



# Housing and Safe & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting

## Minutes

**Date:** 21 February 2024

**Time:** 10.00am to 12.00nn

**Venue:** TEAMS Meeting  
Meeting ID: 445 087 202 782  
Passcode: sBkK6Z

### 1. Welcome | Quorum Confirmation | Opening Prayer

Cr Keith Fell (Chairperson) opened the meeting at 10.05am, welcoming fellow Committee Member Cr John Levi and TSIRC staff.

The Chairperson also advised the meeting that he has invited the Executive Director Corporate Services (Ms Susanne Andres) to join the meeting during Agenda Item 17 (General/Other Business) to discuss Information Technology related matters for the region.

The Chairperson delivered the opening prayer.

### 2. Apologies

The following participants were in attendance:

#### Committee Members

Chairperson  
Member

Cr Keith Fell  
Cr John Levi

#### TSIRC Officers

Executive Director Community Services  
Executive Director Building Services  
Executive Director Corporate Services  
TSIRC Secretariat

Mr Dawson Sailor  
Mr Wayne Green  
Ms Susanne Andres – *joined the meeting at 11.20am*  
Mr Darryl Brooks

Committee Member (Cr Francis Pearson) was an apology for this meeting due to prior training commitments in Cairns.

The Executive Director Engineering Services was also an apology for this meeting.

### 3. Conflict of Interest (COI) – Declarable/Prescribed

No declarations were made by Members. The Chairperson requested that members be mindful throughout the course of the meeting to make any relevant conflict of interest declarations known as soon as possible, should any arise.

### 4. Ratified Minutes of HSHC Committee Meeting held on 10 October 2023.

The Committee noted this item.

### 5. Action Items from Previous Meeting

The Committee noted the verbal update provided by the Executive Director Community Services on the status of action items.

## 6. STANDING AGENDA ITEM – HEALTH MATTERS

The Committee noted the following verbal updates:

- Hammond Island Health Centre
  - Ongoing issue
  - TCHHS advised the Council in September 2023 (Saibai) that it is aware that the Hammond Island Health Centre is a high and overdue need within the community, as well as a high priority long identified by Council.
- Asbestos concerns within Communities
  - Ongoing issue.
  - Have approached QBuild for assistance with this as part of the Asset Condition audit.

## 7. STANDING AGENDA ITEM – ANIMAL MANAGEMENT MATTERS

- Unfenced/feral horses (St Pauls/Kubin Communities and Badu)
- Animal Management – Feral Dogs and Cats

The Chairperson advised that crocodile numbers are visibly increasing and this is becoming an issue of concern across a number of communities. The larger crocodiles show no fear and are now even moving up on the beachfront during the night. Rangers do all they can, but it inevitably these animals need to be moved on in some capacity before someone in the community is attacked.

**ACTION:**

Executive Director Community Services to ask CEO to raise this matter – and feral animal management issues generally – during his discussions with the TSRA CEO.

## 8. Regional (Jetty) Ramps

Not discussed in the absence of the Executive Director Engineering Services.

## 9. UHF Radios

Contractor has been engaged, effective 15 January 2024, to undertake repairs of faulty equipment and to install a new unit a Kubin. Materials are expected to be in Cairns early April 2024, as there has been a hold up in the supply from manufacturer. A program of works to deliver the repair works on the divisions will be developed with the contractor once materials arrive in Cairns, and the new unit for Kubin is programmed. The plan is to align these works with other works for Council that regularly is undertaken by the contractor.

**10. Regional – Healthy & Safe Council Infrastructures**

Health and Safety issues around infrastructures. Executive Director Community Services confirmed that no issues in relation to unsafe infrastructure has been reported directly to him. The Chairperson is concerned that no reports are being received. The Executive Director Building Services advised that these matters will be included as part of the Asset Condition Report being undertaken by Qbuild. The costings provided back from Qbuild as part of its Report will then need to be submitted to Council’s Financial Services Department to seek funding. Once funding is received, advice will be provided to Divisions on timelines.

