

TSRA Media Release

Trainees Gain Unique Insight into National Museums

15 February 2005

Gab Titui Cultural Centre trainees were provided a unique insight into museum and collection management in January when as part of an intensive five day internship they visited some of Sydney's leading cultural institutions.

Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris expressed his gratitude to the Australian Museum, Sydney University's Macleay Museum and Koori Centre, and The Powerhouse Museum for their tuition and contribution to the trainees' development.

"What a privilege it has been for our trainees to meet some of the country's top conservators, curators and arts industry professionals and be given tuition and explanation of how they manage exhibitions and their Indigenous collections," he said.

"Being a small centre means Gab Titui needs the support of our museum counterparts in all states to contribute to long-term and touring exhibitions, children's outreach programs and our further development.

"Our trainees have returned inspired and motivated by their extraordinary experience and the wealth of knowledge gleaned from this week will serve them well in Gab Titui's future operations.

"I would like to congratulate Mona Ahwang, Frank David and Simona Barkus for embracing this opportunity to broaden their skills for the benefit of Torres Strait culture.

"Their opportunity to view national Torres Strait and Aboriginal collections and their meticulous storage has given them an insight into the elaborate planning that goes into managing your own collection.

"For Torres Strait people living in our region it's a significant expense to travel to capital cities to view Torres Strait collections and one which many cannot afford.

"It's important therefore that we work with the national institutions, as well as work towards building our own storage facility so one day we may all share in the privilege of viewing our own Torres Strait collection."

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TSRA Media Release

Funding Being Sourced for Dugong and Turtle Management in Torres Strait

15 February 2005

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has welcomed the Australian Government's commitment to source funding for Torres Strait's dugong and marine turtle management, announced at this month's Protected Zone Authority meeting held on Thursday Island.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said he was pleased the Authority's calls for funding to support a Torres Strait traditional catch monitoring program had been recognised by the Federal Minister for Fisheries, Senator Ian Macdonald.

"Of course we are pleased to have the Australian Government's support toward this initiative and we hope that the \$1.3 million to implement this program can be sourced, otherwise our ability to complete community based management plans will be severely compromised," Mr Kris said.

"Full funding will ensure all affected communities are involved and can contribute to catch monitoring on the ground and that essential capacity building can be undertaken to educate and develop awareness of the program and its importance.

"In 2004, the TSRA made a submission to the Natural Heritage Trust cross jurisdiction project for northern Australian waters, which is coordinated by the Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) in Darwin.

"NAILSMA is coordinating the project for five regions from Queensland to Darwin and though to the Kimberley's in Western Australia, and funding will be allocated to these regions.

"Clearly, there is still a lot of planning to be done and it is important we continue this momentum.

"A post graduate research student from the Cooperative Research Centre in Townsville, arrived this month in the Torres Strait to help begin traditional catch monitoring of these important species over the next 18 months.

"We have also made positive progress with Papua New Guinea who are interested in sustainably managing migratory dugong and turtle stocks in their waters.

"Understandably there are many parties which have a vested interest in preserving dugongs and turtles, but none more committed than the Torres Strait people.

"I am pleased both the Australian and Queensland ministers for Fisheries understand the importance of a community-driven management plan – afterall, we are talking not only about the conservation of a species, but the preservation of an entire culture," Mr Kris said.

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TSRA Media Release

Major infrastructure improvements for Torres Strait

3 March 2005

The Torres Strait region's highly successful infrastructure development program is set to continue for another three years.

The Major Infrastructure Program (MIP), which is jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments and managed by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), will deliver a further \$32.4 million worth of environmental health infrastructure to the region.

Local Government and Planning Minister Desley Boyle said the MIP had improved the wellbeing and quality of life of people in the Torres Strait.

"The program is a true trailblazer," Ms Boyle said. "Water and sewerage infrastructure especially are just so important. They are so easy to take for granted – when you have them, that is.

"This program is helping to make sure all the communities in the Torres Strait have access to clean and reliable water supplies and that sewage is properly dealt with.

"It identifies the highest priority environmental and health infrastructure in the region and how to meet the needs of 18 communities.

"The first six years of the program have delivered enormous benefits to outer island and Northern Peninsula communities and the next three years will continue to raise living standards through major improvements to water quality and supply and sanitation," Ms Boyle said.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the coming three years was a component of a \$100 million, 10-year joint commitment by both Queensland and Australian Governments to the MIP.

"The MIP is a long-term project and has made the single greatest impact of any initiative on the lives of our people," Mr Kris said.

"Planning for the next stage has commenced and it is expected that Stage Three projects will continue to deliver essential services to communities, as well as build upon the vast improvements that have been made over the previous six years.

"The focus will be on developing sewerage and improving water quality and supply, with particular emphasis on mobile desalination plants, which is an important facility for our island communities, especially as we have had to endure drought conditions for the past two years.

"Over the coming three years we will embark on regional projects as well as projects that meet the needs of individual communities.

"The MIP continues to highlight that cooperation across all tiers of government can deliver enormous benefits and it has become a model for future partnerships," Mr Kris said.

ENDS.

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TSRA Media Release

Arts Funding Contributes to Torres Strait's Cultural Preservation

23 March 2005

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has announced the successful projects to gain funding through the Torres Strait Indigenous Regional Arts Development Fund (TSIRADF) for 2004-2005.

The TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris expressed his gratitude to Arts Queensland for their continued support of Torres Strait arts and culture since 2002 through yearly TSIRADF funding, which is matched by the TSRA.

"In this round of funding TSIRADF will contribute over \$24,700 to six projects, which at a community level will inject a real boost to arts activity," he said.

