

TSRA BOARD MEETING 158 COMMUNIQUE

Wednesday 9 – Friday 11 September 2026

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Board Meeting 158 was held at the Joey Nona Conference Room, Torres Haus on Thursday Island, 9-11 September 2026.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC INVESTMENT STRATEGY (REIS) REVIEW

The TSRA Board endorsed the Regional Economic Investment Strategy (REIS) Phase 2 as TSRA's primary economic development platform, adopting the proposed two stream delivery model and approved commencement of the immediate (0-6 months) implementation actions.

The proposed two stream delivery model focuses on business and workforce development, and economic enablers. Immediate implementation actions include finalising Phase 2 design and priority sectors, establishing an auditable economic baseline, recruitment of Phase 2 Implementation Lead, and filling critical senior vacancies.

The Board endorsement strengthens alignment with Closing the Gap and regional economic priorities, creating clearer pathways from training to employment and enterprise.

REIS was developed by TSRA to identify and support business opportunities and key industry sectors with the highest potential for growth and benefit to Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal People in the region.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AGENCY PRESENTATION

Selena Pattrick, Group Manager - Eastern Group, Kassmena Birch, North Queensland Group Manager and Lara Goodwin, Branch Manager - Environmental Branch, of the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) provided an agency update to the TSRA Board which included NIAA approval and release of \$5 million funding for the Boigu jetty.

NIAA introduced the Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) Strategic Projects Grant which provides funding over a maximum three years to support PBCs in pursuing economic and strategic opportunities.

NIAA provided further updates on the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) initiative and the Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) noting across North Queensland, RAES providers were currently supporting approximately 8,500 job seekers and developing community plans in relation to the actions RAES providers can provide for community projects. NIAA took on board feedback that RAES service delivery was not occurring across all the outer islands in the region.

NIAA is the coordination point for National Agreement on Closing the Gap and implements Australian Government policies by ensuring '*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard, recognised and empowered.*'

INDIGENOUS BUSINESS AUSTRALIA

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) Chairperson Darren Godwell, Chief Executive Officer David Knights and Director Community & Customer Experience Rachelle Singleton delivered a presentation on 'TSRA and IBA Collaboration Opportunities' to the Board.

The presentation provided an overview on:

- The refreshed IBA strategy which had shifted more to balance economic and social development for First Nations people around Australia.
- How IBA created impact including the areas of collaboration, products and services for housing and business solutions.
- IBA's investment strategy.
- IBA's investment overview and approach.
- Collaborations to date and opportunities to collaborate.
- IBA's special project being the First Nations Women in Business Coaching Program noting IBA wanted to partner with an organisation in the Torres Strait to deliver the program.
- IBA's Waikato Partnership in New Zealand, noting the Waikato Tainui Partnership Agreement had been signed in Aotearoa on 4 September 2026 which TSRA had supported.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

TJ Oberleuter, Torres Strait Treaty Officer from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) provided the TSRA Board with latest agency updates.

Information on traditional inhabitants movements in and out of Australia was presented, along with an update on the collaboration between DFAT and Australian Border Force (ABF) on the collection of data for trade and barter activities throughout the region.

Mr Oberleuter informed the Board, he had visited most islands in the Torres Strait in 2026 to deliver Treaty awareness education. Visits had also occurred to the treaty villages of Mabadauan and Sigabadaru in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

The Torres Strait Treaty defines the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea and provides a framework for the management of the common border area. Both Australia and Papua New Guinea have liaison officers, based respectively at Thursday Island and Daru, who consult regularly on the implementation of the Treaty at the local level.

REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS FORUM

The TSRA Chair and Board received local leaders to the inaugural Regional Leadership Forum on the final day of Board 158, welcoming the opportunity to connect and continue working with each Chair, Mayor and Council to progress shared priorities and aspirations for the region. to progress shared priorities and aspirations for the region.

Prioritising the Major Infrastructure Project initiatives, coordination of local leadership, empowering and safeguarding the rights of Traditional Owners in the region, and a regional approach to advocate for funding in the Torres Strait were discussed during the forum.

TSRA will coordinate the first monthly meeting series for the regional leadership to be held in early November via MS Teams.

As a commitment of the current TSRA Board, local leaders' deputations through the Regional Leadership Forum are a standing placeholder for all TSRA Board Meetings.

GROWING OUR OWN – TAGAI STATE COLLEGE

Tagai State College Vocational Education and Training (VET) program delivered their 'Growing Our Own – Maritime Program' presentation to the TSRA Board.

The presentation included:

- An introduction of the Maritime program which TSRA have continued to support and invest since 2019
- The vision and building the pathway
- The reach and impact of the program
- Beyond the statistics
- Maritime as a vehicle for regional development
- Community Empowerment

A second presentation was delivered, sharing how Mr Kailu Luffman had started in the program as a Tagai student, progressed from being a mariner to leader and now to become the new CEO and future Director of the entity Torres Strait Training.

TSRA ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

The TSRA Board endorsed the TSRA Annual Report 2025-26 in an Out of Session Meeting on 25 September.

The Annual Report outlines the TSRA's achievements, governance structures, performance and financial outcomes for the period 1 July to 30 June each year and must be endorsed by the Board as the Accountable Authority.

The annual report is a legislative requirement under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Act 2005* (ATSI Act) and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act). The PGPA Act sets rules for what must be included in the annual report.

NEXT MEETING

The Board agreed to their next meeting on 24-27 November 2026.