



STRAIT talk

Edition 2. August 2017



Saibai Seawalls Officially Completed

Council were proud to welcome the Honourable Mark Furner MP, Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships; and the Honourable Warren Entsch MP, Federal Member for Leichhardt and Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, Chairperson TSRA and their respective teams to witness the celebration hosted by Cr Akiba and the TSIRC team at Saibai.



Former TSRA Chair, Mr Joseph Elu and former TSIRC Councillor for Saibai, Mr Ron Enosa were also in attendance. The people of Saibai were critical to the success of this project. Council acknowledges their patience, perseverance during construction, and generosity in land negotiations.

Council have committed \$2.6M for preliminary construction of a seawall, a bundwall and to improve community drainage to combat tidal inundation. Phase One of the Boigu Seawalls Project will be completed by November 30, 2017.

Peter Rubu and George Wosomo attained their Cert III in Civil Construction and Plant Operations, with Adidi Wosomo also participating in the training. It was an honour to present these Awards in the presence of their families.

Phase Two of the project will occur once the remaining funding is secured. (Costing of Boigu's total works back in 2015 on Boigu was \$7.4M)

The Seawalls Project demonstrated the endless opportunities available for local training and employment.

Council continue to lobby the State and Federal government to address outstanding climate adaptation works required for Boigu, Poruma, Masig, lama and Warraber. Council will ensure that accurate costings are commissioned right from the start so we are not bearing the brunt of inadequate costings handed down from the Federal government which has burdened the Saibai project right from the very beginning.

Boigu Seawalls Phase One begins

Council are pleased to announce that the Boigu Seawalls project has now commenced with Koppens Construction securing the initial stage of the contract.





From the office of the Mayor

Firstly, I acknowledge our Traditional Owners, our Elders past and present, and the people of the Torres Strait.

It has been a significant quarter with the newly adopted budget firming up Council's strategic approach to minimise the impact of funding shortfalls and addressing capital infrastructure needs.

Budget Landscape

At the June Ordinary Meeting, Council endorsed its 17/18 operating and capital budgets and a 10-year financial forecast for the Council.

Council acknowledges 17/18 and 18/19 financial years will be tough due to loss of funding comprising a \$2.4m reduction in operating grants including \$1.7m of water funding and the expiry of \$600k worth of funding to assist with the operational costs of our desalination plants.

The end of NPARIH new housing program between July 2018 and June 2019 means a \$16m reduction in recoverable works income for Council from our building Works. Council continues to lobby for an extension of this project, however at the time of going to print of this edition of Strait Talk, no announcement had been made by the Federal Government.

Although Council has projected a modest operating surplus for 17/18, Council has noted a number of expenses confirmed after completion of the budget which may result in a budget deficit if additional funds cannot be identified.

it is vital that State and Federal funding aligns with Council's priorities and local knowledge about providing fit for purpose, sustainable infrastructure and value for money in our region.

Budget Position 17/18

Total Operating Revenue: \$75.8m

Total Operating Expenditure: \$115.7m

Net Operating Capability (with depreciation): \$39.8m

Operating Surplus: \$13k*

*Subject to notations stated in the budget.

Strategies to minimise impact

- Significant State and Federal government advocacy, which has proven to be a great success in 16/17, seeing the Financial Assistance Grants Scheme indexation being passed through the Federal Budget, the State Government Financial Aid funding levels being increased and indexation passed on, Works 4 Qld funding program continuing, continuation of the Local Fare Scheme, Environmental Health funding over a 5 year period of \$8m, just to name a few.
- Stripped back Council's operating budget to bare bones without on-ground service delivery reductions.
- Investigate structural reforms in Housing, incorporating external tenancy management by 1 July 2019.
- Sourcing multiple grant opportunities to deliver Council's capital works priorities.
- Stringent cash management through collaborative debt recovery practices with Housing tenants and a pro-active approach to commercial debt recovery.



Budget Results

- \$13k operating surplus before depreciation in 17/18. This small surplus will need to be revised at budget review due to \$5m advance payment for the Financial Assistance Grants Scheme, which will be reported in 16/17.
- We are forecasting a continued \$1m operating deficit before depreciation for next financial period 18/19 as a result of a reduction in revenue from our building works activity as mentioned earlier, however Council's liquidity level or cash held in reserve is more than what is normally required to be held in reserve for a Council our size.
- Operating surpluses are projected from 19/20 to 23/24, however this can only be achieved if Council makes strategic decisions such as outsourcing tenancy management responsibilities, which will certainly be discussed in all our communities.
- Strong operating cash flows projected throughout that particular period with Council building healthy cash reserves.