"There's no doubt in my mind that Arts Queensland shares the TSRA's vision for cultural preservation and artistic development by demonstrating this time and time again through their continued commitment to nurturing arts and cultural endeavours in the Torres Strait.

"The great part about TSIRADF is that it's giving individuals, schools, community groups and Councils an opportunity to implement short-term arts and cultural projects that are manageable and deliver real and immediate benefits to the community.

"We have seen a surge in creative initiative since the grants were first offered and that's not surprising considering the enormous wealth of talent we have across our island communities.

"Congratulations to all recipients of this recent TSIRADF funding – it's this shared approach to preserving and protecting our environment, heritage, culture and languages that strengthens our cultural identity and encourages others to realise their full potential," he said.

The recipients of TSIRADF funding for 2004-2005 are:

Thursday Island Primary School	Art & cultural exchanges will be conducted with outer island communities of Mabuig & Badu.
TRAWQ Community Council - Thursday Island	Local indigenous artists and outer island artists will be employed to conduct art and craft workshops for the TRAWQ community.
Poruma Council	Local indigenous artists will be employed to conduct art and craft workshops for the island and work towards an exhibition.
Tony Titasey	Mr Titasey will develop pearl shell carvings for an exhibition.
Sacred Heart Primary School - Thursday Island	Local artists will be employed to deliver art programs, in particular dance, which will result in a concert and participation at Croc Fest this year.
Thursday Island State High School	An indigenous dancer will be employed to oversee and choreograph a section of the school's 2005 Croc Festival performance.

Mr Kris said it was intended that a further round of funds would be offered to eligible Torres Strait projects in mid 2005.

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TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Airstrip Upgrades Underway for 2005

15 April 2005

The upgrade to Warraber airstrip, the first of two in the Torres Strait planned for 2005, is underway with a combined \$2.9 million being spent to improve transport infrastructure safety and access this year.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the TSRA had contributed \$1.45million toward these two upgrades, which was matched by Queensland Department of Transport funding.

Mr Kris said the upgrade of outer island airstrips on Warraber and Mer Islands would help communities to better access health facilities and enhance general access for business and residents.

"In times of emergencies outer island communities are entirely reliant on air travel to transport patients to better care, whilst we still rely on dinghies and ferries for day to day travel, in emergencies they are not an option," Mr Kris said.

"The upgrades will also improve aviation safety and provide significant training and employment to locals for longer project periods by transforming grass to sealed bitumen runways with secure apron areas.

"Project Managers are expecting the Warraber airstrip upgrade to take up to three months to complete, during which time a ferry service to nearby Poruma Island will ensure residents have access to a commercial air service.

"The upgrade to Mer airstrip will follow shortly after in July and is expected to take a longer 20 week duration with further plans for an upgrade to Iama Island airstrip next year.

"Like many successful initiatives in the Torres Strait, the Warraber and Mer upgrades are part of a collaborative effort in which Queensland Transport and the Torres Strait Regional Authority are enhancing the region's coordination and planning.

"The Airstrip and Marine Upgrade Program, Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) is delivering these valuable infrastructure improvements to island communities disadvantaged by their isolation.

"The Torres Strait Regional Authority is pleased to be a joint stakeholder with the Department of Main Roads and the Queensland Department of Transport to fund this \$2.9 million dollar essential upgrade.

"The Remote Communities Services Unit of the Department of Main Roads will deliver the project through the Heavy Equipment Management Training Program," Mr Kris said.

ENDS

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TSRA Media Release

The Gab Titui Cultural Centre Turns One!

15 April 2005

A long held dream and twelve months of achievements will be celebrated by families, elders, artists and community leaders tomorrow at the Gab Titui Cultural Centre's first birthday on Thursday Island.

Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the Centre's first birthday was a credit to the Torres Strait community and symbolic of their aspiration to establish a keeping place for contemporary and traditional Torres Strait culture.

"It has been a tremendous year for the cultural centre as its dedicated staff have transformed the new facility into a cultural hub and Torres Strait icon," Mr Kris said.

"The Centre is distinctly Torres Strait in its approach to education and entertainment and is well on its way to empowering Torres Strait people by enriching their lives and protecting their heritage.

"Apart from inspiring cultural initiative and strengthening our own cultural identity, Gab Titui is becoming a stepping stone for tourists wishing to explore and discover the essence and spirit that makes Torres Strait unique.

"We have an immense region of rich traditions, diverse landscape and Indigenous culture that's appealing to more and more tourists wanting to holiday in Australia, but to experience a culture very different from their own.

"Gab Titui is giving visitors a glimpse into Torres Strait's heritage and customs and some perspective on the vast nature of our island communities and their diversity.

"In our first year we conducted thirteen workshops and exhibitions and welcomed over 3,000 visitors and that is great news considering our tourist season lasts for just three months from July to September.

"The centre is going from strength to strength and at tomorrow's community birthday celebration we'll have the opportunity to give thanks and celebrate our first year achievements," Mr Kris said.

The community birthday celebration is one of many activities and events planned this month in honour of Gab Titui Cultural Centre turning one year old.

Visitors can enjoy an historical black and white photographic exhibition selected from the Cambridge University's 19th Century Haddon Photographic Collection; a contemporary photographic exhibition with material selected from the Centre's Opening Festival in 2004; a Writers Week Festival and Traditional Language Seminars; and a Members' Evening.

For more information visit www.tsra.gov.au and follow the link to Gab Titui Cultural Centre – Torres Strait.

