



SECTION ONE

Strategic Overview

CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE



INTRODUCTION

As Chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), I am pleased to present the TSRA's 2017-2018 Annual Report. Since the 2016 election of the current TSRA Board, all members and the administration have worked progressively to achieve the best outcomes for communities in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area. This Annual Report outlines the work that has progressed as well as some of the achievements and challenges of the TSRA over the past year.

NEW BOARD MEMBER

The TSRA welcomed the new Member for Erub, Mr Jimmy Gela, during his recent induction into the organisation.

Following the resignation of the previous Member for Erub, Mr Kenny Bedford, the Australian Electoral Commission declared Mr Gela the successful candidate to fill the vacancy on the TSRA Board.

Mr Gela comes to the TSRA with a wealth of community experience, including involvement in a number of community boards and committees. He held the Local Government Councillor position for Erub in the previous term of the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) and is the Chairperson of the Erubam Le Traditional Land and Sea Owners (Torres Strait Islanders) Corporation. Further information about Mr Gela can be found in Section 4 of this Annual Report in the section 'Profiles of TSRA Board Members'.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIVE TITLE ACT 1993

In June 2018, I attended the National Native Title Conference hosted in Broome, Western Australia, by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

The conference marked 25 years since the passing of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) and provided a valuable forum for exploring the challenges and opportunities of Native Title in the broader context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's aspirations for their lands, waters and communities.

The TSRA will continue to assist Traditional Owners to secure legal recognition of Native Title to land and waters in the Torres Strait. We will continue to support Prescribed Bodies Corporate in the post-determination era to strive for economic independence and work with Traditional Owners to obtain appropriate compensation for the use of Native Title land in our region.

CLIMATE CHANGE

At the beginning of 2018, I met with the senior leadership of the TSIRC and the Torres Shire Council (TSC) to consider key climate change risks for the Torres Strait.

It is widely recognised that climate change is a very important issue for communities in the Torres Strait. Besides sea level rise, climate change will also impact health, water security, and marine resources, and could likely contribute to regional instability in areas neighbouring the Torres Strait as identified in the *2016 Defence White Paper*.



The inaugural meeting of the Torres Strait Climate and Resilience Working Group (left to right): Ms Dalassa Yorkston, Torres Shire Council CEO; Mr Bruce Ranga, Torres Strait Island Regional Council CEO; Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, TSRA Chairperson; Ms Hilda Mosby, TSRA Member for Masig and Portfolio Member for Environmental Management; Ms Vonda Malone, Torres Shire Council Mayor; Mr Fred Gela, Torres Strait Island Regional Council Mayor; and Mr Wayne See Kee, TSRA CEO

The meeting helped to galvanise our resolve for our organisations to work together to meet this challenge as best we can to ensure a strong future for our region. The TSRA, TSIRC and TSC agreed to establish the permanent high-level Torres Strait Climate and Resilience Working Group to drive the implementation of the *Torres Strait Regional Adaptation and Resilience Plan 2016-2021*.



Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, TSRA Chairperson, and Mr Wayne See Kee, TSRA CEO, with the delegation from the Solomon Islands Government and representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The working group has since been renamed the Torres Strait Regional Coordination Group and now includes the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC) in its membership, with an expanded scope to coordinate Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) across the region.

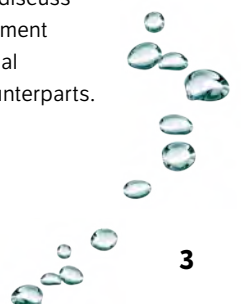
TSRA BOARD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

In June 2018, TSRA Board members undertook an intensive two-day Indigenous Governance Programme on Thursday Island. Delivered by the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the programme provided members with professional development in assessing financial statements and organisational performance, as well as understanding their strategic role in the agency and how to engage with and understand the risks of decision-making at the Board level.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

In March 2018, I was honoured to host a meeting with representatives of the Solomon Islands Government and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Solomon Islands delegation visited Thursday Island to observe the implementation of the Torres Strait Treaty, covering immigration, border control, environment, fisheries, law and order, health, maritime safety and Traditional Inhabitant matters.

In April 2018, I joined the Australian Government delegation to the 17th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII17) in New York, United States of America. UNPFII17 was a very valuable opportunity to highlight and discuss the issues of climate change, development planning, Closing the Gap, and regional governance with our international counterparts.





Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, TSRA Chairperson, with the Australian delegation to UNPFII17

In February 2018, I attended the Torres Strait Treaty Cycle Meetings in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Hosted by the Papua New Guinea Government, the 2018 cycle of meetings consisted of the Traditional Inhabitants Meeting and the Joint Advisory Council, with delegates from the Papua New Guinea and Australian governments, as well as Papua New Guinea and Australian Traditional Inhabitant representatives. The Environmental Management Committee Meeting, Health Issues Committee Meeting and Fisheries Bilateral Meeting were held in conjunction with the treaty meetings.



Left to right: The Queensland Government's Ministerial Champion for the Torres Strait, the Hon. Shannon Fentiman MP, with Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, TSRA Chairperson, and Mr Charlie Kaddy, Acting TSRA CEO, in June 2018

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE IN THE TORRES STRAIT REMAINS A LONGSTANDING ASPIRATION OF TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS.

TSRA REGIONAL GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Regional governance in the Torres Strait remains a longstanding aspiration of Torres Strait Islanders that requires Australian Government and Queensland Government support and commitment. The TSRA Regional Governance Committee worked to bring this aspiration to reality throughout 2017-2018, meeting with Australian Government and state government ministers and key stakeholders to discuss the design and implementation of the preferred model. The TSRA Board reconfirmed its support in June 2018 for the creation of

a Torres Strait Regional Assembly and endorsed the Regional Governance Committee Secretariat to develop a transition plan for implementation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2017-2018, I maintained my commitment to visit Torres Strait communities and directly engage with the community members at the grassroots level. The Chief Executive Officer and I have continued on the community engagement cycle. I was pleased to undertake visits to Poruma, Masig, Seisia, Ugar, Dauan and Erub.





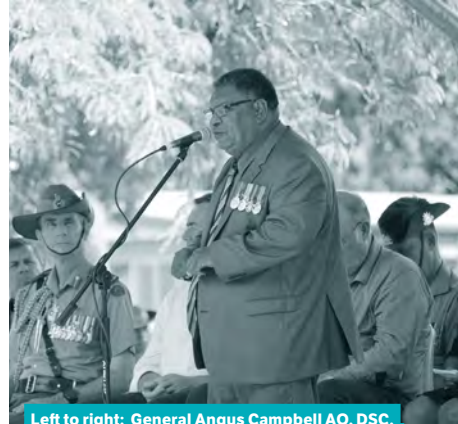
THE VISITS PROVIDE A FIRSTHAND OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS OR GROUPS IN COMMUNITIES TO RAISE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL ISSUES WITH US.

These visits are specifically useful to me and Board members in the communities as we share information about the TSRA. The visits also provide a firsthand opportunity for members or groups in communities to raise community and regional issues with us.

Over the upcoming year, I will continue to visit Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area communities.

BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Over the past year, the TSRA maintained its focus on developing the leadership capacity of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people in the region. The partnership between the TSRA and the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation has continued to grow. During the reporting period, sponsorship was provided to emerging leaders in the Australian Rural Leadership Program, Training Rural Australians in Leadership, the Torres Strait Women's Leadership Program and the Torres Strait Young Leaders Program.

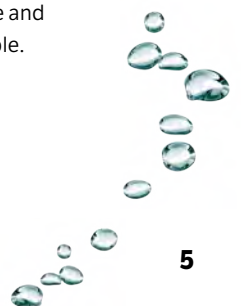


Left to right: General Angus Campbell AO, DSC, Chief of the Defence Force, and Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, TSRA Chairperson, at the event commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion

MAINTAINING OUR CULTURE

In February 2017, the TSRA launched the *Torres Strait Traditional Languages Plan 2016-2019* and the Torres Strait Languages Charter at the Gab Titui Cultural Centre, followed by the 2017 Torres Strait Language Symposium where people from the region engaged with local, national and international presenters. The Languages Reference Group dissolved at the end of the Symposium and a new Torres Strait Traditional Language Advisory Committee was established to continue with the development of the Regional Language Centre and delivery of language-related initiatives. I wish to acknowledge all key partners, stakeholders and community representatives for their ongoing contribution towards revitalising our traditional languages.

The Gab Titui Cultural Centre commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion with a specially curated exhibition that celebrated and honoured the individual and family stories of service and sacrifice of Torres Strait Islander people.



