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TSRA Rangers assist in safeguarding the Torres Strait against climate change

Land and Sea Rangers from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) are monitoring the water quality in the region to assess the impacts of rising sea levels and its effect on the environment.

The project, conducted in partnership with scientists from TropWATER at James Cook University, is measuring the intrusion of sea water across the wetland swamps on the islands of Boigu and Saibai.

The deployment of water monitoring equipment is part of the strategy to address potential freshwater contamination issues resulting from rising sea levels.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, said the TSRA Rangers will continue to monitor water salinity.

“Rising sea levels could lead to the demise of local freshwater fish, turtles and also impact the feeding areas for migratory birds,” Mr Elu said.

“The strong traditional connection between our people and the swamplands stem from the food they provide, like Batha (barrumundi), Yamu (tarpon) and Pakawiyi (sea mullet).

“Having the TSRA Rangers and scientists working together enables them to combine traditional ecological knowledge with western science to understand more about our land; ultimately working towards protecting the land for our children, and their children to come.”

Mr Elu said the ecosystems of the Torres Strait are at risk from increasing temperatures and sea level rise. Saibai and Boigu Islands are only a few meters above the highest astronomical tides.

“Researchers are concerned that freshwater wetlands are becoming increasingly salty from sea water inundation. This favours the highly adaptive and invasive species such as the climbing perch.

“Rangers will now be able to track salinity, water temperature and the depth of water across these swamp lands. The equipment will remain in place over the wet season, and the data will be downloaded early next year.”

Understanding how the king tides the region experiences each summer impacts these ecosystems will help the Rangers and communities to develop management strategies to protect the wetlands.

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Clearance Workflow:

| The Workflow section is to be deleted prior to distribution to the media | | |
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