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## New Boat Safety Initiative For Torres Strait



Community members from Hammond Island take part in the region's BoatSafe training course, Courtesy MSQ

Community members of the Torres Strait have an opportunity to enhance their boat safety skills and at the same time obtain a Recreational Marine Drivers License under a new Boatsafe project which has commenced in region.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson Mr Toshie Kris, who is also a member of the Project's Steering Committee, said the TSRA was pleased to be supporting this important initiative which is being delivered by Marine Safety Queensland (MSQ).

"Torres Strait Islanders are traditionally seafaring people and in today's modern society with the assistance of dinghies and motors, we continue to base our lives around the sea," said Mr Kris.

"We rely on our dinghies to travel between islands to visit family and friends, to attend cultural and sporting events, to earn a living, to provide food for our families and to take part in recreational activities.

"However, our seas are characterised by deep ocean currents and strong winds, and it is important for community members to ensure that they are well prepared before an outing and have the necessary skills to cope with a breakdown or an emergency situation when out at sea.

"Through consultation with stakeholders, MSQ has designed the Boatsafe course specifically for the Torres Strait's needs with a specific training workbook and a pocket safety guide printed in Creole.

"Pilot Boatsafe workshops were held on Hammond and Horn Islands in June and I was pleased to hear that community members from a range of backgrounds and age groups took part.

"Due to the success for these initial training sessions,

MSQ now plans to take the course to all Torres Strait communities, beginning with a series of courses to be delivered in the Eastern Group of Islands in the coming months.

"The Boatsafe course itself is conducted over two days where participants are informed of safety topics including trip planning, proper safety equipment, correct storage of equipment, how to use safety equipment, taking precautions, adequate fuel supplies and the importance of wearing life a jacket.

"Caring for your motor is another important subject that participants will learn of and during the course they will learn how to maintain a motor, how to trouble shoot problems and receive tips on avoiding water contamination in fuel.

"There are no costs involved in undertaking the training so I encourage community members to take advantage of this important initiative to keep our families safe at sea," said Mr Kris

Boatsafe is supported by an information and education campaign. Television and radio advertising will feature advertisements about trip planning and safe boating practices and a range of promotional material is available.

MSQ is also conducting a vessel census to establish how many boats are in use in the Torres Strait, what is their general condition and what safety equipment is carried. This information will assist MSQ in conjunction with further consultation to target education and training initiatives.

For further information about Torres Strait Boatsafe, telephone 07 4069 1351 or email [SaferStraits@msq.qld.gov.au](mailto:SaferStraits@msq.qld.gov.au)

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## News from TSRA Portfolio Member for Housing and Infrastructure Fred Gela

As the Torres Strait Regional Authority's (TSRA) Portfolio Member for Housing and Infrastructure, I would like to update you on some of the recent developments being progressed by the region's Major Infrastructure Program.

### The Major Infrastructure Program

The Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) represents the Australian and Queensland Governments commitment to improve the region's environmental health infrastructure. The Program is delivered in partnership by the TSRA and the Queensland Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation (DLGSR).

Since its commencement in 1998, essential infrastructure such as reticulated sewerage and sewerage treatment plants, improved water supplies, portable desalination units, road works and drainage have been installed and upgraded throughout our communities.

As of 30 June 2007, a total of \$93 million has been invested in the region by MIP. The improved environmental health infrastructure has led to a positive impact on the region's living standards, enhancing both quality of life and environmental health outcomes.

The TSRA has recently secured a further \$28 million from the Australian Government to continue MIP's good work to 2009. The Queensland Government has confirmed that it will match this amount.

I would like to thank both the Australian and Queensland Governments for their continued support for MIP. It is vital that MIP continues beyond 2009 to build on the life-changing work already underway.

Below is an update on some of the MIP Projects currently being progressed in the region.

### MIP Warraber Waste Management Pilot Project

The Warraber Waste Management Project is a \$475,000 MIP project, jointly funded by the Australian Department of Environment and Water Resources (DEW), the TSRA, the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the DLGSR.

This pilot project is anticipated to begin by the end of the year and aims to improve integrated waste management. It will involve the construction of a garbage compactor, recyclable bailer and fuel storage facility, to help enhance the storage and disposal of



TSRA Portfolio Member for Housing & Infrastructure, Mr Fred Gela

Warraber community's refuse.

Studies will also be undertaken to look at the overall management of waste, such as a waste composition study, an examination of the costs of waste removal and an analysis on the overall efficiency of the facility's operations.

