

## Torres Strait Island Regional Council Services include:

- Water & sewerage
- Waste
- Child care
- Planning
- Environmental Health
- Housing
- Libraries
- Roads
- Maintaining parks & gardens

**“Empowering our people, in our decision, in our culture, for our future”**

## CLIMATE CHANGE

TSIRC have collaborated with the University of New South Wales to produce a website specifically dedicated to climate change in the Torres Strait.

The website aims to draw attention to the issues of inundation, erosion and rising sea levels in the Torres Strait.

It features all forms of media regarding the issue including Mayor Gela's letter and video question to the Prime Minister, plus radio interviews, newspaper articles and media releases.

The site is interactive and allows visitors to comment on issues, sign a petition and have their say.

The site also includes relevant studies and reports that prove climate change poses a real threat to our region.

Climate Change is a significant issue in the Torres Strait.

Do your bit to help by signing the petition at:

[www.torresstraitclimate.org](http://www.torresstraitclimate.org)

Let's show the government there is widespread support to tackle climate change in the Strait.



TORRES STRAIT ISLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL  
 TSIRC Lot 12 Francis Road Hammond Island  
 Qld 4875  
 Ph: (07) 4048 6200 Fax: (07) 40691868  
 PO Box 501, Thursday Island Qld 4875



Be sure to phone the

## Housing Call Centre

for responsive maintenance if you require repairs to fix something that is broken or not working properly on:

**1300 738 616**

If you would prefer to speak with someone in person about your issue, please feel free to talk to the Housing Officer in your Division who will help you rectify the situation.



Take part in the Great Northern Clean Up on 9 - 11 September 2011. The Great Northern Clean Up is a chance for communities across the top end of Australia to get together and take part in a Clean Up Day at a time more suited to the northern climate. The national Clean Up Australia Day falls during the Torres Strait Wet Season and makes it difficult to clean up when it is raining, damp and soggy. Council would like to encourage communities to get involved from 9-11 September to clean up your community. Further information about the Clean Up Day in your community will be provided by your Council Office closer to the date.



## Have your say...

Any community members who would like to submit photos or stories to be published in 'Strait Talk' please send your ideas to:

[info@tsirc.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@tsirc.qld.gov.au)



# Strait Talk

Kawau

Kuikumbaigau

Yangukudul

The official newsletter of the  
 TORRES STRAIT ISLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

August: Edition Eleven

What's inside...



Qld Governor's visit

Saibai Annexation

Coming of the Light

NAIDOC on Dauan

Career Expo's

## Message from the Mayor

### Less job cuts

I would like to herald, yet again, the pride I feel of belonging to a race of such noble and compassionate people.

Proven especially in hard times, we repeatedly come together as one, united by our blood.

We make sacrifices for others and we are considerate and understanding of the various issues we face here in the Strait.

The spirit of the Torres Strait Islander has been made evident once again after the announcement in the last edition of 'Strait Talk' having no other option than to cut a number of positions due to Council financial constraints.

Although I am truly sympathetic for employees whose jobs are in jeopardy, and frustrated that we cannot secure funds to keep everyone onboard, we have received a positive verbal agreement with the State Government that could drastically reduce the number to be made redundant down to as little as 23.

While this number is significantly less than previously reported, I am still distressed that good and loyal employees will lose their jobs.

The true spirit of the Torres Strait Islander has surfaced with the news, as some employees have selflessly chosen to step down in order to allow others to keep their positions.

I'd like to personally thank you all for understanding and reassure you that we (Council) are in this for our people and are still working very hard to secure future funding to maintain the sustainability of Council and for other services to improve and enhance our communities.

We have encountered many hurdles since amalgamation and although it may have been a steep and rocky clime, we've have risen to the challenge each and every time.

Mandatory regulations have required Council to develop in-depth financial and planning tools that have allowed us to foresee, plan and predict the future dealings of Council.

They also illustrate the position that Council is in and what is needed to ensure a sustainable future.



## Social Housing Course



TROPICAL NORTH  
QUEENSLAND  
**TAFE**

A selection of TSIRC's Housing Department staff attended a Social Housing Course at Cairns TAFE this month.

