

# TASMANIAN ABALONE COUNCIL LTD

262 Argyle Street

Hobart Tas 7000

Telephone: 03 6231 1955

Facsimile: 03 6231 1966

Email: [admin@tasabalone.com.au](mailto:admin@tasabalone.com.au)

[www.tasabalone.com.au](http://www.tasabalone.com.au)

ABN: 80 009 590 578 ACN: 009 590 578

## **Fishery Resource Advisory Group (FRAG)**

Meeting 3/2013

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2013 – 10.00am

IMAS, Nubeena Crescent Tarooma

---

### **DRAFT Minutes**

#### **1. Present:**

##### **Members:**

I Cartwright (Chair), G Woodham, D Lisson, M Webster, T Johnston, B Cobbing, J McKibben, P. Richardson, J. Hault, R. Scanlon, V Collins, A Gray, D Tarbath, M Bradshaw, C Gardner, C Mundy, J Freeman (minutes),

##### **Observers:**

L Forbes, S Pyke, R Colquoun, (IMAS) B Cobbing, B Gray, R Seabourne, G Moroney, J Evans, D Hansen, Valentine (snr), S Grant, B Wilson, B Richardson, J Huddleston, R Seabourne, M Lovett, M Chesterman, J Evans, J Valentine, A Hansen

#### **2. Apologies**

M. Haddon, T Johnston, R Rex,

The Chair opened the meeting. Observers were welcomed and reminded/informed about the FRAG processes and how members and observers can have input into the meeting. It was noted that any follow up queries or clarifications of the issues discussed could be raised in the first instance with TACL Chief Executive Dean Lisson, and a Summary and the minutes of this meeting are placed on the TACL website for members to view.

It was noted that the meeting discussion would include i) a review of the fishery performance so far for 2013 and ii) a review of minimum size changes, and iii) changes that would need time to develop and would not be implemented until 2014. The Chair noted that it is important that information on changes suggested by the FRAG are communicated clearly to all members as soon as possible to avoid the perception that the FRAG is operating in isolation from TACL members.

The Members congratulated Allen Hansen on being awarded The 'Industry Ambassador Award' by the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council in recognition of his service and commitment to the industry.

### **3. Adoption of agenda:**

The agenda was adopted with additions to General Business.

### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting:**

Agreed to be an accurate record and accepted.

### **5. Actions Arising from Previous Meeting:**

#### **Action 1 – Development of indicators, target and limit reference points**

Ongoing

A successful workshop was held on 10<sup>th</sup> May to discuss what constitutes acceptable target reference points for the fishery, including acceptable catch rates. Malcolm Haddon has incorporated a simple version of the new harvest control rule into the abalone MSE to help identify how the fishery performs under various management settings. Malcolm has almost completed the Management Strategy Evaluation project (MSE), and pursue additional spatial land size limit scenario's for improving the assessment and management of abalone within his new FRDC project.

#### **Action 2 - Follow up on funding with FRDC for Occupational Divers Course, based on FRDC People Development Funding**

Ongoing

#### **Action 3 – Finalisation of Block 5 report and presentation of results to FRAG**

Ongoing

The data obtained between 2008 and January 2012 is an under-representation of the fishing activity as divers frequently shared loggers but did not notify IMAS which logger was used by the divers; Craig will produce a summary of the data obtained, limited to effort data, and key issues and recommendations on options for future management of the area for the next AbFAC meeting

#### **Action 4 – Information of processor/diver numbers and options for maintaining profitability/viability in these sectors**

Completed

W Ayliffe has been contracted for a report on Dive Sector and Bruce Felmingham contracted to report on the Processing Sector.

#### **Action 5 – Workshop to develop criteria for MCDA process –**

Ongoing - item 10.1 and see Action 1 above

#### **Action 6 – Increase size to 140mm Partridge Island, Bruny Island 14 C & D**

Ongoing - agenda item 9.

#### **Action 7 – Extended East Coast Closure (4 or 6 months)**

Completed

#### **Action 8 – Increase size limit on Western Zone to 145mm from April 1, 2013**

Ongoing

#### **Action 9 – 'Shell Study' article to be inserted in 'Fishing today'**

Completed

#### **Action 10 – Freycinet, txt to divers on the 145mm size limit**

Completed

### **Action 11 – Block 5, close cap at 60t**

Completed

### **Action 12 – South West. Ian to write up for the Minister**

Completed

## **6. AbFAC #2 summary FAC outcomes relevant to FRAG business (stock status and associated issues)**

The coverage of length frequency data from the fishery was discussed. It was noted that traceability is not always possible, especially in the case of motherships, and some sampling cannot be attributed to a particular diver or a sub block. Additional effort to cover the current length frequency gaps is necessary to fill data gaps in the fishery assessment

**Action: IMAS to work with industry and write up an operational process on the best method of collecting additional length frequency data**

## **7. Recommendations from the 2012 Stock Assessment**

IMAS presented the recommendations from the finalised 2012 stock assessment as below:

1. Stocks were assessed to have been sufficiently reduced to warrant substantial reductions of catch in the following areas: Block 5 (Northern Zone), and Blocks 10, 11 and 12A (Western Zone).
2. Some other areas have also had declines in catch rates although from higher stock levels and consideration should be given to reducing catch in response. These areas are Blocks 6, 7 and 8 (Central Western Zone/Western Zone), Block 9 (Western Zone), Block 31 (Eastern and Northern Zones), Blocks 33 and 38 (Bass Strait Zone) and Block 49 (Northern Zone).
3. Parts of the greenlip fishery are of concern. King Island appears to be less productive than it was historically and may no longer be capable of supplying former levels of catch. The 10 t greenlip catch allocated to Circular Head and the Central North Coast has never been caught there and has the potential to be shifted to other areas which risks harming those areas. There may be opportunity to increase yield and quality in the north-east through an increased LML.
4. The Eastern Zone TAC reduction was a pre-emptive strategy to reduce the risk of fishery impacts on the stock, and the catch is now at record lows. As yet, the low catch has not led to a widespread recovery of catch rates. Fishers appear to have modified the way that they fish in response to lower catch rates, possibly biasing catch rate data used for assessment.

## **7. Review of 2013 Fishery Performance June Quarter:**

The FRAG considered the IMAS data and analysis presented as at the 23 July 2013

Landings (tonnes) to 17 July 2013:

Zone	TAC	Landed	% caught	Remainder
Greenlip	140.0	56	40	84
East	528.5	156	29	373
North	308.0	158	51	151
West	1001.0	555	55	446

Central West	101.5	60	59	42
Bass Strait	70.0	32	46	38
	<b>2149</b>	<b>1017</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1132</b>

The FRAG worked through the zones of the fishery by groups of blocks or single groups. It was noted that for some areas of the fishery, and in particular the Eastern Zone, there had been little catch taken to date and in others there remained significant amounts of catch to be taken. In this respect the suggested 2014 catches recommendations by block/sub-zone/zone are very preliminary and will be reviewed at the next FRAG meeting.

