



## Media Release No.667

### For immediate release

#### STATEMENT ON DUGONG NETTING INCIDENT OFF SAIBAI ISLAND

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) supports the traditional use of dugong and turtle, but it must be in accordance with the agreed management arrangements for the fisheries, including legislation, community-based management plans and traditional protocols.

Under these management arrangements, dugong may only be taken using a traditional spear (wap), and the use of nets for catching dugong is illegal.

The TSRA is aware of an incident that was reported off Saibai last week where five dugong's caught in an illegal net were discovered by local fishermen.

Two dugongs were released however three had died, and an investigation into the matter is underway.

The illegal fishing of dugong using nets around Saibai was raised as a serious concern by the Traditional Owners in 2014.

Since 2014, the TSRA has been increasing its collaboration with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and other agencies in order to assist in addressing this important issue.

The Australian Government, including TSRA, is also working closely with Papua New Guinea in relation to cross-border turtle and dugong issues.

Particularly, the government is working to raise awareness of the turtle and dugong management plans which must be adhered to when PNG nationals visit families or friends in the Torres Strait.

The TSRA has worked with Traditional Owners and Torres Strait communities to put in place 14 Turtle and Dugong Management plans across Torres Strait Islands.

Each community-based plan includes a range of culturally-based management arrangements that have been agreed to by each respective community.

The plans are being implemented on a voluntary basis by communities throughout the Torres Strait with the assistance of the TSRA's Torres Strait Indigenous Ranger Programme.

The TSRA has also engaged a Specialised Dugong and Turtle Compliance Officer, whose role is to raise regional awareness and understanding of the community-based plans.

**ENDS**

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