The exhibition was supported by the award-winning Shrine of Remembrance travelling exhibition *Indigenous Australians at war from the Boer War to the present*. At the opening of the exhibitions, I was honoured to host Torres Strait Islander veterans, along with the Member for Cook, Ms Cynthia Lui MP, and the Chief of the Defence Force, General Angus Campbell AO, DSC.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Looking back over the past year, the Board and the administration of the TSRA have worked diligently to set the strategic direction and achieve the best possible outcomes for the people living in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area region.

I sincerely thank my fellow Board members for their valuable contributions and constructive debates, and for making the hard decisions for the best outcomes on the challenging issues.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the outgoing Chief Executive Officer, Mr Wayne See Kee PSM. Mr See Kee's appointment as Chief Executive Officer officially ceased at the beginning of July 2018. On behalf of the Board and the staff, I wish Mr See Kee every success in his new appointment with the Australian Government. Mr See Kee has made an enormous contribution to the TSRA since 2001 and since 2004 has provided strategic leadership as Chief Executive Officer that will leave a lasting legacy.

THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF THE BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION ALL CONTRIBUTE TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES BEING DELIVERED IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

The combined efforts of the Board and administration all contribute to positive outcomes being delivered in our communities.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge our Elders and Traditional Owners, and the officials and councillors of Prescribed Bodies Corporate and local government, for the support and hospitality provided to me and the TSRA administration in the delivery of our services throughout the region.

In closing, I also express my gratitude to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon. Nigel Scullion, and to Australian, Queensland and local government members and agencies for providing ongoing support to the TSRA and the Torres Strait to ensure that the region continually grows in strength.



Napau Pedro Stephen AM
Chairperson

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MESSAGE



DELIVERING OUTCOMES

The TSRA has continued to deliver programmes and implement policies and projects to achieve the targeted outcomes identified in the *Torres Strait Development Plan 2014-2018*.

Community Engagement

As part of the TSRA's commitment to engage with our communities, the TSRA Chairperson and I completed visits to six communities as part of our engagement programme. These engagement visits will continue in 2018-2019, with the aim of visiting all communities in the region. Community engagement visits by TSRA programme areas at the operational level have been ongoing and will continue in the coming financial year as well. These visits are conducted by TSRA project staff to work with their clients and review the status of TSRA projects and initiatives.

Leadership Development

The TSRA is proud to continue its partnership with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, delivering a suite of leadership programmes tailored for youth, women and emerging leaders in our region.

I was honoured to join the TSRA-sponsored graduate, Mr Andrew Lui, and 30 other successful participants of the flagship Australian Rural Leadership Program Course 23, for the gala event held at the National Museum of Australia in October 2017 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. Andrew is the TSRA's eighth candidate who has successfully completed the

programme. I look forward to seeing leaders like Andrew return to our community to influence and drive positive change in the region.

Simplifying and Streamlining Grant Funding Administration

In the reporting period, the TSRA successfully completed the rollout of the Smarty Grants system. Further refinements were tested and successfully implemented to improve the experience for funding applicants, including the option for submitting online applications.

I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING LEADERS LIKE ANDREW RETURN TO OUR COMMUNITY TO INFLUENCE AND DRIVE POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE REGION.



Community user feedback has been positive, on the seamless ease of use and the reduction in the time and complexity involved in applying for funding.

The TSRA has a strong commitment to the Australian Government's initiative to reduce red tape and, along with the implementation of the Smarty Grants system, the TSRA also undertook to streamline our standard grant agreements with assistance from the Grants Policy Team in the Department of Finance and the Australian Government Solicitor. This resulted in grant agreement paperwork being reduced in the majority of projects by over 80 per cent. The feedback from grant recipients in the community was again positive, with the streamlined agreements rolled out in June 2018 for projects commencing on 1 July 2018.

Integrated Service Delivery

During 2017-2018, work continued on reviewing and negotiating an updated ISD governance framework with our counterparts at the Commonwealth, state and local government levels. This culminated in the formation of the Torres Strait Regional Coordination Group in April 2018, bringing together elected representatives and senior staff from the TSRA and local government bodies in the region. Through the Torres Strait Regional Coordination Group, the TSRA Board and administration remain committed to working in partnership with all government and non-government stakeholders to address the key challenges of economic development, renewable energy, waste management, housing, climate change and coastal erosion.

THROUGH THE TORRES STRAIT REGIONAL COORDINATION GROUP, THE TSRA BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION REMAIN COMMITTED TO WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALL GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS TO ADDRESS THE KEY CHALLENGES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, RENEWABLE ENERGY, WASTE MANAGEMENT, HOUSING, CLIMATE CHANGE AND COASTAL EROSION.