ENDS

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TSRA Media Release

Warraber Island set to construct a motel and conference facility

31 May 2005

Warraber Island in central Torres Strait has been given the green light to launch the region's latest tourism initiative, the Warraber Motel and conference centre, with recent advice from the Australian Government that it will co-fund the venture.

The Warraber Motel and conference centre is a \$750,000 project, jointly funded by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Department of Transport and Regional Services, Regional Partnerships Program.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the project would spearhead economic development on the island of Warraber and anticipated that the community would derive significant employment and flow-on benefits from the motel and conference centre.

"Construction of the Warraber Motel complex is expected to commence in June and be completed by December and will include eight accommodation units, a commercial kitchen and conference facility," Mr Kris said.

"Warraber Council recognised that the demand for accommodation by business and leisure travellers could soon outweigh the island's current capacity and by increasing their accommodation it would allow them to capitalise on future opportunities.

"Warraber is one of the coral islands in the central group that has an abundance of marine life and will leave visitors with a real sense of Torres Strait culture.

"Staying on Warraber provides travellers with opportunity to easily access other Torres Strait communities and experience village life and appreciate the diversity between islands.

"The Motel and conference centre will also provide greater opportunities for economic and social participation in the community, injecting a boost to employment and skills.

"This is a practical example of regional partnerships working effectively to meet community driven needs and for a small community like Warraber that has so much to offer this is an excellent outcome," Mr Kris said.

ENDS

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TSRA Media Release

Participants Discover Enterprise at Gab Titui Workshops 30 May 2005

Indigenous people and local artists from across the region have converged on Gab Titui Cultural Centre this week to define how to best meet the needs of the Torres Strait's developing visual arts and crafts industry and be coached on how they can become a small business success.

The back-to-back workshop program commenced with a Visual Arts and Craft Forum on 30 and 31 May and will follow with the First Australians Business 'Discovering Enterprise Workshop' on 1 and 2 June.

Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said Arts Queensland, who had jointly funded the Forum with the TSRA, were very keen to develop a picture of the Torres Strait art and craft industry at a regional level to understand the challenges being confronted and the direction in which communities want their industry to develop.

"One participant has been nominated by each island Council to attend the workshop and Arts Queensland are paying their travel expenses, which of course will enable all communities to share their views," Mr Kris said.

"The 'Discovering Enterprise Workshop' will be presented by First Australians Business and Indigenous Business Australia and will benefit not only artists and crafts people, but all people wanting to establish their own business.

"What makes this workshop different from others is that it aims to help participants overcome cultural barriers to business and takes into account that small enterprises are often developed to meet a small community market.

"The workshop will also focus on identifying business opportunities; marketing and promotion; financial management; and business planning.

"Finding a mentor, whether they be a local business owner, community leader or representative is of great advantage to those starting out in business and is being encouraged.

"The workshop's business dinner on Wednesday (1 June) will present a good opportunity to network," he said.

Mr Kris encouraged interested participants who had not yet registered for the 'Discovering Enterprise Workshop' commencing on Wednesday, 1 June to contact Gab Titui Cultural Centre on 07 4090 2130.



Australian Government



**Queensland
Government**

THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey. Ph: 07 4069 0700 or Mbl: 0427 858 935.

TSRA Media Release

Coastcare Art Competition Winners Announced

1 June 2005

Torres Strait's creative kids, through their participation in the Coastcare Art Competition, are raising awareness of the detrimental effect of pollution on near-shore habitats and marine animals.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said entries received showed that students were conveying a very strong message and had a clear understanding of some of the threats facing their coastal habitats.

"The artwork received from both primary and high school students has been exceptional and I congratulate everyone that took part for getting behind such an important conservation issue," Mr Kris said.

"Each artwork tells a story and illustrates a range of different ways in which people can respect sea country and care for the coast and clearly shows that participants have recognised its importance.

"It is hoped this message will be further promoted when the community visit the Gab Titui Cultural Centre and see the students' creativity on display.

"There were some truly outstanding entries, including Penina Mari's entry from Thursday Island State High School which depicted Penina actually helping to clean up our beaches, with some of the marine debris she found attached to her artwork.

"The Coastcare Art Competition is just one example of how our community can play an active role in raising awareness about the protection of coastal and marine habitats in the Torres Strait and has proven very successful.

"The TSRA, as the organiser for this competition, is very thankful to the many businesses, Council and individuals that committed time and resources to this important cause.

"We wish to thank Ports Corporation for their generous donation of prize money; local schools and judges Mark Kelleher, Chief Executive Officer of Torres Shire Council; John Clark, from Ports Corporation Queensland; and Stanley Laifoo, a prominent local artist," Mr Kris said.

Recipients of awards were announced at Clean Beach Day on Saturday, 28 May and include:

Primary School Category:

Winner - Stephen Boyd

Runners-up -

Takeshi Shibasaki

Olive Tamwoy

Ernest Beckley

Adianna Nawie

Encouragement Award - Jaxon Saylor

High School Category:

Winner - Penina Mari

Runner up - Michael Nona

The competition was run as part of the Natural Heritage Trust initiative for the Torres Strait region, under the Coastcare theme.

ENDS

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TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Communities Suffer Unimaginable Loss

13 May 2005

Communities across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula are mourning the tremendous loss of family and friends who perished in the Aero-Tropics aircraft crash of Saturday, 7 May.

Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said Torres Strait Islanders from across the region were still in a state of shock as they prepared to commemorate the lives of the seven locals from the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area (NPA).

"It's incomprehensible to have ever imagined a tragedy of this magnitude that has shattered so many families and has impacted on every person living within our region," Mr Kris said.

"The shockwave has been felt throughout all communities of the Torres Strait and NPA, as chances are you either knew one of the seven local people that died or were related – and for so many people the enormity of the tragedy is still yet to be realised.

