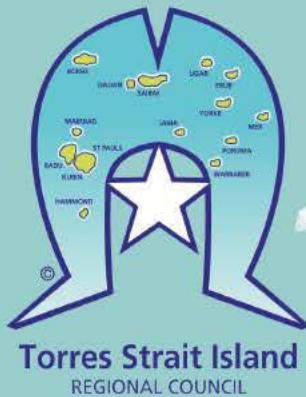


Kawa

Kuikumabaigaw

Yangukudul



STRAIT talk



Welcome back to another edition of **Strait Talk**. We've picked out the best highlights of our work and events in our communities over the past several months so we can share them here with youpla. We thank our teams and communities for their great work and contributions to **Strait Talk**.
Mina big esso youpla!

From the Mayor's Office...

Firstly I would like to thank God for his many blessings and acknowledge our Traditional Owners, Elders past and present, spiritual leaders and all of our constituents across Zenadth Kes.

During the June Council meeting we adopted our first ever budget surplus in Torres Strait Island Regional Council's history. The 2015 -16 budget of \$104 million, with an operating surplus of \$1.4 million, will not detract Council from their goal of achieving sustainability which can be achieved by prioritising debt recovery and asset management. This is a wonderful achievement for Council. *[Continues inside]*

Coming of the Light Feature Story inside!



'Empowering our people in our decision, in our culture, for our future'

From the Mayor's Office continued...

One Boat

Since amalgamation regional offices have been working hard to provide additional support to their community divisions so that Council can work towards improved economic and operational service delivery. It is now time to 'turn the ship around' and continue working towards the regional vision of 'One Boat', the Regional Governance Model that will improve the current unwieldy governance structure for the Torres Strait.

One Boat would absorb the roles, municipal responsibilities and powers of all of the Local Governments (TSIRC, Torres Shire Council, Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council) and the statutory functions of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

One Boat is a shared Regional vision with a coalition made up of the three Local Government Mayors, including myself and Mayor Napau Pedro Stephen, Mayor Bernard Charlie and TSRA Chair, Mr Joseph Elu.

Since 2013 I have been meeting regularly with Government Ministers including our Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion, Local Member for Leichardt, Warren Entsch MP, and Mr Warren Mundine, Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Council and other senior officials to discuss the benefits of a One Boat approach.

Minister Scullion has shown his support for Torres Strait Islanders aspirations to improve governance arrangements saying "I am a strong advocate for local communities and leaders including elected and cultural leaders taking the lead and driving change without interference from Government. The One Boat concept is

such an initiative where the One Boat Coalition can drive change providing real empowerment at the local level,"

We continue to remind our Leaders that as momentum for One Boat builds, we are becoming increasingly unified and strategic, not only in our vision, but also in our planning.

Without strong political support and will, of both the State and Federal Government we will not be able to achieve our '2020 Vision' of implementing One Boat.

Prime Ministers and Cabinet Ministers visit to the Torres Strait.

This month we welcomed our Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, his Cabinet Ministers and Senior Officials to the Region. We canvassed several key issues, including One Boat. High on our list of priorities is to continue to take strategic and targeted actions to drive down the higher cost of living in the Torres Strait and we've made it known that this can be achieved by providing a subsidy - much like they already have in place for Tasmania - towards a Torres Strait Freight Subsidy Scheme. Freight costs heavily contribute to our high cost of living and directly impact our economic development. Another option is to offer tax rebates driving down the cost of providing goods and services to the region.

TSIRC continues the pursuit of securing an exemption to all projects that require accreditation under the Australian Government Building and Construction Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme. We also sought increased commitment from the Commonwealth to protect the border area of Australia that runs through the Torres Strait.

Despite urging The Prime Minister and his advisors for genuine collaboration and engagement with our remote outer islands, it was disappointing to see the Prime Minister travel to the northern most point of Australia and only spend 3 hours on one of our 15 communities, having chosen instead to replicate the experience of "Indigenous life" from tents in TI. My offers to provide deeper understanding of the many strengths we have, and the challenges we face in the most remote and beautiful parts of Australia were ignored.

