

**Torres Strait Island**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Queensland 2017 State Election

# **POLICY PLAN**



# Our Policy Plan

Torres Strait Island Regional Council has a longstanding commitment to maintain and develop our close working relationship with the Queensland Government and Parliament.

We engage with other levels of government on the basis of mutual respect and honest dialogue. We are committed to ensuring the needs of our people and our region lead how policy, programs and funding are developed and delivered in the Torres Strait.

We believe all political representatives are open to policies that effectively and efficiently meet the needs of our people in sustainable ways.



**Cr Fred Gela, Mayor**  
Torres Strait Island Regional Council



# 1. Climate Adaptation

**TSIRC seeks:**  
\$10.14M (50% of total costs) for completion of protective works against tidal erosion and inundation on Boigu and Poruma; and for production of engineering designs for Masig, Iama and Warraber.

Significant climate adaptation works are required on five of our islands to protect coastlines from erosion and inundation. A large seawall (1,870m) on Saibai has recently been completed.

Estimation of costs to complete works (subject to scope and methodology) for Boigu is \$12.82M and Poruma \$6.87M. Obtaining certified engineering plans for Masig, Iama and Warraber will cost in the order of \$600,000 and will enable detailed costing to be obtained for completion of works on each island.

Erosion caused by encroaching tides is scouring sand from beaches, undermining community infrastructure and threatening homes on Boigu, Poruma, Masig, Iama and Warraber. Inundation on king tides and during severe weather events occurs on Boigu, and the impacts are significant.

Essential to life infrastructure and homes in our communities are severely impacted by these conditions and events.





## 2. Torres Strait Digital Expansion Project

**TSIRC seeks:  
Ongoing commitment of the State's  
\$2.1M contribution to the Torres Strait  
Digital Expansion Project.**

Only 50% of the Torres Strait has mobile coverage, and bandwidth of internet services is low. To obtain functional bandwidth and full coverage of the Torres Strait, TSIRC is leading the Torres Strait Digital Expansion Project. Telstra has committed \$7.1M, the Queensland Government \$2.1M and we are seeking \$6.4M from the Federal Government.

The current insufficient, out-dated communications infrastructure restricts personal use and basic business and government operations and opportunities, access to education and training, health and essential services.

This has life threatening implications.

Adequate mobile and internet access will open up a world of business, governance and educational opportunities for the people of the Torres Strait. The innovation already evident in our region will be able to thrive.



### 3. Water & Wastewater Operations

**TSIRC seeks:**  
Ongoing \$1.5M annually for TSIRC water and wastewater operations.

Drinking water and sewerage infrastructure is essential to life. Without maintenance, it fails.

TSIRC has \$1.15 billion in assets, no effective rate base, and a population of 4,514 people spread over 15 communities across 14 remote islands.

Our costs of water production are at least 440% higher than typical costs. This means the results achieved with available funding are limited. Given our high cost base, it is critical that our water and wastewater maintenance occurs at the earliest possible time to minimise cost escalations and service disruption.

Adequate water and wastewater operations funding is essential to maintaining levels of public and environmental health that can and should be expected in one of the world's most affluent nations.



## 4. ATSI TIDS

### **TSIRC seeks:**

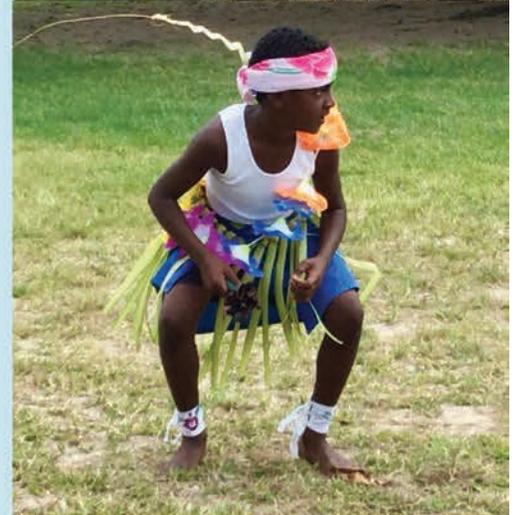
Increased budget allocation to ATSI TIDS and program expansion to include repairs and maintenance as well as capital works that meet the standards and compliance requirements of government.

The depreciation on TSIRC transport infrastructure is in the order of \$6.5M per year. ATSI TIDS typically funds TSIRC to \$1.4M per year. This gap translates to significant deterioration of our transport infrastructure. Renewals cannot occur as and when required. As a remote, island region our infrastructure includes roads but also significant air and marine assets.

The under-funding of ATSI TIDS means that Council never has sufficient funds to conduct major upgrades. Upgrading just one wharf would consume up to two or more years of our ATSI TIDS allocation of around \$1.4M, leaving no funds for other renewal and replacement requirements.

