

## Article for TSIC July 2023

In the last edition I referred to the fall in the total allowable catch (TAC) over time and the adverse effect that was having on the industry. The Fall has been caused by a number of factors, some harvest-based and some nature-based, and the TACL has been supportive of new management arrangements to ensure the long-term sustainability of the resource.

A new management and advisory structure has been put in place to take over from the Abalone Fishery Advisory Committee (AbFAC), and the first meeting of this new body was on August 7. This is to be followed by a general meeting of TACL members on August 21 – our Stock Assessment Forum - at which IMAS will present their view as to the status of the stock. Early indications are that the stock levels have stabilised, although the stock on the western zone has responded more slowly. Further information will be available at the meeting.

Work is continuing on Centro, and a program of work is being designed to keep the spread of the urchin to a minimum. The AIRF has been extended by two years, and funding for the Centro program will be sourced from this fund. Efforts are also underway to encourage a more regional approach to Centro, to include the Commonwealth, NSW and Victoria.

Another “nature” issue confronting us is the presence of biotoxins in the water from time to time, as a result of algal blooms. Present knowledge would suggest that biotoxins accumulate slowly in abalone (unlike shellfish), but once there will depurate slowly (again unlike shellfish). Blocks on the East Coast are presently closed because of the presence of biotoxins in the past, and are now not being monitored in the hope that these blocks can be re-opened soon. Of some concern is that warming water may encourage more frequent blooms, and with IMAS we are keeping a watchful eye on any developments. We now receive a weekly summary of biotoxin monitoring from ShellMAP, which we distribute to all divers and processors. The efforts by ShellMAP are appreciated and talks are underway for the abalone sector to more permanently align with an integrated monitoring program.

Divers would be aware of our Diver Code, which is now seriously out-of-date and in need of an update. The update has now been drafted and circulated to all diver members. It is our intention for the update (the Guide) to replace the code and to ensure divers are aware of the present laws and responsibilities they entail. TACL are keen to ensure any necessary transition is as smooth as possible and we have been working with the company Offshore SMS to enable their on-water application to align with the Guide.

The harvest strategy is also in need of an update and is presently under review. The State Department (NRE) is driving this agenda and has recently presented a first draft of a possible new harvest strategy. Once preliminary discussions with the department have been finalised it is our intention to inform members by circulating the draft document.

Internally, the TACL Constitution is also in need of an update and remains under review. It is to be hoped that amendments may be ready to present to the October AGM. Due notice will be given if this is to occur.

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CEO