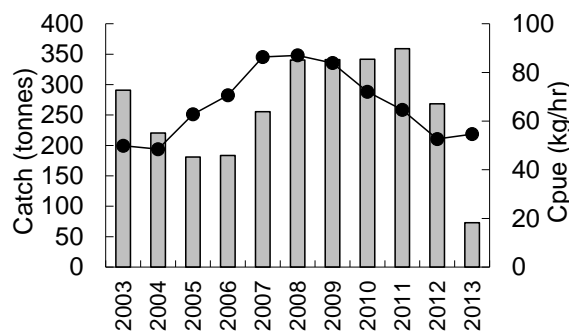
### Eastern Zone

**FRAG Comments:** The FRAG agreed that there had been insufficient catch and effort to make a judgement on the likely TAC for the zone for 2014, or draw significant conclusions concerning resource status. Industry provided some preliminary comments, which generally reported some encouraging signs.

IMAS presented preliminary logger data, comparing catch, catch rate and other indicators with the previous year. Industry noted that it was important to consider external influences on fishing activity, most of which were market driven.

**Action; IMAS/DPIPWE to provide a report on landings by zone by month for the last 3 years, overlaid with key external factors/influences including Chinese holidays, exchange rates etc**

Actaeons 13C, 13D, 13E (capped area)



**2013 Cap:** No cap, included in EZ TAC

**Catch to date:** 73 t

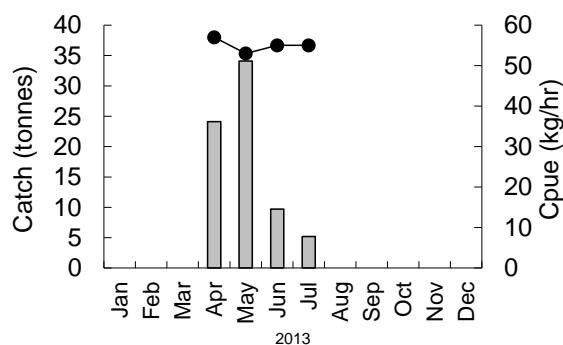
**Mean CPUE to date:** 55 kg/hr

**Mean catch (2000-2012):** 291 t

**Fishery condition:** low stock levels

Notes:

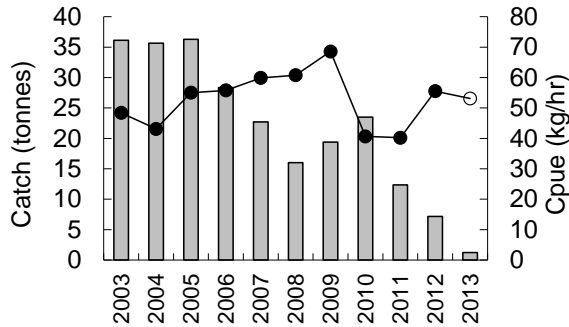
- Unusually small amount of catch taken so far this year



## FRAG comments

Appears to be a healthy number of fish just under the measure, GPS data queries collected shows longer swims ie. metres of coast swum vs catch per hour. Divers are reporting longer days, with shallow areas showing isolated fish, deeper areas are showing bigger fish. Processor data is not supporting these observations.

14A, 14B - Lower Channel, Huon to Southport Island, inc Dover, Southport



**Cap:** No cap, included in EZ TAC

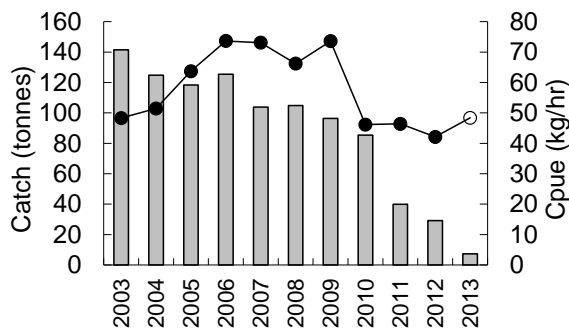
**Catch to date:** 1 t

**CPUE to date:**

**Mean catch (2000-2012):** 27 t

**Fishery condition:** low stock levels

Bruny Island – Blocks 14C, 14D, 14E, 15, 16.



**Cap:** No cap, included in EZ TAC

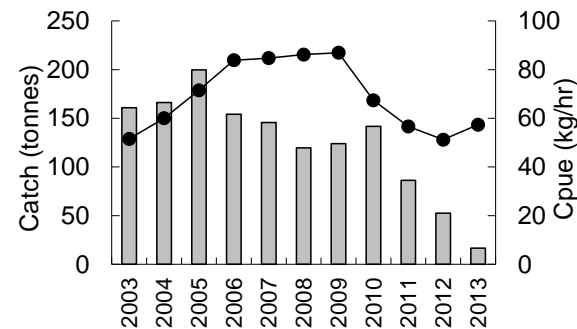
**Catch to date:** 7 t

**CPUE to date:** 49 kg/hr

**Mean catch (2000-2012):** 113 t

**Fishery condition:** low stock levels

Storm Bay - Blocks 17 - 21. – Hobart to Tasman Island including Nubeena.



**Cap:** No cap, included in EZ TAC

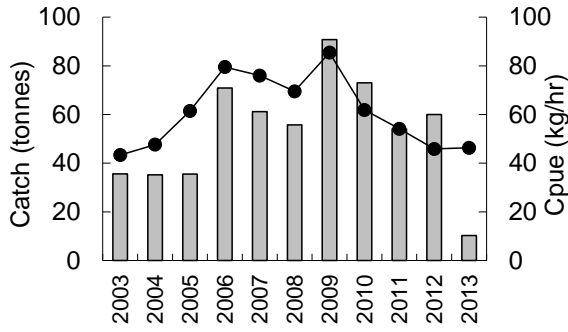
**Catch to date:** 17 t

**CPUE to date:** 57 kg/hr

**Mean catch (2000-2012):** 136 t

**Fishery condition:** low stock levels

Block 22



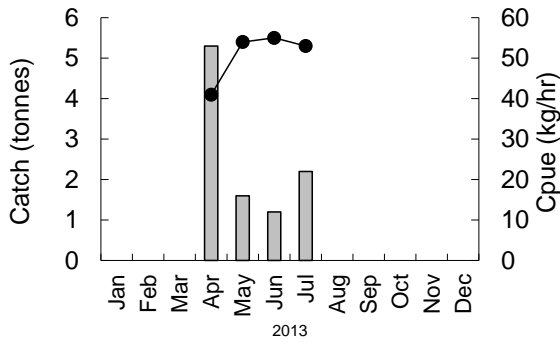
**Cap:** No cap, included in EZ TAC

**Catch to date:** 10 t

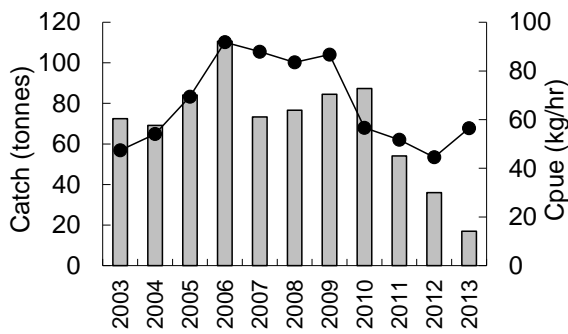
**CPUE to date:** 46 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 56 t

