in this Atlas. An overview of the magnitude and distribution of fisheries in the Torres Strait is provided below.

Torres Strait Prawn

The fishery, which is based around three prawn species (tiger prawns, endeavour prawns and king prawns), is concentrated in the waters between the Warrior Reef complex and Yorke (Massig) Island and is fished mainly by boats based in Cairns. In June 2002 there were seventy seven Australian vessels licensed to operate in the fishery. Production from the fishery in 2001–02 was valued at approximately \$25 million, total catch for the fishery in 2002 was 1729 tonnes. Total prawn catches average between 1500 and 2000 tonnes per year. Catch details of the Torres Strait Prawn fishery are provided on maps 2A and 2B.

Tropical Rock Lobster

Mean annual catch (1981–2000) = 202 tonnes
Tropical Rock Lobster is the most important commercial fishery to many Torres Strait Islanders. Most lobsters are taken by divers using

a short hand spear or snare either using hookah (surface air supplied) gear or free diving.

Spanish Mackerel

A small troll fishery operates in eastern Torres Strait where Spanish mackerel are most abundant. Approximately twelve specialist boats operate regularly in the Fishery, however mackerel fishing is a part-time activity for most.

Pearl Shell Fishery

Gold-lipped pearl shell is collected for pearl culture farms mainly by a small number of divers using hookah gear. Pearl shell is also collected as a bycatch by lobster and trochus divers.

Barramundi and crabs

Barramundi is fished from the inland swamps and shorelines around the north western islands. The crab fishery primarily targets mud crabs using pots or dillies. These fisheries are managed entirely for the benefit of traditional inhabitants.

Beche-de-mer

The beche-de-mer fishery is based on numerous species, especially sandfish, although the harvesting of sandfish and some other species is currently prohibited.

Finfish

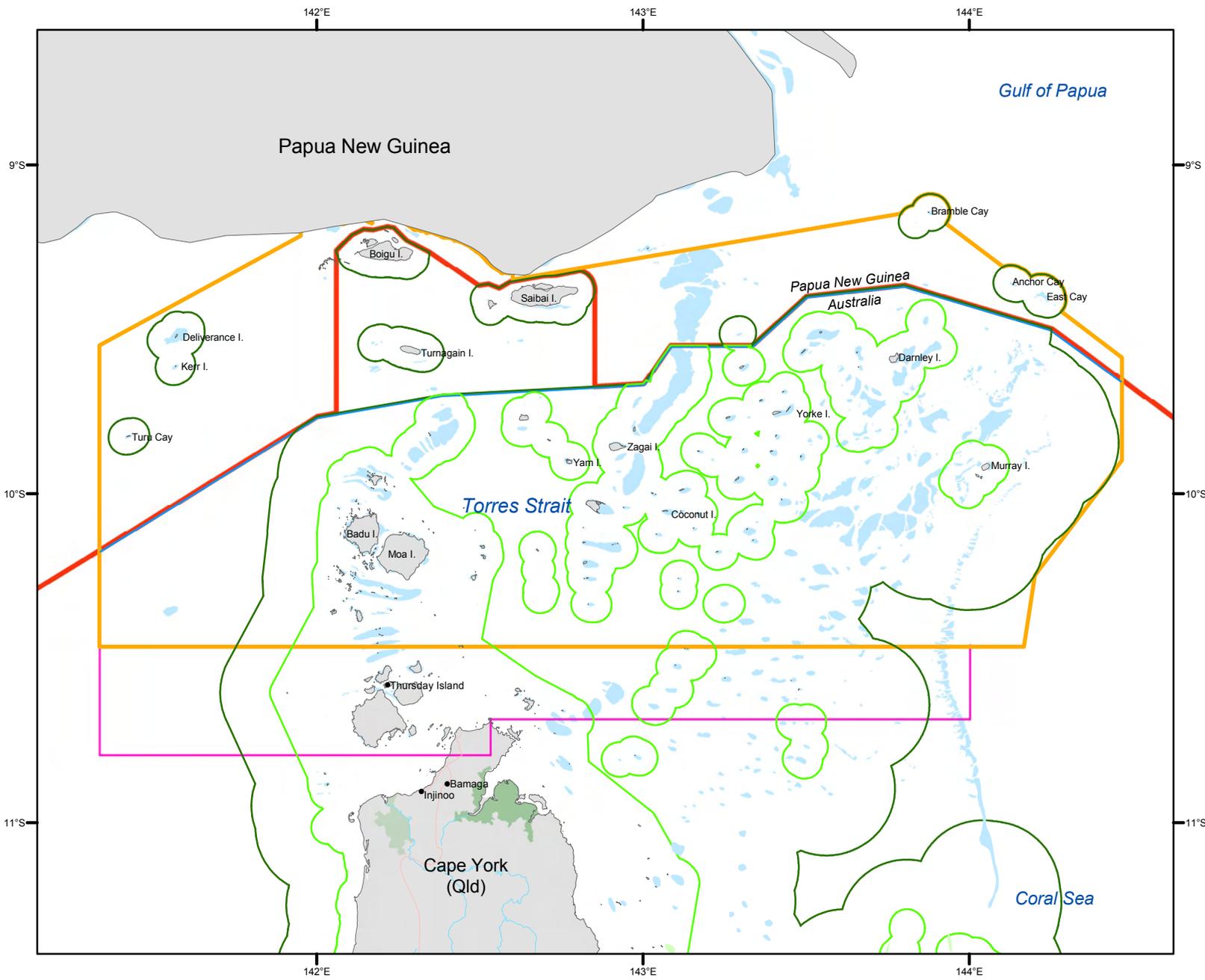
The finfish fishery targets mainly coral trout, snappers and emperors by line fishing methods.

Traditional fishing

The PZJA is responsible for monitoring and managing traditional fishing. Community based management plans are being developed to manage traditionally fished species, particularly dugong and turtle.

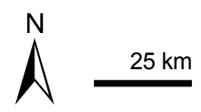


Map 3 - Torres Strait Fisheries Torres Strait Protected Zone.



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- Australian Fisheries Jurisdiction
- Outside but near Area
- Australian Seabed Jurisdiction
- Limit of Coastal Waters (3nm)
- Limit of Territorial Sea (12nm)
- Reefs
- Torres Strait Protected Zone



Data Sources:
 AFMA, Torres Strait Protected Area Joint Authority.
 Terrestrial features: Australian Land Information Group.
 Cartography and digital compilation:
 Bureau of Rural Sciences. www.brs.gov.au
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 Data are assumed to be correct as received from suppliers.


Australian Government
 Department of the Environment and Heritage
 Fisheries Research & Development Corporation
 Bureau of Rural Sciences

