

TSRA Media Release

Faster Response and More Government Resources Needed to Control Torres Strait Dengue Outbreak

19 January 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today called on the Queensland Government to act decisively to control the current dengue fever outbreak in the Torres Strait.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said that although Queensland Health is taking measures to try and control the situation there seems to be a lack of public awareness about what is happening.

"From my recollection, this outbreak began in November 2003 and in those first crucial months of the disease spreading the community heard almost nothing from the health authorities on what steps were being taken to isolate and control the outbreak," Mr Waia said.

"With the number of dengue fever cases now reaching 175 according to last week's Courier Mail the Queensland Government needs to commit additional resource to helping our islands control the disease's spread and Queensland Health needs to be more proactive in raising awareness within our communities.

"Some of the steps that need to be taken at the community level in the short and medium term are that household rainwater tanks needed to have briquettes dropped in them immediately and proper screens are needed on these tanks.

"The TSRA and the Island Coordinating Council have done our bit to combat this outbreak by purchasing the briquettes for the Island Councils and coordinating their delivery into household tanks.

"The Queensland Government and the Health Department now need to commit more resources to ensure that they can firstly control and end the current situation and secondly, make sure that we don't see a repeat of this outbreak.

Mr Waia said the current epidemic really does highlight the need for continued government support to maintain and upgrade infrastructure in the Torres Strait.

"I recently wrote to Queensland Premier Peter Beattie outlining the need for his government's continued support of the Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) to ensure that all of our households have essential services and infrastructure that provides environmental health outcomes," he said.

"To continue MIP, we asked the Queensland Government for a further \$5 million per year for the next three years, which the Australian Government is expected to match.

"This current dengue epidemic really does bring home the fact that environmental health is still a big issue in the Torres Strait because although we have made great advances in improving conditions since 1998, there is still a lot more that needs to be done.

"Our councils also need funds to establish and maintain environmental health workers on their communities – this is an on the ground presence that the

Queensland Government should seriously consider funding now that we have seen the effects of this epidemic.

"I believe the government, as well as candidates contesting next month's State election, need to demonstrate that they are committed to supporting infrastructure development in our region and that our health at home is their priority."

ENDS.

TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey, Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Cook Candidates Urged to Consider Torres Strait Health

22 January 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today urged political parties contesting the Queensland elections to outline their commitment to addressing the region's health issues.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said poor health service delivery, highlighted by the current dengue outbreak, needed urgent attention and called for the Premier to continue his support for the Major Infrastructure Program, which is upgrading environmental health infrastructure across the Torres Strait.

"Health remains an election issue state wide, but for the people of the Torres Strait within the Cook electorate, who continue to suffer low life expectancy rates compared to most mainland Australians, it's about supporting programs that really make a difference to indigenous communities," he said.

"The Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) is a prime example of how improvements to environmental health infrastructure are having a direct impact on the health and well being of Torres Strait people living in isolated island communities.

"The delivery of environmental health outcomes in the Torres Strait from the MIP's induction in 1998 need to be maintained for the next three years, so it is important that Queensland Government commitment after the elections is maintained.

"The MIP needs \$5 million per year over the next three years to continue delivering environmental health infrastructure and to complete its important work.

"It may be hard for some people to believe, but just six years ago we did not have sewerage, flushing toilets or a good supply of quality water – that's how hard life was in the Torres Strait.

"The MIP has been a significant achievement for all stakeholders including the Queensland and Australian Governments who have teamed up over the last six

years to contribute more than \$66 million to essential and life enhancing capital works projects.

"The Program is only two thirds of the way to completing vital health infrastructure for the 17 outer islands of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula communities.

"Another three years and the combined funding support of governments will see us through – we set a goal six years ago that both governments were committed to achieving and now is the State's opportunity to progress the Torres Strait's environmental health infrastructure and to support the last phase of the Program.

"The MIP has employed and skilled an Indigenous local workforce in outer island communities by linking with the Community Development Employment Program and the Heavy Equipment Management and Training Program.

"It is successfully transferring skills to communities and empowering Councils through capacity building to independently maintain their future growth, infrastructure and economic development.

"Although we still have some way to go before Torres Strait people's health and standard of living is comparable to that of the majority of people living on mainland Australia, with the support for significant initiatives like this we are certainly moving closer."

ENDS.

Media Contact: Jolene Southey, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Cook Candidates Urged to Continue Vital Infrastructure Development in Torres Strait

3 February 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today challenged Cook candidates contesting the Queensland elections to prove their commitment to the people of the Torres Strait by publicly supporting the third and final phase of the region's Major Infrastructure Program.

TSRA Chairman, Mr Terry Waia said he urged Cook candidates to support the completion of the ten-year Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) which had already made significant improvements to the environmental health of the Torres Strait and transformed the lives of disadvantaged Torres Strait people.

"The health and quality of life in seventeen isolated Torres Strait communities has been dramatically enhanced since the Program's introduction in 1998 and

communities for the first time have benefited from improvements to their quantity and quality of water and the introduction of sewerage," Mr Waia said.

"This Program has done more to improve the living standards and health of Torres Strait people over the last five years than any other initiative – it's having the greatest impact on the quality of life of people living in the Torres Strait.

"It's initiatives like this will have long-term results and do a lot to alleviate the re-occurring problem of Dengue Fever which is putting the lives of Torres Strait people at risk.

"One candidate has come out and committed to supporting this essential funding of \$15 million and I call on the others to make a stand and commit to completing the final three years of MIP.

"The delivery of essential major infrastructure to isolated Torres Strait communities over the last six years has been jointly supported by both State and Australian Governments and it's vital this strategic partnership continues for the benefit of Torres Strait people.

"We have been listening to the politicking and candidates empathising with the disadvantages of Torres Strait people – well now candidates have the opportunity to prove their convictions.

"Their response to funding this life enhancing program will clearly weed out the talkers from the committed parties and what better cause to challenge the legitimacy of their campaigns.

"Candidates that support this Program will be demonstrating their commitment to equality by tackling disadvantage and continuing to make real improvements in the lives of those people most in need - they'll have my support and I expect they'll also gain the support of many Torres Strait islanders."

ENDS.

Media Contact: Jolene Southey, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Arts and Culture Deserve Better

4 February 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today announced they are seeking a greater commitment from the State Government towards arts development and heritage preservation and called on Cook electorate candidates to rally their leadership to support greater funding.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Terry Waia said although the State had made positive contributions to arts development and cultural revival initiatives in the region there was still much more that could be done.

"Torres Strait art and culture has received substantial benefits from a strategic partnership between the TSRA and State Government and its equal funding contribution to projects through the Indigenous Regional Art Development Fund (IRADF)," he said.

"The Program has produced some great results by broadening artists' skills base, promoting cultural revival and supporting our younger generation through arts and cultural education and what makes it even more successful is that each time we secure State funds through IRADF the TSRA matches it.

"However, the \$25,000 the State currently contributes is limiting, especially when Torres Strait people are trying to revitalise their culture across 20 isolated communities and inspire their youth through creative projects.

"The TSRA is carrying the burden of funding for the bulk of projects, and we want to do even more.

"What has been achieved so far is great but if the State truly wants to make a difference by helping Torres Strait preserve its culture for future generations and build a strong and vibrant arts industry this is their opportunity to maintain the positive momentum.

"If the State commits to doubling its annual IRADF funding TSRA will match it – it's a good deal for the people of the Torres Strait and presents the opportunity for the State to really show their commitment to the future of one of Queensland's two indigenous cultures.

Mr Waia said the Torres Strait's cultural revival and burgeoning arts industry was anticipating a significant boost to promotion and national interest this year with the Torres Strait's first cultural centre scheduled to open in April.

"We are expecting that the region's very first cultural centre will act as a beacon for the Torres Strait, attracting interest from potential funding partners and media, as well as increasing the number of visitors to our islands that are eager to gain a fuller appreciation of Australia's cultural diversity," he said.

"The TSRA, with vital support and guidance from the Torres Strait community, has played an integral role in funding and establishing as well as promoting the forthcoming centre.

"It's been disappointing from our view that the State Government has contributed so little financially towards this project.

"The State's \$175,000 contribution to the project through the Queensland Heritage Trails Network disappeared because of the payment of \$300,000 back to the State for the purchase of the Four Winds building and site.

"It's not too late for the State to become a more active funding partner and we have already earmarked opportunities for further funding to contribute to the establishment of an outdoor amphitheatre which will enable dance and cultural performances to be held.

"Torres Strait people are fiercely proud of their culture, the way forward is to support them in nurturing their rich heritage, their artistic abilities and reviving their cultural traditions – I hope the Queensland Government will join us in our long-term commitment."

ENDS.

Media Contact: Jolene Southey, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

TSRA Congratulates The Beattie Government On Its Re-Election

10 February 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today congratulated Queensland Premier Peter Beattie and the Labor Party for their re-election to a third term in government.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia, wrote to both Premier Beattie and new Member for Cook, Jason O'Brien congratulating them on the weekend's result, and called on the Queensland Government to continue working with the TSRA to resolve outstanding issues in the Torres Strait region.

"In previous terms, the Beattie Government worked in partnership with the TSRA to deliver some major outcomes to the people of the Torres Strait through on-going initiatives such as the Major Infrastructure Program," he said.

"The TSRA will be seeking to work with the Premier to progress the pressing issues of health, housing, education, economic development and land ownership, all of which are intensified by the isolation of our communities to the mainland and to one another.

"Mr Beattie's leadership on these issues will directly impact on the lives of Torres Strait Islanders and we look forward to progressing these matters now that the elections are over."

Mr Waia said he would also invite the Premier to visit the Torres Strait soon to see the many achievements first hand.

ENDS.

Media Contact: Jolene Southey, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Mourns The Passing Of Cultural Icon - The Late Mr Ephraim Bani

12 February 2004

The Torres Strait is today mourning the death of world-renowned cultural ambassador, Mr Ephraim Bani.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Terry Waia said that Mr Bani's passing was a great loss to the region's cultural heritage.

"I want to express my deepest sympathy to the family of Mr Bani on behalf of the people of the Torres Strait and I want to let them know that we all share their grief in this very sad time," he said.

"Uncle Ephraim, as he was known to many of us, was a true ambassador for our people because he had an unique understanding of what 'Ailan Culture' is and he possessed a remarkable ability to teach others the importance of our heritage.

"Throughout our region, he was recognised as a cultural authority, providing leadership and guidance to countless individuals both indigenous and non-indigenous on how to practice, preserve and promote our culture.

"He was an honest and humble man and his pride in his people, their traditions and his homeland made him a role model for all of us.