"We are all hopeful that the investigation into the crash will provide answers that could prevent this devastation from ever occurring again.

"Whatever the results, sadly we cannot turn back time and change the circumstances that led to this fatal day – for now we must grieve the loss of our loved ones and console our families ,... and over time, remember the contribution each one of them made to our lives and our communities," he said.

Mr Kris passed on his deepest condolences to Torres Strait and NPA families that will remember forever this tragic event; family and friends of the late Bamaga police officer, Sally Urquhart and the many others that lost their lives in the fatal crash.

ENDS

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TSRA Media Release

TSRA Announces \$53.6 Million Budget for 2005-2006

21 June 2005

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has announced a \$53.664 million budget for 2005 – 2006 to address regional issues that contribute to improving the quality of life for all people living in the Torres Strait.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the budget reaffirmed the TSRA's commitment to delivering meaningful outcomes to its 18 isolated communities by

funding a range of programs that focus on reducing Indigenous disadvantage and empowering Torres Strait and Indigenous people.

"This budget will deliver better outcomes for Torres Strait communities, while progressing the needs of the region as a whole," Mr Kris said.

"Our vision for the future is to empower our people to determine their own affairs based on our unique Ailan Kastom (island custom) and we'll continue this year to demonstrate this commitment.

"It's all about building a framework that enhances our communities' capacities to capitalise on opportunity and meet their long-term economic, physical, cultural and social needs.

"The TSRA is contributing to essential capital infrastructure and improving communities' access to services, which ultimately over time, will help develop a sustainable economic base.

"The TSRA Board is committed to progressing a better quality of life for all people living in our region.

"We are focussed on delivering available resources to meet long-term needs that are both culturally appropriate and have clear and obtainable outcomes for our people.

"I wish to thank the TSRA Board for their support in passing this budget and for their shared dedication to building a strong future for the Torres Strait."

2005 – 2006 Budget highlights include:

\$2.6 million	Thursday Island organisations (TSIMA, Legal Service, Port Kennedy Association and others)
\$31.7 million	CDEP Projects & Community Training Towards operations of Island Councils
\$1.2 million	The Major Infrastructure Program (\$5.5million for 2006 - 2007)
\$5.4 million	Airstrip and marine upgrade projects
\$1.1 million	Economic Development
\$1.8 million	Native Title
\$1.4 million	Sports & Recreation
\$700,000	Gab Titui Cultural Centre
\$370,000	Torres Strait Fisheries
\$170,000	

ENDS.

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TSRA Media Release

Dugong and Turtle Management Plan Approved for Torres Strait

21 June 2005

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has endorsed a community-driven Regional Action Plan for dugong and marine turtle management in the Torres Strait.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the Regional Action Plan provides a framework and a process that aims to promote the sustainable traditional legal harvest of dugong and marine turtles under community-based management.

"This Plan builds on previous consultative efforts, as well as more recent consultation with Community Fisher Group representatives, traditional hunters and TSRA Executive members to discuss a range of issues and management techniques that support effective community-based management of dugong and turtle," Mr Kris said.

"Thanks to constructive input from all involved we have defined a workable process for enabling communities to develop their own management plans.

"What's particularly pleasing is that the Regional Action Plan reflects communities' unique circumstances and priorities, as well as all threats to dugong and turtle, and takes into account hunting practices and cultural traditions for each cluster of islands.

"It's this local approach that encourages ownership at a community level that will help to instill a sense of shared responsibility in the management of these species for future generations.

"Historically, what has been lacking in the Torres Strait are the resources to carry out management activities in respect of dugong and turtle fisheries.

"We are pleased the opportunity now exists to support communities in their management initiatives, in partnership with other government stakeholders," he said.

Mr Kris said the Plan took into account agreed priorities of both the regional Community Fisher Group and the TSRA.

"Community consultation and participation, and partnership approaches will continue to define the way in which we manage these precious resources," Mr Kris said.

"The Plan facilitates communities participation in identifying all threats to dugong and turtle in the region, including external and international activities that endanger their habitat.

"The Plan also emphasizes the importance of monitoring traditional catch to ensure that reporting is meaningful.

"Educating the community on the role they can play in sustaining the Torres Strait's dugong and marine turtle population will be key and that's where all stakeholder groups can play a part.

"The next step will be for the TSRA to forward the Plan to NAILSMA (North Australian Indigenous Land & Sea Management Alliance) to allocate a budget to the Torres Strait, as one of five regions participating in the NAILSMA cross-regional dugong and turtle management project.

"A budget will be determined on the basis of activities proposed under the Regional Action Plan and it's expected that funds will be available by August 2005 to enable awareness raising activities and consultation with all island clusters.

"Dugong and turtle mean a great deal to Torres Strait Islanders and all stakeholders, and as custodians we are committed to making this plan work.

"We're talking about creatures that are intrinsic to our traditional way of life and add meaning to our culture and I am relieved we have the cooperation and resources now to ensure their future," Mr Kris said.

ENDS.

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TSRA / Croc Festival® Joint Media Release

The Thursday Island Croc Festival®

28 July 2005

Live music, films, special guests and fireworks were on offer when the Croc Festival® converged on the Torres Strait two weeks ago.

While the three-day event targeted young people and promoted positive health messages and career pathways for them, Torres Strait Regional Authority Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the event benefited the whole community.

"The Croc Festival® provided an economic boost to many local businesses, ranging from the transport industry to hospitality," Mr Kris said.

"Over the three-days from 12 to 14 July, there was a festive atmosphere both on Thursday Island and the surrounding islands with many visitors staying on Horn Island to accommodate the large number of people who travelled to the event.

