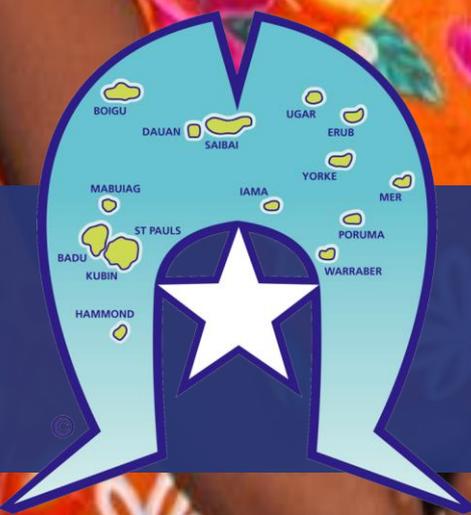




Queensland Government Deputations
Portfolio of Briefs
20 – 22 March 2018







PAPUA NEW GUINEA

DARU Is.

BRISTOW Is.

BRAMBLE
Cay

EAST
Cay

UGAR (Stephen Is.)

ERUB (Darnley Is.)

MASIG (Yorke Is.)

MER (Murray Is.)

PORUMA (Coconut Is.)

IAMA (Yam Is.)

MABUYAG (Jervis Island)

MOA (Banks Is.)

WARRABER (Sue Is.)

BADU (Mulgrave Is.)

DELIVERANCE Is.

BOIGU (Talbot Is.)

DAUAN (Mt Cornwallis Is.)

SAIBE (Saibai Is.)

TORRES STRAIT

Torres Strait Protected Zone

KIRRIRI (Hammond Is.)

WAIBEN
(Thursday Is.)

MAWAI (Wednesday Is.)

Ngurupai (Horn Is.)

MURALAG
(Prince of Wales Is.)

Torres Strait
permanent
biosecurity
monitoring
zone

MAINLAND AUSTRALIA





Climate Adaptation: Coastal Erosion & Tidal Inundation Mitigation

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 20 - 22 March 2018

Recommendation:

That the Queensland government fund \$10.145M (50% of total costs) for:

- Completion of protective works against tidal erosion and inundation on Boigu and Poruma
- Production of certified engineering plans for Masig, Iama and Warraber

Background

Torres Strait Island Regional Council is developing a long term strategy to address climate adaptation needs of our region and is participating in the QCoast2100 Coastal Hazard Adaptation Study (CHAS).

The QCoast2100 CHAS is an 8 stage project funded by LGAQ which aims to achieve the following 3 objectives:

- Identify coastal hazards induced by climate change, such as inundation and erosion
- Consult with the community
- Plan to adapt to the hazard by defending, adapting or retreating.

TSIRC recently received \$50,000 funding under the QCoast2100 Coastal CHAS and are progressing with Phases 1 & 2 of the program. GHD are the consultant responsible for completing Phases 1 & 2 which includes firstly developing a Stakeholder Engagement Plan and then the CHAS Project Plan. Under future funding applications, TSIRC are aiming to progress with the remaining CHAS Phases (Phases 3 – 8):

- Identify areas exposed to current & future coastal hazards
- Identify key assets potentially impacted
- Risk assessment of key assets in coastal hazard areas
- Identify potential adaptation options
- Socio-economic appraisal of adaptation options
- Strategy development, implementation and review.

While long term strategies are developed and implemented, there are immediate threats to our communities that need addressing.

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.

TSRA has recently committed \$650,000 for 60m of sand bag wall on Poruma to protect a section highly impacted by erosion. This work will be delivered by Council.

Erosion caused by encroaching tides is scouring sand from beaches, undermining community infrastructure and threatening homes on Boigu, Poruma, Masig, lama and Warraber. The recent severe weather events combined with king tides resulted in significant coastal erosion on Poruma, lama, Mer and Erub Islands.

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

The impacts of tidal inundation on Boigu can be severe - as can be seen in the attached photos of the February 2017 high tide and severe weather. If full funding for the Boigu works had been provided in response to our May 2017 request it would have saved at least \$500,000, which is the cost of mobilisation and demobilisation of plant, equipment and personnel for the works to occur in a two stage process. A surplus of \$2.7M remained from works on Saibai, which has been allocated to commencing works on Boigu. These works, which included raising the lowest sections of the Seawall meant that during the recent severe weather events, Boigu was not impacted to the extent that occurred in February 2017 prior to the works.

