

Torres Strait Regional Authority

Annual Report 2011 – 2012

The Torres Strait Regional Authority recognises the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate. We acknowledge the past and present elders of all Indigenous people in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area and respect the culture and lore of all Indigenous people in the region.

The TSRA will always make every effort to respect Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people's cultural sensitivities when featuring the images or names of people who have recently died.

However please be advised that this document may contain images of persons who have died after this Annual Report was tabled in Parliament in October 2012 and we offer our apologies for any distress caused if this occurs.

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ISSN 1324 - 163X

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The Annual Report is published on the TSRA website at www.tsra.gov.au.

Vision

Empowering our people, in our decision, in our culture, for our future

Ngalpun yangu kaaba woeydhay,a ngalpun muruygaw danalagan mabaygal kunakan palayk, bathayngaka

Kala Lagau Ya

Buaigiz kelar obaiswerare, merbi mir apuge mena obakedi, muige merbi areribi tonarge, ko merbi keub kerkerem

Meriam Mir

Ngalpan moebaygal thoepoeriwoeyamoeyn, ngalpan ya kuduthoeraynu, ngalpan igililmaypa, sepa setha wara goeygil sey boey wagel

Kala Kawau Ya

The Indigenous people of the Torres Strait are of Aboriginal and Melanesian origin and speak two distinct traditional languages. In the Eastern Islands the traditional language is Meriam Mir, while the Western and Central Island groups speak either Kala Lagau Ya or Kala Kawau Ya, which are dialects of the same language. Torres Strait Creole and English are also spoken.

Our vision is expressed in the languages of our region, recognising the importance and diversity of our culture and traditional languages.

Our vision signifies that the heart of our region is our people with culture an important part of our lives now and into the future. Empowering our people to contribute to and make decisions regarding their future, ensures that our culture will remain strong and that the future will be guided by the people who live in the region and understand and promote its unique characteristics.

Highlights and Achievements 2011 - 2012

Engaging with our communities to build the future

The TSRA is leading Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) in the region working with all levels of government to improve integrated government services across the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area (NPA). Solid progress has been made developing this methodology as core business for all government entities and non-government organisations providing services in the region.

The TSRA maintains close relationships with communities through its elected Board Members. Almost all of our Board Members live and work in the communities they represent and representatives from the TSRA's Program Areas make frequent visits to all communities.

The Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Region Plan Community Booklets have been released showing the 2012 baseline of services being provided to communities in the region. Nineteen booklets have been published covering the 18 communities in the Torres Strait and two communities (combined) in the Northern Peninsula Area.

By 30 June 2012, fourteen new ranger positions have been created bringing the total full-time rangers employed by the TSRA to 33 across 14 outer island communities. All rangers have undertaken professional development and are working towards formal qualifications, including; a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management and a Certificate II in Transport and Distribution Maritime.

Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage

Two key TSRA plans align with the Council of Australian Government (COAG) targets for Closing the Gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. All of the TSRA's Programs are aligned with the Torres Strait Development Plan 2009 - 2013 and the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009 - 2029. The seven Building Blocks that underpin the achievement of the COAG targets are the focus of the TSRA's Integrated Services Delivery project. All TSRA funding requests are tested against the objectives of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009 - 2029 and the Closing the Gap targets to ensure a strategic focus for all grant funding approvals.

The Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) continues to deliver essential environmental health infrastructure throughout the region. Seventeen MIP 4 projects have been completed with a further eight projects scheduled. Five of these projects are underway and three are in the detailed design and planning phase.

New economic development strategies were implemented throughout the year leading to a substantial increase in the number of Torres Strait Islanders undertaking training and reducing the region's dependency on the Community Development and Employment Projects Program.

The Business Funding Scheme and Housing Loans projects were restructured and a new community engagement strategy centred on place based Business Development and Sustainment Officers was implemented. This led to an increase in the number of business and home loans enabling the TSRA to reach its benefit targets for this project for the first time in 2012.

The TSRA has established an expertise based Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) to provide independent advice on fisheries related economic development initiatives to the TSRA Board. This year the TSRA disbursed \$530,000 of Finfish Quota Trust funds to Eastern Island community fishers for capacity building projects.

Promoting and advocating critical issues for the Region

The TSRA successfully negotiated a continuation of the Heavy Equipment Management Training Program (HEMPT) and provided on-going funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service.

In partnership with communities, all levels of government and the research sector, the TSRA has implemented the Torres Strait Climate Change Strategy and commissioned the Torres Strait Extreme Sea Water Level Study and the Torres Strait - Options to Reduce Regional Carbon Footprint.

The TSRA has sponsored touring exhibitions of Torres Strait artwork and cultural objects at the Cairns and Darwin Indigenous Art Fairs, Queensland State Library, the Gallery of Modern Art, the Queensland Art Gallery, the National Museum of Australia and the Queensland Museum. These initiatives are promoting the Torres Strait's unique culture and its artists while supporting economic development in the region.

Traditional Owners have been assisted to obtain legal recognition of native title over the land and sea in the Torres Strait. Support has also been provided to help Prescribed Bodies Corporate to manage existing native title. Progress has also been made towards the adoption of a template Infrastructure and Housing Indigenous Land Use agreement which will speed up housing and infrastructure projects on outer islands.

Opportunities and Challenges for 2012 - 2013

Opportunities

To continue programs to Close the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage for the Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the region.

To ensure appropriate and effective representation for all communities on the TSRA Board and implement the best possible governance model for the region.

To continue to improve the delivery of integrated whole of government services to all people in the region.