"In my experience Croc Festival® is truly unique, because it provides a cultural exchange that is helping to deliver important health and educational messages for our youth, while building their self-esteem, inspiring their creativity and promoting harmony – and this year was no exception.

"Everyone who participates makes a valuable contribution."

Mr Kris said that the Governor-General and Mrs Jeffery who visited the Torres Strait in their official capacity for the first time, as well as all guests, were warmly welcomed.

Croc Festival® Executive Producer, Mr Peter Sjoquist said some of the highlights of the festival this year were the welcome by local high school students to the Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery; a Kup Mari; and two nights of performances by students from around the Torres Strait and Far North Queensland.

He said the DEWR Careers Market, Health Expo, HipHOPERations, the Croc Rock Climbing Wall of Inspiration; and the myriad of other activities and workshops aimed to further benefit the young people of the Torres Strait and Far North Queensland.

It was the third Croc Festival® hosted by Thursday Island in the event's eight-year history, with more than 1000 students attending from 27 schools.

"There are many wonderful memories for students, parents, family, organisers, visitors and the community," Mr Sjoquist said.

"Thank you to all those hard-working and dedicated people, organisations and businesses that helped the Croc Festival® ensure this was another successful event on Thursday Island."

Special guests for the Festival included the Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery and Mrs Jeffery; Queensland Minister for Education and the Arts, Minister Hon Anna Bligh; and Director General, Queensland Education and the Arts, Ken Smith.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority also congratulated all local businesses and organisations which backed the Croc Festival® to make it an energizing and beneficial event.

The Croc Festival® is supported by the Australian Government, which has committed \$2.5 million to the 2005 events.

Further information about the event is available at www.crocfestival.org.au or by contacting the Croc Festival® Production Office on 1300 725 287. A web gallery of photographs from the event will be showcased on the website from Friday, July 29.

ENDS.

For further information, contact:

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TSRA Media Release

Warraber Island celebrates upgraded airstrip

3 August 2005

Community leaders from across the region converged on Warraber Island in central Torres Strait today, to celebrate the official opening of the community's recently upgraded airstrip.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Queensland Department of Transport jointly funded the project under the Marine and Airstrip Program, which continues to improve essential transport infrastructure across the region.

The upgrade was conducted by the Department of Main Roads and has transformed the much relied upon airstrip from grass to a bitumen sealed tarmac with new fencing, storage shed and aerodrome furnishings.

Federal Member for Leichhardt, Mr Warren Entsch; State Member for Cook, Mr Jason O'Brien; and TSRA Chairperson Mr Toshie Kris, travelled to Warraber to join the community in their celebrations.

Federal Member for Leichhardt, Mr Warren Entsch said the opening marked another accomplishment for Torres Strait communities by improving their existing infrastructure through joint cooperation between Australian and State Government agencies.

"The new airstrip has improved aviation safety and access to Warraber, which clearly benefits the community's economic prospects and is timely considering the island is developing its first motel and conference facility," he said.

"From a social perspective, it will become that much easier for residents to use air travel to visit extended family living in the region, as well as access services that are unavailable on Warraber."

State Member for Cook, Mr Jason O'Brien, said he was happy and proud that the Queensland Government had been a partner in this successful project.

"I congratulate all workers involved for their professionalism and with Mer and Yam being the remaining airstrips left to upgrade, I look forward to the day when all airstrips in the region are sealed," said Mr O'Brien.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris, said projects like these, that embrace a whole of government approach make a real difference in the Torres Strait region.

"During construction, the project contributed to the local community by providing six residents with accredited training as part of the Heavy Equipment and Management Training Program (an initiative of the Remote Communities Services Unit and funded by the TSRA and the Department of Local Government, Planning, Sports and Recreation).

"The TSRA is an avid supporter of infrastructure development in the Torres Strait as a means of improving the quality of life for all people living in the region and we are pleased to have contributed to this vital transport link.

"It is a significant event when remote communities, like Warraber, contribute to the development and upgrade of vital infrastructure that has a direct impact on their lives and wellbeing.

"Many city folk do not realise that their counterparts in remote areas live without essential capital infrastructure that urban dwellers take for granted.

"Infrastructure development in remote regions is critically important, and providing adequate infrastructure to Torres Strait people is certainly a key priority of the TSRA.

"A project such as this has far reaching advantages for the health and wellbeing of communities that are greatly disadvantaged by their remote access to services

and facilities and it's with each vital infrastructure project that living standards are gradually improving," Mr Kris said.

ENDS.

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TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Achieves Native Title Recognition Over Uninhabited Islands 15 August 2005

Today commemorates another victory for Torres Strait's traditional owners who have been recognised by the Federal Court of Australia as the Native Title holders for a further eight uninhabited islands in the region.

The four separate claims have established nine communities as the legally recognised native title holders for each claim area, including:

- the Buru & Warul Kawa Claim over Deliverance (Warul Kawa), Turnagain (Buru), Kerr Islet and
- Turu Cay on behalf of Badu, Boigu, Mabuiag, Dauan and Saibai;
- the Sassie Claim over Long Island (Sassie) on behalf of Iama, Warraber and Poruma; the Garboi Claim over Arden Island (Garboi) on behalf of Masig and Poruma; and
- the Yarpar & Uttu Claim over Roberts (Yarpar) and Dove (Uttu) Islands on behalf of Poruma.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris was delighted with the outcome announced today.

"Formal recognition and acknowledgement of native title by the Federal Court has reinforced that Torres Strait Islanders' traditional connection to their land continues unbroken and remains an important element of our culture's preservation," he said.