Aside from fulfilling his election promise of spending a week in a remote location each year, I asked our Prime Minister whether he would also be providing any genuine commitment towards strengthening our region. I would have loved to hear the Prime Minister confirm that once the Seawalls funding had been exhausted, that the Commonwealth would continue to support the project. However this was not the case.

Speakers at the Leaders Forum on Thursday Island were happy to hear that the Commonwealth will fund the construction of a new wharf on Prince of Whales Island so that people travelling to work, and students travelling to school can do so safely.

The Hon Prime Minister also committed to supporting Minister Nigel Scullion and Member for Leichardt, Mr Warren Entsch to work with us on establishing a Transitional Committee for One Boat.

We wait to hear of further announcements that will act as a catalyst for real change for our people in the Torres Strait.

Driving down the high cost of living

Since my election in 2008 on behalf of Council I have been advocating for our Governments to address the critical issue of the disproportionately high cost of living in the Torres Strait. We know that improving access and affordability to fresh produce, increasing access to health services and providing adequate housing significantly improves our health and wellbeing, lengthening life expectancy. I continue to ask why our politicians aren't addressing the statistics, if there really is genuine commitment to Close The Gap.

Torres Strait Islanders, on average, earn \$25,000 less per year than people living on mainland Australia, however we are paying up to three times more for the price for food and petrol primarily due to the high cost of freight. Since my election in 2008, Council have been lobbying Government to implement a Torres Strait Island Freight Equalisation Scheme.

Torres Strait Islands Freight Subsidy Scheme

Tasmania has had a Commonwealth government funded Freight Equalisation Scheme in place since 1976. The Tasmanian Scheme provides local industries with equal opportunities to compete in mainland markets, recognising that unlike their mainland counterparts, Tasmanian shippers do not have the option of transporting goods interstate by road. As our Islands in the Torres Strait are separated by 42,000 square kilometres of water, we too are in the same boat. Our sea is our national highway, everything is sent from Port to Port.

Freight costs contribute significantly to the high cost of living for constituents and is arguably the greatest impediment to achieving economic development on a local, State, national and international level for Torres Strait Islanders.

Exemption for Commonwealth OHS Accreditation Scheme

Another barrier for our people and our local businesses in achieving economic independence is the unaffordable costs associated with the Australian Government Building and Construction Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme. The scheme is a mandatory requirement to compete for major building and infrastructure development opportunities in excess of \$4M.

Our local businesses have ticked off all of States regulatory requirements; they already build to code, and have the capacity and machinery to engage in the larger contracts but are unable to do so because of this Scheme.

To further benefit the regional economy and support the creation of long-term employment opportunities I am calling on the Government to provide exemption on all Commonwealth funded construction works in the Torres Strait and for our neighboring remote communities, in the Northern Development Area.

If this Scheme is not made exempt, it will have the very opposite effect on both the opportunities that the Northern Development Package is seeking to achieve. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities will not achieve Economic Development unless this happens.

I continue to question the National Development Package and its claims of stimulating the economy and creating jobs. How will the Torres Strait even get a look in, if the true impacts of the Accreditation Scheme are not even considered?

The Accreditation Scheme is a massive obstacle in the path of true economic development for our people.

PNG - Open Door Policy

We have also been seeking greater commitment from the Commonwealth Government to appropriately resource our borders. We recommend the construction of a shared Government facility at Saibai. The shared facility would permanently house monitoring and enforcement personnel from the Australian Border Force and the Queensland Police Service and would be better positioned to respond to complex border issues that directly affect our health, our wellbeing and our way of life.

The Australian Government has been throwing significant investment at Operation Sovereign Borders, Operation Relex I & II, providing enhanced surveillance, patrol & response operations in international waters between the Indonesian Archipelago & Australia, while we continue to be left exposed. All we need is an illuminated light with the word 'Enter' across it, so that we also dress the part - because Torres Strait is unsecured and abandoned. We have a porous border, our communities are in a very vulnerable position and we are asking that they be resourced appropriately.

Council is not in a position to act as an enforcement agency to tackle unlawful activities of other nationals, contain Public Health outbreaks or provide protection to people at risk of human trafficking.

