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TSRA RANGERS TO STUDY SOLOMON ISLANDS MARINE CONSERVATION

On 16 April 2013, a group led by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairman, Mr Joseph Elu, will depart Australia to study economic development and biodiversity management on a visit to the first community managed marine conservation area established in the Pacific Ocean.

The Arnavon Community Marine Conservation Area (ACMCA) was created 18 years ago in the Solomon Islands and this visit is the first stage of a ranger exchange program which is being hosted by the World Indigenous Network (WIN).

The WIN was established last year by the Australian Government to encourage networking amongst Indigenous Rangers.

Next month, rangers from the Solomon Islands will visit Cape York and the Torres Strait before joining TSRA Land and Sea Rangers for the inaugural WIN conference in Darwin.

Mr Elu, who will lead a group of four TSRA Rangers on the visit, said the Arnavon area shared many similarities with the Torres Strait.

“The protected area covers 157 square km and includes small uninhabited islands, flourishing reefs, fish filled lagoons and beaches that are home to thousands of hawksbill sea turtles.

“Most local livelihoods in the Arnavon Area depend on the marine environment including fishing, sea cucumber harvesting, trochus shell collection and seaweed farming.”

Mr Elu said the exchange would be an opportunity to share regional approaches and experiences using contemporary and traditional knowledge and local practices to better manage the environment and support sustainable livelihoods.

“These exchanges will enable land and sea managers to improve their knowledge and skills and consolidate genuine partnerships, essential to the ongoing success of the Network.

“The Arnavon Area management programs include diversifying income sources to combat over harvesting of marine resources. Those sort of initiatives are very similar to the conservation measures such as turtle and dugong management plans adopted in the Torres Strait.

“Young men from all three Arnavon area partner communities are employed as Conservation Officers to enforce restrictions on harvesting marine resources so that also mirrors the way the TSRA is approaching measures to ensure long term sustainability.

“Economic development opportunities being encouraged include making handicrafts for visiting tourists, pearl buttons from trochus shell, seaweed harvesting and diversification into agriculture.

“Ecotourism also provides an occasional source of income with visitors to the marine conservation area encouraged to assist rangers in nightly monitoring of turtle egg-laying.”

Mr Elu will be accompanied on the trip by TSRA Ranger Supervisors, Don Whap and Troy Stow, Iama Ranger David Baragud and Sea Program Manager, Frank Loban.



Caption: David Baragud, Frank Loban, Joseph Elu, Troy Stow and Don Whap.

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