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From L to R: Iama Island Council Chairperson, Mr Walter Mackie, TSRA Deputy Chairperson, and Portfolio Member of Housing and Infrastructure, Mr Fred Gela, Elder Mr Harold Mareko, Elder Mr Mareko Kebisu and TSRA General Manager, Mr Wayne See Kee



From L to R: Iama Island Council Chairperson, Mr Walter Mackie with TSRA Deputy Chairperson, and Portfolio Member of Housing and Infrastructure, Mr Fred Gela



Iama Island's children celebrate the opening with State Member for Cook, Mr Jason O'Brien and TSRA Deputy Chairperson, Mr Fred Gela

## All Airstrips in Torres Strait Sealed

A major milestone for Torres Strait community development and aviation safety was achieved on 28 August, with the opening of Iama Island airstrip, the final island community to receive a sealed airstrip.

The \$2 million airstrip was jointly funded by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Queensland Department of Transport, with works completed by the Queensland Department of Main Roads.

TSRA Deputy Chairperson and Portfolio Member for Housing and Infrastructure, Mr Fred Gela, said the Marine and Airstrip Program has provided vital infrastructure to the Torres Strait and in turn has contributed toward improving the quality of life for the people of the region

"This whole of government collaboration has resulted in all our communities receiving improved safety in air travel, with grass airstrips being transformed to sealed gravel pavement runways - gone are the days when the airstrips are closed during the monsoon," said Mr Gela.

"The local economy will gain from year-round access to communities, with visitor movements enhancing business opportunities and residents benefiting by being able to commute between islands quickly and safely, to attend family and cultural events.

**"...gone are the days when the airstrips are closed during the monsoon..."**

"During the 14 week Iama Island project, four local community members were employed and took part in the construction of the airstrip, receiving training under the Heavy Equipment and Management Training Program (HEMTP).

"HEMPT is operated by the Department of Main Road's Remote Communities Services Unit and supported by the TSRA and the Queensland Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation (DLGPS&R).

"It is contributing to community capacity building by up-skilling trainees in the areas of construction

and heavy machinery use, enabling them to assist their own community in maintaining infrastructure, as well as becoming part of a skilled pool of local workers who can be called upon to assist in future projects.

"The Marine and Airstrip Program now has a further four projects planned for the region, which include the upgrades of berthing dolphins (posts for mooring vessels) at Hammond, Erub, Warraber and Kubin communities.

"I would like to congratulate the Iama Island Council and community on their upgraded airstrip and the four trainees who have participated in its construction.

"In addition, I wish to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Queensland Departments of Transport and Main Roads for working in partnership with the TSRA and the region's communities to achieve this milestone in Torres Strait aviation safety," said Mr Gela.

The Iama Island Airstrip project included the completion of an 800 metre all weather airstrip, replacement of airstrip equipment, fencing and access tracks outside the airstrip perimeter.

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## Positive Outcome at Community Fisher Group Meeting

Progress towards achieving a greater share of the region's Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) catch for traditional inhabitants, was made at the Community Fisher Group (CFG) meeting held from 4 to 7 September on Thursday Island.

Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Chairperson Mr Toshie Kris said by working together and participating in constructive, robust discussion, Indigenous Torres Strait fishermen can use the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) process to effectively lobby Government for improved outcomes in the region's fisheries.

"This industry is crucial to the livelihood of many families in the Torres Strait, and it is vital that we all work in partnership to secure a greater share of these resources for our people," said Mr Kris.

"TSRA has always advocated that the region's fisheries be owned and managed by Torres Strait Islanders.

"At their meeting, the CFG looked over new data available on the TRL fishery, some of which indicated that Indigenous fishers may already be catching their 50 percent share.

"With this new information, the CFG are again writing to the Australian Minister for Fisheries to bring this to his attention.

"I will also raise this with both Ministers as a member of the PZJA, when I next speak to them, to ensure that the views of our fishers are considered in full," said Mr Kris.

TSRA Portfolio Member for Marine and Fisheries Mr Donald Mosby, said TSRA will continue to lobby relevant government departments to ensure that the aspirations of the CFG's are heard and placed on the agenda at the next PZJA meeting.

"We also need to look at fisheries development in the long-term and consider how we would like our fisheries businesses to be structured," Mr Mosby said.