"To receive Native Title determinations over traditional lands is enormously rewarding and empowering and I would like to congratulate all nine communities that have been acknowledged by the Court today.

"These determinations recognise that the traditional land owners have maintained their connection to the areas under claim, and that traditional laws and customs are still relevant to our people as are the rights and interests held under those laws and customs.

"As Native Title holders their rights to practise their traditional laws and customs on their land has been recognised by the Federal Court and this is critically important, as it helps to strengthen our cultural identity.

"The Native Title rights in these four claims are exclusive rights in the same terms as those used by the High Court in the Mabo determination and the seven claims

determined by consent in December 2004.

"In this way, determinations of Native Title in the Torres Strait continue to draw on the rights that the Meriam people fought to obtain in the historic Mabo decision of 1992 – the legacy continues.

"There are still six more claims over uninhabited islands in the region progressing toward consent determinations, and in collaboration with traditional owners, the TSRA's Native Title Office will continue working towards achieving the same positive outcomes for these claims as we have seen today.

"As well as land, the Torres Strait Regional Sea Claim remains a priority for the TSRA, and the Federal Court has indicated its preference that this claim also be resolved by way of a consent determination.

"The Federal Court has put in place a timetable for progression of the Sea Claim over the next two years and we are hopeful that substantial progress will be made in upcoming mediations with other parties to the sea claim, scheduled to take place in the second half of this year and early 2006," Mr Kris said.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Susan Reilly. Ph: 07 4069 0700

TSRA Media Release

***rewind*/FORWARD Exhibition**

23 September 2005

Qantaslink is delighted to present Margot Douglas' *rewind*/FORWARD Exhibition which has opened at the Gab Titui Cultural Centre, Thursday Island.

Margot Douglas is a Townsville based artist who studied Visual Art & Design majoring in jewellery and printmaking.

The *rewind*/FORWARD Exhibition explores Margot Douglas' own family history within the colonial pioneering era of Queensland, from the later half of the 19th century through to the early 20th century.

Margot Douglas' great grandfather, John Douglas, was a political figure in the early history of Thursday Island from 1885 until his death in 1904.

New insights into the personal lives of her ancestors and their contributions to political history, community development and the foundation work for Federation have been gleaned by the artist through research into the cultural and heritage influences on personal, political and pioneering conviction of that time.

"Uncovering surviving documentation inspired me to explore these cultural connections through creative expression," Ms Douglas said.

"Yet issues of colonisation/reconciliation required reflection in order to resolve how I would best develop this work.

"A series of personal letters between father and son spanning a period of 13 years provides this nexus.

"By overlaying references of diaries, photographic material and personal and public life correspondence, it was my aim to explore this cultural connection through combining elements of jewellery and artist books.

The *rewind*/FORWARD Exhibition will be on show at Gab Titui Cultural Centre until 10 October 2005.

Ends

TSRA Media Contact: Susan Reilly Ph: 07 4069 0700

TSRA Press Release

TSRA Congratulates new ICC Chairperson, Mrs Margaret Mau 7 October 2005

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) congratulates Mrs Margaret Mau, on her appointment as the new Chairperson of the Island Coordinating Council (ICC).

Mrs Mau was elected as Chair of the ICC Board at their meeting on 6 October, by the ICC Membership.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris, said Margaret Mau's election was historic, as she is the first woman to hold this office and he looks forward to working with her to improve the standard of living for the people of this region.

"I am confident Mrs Mau will be able to provide strong leadership to the ICC and make significant contributions to the Torres Strait during her three-year term.

"She has a proven track record as a leader and spokesperson for her people, as demonstrated by her participation in a number of regional committees, and her involvement with Dauan Island Council, the ICC and the TSRA Boards.

"Margaret is the Women, Family and Health Portfolio Member on the TSRA Board and was the TSRA Deputy Chair for one term (2000-2004).

"On behalf of the TSRA, I wish to congratulate Mrs Mau and the new ICC Deputy Chair, Mr Elia Doolah, on their new appointments.

"The TSRA will strive to continue working in partnership with the ICC and the Queensland and Australian Governments, to achieve positive social, cultural and economic outcomes for the people of the Torres Strait," Mr Kris said.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Susan Reilly. Ph: 07 4069 0700

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Study of Children Nearing Completion

10 November 2005

The first stage of "*Footprints in Time*," an eleven month longitudinal study of the experiences Indigenous children encounter when growing up in the modern world, will soon be complete in the Torres Strait.

The Australian Department of Family and Community Services (FaCs) undertook consultations with twenty-one communities in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area between October 2004 and September 2005.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris, said the TSRA was pleased to support the trial in the Region, adding that this study will identify and increase awareness of the range of challenges confronted by Indigenous children.

"The project aims to examine children at different stages of their lives and I am looking forward to the release of the trial's report and working with stakeholders to analyse the findings.

The TSRA's Portfolio Member for Women's Issues and Families, Mrs Margaret Mau, said government and local communities were anticipating that results from the trial and the proposed national study would be of great value for strategic planning to support Torres Strait youth.

"*Footprints In Time* is about gathering and sharing information on what will help make Indigenous children better prepared for the challenges they may face in the future," Mrs Mau said.

"During the year, community liaison officers and FaCs representatives worked with families, councils and stakeholders to conduct this trial study, and at the same time test their own processes of community engagement, recruitment and dissemination of information throughout the region, in preparation for a national study.

"Torres Strait was chosen, among others, for this trial because of its unique geographic and cultural diversity.

"Results from *Footprints In Time* will assist in planning for a national study of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal children to identify the diversified needs of Indigenous communities.