Poruma requires works to protect against coastal erosion which is occurring at a significant rate. Surveys indicate that Poruma has experienced shoreline change at the western tip at **rates up to 11 m/year since 1974**, and varying losses at other points. The Poruma community has agreed to 240m of protective works on the most impacted section of coastline (see Appendix 1). The existing one cubic metre geotextile sand bags utilised on Poruma are the same specifications as those used on the Cocos Islands.

Completion of the design phase (certified engineering plans) for lama, Masig and Warraber will cost over \$600,000 – around \$200,000 per community including surveys and

geotechnical assessments. Detailed costing of final works for lama, Masig and Warraber can be determined once certified engineering plans are obtained.



Boigu Tidal Inundation February 2017



Tidal inundation breaching original seawall (designed to stop erosion not to stop inundation). Seawall line can be seen running from rear centre photo to the right.



Tidal inundation of roads – shop is in centre left background.





Tidal inundation surrounding the lagoon – Boigu’s only source of drinking water.



Tidal inundation of the airport apron and taxiway.





Tidal inundation surrounding a home.



Poruma coastal erosion



Coastal erosion occurring at Poruma.



Erosion on sections of Poruma's coast is severe.





Existing sandbags on a segment of eroding coastline on Poruma. Note how much further the erosion has progressed on the unprotected coast in the upper left of the image.





Impacts from costal erosion at Poruma



APPENDIX 1: Proposed 240m protection, Poruma



RECENT STORM EVENTS 2018 – Inundation & Erosion Impacts

IAMA



Please note erosion of seawall and deposit of sand and coral inland





Movements of sand and coral onto shore from king tide



BOIGU



Recent works on Boigu resulted in holding back tidal inundation



Completed protective works on Boigu





Completed protective works on Boigu



PORUMA



Note far deeper ingress of coastal erosion where sandbags are not present





Note depth of coastal erosion





Waves breaking over jetty during recent severe weather at Poruma

ICCIP Funding

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 20 - 22 March 2018

Recommendation:

That the Queensland Government:

- Minimise process and fast track approvals and budget release to assist Council to deliver \$51M of works within the remaining 2.5 year delivery period
- Ensure that the full amount of \$51M allocated to Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) is quarantined for Council to access as required for the critical projects identified
- Support Council's objective of prioritising internal and regionally focused delivery to:
 - Minimise the significant costs of contracting external mainland based consultants and contractors
 - Maximise employment, training and economic opportunities for people and businesses of the Torres Strait.



Background

In September 2017 the Director General advised TSIRC that as of the 2017-18 budget, funds were committed to TSIRC over a 4 year period (capped at \$51M) under the Indigenous Communities Critical Infrastructure program.

Council acknowledges the great work the Department has done in visiting 5 communities with Council staff to assess 'first hand' the significant asset needs and challenges faced, such as the Saibai Sewage Plant which is in dire need of renewal and poses many risks to Council, and the health and wellbeing of the community and environment.

The fresh and pragmatic approach the Department is taking in working closely with Council, and in it's drive to have delivered 'fit for purpose and place' infrastructure and infrastructure that can be operated and maintained by Council staff is appreciated. Commitment to developing infrastructure that has manageable 'whole of life costing' for Council is critical, both to Council and to the future funding demands upon the Queensland government.

Issues

Program Roll-Out Timing

The letter received in September 2017 suggests that the program is a 4 year program which would indicate funding is available from 1 July 2017 through to 30 June 2021. However, apart from some minor funds related to works that were already underway relating to a project Council is undertaking with the Health Department, funds have only recently become available to progress other works.

In addition this, Council has been advised that the program is to be completed in June 2020.

This means that a 4 year program is, for all practical purposes, required to be completed in 2 years and 5 months. For Council this means \$51 Million of works to be completed in less than two and a half years.



For Council this will be a very significant challenge and will put great strain on realising the opportunities for Torres Strait people and Torres Strait-based businesses to deliver the program. The employment, training and economic opportunities are always diminished when programs are accelerated in the Torres Strait as there isn't the capacity to undertake such a body of work in a quick manner.

As such, there is a real risk that opportunities and budget will be lost to mainland suppliers and contractors, and less opportunities and benefits will be realised in the Torres Strait.

If this accelerated program is required, and for it to be realised, Council requests your Department streamline approvals and budget releases to:

- Enable Council to meet the challenges of high-intensity program delivery in the timeframe available
- Realise as much benefit as possible for Torres Strait employees and businesses.