The results from the project will be used to develop a Regional Waste Management Strategy which will assist our Island Councils to implement waste management techniques that are efficient and environmentally sound.

### Moa Island Sewerage Project

The construction phase of the \$20 million Moa Sewerage Project commenced in June 2007. The project will replace current septic systems with a reticulated sewerage system for both communities of St Pauls and Kubin.

When complete, these communities will have modern and efficient treatment plants to process their sewage.

### Wasaga Sewerage (Horn Island) Project

The Queensland Government recently approved an additional \$2 million under its Water and Sewerage Program (WASP) for

this now \$8 million project. This will allow the complete installation of a fully reticulated sewerage system for Wasaga Village on Horn Island.

Construction commenced in July this year under the management of the Torres Shire Council. When completed, the new system will comprise of:

- Sewerage treatment plant
- Ocean Outfall
- Pump stations and raising mains
- Sewer mains, manholes and house connection braches

### Ugar Island Roads Upgrade

This \$1.1 million project is jointly funded by MIP and Queensland Transport's Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS), and is delivered under the Heavy Equipment Management Training Program (HEMTP).

Works commenced late last year to upgrade and seal Ugar community's roads and drains. The project is helping to reduce the dust experienced by the community during the dry season and improve vehicle transportation during the wet.

Approximately one kilometre of paved roads will be installed, along with appropriate stormwater drainage to reduce overland runoff which has been flooding some homes and eroding existing tracks and roads.

If you would like more information about MIP, please contact the TSRA's Policy Coordination and Development Section by telephone (07) 40 690 700, toll free 1800 079 093 or email [info@tsra.gov.au](mailto:info@tsra.gov.au). Alternatively, you can also visit the TSRA office on Level 1, Torres Strait Haus, 46 Victoria Parade, Thursday Island.



Work underway on the Moa Sewerage (left) and Ugar Island Roads (right) Projects, Courtesy Black & More



## Six Communities to Participate in Sustainable Land Use Planning Project

The Torres Strait Regional Authority's (TSRA) Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) has secured \$1.1 million from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) to implement a Sustainable Land Use Planning Project in six Torres Strait communities.

TSRA Portfolio Member for the Environment Mr Walter Mackie, said the islands of Boigu, Saibai, Davan, Iama, Erub and Masig will be participating in the pilot project, which aims to support communities to access information and advice to enable them to plan for the future sustainable management of their islands.

"This Project has been identified by the TSRA Board as the highest priority regional-scale project for NHT funding," said Mr Mackie.

"Our communities are experiencing environmental changes and when this is combined with our increasing population, there is a need for information at a locally relevant scale to help communities to plan for the future," said Mr Mackie.

"Through this project, participating communities will be able to access information on a range of issues including:

- the availability of water to support growing populations
- waste management issues
- erosion/inundation or landslide prone areas
- cultural heritage impacts
- fragile habitat impacts

"Such information can be incorporated in to maps or data layers which would form a basis for developing land-use plans that take into consideration all of these factors.

"The project will consist of two key parts the first involving Regional Ecosystem Mapping of all inhabited and non-inhabited islands with key vegetation communities and the



The team involved in the Sustainable Land Use Planning Project.

From left, Mr Ian Doust (C&B), Mr Vic McGrath (LSMU Community Liaison Officer), Mr David Finney (Natural Solutions), and Dr Garrick Hitchcock (Arafura Consulting)

second component entailing the development of Land Use Plans in partnership with the communities.

"The maps and plans will be developed through community consultation, participatory planning and the provision of relevant information about key issues of interest or concern to the community about the future sustainable development of their islands.

"To roll out the Project, the TSRA's LSMU has engaged a team of consultants (including Mr Ian Doust of C&B Consultants, Mr David Finney of Natural Solutions, and Dr Garrick Hitchcock of Arafura Consulting) who have had previous experience working with the region's communities.

"A team of botanists (Mr David Fell, Mr David Stanton, and Mr David Gooding) from 3D Environmental, will undertake the Regional Ecosystem Mapping component by assisting the consultants.

"The project teams hope to carry out initial visits to the Islands in October of this year and will be consulting respective Councils for permission to visit and meet with community members prior to this.

"TSRA's LSMU is here to assist our people to sustainably manage our land and sea, and this project will help communities to access important data and be in a better position to make informed decisions when planning for their island's future.

"I congratulate the Island Councils of Boigu, Saibai, Davan, Iama, Erub and Masig for supporting and taking the initiative to participate in this important project," said Mr Mackie said.

