

TSRA Chairman's Column

March 2013



Welcome to the first of a series of regular columns keeping everyone informed about the activities and decisions of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA). This is my fifth term serving on the TSRA Board and first as the TSRA Chairperson. I am committed to widespread community consultation on the way forward for the Torres Strait and I will be openly communicating with all communities. As a former Chairperson of Indigenous Business Australia, I recognise the important role private enterprise has to play in the economic development of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area. I am very keen, in the months ahead, to talk to people about opportunities to develop our economic independence in areas such as fisheries, sustainable eco-tourism and any other opportunities to secure the future of the region. Over the years I've had the opportunity, for example, to study how the Maori people of New Zealand manage their fisheries resources by leasing catch quotas to Taiwanese seafood processors. Under this agreement they have the first right of refusal on any product and the system generates important income to support the Maori people. This is the kind of innovative approach we need to talk about and – if it is acceptable to the whole community – explore whether similar arrangements would work for the Torres Strait.

Community Consultations

A list of community consultation visits has been developed for 2013 for the TSRA's leadership team to travel to as many Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area communities as possible. In most communities we plan to stay overnight and to meet with as many organisations and community members as possible. The Torres Strait Island Regional Councillor and Prescribed Body Corporate Chairperson will be consulted to confirm dates. The visit schedule takes into account local

government meetings and other significant events such as Mabo Day and Coming of the Light. Dates may change depending on specific community requirements.

Gab Titui Cultural Centre Progress

Good progress is being made on the Gab Titui Cultural Centre major renovation, the first since the cultural centre opened in 2004. The external work is expected to be finished next month and the internal work completed by the end of May. The centre's re-opening is now planned for the end of June 2013. This will be an exciting time for all Torres Strait artists with the internal renovations set to provide museum quality display areas for the Torres Strait. The renovation heralds a new and important stage of Gab Titui development with greater scope for all communities to gather, share or be represented in cultural activities and the preservation of our unique Island culture.

Member for Kubin welcomed to TSRA Board

The TSRA Board has welcomed Mr Saila Savage to his third term following the Australian Electoral Commission declaration for Kubin. Mr Savage has now completed his Board Induction Program and was welcomed to his first meeting of the new TSRA Board in February.



Landcare recognition

I was pleased to see efforts of our hardworking Regional Landcare Facilitator, George Saveka, recently featured in the National Landcare in Focus Newsletter. George works with communities across the Torres Strait to set up local food gardens helping people re-establish self-reliant food production and strengthening the cultural heritage of the younger generation. The Torres Strait is now well and truly on the Landcare map following last year's selection of Agnes Fox as one of three National finalists for an award recognising outstanding individual effort in encouraging Australians to adopt sustainable and productive agricultural practices. I will endeavour to make this Chairpersons' Column a regular feature in the Torres News to keep you all informed of Torres Strait Regional Authority's activities. I look forward to meeting as many people as possible in our forthcoming community visits.



Joseph Elu

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