



TSRA Torres Strait Development Plan 2023–2028





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Cover Artwork

ARTIST: Fiona Mosby

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STORY: *One voice portrays the values and teachings in life, to embrace, regenerate and practice walking hand in hand in unity.*

The trumpet shell is used to sound and echo, bringing and gathering everyone together in one accord.

The green vibrates life, and the pink/red depicts love.

For more information about the TSRA Torres Strait Development Plan

VISIT:

www.tsra.gov.au

CALL:

(07) 4069 0700

COLLECT A COPY:

Hard copies of this plan are available at all
TSRA offices across the Torres Strait.

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Acknowledgement of Country

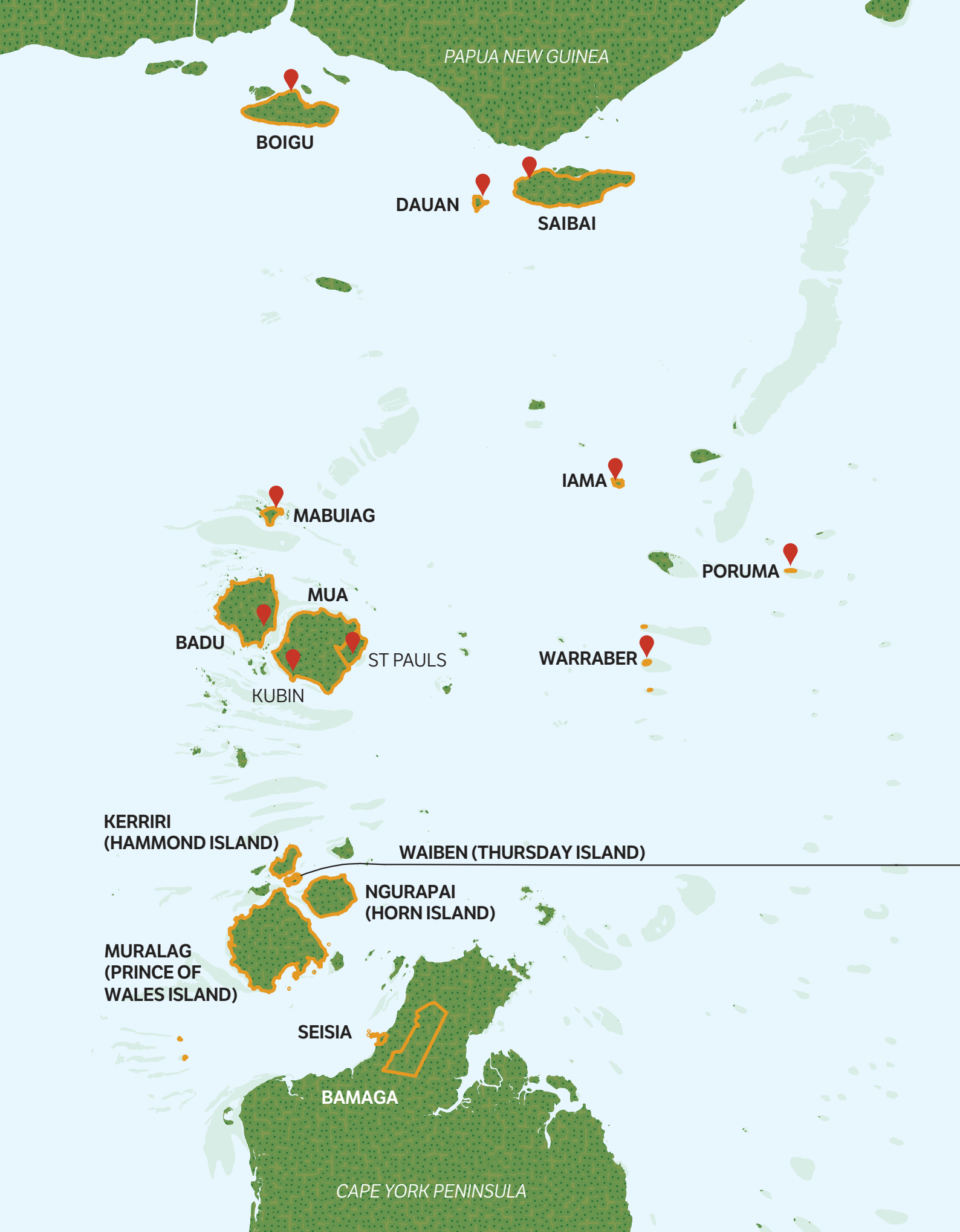
The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) pays respect to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters on which we work.