Subjects included maintenance enquiries, tenancy agreements, housing allocations, rent, charges and rental arrears, vacant properties, homelessness, communication skills, legal and ethical framework, support services, complex needs, work environment, culturally diverse clients and OHS processes.



NAIDOC is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and an opportunity to recognise the contributions of Indigenous Australians in various fields.

### Dauan Island Street Parade

Activities take place across the nation during NAIDOC Week in the first full week of July. All Australians are encouraged to participate.

This year NAIDOC Week was celebrated throughout our region including on Dauan Island (pictured).



## Skilled water team

TSIRC would like to congratulate those of its Engineering Staff who recently obtained Certificates II and III in Water Operations. 90 per cent of those who sat for Certificate III passed. Those who completed Certificate III have generally been operating Council's desalination, water treatment and sewerage treatment plants for some time and could be considered 'old-hands' in the field.

This outstanding success rate proves that they are confident and competent in the positions they hold. It also shows their commitment to the communities they serve. Also, of the newer staff who sat for their Certificate II, 50 per cent passed outright, and another third will progress to their qualification as they gain further experience.

The nine month program was extremely demanding, with attendance at five block courses (held in various communities where workers were given 'classroom' training) being required. This was then followed by assessment in their workplace.

Executive Manager Engineering Services, Mr. Patrick McGuire, said he was very pleased and proud that his workforce had shown the commitment to achieve such a high level of skills. "They should be recognized within their communities and made aware of how proud we are of them," he said. "These guys now have the qualifications to operate even the SE Queensland Desalination Plant on the Gold Coast – what a fantastic effort"

"The part played by the former Minister of Local Government, Desley Boyle in obtaining the funds to make this happen shouldn't be forgotten either nor should the tireless efforts of the TI support staff in handling the logistics to make this all happen."

Mr. McGuire said Council was looking to Minister Boyle's successor to keep up the good work.

"Community members can rest knowing their water supplies are being looked after by some of the very best," Mr. McGuire said.

I would like to acknowledge my Heavenly Father and my Saviour Jesus Christ also acknowledge all Elders past and present. We are very blessed to be living in this part of the Lords vineyard (Torres Strait).

Cut Backs:

We have just gone through a very difficult phase in our leadership as councillors of this region with the cut backs of TSIRC staff. I know we as Torres Strait Islanders have been put into this situation many times before and have survived; here we are once again; there is no doubt in my mind that we will pull through.

Cr. Day, in the last edition (Councillors Corner) spoke on "Unity" something that has been mentioned in leadership for as long as I can remember. It is true, we certainly need change, however, true change can only come from within oneself, you make the change and unity will follow.

If you are bad – be good.  
If you are good – be better.  
If you are better – set an example that others may follow.

We must understand that even though we are free to choose our course of action, we are not free to choose the consequences of our action. The consequences, whether good or bad, follow as a natural result of any choice we make.

Our term as Councillors is approaching election time again. I'm grateful for the opportunity that I've had and very much enjoyed it, and would like to express my love and appreciation for the people (families) of Mabuia Island for the good times and the challenges, however, we still have a very long way to go.

"All the water in the world"

All the water in the world;  
no matter how it tried,  
Could never sink the smallest ship;  
unless in got inside.  
All the evils of the world;  
and every kind of sin,  
Could never damn a human soul;  
unless we let it in.

I pray for our Heavenly Father's blessings to be upon all of us now and into the future.

Cr. Keith Fell  
Division 4 - Mabuia Island

## Councillor's Corner



## TSIRC Engineering Executive co-authors internationally published paper



Executive Manager of Engineering Services for Torres Strait Island Regional Council, Mr. Patrick McGuire is the co-author of a paper written specifically about desalination in the Torres Strait.

The paper has been chosen for publication in the international IDA Journal produced by the American Water Works Association for its ground breaking theory.

The paper discusses the application of the 'Pareto Principle' to remote community seawater desalination in the Torres Strait. It shows that our unique and diverse circumstances are even acknowledged internationally.