The Executive Director Community Services advised that a consultant was engaged in early 2023 to undertake a Mindful Risk Audit. The Health and Safety team is scheduled to visit the Torres Strait sometime in March 2024 to undertake related follow-up work. The Executive Director Community Services suggested that the Executive Director Building Services may seek CEO endorsement to share relevant information to the Committee.

**ACTION:**

1. Executive Director Building Services to follow-up with the Operations Engineer – Assets (Mr Tony Wynen) to provide updates to the Committee on facility safety issues across the TSIRC footprint on a regular basis.
2. Executive Director Building Services to seek CEO approval to brief the Committee on the outcomes of the Mindful Risk Audit (undertaken in early 2023).

**11. Regional- Healthy & Safe Sporting Facilities**

Refer to Agenda Item 10 above.

**12. Regional Cross Border Issues**

The Chairperson highlighted concerns expressed by Cr Conwell Tabuai (Saibai) in relation to Papua New Guinea nationals walking around Saibai at night with machettes and drug runs at night.

The Chairperson advised that when he was TSIRC Deputy Chair in a previous Council term, he sat on the Cross Border Treaty Committee and has already expressed to the Mayor an interest in a similar role in the next term of Council. This interest touches into this Committee’s purview for safe and healthy communities and the recent discussions at the February 2024 Ordinary Council Meeting on cross border and border issues generally.

**ACTION:**

Cross-border Issues to be a standing agenda item for the HSHC Committee.

**13. Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) and HLOs – Storage for Equipment**

Many of the Council’s IKCs are being used for storage and the HLOs have no dedicated storage. The Chairperson sought advice on funding options to obtain dedicated storage facilities.

The Executive Director Community Services advised that he has been working with the Head of Community Services (Ms Ella Kris). There is capacity within the HLO funding space to vary grant funding terms if storage space is required. The first task to be undertaken will be for an audit of space options across the Divisions to ascertain need as well as identify options to accommodate IKC and HLO requirements.

#### **14. RIBS**

The Executive Director Community Services provided an update.

Given that there may be a number of suitable broadcasters interested in securing a license to provide community radio services, it was recommended at Council's January 2024 meeting that Council conducts a process to identify the most suitable service provider by calling for Expressions of Interest during February and March with a view to presenting the expressions of interest to Council as soon as practicable after the 2024 local government election.

The criteria for expressions of interest would address broader strategic objectives in addition to the community broadcasting services aligned to Council's Corporate Plan.

Submissions would then be considered and a recommendation made to Council at the April or May 2024 Ordinary meeting.

It is anticipated that this would allow sufficient time for the newly appointed licensee to prepare for and commence broadcasting in mid-2024.

Council supported this process at the January 2024 Council meeting and authorised the Chief Executive Officer to facilitate an expression of interest process to identify a suitable service broadcaster and requested the Chief Executive Officer to present expressions of interest to the Council as soon as practicable after the 2024 local government election for consideration of a recommendation to Council in April/May 2024.

#### **15. High Cost of Living (%)**

The Chairperson sought an update on the status of actions arising from the *Cost of Living Summit: Torres Strait Islands and Northern Peninsular Area* which was held on Thursday Island on 20 March 2023. This summit was designed to identify solutions to cost of living concerns raised during a Community Cabinet meeting held on Thursday Island on 5 September 2022. Refer to attached report for background information.

The Executive Director Community Services advised that he was approached by the Economic Growth Committee around some of these issues and will also be meeting with Chris Bradley in Cairns sometime in the w/b 26 February 2024. Following his meeting with Mr Bradley, the Executive Director Community Services to explore an opportunity where Mr Bradley can brief both the HSHC Committee and the Economic Growth Committee (including possibly a dial-in opportunity).

#### **ACTION:**

1. HSHC Chairperson to follow-up further with the Mayor.
2. Executive Director Community Services to explore future options around inviting Chris Bradley to jointly address the Economic Growth Committee and the HSHC Committee.

