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Action on climate change and coastal issues in the Torres Strait

As communities in the Torres Strait prepare for another season of king tides the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) with Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), is continuing to try and secure the funds required to address the ongoing issue of flooding and coastal erosion.

“The TSRA and our partner agencies, the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) and the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (DCCEE), have funded extensive research over the past few years that builds a clear case for governments to fund the on ground action needed to protect communities from the impact of king tides and rising sea levels” said TSRA Chairperson Toshie Kris.

“The TSRA has made a number of formal submissions to government over several years and various government reports are in agreement - action is required now.”

“We seem to be stuck in a game of buck passing between departments around who is responsible for funding coastal protection works” said Mr Kris.

Despite this, the TSRA is determined to continue working with councils and government agencies to secure the funding needed for the major coastal works program.

The TSRA does a lot of work behind the scenes preparing submissions, costings and commissioning engineering designs for coastal works. This information together with coastal research undertaken by DERM and James Cook University (JCU), forms the basis of the case needed to secure funds from government.

“Despite the ongoing frustration surrounding efforts to secure coastal works funding, there is a lot of progress being made on climate change and coastal issues in the region” said Mr Kris.

The Torres Strait Coastal Management Committee (TSCMC) has been established by the TSRA to represent key stakeholders in the region. At a recent meeting the TSCMC commended the progress made against the 46 actions identified in the Torres Strait Climate Change Strategy Action Plan.

“Seventy percent of the actions listed are underway with 30% close to or completed. These include flood risk mapping and expanding coastal erosion studies to all island communities in the Torres Strait”, said Mr Kris. “Flooding and erosion are critical issues for communities, but there are many

other climate change issues we also need to understand and prepare for whilst we progress coastal protection.”

“The ground work we have done with our partners has put our region at the front of the pack nationally in terms of addressing the impacts of climate change on our communities and environment.”

“We feel our communities’ frustrations at the lack of success in finding the funds to construct coastal protection works, but we can assure all communities that we will not rest until the critical works we have identified are in place”, concluded Mr Kris.

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