"Words cannot describe his impact on our lives as cultural people because his contribution to our community and its cultural development is immeasurable – he was the lighthouse that shone in the dark and reminded us of where we came from as a people and where we are going as a nation.

"Let us all take a moment to reflect upon the achievements of this great man in this time of sadness and remember all the wisdom, love and goodness that he shared with every one of us.

"Let us also pray for the family that Mr Bani has left behind and comfort them during this time of grief as the Torres Strait mourns the passing of one of its greatest ambassadors."

ENDS.

Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Dengue Fatality Highlights Need For Better Environmental Health Infrastructure

13 February 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today labelled the region's first dengue fatality a tragedy and called for urgent Queensland Government action to investigate the incident.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said that Queensland Health must investigate the incident as a matter of priority so that the necessary steps can be taken to ensure that there are no further fatalities in the Torres Strait.

"Queensland Health may also need to review its current strategy for battling this outbreak to ensure that our communities have maximum protection against this disease and heightened public awareness about preventative measures," he said.

"What this incident highlights is the seriousness of the current dengue epidemic and the importance of environmental health in the Torres Strait.

"I hope the re-elected Beattie Government is paying attention to what is happening in our region and seriously takes action to address those environmental health issues that the TSRA has been lobbying for.

"The importance of having appropriate community infrastructure and the resources to maintain them cannot be overstated.

"We also need people on the ground in our communities who can address environmental health concerns and minimise the effects of epidemics such as this.

"In the lead up to the State election we lobbied the Queensland Government to fund environmental health workers in our communities and I sincerely hope that they take the Torres Strait's concerns seriously and commit resources to our region.

"The recent fatality is a tragedy for our communities that none of us wants to see repeated, so the message from the people of the Torres Strait to Mr Beattie is that it is time to take action, because this is about our lives", Mr Waia said.

ENDS.

Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Queensland Health Blame Shifting For Dengue Death Pathetic

17 February 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today called on the Queensland Government to initiate a full investigation into the handling of the dengue epidemic in the Torres Strait and stop blaming the island communities for the ongoing outbreak.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said he was appalled to hear officials from the Tropical Public Health Unit (TPHU) shift the blame for last week's death onto the regional community.

"Queensland Health's statement to the Courier Mail and Cairns Post on Friday (13 February) blaming the local community for the death is nothing short of pathetic," he said.

"That was a totally inappropriate and shameless act on behalf of the TPHU which portrayed our communities in very poor light and effectively implied that we are not taking enough preventative measures to protect ourselves.

"If the TPHU does not have a local presence to explain to people what effective measures are, how on earth are people supposed to know what they need to do?

"Does the TPHU realise that many people up here speak and read English as a second or third language and the most effective form of communication is oral face-to-face and verbally through mediums such as the radio?

"What Queensland Health should have done when the first cases were reported in November 2003 is come clean and tell the community about the extent of the problem instead of hiding the facts from us.

"The local Health administration should have called whole of government meetings to rally all the on-ground government agencies in the Torres Strait, including local councils, to enlist support in controlling the outbreak.

"Someone is definitely asleep at the wheel and if Queensland Health does not take the situation more seriously there will be more deaths in our region.

"A case in point is the fact that although I am the Chairperson of the region's health framework committee, I have not been informed officially by Queensland Health of the problem, nor the response to control the disease since the outbreak last year.

"How many more deaths do we need before the Health authorities begin taking this seriously?

"I am writing to Premier Beattie to seek an investigation into the handling of the current epidemic, because I am convinced that the 'out of sight, out of mind' principle is at work here.

"Imagine if this had happened in Brisbane, the authorities would be working overtime to have it sorted out and there would be a widespread awareness campaign in the media.

"But in the Torres Strait, a geographically challenging environment, we have two to three health workers from Cairns here working as the response team and our communities are receiving information second-hand.

"The health authorities need to stop blaming our communities and review their approach to ensure there is effective communication with each community and a whole of government approach.

"There are 17 communities in this region and we are in the middle of the monsoon, so access to some islands will be dependent on weather conditions – on ground environmental health workers in these communities could be working with islands now in an ongoing strategic approach providing long-term preventative results.

"That is why we are calling on the Queensland Government to seriously fund environmental health workers on our islands and continue to fund infrastructure development and maintenance so that we can manage environmental health more effectively.

"Let's make sure that there are no more dengue deaths in the Torres Strait and work together to solve this."

ENDS.

Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Work Underway On Poruma Airport

15 March 2004

Upgrade work has commenced on the Poruma Island airport to provide all weather access to the central Torres Strait community.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Terry Waia said the \$1.25 million project is a joint enterprise between the Authority and Queensland Transport and once again demonstrated how agencies working together could cost effectively deliver infrastructure in remote communities.

"The partnership established between our agencies was successful in delivering all weather airports to Badu and Boigu islands in 2002, which have greatly improved air safety at these landing facilities," Mr Waia said.

"Other stakeholders who will have an important role in delivering this upgrade are the Department of Main Roads who will be involved through the Heavy Equipment Management Training Program (HEMTP), the Island Coordinating Council, and project managers, Connell Wagner.

"Works on the Poruma airport will be a challenging exercise as construction of the bitumen runway and apron will take place on sand.

"The other interesting point to note is that upgrade work for this project is taking place during the wet season, rather than the dry season as building on sand requires more water for construction, so working while there is a good supply of water is crucial.

"The upgrade work on Poruma commenced in December 2003 and the airport is closed between 2 March to 21 May 2004 due to construction.

"Once this project is completed our next priority will be to improve the airport on Mer Island in the Eastern Torres Strait."

ENDS

TSRA contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Gab Titui Opening To Be A Celebration Of Torres Strait Culture

19 March 2004

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 The launch of the Torres Strait's premier cultural centre is fast approaching and it promises to be a special celebration of "Ailan (Island) Culture".

Friday 16 April 2004 is the official opening date for the Gab Titui Cultural Centre, which is expected to draw national and international attention to the region.

TSRA Chairperson Terry Waia said the Centre's official launch will be a very special and emotional time for many Torres Strait Islanders because it will mark the end of an epic journey to create a local place for cultural safe keeping.

"The main visionary behind the Cultural Centre concept, the Late Ephraim Bani will not be with us for this historic event and I think from that perspective there will a lot of emotions from the community especially those who were close to him when this concept was formed," Mr Waia said.

"On the other hand this will be an occasion to celebrate our collective achievement in turning Mr Bani's dream into a reality and honouring him for his role in providing cultural leadership to our people.

"I have been informed that Mr Bani will be honoured at the official opening and that the arrangements will be announced in the coming weeks.

"As the Torres Strait's first public keeping place for historical artefacts, Gab Titui will represent the pride of our people, displaying cultural artefacts, historical tools and both modern and traditional art.

"Our stories and traditions of the past and present are also linked in the Centre to produce a truly extraordinary representation of today's island culture, highlighting the diversity of traditions throughout our communities.

"The official opening of Gab Titui will take place at the Centre on the evening of Friday, 16 April 2004, from 4.30pm to 6.30pm followed by night entertainment marking the start of the Gab Titui festival.

"The festival will re-commence at noon on Saturday, 17 April and conclude on Sunday, 18 April, so the community can look forward to an entire weekend of celebrations.

"Activities at the festival are likely to include a mini market, artists in action sessions, cultural performances on the main stage as well as a featured performance by a top-billing artist.

"The full program is still being developed and will be advertised in the coming weeks for the public's information."

Mr Waia thanked the Gab Titui Steering Committee, comprised of community representatives, for their efforts and their active involvement developing the Centre from conception to completion.

"Continued community input will be essential once the Centre opens and will help guide the activities, events and programs it offers, enabling Gab Titui to remain proactive in addressing the cultural needs of the Torres Strait community, whilst maintaining the community's momentum in establishing a cultural revival," he said.

The Gab Titui Cultural Centre is an initiative of the Australian Government, through the TSRA and supported by the Queensland Heritage Trails Network (QHTN).

The Queensland Heritage Trails Network is a joint initiative of the Queensland and Australian Governments.

ENDS

TSRA Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Christine Anu To Lead Gab Titui Opening Celebrations Tuesday 29 February 2004

International star, Christine Anu will lead next month's opening celebrations of the Gab Titui Cultural Centre in the Torres Strait.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, [Terry Waia](#) announced today that Anu would spearhead the Gab Titui Festival on 16 April to celebrate the historic launch of Centre.

"This will be one of the most exciting events that our area has experienced for a long time, because not only will people be treated to a live stage performance by Christine, but there will also be some great performances by our local traditional dancers", Mr Waia said.

"The full entertainment program will be made public once it has been finalised in the weeks leading up to the official opening on Friday 16 April.

"Christine's performance on opening night will be her first in the Torres Strait since 1995, when she starred at the Cultural Festival on Thursday Island.

"I truly believe that having an international drawcard such as Ms Anu at this event will help to raise the profile of the celebrations and ensure that Gab Titui is exposed to the wider Australian community as a must-see cultural attraction for people planning to visit this unique part of the world.

"The community will also benefit from having a famous artist performing for them, especially since Christine is a local girl and is a positive role model to many budding musicians and performers in our communities".

ENDS

TSRA contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Infrastructure Program Shines In Independent Review

Tuesday 30 March 2004

An independent review into the Torres Strait's Major Infrastructure Program (MIP), has found that the ability of government agencies to deliver infrastructure projects in region's remote island communities has improved significantly since 2001.

The MIP is a joint Australian and Queensland Government initiative managed by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), which has delivered \$60 million worth of environmental health infrastructure to 15 communities since 1997.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said that the findings of the review conducted by consultants Cardno MBK were extremely encouraging and reflected the success that a whole of government approach has had in providing capital works to one of the most geographically challenging areas of Australia.

"Some of the key findings of the review were that planning and staging of the MIP had improved since 2001, that our communities were effectively engaged in all projects and that the coordination of working relationships between State funding agencies had significantly improved," he said.

"Joint venturing at all levels, was another key feature of MIP Stage 2 (2001 - 04) delivery that facilitated the successful outcomes achieved by the program helping it overcome technical challenges, while contributing to economic development on our islands.

"I take great pride in highlighting MIP to Ministers, politicians and other dignitaries visiting the Torres Strait because it is a truly remarkable initiative that has helped communities and governments develop appropriate environmental health infrastructure cost effectively as well as strategically.

"It is a good example of tax payers money being used wisely to improve the standard of living in our communities, which meets various governments' policies for addressing indigenous disadvantage - all stakeholders should be proud of what has been achieved so far.

"We are currently seeking ongoing Australian and Queensland Government support for MIP Stage Three for 2004 - 2007".

