

Media Release **No. 600**

For release 10 November 2014

TORRES STRAIT WOMEN COMPLETE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Four Torres Strait women have completed the inaugural Torres Strait Women's Leadership program to fulfil their vision for higher levels of female representation in local governance.

Catharine Enosa and Iris Billy from Warraber, Ella Kris from Thursday Island and Lizzie Lui from Iama took part in the leadership course which was run by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation in conjunction with the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

TSRA Chairperson Mr Joseph Elu said the organisation recognises the Indigenous women are underrepresented in decision-making in all levels of government and in many Indigenous Corporations. This was why the program was created.

"Women make up fifty per cent of the population in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Region and have always been the backbone of their communities as strong advocates for improvement to a better standard of living, health and education," Mr Elu said.

"Despite these contributions, the current representation of women on governance committees in the Torres Strait is by far, much less than the average for Indigenous organisations across Australia.

"Because of this we need to do more to get the balance right and the Torres Strait Women's Leadership program is one of a series of capacity building initiatives we are supporting."

While in Canberra the program participants presented the Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch, MP and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Senator Nigel Scullion with a proposal to establish a women's leadership network in the Torres Strait, called Punji Kupai Kod, to hold workshops to share their skills with other aspiring women leaders.

Mr Elu said there is a need to bring together other stakeholders such as the Lena Passi Women's Shelter and the Mura Kosker Sorority to build greater support networks as well as the monitoring and streamlining of service deliveries to avoid duplication of effort.

The Torres Strait Women's Leadership program comprised three sessions: at Punsand Bay on the tip of Cape York, on Thursday Island, and the final one in Canberra.

A second program is due to be held in 2015.

ENDS

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