For more information about this project, contact the TSRA's LSMU Community Liaison Officer, Mr Vic McGrath, by telephone (07) 4069 2957, fax (07) 4069 2967, or alternatively you can email [info@tsra.gov.au](mailto:info@tsra.gov.au).

## Napcia Bin Tahal Visits South Africa

Torres Strait Regional Authority's (TSRA) Field Officer and Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) participant Ms Napcia Bin Tahal has recently returned to the region after a two week study tour of South Africa.

TSRA Chairperson Mr Toshie Kris, said Ms Bin Tahal is one of two TSRA staff members, the other being Mr Charlie Kaddy, taking part in the leadership course delivered by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

"The Foundation's leadership course is an

exciting way for students to attain the skills necessary to become an effective manager and leader," said Mr Kris.

"It differs from conventional courses and takes participants out of the classroom and into the real world where they can gain a better understanding of local, national and international economic and social issues.

"Napcia is due to graduate from the ARLP in November and I commend her for her determination and commitment in working

towards a tertiary qualification," Mr Kris said.

Ms Bin Tahal said the objective of the ARLP tour was to compare the key economic, political, environmental and cultural characteristics between South Africa and Australia.

"Some of the places we visited included:

- The Apartheid Museum and the Hector Peterson Museum in Johannesburg

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# Project Highlights from CRC Torres Strait 2003-2006

## Marine seabed movement



The oceans in Torres Strait are constantly changing, with strong tidal currents, cyclones and sediments being transported from rivers along the southern coast of PNG.

These physical processes have a strong influence on the important marine resources in these waters. Seagrass beds provide critical habitat for dugong, juvenile rock lobster and a range of other species. Seagrass die-backs have been reported several times over the past three decades but there is little detailed information about how or why they occurred, or when and where they may happen in the future.

Research by CRC Torres Strait researchers from Geoscience Australia and CSIRO accurately mapped the position and movement of underwater 'sand dunes' around Buru (Turnagain Island) where the last die-back event was most severe. This research indicates that seagrasses seem to grow in the troughs between the crests of these sand dunes and can help stabilize the

sand dunes. Rapid movement of the sand dunes can then lead to these established beds of seagrass being buried.

Sand dune crests were seen to migrate up to 25m from east to west in response to the prevailing wind directions associated with a change from the monsoon and trade wind seasons. These winds set up ocean currents in Torres Strait which drive sediment movement on the seabed.

A computer model of the ocean currents revealed an area of low current flow, a 'stagnation zone', located in the north of Torres Strait near Kai Reef. This zone is likely to be the southernmost reach of muddy waters migrating from PNG. Increased turbidity caused by stirred-up seabed sediments reduced the amount of light reaching seagrasses, and this may play a key role in the widespread sporadic seagrass die-back observed in Torres Strait.

Areas where research was conducted: central Torres Strait between Mabuia and



Reef in the Torres Strait

Buru (Turnagain Island). Researchers were in Torres Strait for 67 days.

For more information on this story or on any other project, you can contact the Torres Strait Regional Authority's Land and Sea Management Community Liaison Officer, Mr Vic McGrath, by telephone (07) 4069 2957, fax (07) 4069 2967, alternatively you can email [info@tsra.gov.au](mailto:info@tsra.gov.au)

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- Soweto and Cleftown, including a Shanty Town of 45,000 people
- The Department of Trade and Industry in Pretoria
- The residence of the Australian High Commission in Pretoria

- The Dinokana Community Health Centre north of Zeerust
- Across the border to Labotse to visit the Botswana Meat Company and a privately owned feedlot
- Gaborone to meet various members of the Botswana Local Government
- Madikwe to experience an evening and

- early morning safari at the Tau Game Lodge
- Stellenbosch University

"The two week program was intense and involved representatives from South African businesses and industries delivering presentations to our group along with interactive debates and discussions.

"I came back home with more appreciation of what Australia has to offer and even more so, what we in the Torres Strait actually have.

"For example the Shanty Towns visited, had populations ranging from 45,000 to 150,000 people, who live in tiny shacks, stacked with anything heavy to hold down their roofs, no electricity and communal taps and portable toilets scattered throughout their community.

"The tour was a valuable experience and I would like to encourage others within the TSRA and the Torres Strait as a whole, to consider taking part in the Australian Rural Leadership Program - please visit [www.rural-leaders.com.au](http://www.rural-leaders.com.au) for more information.



| Ms Napcia Bin Tahal during her trip, Courtesy Ms Bin Tahal

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