



Section One:
Strategic Overview

Chairperson's Message



Over the past seventeen years the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has been working with communities and stakeholders to improve lives and make a difference. Together we have

realised significant achievements.

Only a decade ago, Torres Strait communities were without the water and sanitation facilities that we take for granted today. Our communities experienced severe isolation and social dislocation; health, housing, education, communication, employment services and utilities were minimal or completely absent from the region. Huge improvements have been made to this situation over the last decade, and I am very proud to say the TSRA has played a significant role in these achievements.

In my report this year, I have focused on some of the important work that the TSRA has progressed over the last twelve months. In particular I want

to highlight the ways we engage with our local communities. I take great pride in presenting the TSRA's Annual Report 2010 - 2011.

Improving community engagement and understanding

Under the TSRA's amended program structure eight of the twenty TSRA Board members have taken on portfolio responsibilities. Each portfolio is aligned to one of the TSRA's program areas. The Portfolio Members assist me in carrying out my duties in relation to the program areas and also assist with communication between the TSRA and communities.

Tenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues May 2011

This year, the TSRA was again invited to attend the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). As part of the Australian delegation, we visited the United Nations New York headquarters and delivered several Interventions. The TSRA's first Intervention highlighted the impacts of climate change across the region and discussed how climate change was impacting on species of global significance. Our



TSRA Chairperson with presenters from Bolivia and Columbia at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The TSRA is honoured to have been given access to this international platform to raise awareness of critical regional issues.

second Intervention related the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* to our Integrated Service Delivery initiatives. The TSRA also contributed to an Intervention delivered by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; this contribution focused on economic development opportunities in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

We also delivered a side event presentation at this year's UNPFII. The event was co-presented with Columbia and Bolivia to showcase the strengths of each nation's traditional arts, culture and languages. Our presentation emphasised the use of traditional knowledge in environmental management and the relationship between traditional cultural knowledge and the development of fisheries as commercial industries. The TSRA is honoured to have been given access to this international platform to raise awareness of critical regional issues.

Protected Zone Joint Authority and Fisheries

The Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) is responsible for the management of commercial and traditional fishing in the Australian area of the Torres Strait Protected Zone and designated adjacent Torres Strait waters.

As the TSRA Chairperson, I am a member of the PZJA, which is chaired by Senator the Hon Joe Ludwig, the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The Queensland Government Minister for Main Roads, Fisheries and Marine Infrastructure, Craig Wallace, is also a member of the PZJA.

Ministerial visits, Senate Inquiries and Visiting Officials

In April 2011 the TSRA hosted a visit from the Australian Government Minister for Indigenous Health, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP. This visit included meetings on Thursday and Badu Islands. Members of the Torres Strait and Northern



(Rear) Minister for Indigenous Health, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, with the TSRA Chairperson, Mr John T. Kris; (Front) the Torres Shire Council Mayor Pedro Stephen and the TSRA General Manager, Mr Wayne See Kee.

Peninsula Health Partnership participated in a round-table meeting with Minister Snowdon during his visit.

The Health Partnership provides a forum for key stakeholders to monitor and provide strategic advice on the delivery of health care services in the region. Minister Snowdon has indicated his support for the continuation of the Health Partnership and recognises the importance of stakeholders working together to ensure better health outcomes for the people of the region.

In August 2010, the TSRA was privileged to host a delegation of government and community officials from the Bangladesh United Nations Development Program. The delegation was particularly interested in models of governance and autonomy for Indigenous people in remote areas.

Government Ministers including the then-Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, the Hon Desley Boyle, the Australian Government Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP and the then- Minister for Environment, Resource Management and Climate Change, the Hon Kate Jones MP.

No House of Representatives or Senate inquiries were held in the region during the last year.

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

The TSRA welcomes Ms Jody Broun and Mr Les Malezer as the new Co-Chairs of the National Congress of Australia's First People. We look forward to working together to promote and support the rights and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Turtles and dugongs on the world stage

Sustainable management of the region's turtles and dugongs is a priority environmental issue for the TSRA. These animals are of enormous importance to Torres Strait Islanders, both as a food source and as part of our cultural identity, yet world-wide, sea turtles are under threat of extinction.

This year, the Torres Strait's approach to Indigenous engagement in sea turtle management was shared with an international audience at the 31st Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation, held in San Diego, United States.

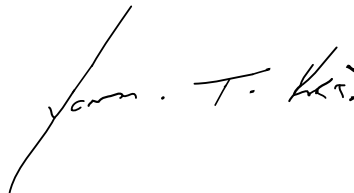
The TSRA's Environmental Management Program presented on the theme, "*Engaging Indigenous people in research - A Torres Strait example*", discussing the Dugong and Turtle Project which

is funded by the Australian Government's Caring for Country program. The project focuses on supporting community-based monitoring and sustainable management of these culturally significant species.