ENDS

TSRA contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Gab Titui Cultural Centre Logo Released

Wednesday 31 March 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today released the official [logo](#) for the Gab Titui Cultural Centre.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said the [logo](#) was designed by Torres Strait artist Matatia Warrior and represented cultural preservation.

"Matatia's theme for the design is appropriate for Gab Titui because the concept of the Centre is to maintain, protect and promote our cultural identity," he said.

"The design was approved by the Cultural Centre Steering Committee, made up of community representatives, and was chosen from a number of designs submitted by local artists.

"Matatia is an artist who is completing his studies in an Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts at Cairns TAFE and his works have been included in numerous exhibitions including his first solo exhibition in September 2003 'Malu Mabaigal'.

"I would like to congratulate him as a young Torres Strait artist for his contribution towards our historic Centre and look forward to seeing the Gab Titui logo being displayed proudly in our community.

"The new [logo](#) will be used on all Gab Titui merchandise, stationery, promotional materials and publications".

ENDS

TSRA contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

TSRA Congratulates 2004 Australia Day Award Winners 27 January 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today congratulated local residents who were honoured at the Australia Day Awards on Thursday Island.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said the awards were well deserved and highlighted the good work that these individuals and groups were doing in the local community.

"When you live in a remote region such as ours, people often put in a little bit extra to help their community and on Monday some of those outstanding citizens were recognised with awards," said Mr Waia.

"All individuals deserve the recognition they have earned with these special awards.

"It is also important to recognise that there are many people in our communities who are also putting in a special effort consistently to keep things running smoothly, but who we sometimes take for granted.

"On behalf of the people of the Torres Strait, I wish to congratulate all award recipients at the Australia Day Awards, keep up the great work your community appreciates your efforts."

2004 AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Citizen of the Year:	Daisy Laifoo
Young Citizen of the Year:	Ja'ak Ward
Community Event of the	Native Title Land Transfer to

Year:	Kaurareg Trustees
Medallions	
Achievement:	TRAWQ, Rubina Kimiia, Celestino Mayor
Cultural:	Takami Kazuyoshi
Sport:	Tyrome Zitha
Competition:	Kaiwalagal Rugby League
Achievement Certificates	
Achievement:	Charles Kazamias, Florence Kennedy, Sue Billingsley, PKA Mini Markets
Sponsor:	Torres Shire Council Social Club
Appreciation:	Ian 'Rusty' Tully Peddells Thursday Island Tours Torres Strait Surf Life Saving Team
Participation:	'Island Boys', Ina Titasey & Cessa Nakata
Mayoral Certificate	'Harmonics' Band

ENDS.

TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey, TSRA Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

Award Details: Torres Shire Council. (07) 4069 1336.

Mrs Louisa Guise, Member for Mabuiag

Mrs Guise is the TSRA Member for Mabuiag, newly elected Chairperson of Mabuiag Island Council and a member of the ICC. This is Mrs Guise's first term on the TSRA Board.

Mrs Guise would like to see the standard of housing improved across the region and has highlighted the need to upgrade existing housing to accommodate extended families.

She supports the introduction of small accommodation ventures such as guesthouses throughout the outer islands believing that they encourage business to communities, provide options to visitors and revenue for Councils to feed back into community initiatives.

Of particular interest to Mrs Guise are possible opportunities for economic development throughout the Torres Strait and she looks forward to the further investigation of fisheries and aqua culture ventures.

As an advocate for native title Mrs Guise encourages traditional owners to pursue their determinations and hopes she can also make a difference in the lives of Torres Strait women by progressing issues of importance to them.



Louisa Guise

TSRA Media Release

TSRA Elects John Toshie Kris As New Chairperson

Thursday 13 May 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Board this week elected its new Chairperson and Executive members.

At its first meeting since the elections in April 2004, the full TSRA Board voted for a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Alternate Deputy Chairperson and a Torres Strait Zone Commissioner.

The new executive members are:

[John T. Kris \(Saint Pauls\)](#) - Chairperson

[Terrence Whap \(Mabuiag\)](#) - Deputy Chairperson

Jesse Sagaukaz (Bamaga) - Alternate Deputy Chairperson

Maluwap Nona (Horn & Prince of Wales) - Torres Strait Zone Commissioner

In his first statement as the Chairperson, Mr Kris thanked the new Board for electing him to this important position and expressed his gratitude to outgoing Chairperson, Mr Terry Waia for his leadership since 2000.

"I wish to thank the Board for placing its trust and confidence in me for the next four years and I plan to give this position my full commitment," Mr Kris said.

"I also wish to acknowledge the achievements of the TSRA since its creation in 1994 and especially thank Mr Waia for his valuable contribution as a founding Board member and as Chair of the TSRA during the past four years.

"The last four years have been a challenging time for the TSRA and the Torres Strait community as a whole and Terry has shown himself to be a stabilising factor as well as a true example of Torres Strait leadership.

"Some of the achievements that he had a key role in delivering for our people include Torres Strait Islanders gaining a position on the Protected Zone Joint Authority along side both State and Australian Government Ministers, the development of a model for Greater Autonomy and the successful lobbying of governments for infrastructure funding.

"He will always be remembered as a great statesman who was a fair and honest leader of the Torres Strait.

"We wish him all the best in his future endeavours and we look forward to his continued input towards Torres Strait affairs.

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) conducted the polling for all positions, except that of the Alternate Deputy Chairperson.

Mr Kris said that he was excited about the new challenges being faced by the TSRA and pledged to give his full commitment to not only maintaining the positive outcomes that had been achieved to date, but also to progress other matters that would bring about real community benefit.

"The next four years is going to be a key period for the TSRA and I am confident that the new TSRA Board will work through all the important issues that will help us to further improve the quality of life for our communities," he said.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Gab Titui Cultural Centre Opening and Festival Program Released

Friday 9 April 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has today released the [official program](#) for next week's [Gab Titui Cultural Centre](#) opening and festival.

The official opening of the Torres Strait's first cultural centre will take place on Thursday Island next Friday 16 April followed by a weekend long festival to celebrate the historic occasion.

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia said the [program](#) was very exciting with its mix of traditional and contemporary performances to represent the unique culture of the region.

"Friday's official opening ceremony will be a high profile event that holds a lot of significance, as it marks a major achievement in realising our dream of developing a local keeping place for our culture," he said.

"The Gab Titui Festival begins on Friday evening from 6.30 pm and features a performance from acclaimed artist, Christine Anu as well as dance groups from all parts of the Torres Strait region.

"The celebrations continue on Saturday with the official opening of the Ephraim Bani Gallery within the centre followed by stage performances all day.

"A marketplace will also be open near the Gab Titui site on Friday evening and all day Saturday, so there will be something for everyone at this festival.

"Sunday is the concluding day of the festival and appropriately it will end with a combined church service on the main stage, to give thanks for this great event.

"If people in the community would like a copy of the [program](#) they can collect them from the TSRA Office or visit our website at www.tsra.gov.au.

"I encourage all people who are in the vicinity to come along and share in this festive occasion at the [Gab Titui Cultural Centre](#) site next weekend".

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Gab Titui Cultural Centre Opens In The Torres Strait

Friday 16 April 2004

The Torres Strait's first cultural centre, [Gab Titui](#), was officially opened today at a historic ceremony on Thursday Island.

Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Amanda Vanstone; Queensland Minister for Education and Minister for the Arts, Anna Bligh; Member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch; and Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Terry Waia, took part in the opening ceremony, which was followed by an entertainment extravaganza led by international star, Christine Anu.

Senator Vanstone said Gab Titui was an exciting project that the Australian Government was pleased to support as it provides a significant keeping place for contemporary and traditional Torres Strait culture.

"The Government recognises the important role that art and culture plays in defining Islander identity," she said.

"I commend the TSRA for coordinating the government agencies and community groups that worked together to create this first class facility to the region".

TSRA Chairperson, Terry Waia thanked the community for attending the opening and paid tribute to the late Ephraim Bani who is recognised throughout the Torres Strait as the visionary behind the [Gab Titui Cultural Centre](#).

"There are some mixed feelings at this opening because while we are very happy that Gab Titui is now a reality, there is some sadness that Uncle Ephraim could not be here to see his vision come true," Mr Waia said.

"I know that he is here with us in spirit today and I am sure that he would want us all to be proud of our very first cultural centre which will help us promote and protect our unique identity".

The [Gab Titui Cultural Centre](#) cost \$3 million to complete with both the Australian and Queensland Governments contributing funds toward the project through the Queensland Heritage Trails Network.

Mr Waia said that both governments should be commended for their support of Gab Titui and their faith in the TSRA, which worked closely with the community to develop the centre.

"Building a first class facility in an isolated region such as the Torres Strait was a challenge", he said.

"The fact that the centre has been completed on time is testament to the hard work and ingenuity of all the people involved and highlights the strong community spirit that we have up here.

"Continued community input will enable Gab Titui to be proactive in addressing the cultural needs of the Torres Strait."

Gab Titui includes space for exhibitions, artwork and workshops, with a specialised area to accommodate and display artefacts and cultural heritage material in a climate-controlled environment.

The overall design by Mike Ferris from Mike Ferris Partners Pty Ltd, also includes the capacity to further develop the site for events happening outside the building, such as traditional performances and cultural festivals.

The Queensland Heritage Trails Network (QHTN) developed over four years from 2001 to 2004, links together 43 heritage and cultural sites, museums, natural attractions and cultural centres.

The QHTN is a \$110 million joint initiative of the Queensland and Australian Governments.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey, (07) 4069 0700, 0427 500 744
Minister's Media Contact: Damon Hunt 0419 691 944

Mr Terry Waia, Member for Saibai (1994 - 2004)

Mr Waia was the TSRA Chairperson between 2000 - 2004. He was also the Chairperson of the Saibai Island Council and a member of the Island Coordinating Council.

Prior to becoming Chairperson of the TSRA, Mr Waia was the Commissioner for the Torres Strait Zone on the ATSIC Board and has been a Member of the TSRA since its formation in 1994.

With strong links to Saibai Island, Mr Waia is keen to ensure that traditional values in Torres Strait remain. Mr Waia has led several delegations to Papua New Guinea to negotiate arrangements under the Torres Strait Treaty to safeguard and protect the lifestyle of the people living in Torres Strait.



Terry Waia

Mrs Margaret Mau, Member for Dauan

Mrs Mau is the TSRA Portfolio member for Women & Families, Chairperson of Dauan Island Council and an ICC Board member.