"Our fisheries are an important opportunity to gain economic independence for the region, and I was pleased to see the CFG's working towards positive outcomes for their communities," said Mr Mosby.

TRL Working Group Member Mr Yen Loban, said that the CFG meeting was fair and positive, as it allowed the public to be heard each day and fishers could voice their concerns openly regarding the decision for 50:50 allocation of TRL resources.

"The CFG have all said in the past and still believe, that Islanders should start at 70 percent share of the TRL resources and will be working with the TSRA to pursue this vigorously with the PZJA," said Mr Loban.

Badu Island Representative on the TRL Working Group Mr Solomon Nona, said the PZJA structure is a fair mechanism for dealing with fisheries issues.

"Torres Strait Islander representatives who participate at PZJA meetings have all been selected by their respective

community to represent them at this level," Mr Nona said.

"The PZJA decision on 50:50 has never been supported by the CFG at all levels of fisheries discussions through to the TSRA Chairman sitting on the PZJA, and we are using the PZJA processes to work through our concerns," said Mr Nona.

Mr Kris also thanked the Torres Strait Community Fisher Group for their positive input over the last week and for their ongoing participation and commitment to the PZJA consultative structure.

"We have a substantial amount of work ahead of us to establish a Torres Strait fishery that is owned and managed by the people of the Torres Strait, but with a combined effort by all stakeholders, we can make this goal achievable," said Mr Kris.



Tropical Rock Lobster

Courtesy AFMA

## TSRA Visits Boigu and Mabuia Island Communities

During 23 to 25 August, The Torres Strait Regional Authority's (TSRA) Chairperson Mr Toshie Kris, the TSRA Portfolio Member for Native Title Mr Donald Banu and the TSRA General Manager Mr Wayne See Kee, visited and participated in open forums with the Island Councils and Communities of Boigu and Mabuia.

TSRA Chairman Mr Toshie Kris said it was an occasion to meet community members as well as to update the

communities on the TSRA's role, TSRA Programs and the TSRA Board's Development Plan.

"One of the key objectives of the visit was to inform the communities on how they can participate and be involved in the region's economic development, from individual community level to expanding and including island cluster groups," Mr Kris said.

"It was also an opportunity for community members to obtain

information on how they can access TSRA Programs, such as the Community Economic Initiatives Scheme (CEIS) and the Business Funding Scheme (BFS), and to discuss any local issues directly with Mr Banu, Mr See Kee and myself.

"The visit was productive, with the TSRA and community members exchanging information, to take back and share with our communities and the TSRA Office. *Continued page 3.*

"I would like to thank the Councils and Communities of Boigu and Mabuiag for their warm hospitality, and for their participation -their valued feedback will help to improve the delivery of our service to the Torres Strait.

"In addition, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the TSRA's Land and Sea Management Unit Manager, Mr Damian Miley, and the TSRA Field Officer Mr Geoffrey Uta, for accompanying us and assisting with this visit," Mr Kris said.

The TSRA plans to visit other communities to conduct similar forums in the near future. Local island councils will be advised of planned dates, and will then be able to advise community members of where and when they can participate.



TSRA meets with Boigu Island Council

## Hammond Island Rangers Attend Land and Sea Conference

From 22 to 25 August, the Torres Strait Regional Authority's (TSRA) Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) assisted two Hammond Island Rangers, Ms Alice Garnier and Ms Judith Thaiday, to attend the 2006 Women's Land and Sea Management Conference, in North-East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

TSRA Portfolio Member for the Environment and Health, and lama Island Council Chairman, Mr Walter Mackie, said the TSRA was pleased to support these two women to participate at the Conference.

"The newly established LSMU Office is here to support and assist our communities to learn, develop and implement their own community approved plans and projects, to maintain and preserve our natural resources," Mr Mackie said.

"On Hammond Island where these two Rangers come from, the LSMU is working with the Community and the Kaiwalagal Traditional Owners to conduct a seagrass and marine debris monitoring project, as well as shoreline clean-up activities.

"The Unit's Landcare Officer, Marianne Helling, has also been working with the Rangers to promote best practice and inform members on how to care for their land - this includes workshops and land management activities, like weed identification and removal,



Hammond Island Rangers (L to R), Judith Thaiday & Alice Garnier

vegetation surveys, seed collecting and revegetation.