Council thanks Mr. McGuire for his input on the paper and is pleased that such innovative ideas are coming from Council services in the Torres Strait.



## The Torres Strait Islands: A Celebration



The Cultural Centre in Brisbane is currently hosting an exhibition titled The Torres Strait Islands: A Celebration until October 23, 2011.

Queensland's major arts organisations have joined forces to showcase the diversity and vibrancy of historical and contemporary arts and culture of Torres Strait Islanders.

The exhibition features 'Land, Sea and Sky: Contemporary Art from the Torres Strait Islands'; 'Strait Home' with the State Library of Queensland; and 'Awakening: Stories from the Torres Strait', a collection of objects, including ceremonial masks and archaeological findings.

Opening celebrations took place last month when more than 100 Torres Strait Islanders visited Brisbane to perform traditional dancing, cooking and art and craft activities.

If you are planning to visit Brisbane over the next few months be sure to check out the exhibition: [www.southbank.qm.qld.gov.au](http://www.southbank.qm.qld.gov.au)



## Local Laws in place



Authorised Persons in your community have been identified to enforce Council's new local laws. Please abide by the new laws and work with them to make your community a safe one! (L-R Community Police Officers: Senior Sergeant Wrench Mau and Constable Kearney Binawel of Dauan, and Honorary Inspector Ned Mosby of Masig).

Council has now completed its Local Laws Information Sessions held in each community throughout July and August 2011 providing a comprehensive summary to community members of Council's new Local Laws.

Local Laws brochures have been delivered to all house holds and Council's appointed Authorised Persons (namely, Community Police Officers in

Charge and Environmental Health Workers) will now continue the Community Awareness Campaign by providing ongoing education with community on key areas of reform.

Council looks forward to continued assistance and support from communities in spreading news of the Local Laws to all corners of the Local Government area.



## Social Housing delivery in the Torres Strait

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing will address significant overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and the severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities.

Improving housing conditions is fundamental to achieving improvements in Indigenous health, education and employment and make a major contribution towards closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The Commonwealth has responsibility for funding additional Indigenous housing and housing-related infrastructure in remote Australia.

The Program Office has now completed the ground truthing phase in all of Council's Divisions. Ground truthing identifies available lots in each division that can be used for the construction of new houses. It also assesses service information on each lot, such as access to power, water and sewerage.

Council is working with the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM), who look after property titles and valuations, and the Native Title Office (NTO) to progress an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) which is a voluntary agreement between a native title group and others about the use and management of land and waters that allows people to negotiate flexible, pragmatic agreements to suit their particular circumstances.



Experience the beauty and diversity of Indigenous culture at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), Australia's premier Indigenous art fair. CIAF celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, music, dance and theatre. It invites commercial galleries and Indigenous art centres to sell art by Queensland Indigenous artists. The event will also launch the book 'Island Treasures' based on cultural stories from different islands in the Strait.

[www.ciaf.com.au](http://www.ciaf.com.au)



## Are you interested in owning an enterprise in your community?

Council is currently working closely with successful community organisation Tenderers on Saibai, Mer, Masig and St Paul's communities for the next stage of enterprise divestment which is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2011.

Round 2 of tenders for the Divestment of Enterprise Project in October 2011 will soon be advertised in the Torres News and on public notice boards and will remain open for tenders for 21 days.

If you or someone else is interested in acquiring a Council enterprise, keep watch for further details. For more information contact Council's Compliance Officer in the Legal Services Department on (07)4048 6200.



## Saibai Annexation

One thing that Torres Strait Islanders have in common is their love and respect for family, culture and tradition. We follow in the footsteps of our forefathers and celebrate their achievements. The achievements that were accomplished so that we can stand here today, on the very land they claimed for the security of future generations.

We live and breathe our culture and are grateful of the land and islands we call home.

The Saibai Annexation marks the cultural significance of the great movement of our brave and bold ancestors from their tribal lands to the village of Saibai as we know it today.

The people of Saibai Island and visitors celebrated this movement on August 1 with a traditional presentation of the 'mawa' and activities such as a Music Festival, performances by the Ariw Poenipan Dance Team, local artists, food stalls, and much more.