**God Bless
Mayor Fred Gela**

More information on the current key issues can be found at:
<http://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/publications/media-releases>

LITTLE BUT IMPORTANT PEOPLE

CREATING SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS



TSIRC, along with Cairns Taipans Cape and Communities Development Manager Kerry Williams, Cape and Communities Development Manager Rob Moore and Queensland Rugby League, recently partnered up to visit six communities across the Torres Strait to promote and create sustainable sporting programs and clinics for our communities.

Basketball commenced in April when we partnered up Cairns Taipans and Queensland Health's 'Healthy Relationships program' to deliver a Young Persons Check and refereeing clinic to the community of Erub. This resulted in eight teams battling it out over three nights in an 'Erub Mamus Ra Nener' 3-on-3 Basketball competition.

We then visited Mer, Hammond and Mabuig, with an impressive turn out from each community. In Mabuig we fixed the run-down community basketball court and played well into the late afternoon, and at Hammond we had a night refereeing clinic, followed by two nights of Hammond 3-on-3 'Boss of the Courts' matches.

Rugby League began in the last week of July on Mer where we partnered up with Queensland Rugby League's Rob Moore to deliver League Tag in the community hall under the beautiful Mekay Tree. A sausage sizzle and young men's leadership session followed late into the evening before we headed off to Iama to deliver indoor



theory and refereeing. At our next stop, Boigu, we conducted theory and practical sessions and then met the local school kids on the school oval before running for cover from the rain (but not before another sausage sizzle!). Mabuig was next, where we ran another round of theory and practical sessions before our final sausage sizzle.

Special thanks to the Councillors of Mer, lama, Boigu, Hammond and Erub for allowing the sustainable sporting program to go ahead. Thanks also to our Healthy Lifestyle Officers on ground for organising the workshops, and a big thank you to

Rob Moore from QRL for delivering the Rugby League coaching, refereeing and League Safe courses in our communities and Kerry Williams from Cairns Taipans for delivering the Basketball Refereeing Clinic.

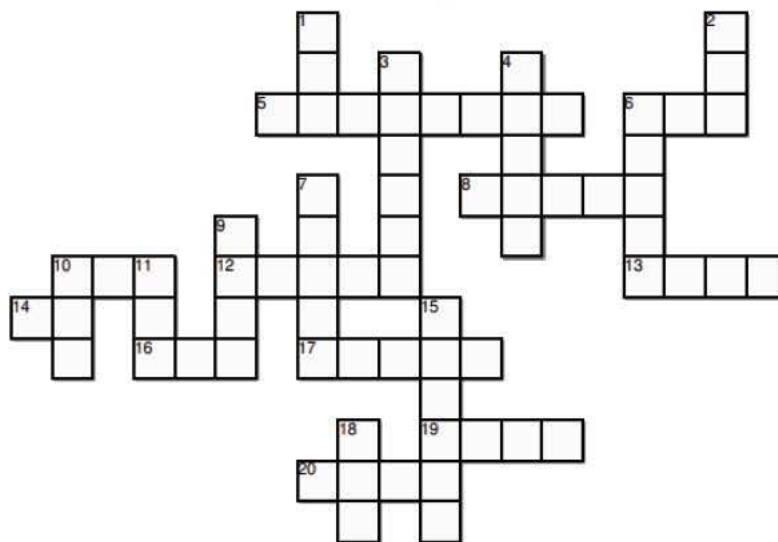
We now have over 38 community basketball referees, 30 league club coaches, 30 league safe runners and 16 new league referees in our communities.



Ella Kris, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator

Ella's Take Five

SOME EASTERN ISLAND WORDS FOR HUMAN BODY PARTS



Created on TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Maker

Across

5. KIDNEY
6. MUSCEL
8. BACK OF THE HEAD
10. BLOOD
12. FOREHEAD
13. NECK
14. MOUTH
16. BACK
17. TEETH
19. EAR
20. EYE

Down

1. LIVER
2. NOSE
3. HEART
4. CALVES
6. BLADDER
7. TONGUE
9. CHIN
10. FEET
11. LUNG
15. RIB CAGE
18. HAIR

FREEHOLD PILOT PROGRAM

Council is embarking on a major project, in conjunction with the State government, to consult with communities on whether to make ordinary freehold available in Torres Strait (to allow the buying and selling of land in open market similar to anywhere else in Australia).

