



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

The Hon Chris Natt MLA
Minister for Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
GPO BOX 3146
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Minister

I am writing to you as Delegate of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts in relation to the re-assessment of the Northern Territory (NT) Trepang Fishery under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The NT Trepang Fishery was first assessed by the then Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage (now the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts) in December 2004 under Part 13A of the EPBC Act in accordance with the Australian Government *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries*. This assessment was based on the submission provided by the then NT Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development in September 2004. The NT Trepang Fishery was declared a three year Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) under Part 13A of the EPBC Act until 22 December 2007.

In October 2007, the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM) submitted the document entitled - *A Report Against the Guidelines For The Ecologically Sustainable Management Of Fisheries – 2007* for re-assessment of the fishery under the EPBC Act to allow continued export approval for this fishery. The submission has been assessed for the purposes of the wildlife trade provisions of Part 13A of the EPBC Act.

I am pleased to advise that assessment of the fishery is now complete. The new assessment report will be available on the Department of the Environment, Water Heritage and the Arts website at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/index.html>.

I am satisfied that the operation of the fishery is consistent with the objects of the wildlife trade provisions in Part 13A of the EPBC Act. I am also satisfied that it is unlikely to be detrimental to the survival or conservation status of any taxon to which the fishery operation relates, or threaten any relevant ecosystem. The fishery is relatively well managed and operates under an adaptable and precautionary regime capable of controlling, monitoring and enforcing the level of take from the fishery. Performance against the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition* is adequate however there are a number of issues that need to be addressed to contain environmental risks in the longer term. Hence, I propose to

declare the fishery an approved WTO under Part 13A of the EPBC Act. This declaration would allow the export of product from the fishery for the next three years. I will make the declaration subject to the conditions at **Attachment A**.

While there are some environmental risks associated with this fishery, I believe that DPIFM is committed to addressing these issues and is already taking proactive steps in some areas. Officers from our two departments have discussed key areas requiring ongoing attention. In addition to the conditions to the WTO declaration, I understand that they have agreed to a number of recommended actions, focusing on addressing key issues outstanding from the last assessment, to be implemented before the next Australian Government review of the fishery. The recommendations at **Attachment B** have been an important factor in my decision to declare the fishery a WTO and I look forward to receiving your confirmation that they will be implemented.

I would like to thank you for the constructive way in which your officials have approached this assessment.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

Robyn Bromley
Delegate of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

18 December 2007

Conditions on the Wildlife Trade Operation Declaration for the Northern Territory (NT) Trepang Fishery

1. Operation of the NT Trepang Fishery will be carried out in accordance with the management regime in force under the NT *Fisheries Regulations 1995* and the NT *Fisheries Act 1998*.
2. The NT Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM) to advise the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) of any intended change to the NT Trepang Fishery's management arrangements that could affect the criteria on which EPBC Act decisions are based.
3. DPIFM to produce and present reports to DEWHA annually as per Appendix B of the '*Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition*'.

Recommendations to the Northern Territory (NT) Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM) on the ecologically sustainable management of the NT Trepang Fishery

The NT Trepang Fishery is a relatively well-managed fishery with a range of management measures to promote the ecological sustainability of the fishery. These measures include: limited entry, two separate management zones and gear restrictions (hand harvest only).

The following recommendations have been made to further strengthen the effectiveness of the management arrangements for the fishery and minimise environmental risks in the medium term. Unless a specific time frame is provided in the recommendation, each recommendation must be addressed within the life of the declaration (three years).

Recommendations:

1. Through continued collaboration with other jurisdictions, DPIFM to continue to identify and implement key research priorities regarding the biology and ecology of *Holothuria scabra*.
2. Within 2 years, DPIFM to commence developing meaningful precautionary yield estimates for *H.scabra* in the NT Trepang Fishery, with the aim to commence implementing yield estimates within 3 years.
3. Using information and research relevant to the fishery, DPIFM to review the current limit reference points for *H. scabra*, to ensure that they provide a precautionary basis to detect changes to and impacts on the stock.
4. Within 12 months, DPIFM to develop and implement appropriate data collection, reporting and management measures to mitigate the risk of localised and serial depletion.
5. Within 2 months of a species other than *H. scabra* being harvested in the fishery DPIFM to develop precautionary reference points for that species.