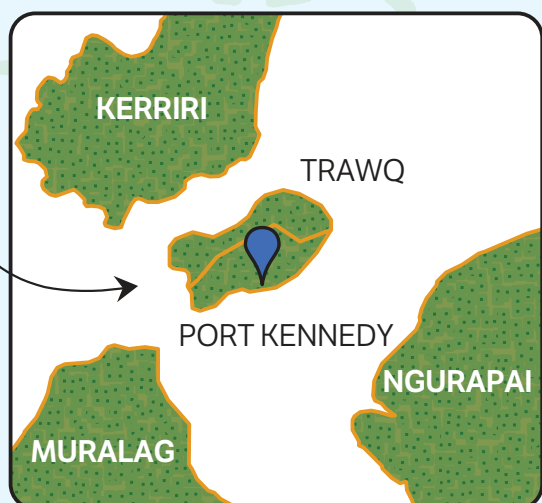
We honour the resilience and continuing connection to land and sea country, culture and community of all Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal peoples across Australia.

We recognise the decisions we make today will impact the lives of generations to come.

In representing certain images, the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) respectfully acknowledges the moral and cultural rights of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal peoples and the traditional cultural protocols of knowledge sharing and privacy/sacred knowledge.

The TSRA does not own or claim the rights to the Wongai Tree images, references, concepts, or interpretations used in this document.





TSRA OFFICES AND ELECTORAL WARDS



TSRA Electoral Wards



Head Office



Ranger Office

Produced on 19/07/2023

Produced by M.S. TRC: GL 2023 001

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Australian Government



TSRA
www.tsra.gov.au



Message from the Chairperson

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Torres Strait Development Plan 2023–2028 sets out a Vision that leverages and embraces the unique qualities of our region, from the mainland communities of Bamaga and Seisia to the outer islands.

It reflects and responds to the changing world around us. Developed by the TSRA Board with local communities, the Development Plan will underpin the TSRA's continued advocacy for local needs, priorities and aspirations at the highest levels.

As one of the most remote Australian Public Service (APS) agencies, TSRA's refreshed vision, Yumi Pasin, Yumi Ilan Kastom: Strong in culture, unified partnerships to achieve a sustainable future, ensures community and culture remain at the heart of our efforts.

This plan is a navigational beacon to guide the TSRA's purpose and priorities over the next five years.

By embracing a strengths-based approach towards Closing the Gap, the plan acknowledges the Torres Strait as a region open for innovation, investment and opportunity, rather than limiting our potential by distance and remoteness.

Imagery of the Wongai tree has been used to visualise the TSRA's key strategic priorities:

- Strong regional partnerships and governance.
- Globally resilient communities.
- Growing sustainable economies.

The Wongai tree grows across our region's vast terrain, from the granite rock and volcanic soil to sandy cays and coastal shores. It is a plant of great cultural significance and is revered within Torres Strait Islander communities.

Like the Wongai tree, we must stand tall with resilience, strength and solidarity as we adapt to the challenges and seize opportunities before us.

Our future depends on the decisions and actions we make today, to ensure our children can experience the best start in life, grow up in healthy and safe communities with their families and access study and work opportunities to build wealth and stability, including through business and home ownership.

This Plan presents an opportunity to redefine our region as a new frontier. It commits words into action by enabling practical, on-the-ground outcomes in partnership with communities.





In addition to ongoing monitoring and evaluation, we will track progress against the Development Plan's strategic objectives through the TSRA Corporate Plan and Annual Report.

As we approach TSRA's 30th Anniversary in 2024, now is the time to refocus our efforts for the benefit of our people and region.

On behalf of the TSRA, I offer a sincere thank you to all who have contributed to this plan.

This is a meaningful step towards uniting as individuals, communities and governments to ensure more opportunities, for more people across the Torres Strait.

Thank you to our predecessors who established the TSRA on 1 July 1994 and the TSRA Board Members, staff and communities who continue to advocate for better outcomes.

We understand the needs and dreams of our families, communities and region. We know our land and sea country, winds and waters.

By working together we can enable our people and region to thrive now and into the future.

Napau Pedro Stephen AM
TSRA Chairperson



Torres Strait Regional Authority Milestones

TSRA is established as an Australian Government Statutory Authority under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989*.

The **Bamaga Accord** is established following discussions between the TSRA, regional councils, the Island Coordinating Council and Torres Strait communities, to strengthen governance and self-determination for the region.

Finfish fishery becomes 100% owned by Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people of the Torres Strait, following negotiations and buybacks undertaken by the TSRA. Bêche-de-mer fishery achieved the same status in 2015.

TSRA is appointed as a Native Title Representative Body, providing over \$17 million for native title services and helping to achieve 28 Native Title determinations for almost 100 islands, islets and cays and approximately 40,000 square kilometres of sea country.

TSRA moved into Torres Haus, and was formally opened by the Hon Senator John Herron on 14 December.

The **Gab Titui Cultural Centre** is established as the Torres Strait's foremost keeping place for cultural and historical artefacts and the promotion of contemporary Indigenous art. The subsequent establishment of Erub Arts (2008), Badu Arts (2009) and Moa Arts (2009) further expanded TSRA support for regional arts and heritage.

TSRA's partnership with the Australian Rural Leadership Program initiated.

1994

1996

2001

2004

2008

1995

1998

2002

2005

2009

TSRA joined its first Torres Strait Treaty Joint Advisory Council meeting.