Project Needs and Budget

The budget allocation as advised in the State's correspondence is capped at \$51 Million. Council is aware that this includes a nominal contingency percentage of 60 percent.

Currently the State has nominated a contingency amount of 15% to be released at this stage.

Council is of the firm belief that in most cases the full contingency amount will be required to meet the Program objectives. The actual amount of contingency needed will become clearer once designs and construction tenders are progressed, and as construction progresses.

Council therefore requests that the full \$51 Million is 'quarantined' for access as needed, and to make informed and 'fit for purpose' decisions early-on and in the design phases.





Container Refund Scheme

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 20 - 22 March 2018

Recommendation:

That the Queensland Government:

- Restrict the implementation of the Container Refund Scheme to areas that fall into the Metropolitan to Remote range of the ARIA index (Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia)
- Make amendment to the policy of the Scheme to ensure that beverage pricing does not increase in Very Remote areas such as the Torres Strait which are unable to access the Scheme



Background

In 2018 the Queensland Government is due to roll out the Container Refund Scheme. As the Container Refund Scheme policy currently stands, it is due to apply across the State without regional exceptions or variations.

To roll out this Scheme in the Torres Strait would require container collection points on all 15 island communities. The costs of establishing, servicing, maintaining and resourcing 15 container collection points would be prohibitive. Additional issues that would impact the function of the Scheme in the Torres Strait include:

- low volumes of returned containers
- high costs of freight to return containers to mainland processing centres
- impact of biosecurity risks on returning collected materials

Reverse dispensing machines are an option for the Torres Strait Islands, which exchange containers for money. However, maintenance and servicing of the machines will be expensive in the Torres Strait and trials in remote NT communities have proven they are unreliable.

On each of TSIRC's 15 remote island communities, a Container Refund Point operator would need to:

- Procure, operate, maintain and eventually replace container crushers & bailers
- Procure, operate, maintain and eventually replace lockable bins and sheds for storing containers
- Hold cash available for refunding containers or undertake EFTs (Council is currently cashless)
- Allocate staff time for handling money, collecting containers, giving refunds, washing containers, crushing & bailing containers, biosecurity clearance on containers, organising freight, delivering containers to the barge, organising contracts with recyclers, requesting payment from the beverage industry, etc.

If eligible recyclables are to be shipped back to the Australian mainland for recycling, Biosecurity Queensland indicated the following issues would need consideration when operating a container refund scheme in the Torres Strait:



- Before, during and after collection/crushing/transport, containers need to be stored in a dry and secure area where there is no possibility for water collection/pooling, soil contamination, vegetation/seed contamination, or ingress by insects, mammals and birds
- The handling, storage and transport of the containers would require a Biosecurity Approval Notice (BAN)
- The process would undergo random audits to ensure that it is compliant with biosecurity regulations
- For old containers which have been lying around on the ground outside and have been contaminated with water and soil, these would need to be thoroughly rinsed prior to returning for a refund, or put in a general waste bin as an alternative.

Issues

The establishment, running, compliance and maintenance costs of implementing the Container Refund Scheme in the Torres Strait region will be uneconomically high. On that basis, Council is very unlikely to tender for the Scheme and it is unlikely that private providers will either for the same reasons. The lack of fit of the scheme to the Torres Strait means that our residents are hit with increased grocery costs with no means to obtain refunds. Costs of living in the Torres Strait are already amongst the highest in the nation.

Policy settings need to be adjusted so that the varying conditions across the State are recognised in the policy and structure of the Scheme. It is our recommendation that the Queensland government consider utilising a nationally recognised measure such as the ARIA remoteness index to define the areas for implementation of the Scheme and exclude Very Remote areas from the Scheme. It is also vital that Very Remote areas are protected against increased beverage costs.





Land Tenure Resolution

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 20 - 22 March 2018

Recommendation: That the Queensland Government resolve land tenure issues effectively and efficiently by:

1. Ensuring instruments and approaches to tenure are collaboratively developed across Federal, State and Local government to ensure the simplest possible experience for community members, including:
 - Partnership between Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) and Queensland government to replace 40 year leases on National Partnership Remote Housing (NPRH) housing with a more effective instrument capable of region-wide application across NPRH and non-NPRH housing
 - Prioritising island-by-island traditional boundary mapping to ensure correct Traditional Owners are engaged
 - Implementing an island-by-island ILUA model which includes:
 - RNTBC fee for service and compensation funding
 - Mandatory inclusion of land allocated for contractors camps (time-limited) in ILUAs/ s24JAA notices
2. Contribute funds and resources to a joint Federal/State holistic land tenure resolution process across the Torres Strait to simultaneously develop land tenure outcomes across all land tenure issues.



