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TORRES STRAIT RANGER'S LAUNCH TWO NEW VESSELS

Two new Ranger vessels, *Sager* and *Kuki*, have been launched today on Thursday Island.

A blessing for the new vessels marks the expansion and capacity of rangers' ability to work across the entire Torres Strait region and will bring the Ranger fleet to nine in total.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), with the support of the Australian Government, provided the funding for the vessels to assist in the management of natural resources in the region.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, said with the addition of two smaller vessels to the fleet, rangers will now have easier access to patrol shallower areas for projects such as mangrove assessment and monitoring to provide reports back to community on the health of the mangroves.

"The *Sager* and *Kuki* will make it easier, safer and more practical for the rangers to undertake their daily activities and aid the community in managing land and sea country," Mr Elu said.

"For example the vessels will benefit turtle and dugong projects to provide reports back to community on their populations.

"The vessels will also facilitate collaborative work amongst Rangers from different islands, providing transport to undertake land management activities such as weed and feral management, sea, reef and beach clean-up, erosion control and also cultural site restoration and management."

Mr Elu said funding from the Australian Government's Working on Country initiative has been secured to continue the Ranger Program until June 2018, and the TSRA will seek to ensure this highly successful initiative will be continued into the future.

"Direct benefits of the program include the creation of full time jobs, on-ground cultural and natural resource conservation outcomes, restoration and management of cultural sites as well as knowledge and skills development," Mr Elu said.

"It is important to ensure that the good work of the Rangers and Torres Strait communities is continued into the future."

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