TSRA becomes a foundation member of the Protected Zone Joint Authority.

TSRA's first engagement with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

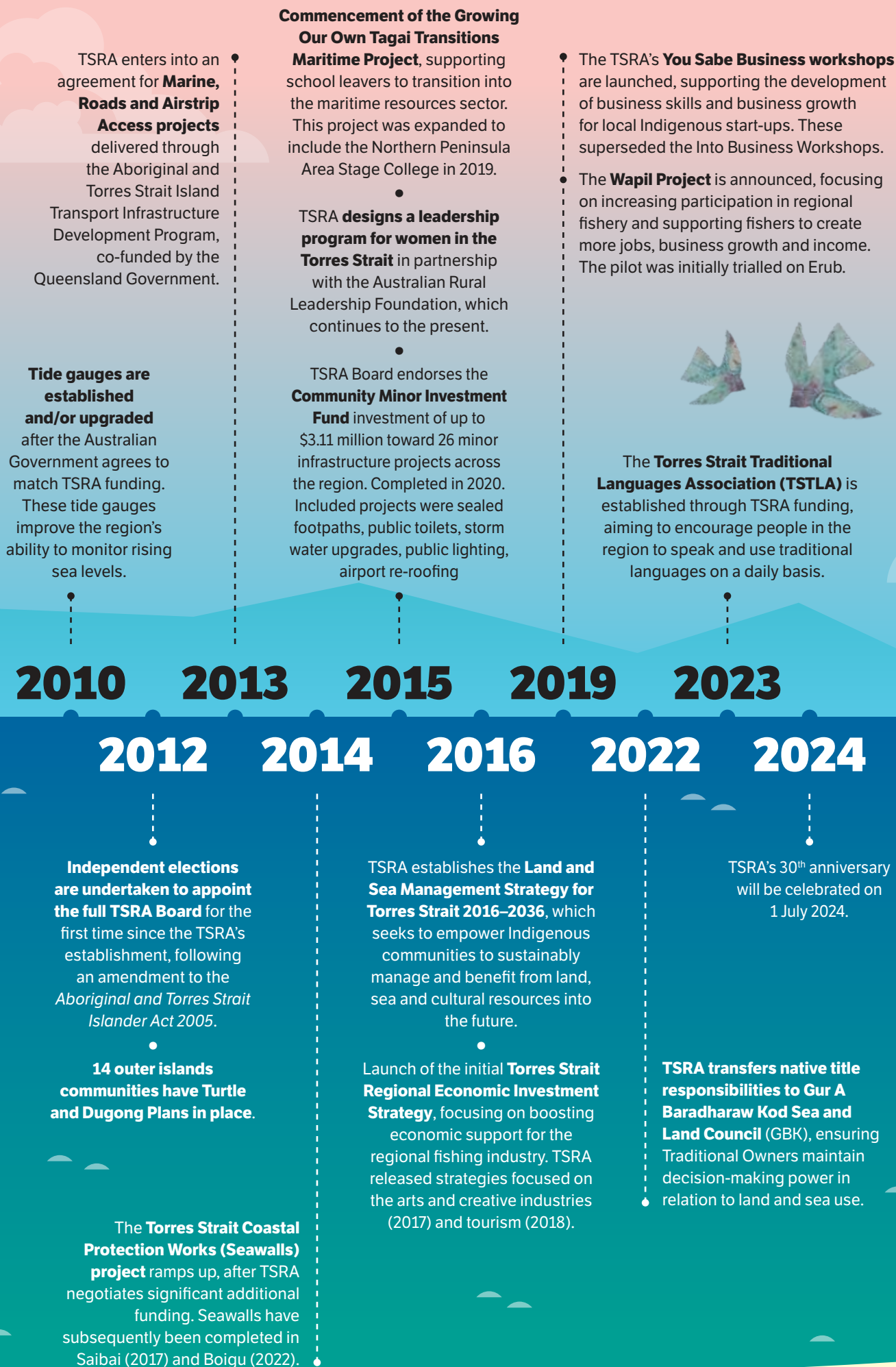
The **Major Infrastructure Programme (MIP)** commences delivery of major environmental health infrastructure projects in the region, following a Memorandum of Understanding between the TSRA and other government agencies for the Major Infrastructure and Other Projects Trust Fund. Since inception, the TSRA has administered 6 MIP stages, collectively valued at more than \$300 million.

The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005** is enacted, forming a new legislative basis for the TSRA.

The **TSRA Ranger Program** is initiated, providing support for communities to care for their land and sea country. Since inception, the number of TSRA rangers undertaking environmental management projects has more than doubled.

The TSRA Milestones identify what has been achieved since its establishment in 1994, and provides a baseline identifying what this Development Plan 2023-2028 will build upon for the future.

The **Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Regional Plan 2009–2029** is established through collaboration between the TSRA, regional councils and the Queensland Government. The Regional Plan outlines an approach to long-term, whole-of-government program delivery for the region.



