

Media Release **No. 573**

For immediate release Wednesday 23 July 2014

LAUNCH OF TORRES STRAIT CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

The Torres Strait Climate Change Strategy (2014 - 2018) is being launched today to provide a big-picture approach for responding to the anticipated challenges for the region.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSRIC), Torres Shire Council (TSC) and the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) collaborated in order to develop a holistic and practical strategy.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Joseph Elu, says the updated edition of the strategy has been launched in response to the impacts of climate change for the people of Torres Strait.

“The 2014 - 2018 strategy has a stronger focus on the communities and how we build adaptive capacity and resilience for our people and environment,” Mr Elu says.

“Torres Strait islanders are particularly exposed to climate change impacts because we live in small remote island communities.

“Consequently, we must be at the forefront of developing strategies to adapt to a changing environment.”

Mr Elu says substantial progress has been made since the first Climate Change Strategy.

“Securing State and Commonwealth funding to construct sea walls for most at risk communities will significantly aid our response to climate change in 2014-18,” Mr Elu says.

“Numerous studies have also been conducted since this initial strategy so we can better understand the specific nature of anticipated impacts to islands and communities.

“Together with our government and research partners we have undertaken a great deal of background research and established programs to monitor where the real risks lie for us.”

Mr Elu says the focus now is primarily on developing proactive ways to deal with these challenges.

“Our communities want to see action taken immediately on threats such as erosion and flooding, and we’re now moving forward with a program of works to address this,” Mr Elu says.

“Part of this strategy also involves thinking ahead to ensure that the decisions we make now are for the most sustainable options for reducing the risks for our children and the generations to follow us.”

Mr Elu thanked the Torres Strait Coastal Management Committee for developing the strategy, the Australian Government’s National Environmental Research Program for contributing funds for some of the science projects and the institutional partners from AIMS, JCU and CSIRO.

The Torres Strait Climate Change Strategy (2014-2018) will soon be available on the TSRA website.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact – Bruce Nelson 0423 403 449



Caption: TSRA Coasts and Climate Project Manager John Rainbird with an engineer assessing the seawall at lama (Yam Island) (Image: TSRA).



Caption: Tide gauge housing now installed at Kubin, Moa Island for monitoring of rising sea levels (Image: TSRA).



Caption: Low-lying Saibai Island is one of the Torres Strait islands identified as high risk for tidal inundation (Image: TSRA).