Issues of concern to Mrs Mau are providing people of the outer island communities with access to basic services, regular maintenance to current housing to ensure liveable standards, and, most importantly, establishing a form of air service on Dauan and Stephen Islands to assist in emergency situations and daily travel.

In her role as Portfolio member for Women's issues, Mrs Mau pursues and encourages ongoing training and professional development of Torres Strait women to enable them to gain sustainable economic development and employment opportunities as well as equal representation in decision-making processes within the region.

Mrs Mau is committed to improving the health and protecting the environment of communities throughout the Torres Strait and encourages broader support for families.



Margaret Mau

TSRA Media Release

TSRA Secures Federal Funds For Major Infrastructure Tuesday 25 May 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today announced the Australian Government's \$16.2M commitment to major infrastructure development on Torres Strait's most geographically challenged islands.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr John Toshie Kris said this third release of funding by the Australian Government to complete the last phase of the Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) would enable this vital strategy to continue.

The MIP is a joint Australian and Queensland Government initiative managed by the Torres Strait Regional Authority, and has delivered \$60 million worth of environmental health infrastructure to 17 communities since 1998.

"This injection of funds by the Australian Government is crucial to our communities future development, health and wellbeing by effectively addressing some of the core problems that were identified as contributing to the poor health of our people," he said.

"The MIP has provided essential services like sewerage reticulation and improved the quality and quantity of water available in outer island communities, which has contributed to significant improvements in the environmental health of the Torres Strait.

"It's the introduction of these essential services, that many Australians take for granted, that are revolutionising lives of Torres Strait people and we are very thankful the Australian Government recognises some of the disadvantages imposed by isolation.

"Certainly there is still a lot of work to be done in the Torres Strait before the standard of living reaches a level that is comparable to that enjoyed by the majority of Australians on the mainland, but with projects like the MIP, that adopt a strategic and whole of government approach, we are making significant headway.

Mr Kris said that since 1998 the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments had equally contributed a total of \$60 million towards MIP projects in the Torres Strait.

"We are hopeful that the Queensland Government will match the support of the Australian Government and allocate this funding for MIP Stage Three for 2004 – 2007 in their next budget," he said.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

TSRA Activates Bulk Waste Removal Strategy To Reduce Dengue

Tuesday 25 May 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has activated the priority removal of bulk waste as the latest risk reduction strategy to minimize Dengue Fever outbreaks on Torres Strait's outer islands.

TSRA Chairperson, John Toshie Kris said that the removal of bulk waste would alleviate the number of potential breeding sites for the Dengue mosquito and hoped would reduce the risk to residents.

"With Dengue still a concern to our communities it's imperative we do whatever it takes to break the breeding cycle," he said.

"The problem with bulk waste such as old fridges and waste steel is that it's not bio-degradable and with a shower of rain it can offer the ideal breeding site for mosquitoes.

Mr Kris said the removal of bulk waste was part of the Outer Islands Waste Strategy implemented by Cairns Consultants C&B Group under the charter of the Major Infrastructure Program.

"Project Managers started the bulk waste initiative in February with the collection and wash down of bulk waste and scrap vehicles which were then planned for burial or removal from communities," he said.

"There are many stakeholders and the project team will spend the next two months coordinating the burial or removal of vehicles in conjunction with the Remote Community Services Unit, local Community Councils, the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service and the Environmental Protection Agency.

"It's strategic initiatives like this that will have long-term results and do a lot to combat the re-occurring problem of Dengue Fever which is putting the lives of Torres Strait people at risk."

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Mabo Day 2004 - Time To Break The Torres Strait Native Title Deadlock

Thursday 3 June 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is calling on the Queensland Government to break the native title deadlock in the Torres Strait by Christmas 2004.

TSRA Chairperson, Toshie Kris said that although this is a time to celebrate the achievements of Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo and the Meriam people, it is hard to ignore the fact that native title in the region is under real threat.

"This will be the second consecutive Mabo Day celebration where our festivities will have a dark cloud hanging over them due to the ongoing public works dispute with the Beattie Government," Mr Kris said.

"Last year we said that we are at a crossroads, and unfortunately twelve months down the track we are still here.

"I want the Queensland Government to make a commitment that this public works matter will be resolved once and for all before Christmas 2004.

"Mabo Day 2005 should be to celebrate that recognition of our ownership has been restored in full.

"I can appreciate that negotiations are at a stage where options are being explored by all parties, but I sincerely hope that our people's good faith towards the State will be rewarded with appropriate recognition of ownership.

"As we celebrate the Meriam High Court Decision in 1992, let us use their experience to inspire us to stay the course in our current battle.

"I am sure that those elders who were involved with that historic case will tell us that it was not an easy road to walk, and at times it must have seemed like an endless journey.

"But history tells us the Meriam won their native title because they knew that they were right, just like the communities of Badu, Boigu, Erub, Iama and Ugar know that they are right in this current battle.

"The Queensland Government knows that we want ownership of our lands, so now let's put pressure on them to deliver these rights in a timeframe that suits us.

"We want native title ownership restored by 25 December 2004, and only then will we begin to restore our faith in the State as a manager of our native title affairs.

"Let this be the measure of how committed Premier Beattie is to protecting our traditional rights as the people of the Torres Strait," Mr Kris said.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

**Mr Terrence Whap, Member for Mabuiaq
(1997 - 2004)**

Mr Whap was the TSRA Deputy Chairperson, TSRA Portfolio Member for Arts, Language, Culture and Sport, Chairperson of Mabuiaq Island Council and a member of the Island Coordinating Council (ICC).

During his term, Mr Whap strived to achieve better infrastructure for all island communities as well as more sporting facilities for youth, and greater promotion and coordination of sporting events throughout the region.

Training initiatives are still encouraged by Mr Whap in the Mabuiaq Island community and he is still strongly



supportive of economic development and community enterprise and continues to encourage community members to apply for TSRA business development loans.

Terrence Whap

Mr Whap would like to see greater employment opportunities for Torres Strait Islander people. He also believes that decision-making over marine resources should be determined by all communities in Torres Strait, giving them more control.

TSRA Media Release

TSRA Announces \$52.63 Million Budget for 2004/05

Wednesday 16 June 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today announced its 2004/05 budget of \$52.634 million to continue addressing issues of regional importance.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the Authority's budget would continue to focus on delivering real outcomes to communities through a variety of programs.

"Our aim when developing these budgets is to ensure that we are targeting areas that will help us move progressively towards achieving a better quality of life and to develop an economic base for our people," Mr Kris said.

"This budget recognises the unique and diverse needs of Torres Strait island communities and acknowledges the positive and life changing impact that major capital works, health, social, economic and community development initiatives have had on our communities.

"The TSRA Board recognises the long-term needs of our region and aims to use our available resources to deliver services and initiatives that are culturally appropriate and represent value for money.

" I wish to thank the TSRA Board for their support in passing this budget and for their commitment to development within the Torres Strait area."

2004/05 Budget highlights include:

\$2.3 million	Thursday Island organisations (TSIMA, Legal Service, Port Kennedy Association and others)
\$29.3 million	CDEP Projects
\$1.2 million	Towards operations of Island Councils
\$5.3 million	The Major Infrastructure Program (subject to Queensland Government funding)
\$1.5 million	Airstrip and marine upgrade projects
\$1.9 million	Economic Development
\$1.3 million	Native Title
\$700,000	Sports & Recreation

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Community Fishers gain full support from Torres Strait's Elected Leaders

Thursday 17 June 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) announced today that it would provide \$200,000 over the next year to support indigenous participation in the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) consultative process.

TSRA Chairperson, Toshie Kris who is also a member of the PZJA together with the State and Commonwealth ministers for Fisheries, said the funds would be used during the 2004/05 financial year to ensure that community fisher representatives had continued involvement in the PZJA process; and to maintain community level capacity building for local fishers.

"Our Board gave a clear mandate to support these proposals because we recognise the importance of maintaining our fishermen's voice in the current management structure and acknowledge the success of this arrangement during the past 12 months," Mr Kris said.

"The community fisher representatives have been doing an excellent job participating at meetings to develop fisheries legislation.

"I had the pleasure of attending a Fisheries workshop with these representatives between 18-19 May and listening to what they wanted to achieve in fisheries over the next four years.

"It was a valuable exercise and I am proud to say the TSRA has allocated \$200,000 to enable them to continue representing our interests in the fisheries consultation process.

"Half of these funds (\$100,000) will be used to conduct further capacity building among our community fisher representatives.

"Both the TSRA and community fishers share the long-term goal of Torres Strait fisheries being owned and managed by Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people living in this region and with this continued support we are taking the important steps toward achieving these ambitions."

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

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The Public Affairs Officer
TSRA
PO Box 261
THURSDAY ISLAND QLD 4875

TSRA Media Release

TSRA welcomes Queensland Government commitment to Torres Strait Infrastructure development

Thursday 24 April 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today welcomed the Queensland Government's \$16.2 million commitment towards the region's Major Infrastructure Program (MIP).

The MIP is a ten-year program managed by the TSRA and jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments to improve environmental health standards and deliver essential services to island communities through infrastructure development.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said that funding for the final stage of the MIP was given the thumbs-up in the recent State Government budget.

"The Queensland Government has been a strong advocate of the MIP over the last six years and we are extremely grateful for their continued contribution to essential infrastructure development in our region," Mr Kris said.

"The State's commitment will allow the remaining three years of the program to be completed and matches the Australian Government's contribution of \$16.2 million announced earlier this year.

"This alliance between the two levels of government and the TSRA has delivered crucial and life enhancing infrastructure to some of the Australia's most isolated communities by tackling basic, but significant issues of improving water quality, increasing its supply, and establishing sewerage facilities.

"For Torres Strait people living on the outer islands it has had the largest impact of any project on improving environmental health.

"This is no small feat considering the logistical challenges of delivering \$100 million worth of infrastructure over 10 years to 17 communities, particularly considering these communities are spread far and wide across the Torres Strait.

"Now that both funding partners have committed to the MIP, the TSRA in consultation with the Joint Torres Strait Housing Infrastructure Committee (JTSHIC) will begin prioritising projects for the next three years.

"Projects for the remaining stage of the program will focus on meeting the region's current population demands and forecasted community growth on our outer islands.

"Regular feedback from Island Councils and project officers, indicate that subdivisions, waste management and sewerage are vital areas that need to be considered during this next round of the MIP.

"The MIP has been a massive undertaking and a valuable model of how a whole of government approach can continue to make significant improvements to the health and standard of living for our people.

"We are making considerable headway and I hope that we can develop further strategic partnerships with both the Australian and Queensland Governments that strive to address some of the core problems we are facing in our isolated region."