Introduction

Torres Strait Region

The Torres Strait stretches 150 kilometres northwards from Cape York Peninsula to Papua New Guinea (PNG) and up to 300 kilometres from east to west. It includes 5 Traditional Owner nations of Kaiwalagal, Maluilgal, Guda Maluilgal, Kulkaigal, and Kemer Kemer Meriam.

The 48,000 km² area consists of more than 270 islands and reefs. The Torres Strait islands have a variety of topographies, ecosystems and formations. Several islands, closest to the PNG coastline, are low lying and regularly inundated by sea water caused by rising sea levels. Many of the western islands are hilly and steep. The central islands are predominantly coral cays and those to the east are located on ancient volcanic formations.

As one of the most remote Australian Public Service (APS) agencies, the TSRA supports programs across the Torres Strait region, including for the 17 inhabited islands of the Torres Strait, and the communities of Bamaga and Seisia on the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) of mainland Australia.

Ailan Kastom

The recognition of Ailan Kastom (island custom) is enshrined in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (Cth). Ailan Kastom means the body of customs, traditions, observances and beliefs of some or all of the Torres Strait Islanders living in the Torres Strait area, and includes customs, traditions, observances and beliefs relating to particular persons, areas, objects or relationships.

Cultural Empowerment Principle

All TSRA partnerships, programs and services are developed and delivered in accordance with the principle of cultural empowerment and respect the unique cultural protocols of the Kaurareg, Maluilgal, Guda Maluilgal, Kulkaigal, Kemer Meriam, and Northern Peninsula Area peoples.



What does the TSRA do?

The TSRA is the lead Australian Government agency in the Torres Strait region for Indigenous Affairs. As a statutory agency established under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (Cth), the TSRA operates under the direction of a democratically elected Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Board, comprising of 20 members representing the communities of the region. The TSRA is a corporate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth).

The TSRA operates within the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio and works closely with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to provide greater autonomy and improve the lives of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal peoples living in the Torres Strait region, by contributing to a healthier, safer and more prosperous region.

The functions of the TSRA are outlined in section 142A(1) of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (Cth) and are detailed on page 27.



About the TSRA Torres Strait Development Plan

What is the TSRA Torres Strait Development Plan?

The TSRA produces a Torres Strait Development Plan every 3–5 years (Development Plan). The Development Plan sets out the Board's Vision and Priorities for the TSRA, as an Australian Government agency.

The TSRA Board sets the organisational vision and priorities in their capacity as the elected representatives who oversee the TSRA.

The requirements of what needs to be included in the Development Plan are set out in section 142D of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (ATSI Act 2005), which also sets out the functions of the TSRA.

The aim of the Development Plan as stated in the ATSI Act 2005 is to **improve the economic, social and cultural status of Torres Strait Islanders, and Aboriginal persons, living in the Torres Strait area.**

The Development Plan outlines the strategies and policies that the TSRA intends to adopt in order to implement the Plan (see strategic priorities on pp 20-22).

Section 142D of the ATSI Act also specifies the inclusion of a marine strategy for the Torres Strait area. There is a current TSRA marine strategy called the Land and Sea Management Strategy for the Torres Strait 2026 - 2036. This marine strategy can be found on www.tsra.gov.au.

This Torres Strait Development Plan 2023–2028 supersedes the Torres Strait Development Plan 2019–2022.

The strategic Priorities contained within the Development Plan form the basis of the TSRA Corporate Plan and Annual Report which are released annually.

Section 142D of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (Cth) is detailed on page 28.



Development Plan relationship with other government plans

It is important for the TSRA Torres Strait Development Plan to be prepared so that it considers regional, state and national priorities.

The TSRA Torres Strait Development Plan focuses on priorities for the TSRA. It **does not** cover all government activities occurring within the Torres Strait.

There are a range of other planning documents that also impact the Torres Strait, including:

- *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* **(International)**
- *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* **(Federal)**
- *Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009–2029* **(Regional)**
- Plans released by Torres Strait regional councils **(Local)**.



The operating context

The Development Plan Vision and Priorities take into account the geopolitical, environmental and economical challenges impacting the region.

These identified challenges are considered and addressed across the TSRA's strategic planning, operational planning, and performance reporting. See page 24 "Tracking positive change" for information about TSRA's planning and reporting framework.



Geopolitical challenges

- Geopolitical conflict has raised the cost of living and created uncertainty
- Increased cost of freight is impacting prices of fresh food, services and supply
- Access to critical and reliable transport, freight and travel services that connect the region

Environmental challenges

- Rising sea levels threatening culture, livelihood, environment and the economy
- Severity of climatic events is increasing
- Rising impacts on environmental health including heat stress
- Collaboration of traditional ecological knowledge and western science to sustainably manage our environment

Economic challenges

- Access to affordable food and services
- Access to essential to life infrastructure and maintaining water security
- Access to quality education and fulfilling employment
- Ability to support new and sustainable industries that provide jobs for the future
- Intensity of social change driven by the pandemic, technology and changing modes of work

The TSRA's Ambition

Vision

Yumi pasin – yumi Ailan Kastom. Strong in culture, unified partnerships to achieve a sustainable future.