:



Blocks 23, 24 – Deep Glen Bay to Triabunna including Maria Island

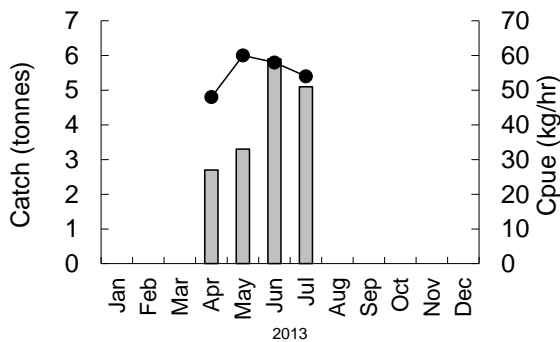


**Cap:** No cap, included in EZ TAC

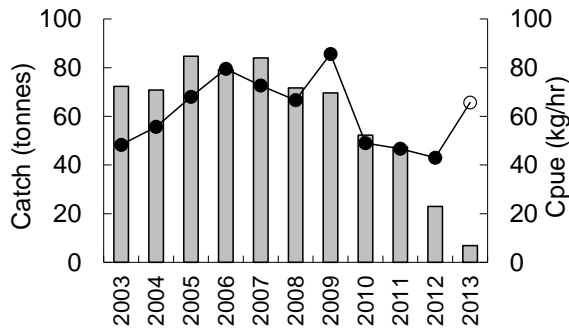
**Catch to date:** 17 t

**CPUE to date:**

Mean catch (2000-2012): 56 t



Freycinet and Bicheno – Blocks 25 to 29A



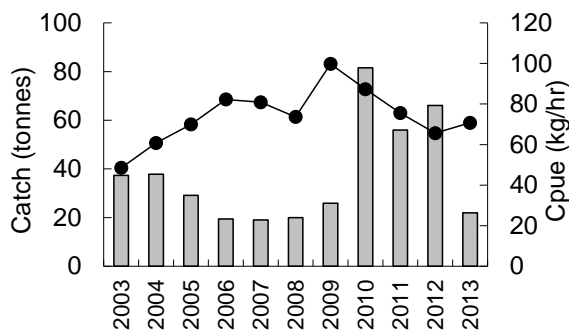
**Cap:** Block 27 = 5 t

**Catch to date:** 7 t (Block 27 = 1 t)

**CPUE to date:** 66 kg/hr

**Mean catch (2000-2012):** 74 t

North East – sub-blocks 29B, 29C, 29D, 30A, 31A



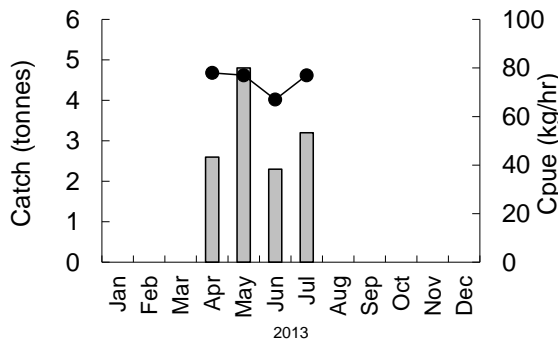
**Cap:** No cap, included in EZ TAC

**Catch to date:** 22 t (9 t from 31A)

**CPUE to date:** 71 kg/hr

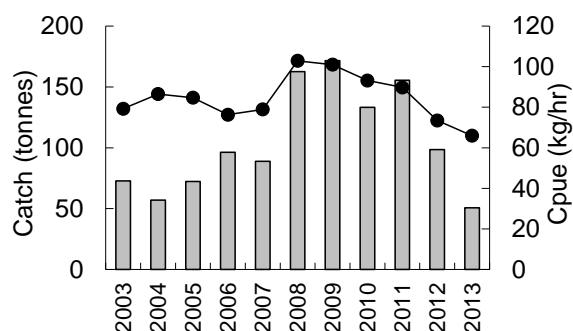
**Mean catch (2000-2012):** 50 t (34 t from 31A)

**Fishery condition:** Depleted



## Northern Zone

### North West - Block 5



**Cap: 60t**

**Catch to date: 51 t**

**CPUE to date: 66 kg/hr**

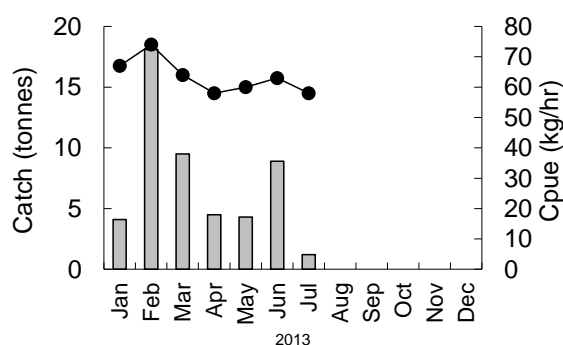
**Mean catch (2000-2012): 105 t**

**Fishery condition: Stocks depleted**

**Suggested catch 2013: 60t**

**Suggested management changes: Reduce the catch**

### Notes:



### FRAG Comments

Block 5 – Catch is close to the agreed cap and the area will be closed shortly. In considering the likely recommended catch from this Block in 2014 it was noted that this would need to be a balance between size limit and catch. The current size limit of 127mm seen by some as appropriate, but that a conservative TAC would also be required.

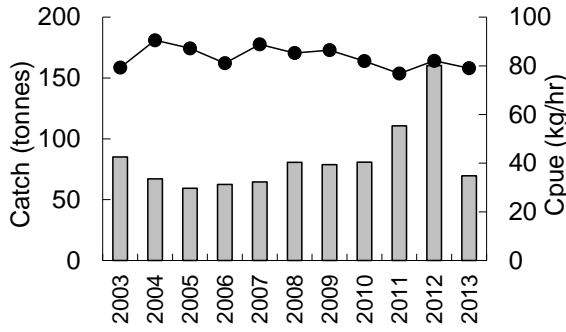
The proposal in the Rules is that there be a to stepped increase to 130mm then a final LML of 132mm, accompanied by a means of accessing the smaller slower growing fish on an occasional basis i.e. a fishdown. The Department considered that this was a better option, which would allow the harvest of the larger sized abalone.

Allen Hansen suggested an increase in quota and a lower the size limit to maximise the yield from the block.