**16. Agenda Report – housing – Policy and Procedure Review *(late paper)***

Not discussed.

**17. General / Other Business (on notice)**

**(i) Audit of Service Providers in the Torres Strait region**

The Chairperson requested that this matter become a standing agenda item for the Committee. The service providers should also include State and Federal Government services like the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), State and Federal Police, Border Force, Customs, etc. NGOs should also be included.

Cr John Levi reminded the Committee that this can provide an incredibly useful outcome, citing a similar situation that occurred at Mornington Island where \$364m was provided into that community with no tangible outcomes on-ground. Cr Levi cited other examples in the Torres Strait and local region where investments have been made, but where community perceives that there are no tangible outcomes for them:

- the Saibai Community Safety and Security Facility (new \$13 million high-tech security post to guard Australia's international border with Papua New Guinea) which was funded in 2018 by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet with an Indigenous Advancement Strategy grant;
- \$444m Federal Government funding to the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF) in 2018;
- Health Service Providers – costs associated with sending families to Cairns for treatment of chronic diseases (Flying Doctors, airline travel, accommodation, etc.) yet why can't an investment be made on-ground in communities where these services can be delivered locally.

The Executive Director Community Services advised that this matter is on the radar of Council and during discussions at the SARG Committee meeting in January 2024 the Chief Executive Officer indicated the need to engage external expertise to undertake this task.

Cr Levi suggested that this Committee (or Council) may like to reach out to the Mornington Island Mayor to discuss this matter.

**(ii) Beach Erosion on St. Pauls**

Cr John Levi indicated that beach erosion has now become decidedly evident around the St Pauls community. The TSRA has reported also that by 2030 the western side of Moa will begin to suffer the effects of erosion from high water and this is being felt already.

The Committee agreed that it is now time to raise these issues with Council as priorities for keeping communities safe and healthy.

**(iii) Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)**

Cr John Levi expressed concern that WHS matters are not being clearly addressed and discussed at Council meetings.

**(iv) Accommodation Registers**

The Chairperson sought clarification on whether the Accommodation Registers (Iama, Ugar, Dauan, Boigu, etc) are up-to-date and whether this was causing any issues for Council, as well as the housing information.

The Executive Director Community Services advised that the Accommodation Registers are audit compliance related, hence the reporting on those figures is required.

The Executive Director Community Services confirmed that the \$12m debt remains for rental arrears, but Divisional Staff are undertaking outreach to communities to try and get on top of a backlog of legacy issues, including:

- turnover of staff;
- ‘push-back’ from clients and community (refusal to pay rent until building repairs are undertaken);
- tenancy matters (relationship breakdowns/changing names on leases);
- tenants moving to the mainland, but retaining a lease on their home;
- recovering funds through legal action (long process);
- reconciling overpayments by tenants (tenants pay above rent price in order to stay ahead); etc

The Chairperson advised that the Committee is available to assist wherever it can on this matter.

#### **(v) HSHC Terms of Reference**

The Executive Director Community Services suggested that it may be timely/appropriate to review the Terms of Reference for the Committee following the upcoming local government elections.

#### **(vi) Information Technology Matters**

The Chairperson requested an update from the Executive Director Corporate Services on the following matters:

- Printer maintenance in Divisions (unsure how many printers are actually operational)
- Cabling in ageing Council buildings;
- Connectivity issues remain an ever-present concern;
- Physical and regular visits to the Divisions by the IT Services staff is imperative to get on-ground appreciation of the issues involved.

The Executive Director Corporate Services (Ms Susanne Andres) responded as follows:

- Requests for assistance from Divisions are not being lodged as required (via the IT Helpdesk ticketing system. This ticketing system keeps a log of jobs required; nominates the IT staff member assigned to the job; prompts the IT Helpdesk to seek further information/clarification of the problem being experienced on-ground; and maintains the status of whether a job is open or closed). It is important for staff lodging requests for help via the IT Helpdesk to respond to enquiries generated by the IT Helpdesk ticketing system. If staff do not respond to enquiries generated back to them by the system, the system **automatically closes** the ticket/job.
- The cabling issue centres around infrastructure upgrades being undertaken (resources required for this).