Ngalpun pawa a danalayg matha kaymel bangal KALA LAGAW YA

**Meriba tonar, merbi gedira tonar a merbi areriba tonar batkapda a bakeli au kelakela
beli iako mi kikemem nabakiawar** MERIAM MIR

Ngalpan mina Pawa a Ngalpan mina Igiliinga. Ngaru bangal urapun KALA KAWAU YA

Purpose

The TSRA's purpose is aligned to the Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio Budget Statement Outcome:

Progress towards closing the gap for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the Torres Strait Region through development planning, coordination, sustainable resource management and preservation and promotion of Indigenous culture.



How the Wongai tree symbolises the Development Plan

Wongai trees are found throughout the region, including sandy cay islands, volcanic, granite and coastal islands. They are all weather and can withstand harsh climate and environmental conditions, even as seedlings. They have a strong root system and grow over a long time, usually reaching maturity in ten years and up to 50-80 years.

The Wongai tree was selected to symbolise the Development Plan because it captures the vibrant colours of the fruit and the leaf, it reminds us about seasons/seasonal changes, the change of wind direction, and the cycles from flowering to the fruit start showing until it reaches its maturity. The tree or the fruit stands out amongst any other tree when it is in season.

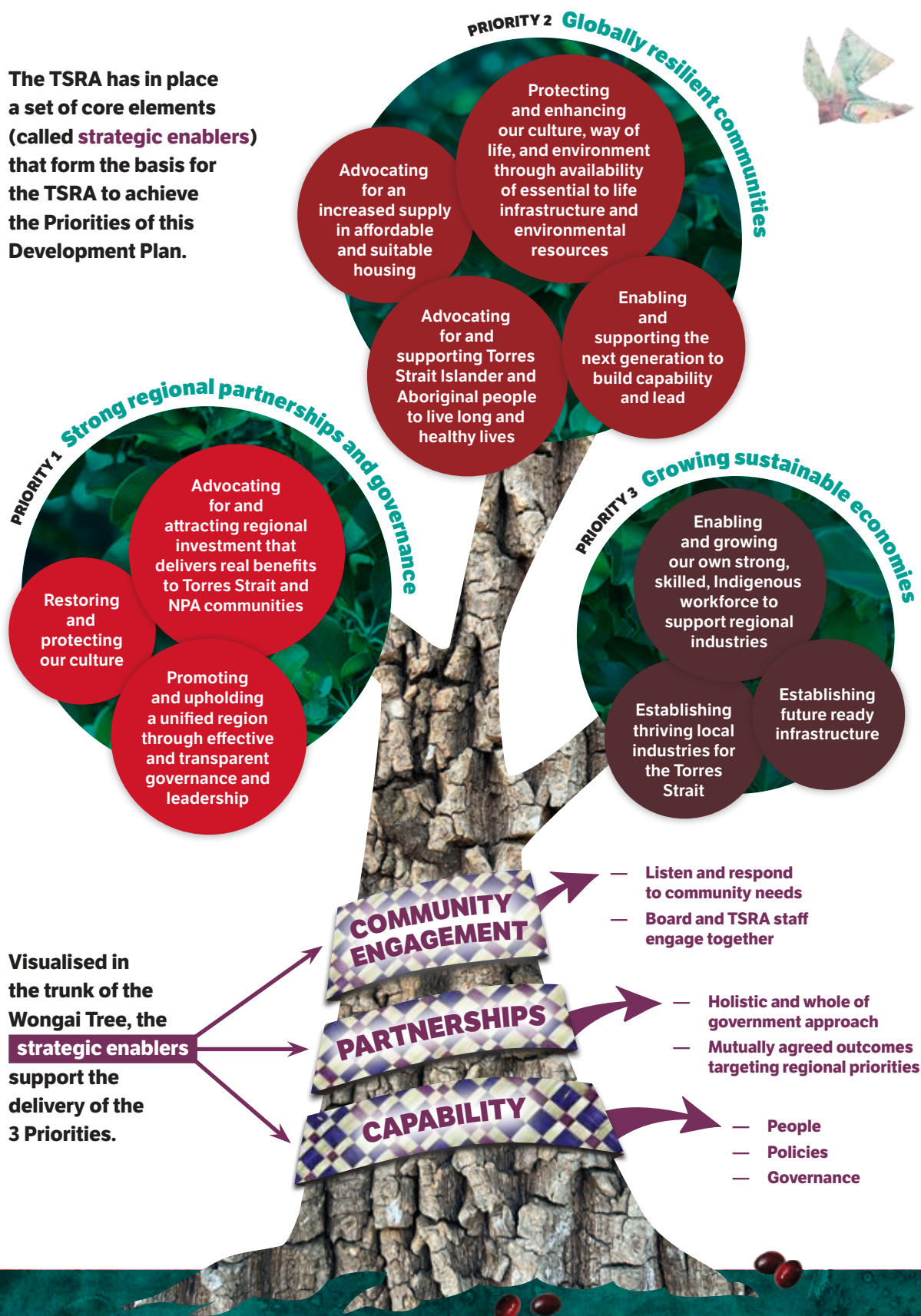
The trunk grows slowly, steadily and strongly – capturing the TSRA's steadfast focus to deliver its Priorities for the benefit of communities in the Torres Strait, and Northern Peninsula Area communities of Bamaga and Seisia.