In June 2015, Council endorsed a Freehold Implementation Plan for Poruma, St Pauls and Hammond as a 'pilot program' in Torres Strait. The program began in July 2015 and completion is projected for 2017.

Over the coming months, Council will be implementing the Freehold Implementation Plan, facilitating consultation within community on the prospect of grant of freehold parcels of land. *Council's approval at this time is limited only to a consultative process with community* and it has not yet agreed to consider applications for grant of Freehold. The consultations will determine Council's position on Freehold grants, which will be tabled in months to come. Council will consult with native title representatives and claimants.

Until December 2015, Council will consult with the Traditional Owners and the community at large on whether Freehold option is suitable for their community. Consultations for Poruma, St Pauls and Hammond will take place in September.

PROCESS OUTLINE

July - December 2015:

- Council to develop Freehold instrument.
- Identify land available for Freehold.
- Freehold Policy developed, clarifying persons who are eligible to apply for Freehold.

December 2015:

- Council and Traditional Owners agree on method for addressing native title implications from Freehold.
- Council (in its capacity as Trustee) to decide by formal resolution whether or not to proceed with making Freehold available in pilot communities.
- If endorsed by Council as Trustee, Ministerial endorsement of Freehold Instrument to be sought.

- Endorsed Freehold Instrument attached to Planning Scheme.

Post December rollout:

- Roll out Freehold in pilot communities (where endorsed to proceed)

FREEHOLD: COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS - LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

Community	Date	Venue	Time
Hammond Island	Sunday 13 Sept.	Community Hall	2pm
Poruma	Tuesday 15 Sept.	Community Hall	9am
St Pauls	Monday 29 Sept.	Community Hall	9am

Ninety one year-old Mebai Warusam took centre stage at Saibai's Health Awareness Expo when Federal Member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch presented the World War II veteran with medals for his service in the Torres Strait Light Infantry Brigade.

A Traditional Owner and community leader on Saibai, Mr Warusam's original medals were lost many years ago by his children who took them as play things while their father was out fishing.

The new medals were especially re-issued by the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs at the request of Mr Entsch who also organised an accompanying certificate, recognising Mr Warusam's service, signed by Prime Minister Tony Abbott.



Image of Mr Warusam courtesy Heather Beck.

Fees and Charges Register Update

At Council's June Ordinary meeting a revised Register of Fees & Charges was adopted. This adopted Register of Fees & Charges, details the cost-recovery fees, services and/or facility charges, and commercial fees applicable for the 2015/2016 financial year.

In relation to its commercial fees, Council has developed a system of full cost pricing as its vehicle for service delivery and the setting of user fees and charges. All direct and indirect costs involved in providing the services have been factored in the price charged for each service to ensure Council is sustainable in long term service delivery.

The following fees have significantly changed in Fees and Charges for 2015/16:

- Maritime Fees
- Prescribed Activity Permits
- Childcare Fees
- Accommodation Rates

A complete list of 2015/16 Register of Fees and Charges can be accessed via TSIRC website by using the web link below and clicking on the 'Quick link' to 'Register of Fees and Charges'. Alternatively a copy of the Register of Fees and Charges is available at each Council office.

<http://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/publications/media-releases/publication-scheme>

MANAGING COUNCIL'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

In June, an assessment of the carbon footprint for the Torres Strait Island Regional Council was conducted as part of the financial statements for 2015. The assessment focused on carbon emission generators such as:

- electricity for running council water and sewerage infrastructure,
- power and lighting to council buildings, and
- street lighting across the Torres Strait Island Communities.