Background

Multiple land tenure 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.

The TSIRC Freehold Pilot project ran for two years from March 2015 to March 2017. The overall aim of the state-wide Freehold Pilot was to provide assistance to Trustees of Indigenous lands to enable the Freehold Option in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities.

The Freehold Pilot was valuable as it indicated the resources, processes and time frames necessary to engage with communities regarding land tenure choices. There has been strong community involvement. Discussions have ranged across all land tenure issues and provided an opportunity for community members to better understand the choices available. The Pilot has also been valuable in building community understanding of the relationship between Native Title and the land tenure systems affecting the Torres Strait.



Issues

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 those utilised in the current Moa Tenure Resolution Project) must be used across all islands, and open to addressing all land tenure issues to enable effective and efficient outcomes to be achieved.

Following from the Freehold Project, communities across the Torres Strait now have an entirely reasonable expectation that Freehold consultations will be conducted on all communities. The cessation of the Pilot reinforces community perceptions of 'revolving-door' policy without real outcomes.

These recent consultations in Torres Strait, and a history of home-ownership applications to Council, demonstrate a strong desire of many Torres Strait Islanders to own their own homes. To date, these aspirations have largely gone unfulfilled. The complexity of land law in the region poses procedural barriers to home ownership, in addition to the practical challenges of remoteness.

The regional ILUA currently being negotiated, although broad in scope, excludes social housing, meaning island-by-island ILUAs will still be required.

The Federal government has recently recognised the need to better resource native title and land tenure negotiations across Federal agencies. Formalised arrangements are now in place to better support registered native title bodies corporate (RNTBCs) in the Torres Strait to improve the governance of RNTBCs in the region.

Funding for holistic tenure resolution would provide communities with a forum to consider different tenure options and make land tenure decisions best suited to their needs. Community members in the Freehold Pilot and Moa ILUA consultations have emphasised how important these consultations have been to building understanding of the issues and giving people time to make informed decisions, which balance personal and community needs and considerations.



Table 1 outlines key land tenure issues, their impacts, and puts forward our suggested solutions to land tenure issues.

TABLE 1 SOLUTION:		
Resolve land tenure issues effectively and efficiently by:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring instruments and approaches to tenure are collaboratively developed across Federal, State and Local government to ensure the simplest possible end-user experience for community members, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnership between TSIRC and Queensland government to replace 40 year leases on NPRH housing with a more effective instrument capable of region-wide application across NPRH and non-NPRH housing • Prioritising island-by-island traditional boundary mapping to ensure correct Traditional Owners are engaged • Implementing an island-by-island ILUA model which <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Includes RNTBC fee for service and compensation funding ○ Includes mandatory inclusion of land allocated for contractors camps (time-limited) in ILUAs/s24JAA notices 		
ISSUE	IMPACT OF ISSUE	SOLUTION - WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?
40 year leases over NPRH housing add yet another variation and layer of complexity to the tenure issues in the Torres Strait	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confuses community members. • Complexity and confusion and the varying rights and conditions of tenure across the region undermine compliance with TSIRC rental payments. • Complexity makes it difficult for community to understand their rights, obligations and opportunities regarding home occupation and home ownership. 	<p>TSIRC, Queensland and Federal governments collaboratively develop approaches to tenure which give the end-user (tenant) consistency of experience across NPRH and non-NPRH housing.</p> <p>This will ensure the simplest possible end-user experience and consistent messaging for community members (as tenants, lease holders and current and prospective home owners).</p>
Without whole-of-island traditional boundary mapping and with the stretched resources of RNTBCs, the correct Traditional Owners are not always identified for a particular piece of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to disputes well into the process which means negotiations need to restart which causes conflict in community and significant delays to project commencements. 	<p>Finalise island-by-island traditional boundary mapping to ensure correct Traditional Owner is engaged.</p> <p>This provides clarity about the boundaries of traditional lands which facilitates clear, consensual and timely agreements.</p>
<p>In original negotiations for land with PBC's, the decision was to allocate traditional lands to the Traditional family group based on need – eg. <i>Gela land is to be allocated based on need to Gela families on the wait list.</i></p> <p>However, application has not always considered family ties to land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causes conflict and confusion on the community level. • Housing tenure is already a highly complex issue in the Torres Strait and inconsistent application of policy confuses people and causes further conflict. 	<p>Clarity of policy and transparent, clear communication of how it will be applied is essential.</p> <p>Governments must take a whole-of-government, tri-level approach to how policy relating to allocations is applied to ensure clarity and to create as much as is possible a simple and consistent end-user experience for the people of the Torres Strait.</p>