The roots strongly connect the Wongai tree to the earth the same way the Torres Strait and Aboriginal people living in the region connect to their traditional lands.

The Island mat represents the beginning and the end of this Development Plan, including the weave of the mat representing how the enablers are interwoven to achieve the 3 Priorities.

Strategic enablers to achieve Priorities

The TSRA has in place a set of core elements (called **strategic enablers**) that form the basis for the TSRA to achieve the Priorities of this Development Plan.



Strategic Priorities

PRIORITY 1

STRONG REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

The TSRA is committed to:

1. Advocating for and attracting regional investment that delivers real benefits to Torres Strait and NPA communities

- maintain strategic partnerships with key government, community and commercial providers that maximise and positively influence regional investment
- access regional data and community aspirations to inform programs and ensure they are contributing to achieving the organisational priorities

2. Promoting and upholding a unified region through effective and transparent governance and leadership

- contribute to pathways that support a continual talent pool of community leaders based on accountability, communication and culture
- share experiences with international and national First Nations partners that enhance governance and leadership strategies that produce benefits for the region

3. Restoring and protecting our culture

- work to ensure that culture is strongly reflected across and within the Torres Strait region's education, employment and community settings
- embed culture as the social fabric of our community and families celebrated and shared through festivals, community, regional, state, national and international events
- preserve and maintain cultural links, language and culturally significant sites



PRIORITY 2

GLOBALLY RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

The TSRA is committed to:

1. Protecting and enhancing our culture, way of life, and environment through availability of essential to life infrastructure and environmental resources

- identify through care of our land and sea resources opportunities to protect and preserve our cultural heritage
- secure investment to construct critical infrastructure to support community adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change
- support community access to and uptake of reliable and renewable energy sources

2. Advocating for an increase supply in affordable and suitable housing

- support work to ensure that more Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people own their home by alleviating issues of housing affordability, suitability, and availability supply
- work to improve the environmental health conditions for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people caused by issues such as overcrowding and homelessness

3. Enabling and supporting the next generation to build capability and lead

- advocate for high-quality education accessible across the region
- support clear and effective pathways between secondary school and further education and training
- support proactive education programs to reduce children in the child protection system, and manage representation of children, young people within the criminal justice system

4. Advocating for and supporting Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to live long and healthy lives

- work towards increasing access to preventative health education, safe communities, community infrastructure and information, activities and programs to help reduce the burden of disease

PRIORITY 2 **Globally resilient communities**

Advocating for an increased supply in affordable and suitable housing

Protecting and enhancing our culture, way of life, and environment through availability of essential to life infrastructure

Advocating for and supporting Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to live long and healthy lives

Enabling and supporting the next generation to build capability and lead



PRIORITY 3

GROWING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES

The TSRA is committed to:

1. Enabling and growing our own strong, skilled, Indigenous workforce to support regional industries

- support a pipeline of jobs across the region for now and into the future
- work to stimulate business and economic development, and provide more opportunities for a diverse workforce to participate in the economy
- increase the employment of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people involved in industries delivering local services