TSRA Media Release

TSRA announces \$52.63 million budget for 2004/05

Wednesday 16 April 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) today announced its 2004/05 budget of \$52.634 million to continue addressing issues of regional importance.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the Authority's budget would continue to focus on delivering real outcomes to communities through a variety of programs.

"Our aim when developing these budgets is to ensure that we are targeting areas that will help us move progressively towards achieving a better quality of life and to develop an economic base for our people," Mr Kris said.

"This budget recognises the unique and diverse needs of Torres Strait island communities and acknowledges the positive and life changing impact that major capital works, health, social, economic and community development initiatives have had on our communities.

"The TSRA Board recognises the long-term needs of our region and aims to use our available resources to deliver services and initiatives that are culturally appropriate and represent value for money.

" I wish to thank the TSRA Board for their support in passing this budget and for their commitment to development within the Torres Strait area."

2004/05 Budget highlights include:

\$2.3 million Thursday Island organisations (TSIMA, Legal Service, Port Kennedy Association and others)
\$29.3 million CDEP Projects
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\$5.3 million The Major Infrastructure Program (subject to Queensland Government funding)
\$1.5 million Airstrip and marine upgrade projects
\$1.9 million Economic Development
\$1.3 million Native Title
\$700,000 Sports & Recreation

TSRA Media Release

Historic Fort On Thursday Island Handed Back To Community

Tuesday 13 July 2004

The historic Green Hill Fort on Thursday Island was officially handed back to the community today at an official ceremony.

The Australian Government effectively transferred ownership of the historic fort to the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), a statutory authority servicing this most northern part of Australia.

Federal Member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch represented the Australian Government at the ceremony, while TSRA Chairperson, Toshie Kris accepted the fort on behalf of the Authority.

Mr Entsch said the transfer of the fort marked the end of an era for this important site and he is confident that the building was in safe hands for the future.

"The TSRA is a worthy custodian of the fort and I am confident that they will do a good job in preserving this unique facility and its heritage," he said.

TSRA Chairperson Toshie Kris said that to many people the fort is an important reminder of the role played by the Torres Strait in defending Australia in various global conflicts.

"There is a proud military tradition among many of our families based on our shared experiences in wars and to have a symbolic facility like this given back to us is a real significant event," he said.

"When we consider the circumstances that this fort was built under all those years ago, not much has changed in relation to our region's strategic value to Australia.

"Maybe we aren't mounting guns to keep out a foreign military invasion anymore, but our islands are still a battle ground for stopping illegal international fishing, pest and diseases as well as health epidemics.

"The TSRA as the custodian of the Green Hill Fort will ensure that the cultural value of this facility is maintained for generations to come and we thank the Australian Government for giving us this opportunity.

"The existing 30-year lease of the site to the Torres Strait Historical Society and Museum Association (TSHSMA) will continue under the TSRA's ownership".

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.
Office of Warren Entsch Contact: Fiona Telford 0427 737 203

**THE WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
19 TO 23 JULY 2004
GENEVA**

Address by the Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris

General Debate

Mr Chair
Distinguished members
Ladies and Gentlemen

My name is John (Toshi) Kris and I am here to represent the people of the Torres Strait, Australia. I am the recently elected Chair of the Torres Strait Regional Authority, a statutory body of the Australian Government, which celebrated its tenth anniversary on July 1 this year.

Torres Strait stretches some 150 kilometres from the north-eastern part of the Australian mainland, to the coast of the Western Province of Papua New Guinea, which I will refer to as PNG. It is home to a diverse mix of peoples from many backgrounds, the majority of which are Indigenous Australians who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Islanders.

Our population of about 10,000 people is spread across 20 communities on the tip of Australia's mainland and scattered islands to the north. It is a unique region in many ways, but particularly in that it shares an international border with PNG. Moreover, a specific Treaty between the two nations of Australia and PNG signed in 1978 outlines an agreed position on:

- sovereignty of the two nation states;
- maritime boundaries;
- protection of traditional ways of life;
- visa free movement provisions of traditional inhabitants;
- marine environmental protection;
- fisheries management;
- freedom of navigation and overflight; and
- exploration and exploitation of seabed mineral resources.

In effect, the Treaty promotes and protects the rights of Indigenous peoples, including our human rights and fundamental freedoms. It allows the traditional inhabitants of 14 Australian Torres Strait Islander communities and 13 PNG Western Province villages to move quite freely, to fish across the whole of what is known as a 'protected zone', to barter and trade, and to carry out all forms of religious and social ceremonies.

A variety of forums and governance committees have been established to enable the traditional inhabitants and both governments to collectively regulate and manage activities covered under the Treaty such as quarantine, customs, health care service provision, fisheries, and policing.

The provisions of the Treaty, and the activities and protection of our way of life that it facilitates have, since its entry into force in February 1985, been very positive for the people of Torres Strait, and of course for our brothers and sisters of the Western Province of PNG. It is a vital document, enabling us to enjoy our traditional way of life, and something that we need to protect and maintain. The

people of Western Province are family to us and we must continue to share our customs, our culture and our traditional livelihoods.

The Australian Government, through the TSRA and other agencies, has done much to improve the quality of life of the people of Torres Strait through better infrastructure, housing, health facilities and so on. We are proud of our 'whole-of-government' efforts, and pleased that (to a large degree) we enjoy a standard of living like most other Australians.

The relatively unrestricted movement within the Treaty zone of PNG inhabitants into the Torres Strait islands now poses significant public health concerns. Vector-borne diseases and those transmitted through human contact are spreading, aided by extreme environmental conditions. Prevention and treatment is difficult if not impossible at times, as is any follow-up or after-care, due to the lack of basic health and communications infrastructure on the PNG side of the border. Our health care facilities available in our communities within close proximity to the Western province villages are stressed to the limit.

Because of the deteriorating situation in PNG, the people of Torres Strait now have to deal regularly with, and may well suffer a range of, communicable diseases. A number of public health risks exist including sexually transmitted infections, HIV, tuberculosis, dengue, malaria and typhoid.

It is clear that the PNG and Australian aid agencies, such as AUSAID are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the growing needs of the people of Western Province. Greater effort and involvement of other organisations such as the World Health Organisation and various non-government organizations is urgently required.

There is a need to build significant capacity within the Western Province to enable the people to better manage their own affairs and to bring these problems under control. There is an urgent need to:

- Provide better facilities and services to enable treatment of diseases;
- Build better infrastructure – water, sanitation, housing, and communications, to try to prevent public health risks;
- Provide preventative health programs; and
- Ensure medicines reach aid posts.

This list represents, however, only a small sample of what is required.

Support for the people of PNG's Western Province is critical to their survival. But this support is also critical to Torres Strait Islanders if our culture and traditional way of life is to be sustained. I would therefore urge all relevant organisations and agencies to get involved in a significant, coordinated and sustained effort to improve the social, environmental and health standards of all people under the Treaty.

Thank you

TSRA Media Release

New Survey Shows Torres Strait Awash With Bath Sponges

Monday 16 August 2004

One of the most extensive sea sponge surveys in the world has unveiled a bevy of sponge species, some suitable for culture, many new to science.

The study is the start of a two-year collaborative project between the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), CRC Torres Strait, and the Torres Strait Regional Authority to explore the potential for bath sponge culture in the region.

AIMS scientists have completed a field trip to the Torres Strait combing 10,000 square metres of ocean floor documenting at least 30 different bath sponge species.

Project Leader AIMS marine biologist Dr Alan Duckworth said one particularly exciting species suitable for the bath sponge market was identified.

"This particular bath sponge is from the classic bath sponge order and is a soft, durable sponge with good shape and was found throughout Torres Strait waters, from Erub (Darnley Is.) and Masig (Yorke Is.) to Badu and the inner group of Islands," Dr Duckworth said. "They were particularly large and abundant around Masig and surrounding islands in the central Torres Strait, where some were up to 40 cm in diameter."

The world sponge market is currently worth US\$40M. It is supplied by natural bath sponge populations from the Mediterranean and Caribbean but these regions have been over harvested and hit by disease and are unable to keep up with global demand. "It means the world market is grossly undersupplied and the best way to meet that demand without the over-harvesting problems elsewhere, is through aquaculture," said Dr Duckworth.

TSRA Chairperson, Toshie Kris said that this was an exciting project considering the potential of the market, but it was important to ensure any potential farming techniques would not impact on the natural environment.

"Our marine environment can be quite fragile, so we constantly identify that protection of our sea country is paramount, especially if one of the long-term outcomes of all of this may be the development of a potential industry," Mr Kris said.

"It is still early days for this project and it will be very interesting to assess what the potential for farming sponges is in our region."

AIMS is pioneering sponge farming techniques and experimenting with low-technology in-sea aquaculture compatible with the customs of remote coastal communities. The next exciting phase of the two-year long project is to develop ways to farm this bath sponge species off Masig where the natural population is flourishing. At the end of the project the potential for aquaculture as a new industry will be assessed. The team of AIMS scientists will be working closely with the Island's traditional owners and exchanging scientific knowledge and training with their extensive knowledge of the marine environment. While Masig will be the base of the initial trials, the results can be applied in other Torres Strait and indigenous coastal communities.

Dr Alan Duckworth and Libby Evans-Illidge will be available for Interviews at the RV Cape Ferguson, Riverside Marine, 310 Boundary Street, South Townsville from 10-11am on Monday 16 August.

Images and video footage of the AIMS Torres Strait field trip will be made available to the media on request.

Media Contacts:

Dr Alan Duckworth: AIMS Project Leader, Email: a.duckworth@aims.gov.au

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, Public Affairs, (07) 4069 0700

Wendy Ellery: AIMS Media Liaison, Ph, 0418 729 265, Email:

w.ellery@aims.gov.au

TSRA Media Release

Upgraded Poruma Airstrip Officially Opened

Saturday 28 August 2004

The \$1 million Poruma Island airstrip upgrade in central Torres Strait is complete and operational, Queensland Transport Minister Paul Lucas and Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch jointly announced today.

The local community has today celebrated the end of the project which was funded by the Australian Government, through the TSRA contributing \$500,000 and the Queensland Government providing \$500,000. Each agency has contributed extra funds to support the delivery of the project.

Member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch and Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris were among the official guests able to attend the local community's celebrations.

Mr Entsch, who was representing Indigenous Affairs Minister, Amanda Vanstone, said that the improved facility on Poruma was important for supporting the growth and development of the island, especially since it had been gaining recognition as a tourist destination.

"Having infrastructure that can support economic and social growth in regional communities is crucial and this is why the Australian Government is proud to support initiatives such as this through the TSRA," he said.