- Communication to/from the region does need dramatic improvement.
- Physical visits to the Divisions is acknowledged as a need and it is further acknowledged that a program of visits to Divisions by staff from IT Team to train staff on-ground on basic quick-fix solutions is desired.

The Executive Director Community Services (Mr Dawson Sailor) suggested that details for some of those matters where requests to Divisions for additional information are not responded to in a timely manner should be sent to him for resolution. In addition, an awareness and understanding is required on the part of the IT Services team that the IT jargon (the collection of words and phrases that people use in industries dealing with computers and software) is not easily understood by on-ground staff who generally do not have an IT background.

**ACTION:**

IT Services Update to be a standing agenda item for the HSHC Committee.

**18. Next Meeting Date: N/A**

**19. Closing Remarks & Prayer**

Before formally closing the meeting, the Chairperson acknowledged and thanked Committee Members, the Executive Director Community Services (as lead officer for the Committee) and the contributions and progress being made by the Executive Director Building Services during this term of Council.

Cr John Levi mirrored the comments made by the Chairperson, as well as thanking the Chairperson for his leadership of the Committee during this term of Council.

The meeting closed at 12.20pm and Cr Francis Pearson delivered the closing prayer.

Cr Keith Fell  
Chairperson  
Housing and Safe & Healthy Communities Committee

21 February 2024

**RATIFIED AT THE MARCH 2024 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING.**

.....  
**Mr James William**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Torres Strait Island Regional Council

.....  
**Cr Phillemon Mosby**  
Mayor  
Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Date:

Date:

DRAFT

# 2023 Torres Strait Islands and Northern Peninsula Area Cost of Living Summit outcome report

## Message from the Co-Chairs

**On 20 March 2023, the Queensland Government convened the Cost of Living Summit: Torres Strait Islands and Northern Peninsula Area on Thursday Island.**

Cost of living pressures are being felt across Queensland, but we know that these pressures are even more deeply felt in remote and regional areas of our state, including in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

Supply chains in these areas can be complex, with significant distances and operational challenges having a dramatic impact on the cost and availability of food, clothing, fuel and other essential items.

A Cost of Living Summit was held on Thursday Island to identify solutions to cost of living concerns raised during a Community Cabinet meeting held on Thursday Island on 5 September 2022. Local Member, Cynthia Lui MP, worked closely with Mayor Yen Loban, Mayor

Phillemon Mosby and Mayor Patricia Yusia to deliver a truly community-led event.

The Cost of Living Summit provided a forum for more than 100 residents, local businesses and community organisations to work together with state and local government representatives to develop practical local solutions.

We heard from community members on five key themes: freight, food security, marine and transport infrastructure, energy, and housing. The outcome from these discussions was clear – there must be community-driven action to meet local needs, build local capability, and provide meaningful local jobs.

At the Summit we announced a range of new initiatives intended to support the Torres Strait Islands, Cape York, Gulf and Northern Peninsula Area community to navigate these challenges.

This is only the start, as we now shift to work with local communities to implement many of these initiatives and programs in a way that best drives outcomes for the people in the Torres Strait, Cape York, Gulf and Northern Peninsula Area.

We have listened to the local community and local leaders and we are committed to taking action, including through genuine tripartite engagement between local, state and federal governments on the challenges raised at the Summit.

We thank everyone who participated in the Summit.

*Co-Chairs – Minister for Transport and Main Roads, Mark Bailey MP, and Member for Cook, Cynthia Lui MP*



*Business, community and government representatives at the Torres Strait Islands and Northern Peninsula Area Cost of Living Summit.*

# Panel session

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Shannon Fentiman MP, as the Ministerial Champion for the Torres Strait region, facilitated a panel discussion with representatives across various sectors of the community.

Panel members shared valuable insights into the barriers for accessing services such as childcare, housing, and other essential services.