TABLE 1 SOLUTION:		
<p>Resolve land tenure issues effectively and efficiently by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring instruments and approaches to tenure are collaboratively developed across Federal, State and Local government to ensure the simplest possible end-user experience for community members, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnership between TSIRC and Queensland government to replace 40 year leases on NPRH housing with a more effective instrument capable of region-wide application across NPRH and non-NPRH housing • Prioritising island-by-island traditional boundary mapping to ensure correct Traditional Owners are engaged • Implementing an island-by-island ILUA model which <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Includes RNTBC fee for service and compensation funding ○ Includes mandatory inclusion of land allocated for contractors camps (time-limited) in ILUAs/s24JAA notices 		
ISSUE	IMPACT OF ISSUE	SOLUTION - WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE?
Current per-project ILUA negotiation is cumbersome, costly and time-consuming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several projects may involve a single piece of land, but project-based ILUAs mean that negotiations need to occur again for each new project. Complex, time, cost and resource intensive. 	Utilise an island-by-island ILUA (modelled on the Regional ILUA – compensation per ILUA formula) so that multiple projects can occur within the terms of the ILUA.





Housing

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 20 - 22 March 2018

Recommendation:

That the Queensland Government

- Make clear the funds committed by the Queensland Government to new remote Indigenous housing regardless of Commonwealth investment from 30 June 2018



Background

NPRH has achieved against the Building Blocks of the Closing the Gap targets. It has delivered multiple outcomes which build resilience and opportunity in the social determinants of health – across health, wellbeing, employment, education and family safety.

In the region of Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), 153 new homes are on track to be built under NPRH by June 2018 with 90 homes already completed and 63 under construction (55 built by TSIRC). By June 2018 TSIRC will also have built 25 NPRH funded housing plug-ins to existing homes across 4 islands.

TABLE A TOTAL ACHIEVED AGAINST INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES PROJECT TARGETS (Core and IEO Plan)			
	IEOP Plan apprentices	IEOP Plan other work force	IEOP Plan Local Indigenous Business, Goods and Services
Agreed Total	8717	5811	\$1,253,750.00
Actual Total	17122	25302	\$1,914,219.00
Progressive Percentage actuals against requirements	196%	435%	152%

Council currently has 598 registered applications for Social Housing. There are 137 applicants who reside in the TSIRC foot print identified as living in overcrowded housing. There are also 267 applicants who are currently living outside of the Torres Straits who have been forced to move or are unable to return to their communities due to overcrowding and lack of available housing. Many of these applicants also identify as living in overcrowded housing in their current location out of our region.

From July 2018 TSIRC is engaged in the Government Employee Housing (GEH) program and has first right of refusal on contracts. We appreciate the Queensland Government's support in providing this access to GEH work to manage the impact of cessation of NPRH works.



Nonetheless, commitment to sustainability of remote Indigenous housing requires funding to be identified now. Interim measures such as establishing GEH first right of refusal go some way to sustaining the human and capital investment in our building program is maintained in readiness for the next phase of remote Indigenous housing funding provision. Given intent of NPRH is also standardisation and regulation of tenancy management across remote Indigenous communities, we have received funding for one tenancy management position which has facilitated improved rental collection rates and community education around rental rights and responsibilities. These are deliverables which makes housing more sustainable.

The experience of NPRH across these domains – of employment outcomes, increased housing stock, increased rental collections – is evidence of its success. These are very direct benefits. Ceasing the program now will directly impact on:

- Employment
- Overcrowding
- Revenue
- Upgrades
- Tenancy management
- Asset deterioration (an impact of overcrowding)

NPRH new builds have also allowed people to move back to community who were forced to leave due to overcrowding. These people return and bring with them skills which are of benefit to the region.





Tenants, previously living in overcrowded housing, and their recently completed new home in St Pauls community





Tenants, previously living in overcrowded housing, and their recently completed new home in St Pauls community





An elderly tenant, previously living in overcrowded housing, and his recently completed new home in St Pauls community





An elderly tenant, previously living in overcrowded housing, and his recently completed new home in St Pauls community





An elderly tenant, previously living in overcrowded housing, and her recently completed new home in St Pauls community





An elderly tenant, previously living in overcrowded housing, and her recently completed new home in St Pauls community





Bathroom facilities built to meet tenant needs in a new home in St Pauls community.



