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TORRES STRAIT PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTION TO CONTINUE

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) will continue to support climate change adaptation and resilience planning in the wake of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report.

The fifth report predicts a global sea level rise of between 59 and 96 centimetres by 2100 with annual global rates rising to 8 to 15 millimetres by the end of the century.

The TSRA Chairman, Mr Joseph Elu, said at least five low lying islands in the Torres Strait could be highly vulnerable to even moderate sea level rise.

“All communities should be aware of the projected increases and the potential for them to impact on our culture, heritage and wellbeing.

“While seawalls have been proposed to reduce the impact of storms and sea level rise on these communities over the coming decades, the walls may not protect communities from the sea level rise projected in this latest report.

“The Torres Strait also has some of the world’s most intact and species rich marine environments, with healthy populations of dugong, marine turtles, extensive seagrass meadows and diverse coral reefs.” Mr Elu said.

“Our people have been custodians of this environment for millennia but the health of these ecosystems is now at risk because of human activities from beyond the Torres Strait.”

Mr Elu said the TSRA had been working with councils and other agencies to implement climate change adaptation and resilience planning for all inhabited islands in the region over the next 2-3 years.

“We will now review that planning process on the basis of the forecasts in the latest report.

“We can do our best to respond to as many of these challenges as we can but there is a limit to how much communities can do to adapt to climate change,” Mr Elu said.

To view the IPCC Report: www.ipcc.ch/

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