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TSRA WELCOMES RANGER PROGRAM FUNDING WITHIN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA WHITE PAPER

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson Mr Joseph Elu has welcomed a significant funding investment for 'Indigenous ranger groups' within in the Federal Government's new Developing Northern Australia White Paper.

The White Paper includes a \$12.4m investment for ranger programs with biosecurity concerns but does not specify whether Torres Strait or Northern Territory-based Rangers are to be supported.

Mr Elu says the TSRA's successful Land and Sea Ranger programme deserves to be considered for the funds.

"The enduring success of the TSRA Ranger programme – both operationally and culturally – proves it is an endeavor worthy of significant continued Federal Government support," Mr Elu said.

"Our Ranger programme delivers highly positive biosecurity and conservation outcomes in extremely challenging conditions."

Mr Elu says TSRA Rangers deal with significant volumes of boat traffic in a region constrained by its remoteness, while also protecting the region's unique flora and fauna on more than 100 islands.

The Ranger programme is run within the Torres Strait Regional Authority's Land and Sea Management Unit.

Last year the LSMU was awarded the Banksia Foundation's Indigenous 'Caring for Country' award and their overall Gold Award (top national prize for environmental / conservation work).

The programme is growing from an initial 21 rangers employed in 2010 - 2011 across seven islands to today's 45 rangers work on 14 islands, with six ranger vessels being used full-time for sea management activities including mangrove monitoring and dugong and sea turtle satellite tagging.

The Australian Government's Northern Australia White Paper also includes positive references to the ongoing management of:

- Fisheries rights within the Torres Strait
- Biosecurity and border movement through the Torres Strait
- The Torres Strait Treaty and environmental management within the Protected Zone.

Separate to the measures outlined within the White Paper, the TSRA continues to reform its approach to economic development through small business support and creating an economic development strategy to inform broader industry development in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula region.

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