"Stage one of the trial is now nearing completion and it is anticipated that FaCs staff will be discussing the draft final report with those families involved in late November to December, and return to the region in March 2006 to distribute their final report prior to the commencement of stage two of the study.

"I would like to thank families who participated in stage one of *Footprints in Time* for their important contributions – our children are set to benefit from this study and the findings of the National Study when it is implemented," Mrs Mau said.

For more information about "*Footprints in Time*" contact Mr Elizah Wasaga, the Manager of the study in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area, on (07) 4090 3985.

ENDS

TSRA Media Contact: Susan Reilly. Ph: (07) 4069 0700

"Footprints in Time" Contact: Elizah Wasaga. Ph (07) 4090 3895

TSRA Media Release

TSRA to Implement Land and Sea Management in Torres Strait

25 November 2005

The Board of Torres Strait Natural Resource Management Ltd (TSNRM) last week officially handed over the land and sea management role to the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

The TSNRM endorsed a decision for the TSRA to act as the key agency for the delivery of Natural Heritage Trust funding in the Torres Strait, as did the TSRA Board at this week's Board meeting – the last for 2005.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the announcement was of enormous significance to Torres Strait's land and sea management.

"The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is very grateful for the contribution of TSNRM Directors, they have encouraged stakeholder groups within our community to have their say in decisions affecting land and sea management, which has formed the basis of a Land & Sea Management Strategy," he said.

"The TSRA has agreed to implement the Strategy on behalf of the Torres Strait people, to better enable communities to pursue their diverse land and sea management aspirations.

"The Strategy will be funded under the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust initiative and all TSRA Board members have endorsed the draft Strategy in-principle, subject to further amendments.

"The implementation of this Strategy presents us with an opportunity to progress community-based management in our unique region.

"We'll be continuing a vital role in identifying the region's land and sea assets, issues, information, and potential mechanisms for supporting Torres Strait communities to sustainably manage their natural resources.

"This Strategy is the culmination of a long process of consultation, research and decision-making about and for Torres Strait land and sea management and we're thankful to all stakeholders, particularly TSNRM for their broad-based community representation.

"The draft developed is consistent with previous work undertaken in the Torres Strait and reaffirms and complements information compiled from previous consultations and reports made available by the Island Coordinating Council and the Torres Strait Regional Authority, while benefiting from technical input by the scientific community and key agencies.

"Our twenty communities share an ecologically unique region and it's this combined local and professional insight that has made such an important contribution to direction setting and prioritisation of land and sea issues and aspirations, which are reflected in the Strategy.

"While resources are not going to be sufficient to address all environmental issues or concerns in the region, they will go a long way towards establishing the basic structures and processes we now need to care for our land and sea country.

"It's hoped that this first step will be a catalyst for the development of a strong and functional, strategic and regional approach to on-ground capacity-building and environmental management," Mr Kris said.

It is anticipated that the final Land and Sea Management Strategy will be submitted to the relevant Queensland and Australian Government Ministers by early December to enable funding to be released to the TSRA to establish a Land & Sea Management Unit for delivering initiatives under the Strategy.

ENDS

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

TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait's Gab Titui Cultural Centre Wins Queensland Tourism Awards

25 November 2005

The Torres Strait's Gab Titui Torres Strait Cultural Centre on Thursday Island has taken top honours in the category of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism at the Queensland Tourism Awards 2005, held in Brisbane on 18 November.

Indigenous Affairs Minister, Amanda Vanstone said "this highly contested award is a credit to the region's art and craftspeople and Gab Titui Cultural Centre's staff. The Centre provides a unique and personal experience of Torres Strait culture."

"At the opening of the Centre just over a year ago, I said that Gab Titui was the jewel in the crown of the Australian Governments Federation Fund – receiving the award has confirmed that," said Senator Vanstone.

"Congratulations to the Gab Titui Cultural Centre on this outstanding achievement, as well as the Torres Strait Regional Authority for their continued support, but most importantly, congratulations to the Torres Strait people.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said while the Gab Titui Cultural Centre was developed as a keeping place for Torres Strait history and culture it is performing an equally important role as a cultural hub and continues to support opportunities for Torres Strait people.

"Our people can be very proud of this award because it signifies an appreciation by the tourism industry that we are making a significant contribution to the protection and strengthening of our culture – it's about maintaining and sharing our rich heritage with our people and the rest of the world.

"This is an honour for Gab Titui Cultural Centre and on behalf of the TSRA Board I congratulate everyone involved."

ENDS

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

TSRA Media Release

New partnership to bolster Torres Strait business

4 December 2005

The Torres Straits Regional Authority (TSRA) today jointly announced a strategic partnership, with the Queensland Government and the National Australia Bank, to pioneer the provision of extensive business support services through a Business Hub in the Torres Strait.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the Memorandum of Understanding, being signed tomorrow, highlighted the commitment by the Australian and Queensland Governments and the private sector to ensure the success of Indigenous business in the region.

The Queensland Government is contributing \$464,750 to help establish the Torres Strait Hub and the National Australia Bank, through a broad range of banking skills, will work closely with the TSRA to assist in the development of local business initiatives.

"Through this collaboration between the TSRA, National Australia Bank and the Queensland Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation, communities across the region are being supported and mentored to develop businesses that meet local and regional demands for services and products, resulting in employment, training and income to councils," Mr Kris said.

"The TSRA supports a number of strategies to benefit the region's economic development and this is a great complement to our Business Funding Scheme and Community Economic Initiatives Scheme to encourage local Indigenous business.

