

TSRA BOARD MEETING 156 COMMUNIQUE

Tuesday 17 – Thursday 19 March 2026

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Board Meeting 156 was held at the Joey Nona Conference Room, Torres Haus on Thursday Island, 17-19 March 2026.

TSRA ELECTION RULES REFORM

The TSRA Board approved the project schedule and scope for the TSRA Election Rules Review which was developed collaboratively with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

Proposed key reform objectives include simplifying the rules, improving the voter experience and supporting the AEC's ability to administer the Board election.

The TSRA is the policy lead for the review of the Election Rules with the successful delivery of the reform requiring coordinated technical support from AEC and NIAA, achieved through a Cross Agency Working Group.

Under Section 17 of the Legislation Act 2003, the Minister for Indigenous Australians must be satisfied that 'reasonable and appropriate' consultation has been undertaken when making or amending the TSRA Election Rules.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AGENCY PRESENTATION

Selena Pattrick, Group Manager – Eastern Group, and Michael White, Engagement Director – North Queensland Region, of the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) provided an agency update to the TSRA Board, along with a list of investments throughout the Torres Strait region currently funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

TSRA activities funded under the strategy total over \$100 million and include the Torres Strait Indigenous Rangers Program and the Fisheries Investment Project.

NIAA also presented a snapshot of projects in the region under the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) Round 1 and 2, confirming funding for Round 3 closing on 7 April 2026.

NIAA and TSRA signed an MOU in December 2025 which appointed TSRA as the Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) management agent in the Torres Strait until June 2027, and to assist in RJED planning.

The Australian Government has committed an additional \$299 million over four years, enabling the creation of 3,000 extra jobs and bringing the total to 6,000 jobs for people living in remote Australia by 2030.

Eligible employers in the 60 RAES regions (formerly CDP regions) can apply for funding to create new, community-driven jobs that support local priorities.

TSRA FISHERIES WORKPLAN 2026-28

The Board approved the TSRA Fisheries Workplan 2026-28 presented by the Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) at Board 156.

The FAC considered a range of key policy and operational matters which were presented as short, medium and long term deliverables. Each deliverables progress towards enhancing the region's wealth, by managing and maintaining sustainable fishing industries and increasing employment and economic opportunities for Torres Strait communities.

The FAC is established by the TSRA in accordance with section 142M of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (ATSIA Act).

ZENADTH KES FISHERIES

Zenadth Kes Fisheries (ZKF) presented a request for continued funding at Board 156. The TSRA Board reviewed the presentation and after lengthy deliberations, declined further funding to ZKF.

ZKF was established in December 2020 as an independent organisation to hold and manage Indigenous fisheries assets in the Torres Strait on behalf of Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal peoples.

KALA LAGAW INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AREA TRANSITION

The TSRA Board endorsed the Kala Lagaw Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) to transition its contractual management from the TSRA to the Goemulgaw RNTBC.

The Board's decision supports the public community vote from Traditional Owners and the broader Mabuyag community following a community meeting in Mabuyag in February 2026, determining the Goemulgaw RNTBC as the management organisation the Kala Lagaw IPA transition to. This decision reflects the community's aspiration for strengthened self-determination, cultural governance, and locally led management of land and sea country.

The Goemulgaw RNTBC will work collaboratively with the TSRA and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to finalise a multi-staged, culturally respectful and achievable IPA transition plan over the coming months.

TSRA FINFISH QUOTA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Board approved the appointment of Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) members and the TSRA Member for Mer to assume the role of the Finfish Quota Management Committee.

The role of the TSRA FQMC is to provide advice and make recommendations to the TSRA Board with respect to finfish leasing arrangements for the benefit of the traditional inhabitants of the Torres Strait. Recommendations include the quota price and tonnage of fish that is leased out to the Sunset Sector. Revenue generated from the lease out process is held in trust for the benefit of Torres Strait communities.

TSRA BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

The TSRA Board Strategic Planning Workshop is scheduled from 28-30 April 2026 on Thursday Island. The workshop provides an opportunity for the Board to outline key priorities and shape the future direction of the organisation.

The workshop is of particular importance in setting the forward vision of the TSRA Board entering the second year of their tenure.

The TSRA is the leading Commonwealth representative body for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people living in the Torres Strait and communities of Bamaga and Seisia on the Northern Peninsula Area. Through its programs it coordinates outcomes to improve the lives and livelihood of Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people living in the region through Economic Development, Fisheries, Culture, Art and Heritage, Environmental Management, Healthy and Safe Communities, and Governance and Leadership.

NEXT MEETING

The Board agreed to their next meeting on 16-18 June 2026.