"One of the 6 Goals of the TSRA, is to ensure protection of our environment, and I would like to congratulate these women and other Rangers in the region for their important work, which is contributing towards achieving this goal and helping to preserve our beautiful natural assets for future generations to also enjoy," said Mr Mackie.

Rangers Alice Garnier and Judith Thaiday, arrived at the Garma Campsite, in Yirrkala Country, to spend four days with other Indigenous women land and sea carers to learn and share their knowledge and experiences.

"This was an opportunity for us to meet other Indigenous women conducting similar work, and to celebrate the important role of women, who play a vital part in caring for our land and sea," Ms Garnier said.

"We shared our stories, as well as

attended presentations and learned of other bush foods and medicines used by our friends on the mainland," said Ms Garnier.

Ms Judith Thaiday said by participating at the conference, they were able to learn of new projects and challenges that other communities had been through and how they overcame them.

"It gave us more information and knowledge on how to improve existing projects and also helped us to learn of new activities that could be considered for our community, to ensure the preservation of our land and sea," Ms Thaiday said.

Both Rangers would like to acknowledge the support the TSRA's LSMU, in particular the team's NRM Facilitator Ms Miya Isherwood, and thank the Caring for Country Unit of the Northern Land Council for facilitating the Conference, and Mawalan Gamarrwa Nuwul Landcare Department and the Yirrkala Dhanbul Community Association as hosts during their stay.





# Project Highlights from CRC Torres Strait 2003-2006 Sea Cucumber Fishery

The modern sea cucumber (beche de mer) fishery provides a substantial source of income and employment for Torres Strait Islanders. Sandfish on Warrior Reef were the source of most of the early catches and this area was heavily fished between 1994 and 1996.

In 1998 the sandfish population of Warrior Reef was found to be severely depleted and the fishery was closed. Fishers then turned to other species of sea cucumber including White and Black Teatfish and Surf Redfish.

This led to Black Teatfish and Surf Redfish also becoming depleted and fishing for these was stopped in 2003. White Teatfish and other sea cucumber species are still open to fishing, but under strict catch restrictions, and are being closely monitored.

Surveys by CRC Torres Strait researchers from CSIRO monitored the recovery of sea cucumber stocks that are closed to fishing, as well as the status of those species that remain open to fishing at Warrior Reef and the reefs and islands of eastern Torres Strait.

This research was enhanced by collaboration with Islanders who helped design the survey by providing

local knowledge on the distribution and preferred habitat of sea cucumbers.

The research indicates that despite the management strategies that have been put in place, recovery for these depleted species is slow.

Researcher Tim Skewes joined Australian Fisheries Management Authority Officer Sascha Taylor to run workshops with Torres Strait Islander fishers to discuss the new management regulations in 2005. These workshops were extremely useful for discussing with fishers why the regulations were necessary and in the long-term interest of all involved in the fishery.

For more information on this story or on any other project, you can contact CRC Torres Strait by telephone (07) 4729 8400, fax (07) 4729 8499, alternatively you can email [info@crctorres.com](mailto:info@crctorres.com) or visit [www.crctorres.com](http://www.crctorres.com).



Courtesy CSIRO

## TRAWQ Disability Week

TRAWQ Community Council participated in Disability Week from 16-22 July to assist in creating a more positive outlook for people with a disability and recognize the important role of their carers.

## Crime Stoppers Campaign

Crime Stoppers Information signage placed on all Torres Strait Island communities to increase awareness of this important campaign to reduce crime.

## Thursday Island Justice Group

The Thursday Island Justice Group travel to Lotus Glen to visit and provide assistance to inmates from the region.

## TSRA Sponsored Events

### Iama School

Iama School students will be able to attend classes in comfort with air conditioning to be installed under the Cooler Schools Program, an initiative of Education Queensland and supported by the TSRA.

### Horn Island Basketball team

From 9 to 13 October, the Horn Island Hornets Basketball team will travel to Homebush, Sydney, to participate in the inaugural National Indigenous Basketball Championships.

### Memento Australia Awards

Prominent Torres Strait Islander Artist Mrs Rosie Barkus, will travel to Brisbane to attend the Memento Australia Awards on September 12, which showcases Australia's contemporary, unique and commercially viable art and craft.

### Landcare Grants for Erub, Masig and Mer

Erub, Masig and Mer Communities will benefit from a Lantana and other environmental weed eradication and native plant re-vegetation project, with the assistance from the TSRA's Land and Sea Management Unit.

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