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SUPPORT SOUGHT FOR CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT SUSTAINABLE TRADITIONAL HUNTING

Representative bodies throughout the Torres Strait and Far north Queensland are being urged to support a Torres Strait Regional Authority initiated campaign to protect culturally appropriate management of natural resources including fisheries.

The call follows a meeting on Badu Island to consider the implications of adverse media reporting of dugong and turtle hunting in the Torres Strait and Far North.

Torres Shire and Torres Strait Island Regional Councils, TSRA and Traditional Owner Prescribed Body Corporate representatives decided at the meeting to seek broader support for the sustainable management of traditional fisheries.

A Torres Strait delegation will seek meetings with the member for Cook, David Kempton, the member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch, the Minister responsible for the Queensland *Animal Care and Protection Act 2001*, the Cape York Land Council, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation and other interested bodies as part of an accelerated campaign to guarantee traditional hunting rights.

TSRA Chairperson, John 'Toshie' Kris said the campaign was gaining momentum because of an awareness in traditional communities that activists would continue to use unethical and unauthorised means such as covert filming to pressure governments to intervene.

"Very little media coverage so far has acknowledged the progress we have made and continue to make in activities that ensure our natural resource management is sustainable.

"Seven community based turtle and dugong management plans were implemented for Badu, Boigu, Iama, Mabuiag, Mer, Erub, and Moa (St Pauls) Islands in June 2008.

"Plans for the remaining seven communities of Saibai, Dauan, Kubin (Moa), Warraber, Poruma, Masig and Ugar have been endorsed by traditional owners and implementation started in June 2010.

"Experts have acknowledged the Torres Strait has the largest dugong population in the world and we were managing that resource effectively long before the first white sails appeared on our horizons."

Mr Kris said \$17 million worth of funding from the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country Working on Country initiative would ensure compliance with the management plans was closely monitored.

“Those funds will support the employment of up to 42 rangers across the 15 island communities by 2013- an initiative that will protect our environment and provide valuable training and employment opportunities.

“The Queensland Government has also made an important contribution to the ranger program with shared resourcing and policy making.”

“We will continue to work closely with interested parties such as the RSPCA which has already been consulted about humane processing methods and any other agency that can contribute to sustainable natural resource management.”

Mr Kris said Torres Strait community leaders believed the right to continue sustainable traditional fishing guaranteed by the Torres Strait Treaty and Native Title legislation was a non negotiable starting point for any future discussion or consultation.



Caption: Torres Shire Councillor, John Abednego; TSIRC Badu Councillor, Wayne Guivarra, TSIRC Mayor, Fred Gela; TSRA Chairperson, John ‘Toshie’ Kris; Land and Sea Unit Manager, Damian Miley; TSIRC Warraber Councillor, Willie Lui and TSRA Fisheries Portfolio Member, Kenny Bedford, at the Badu meeting.

(Higher resolution picture available if required)

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