**Suggested 2014 catch allocation 60 tonnes**



**North West NOT Block 5 (Blocks 47, 48, 49)**



**Cap: 100t**

**Catch to date: 70 tonnes**

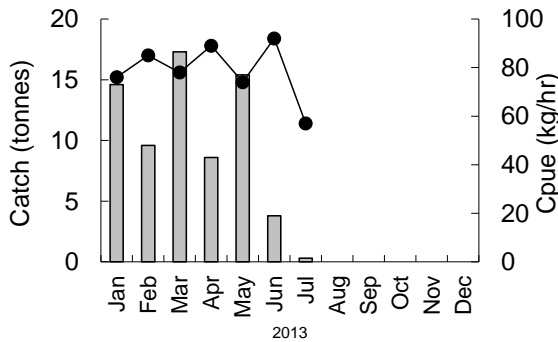
**CPUE to date: 79 kg/hr**

**Mean catch (2000-2012): 77 t**

**Fishery condition:** Catch rates heading down

**Suggested catch 2013: 100t**

**Suggested management changes:** reduce the catch



**Notes:**

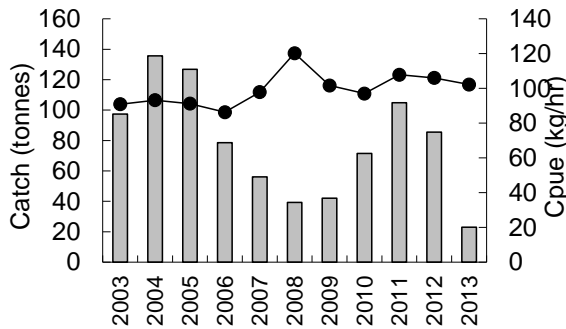
- increased stocks as a result of 5mm reduction in LML from 125 mm in 2012
- catch rates heading downwards after 160 tonne catch in 2012 – increased stock now reduced.

**FRAG Comments**

No improvement in catch rates, with catch rates falling, with seasonal changes may be a factor in fishing behaviour

**Suggested 2014 catch allocation 100t**

**King Island - Blocks 1-4**



**Cap: 118t**

**Catch to date: 23 t**

**CPUE to date: 102 kg/hr**

**Mean catch (2000-2012): 71 t**

**Suggested catch 2013: 95t**

**FRAG Comments**

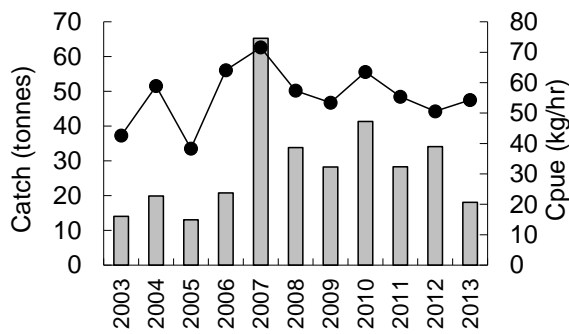
The fishing is ok, noting the mean catch of 71t and that the area was unlikely to take the increased catch that had been shifted to this area last season in the future

The China market is volatile at this time due to several factors including the exchange rate and eating habits, which may have influenced catch to date.

Suggested to return to previous level of catch.

**Suggested 2014 catch allocation 95 tonnes**

**North East - Blocks 31, 39**



**Cap: 30t**

**Catch to date: 18 t**

**CPUE to date: 54 kg/hr**

Mean catch (2001-2012): 30 t

**Suggested catch 2013: 30 t**

**Suggested management changes:**

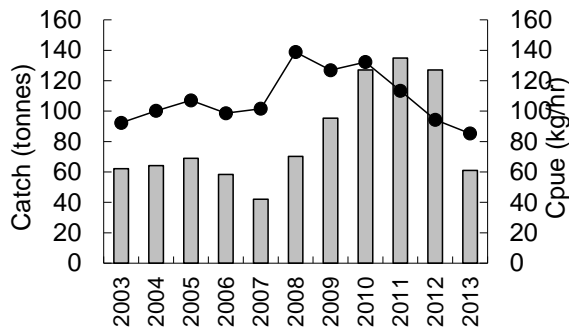
**FRAG Comments**

Greenlip and Blacklip can be reported as a mixed catch therefore the information from this area may not be accurate.

**Suggested 2014 catch 30 tonnes**

**Central Western Zone**

**Couta Rocks – 6A, 6B, 6C**



**Cap: = CW TAC (101.5 t)**

**Catch to date: 61 t**

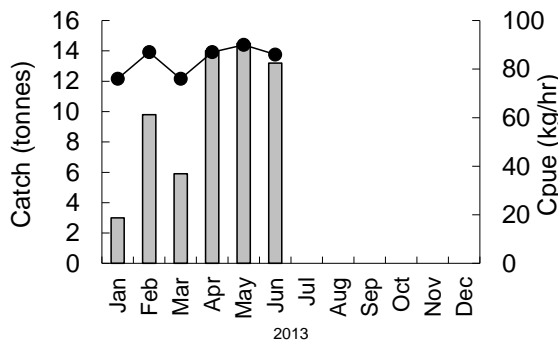
**CPUE to date: 85 kg/hr**

Mean catch (2000-2012): 101 t

**Fishery condition:** catch rates falling sharply => falling stock levels

**Suggested management changes:** reduce the catch

**Notes:**



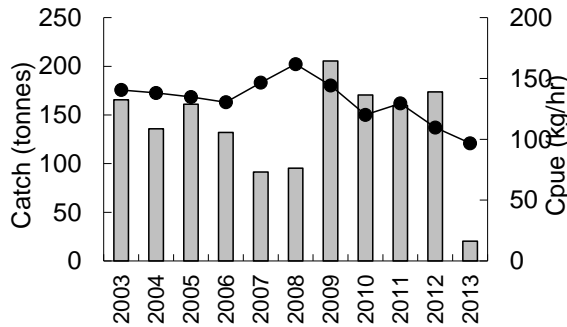
**FRAG Comments**

Catch rates have dropped continuously since 2010 and are now around 80kg/phr. CPUE appeared stable at around 60-70 tonnes per year – indications that current catch expectation (101.5 tonnes) is too high and needs adjusting downwards. Agreed that catch be reduced

**Suggested 2014 catch 75 tonnes**

**Western Zone**

Granville Hbr, Sandy Cape Blocks 6D, 7, 8



**Cap: 140t**

**Catch to date: 20 t (6 t from Sandy Cape)**

**CPUE to date: 97 kg/hr**

**Mean catch (2000-2012):**

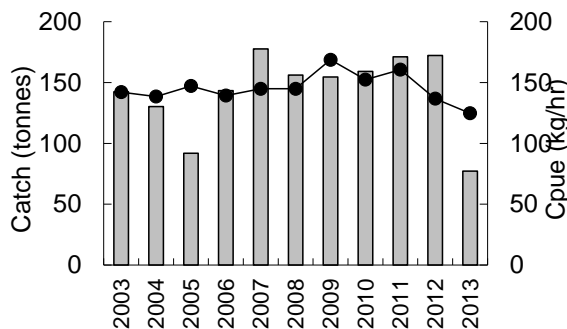
**Suggested management changes: reduce catch**

**FRAG Comments;**

Catch rate decline noted following higher catches since 2009. Divers consider TAC needs adjustment downwards noting that weather has played a major part in fishing on the West Coast.