The snowball effect of chronic under-funding also means that marine and other transport facilities will fail to meet future compliance requirements such as those approaching under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Queensland Government has a responsibility to align its own standards and compliance requirements with sufficient funds to allow Council to meet these obligations.





## 5. Local Fare Scheme: Dauan & Ugar

### TSIRC seeks:

- Commitment to whole-of-government utilisation policy for the Erub-Ugar and Saibai-Dauan ferry services
- A transport subsidy to the community members of Ugar and Dauan, via a:
  1. Ferry subsidy, and/or
  2. Helicopter subsidy.

Many families in the Torres Strait on low to medium incomes are struggling with the high cost of living. This often makes full cost travel for any reason beyond people's reach.

With no regulated air service, community members in Dauan and Ugar do not obtain the benefit of the Local Fare Scheme available to all other outer islands.

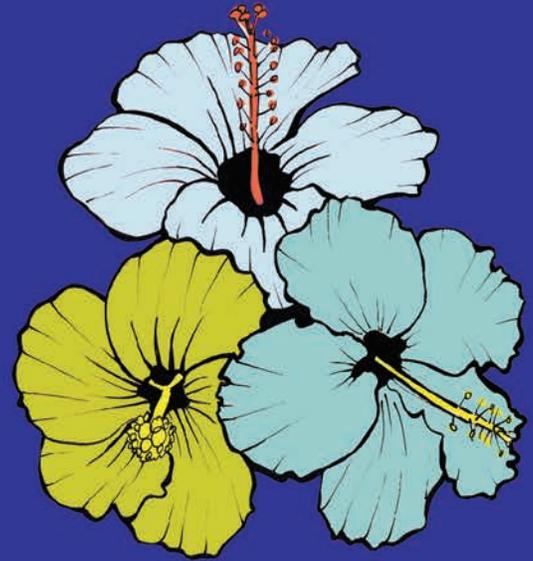
The lack of access on Ugar and Dauan impacts every aspect of people's lives, from health, to cost of living, work, leisure and social connectedness. Finding a way to subsidise travel from Ugar and Dauan communities will help redress these challenges.



## 6. Land Tenure Arrangements

### TSIRC seeks:

Simplified land tenure arrangements in the Torres Strait. Holistic tenure resolution processes need to be sufficiently resourced. If implemented this will enable the simplest possible end user experience for community members and stakeholders and support effective land tenure outcomes.



Multiple land tenure management processes developed over time have resulted in a highly complex administrative environment in the Torres Strait. This administrative complexity hampers everything from the provision of social housing, to government and non-government services, leases, and the establishment and functioning of businesses.

The economic and social development of the Torres Strait is held back by such administrative complexity.

Community members – as tenants, Traditional Owners, prospective business people and/or prospective home owners – are confused and frustrated by this complexity and the lack of outcomes that result.

Resources must be committed to developing better policy approaches to land tenure administration in the Torres Strait, in close collaboration with TSIRC. Holistic approaches to land tenure decisions such as utilised in the traditional boundary resolution project on Ugar, and the current Moa Tenure Resolution Project must be used across all islands. Capacity to address all land tenure issues in one process is essential to enable effective and efficient outcomes to be achieved.



## 7. Regional Economic Development

**TSIRC seeks:**  
\$260,000 development cost for a regional cabinet workshop on Hammond Island.

Council undertook a feasibility study in February 2017 for development of a regional cabinet workshop on Hammond Island.

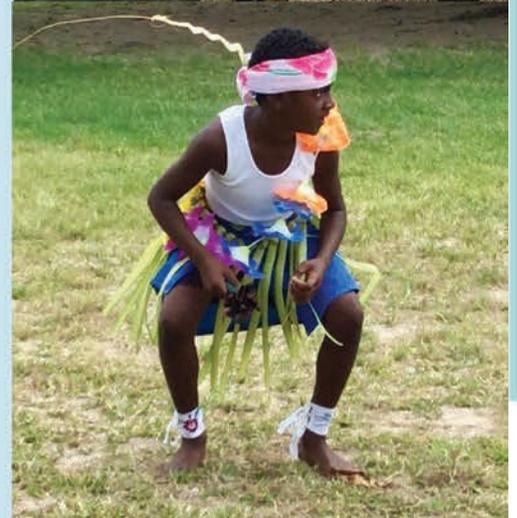
The cabinet workshop will employ a local manager and two local apprentices, and produce at least 94 kitchens per year, replacing the existing need to bring kitchens up from Cairns.

We anticipate a cabinet workshop will also attract demand from Northern Peninsula and Torres Shire communities, thereby increasing returns.

TSIRC advocates strongly for increased employment and business opportunity in our region. With over 1000 properties we are the largest housing provider in the region. The cabinet workshop will also be able to service Government Employee Housing, private individuals and business building needs in the region.

Our consideration of the benefit of the cabinet workshop includes the gross economic benefit to the region.

Practical developments such as the cabinet workshop are essential to building economic opportunities in our region.





## CONTACT DETAILS

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