Panel members highlighted the need for collaboration between all levels of government to deliver fit-for-purpose services for the regions.



The panel discussed the need to bring the community along for the transition to renewable energy, including a transition away from diesel generation, undertaken with community consultation, providing local benefits and local employment.

A transition to renewable energy was recognised as a key opportunity to provide employment for young people in the region. The panel communicated the need for increased

local job opportunities for young people in the region, as well as for the school education system to better assist school leavers to transition to tertiary education, other skilling opportunities, and employment.

Overall, the panel highlighted the need for meaningful and lasting outcomes that account for the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the region.

# Marine and transport infrastructure

## Investing in marine and transport infrastructure solutions.

The Queensland Government has committed to invest:

- **\$80 million** in joint federal and state funding for marine infrastructure
- **\$500,000** to help ensure reliable ferry services to Thursday Island.

We know safe, reliable, and fit-for-purpose transport infrastructure can increase economic activity and

tourism. It's about more than just getting from one place to another – it's about empowering locals and local economies.

A total of **\$80 million** has been committed by state and federal governments to support community priorities for marine infrastructure as part of the Torres Strait Islands Marine Infrastructure Program.

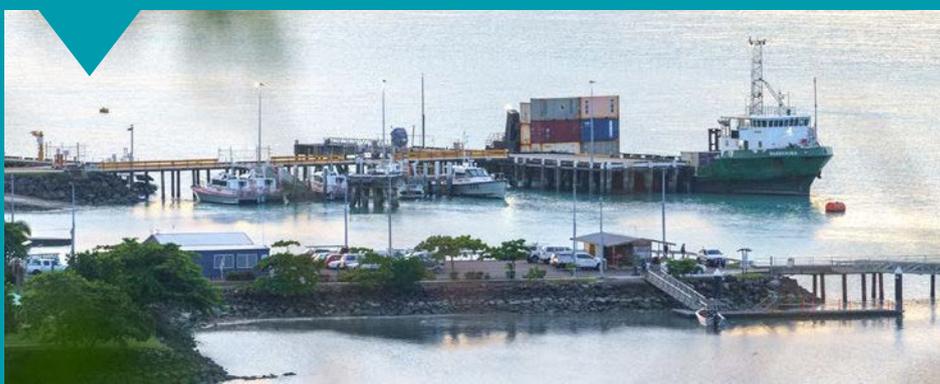
The Queensland Government has also committed to a **\$500,000** ferry maintenance package. We have worked with the school bus provider to implement free transport to and from school for all students on Thursday Island.

In addition, the Queensland Government is providing a community bus for people living on Thursday Island.

Active transport infrastructure, like shared bike and walking paths, reduces the cost of transport and improves health outcomes. We are working with local councils to build more than **3.7 kilometres** of shared paths on Thursday Island.

We are also addressing cost of living pressures by removing the requirement for people living in the Far North to purchase permits when using their vehicle outside of a restricted area for more than seven days.

**Going forward:** We will work with local councils and the Federal Government to identify marine infrastructure priorities and make every effort to build the skills and capability of the region throughout the delivery of the Torres Strait Islands Marine Infrastructure Program.



# Freight services

Removing barriers and supporting delivery of freight services.



The Queensland Government has committed to invest:

- **\$52.6 million** for a remote freight subsidy
- **\$5.3 million** to trial dedicated freight coordinators
- **\$6.5 million** towards a Remote and Regional Infrastructure Fund.

The Queensland Government is investing more than **\$64 million** over the next five years to target freight disadvantage in the Torres Strait, as well as Cape York, Gulf and the Northern Peninsula area.

By subsidising some of the freight costs, pressure is eased on local suppliers and reduces one of the major factors that makes food, clothing, fuel, and other essentials

more expensive in the region. This is our way of making sure people living in remote areas don't disproportionately feel the cost of living burden, and that everyone in our state has the opportunity to thrive.