Cash Position

- Council's cash position has improved since drafting the 17/18 Budget with receipt of \$5m in advance for FAGS funding for 17/18.

- As at 9th June 2017, Council's cash holdings were \$28.7m, \$19m of which is quarantined as our working capital or liquidity buffer.
- After deducting Council's "committed cash" (tied grant programs, own funded capital works and the liquidity level), Council is left with \$6.2m.
- Council has elected to utilise this surplus cash to invest into asset repairs and maintenance projects, described below.

Special Projects | \$2.73M Works for QLD and \$6.2M TSIRC Funds

Council will receive \$2.73M over 17/18 and 18/19 under the extended Stated Government-funded Works for Queensland (W4Q) program. These projects will be announced soon.

Additionally, I am proud to announce that at its July 2017 Ordinary Meeting, Council approved to utilise its \$6.2M cash to prioritise on each community, repairs and maintenance of key existing community facilities, with a focus on island beautification, functionality and OHS. Some of these include:

- Airport Waiting Sheds
- Public Toilets
- Council Offices
- Landfill Cleanup and Re-organisation
- Landfill Fencing and Signage
- Wharves and Jetties

Many more exciting projects will be announced soon under the W4Q project.

In closing, it is vital that State and Federal funding aligns with Council's priorities and local knowledge about providing fit for purpose, sustainable infrastructure and value for money in our region. Renewal and replacement of existing infrastructure is our priority.

God Bless



Mayor Fred Gela





Message from the CEO

With the 2016/17 financial year coming to a close on June 30, let's take a look back at TSIRC's top achievements.

Office of the Chief Executive Officer

- Successful advocacy, including recent announcement by the State Government of:
 - State Government Financial Aid (SGFA) restored to 2012 levels and indexed annually
 - Works for Queensland funding extended for further 2 years (\$200M)
 - Indigenous Water Infrastructure Program (\$120M over 4 years)
 - Local Fare Scheme extended for 2 years (\$8.3M)
 - Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) expanded by \$30M
 - \$50M over 5 years to upgrade up to 344 LHA (Katter) Lease properties to enable homeownership.

(More details in the below article)

- Budget operating surplus achieved in 2016/17
- Successful recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive Officer from September 2017
- Successful recruitment of Executive Manager Housing Services

Financial Services

- Strengthened Council's budget forecasting and long term financial planning by refining model inputs and documenting budget assumptions and inputs
- Grants database implemented to keep better track of Council's grants and acquittals
- Increased debt recovery in 16/17 - utility charges to 82% and commercial debt to 99%
- State wage increase and level merge in September 2016 per Industry Award

Corporate Services

- \$1.3B of Council assets revalued with asset condition assessments
- Backhoe competency training provided to 6 staff from Mabuiag and Dauan Islands
- Finalist in the Far North Queensland Training Awards - Large Employer of the Year category - 15 apprenticeships and 22 traineeships

- Favourable decision in the Land Court of Queensland for the grant of pending Katter (LHA) leases
- Video-conferencing facilities at each TSIRC office

Housing Services (incorporating the Building Services Unit)

- 30 new houses completed across our communities, and a new subdivision on Badu and Hammond Islands.
- Indigenous employment and training - 15 apprentices and 10 indigenous contractors
- In-kind construction of Anzac Memorials
- Successful recruitment of Manager Housing Services
- Increase in social housing rent recovery from 20% to 56%, with payment plans up from 5% of debtors to 30%
- Social housing community engagement sessions (details in the below article)

Community Services

- Environmental Health Program secures 5 year funding deal
- Biosecurity Plan and Strategy developed
- Health and Wellbeing program renewed for 12 months
- Health and Wellbeing program gets a boost from TSIMA funding
- Ideas Box confirmed for communities without Indigenous Knowledge Centres in 17/18
- Community education sessions, vet visits and mosquito control
- 18 Environmental Health Workers completed Cert IV in Animal Control and Regulations

Engineering Services

- Saibai Seawalls complete
- MIP5 projects complete, including
 - Water Main Replacement - Badu
 - Water Main Replacement - Iama
 - Water Improvements - Erub
 - Water Improvements - Mer