**Suggested 2014 catch 120 tonnes**

South of Strahan – Block 9



**Cap: 191 t**

**Catch to date: 77 t**

**CPUE to date: 125 kg/hr**

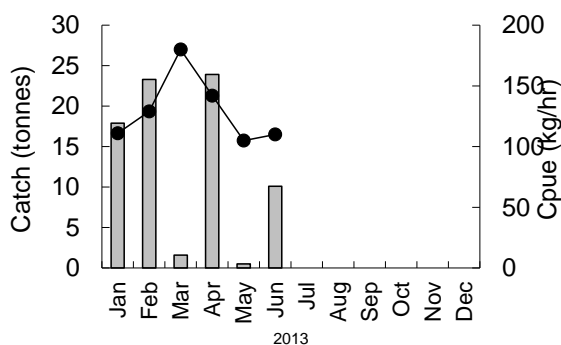
**Mean catch (2000-2012): 159 t**

**Fishery condition: catch rates falling?**

**Suggested catch 2013: 186 t**

**Suggested management changes: reduce the catch**

Notes:

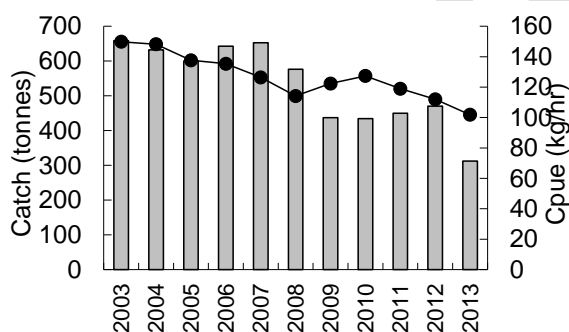


**FRAG Comments**

Similar comments to block 9. Catch rate continuing to decline. Diver observations confirm this is indicative of falling stock levels.

**Suggested 2014 catch 140 tonnes**

**South West – Blocks 10, 11, 12A**



**Cap: 405t**

**Catch to date: 312 t**

**CPUE to date: 102 kg/hr**

**Mean catch (2000-2012): 556 t**

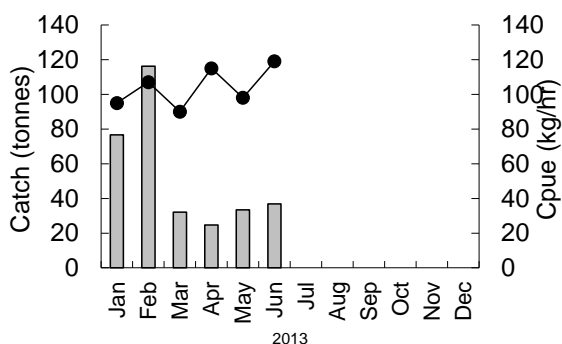
**Fishery condition:** catch rate problem needs addressing => falling stock levels

**Suggested catch 2013: 458 t**

**Suggested management changes:** requires catch reduction

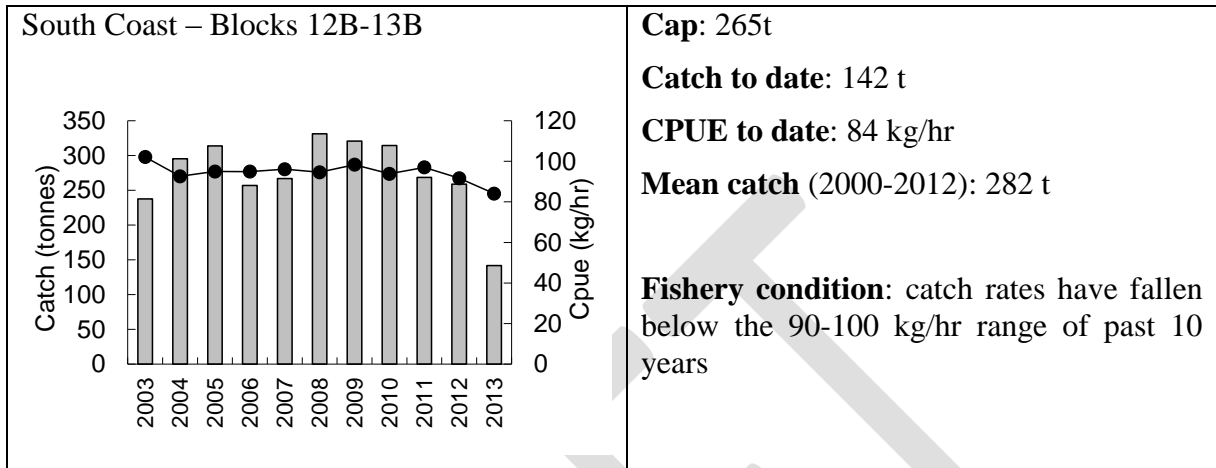
Notes:

- CPUE reduction can no longer be explained adequately by changes in fishing practices caused by double-up diving, or processor demand for small catches
- Only logical explanation is reduced stock levels

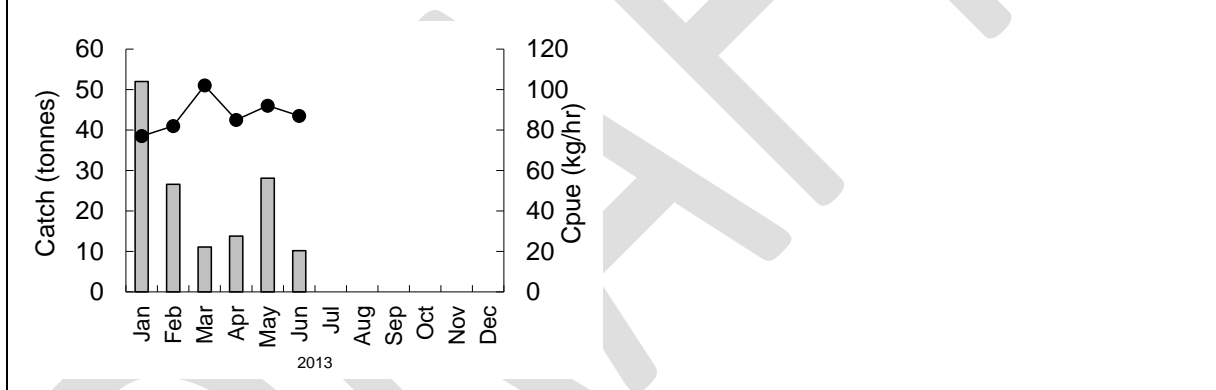


**FRAG Comments:** Stocks in this area considered to be under pressure and are not recovering, recent apparent stability in catch rates could be due to changes in area fished.

