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LATEST IPCC REPORT RECONFIRMS IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE TORRES STRAIT

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) says the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released yesterday highlights the impact climate change will have in the Torres Strait.

TSRA Chairman, Joseph Elu, said the report, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, demonstrates how vulnerable low-lying islands in the Torres Strait are to storm surges, coastal flooding and sea level rises.

“Extreme weather events caused by climate change could cause a breakdown in infrastructure and critical services such as electricity, water supply, health and emergency services,” Mr Elu said.

“Our island communities are vulnerable due to their remoteness and small size which limits adaptation options, and their reliance on climate-sensitive species and ecosystems for food and cultural activities.

“The loss of marine and coastal ecosystems will also have an enormous impact on fishing communities and local industry.”

The report stated that “permanent damage is inevitable” for the Great Barrier Reef, including the northern region.

Mr Elu said due to this particular vulnerability it is essential that remote island communities receive extensive support in the development and implementation of adaptation strategies.

“The TSRA, in partnership with councils and other agencies, is currently progressing planning to identify key areas of vulnerability for Torres Strait Communities to develop an appropriate, sustainable response that will aid to reduce risks and build local resilience,” Mr Elu said.

“Adaptation and resilience planning will be progressed at the regional level as well as the local community level for all communities over the next two to three years.”

Mr Elu said the funding secured for seawalls is for communities most at risk, and will only reduce the impact of storm surge, erosion and flooding over the coming decades to a certain extent.

“The government’s commitment to seawall funding in late February is an important first step to reduce impacts but longer term strategies will be needed,” Mr Elu said.

“All government agencies involved in the planning and development in the Torres Strait must strongly consider the risks of climate change in order to maintain the livelihood of our small island communities.”

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