- Regional SCADA Project
- Pump Station Refurbishment – Mer, Saibai
- Boigu Water Production Investigation and Upgrades
- Other capital projects complete, including
 - Saibai Airport fencing relocation
 - Mer Road (barge ramp to desals plant) continuation
 - Barge Ramp Upgrade – Dauan, Hammond & Masig
 - WTP Shed Repairs & Upgrade – Kubin & St Pauls
 - Airport Upgrades – Badu, Kubin, Mabuiag, Mer & Erub
 - Boigu Water Investigation and Upgrades
 - Emergency Mobile Desalination Units
 - HF Radio
 - NDRRA works – Badu, Boigu, Erub, Hammond, Mabuiag, Moa
 - Hammond and Moa road safety improvements
 - Warraber & Poruma water pump stations renewals

I look forward to soon handing over the reigns of TSIRC management in September to our incoming Chief Executive Officer, and will continue to support him in my role as Executive Manager Corporate Services to ensure Council continues to evolve to meet community expectation. Mina Big Esso to Council and community for the opportunity over the past 12 months to serve as your acting Chief Executive Officer.

God bless.



Chris.

Council has set its plan for 2017/18 which can be downloaded from Council's website at www.tsirc.qld.gov.au by searching 'Operational Plan', and includes a list of all approved projects.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are always looking for good news stories from you. If you've got a story or event that you want to share with STRAIT TALK please get in touch with us.

Community success stories are what we love, but if you'd like to promote the good work of a community member or an event you can message us at our Torres Strait Island Regional Council Facebook page or email us at Engagement@tsirc.qld.gov.au



Deputations in Canberra and Brisbane

Lobbying for better policies, services and funding for the Torres Strait

During May, Mayor Gela, staff and Councillors headed to Canberra and Brisbane to meet with politicians and advocate for the needs of the Torres Strait.

Meetings were held with Ministers, Shadow Ministers and politicians across the political parties to seek commitment to resolving the issues we face in the Torres Strait.

In Canberra, the need for ongoing Federal funding for housing was raised, including the importance of local jobs and business opportunities in housing building projects. With one year to go on the current 10 year NPARIH remote housing program, Council will continue to engage at Federal and State levels to emphasise the importance of continued funding for new housing in our communities.

Mayor Gela, Acting CEO Chris McLaughlin and Principal Advocate Clare Richards met with Minister Scullion, Minister Dutton and twenty other parliamentarians and their staff in the very busy Federal Budget week during May.

As well as housing, other issues raised included developing a Federal/State joint facility on Saibai; protecting our communities from the impacts of tidal inundation and coastal erosion; and Federal funding of the final amount required to commence the Torres Strait Digital Expansion Project.

The restoration of indexation to Financial Assistance Grants that was announced during the Canberra visit was welcome news. Following these meetings in Canberra, several senior parliamentarians are likely to make their first ever trip to the Torres Strait in the coming months.

Spending time on the ground in our region helps people in far away Canberra get a far better sense of the issues we face.

In Brisbane, Mayor Gela was accompanied by Councillors David Bosun and Torenzo Elisala, Acting CEO Chris McLaughlin and Principal Advocate Clare



Richards. While in Brisbane, Mayor Gela argued for:

- Restoration of State Government Financial Aid indexation and continuation of Works for Queensland funding.
- Increased funding for water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Further funding to protect communities from inundation and erosion.
- Funding for a Federal/State joint facility on Saibai.
- Funding for a waste metal clean up on our islands.

Discussions were also held regarding how to progress recognition of Ailan Adoption in ways that appropriately protect the rights and interests of everyone involved.



LEADERS SHOUT OUT!

In this edition we introduce Councillor John Levi for Wug (St Pauls) at Mua.

As Councillor for St Pauls I look forward to working together with my 15 TSIRC Councillors, Executive Management and staff to represent TSIRC at a local and regional Level.

My goals are to bring improvement across governance and our decision-making processes, and to see core service delivery responsibilities being delivered effectively to each division. I am proactive in ensuring our primary health care services are upgraded and improved.

I want to see changes to our current housing service delivery and infrastructure upgrades so that there are more career and job opportunities for local members and businesses. I want to see our young people engaged in career and sporting opportunities both locally and regionally.

I'm enjoy being hands-on in my community taking part in community functions, P&C, church organisations, local school functions, Elders group, helping families and doing volunteer work.