**Suggested 2014 catch 375 tonnes**



Notes:

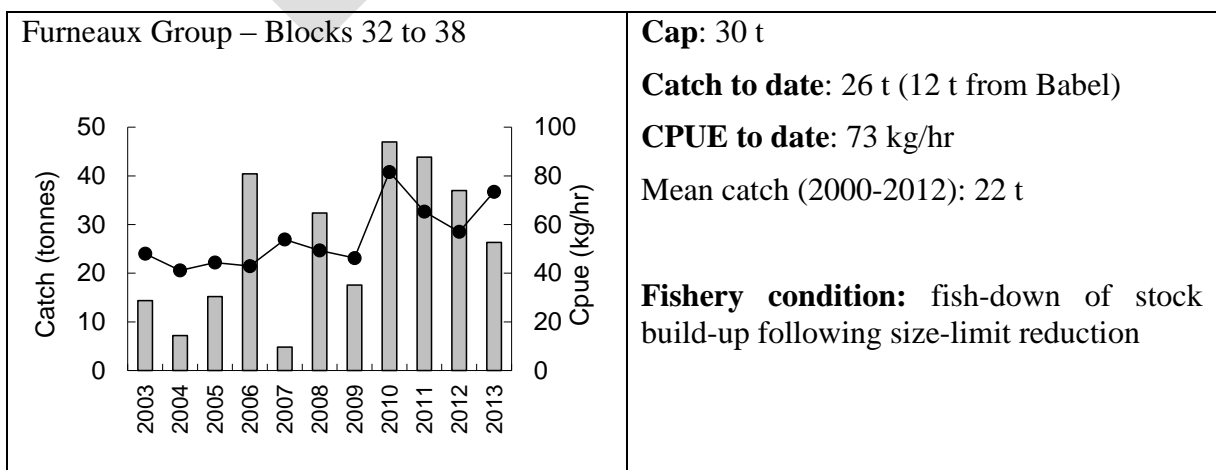


**FRAG Comments**

Area appears to be holding up under current catches. No changes suggested.