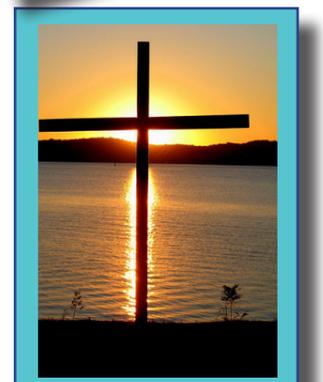
## Coming of the



This year marks the 140th anniversary of the London Missionary Society's arrival in the Torres Strait on July 1, 1871, introducing Christianity which spread throughout the region.

The Coming of the Light is celebrated in all communities and a Cultural Festival is held on Erub each year on July 1.

The festival includes not only religious services, but also spectacular model boat races, traditional arts and crafts, singing, dancing and feasting.





# powersavvy connects with TSIRC

The Torres Strait Island Regional Council and Ergon Energy's powersavvy programme have joined forces to cut the council's power bills.

The council has recently signed an agreement with Ergon Energy that will result in powersavvy funding nearly \$20,000 worth of equipment improvements and upgrades at the council's Thursday Island offices and workshop.

When completed, this work is expected to save the council at least \$8900 a year off its power bills for the two sites. powersavvy manager Brian Elmer said the energy-saving programme could provide substantial savings to the council across its operations in the outer islands, also, and

was looking forward to working together to do this. So far this year, powersavvy has taken its "save power, save money" message to residents on Lama, Masig, Mabuiag, Kubin and St Paul's, Badu, Saibai, Dauan and Boigu islands and Mr Elmer said the programme would be introduced to the remaining islands starting in October.

It has also powered into cyberspace in its efforts to spread the message about saving power and saving money, launching a colourful website [www.powersavvy.com.au](http://www.powersavvy.com.au) If you visit the website in the next month or so and fill out the website survey, you could win a \$50 set of solar power Christmas lights to brighten up your house.

[www.powersavvy.com.au](http://www.powersavvy.com.au)



powersavvy's new website assists with being power conscious with your appliances, at home, at work and with the kids.

## Construction Underway

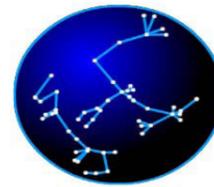
TSIRC received \$13m from CBRC (Cabinet Budget Review Committee) for the construction of up to 26 new dwellings totalling up to 93 new bedrooms in the Torres Strait.

In March 2011, TSIRC Builders were awarded construction of 9 dwellings at Badu, Dauan, Erub and St Pauls.

These dwellings represent 29 of the planned 93 bedrooms for delivery.

TSIRC continues to work with the State Government during the rollout of the remaining dwellings.

Site preparation has now progressed at Badu, Erub and soon to commence at Dauan and St Pauls.



## TSIRC promotes careers in Local Government



TSIRC was present at the Tagai State College Careers Market on Thursday Island and the FOGS Indigenous Employment and Careers Expo in Townsville in July.

The aim of attending the expo's was for TSIRC to share with students the benefits of working for Local Government and the pathways that can be taken through employment, such as training and gaining managerial positions.

### Tagai State College

### Townsville Exhibition Centre





# Queensland Governor visits Torres Strait



## Poruma Island



The Governor of Queensland Ms Penelope Wensley and husband Mr McCosker visited the Torres Strait last month and were accompanied to Poruma, Erub and Saibai Islands by TSIRC Mayor Fred Gela.

In Poruma and Erub, Ms Wensley met with Councillor's and community forum leaders for a briefing on local issues such as erosion and inundation and the future impact of climate change and sea level rise on islands in the Torres Strait.

In Poruma, the Governor visited the local school and visited each classroom where she took the time to chat with the children.

When Ms Wensley visited Saibai, she attended a briefing session on issues of concern including cross-border issues and inundation.

The Governor viewed a performance of traditional music and dance at both Saibai and Erub, and also visited the Erub Erwer Meta Darnley Island Arts Centre.

## Saibai Island



## Erub Island