Mr Lucas said the upgrade would bring social and economic benefits to the island and would support the continued success of the Poruma Resort, which was generating valuable tourist dollars for the community and Queensland.

"The improved facility also ensures that this community has access to health and other essential services, while boosting reliability of airline services during the wet season," he said.

Local Member for Cook, Jason O'Brien, welcomed the project and was delighted the local community was celebrating its completion.

"It is fantastic to see a community come together to celebrate the benefits that will flow to them, and to show how much this project means to their future," he said.

TSRA Chairperson, Toshie Kris thanked both governments for their continued support of initiatives such as the airport upgrades and expressed his appreciation to the Poruma community for their cooperation and hosting the official celebrations.

"For many of our island communities, limited air access during the monsoon is a real issue because it magnifies the isolation that many of them face - communities can be inaccessible for up to a week at a time," he said.

"What these improved airstrips aim to do is better position our islands for these periods and provide our airline companies with a reliable airport that they can access during the monsoon."

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Wayne See Kee, (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

TSRA Native Title Update

22 October 2004

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Native Title Office (NTO) is pleased to announce that traditional land owners from Badu, Boigu, Iama, Erub and Ugar Islands will have cause to celebrate as the State Government has agreed to recognise their exclusive native title rights over their traditional lands.

TSRA Portfolio Member for Native Title Mr. Don Banu said that this significant move comes after substantial negotiations, court action and anguish over possible extinguishment of native title rights to these traditional lands.

"Native title claimants from these islands are now preparing for special sittings of the Federal Court of Australia to be held on their respective islands in December 2004," he said.

"The significant progress made comes after disappointment and frustration experienced over a State argument that resulted in cancelled determination hearings over all five islands in September 2002.

"This was a result of the State raising an argument that all community infrastructure that had been built on the island prior to 23rd December 1996 extinguished native title.

"The State argument halted progress and meant that the rights of present and future generations of traditional land owners would not have been recognised.

"Over the last two years, traditional land owners from each of the five islands, with the support and assistance of the TSRA Native Title Office, have come together for a series of moves that involved negotiating with the State government, taking the matter to the Courts and then negotiating directly with the State Minister, Mr Stephen Robertson MP for a positive outcome.

"I congratulate all involved in driving these positive moves forward for the Torres Strait and we all look forward to welcoming the Federal Court Judge to the islands

where historic determinations will be made recognising exclusive native title rights.

"In preparation for these hearings staff from the TSRA Native Title Office will be holding meetings on each of the five islands to consult with and update with all traditional land owners about Determination Hearings.

"NTO staff will seek authorisation from all traditional land owners for agreements to be reached with the State of Queensland, Ergon Energy and Telstra Corporation in relation to the Consent Determinations" said Mr. Banu.

ENDS.

Contact: Ramon Peachey, Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

With Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, John Toshie Kris.

I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of Kaiwalagal, on whose land I am writing from and all other traditional owners and elders throughout our region. I am receiving pleasing feedback on the role this column has had in keeping our communities informed of the many progressive projects and exciting developments that are occurring within our region.

Dengue Fever and Community Health

The Torres Strait is a wonderful region in which to live. Beautiful beaches, pristine seas and clean air all combine to offer a healthy and unique lifestyle. However this must not be taken for granted especially with the ever present threat of dengue fever. The dengue virus is prevalent in the Torres Strait and its incidence generally rises in the wet season, as was experienced last year. The TSRA is committed to working with other agencies to help prevent dengue outbreaks in the Torres Strait. With your assistance we can all do more to help in the fight against dengue fever. I urge all residents of the Torres Strait and NPA to be vigilant in protecting themselves and one another from this potentially fatal disease by removing possible breeding sites around the home. In the lead up to the wet season the Torres Shire Council will conduct a special rubbish collection on Thursday and Horn Islands to remove potential mosquito breeding sites such as discarded cans and buckets. This will occur from the 1st to the 26th of November and residents are urged to leave all rubbish on the roadside for collection during this period. In addition, the TSRA has been conducting its Waste Management Program around the islands by removing potential mosquito breeding sites. For more information on protecting yourself and your family from dengue, please contact the environmental health section at the Thursday Island Primary Health Centre on 4069 0400. I urge all residents to take personal responsibility this wet season for keeping their home and community safe from dengue fever.

Congratulations to Seaman Dan

On behalf of the TSRA I would like to congratulate Uncle Seaman Dan on winning the Best World Music Album Award at the ARIA Fine Arts Awards in Sydney recently. Uncle Seaman's achievement is a proud moment for the whole of the Torres Strait as national artistic recognition has been bestowed upon a much

loved and popular Torres Strait identity. An award of this magnitude recognises talent and diversity in music and I applaud Uncle Seaman and his production team on this achievement that will no doubt raise his profile but also of the Torres Strait as a region rich in musical talent.

TSRA Sponsored Events and Education in the Community

Education plays a key role in the social and economic progress of the Torres Strait and I am pleased that the TSRA was recently able to support the Thursday Island State School in a number of important activities designed to foster student leadership, cultural enhancement and learning. Students were able to attend and participate in the North Queensland Student Council Conference in Cairns, the Cultural Arts exchange which toured the near western islands and an academic tournament. I congratulate all those involved in these progressive events and I wish all students in the Torres Strait the very best in their studies. On a separate education initiative, I would like to thank the committee members of the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC) for their invitation to attend the opening day of their four day education conference. The conference was organized around a program designed to address among other things, directions, challenges, needs and priority areas in education. I congratulate the committee on this initiative and their planning process. I am hopeful that through this program the education pathways of our students will be expanded for greater benefit.

Sustainable Marine Life Research

The Torres Strait has a unique marine environment and protection of its marine life is an important undertaking for long term sustainability. The dugong population in our region is one of the largest in the world and like other marine life they hold a culturally and ecologically important role. Good progress is being made in understanding their behavioral patterns through a collaborative effort between CRC Torres Strait, James Cook University and local Mabuiag Island hunters. The joint project team has been tagging and recording the movements and behavior of dugongs to gain a better understanding of their habits. Via satellite tracking the results of the study will play an important function in effectively managing their existence and I commend those involved in this important work.

Any feedback for my column can be sent to:

Mr. John T. Kris
TSRA Chairperson
PO Box 261
Thursday Island QLD 4875

Alternatively, feedback can be sent to me through the TSRA website via the media contact in the 'contact us' segment of the site. Until my next column, may God bless you all and keep you safe.

John T. Kris
TSRA Chairperson

TSRA Media Release

Gab Titui Cultural Centre an Ongoing Success

1 October 2004

In just under five months the Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island has established itself as one of the Torres Strait's most diverse and attractive cultural destinations.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Toshie Kris said it is great that ongoing cultural activities at the Centre are drawing good community participation and the number of visitors each month has steadily increased since Gab Titui's official opening in April this year.

"More than three thousand people have visited the Centre already this year and that number will increase dramatically as our records are showing that an average of over one hundred people visit Gab Titui each week," Mr Kris said.

"There is also increased interest in the annual membership for the centre and I encourage families throughout the Torres Strait to get in there and become members as they will receive great value for money, especially when there are touring exhibitions and community activities taking place throughout the year.

"The Centre is active in facilitating a range of artist workshops, some of which have included mosaic productions and contemporary graffiti designs.

"There is a host of other workshops happening soon and we would like to thank our sponsor QantasLink for providing pre-arranged free flights for specialized workshop facilitators to come here and also to TI Hardware, who whilst not a sponsor, has provided paint materials to make these exciting events happen."

For more information on the exhibitions, annual membership, products and activities taking place at the Gab Titui Cultural Centre, telephone (07) 4090 2130.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Ramon Peachey, Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

St Pauls celebrates 100 years young

The centenary anniversary of St Pauls' establishment captured the pride and imagination of all 350 residents as they joined in a week long celebration held from 19 September.

TSRA Chairperson and Chairman of St Pauls Council, Mr Toshie Kris reminisced over years past and the achievements and progress that the community of St Pauls had made.

"St Pauls celebrated its humble beginnings and rich cultural heritage with a feast of activities and some friendly competition," Mr Kris said.

"The extensive seven-day program revived traditions such as broom throwing, coconut husking and coconut scraping competitions, and united the community in family suppers and a festive feast.



Chairman, Toshie Kris commemorates St Pauls' centenary of settlement

"The community spirit, cultural displays, entertainment and family affirmation not only helped reaffirm the unique identity of St Pauls but also celebrated its growth from a village to a flourishing community within the Torres Strait.

"Deep gratitude is extended to the St Pauls Centenary Committee who did a marvellous job in coordinating the celebrations throughout the week, the sponsors who kindly contributed to help ensure the week was a great success and most importantly to the community members of St Pauls.

"My heartfelt appreciation is also extended to Island Councils, elders, and community members, as well as those who made the effort to reaffirm their kinship and relationships as families participated in activities and roster duties throughout the celebrations."

To mark the anniversary, a commemorative plaque was unveiled at the beachfront on the South Sea Esplanade and the primary school's time capsule unearthed and replaced with a new capsule enclosing a history book developed from community stories, audio recordings, family photos and a community letter.

Farewell to TSRA's General Manager, Mike Fordham

Mike Fordham and his family are leaving the Torres Strait after three and a half years.

His departure this month will see him relocate with his wife and three children to Coffs Harbour, in New South Wales, to take up a new appointment for the Australian Government.

In this edition of the TSRA News, Mr Fordham reflects on his time in the Torres Strait.

I am writing to say a great big Esso (thank you) and Yawo (goodbye) to everyone in Torres Strait as Suzie, Milo, Paddy, Lachlan and I head south from beautiful TI.



Having been involved with the development of the region since 1992, and living on TI for the past three and a half years, it is a very sad to be leaving. Suzie and the boys and I are deeply indebted to the people of Torres Strait for all they have done for us, all the support they have offered, and to have brought us into their lives - it has been truly special. We only hope that we have been able to contribute to the community in some positive and enduring way, and to have shown the highest levels of dignity and respect for the position of the TSRA General Manager. This is a very special role in so many ways, and it has been an honour and a privilege to have served in it.

I would like to acknowledge the support and friendship of two fine Chairs (Terry Waia and Toshie Kris), as well as the two Boards and all of the staff I have served with who have taught me so much.

The TSRA is a unique organisation within the Australian system of government. It serves the community well with professional, hardworking staff and Board Members and I have little doubt that it will continue to do so (in whatever shape or form) for many years to come.

Finally, it is very pleasing to see Wayne See Kee appointed to the position for an acting period and I wish him and his family, the Board and staff every success for the future.

Mike Fordham

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris also conveyed his best wishes to Mr Fordham and his family.