**Going forward:** We will work with the community to determine how this **\$64 million** investment in freight funds is best used to deliver positive outcomes for the region.

# Energy

Supporting energy efficiency and energy savings measures.

The Queensland Government has committed to invest:

- **\$1 million** to upgrade the power network and quadruple solar capacity on Thursday Island
- **\$3 million** into the PowerSavvy program for education and awareness
- **\$7 million** to upgrade street lights to LED in Ergon-supplied isolated First Nations communities, which will reduce costs for councils.

We understand the challenges presented by rising energy prices and the flow-on impacts this has for remote communities such as the Torres Strait Islands and Northern Peninsula Area.

To address this, we are providing relief through bill rebates, increasing energy literacy, advancing renewable energy solutions, and retaining public ownership of Queensland's energy system. Ergon is refurbishing the wind turbines on Thursday Island to keep them powering well into the next decade. These actions will help to lower the cost to supply power in the region.

We will work to transition communities away from existing diesel generation and invest in renewable energy solutions such as solar and wind.

To help achieve this, we will co-design the development of the Remote and First Nations Clean Energy Strategy with remote and First Nations communities and the Federal Government.

We have also tasked Energy Queensland to update its Isolated

Network Strategy and complete feasibility studies to decarbonise its isolated power stations.

All of these steps will help to address energy resilience and make sure communities can benefit from the energy transformation. We will ensure genuine community engagement is at the heart of the transition.

**Going forward:** We will work with the local community, local councils and the Federal Government to develop targeted solutions and achieve our ambitious renewable energy and emissions targets, such as through the Remote and First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.

We will continue to take action to address the issues we heard at the Summit, including working with Energy Queensland to commence the roll-out of LED streetlights, and develop and deliver on the Remote and First Nations Energy Strategy to decarbonise communities to address the challenges of climate change.

We will also consider a pathway for solar on public housing in Ergon-supplied isolated communities.





# Housing

Responding to housing stress and discussing priorities for a new *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan*.

The issue of housing and housing supply is fundamentally important to any discussion about cost of living.

The Queensland Government has committed to increasing social housing on Thursday Island and Horn Island by building up to **12 additional social housing properties**, which is an investment of approximately **\$10 million**. This will include a mix of property types, with technical and design work occurring during 2023.

These projects are in addition to the priorities that communities in the region have identified in their Local Housing Plans, and the new social housing, extensions and land lots being delivered by local councils through the **\$40 million** Interim Remote Capital Program and **\$105 million** Forward Remote Capital Programs. The Queensland Government will also support home ownership opportunities across communities and on Thursday Island and Horn Island through the sale of up to **10 social housing properties** to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants in an initial round of this program.

*Going forward:* We will consider how to remove barriers to land development and encourage home ownership. We will look at rent, housing design and standards for social housing construction. We will also examine the potential for a new stand-alone housing authority, as well as the impact of government employee accommodation on housing needs in communities.

# Food security

**Improving availability, access and storage of food and beverages.**

It is clear from the community that local food production should be based on local knowledge and know-how. In recognition of this, we are on track to deliver a Local Food Security Strategy for the region by the end of June 2023.

We will consult with a local committee and the community to develop the Strategy, and to identify the key priorities and enablers required to create positive, lasting and systemic change for food security in the region, and the approach we need to take to get there.

The Queensland Government's **\$64 million** commitment to target freight disadvantage will also support food security in the region.

*Going forward:* We will work with the local community to develop a Local Food Security Strategy by the end of June 2023.

# Delivering on our commitments

**The Queensland Government is committed to delivering on the actions agreed at the Summit and outlined in this report.**

It is acknowledged that implementation and further progression of many initiatives will require genuine consultation between the local community and the local, state and federal levels of government.

The delivery of each action or initiative agreed at the Summit will be led by the responsible state Minister.

One way the Queensland Government will continue to engage with the communities of the Torres Strait Islands and Northern Peninsula Area, including on the status of the initiatives agreed at this Summit, will be through its regular Regional Community Forums.