I'm an advocate for change, as we have adapted to the changes in the past, we have learned also to adapt to the present, and as a strong resilient nation of people, together we will learn to adapt also for the future.

Coin Celebrates Anniversary

To mark the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the 25th anniversary of the High Court Mabo decision, award-winning contemporary artist and grand-daughter of Eddie Mabo, Boneta-Marie Mabo, collaborated with the Royal Australian Mint (the Mint) in the design of Australia's newest 50c circulating coin.

The commemorative coin was officially launched today by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion in the company of those who were part of the 1967 referendum campaign, Ms Mabo and her family, and other guests at a celebration marking the anniversaries.

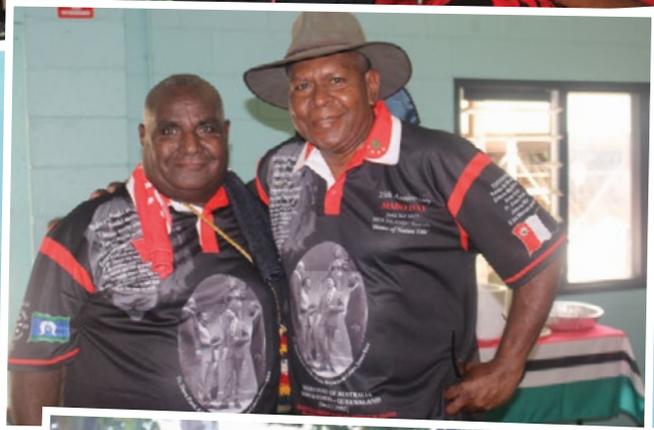
These special coins will enter circulation.



MABO 25

June 3rd marked the 25th Anniversary of the historic Mabo decision. Council honoured the tireless work of Uncle Koiki Mabo and co-plaintiffs, James Rice, Father Dave Passi, Sam Passi and Celuia Salee and their families.





Drinking Water Symposium

The Department of Energy and Water Supply facilitated a Drinking Water Symposium in Cairns this June. 60 delegates from Local Councils, Health and other State Government Agencies exchanged ideas about how to better manage drinking water challenges.

The Symposium provided a platform where Water Managers could share ideas and solutions in a relaxed and open environment on water management.

A big congratulation to TSIRC Manager of Water and Waste Water, Tom Day who won an Award for Best Presentation for "Managing Island Water Stocks During Drought Conditions"

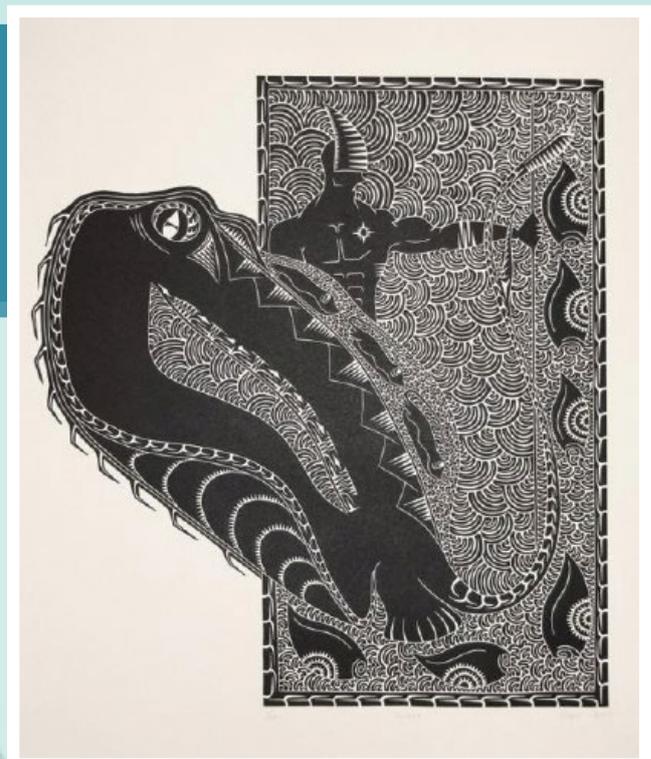
Future Drinking Water Symposiums are due to be held in the West and South East Queensland later in the year.



Shout out to Joseph Au

Strait Talk would like to acknowledge Mr Joseph Au and his contributions to art and culture for Badu. "Joseph Au is one of the 'parents' of the Badu Art Centre. Joseph, alongside Laurie Nona and Alick Tipoti were amongst the small group who decided to lobby to create the Badu Art Centre in the early 2000's."

