

Media Release **No. 534**

For Immediate Release - 26 February 2014

TSRA APPLAUDES AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO SEA WALL FUNDING

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has applauded the Australian Government's announcement today that it will invest a total of \$12 million to improve seawall infrastructure in the Torres Strait.

TSRA Chairman, Mr Joseph Elu, said at least six low-lying islands that could be highly vulnerable to even moderate sea level rises have now been provided with the certainty they deserve.

"This announcement is good news for the communities on Iama, Saibai, Boigu, Poruma, Masig and Warraber Islands," Mr Elu said.

"In the worst affected communities the shoreline has receded more than 10 metres in some areas and the ocean threatens homes and vital health, transport and communication infrastructure.

"The construction of sea walls will reduce the impact of storms and sea level rise over the coming decades, something which is becoming more prevalent with each new king tide."

The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report predicts a global sea level rise of between 59 and 96 centimetres by 2100, with annual global rates rising to 8 to 15 millimetres by the end of the century.

Mr Elu said it was important the Queensland State Government acted quickly to match the funding so works could commence as soon as possible.

"The Queensland Government confirmed its contribution of \$12 million to the project in January 2013, subject to matched funding by the Australian Government," Mr Elu said.

"The Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) which is responsible for the delivery of the project has already begun preliminary project works, so with this new commitment we expect the rest of the funding to follow quickly.

"Designs for priority seawalls construction had already been finalised as part of the first phase of the project and urgently needed works can now proceed immediately once the funding is received."

Mr Elu said the sea walls project has clear long-term regional benefits.

"The sea walls are a major infrastructure project that the TSRA and the TSIRC have been lobbying for funding for some time now," Mr Elu said.

“Apart from their capacity to protect communities, their assets and infrastructure, construction work will provide employment opportunities for local people.

“I hope the funding will also help raise the issue to the wider community about the effects of climate change and the devastating consequences it poses to communities in the Torres Strait.”

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact – Bruce Nelson on telephone 0423 403 449