"As Chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority and on behalf of all those who had the pleasure to work with him, it gives me a degree of sadness to say goodbye to Mike," he said.

"As many would know, Mike has been a highly dedicated and committed leader of the TSRA Administration and in his role as General Manager has been instrumental in driving and upholding the function of the TSRA as an organisation dedicated to delivering positive results for the Torres Strait and its residents.

"I would like to wish Mike, Suzie and the boys all the very best for the future and for the positive challenges that will no doubt lay ahead. I

am also pleased to offer my full support to Mr Wayne See Kee who has been appointed acting General Manager."TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris also conveyed his best wishes to Mr Fordham and his family.

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CDEP Online

The Torres Strait's first internet-based system to manage Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) data is revolutionising the way in which CDEP organisations perform and deliver service to the region's approximate 1,940 CDEP participants.

TSRA Chairperson, Toshie Kris said the development of the new CDEP Manager System, in consultation with Centrelink, had streamlined administrative arrangements and procedures for the TSRA, Centrelink and regional CDEP organisations.



All 18 CDEP communities connected online

"What was once a resource intensive procedure that required manual downloading of information to disk is now vastly improved, enabling immediate online access to participant information and the CDEP Participant Database," he said.

"The System is hosted on Thursday Island and has been in use by the TSRA since May this year, and effectively connects all 18 of the CDEP administrative centres across the Torres Strait, including Bamaga and Seisia.

"Earlier this year during preparation for the new system, staff from each of the CDEP organisations attended a workshop hosted by the TSRA to receive training in the operations of the new internet-based application.

"System Operators at all CDEP locations have embraced the new concept and their newly developed skills and confidence are proving a real advantage to their management of the CDEP network.

"I would like to thank the TSRA administration and Centrelink for their efforts in achieving this remarkable result, and the Torres Strait's CDEP organisations for their continued support during the establishment of this important technology, which will streamline work practices and improve services to CDEP participants."

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TSRA Chairperson and Chairman of St Pauls Council, Mr Toshie Kris reminisced over years past and the achievements and progress that the community of St Pauls had made... [more](#)

Business Dreams Realised

A sound business plan, a relentless drive to succeed and the notion of a dream job are what many prospective business operators possess when they approach TSRA for a business loan under the Business Funding Scheme (BFS).

The scheme provides low interest business loans, payment of... [more](#)

CDEP Online

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His departure this month will see him relocate with his wife and three children to Coffs Harbour, in New South Wales, to take up a new appointment for the Australian Government.... [more](#)

New Public Affairs Officer Joins the TSRA

Ramon Peachey joined the TSRA in August to take up the position of Public Affairs Officer.

"I have a strong interest in the role that communication can play in progressing economic and social development in the Torres Strait, particularly in light of... [more](#)

Torres Strait Marine Life Under the Microscope

Torres Strait has underwater sand dunes that move around the sea floor, sponges with potential to be farmed for bath and cosmetic use, and a healthy port environment. These findings are among the highlights of the first year of research by Cooperative Research Centre Torres Strait.

Torres Strait is rich in marine life, but there is still a lot that is unknown about the animals and plants that live in the sea, and the human impact on... [more](#)

TSRA Media Release

Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children Trail - A First in Australia

10 November 2004

The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) is about to start work on the first longitudinal study of Australian Indigenous children named "Footprints In Time" with support from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

"Footprints in Time" is a study that will be undertaken in the Torres Strait and aims to showcase children at various stages of development and growth across Australia by collecting data on the children as they grow up.

TSRA Chair, Toshie Kris said the project will help enhance the community's understanding of the various stages of growth that Indigenous children experience.

"It will no doubt, be significant in promoting an appreciation of the challenges and achievements of Indigenous children and the steps needed to ensure they are prepared for a better future," he said.

TSRA's Portfolio Member for Women's Issues and Families, Mrs Margaret Mau said the study will be a trial that aims to better understand why some children achieve more than others in a range of endeavours and ultimately how children can be adequately supported to grow up strong and resilient to face life's challenges.

"The study is about collecting and sharing information on what will help make our children better prepared for the challenges that they will no doubt encounter in the future," she said.

"This is the first time such a study has been conducted and will eventually include Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal children right across Australia.

"Footprints in Time' will focus on babies under one year and four year olds and will involve FaCS and Community Liaison Officers being in contact with Torres Strait communities to liaise with families, Councils and other key stakeholders on a regular basis.

"An Administrative Community Liaison Officer and four Community Liaison Officers have been appointed by FaCS for the duration of the trial.

"Mr Eliza Wasaga is the Administrative Community Liaison Officer who will look after the inner cluster group as well as the communities of Bamaga and Seisia on the Northern Peninsula Area.

"Mr Wasaga will also be liaising closely with FaCS and other Community Liaison Officers to arrange and coordinate visits, organise focus groups and interviews.

"The other Community Liaison Officers are: Maluwap Nona for Near Western Cluster; Ron Enosa for Top Western Cluster; Olive Bann for Central Cluster and Annie Pau for Eastern Cluster."

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Mr. Ramon Peachey Ph: (07) 4069 0700.

FaCS: Sharon Barnes at the Department of Family and Community Services Ph: (02) 6244 6063

TSRA Media Release

Collaborative Approach Needed to Protect Dugongs in the Torres Strait

10 November 2004

The chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), Mr. Toshie Kris has called on all stakeholders to work more collaboratively to protect the dugong population in the Torres Strait.

Mr. Kris was responding to a recent announcement by the Minister for Fisheries Senator Ian Macdonald warning of a significant decline in the Torres Strait dugong population if traditional harvests of dugong were not reduced.

"I appreciate the results of the scientific report produced by Dr Helene Marsh which incorporated new aerial survey results and improved methods and which clearly highlights the need to reduce the level of harvest," said Mr. Kris.

"Islanders have acknowledged this issue and have developed several plans to manage dugong hunting at the community level which were discussed at the recent Torres Strait Fisheries Management Advisory Committee.

"It is critical that the measures adopted to control hunting are culturally appropriate and come from the hunters themselves especially in light of the fact that dugongs are captured as a means of supporting families often on low incomes.

"What are needed are more resources to develop and sustain an economically viable fisheries industry to assist in supporting the region and in doing so keeping our economy sound.

"Our hunters must have ownership of the solutions to ensure that we have the whole community behind us as we aim to resolve this complex issue.

"Over-hunting of dugongs can not be solved by Torres Strait Islanders alone as we live on an international border and traditional inhabitants of Papua New Guinea also hunt dugongs therefore it is culturally important to all of us in the Torres Strait region especially as dugong remains an important part of the diet in remote communities and coastal villages in PNG.

Mr Kris noted that a meeting will be convened next week between Australia and PNG where this issue will be raised.

"We need the assistance of the Australian government to assist us to develop cooperative management arrangements with PNG but we also need assistance at home too.

"The new National Heritage Trust (NHT2) cross jurisdictional project to manage dugongs (and turtles) across northern Australia is timely and the TSRA will use the projects funds to commence a program to monitor the dugong harvest and determine exactly how many are being taken as well as to complete community and regional management plans.

"The new cross jurisdictional project is the first significant investment in dugong (and turtle) conservation made by the Australian Government at the grass roots level and this new funding will boost our efforts to protect dugongs for future generations of Torres Strait Islanders and, for that matter, the rest of the world.

"Dugongs are simply too important to the people of Torres Strait – we will resolve this issue in a way that not only saves the dugongs but also saves our culture, our way of life and with the appropriate help from Government, we can resolve this issue," said Mr. Kris.

ENDS.

Contact: Ramon Peachey, Public Affairs Officer. (07) 4069 0700.

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Native Title Determinations

2 December 2004

The chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), Mr. Toshie Kris has commended all stakeholders in the Torres Strait's Native Title claim over Badu, Boigu, Iama, Ugar and Erub, on their perseverance and vision in the lead up to the impending Consent Determinations to be held in December.

Mr. Kris was responding to the recent development whereby the State has agreed to recognise exclusive native title over the areas claimed by each of the five Torres Strait Islands.

"The Federal Court of Australia has now listed each of the five matters for Consent Determination Hearings that will be held on the respective islands of Erub on 8th December, Ugar on 9th December, Boigu on 10th December, Iama on 13th December and Badu on the 14th December," said Mr. Kris.

"I commend the traditional owners as well as the TSRA Native Title Office (NTO) for advancing these claims to this phase of the Determination process and in doing so ensuring the native title interests of the Torres Strait are upheld.

"The NTO is now in the process of working with local agencies to put in place arrangements for the Court, parties, media and other guests to travel to the Islands for these Determination Hearings.

"Engaging as many stakeholders in this matter is paramount and I am pleased at the positive feedback on the recent (NTO) community consultations held on the mainland and on the five island communities of Badu, Boigu, Iama, Erub and Ugar.

"Once these determinations are held I look forward to embracing this foremost development for the Torres Strait with my fellow citizens."

ENDS.

TSRA Media Contact: Vonda Moar. Ph: 07 40690700

TSRA Media Release

YBE Award for Indigenous Leader

3 December 2004

Former Chairperson of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Terry Waia has won the Year of the Built Environment (YBE2004) Award.

Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing Robert Swarten said Mr Waia had been given the award for his role in advocating, promoting and delivering significant infrastructure in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula area.

"His work on the region's Major Infrastructure Program since 1998 has substantially improved the lives and conditions of people in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula area," Mr Swarten said.

"The Year of the Built Environment (YBE2004) encourages a number of themes such as building regional communities, working towards sustainability, healthy environments and imagining the future.

"Mr Waia's work with the Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) thoroughly encapsulates all those principles and there could not be a more deserving winner of this YBE award.

"The MIP has created jobs in the region and Mr Waia's work has been at the forefront of these advancements," he said.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris commended Terry for his leadership and unwavering dedication to the Major Infrastructure Program which has had the largest impact of any program in Torres Strait history.

"Terry's determination to improve the quality of life for outer island residents has made a real difference and the radical improvements to environmental health in the last four years are testament to this," he said.

"The lives of many Torres Strait people have been enhanced through the MIP and Terry's service and dedication to the program over the previous four years is commendable and enormously appreciated."

Mr Waia was a founding member of the Torres Strait Regional Authority Board in 1994 and upheld the role of Chairperson from 2000 to 2004.

ENDS.

TSRA Contact: Jolene Southey. Ph: 0427 858 935.

TSRA Media Release

Native Title Victories Spark Celebrations Across the Torres Strait

9 December 2004

Torres Strait's Erub Island, also known as Darnley, will today make history as one of five islands to be granted native title over the coming days by the Federal Court of Australia, marking a major milestone for the region.