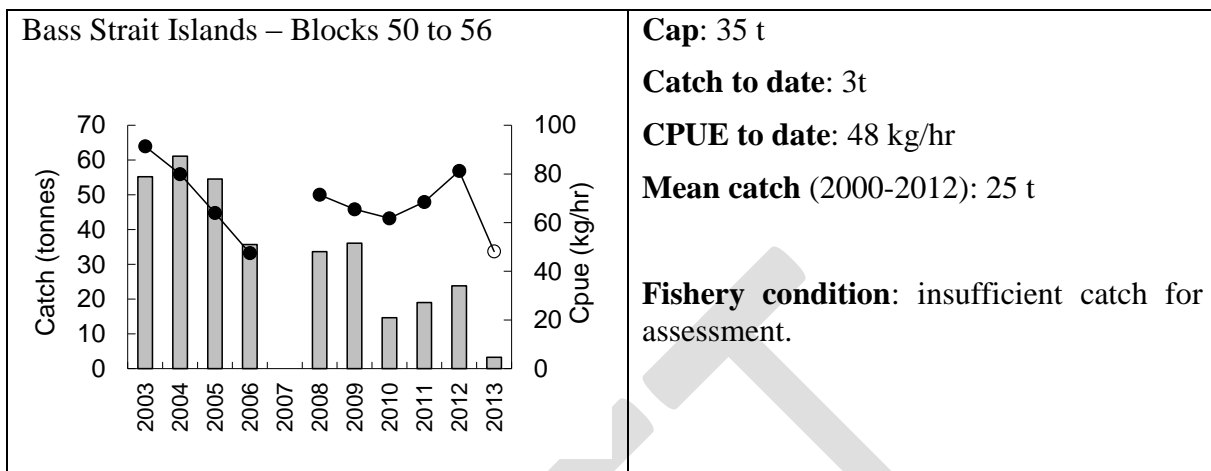
**Suggested 2014 catch 265 tonnes**

**Bass Strait Blacklip Zone**



**FRAG Comments**

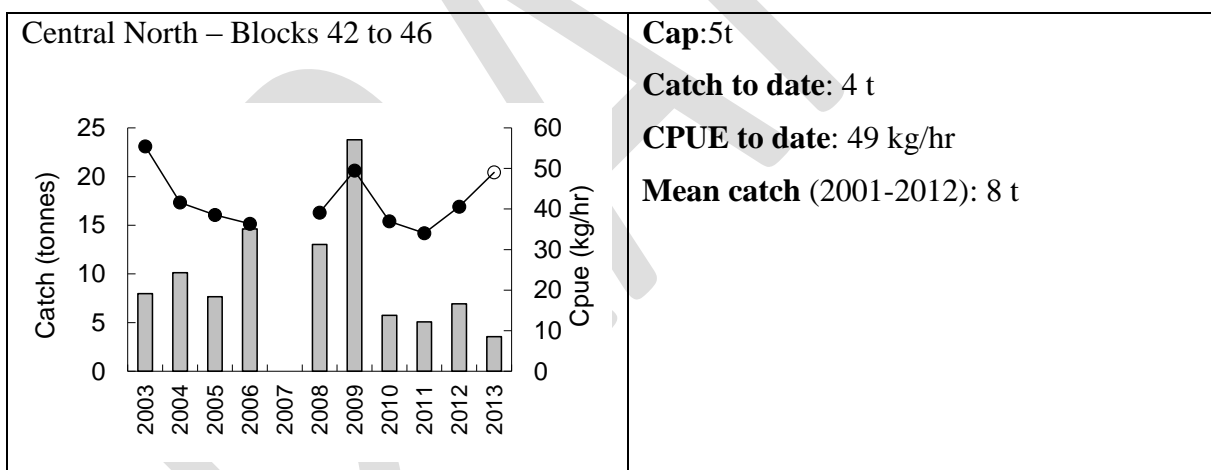
**Suggested 2014 catch 30 tonnes**



**FRAG Comments**

Nil

**Recommended 2014 catch 35t**

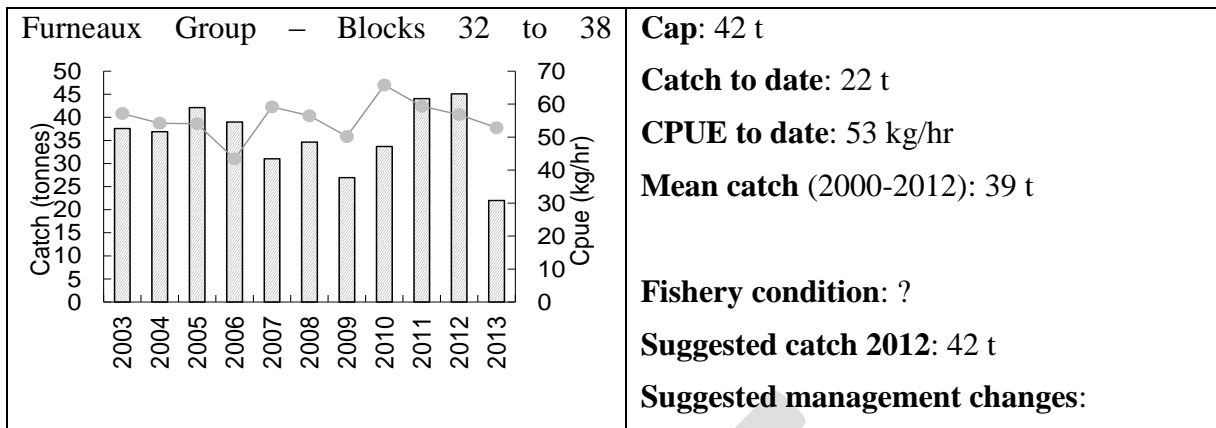


**FRAG Comments**

Nil

**Recommended 2014 catch 5t**

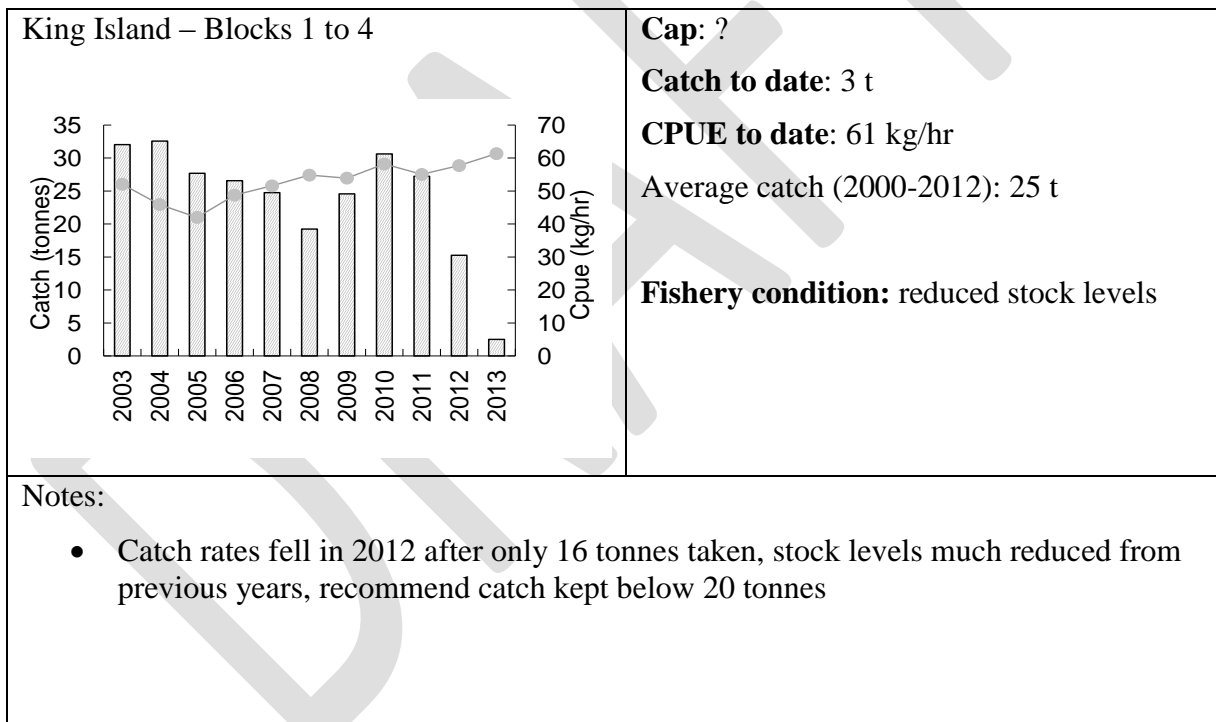
## Greenlip



### FRAG Comments

Motherboats increasing the CPUE

**Recommended 2014 catch 42t**

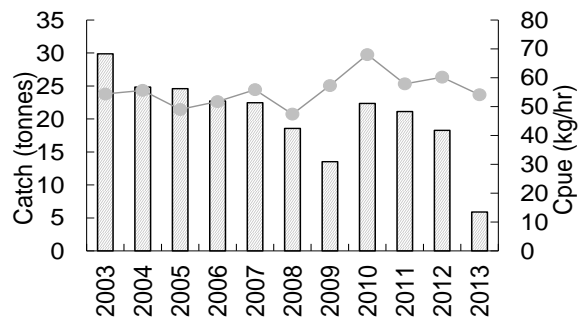


### FRAG Comments

Fish harder to find; suggest catch reduction.

**Recommended 2014 catch 16t**

North West but not Perkins Bay



**Cap:** 18.5 t

**Catch to date:** 6 t

**CPUE to date:** 54 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012): 25 t

**Fishery condition:** stable fishery

**Suggested catch 2013:** 18.5 t

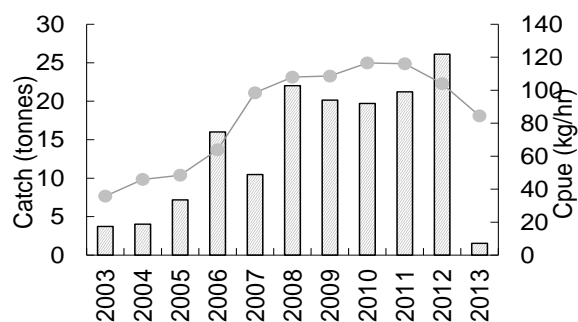
**Suggested management changes:**

FRAG Comments

Fishing ok; no change required

**Recommended 2014 catch 18.5t**

Perkins Bay – Blocks 48A



**Cap:** 25 t

**Catch to date:** 2 t (Black Reef)

**CPUE to date:** 84 kg/hr

Mean catch (2000-2012):

**Fishery condition:** appears stable

**Suggested catch 2013:** 20t from Black Reef/48A, 10 t from further east (Blocks 41-47)

Notes:

- catch rates have fallen, 26 tonnes taken in 2012, possibly too much catch taken.