TSIRC Public Health Program

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 20 – 22 March 2018

Recommendation:

That the Queensland Government:

- Commit to releasing the next 4 year's funding for the TSIRC Public Health Program up to June 2022 with CPI as allocated on an annual basis by Queensland Treasury.



Background

In March of 2017 Mayor Fred Gela met with the Minister of Health, the Hon Cameron Dick MP, to discuss establishing 5 year minimum funding agreements for the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) Public Health program (see Attachment A).

On 10 May 2017, TSIRC received a letter dated 27 April 2017 from the then Minister announcing the continuation of Public Health funding to TSIRC until 2022 (see Attachment B).

Funding intervals of no less than 5 years enable better planning, investment in training and development, and job security for Torres Strait Islander people.

Despite the commitment given by the then Minister, Queensland Health have not enacted that commitment and continue to issue yearly funding releases.

We call on you as the current Minister for Health to honour the commitment made by your predecessor and instruct the Department of Health to issue the next 4 year's funding for the TSIRC Public Health Program up to June 2022 with CPI as allocated on an annual basis by Queensland Treasury.

This ongoing cycle of yearly contracting consumes unnecessary resources, impacts service planning, and impacts the wellbeing, career advancement and sustainability of our Public Health workforce who face yearly uncertainty over their employment.

Council is presently in its budget deliberations for 18/19. We request confirmation of the next 4 year funding allocation from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2022.



ATTACHMENT A – March 2017 Deputation to Minister for Health

Background

Over the past eight years, the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) has successfully delivered a Public Health Program across its 15 communities in the Torres Strait. This program has been supported financially through annual service agreements with the State of Queensland via Queensland Health.

The TSIRC Public Health Program presently employs 19 Torres Strait Islanders across each of its 15 communities and has maintained and built the capacity of its workforce of Environmental Health Practitioners. The program implements preventative health education and awareness, animal and pest management, biosecurity, inspectorial and compliance services. This program is integral to Closing the Gap and to the safety and wellbeing of Torres Strait Islander people.

The funding for the current annual service agreement with Queensland Health expires 30 June 2018 (as it did in 2016). Funding uncertainty means our Environmental Health Practitioners remain on fixed term year by year employment contracts. This creates job insecurity and hampers long-term operational and strategic planning for the region, including investment in training and development of our staff.

The industry peak body, Environmental Health Australia, stated its support for the continuance of funding and longer funding cycles for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Health Program in its letter to your office dated 5th December 2016.

Issues

The loss of our Public Health Program would lead to:

- Unemployment
- Injury (eg. dog attacks)
- Increased disease risks in community
- Loss of amenity (eg. restricted use of public space due to dog attack risks)
- Loss of health promotion and information in communities
- Loss of Local law enforcement



Funding intervals of no less than 5 years are needed to enable better planning, investment in training and development, and job security for Torres Strait Islander people.





Minister for Health and
Minister for Ambulance Services
Member for Woodridge

RECEIVED

10 MAY 2017

C-ECTF-17/59

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Cr Fred Gela
Mayor
Torres Strait Island Regional Council
PO Box 7336
CAIRNS QLD 4870

27 APR 2017

Dear Mayor

Fred,

I am very pleased to announce the continuation of funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Health Program (the Program) until 30 June 2022. The provision for long term funding will enable the continued employment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environmental health workforce. The amount of funding that you will receive for the next financial year 2017/18 will be \$1,691,611 (exc GST). Funding allocation for the remainder of the approved period will be subject to CPI as allocated on an annual basis by the Queensland Treasury.

I am delighted to hear that since the commencement of the Program over 10 years ago, substantial progress has been made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local councils, generally and the environmental health workforce specifically in improving the delivery of environmental health services such as water quality management, food safety, animal management and waste management. These improvements make an important contribution to promoting health and reducing disease.

The program is a part of Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to closing the gap in health outcomes for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. I believe that empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local governments to implement sustainable environmental health programs is critical to achieving this objective.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for the continuing support and engagement from local governments for this work and I look forward to working with your local government in the future on our shared priorities.

If you have any questions or require further information, Ms Sophie Dwyer, Executive Director of the Health Protection Branch, Department of Health, on telephone 3328 9266, is available to assist you.

Yours sincerely

CAMERON DICK MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services