"All stakeholders are committed to providing services that are culturally appropriate and this shared focus, matched by our combined skills, will enable good opportunity to increase the interest and capacity of Torres Strait people to actively engage in business enterprises.

"Nurturing viable commercial ideas and developing local expertise and opportunities is what it's all about and we're thankful for the support of our new partners which clearly share our vision for empowering Torres Strait people and we look forward to furthering our partnerships in the region.

"The Torres Strait Regional Authority will meet the costs of in-kind support through administrative assistance, which we envisage will be very beneficial to establishing networks and gaining effective participation," he said.

ENDS

*TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey. Ph: 0427 858 935
Minister Bligh Media Contacts: Steve Keating Ph: 07 3224 4379 or Chris Taylor
Ph: 07 3224 5982.*

TSRA Media Release

Lodge upgrade to support economic growth in Torres Strait

4 December 2005

Funded by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and Queensland Government, expansions to Lowatta Lodge, on Masig Island in central Torres Strait will soon be complete to meet its forecasted growth in business and tourist markets.

The project is being undertaken by the TSRA, representing the Australian Government and the Queensland Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation, each contributing \$150,000 and the Masig Island Council, which has made an additional in-kind contribution.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the fact that demand for the Lodge's accommodation was exceeding their forecasts and that the project presented good opportunities for local employment and training were reasons for strategic expansion.

"The addition of four cabins and outdoor recreation and dining facilities will cater for a planned growth in visitors, boost local employment and training and has the capacity to indirectly support the development of new economic ventures through meeting accommodation needs," Mr Kris said.

"Grassroots projects that deliver on establishing the essential community building blocks of employment and training and that return revenue to Councils to reinvest for community benefit is what the TSRA is continuing to foster through joint partnerships.

"The Lodge is a great model for how governments can support community managed enterprises to harness opportunities for their future and I have no doubt that it will be a stepping stone to furthering partnerships that champion our cultural and geographic diversity."

ENDS

*TSRA Media Contact: Jolene Southey. Ph: 0427 858 935
Minister Bligh Media Contacts: Steve Keating Ph: 07 3224 4379 or Chris Taylor
Ph: 07 3224 5982.*

TSRA Media Release

New study to enable greater tourism choices for Torres Strait communities

4 December 2005

Evaluating Torres Strait's tourism potential to benefit its 20 communities will be a focus of future research jointly funded by the Torres Strait Regional Authority

(TSRA) in collaboration with the Queensland Department of State Development, Trade and Innovation.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the Authority had negotiated an extension to the Cape York Tourism Action Plan to also include the Torres Strait.

“What this Plan should highlight are opportunities for business enterprise, employment and economic growth, but like all development, it will always remain the decision of individual communities as to whether they choose to advance tourism opportunities on their islands,” Mr Kris said.

“Many Torres Strait councils have already taken actions to encourage more visitation to their islands by developing accommodation that encourages small groups to experience village life - Tourism Award winner Poruma Island Resort and Masig’s Lowatta Lodge are great examples.

“Sustainable tourism presents opportunities for employment, promotion of our proud cultural heritage, as well as the prospect to develop and nurture a regional arts industry.

“Just last month, the Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island was awarded a Queensland Tourism Award as a project that is cultivating opportunities for our people and respecting and protecting our traditions and values.

“The results from this Plan will be available to all communities on its completion, which is expected later next year and will provide a holistic approach to developing tourism within our unique region,” Mr Kris said.

ENDS

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

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TSRA Media Release

Torres Strait Fuel Bowser to become leading model for remote communities

6 December 2005

Torres Strait’s Hammond Island today will launch the first fuel bowser site in Australia to combine Convault tanks, a Compac pre-paid card system and a solar energy solution.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) which funded the project, is anticipating that it will become a leading model for the safe delivery, storage and supply of fuel products to remote areas.

TSRA Chairperson, Mr Toshie Kris said the fuel bowser at Hammond was the highlight of their economic development activity this year and an innovative solution that would deliver a number of positive benefits to the community.

"The fuel facility uniquely caters for island living with an 8000 litre dual tank containing 6000 litres of ULP and 2000 litres of diesel – ideal for vehicles and boats," Mr Kris said.

"From a safety aspect, it will eliminate the need to travel to Thursday Island to purchase fuel and carry dangerous quantities between the two islands.

"The design features are also set to revolutionise the way that Hammond community access fuel for recreation and transport and generate a new revenue stream for their Council.

"The tanks are attached with a fuel bowser and linked to a pre-paid and re-chargeable fuel card system to enable residents' access to fuel through the purchase of a fuel card.

"The facility has incorporated a renewable energy solution (solar power) to supply 100 percent of the power required to operate the site," Mr Kris said.

Hammond Island Chairperson, Mr Fred Gela said a strategic project like the installation of the fuel bowser would meet a fundamental need by improving fuel transport and storage safety and also positively influence many facets of local life.

"The Hammond Island Council has played a key role in supporting TSRA throughout the installation of the facility through its Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) workforce," Mr Gela said.

"There will be two staff engaged through the Council CDEP program to manage the facility.

"A Fuel Administration Officer and Fuel Operations Officer will be responsible for managing all administration aspects and operational external issues for the facility and both these positions are a boost to our Council's capacity.

"The Council operates the school ferry, which is the largest user of fuel on the island and having our own fuel facility will make a significant impact on the funds we can retain for community benefit."

The TSRA is planning to establish a further six island fuel facilities on Boigu, Dauan, Mabuiag, Stephen (Ugar), Poruma (Coconut) and Mer (Murray) following the completion of a successful trial period. Three of the six facilities are expected to be complete by June next year.

ENDS

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