



**THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
MEMBER FOR FARRER**

MS21-009468

02 DEC 2021

The Hon Mark Furner MP
Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries
GPO Box 46
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark', written over the word 'Minister'.

I am writing to you in relation to the assessment of the Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (East Coast) (the fishery) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

I have declared the fishery an approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) under Part 13A of the EPBC Act for three years until 30 November 2024. This approval is contingent on the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries meeting the ten conditions outlined in Attachment A.

The List of Exempt Native specimens has also been amended to allow export of product from the fishery without a permit while the specimens are covered by the declaration as an approved WTO. This exemption does not include species listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which still require export permits. I have also accredited the management arrangements for the fishery under Part 13 of the EPBC Act.

The assessment of the fishery considered the harvest of the CITES listed White Teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*) and Black Teatfish (*H. whitmaei*). The CITES Scientific Authority reached a positive Non-Detriment Finding (NDF) for the harvest and export of 53 t of the White Teatfish.

However, the CITES Scientific Authority was unable to reach a positive NDF for Black Teatfish. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment has informed the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries this species will not be included in the WTO at this time but could be considered for inclusion at a later date.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Susan Ley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

SUSSAN LEY

cc: Mr Graeme Bolton, Deputy Director-General
Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

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**Part 13A Conditions on the approved Wildlife Trade Operation declaration for the
Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery – November 2021**

Condition 1

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must ensure that operation of the Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (East Coast) is carried out in accordance with management regime specified in Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority issued permits, as well as in the following:

- *Fisheries Act 1994* (Qld)
- Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019 (Qld)
- Fisheries (Commercial Fisheries) Regulation 2019 (Qld)
- Fisheries Declaration 2019 (Qld)
- Fisheries Quota Declaration 2019 (Qld)
- *Marine Parks Act 2004* (Qld)
- Marine Parks Regulations 2019 (Qld)
- *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* (Cth)
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 2019 (Cth).

Condition 2

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must inform the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment of any intended material changes to the Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (East Coast) management arrangements that may affect the assessment against which *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* decisions are made.

Condition 3

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must inform the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment of any intended changes to fisheries legislation that may affect the legislative instruments relevant to this approval.

Condition 4

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must provide annual reports on the Queensland Sea Cucumber Fishery (East Coast) to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment every 12 months, from the date of the approval of the Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO). These reports must be consistent with Appendix B of the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition*.

Condition 5

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must commission a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to evaluate the ability of the settings contained in the '*Queensland Sea cucumber fishery harvest strategy 2021–2026*' and any other legislated and enforceable management arrangements to meet the fishery's objectives of attaining maximum economic yield (defined in the harvest strategy as target biomass level of 60% of unfished biomass for stocks harvested in the fishery). The MSE must consider the risk posed to each individual species harvested in the fishery, identify information needs and make recommendations for any improvements to the management arrangements considered necessary for the management of the fishery to meet its objective.

- a) The scope and Terms of Reference for this review should be developed in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.
- b) The updated MSE must include all new data, including data from fishery independent surveys. The updated MSE must be published on the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website, alongside the Harvest Strategy for the fishery by no later than the commencement of the 2023–24 fishing season.
- c) The outcomes of the MSE must be considered as part of an implementation plan to be provided to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment by no later than six months before the end of the Wildlife Trade Operation. Any required changes to management of the fishery must also be implemented by that time.

Condition 6

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must:

- a) Undertake desktop research on the main sea cucumber species harvested in the fishery to determine biologically meaningful minimum size limits. Investigations should consider key biological parameters, for example, size at maturity. Findings of this research should be published on the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website before the commencement of the 2022–23 fishing season.
- b) Work with industry to undertake fieldwork within the fishery to determine appropriate ways to implement the minimum size limits determined through 6a. This may include the development of appropriate conversion factors to account for changes in size resulting from processing. Findings of this research should be published on the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website before the commencement of the 2023–24 fishing season.
- c) Implement minimum size limits based on work completed in 6a and 6b prior to the 2024–25 fishing season. Implementation of minimum size limits should be described in the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries application for the next Wildlife Trade Operation for this fishery.

Condition 7

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must:

- a) Ensure data from fishery independent surveys of Burrowing Blackfish at the Lizard, Gould and Bunker Reef Burrowing Blackfish Zones are representative of the fishery and used to inform a stock assessment for the species.
- b) Undertake and publish the stock assessment for Burrowing Blackfish. The stock assessment must be independently peer reviewed and must be completed by no later than six months prior to the expiry of the Wildlife Trade Operation approval.
- c) For the 2024–25 fishing season and beyond, implement any necessary changes to the total allowable catch (TAC) to ensure that rate of fishing mortality does not exceed that required to achieve the biomass target of 60% of unfished biomass for this species as detailed in the harvest strategy for the fishery.

Condition 8

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must:

- a) Implement species-specific reporting for Curryfish for the 2022–23 fishing season and beyond.
- b) Undertake and publish stock assessments for Prickly Redfish and Curryfish that incorporate fishery independent surveys, that are representative of the fishery, for these species. The stock assessment must be independently peer reviewed and must be completed no later than six months prior to the expiry of the Wildlife Trade Operation approval.
- c) For the 2024–25 fishing season and beyond, use information from 8a and 8b above to determine and implement the appropriate level of fishing mortality rate to be applied to these species to achieve the 60% biomass target as detailed under decision rule 3.2 of the harvest strategy for this fishery.

Condition 9

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must:

- a) Ensure that harvest of White Teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*) does not exceed 53 t per season.

Condition 10

The Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries must:

- a) Report information on the species harvested from Ashmore and Boot Reefs, Marion Reef and Saumarez Reef including species harvested, amount of harvest per species and location of harvest from the Coral Sea Marine Park. This reporting must be done as part of the annual report required under Condition 4.
- b) Ensure that White Teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*) is not harvested from the Coral Sea Marine Park including Ashmore and Boot Reefs, Marion Reef and Saumarez Reef.