The Federal Court of Australia will travel to each of the five islands of Erub, Ugar, Iama, Boigu and Badu to conduct a special sitting of the Court to be attended by the traditional owners for the purpose of formally recognising their native title rights.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the entire Torres Strait would be celebrating this moment in history, which signified the recognition of native title over the last of Torres Strait's community islands in which claims were lodged under the Native Title Act (Cth) 1993.

"Our people's struggle for native title land recognition started with Mer Island and the Mabo case in 1992 and I am privileged to see his legacy continue as we witness the last of 14 island communities being granted their native title rights over their island land next week," Mr Kris said.

"Native title is about being recognised as owners of this land and for our spiritual and cultural connections with our land and sea - it's our heritage and gives meaning to our lives and that's why it's so important.

"We have fought long and hard to secure this recognition and I would like to commend the traditional owners of all five recent claims for their ongoing commitment and resilience - it hasn't been an easy path for anyone involved but this week's decision by the Federal Court of Australia has made it all worth it.

"The TSRA's Native Title Office, under direction from the islands' traditional owners, has been in protracted negotiation with the State of Queensland for the previous 4 years to progress achieving this recognition.

"The consent determinations were being blocked by the State's position that native title had been extinguished over all land on which works to benefit the native title holders had been built, for instance local community housing and community infrastructure.

"Clearly, this was a major hurdle for the communities and we are all extremely relieved the State has now agreed to recognise exclusive native title over the areas claimed by each of the five Torres Strait island communities.

"The TSRA's Native Title Office has had an arduous task of advancing these claims and should be commended.

"This last round of determinations will make history books so it's only fitting that we celebrate by uniting our culture and rejoicing our heritage - it's been like a long journey and we have made it home with our integrity, cultural pride and determination strengthened," Mr Kris said.

The Federal Court of Australia will travel to the following islands to conduct special sittings to acknowledge the native title rights of traditional owners.

Erub Island 8 December
Ugar Island 9 December
Boigu Island 10 December
Iama Island 13 December
Badu Island 14 December

ENDS.

TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey. Ph: 0427 858 935.

Applications close 11 February 2005.

1. What is the purpose of the scholarship

The scholarships are designed to assist Indigenous people within the Torres Strait region to undertake undergraduate study at university, by providing financial assistance towards meeting living and study-related expenses.

2. What is the value of the TSRA Scholarship?

The value of each scholarship is \$6,000 per year for full-time students. This amount will be paid each year of the undergraduate course in which the recipient is enrolled.

Currently, applications for a scholarship may be lodged with *James Cook University* (JCU). Students wishing to study at other universities may still apply, however, JCU is preferred.

The scholarship will be paid out on a fortnightly basis, with additional instalments of \$500 at the commencement of Semester 1 and Semester 2 to assist with the purchase of study materials.

3. Do I have to be a Year 12 school-leaver in 2004?

No. As long as you meet the eligibility criteria, then it doesn't matter whether you are a Year 12 school-leaver in 2004 or a mature-age applicant. Even if you have

never completed year 12, you may apply for a place at university through the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

Many universities recognise that the skills, maturity and commitment required for successful tertiary study can be developed through a wide range of life experiences, and as such, they offer alternative entry to their courses.

It is extremely important that you contact QTAC to obtain an application form called "**2005 Tertiary Application Form**". This enables you to apply for a place at James Cook University (JCU) or other universities. Please note that **this is a pre-requisite to applying for a scholarship** and should therefore be done immediately.

Phone QTAC on 07 3368 1166 to request an Application Form. You may also wish to visit the QTAC web site at www.qtac.edu.au.

QTAC's mailing address is:
PO BOX 1331
MILTON QLD 4064

4. Do I have to study full-time to receive a scholarship?

Yes.

5. Do I have to study on-campus to receive a scholarship, or can I study off-campus (i.e. distance education) as well?

To receive a scholarship you have to study on campus. Scholarships will be allocated only to students who are willing and able to study on campus. This is based on the observation that on campus students generally have higher completion rates.

6. How do I know if I should apply for a scholarship?

You can apply for a scholarship if you meet **all** the following conditions:

- You are an Indigenous person living within the Torres Strait region.

The scholarships are designed to provide assistance in attending tertiary studies to people who are from the Torres Strait and who will return back to the Torres Strait.

- You are motivated to undertake and be committed to the program of studies

This is a personal requirement, which you will need to write about as part of your application, and may need to talk about in the course of possible interview as part of the selection process.

- Returning to work in Torres Strait

Work placements maybe available in the TSRA and other agencies. Also work during semester breaks maybe negotiated later.

- You must be studying an appropriate undergraduate degree in 2005

To be eligible for the scholarship, you can be either commencing an undergraduate degree in 2005, or be partway through your undergraduate degree. Priority will be given to those applications that are considered to best benefit the Torres Strait Region.

If you are commencing an undergraduate degree, you need to indicate at Section 2 of the scholarship application form, the courses that you have listed as preferences on your **2005 Tertiary Application Form** obtained from and lodged with Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC). Please refer back to the boxed section in Part 3.

If you have already commenced your undergraduate degree and are partway through, please write down in Section 2 the course that you are currently undertaking at university. Please note that in this case, the annual scholarship amount will only be paid for the remaining years of your course, it will not be retrospective.

- You must not have previously completed an undergraduate course at any university

The scholarships are designed to assist Indigenous people from the Torres Strait to obtain an undergraduate degree for the first time. Those who have previously completed an undergraduate course are therefore not eligible to apply.

The scholarships are not currently available for individuals undertaking post-graduate studies.

- You must not be in receipt of any other scholarships in the 2005 academic year.

The scholarships are designed to assist Indigenous people from the Torres Strait who are not in receipt of any additional financial assistance, other than Youth Allowance, Abstudy or Austudy.

7. How do I apply for a scholarship?

If you believe that you meet the criteria set out in the previous paragraph, and if you have obtained from and lodged with **QTAC** the **2005 Tertiary Application Form**, then simply:

- Complete the scholarship application form;
- Provide a written personal statement of no more than 300 words describing what you want to achieve by studying at university, and how you believe you will be able to contribute to the Torres Strait community;
- Provide the names and contact details of two (2) referees;
- Provide a letter of support from any Torres Strait community organisation. This would include the degree and length of acquaintanceship with the applicant, and an indication of the applicant's motivation and ability to undertake the studies.
- Attach copies of all relevant documentation which supports your application; and
- Return the application form and the documents to the TSRA at the address below.

Please submit this application by:

Close of Business
Friday 11 February 2005
To:
"The Torres Strait Regional Authority Scholarships"
Torres Strait Regional Authority
Attention: Amanda Manuel
PO Box 261
THURSDAY ISLAND Qld 4875

Applications, which do not contain all the required information, will not be considered.

Late applications will not be accepted unless extenuating circumstances exist. In order to submit a late application the applicant would need to advise the TSRA of such circumstances.

8. Is my application treated confidentially?

Yes. All information and documentation you supply is on a confidential basis. It will not be disclosed to any person outside those people who are involved in the scholarship selection process.

9. How will the selection of scholarship recipients be made?

The TSRA will convene a selection panel to assess the applications.

The following factors will be taken into account by the selection panel when selecting the scholarship recipients:

- The applicant's written personal statement
- The degree of motivation and ability of the applicant to undertake and complete tertiary studies
- The gender balance of scholarship recipients
- Preference will be given to JCU

If necessary, referees will be contacted to provide their perspective on the applicant's worthiness. Also, applicants may be required to attend an interview with the selection panel. This will usually be done if the selection panel is having difficulty making a decision. An interview will only be held after all other avenues, such as talking to the referees, have been explored. The interview may take place either face-to-face, or over the telephone.

The selection panel has the discretion to choose not to grant any or all scholarship based on the quality of the applicants.

The decision of the selection panel convened by the university will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into regarding unsuccessful applications.

10. When will I know if I've been successful?

The TSRA will notify successful applicants in writing in early 2005.

11. Will the scholarship affect my Youth Allowance or Abstudy payments?

Students can earn up to \$236 per fortnight (or \$6,136 per year) without their Youth Allowance or Abstudy payments being affected.

For more information about Youth Allowance or Abstudy, you are encouraged to contact Centrelink on 13 2490.

12. Do I have to account for how I spend the scholarship money?

No. However, as the scholarship is provided to assist students with living and study-related expenses incurred while they are studying at university, individuals are encouraged to use the money responsibly.

13. Do I have to wait to receive an offer of a place from University before I apply for a scholarship?

No. You must apply for this scholarship by 11 February 2005. The university needs time to process and review all the scholarship applications.

The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) will directly advise the selection panels of the universities as to whether or not you have been offered a place at University (this is as a result of you lodging with **QTAC the 2005 Tertiary Application Form**). If you have not been offered a place at university, your name will be removed from the scholarship list.

14. Will I be able to keep the scholarship if I accept a place at another university?

Yes. The scholarships are not university-specific. The scholarship can be transferred to another university.

15. What are the conditions of the scholarship?

Continued payments of scholarship monies are conditional upon continued satisfactory progress in the course of study.

The university will monitor the academic progress of scholarship recipients and recommend additional tutelage for students where required. Students will be provided with sufficient warning that scholarship payments may be discontinued if academic progress continues to be unsatisfactory.

Deferment of the scholarship for a period of one year will only be possible where deferment of university studies is for reason of personal or family illness or bereavement, or other exceptional circumstances.

The decision to discontinue or defer an individual's scholarship payments rests with the university, in consultation with the TSRA.

Successful scholarship recipients should note that their name and case study might be used by the TSRA for promotional purposes.

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Headlines National Exhibition at the Australian

War Memorial

14 December 2004

Re-enacted for the first time at the Australian War Memorial, the Badu Island Dance Group from the Torres Strait will perform the Aeroplane Dance today and handover a symbolic bomber headdress to headline the launch of their "Australia under attack 1942-1943" exhibition.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the historic dance conveyed the coming of US and British planes to the Torres Strait during the Second World War and the significant role that the region played in Australia's defence.

"Torres Strait's participation in this event is symbolic and important because it begins to recognise the impact that war had on our island communities as a frontline for Australia's defence," Mr Kris said.

"Today's performance is of national significance and as Chairman of the TSRA I am pleased that our Arts Development Program could support the Badu Island Dance Team in their role as ambassadors for the Torres Strait.

"It's also poignant that while Badu dancers share their memories and culture with a national audience their community's native title is today being formally recognised by the Federal Court of Australia, which signifies the last of five Torres Strait communities to have their land rights recognised," he said.

ENDS.

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