To develop the capacity of the Regional Indigenous Media Organisation and the Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service to improve communication throughout the region.

Challenges

To secure the resources required to deliver the benefits and program outcomes identified in the Torres Strait Development Plan 2009 - 2013 and the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009 - 2029.

To manage program delivery and deliver effective governance in a remote and geographically isolated area.

To ensure all agencies and non-government organisations operating in the region adopt Integrated Service Delivery as a foundation for delivering their core business.

To work proactively in partnership with the Australian Government, the Queensland Government and the international community to address international cross border issues.

To continue to deliver major health and community infrastructure through the Major Infrastructure Program (MIP).

To align all programs and activities to build a sustainable economic development base for future generations.

Contents

Vision	iii
Highlights and Achievements.....	iv
Opportunities and Challenges for 2012 - 2013	vii
Letter of Transmittal.....	xiii

Section 1 - Strategic overview

Chairperson's Message.....	2
Chief Executive Officer's Message.....	5

Section 2 - Program Reporting and performance summaries

How We Deliver Our Programs	10
Overview of TSRA's Program Structure.....	10
How We Performed	13
Appropriation Program Expenditure 2011 - 2012 Budget as Compared to Actual.....	13
Details About Our Programs	14
Culture, Art and Heritage.....	14
Economic Development	22
Environmental Management.....	30
Governance and Leadership.....	42
Native Title	52
Healthy Communities.....	67
Safe Communities.....	78

Section 3 - Report of Operations

Where We Operate	88
Regional overview.....	88
Map of Torres Strait Region.....	89
Data Used to Benchmark Progress Towards Closing the Gap.....	90
Regional Statistics.....	93
How the TSRA Operates	95
Legislative Framework.....	95
Formation.....	95
Enabling Legislation.....	95
Functions	96
Powers.....	97
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Responsible Minister	97
TSRA Statement of Intent to the Minister	98
Ministerial Appointments.....	98
Briefings and information provided to Minister.....	98
Judicial Decisions and Reviews.....	98

Section 4 - Corporate Governance and Accountability

TSRA Governance and Accountability.....	102
Overview of Governance Structure.....	102
Diagram of TSRA Governance Framework.....	102
TSRA Board Members.....	103
Current Appointments	103
Future Appointments	103
TSRA Executive Committee.....	104
Profiles of TSRA Board Members	105

TSRA Executive Committee Meetings	112
TSRA Board Meeting Schedule.....	113
Attendance at TSRA Board Meetings.....	114
TSRA Board Member induction process	115
Induction of new TSRA Member	115
TSRA Board Member’s Code of Conduct	115
Executive Coaching.....	115
Other Boards and Committees	116
Enabling Functions.....	120
Information Management and Technology.....	120
Environmental Impact Management.....	120
Risk Management.....	122
Accountability	123
External Scrutiny.....	123
Fraud Control.....	123
Internal Audit.....	123
Compliance Report.....	124
Indemnities and Insurance Premiums for Officers	124
Directors’ Interests Policy.....	124
Human Resources.....	125
Overview.....	125
Workplace Agreement.....	125
Payroll and Leave Records	125
Staff Development and Training.....	125
Health and Safety Management Arrangements	125
Workplace Health.....	126
Equal Employment Opportunity	126
Industrial Democracy	126
Property Management.....	126
Privacy.....	126
Changes to disability reporting in annual reports.....	126
Employee Numbers and Classification	127

Section 5 - Financial Statements

Financial Statements	130
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Section 6 - Appendices

Appendix 1: Organisational Structure.....	176
Appendix 2: Freedom of Information.....	177
Appendix 3: Advertising and Market Research.....	179
Appendix 4: Details of Grants.....	180
Appendix 5: Details of Consultants	184
Appendix 6: Compliance with Australian Government Statutes and Policies.....	188
Appendix 7: Explanation of Program Budget Variance.....	189

Section 7 - Compliance Indexes

TSRA - Commonwealth Authority	192
TSRA - Native Title Representative Body (NTRB).....	201

Section 8 - Glossary and Indexes

Index of Tables and Figures	208
Glossary - Terms and Abbreviations	210
Index.....	212

Letter of Transmittal

7 September 2012

The Hon. Jenny Macklin
Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Disability Reform
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

It is with pleasure that I present you with the eighteenth Annual Report of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) for 2011 - 2012.

This Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with Section 144ZB of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005 (Cth), Section 9 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 (Cth) and the Commonwealth Authorities (Annual Reporting) Orders 2011.

This Annual Report contains the Report of Operations, Financial Statements and Auditors-General Report on those Financial Statements, in accordance with Section 9 of the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 (Cth), and the Commonwealth Authorities (Annual Reporting Orders) 2011 and the Finance Minister's Orders. The TSRA has fully complied with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines under Regulation 16A of the Financial Management and Accountability Regulations 1997.

The Directors of the TSRA take responsibility for the preparation and contents of the Report of Operations in accordance with the resolution passed at Board Meeting Number 82 on 8 June 2012.

During the reporting period the TSRA Board has completed a review of its governance structure, and implemented the amendments to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Act 2005 (Cth) which enables the independent election of the next TSRA Board in 2012. The Board has worked with the Administration to deliver the benefits of the Torres Strait Development Plan 2009 - 2013 and meet the objectives of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009 - 2029 which together shape the TSRA's programs to close the gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians living in the region.

The coming year will bring challenges, but we look forward to building on our many successes over the past 18 years.

Yours sincerely,

John T. Kris
Chairperson
Torres Strait Regional Authority

Figure 0-1
Letter of transmittal