Conclusion

The TSRA continues to proactively engage Torres Strait communities in our decision-making processes, delivering high quality services across the region and advocating for regionally significant issues. Through our endeavours, we are delivering the tools and conditions to support long term economic development, protect our natural environment, design safe and healthy communities and preserve and enhance our unique culture and way of life. Staying on this course will help to *Close the Gap* and improve the lives of Indigenous Australians, and in particular provide a better future for Indigenous children.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the TSRA Board Members, the General Manager and the Administration for their dedication and enthusiasm in delivering our programs throughout the year. I look forward to further progress and building on our achievements in 2011 - 2012.



John T. Kris
Chairperson



TSRA Chairperson, Mr John T Kris, delivering the TSRA Intervention at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

General Manager's Message



I am again pleased to report that 2010 - 2011 was another successful year for the TSRA. The Administration worked collaboratively with the TSRA Board, our communities and many other

stakeholders to ensure that our programs continued to make a difference for the Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in our region.

The principles of empowerment, as captured in the TSRA's vision, were the guide that we used when working closely with elected leaders to deliver against key plans over the past twelve months.

Our achievements towards *Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage* since my last report include:

- ▶ Continuing to align our program areas with the needs and aspirations of our communities as identified in the *Torres Strait Development Plan 2009 - 2013*. This approach is ensuring that we maintain our communities and in particular, the citizen, as the focus of what we do. Activities that people would have noticed that demonstrate this approach are the consultations on the *Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009 - 2029*, which were completed in 2010 - 2011, and engagement on a number of other specific matters, such as the TSRA Governance Review.
- ▶ Working with regional partners to implement an Integrated Service Delivery Framework to ensure a whole of government approach across the region. Extensive mapping of all government initiatives was completed as part of this process and this information will now be used to improve coordination of service delivery and address priority needs in communities over the coming years.
- ▶ Stage one of the CDEP reforms which took effect from 1 July 2010. These changes aim to create opportunities, build aspirations and give Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal job seekers the training and other skills that they will need to get and keep a job. One key outcome from these changes was the creation of over 200 properly paid jobs in services that are funded by the Australian Government.
- ▶ The Native Title Regional Sea Claim judgment handed down by Justice Finn in 2010 which was an historic milestone in this long-standing matter. At the time of writing the claim was progressing through an appeal process.
- ▶ High level strategic meetings with the Australian Government and Queensland Government and engagement with other forums to ensure that the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area's priorities and challenges are being addressed.
- ▶ Expansion of the Torres Strait Ranger Program. There are now 21 Indigenous rangers in full-time positions on the seven outer island communities of Mabuiag, Badu, Boigu, Iama, Erub, Mer and Moa. The TSRA will also take on full administrative responsibilities for the program on 1 July 2011. A further expansion of the program to other communities will commence in the 2011 - 2012 financial year. I would like to thank the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) for their partnership in previously providing the administrative support for this important initiative.
- ▶ Strengthening TSRA and local government partnerships through the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Torres Shire Council and establishment of a MOU with the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC). These memorandums outline how the TSRA and



NPARC Mayor, Cr Joseph Elu (L) and TSRA Chairperson, John T Kris (R) sign off on the MOU.



TSRA Executive Board Members with NPARC representatives celebrate signing of the MOU.

these two councils will work together to address a range of priority areas over the life of the agreements.

- ▶ Introduction of a new Performance Development Program (PDP) for TSRA staff that aims to enhance and grow a strong and capable workforce. This has been a critical initiative and has increased workforce engagement as well as increased our focus on building leadership and strategic vision as an agency.
- ▶ Successful introduction of sustainability and efficiency initiatives that deliver benefits to the TSRA as an organisation, as well as to our community and environment. An example of these are the impressive efficiencies we are experiencing with the introduction of electronic meetings and the development of the TSRA's Cultural Policy which is being rolled out across all programs.

These are just some of the achievements that the TSRA and its partners have been able to deliver in 2010 - 2011. There are many other great stories and activities that the TSRA has supported in communities throughout the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area region over the past twelve months and as the General Manager it has been a privilege to be able to help individuals, families, organisations and our communities achieve their goals.

Conclusion

2011 - 2012 will be another busy year. Some of the important regional priorities in the year ahead are local government and TSRA elections, continued expansion of the ranger program, building industries to create employment, completion of the TSRA Governance Review and growing the Integrated Service Delivery framework so that the coordination of services can begin to happen across the key goal areas identified in the *Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009 - 2029*.

I would also like to thank the TSRA Chair and Board Members for their leadership and strategic direction in 2010 - 2011. Their guidance has been valuable in ensuring that the TSRA continues to address short-term needs while maintaining a focus on delivering long-term outcomes that will *Close the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage* for the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

I look forward to working with the Board and with our regional and national stakeholders again in the coming year.

Wayne See Kee
General Manager