More of Mr Au's artwork can be viewed here:
<http://www.baduartcentre.com.au/artists/joseph-au>



Elders Connect with Community

Masig Elders hosted the Elders Connect with Community day on Thursday 11th, May 2017. The Elders meet once a month to share old photos and stories about the good old days in Masig. They spoke of how they lived off the land and sea, and passed on cultural knowledge about the seasons for planting and hunting.

They plan on teaching language, language hymns, dancing songs and 'Family Tree' connections. The Elders also share stories about all the significant events from the region.

“It’s very important to close the gap with the younger generation by building stronger relationships and passing on messages of cultural importance”.

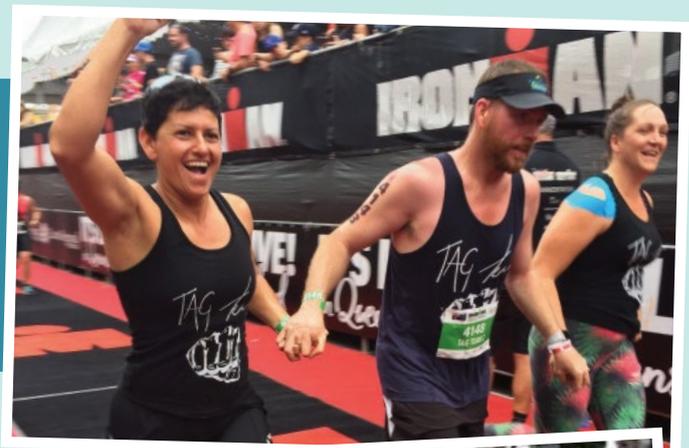


Cairns Ironman event

Our Cairns team Jenny O’Connell and Vicky Torrisi participated in the Cairns Ironman Event during June.

“I was part of Tag Team 2. I was asked 6 weeks prior to the race if I could do the 90km bike leg as the team’s original rider had pulled out. The 90km ride was from Palm Cove to Thala Beach (just south of Port Douglas) and back to Fogarty Park on the Esplanade Cairns. I completed the ride in 3hrs 25mins at an average speed of 27.6km/hr. I only started riding road bikes 6 months ago”.

Jenny completed a solo 1.9km Swim, 90km Cycle and 21.1km run in 6 hours 35 mins.



Housing

TSIRC provides housing to over 900 tenants across the Torres Strait. Through the housing program, Council delivers maintenance, upgrades, new constructions and tenancy management.

Council is committed to making sure housing is sustainable now and into the future. Council's tenancy management team have been busy talking to tenants about what this means, and how this can be achieved.

This year the team have been conducting week-long visits to discuss housing at community forums, meet with tenants one-on-one, as well as provide training and support to our Housing Officers on the ground.

The forums have provided communities with information about: how housing is funded; Council's responsibilities under its funding arrangement; where rental income goes and tenant responsibilities.



The payment of rent, on-time and every-time is an important tenant responsibility. All rent received by Council supports the delivery of tenancy services. To make sure that Council is able to deliver sustainable housing into the future it is important that all tenants pay rent.

Whilst visiting communities, the Housing Team have met with tenants to arrange payment plans and make sure that rent is being paid every fortnight. So far the team have visited Badu, Dauan and Warraber with some great outcomes.

All three communities have had significant increases in their rent payments and the team have been able to resolve a number of complex tenancy management matters. The team will be back on Badu over the coming months.

Keep an eye on Council's notice board for information on the team's next visit and come along to hear about Housing in your community - or make an appointment to see us.

Our community services teams have been busy training these last few months!



Our Building Apprentices have been studying their Cert 3 in Carpentry.



Our Healthy Lifestyle have been studying Sport and Recreation, at Cairns TAFE.

Saibai Seawalls Officially Completed



HACC workers have been training in their Cert 3 in Individual Support.



EHW's studying their Cert 4 in Animal Control and Regulations

TSIRC Training Awards

TSIRC is a finalist for the Regional Training Awards and wins a Bronze Award at the Australasian Reporting Awards!

Our Acting CEO and HR team were proud to represent TSIRC. The award is dedicated to all of our employees who are committed to their professional development and future pathways. TSIRC was a finalist in the 'Large Employer of the Year' category.