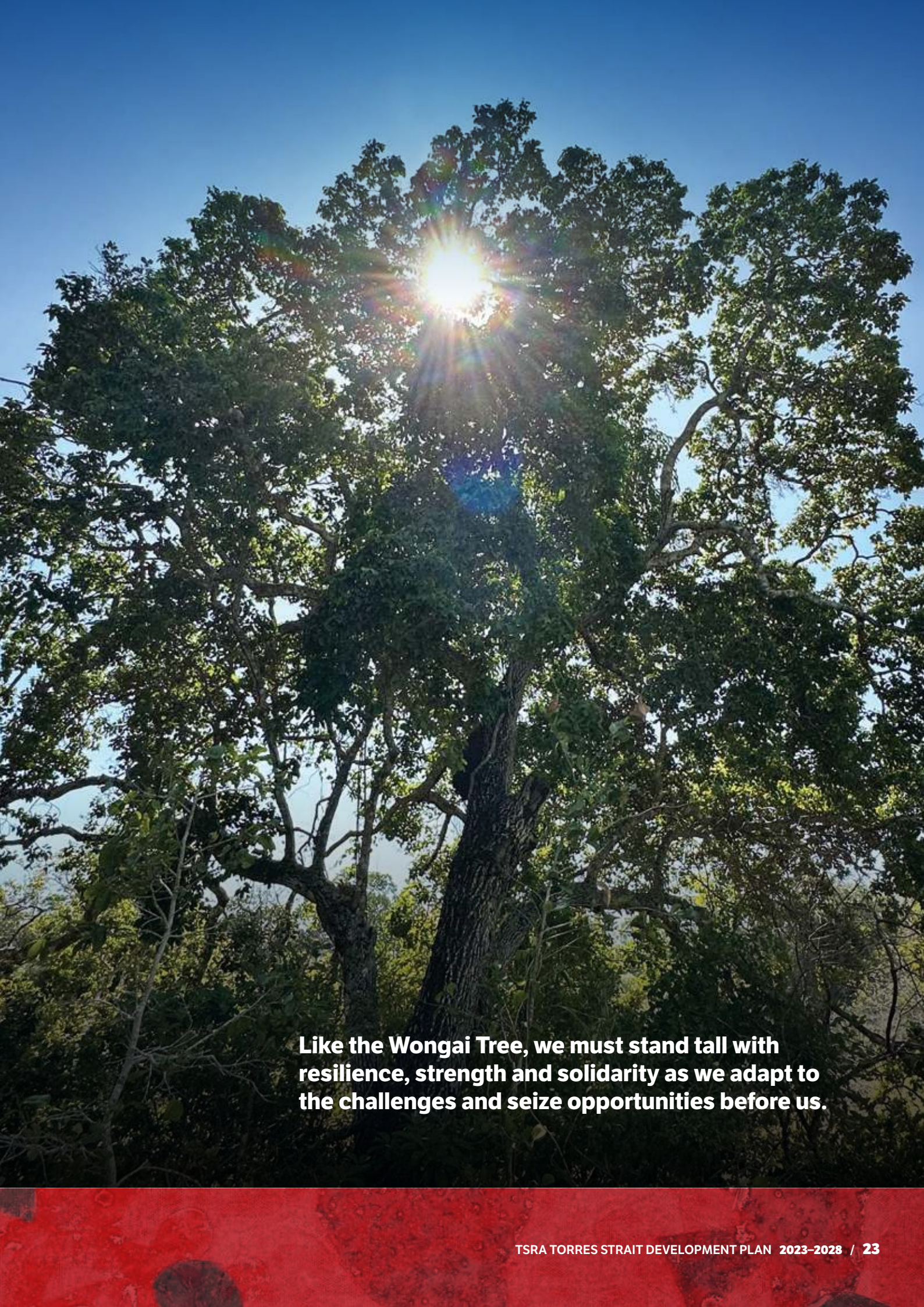
2. Establishing thriving local industries for the Torres Strait

- establish a healthy pipeline of Indigenous entrepreneurs and business people across diverse industries
- support the development of a strong eco-tourism industry for the Torres Strait with full engagement and involvement of Traditional Owners
- work towards 100% Indigenous ownership of Torres Strait fisheries

3. Establishing future ready infrastructure

- facilitate regional coordination, review and prioritisation of essential safe infrastructure investments
- promote and support the development of sustainable energy infrastructure
- build partnerships that enhance safe and accessible transportation of people and goods across the region





Like the Wongai Tree, we must stand tall with resilience, strength and solidarity as we adapt to the challenges and seize opportunities before us.

Tracking positive change

The Development Plan captures the strategic, long-term Vision and Priorities of the TSRA Board. To ensure these strategic priorities are achieved, and that the TSRA's enablers are effective, the TSRA will plan, monitor and evaluate its activities.

The TSRA's planning and reporting framework is closely aligned with, and supports the operationalisation of, the strategic direction outlined in the Development Plan:

- **Portfolio Budget Statements** inform Parliament and the Australian public of how the TSRA intends to allocate resources in the delivery of government outcomes.
- **Corporate Plans** detail how the TSRA will measure and assess its performance in achieving its purpose annually, including detailed information on the agency's purpose, key activities, operating context and risk profile.
- **Program Plans** provide operational information about the activities TSRA program areas will undertake over the financial year, to ensure these are appropriately resourced and co-ordinated.
- **Annual Performance Statements**, included as part of the TSRA Annual Report, report on actual results achieved against performance measures and planned results, as specified within the Corporate Plan and Portfolio Budget Statements.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** will be undertaken to assess program performance, including reviewing feedback from stakeholders, analysing quantitative and qualitative data, and seeking independent advice from external parties.

Outcomes from performance assessment are used by the TSRA to refine and improve its activities.

Taken together, these elements will provide assurance to stakeholders that the TSRA is delivering upon the Development Plan's strategic priorities.