Economic Development

Following the successful launch of the first phase of the Regional Economic Investment Strategy (REIS) in 2016-2017, targeting the fisheries industry, the second phase of the REIS, aimed at the arts and creative industries, was launched in July 2017.

The Arts and Creative Industries Business Growth Package is designed to support Torres Strait businesses that rely on 'creativity' as their primary source of value. The package targets new and existing businesses seeking to build on traditional arts and culture as well as those looking to develop other businesses, across six creative industries segments: music, visual and performing arts; film, television and radio; architecture and design; advertising and marketing; software and digital content; and writing and publishing. More information on the REIS can be found in Section 2 of this report.

Workplace Health and Safety

In the reporting period the TSRA continued to maintain and meet its obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth). The TSRA has in place an active Workplace Health and Safety Committee with representation from all of the TSRA's designated work groups. In 2017-2018, there was only one notification made to Comcare under the Act. More details on work health and safety can be found in Section 4 of this report.



Left to right: Mr Stephen Wilton, Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC) CEO, Mr Edward Newman, NPARC Mayor, Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, TSRA Chairperson, and Mr Wayne See Kee, TSRA CEO, at the signing of the MOU between the TSRA and the NPARC

Local Government Memorandum of Understanding

During the reporting period, the TSRA formally executed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the NPARC. The MOU strengthens the collaboration between the TSRA and the NPARC and formalises the ongoing working relationships until 2020. It also commits the two organisations to formally identify and coordinate joint strategic objectives, particularly to improve community health and wellbeing, plan future regional services and infrastructure development, and pursue opportunities for sustainable economic development.

OUR WORKFORCE

At a Glance

The TSRA workforce has increased from 159 to 162 since the previous reporting period. Of those staff, 122 are Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people. The TSRA has one of the highest percentages of Indigenous employment (just over 75 per cent) of any government entity. This is an achievement we are proud of. The TSRA also maintains a good gender balance, with 82 males and 80 females in its workforce.

Opportunities

The TSRA continues to provide internal opportunities for the training and development of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal staff to increase their capacity and skills so they can apply for higher level positions not only in the TSRA but across the Australian Public Service. The TSRA also provides external opportunities and support for local community members through our leadership capacity building initiatives and the Assistance with Tertiary Education Scheme, which targets university students from the region. More information on these initiatives can be found in Section 2 of this report.

THE TSRA PROVIDES EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES AND SUPPORT FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS THROUGH OUR LEADERSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES AND THE ASSISTANCE WITH TERTIARY EDUCATION SCHEME, WHICH TARGETS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM THE REGION.

OUTLOOK

Financial

The TSRA has secured a budget appropriation that will enable it to maintain the existing programmes and service levels in the region in the coming financial year. The TSRA has also secured external non-appropriation funding for specific initiatives, such as further purchases of licences held by the Transferrable Vessel Holder sector of the tropical rock lobster fishery. Details on TSRA financial performance over the reporting period are contained in Section 5 of this report.



Torres Strait Development Plan

The TSRA Board is working closely with the administration to finalise the new Torres Strait Development Plan for 2019-2022 in the 2018-2019 financial year. The new Development Plan will replace the existing *Torres Strait Development Plan 2014-2018* when it expires in 2018. A series of workshops were held in the reporting period to develop the Board's priorities and programme mandates for inclusion in the new Development Plan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am proud of the achievements and progress we have made throughout 2017-2018. My appointment as Chief Executive Officer comes to an end at the end of this reporting period, after which I will be moving to another role in the Australian Government. I have been privileged to lead the TSRA administration as Chief Executive Officer since 2004-2005.

I would particularly like to thank the Chairperson, Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, Board members and administration staff for their ongoing valuable contribution and commitment to the TSRA, and acknowledge the great work that they perform every day. They are making a real difference to the communities in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

It has been a true honour for me to serve the TSRA and our communities in this very important role – I cannot express how proud I am and always will be of the agency.

I wish the incoming Chief Executive Officer every success in working with the Board and administration to continue to build on our achievements in the coming year.

I also acknowledge the Elders, Traditional Owners, Native Title Prescribed Bodies Corporate, local government councillors and communities of the region for the support and hospitality extended to the TSRA when we visit your communities.



Wayne See Kee
Chief Executive Officer