A shout out to our Training and Development Officer, Teena Akiba who led the application process and applied on behalf of TSIRC.

TSIRC were also awarded a prize from the Australasian Reporting Awards (ARA) for the second year in a row, for our 2016 Annual Report.



ARA's are awarded to Annual Reports that:

- Provide a balanced and reasonable picture of their economic, environmental, and social performance;
- Facilitate comparability, benchmarking and assessment of performance;
- Address issues of concern to stakeholders.

Search the records for your Unclaimed Money!

There is nearly \$40,000 belonging to 100 people living in the Torres Strait region. "Unclaimed money is money from lost bank accounts, shares, investments and life insurance policies. This money becomes lost when you move house and forget to update your details with a financial institution or company."

Community members can search their name, or a community organisation, through the Public Trustee website (<https://www.pt.qld.gov.au/other-services/unclaimed-money/>) to claim any lost money. Unclaimed money comes from any overpayments of levies and unknown payment made to Council over 6 years ago.



Staff Profile

Bob commenced employment with TSIRC early in 2014 along with a number of new recruits in Cairns, before taking on the challenge of working remotely as an Environmental Health Worker.

Having worked as a landscaper in Parks and Gardens Bob could see how maintaining a healthy environment has positive impacts on human health. Bob enjoyed the challenge of his new job in promoting environmental health programs that deliver positive health outcomes.

In March of 2017 Bob was successful in being appointed as the Senior Environmental Health Worker mentoring Environmental Health Workers at Dauan, Kubin, Saibai and St Pauls to deliver programs on the ground.

Bob enjoys the challenge of developing his skills to assist other colleagues to deliver successful outcomes in Animal Management, Food Safety, Waste Management, Sewer and Water Management, Pest Control and promoting Council's Local Laws.



Bob Modee

Every day Bob is inspired by the biblical quote given to him, by his Grandfather the Late Jerry Stephen SNR. "All thy works shall praise thee O LORD; and thy saint shall bless thee" Psalms 145 verse 10

Narelle Vergini Legal Placement Student

Narelle is a final year Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts student at James Cook University (JCU). She completed her legal placement with TSIRC as part of her law degree, assisting the Legal Services Division for one day a week between February and May 2017. Narelle is the third law student from JCU to complete a legal placement with TSIRC. Here, Narelle shares some information about herself and her journey:

"Work placement at TSIRC gave me insight into challenges the Council has in providing and maintaining infrastructure and services in the

region, with native title and cultural heritage being respected at all times. What I found most interesting was the interlinking of cultural heritage and native title into all areas of the Council's responsibilities. Until this point I had never really considered to what extent organisations such as the Council valued and applied community consultations.

"I have now officially finished university study, and look forward to completing my legal practicing certificate and ultimately finding a position that will enable me to help people. I have always had a passion to want to help people in



all areas of my life, which is why I decided to study law: to help people understand their options, and give a voice in seeking rights and justice."

Narelle, big esso for your assistance and all the best for the future!

Kai Kai Corner

'Island Style' Sweet Chilli Crayfish is an absolute treat here is a dish shared with us by our very own staff member Yancy Tamu of Warraber Island.

Ingredients:

- 2 medium cray tails
- ½ cup sweet chilli Sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon ginger, crushed
- 2 red chillies, de seeded and finally sliced
- 1 tablespoon margarine, to brush pan

Utensils:

- Cutting board
- Medium bowl
- Medium pan
- Tongs
- Knife

Method:

- Cut cray tails in half and remove meat from shell
- Combine Sweet chilli sauce, oyster sauce, garlic, ginger & chilli in a medium bowl



Yancy Tamu

- Add cray to marinade mix for ½ hour, or overnight for best results
- Add margarine to pan on medium heat & cook cray for 3-5mins each side or until cooked

Serve this delicious kai-kai with salad.



STRAIT talk

STRAIT talk is produced by the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and is also available as an online newsletter that can be delivered to your inbox! Go to our website to subscribe and receive announcements and Council updates!

Cairns based Indigenous design and digital media creative agency 'Ingeous Studio's' have designed a new look Strait Talk working with artwork from the Torres Strait.

Talented Badu Islander artist Matilda Nona Malujewell's Coconut Broom print and Cr David Bosun's beautiful artwork are included in this new design.

To see more of their work contact Badu Art Centre through <http://www.baduartcentre.com.au> and Moa Arts <http://moaart.com.au>



LIKE US ON 