Strategic planning

Development Plan	Sets the long-term strategic vision of the TSRA, reflecting the aspirations of the democratically elected TSRA Board
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Operational planning

Portfolio Budget Statements	Proposes how resources will be allocated and expected outcomes from this expenditure
Corporate Plan	Outlines how performance will be measured and assessed against the TSRA's purpose
Program Plans	Articulates how the annual priorities will be operationalised and resourced by TSRA program areas

Performance reporting

Annual Performance Statements	Reports on results achieved against the performance measurements set within the Corporate Plan and Portfolio Budget Statements
Monitoring and Evaluation	Assesses ongoing program performance through quarterly reporting, stakeholder feedback, data analysis and independent advice

Strategic alignment –

Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Targets, TS&NPA Regional Plan 2009-2029

	TSRA Torres Strait Development Plan Strategic Priority	Alignment to Closing the Gap Priority Reforms	Alignment to Closing the Gap targets*	Alignment to Torres Strait Regional Plan 2009-2029 Goals and objectives**
1. Strong regional partnerships and governance	Advocating for and attracting regional investment that delivers real benefits to Torres Strait and NPA communities	1, 2, 3	7, 8, 15	Economic Development
	Promoting and upholding a unified region through effective and transparent governance and leadership	2, 3	17	Governance and Leadership
	Restoring and protecting our culture	1, 2	15, 16	Art Culture and Heritage Communities
2. Globally resilient communities	Protecting and enhancing our culture, way of life and environment through availability of essential to life infrastructure	1, 2, 4	1, 9, 15	Environmental Management Social Services Native Title
	Advocating for an increase supply in affordable and suitable housing	1, 2, 3, 4	9	Housing Native Title
	Enabling and supporting the next generation to build capability and lead	1, 2, 3	5, 6, 7, 16	Schooling Early Childhood
	Advocating for and supporting Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to live long and healthy lives	1, 2, 4	1, 2, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17	Public Health Social Services
3. Growing sustainable economies	Enabling and growing our own strong, skilled, Indigenous workforce to support regional industries	2	6, 7, 8	Economic Development Schooling
	Establishing thriving local industries for the Torres Strait	1, 2, 4	7, 8, 15	Economic Development
	Establishing future ready infrastructure	1, 4	8	Communities

* Closing the Gap Priority Reform, targets and outcomes | National Agreement on Closing the Gap

** Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009-2029 | Signed by TSRA Chairperson, TSIRC Mayor, TSC Mayor and NPARC Mayor

We understand the needs and dreams of our families, communities and region. We know our land and sea country, winds and waters.



The TSRA's functions

The functions of the TSRA, as outlined in section 142A(1) of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (Cth), are:

- a. to recognise and maintain the special and unique Ailan Kastom of Torres Strait Islanders living in the Torres Strait area;
- b. to formulate and implement programs for Torres Strait Islanders, and Aboriginal persons, living in the Torres Strait area;
- c. to monitor the effectiveness of programs for Torres Strait Islanders, and Aboriginal persons, living in the Torres Strait area, including programs conducted by other bodies;
- d. to develop policy proposals to meet national, State and regional needs and priorities of Torres Strait Islanders, and Aboriginal persons, living in the Torres Strait area;
- e. to assist, advise and co-operate with Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal communities, organisations and individuals at national, State, Territory and regional levels;
- f. to advise the Minister on:
 - i. matters relating to Torres Strait Islander affairs, and Aboriginal affairs, in the Torres Strait area, including the administration of legislation;
 - ii. the co-ordination of the activities of other Commonwealth bodies that affect Torres Strait Islanders, or Aboriginal persons, living in the Torres Strait area;
- g. when requested by the Minister, to provide information or advice to the Minister on any matter specified by the Minister;
- h. to take such reasonable action as it considers necessary to protect Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal cultural material and information relating to the Torres Strait area if the material or information is considered sacred or otherwise significant by Torres Strait Islanders or Aboriginal persons;
- i. at the request of, or with the agreement of, the Australian Bureau of Statistics but not otherwise, to collect and publish statistical information relating to Torres Strait Islanders, and Aboriginal persons, living in the Torres Strait area;
- j. such other functions as are conferred on the TSRA by this Act or any other Act;
- k. such other functions as are expressly conferred on the TSRA by a law of a State or of an internal Territory and in respect of which there is in force written approval by the Minister under section 142B;
- l. to undertake such research as is necessary to enable the TSRA to perform any of its other functions;
- m. to do anything else that is incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the preceding functions.

Purpose of the Development Plan

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is required to formulate and implement a plan to guide the progress of the Torres Strait region. This plan is required under Section 142D of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005*, which states:

1. The TSRA must formulate, and revise from time to time, a plan to be known as the Torres Strait Development Plan (the Plan).
2. The aim of the Plan is to improve the economic, social and cultural status of Torres Strait Islanders, and Aboriginal persons, living in the Torres Strait area.
3. The Plan must outline the strategies and policies that the TSRA intends to adopt in order to implement the Plan, including, but not limited to, a marine strategy for the Torres Strait area.
4. Each Plan must relate to a period of at least 3 years and not more than 5 years.
5. The TSRA must review the Plan regularly.
6. The TSRA must perform its functions under this section in consultation with the Minister.
7. Without limiting the operation of the Freedom of Information Act 1982, the TSRA Chief Executive Officer must ensure that copies of the Plan as in force from time to time are available for inspection and purchase at each office of the TSRA.
8. The TSRA Chief Executive Officer must cause notice of the publication of the Plan to be published in the Gazette.