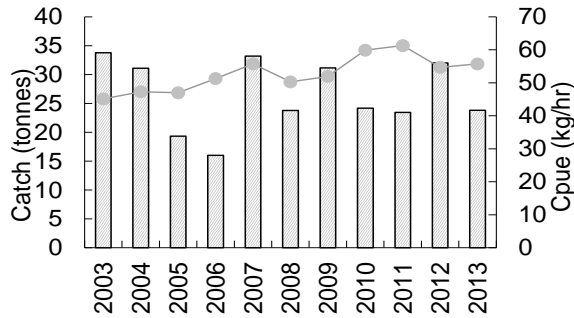
FRAG Comments

Fishing ok

**Recommended 2014 catch 30t**



North East – Blocks 31, 39, 40



**Cap:** 23 t

**Catch to date:** 26 t

**CPUE to date:** 57 kg/hr

**Mean catch (2000-2012):** 29 t

**Fishery condition:** closed for rest of year

**Suggested catch 2013:** 23 t

**Suggested management changes:**

Notes:

### FRAG Comments

It is noted that the fish in this block are a substandard quality with little chance of sale.

### Recommended 2014 catch 23t

## 8. Hunter Island Update

Dave Tarbath provided a copy of the milestone report to the CRC, which covers preliminary field work of the fish down completed to date. The project has developed a method of looking for external features that can be applied to live fish for future management of blocks around the state.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> stage results will show if the project is a sound management study to improve the quality of abalone.

## 9. Two Year Rule

The Minister has approved a review of the Management Plan (regulations and rules), with proposed changes to boundaries and sizes which are currently covered by annual instruments. A draft of the management plan highlighting changes will be drafted and circulated for consultation with all license and quota holders (approx 700) for a statutory period of 60 days and then will be discussed at the FRAG and AbFAC. Any decisions will then be forwarded to Parliament for approval and enactment in Legislation. At present the Department has to write five Instruments outside of the current Management Plan on a yearly basis.

Established Rules and Regulations are essential for sustainable business planning for all members, rather than continuing to write annual instruments to reflect changes in minimum lengths.

There is a current view by many, that size limits are providing adequate protection for the fishery, in accordance with the two year rule. The reality is that the method used by IMAS for calculating the LML may not strictly achieve what is stated in the abalone management plan policy document. Rather than use the size at which all abalone are mature, IMAS use the size at which 50% of the population is reproductively mature, in line with standard practice. Thus not all abalone that

reach the LML may have had the opportunity to reproduce for two years. Consequently it should be borne in mind that we are relying on the reproductive sub-legal population and the remaining legal sized population, and therefore conservative TAC settings are an important component of sustainable management of the fishery.

The relevant rule in the policy document covering the requirements for size limit is out of date and ambiguous and needs revision. There is a need to be clearer on the expectation of size limits in terms of management outcomes; their main benefit is in preventing localised depletion

The FAC noted that there are processes in place in relation to size limits:

- The consultative process outlined above that will be actioned in the short term to change a number of size limits in the Management Plan and should be in place for the 2014 season
- A review of the objectives and the mechanics of LML's is a key component of the new FRDC project run by Haddon and Mundy.
- A longer term process using management strategy evaluation to look at various combinations of size limits and catch levels – the outcome of this

## 10. Other Business

### 10.1 MSE Project

The MSE project is being progressed.

### 10.2. Harvest Control

As part of the Tasmanian Spatial project Craig Mundy is developing a Harvest Strategy and Control Rule system to assist with objective decision making. This is consistent with a national push for all fisheries to adopt formal decision rule processes..

A document with an explanation of the system and the calculations for 2014 based on 2013 data will be provided by Craig prior to the next meeting

Action: Craig to distribute a summary of project prior to the next FRAG meeting

Action: [Craig and Joey to convene a meeting in September.](#)

Meeting closed at 2.50pm

Next Meeting FRAG #4 Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013

## Action Items FRAG #3 2013

	Action	Responsibility
1	Development of target and limit reference points	IMAS: Malcolm Haddon, Craig Mundy and Dave Tarbath  Ongoing –  Malcolm Haddon exploring limited options using MSE evaluation
2	Follow up funding with FRDC for Occupational Divers Course, based on FRDC People Development funding	TAC/IMAS: Dean Lisson and Craig Mundy  Ongoing –  Joey & Ian to put a proposal together
3	Finalisation of Block 5 report and presentation of results to FRAG	IMAS: Craig Mundy  Ongoing –  Craig will produce a summary of the key issues and recommendations on options for future management of the area for the next AbFAC meeting
4	Workshop to develop criteria for MCDA process	IMAS: Craig Mundy  Ongoing -  Craig & Joey to convene a meeting
5	Length frequency data	IMAS to work with industry and write up an operational process on the best method of collecting additional length frequency data
6	Report on landings by zone and month end for 3 years.	IMAS/DPIPWE to provide a report on landings by zone by month for the last 3 yrs, overlaid with key external factors/influences including Chinese holidays, exchange rates etc

<b>Blocks - Area</b>	<b>TAC 2013</b>	<b>FAC 3 2014</b>	<b>2014 Rec.</b>
<b>Eastern Zone</b>			
Blocks 13C, -14 E. Actaeons	245		
Blocks 14A and 14B. Lower Huon Channel, Huon to Southport Island, inc Dover, Southport	10		
Blocks 14C-16 Bruny Island	30		
Blocks 17-21 Hobart to Tasman Island inc Nubeena	80		
Block 22	40		
Blocks 23 and 24 Deep Glen Bay to Triabunna, including Maria	40		
Blocks 25-29A Freycinet and Bicheno	5		
Blocks 29B, 29C, 29D and 30A North East	80		
<b>Total Eastern Zone TAC</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>530</b>	
<b>Northern Zone</b>			
Blocks 5A-5C	60	60	
Blocks 47-48 NW not Block 5	100	100	
Blocks 1-4 King Island	118	95	
Blocks 31B, 39 and 40 North East	30	30	
<b>Total Northern Zone TAC</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>285</b>	
<b>Central Western Zone</b>			
Blocks 6A-6C Couta Rocks	101.5	75	
<b>Total Western Zone TAC</b>	<b>101.5</b>	<b>75</b>	
<b>Western Zone</b>			
Blocks 6D, 7 and 8. Granville Harbour, Sandy Cape	140	120	
Block 9 South of Strachan	191	140	
Blocks 10, 11 and 12A. South West	405	375	
Blocks 12B-13B South Coast	265	265	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1001</b>	<b>900</b>	
<b>Bass Strait</b>			
Blocks 32-38 Furneaux Group	30	30	
Blocks 50-56 Bass Strait Islands	35	35	
Blocks 42-46 Central North	5	5	
<b>Total Bass Strait TAC</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>	
<b>Greenlip</b>			
Blocks 32-38 Furneaux	47	47	
Blocks 1-4 King Island	25	16	
North West not Perkins Bay	18.5	18.5	
Block 48A Perkins Bay	25	30	
Blocks 31,39,40 North East	23	23	
<b>Total Greenlip TAC</b>	<b>138.5</b>	<b>134.5</b>	
<b>TAC TOTAL</b>	<b>2,149t</b>	<b>1,994.5t</b>	

Note: 2013 rounding up/down at zone level: EZ 530 down to 528.5 and Greenlip 138.5 up to 140