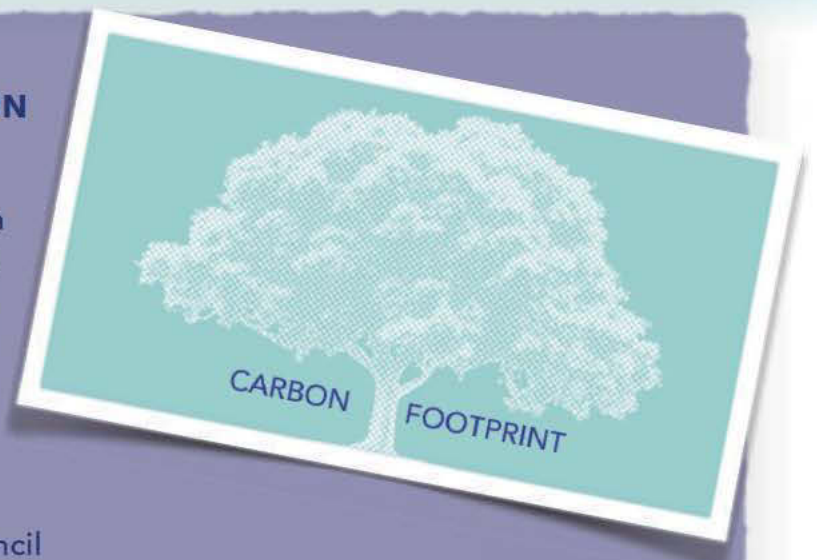
Items also included were fuels (both diesel and unleaded petrol consumed in council vehicles), and air travel taken by staff and councillors to transit across the broad Torres Strait Region.

Carbon calculations were conducted using ratio factors from the Carbon Reduction Institute Pty Ltd Australia, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Uniquest Pty Ltd and the University of Queensland. The review showed an overall marginal decrease in emissions for 2014. The major carbon contributor is energy in the form of electricity at a rate of 79% followed by air travel at 13% and fuels at 8%. The overall decrease is due to electricity component downward progression through better control of air-conditioning, and fuel being reflected as actual Council fleet consumption.

Factors contributing to this improvement would be changes in infrastructure with better processes and more efficient facilities coming on line, including the installation of timers on new air-conditioners as they are replaced and the regular maintenance of air-conditioning systems. These push-button timers have been installed with new air-conditioners over the 2013 and 2014 year period to reduce the time air-conditioners are left on unattended. Timers are being installed on an ongoing basis to reduce energy costs across all islands.

The data for the 2014 period indicates that Council is improving in its consumption of electricity which has been displayed over the last three years. This is the major contributor to emissions and Council encourages all staff to think wisely when using electricity.

Council's review identified areas where further improvements can be made to reduce Council's carbon footprint.



LOOKING AFTER OUR PETS

Late last year during the Annual Council Workshop, Councillors instructed that they wanted to begin enforcing local laws to combat dog issues in their communities. Since then local Environmental Health Workers have been conducting awareness and education programs to inform community members how they can improve community health and safety, through responsible pet ownership.

New Animal Local Laws include:

- All animals over three months need to be de-sexed.
- Animals over three months need to be registered.
- No more than two dogs and two cats per house (unless a special permit is issued)

Fines of up to \$375 may be issued to animal owners who don't comply with Animal Management Local Laws. A copy of ALL of the new Animal Management Local Laws is available at your local Council office or are available online at: <http://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/about-council/legal-services-department/local-laws>



To assist community members Council coordinated a vet to visit our communities during August to de-sex cats and dogs, free of charge. There is another round of Community Vet Visits planned for November. This is a great opportunity to assist you, as responsible animal owners, and to help you comply with the local laws.

Please contact your local Environmental Health Worker (EHW) to complete a consent form and arrange treatments, which includes de-sexing, euthanising and vaccinations. EHW's can also provide information on vet visits and further info on the new Animal Management Local Laws.

Thanks to Queensland Health for providing funding for our team to deliver our TSIRC vet visit program.



Like us on Facebook

MINISTER LEEANNE ENOCH + TSIRC COUNCIL MEETING



Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) invited Leeanne Enoch, the Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation to visit the Torres Strait so she could gain a better understanding for people living on the islands. Mayor Gela said that Council was impressed that the Minister visited the islands to meet with them within 10 weeks of holding her portfolio. Council is pleased she had shown that she is committed to working with the Torres Strait Islander people at a local level.

Mayor Gela said that there was a raft of issues discussed, including Indigenous business ownership, employment and traineeships and apprenticeships. The purpose of the day was to advocate for improved social housing for our residents - including repair and maintenance, community capital works and advocating towards investment in home ownership. As a result of the meeting Mayor Gela commented that

“home ownership for our people, is very real and that the region should be afforded the opportunity. Until now this option has been non existent to our local island communities.”

The Council also raised concerns over ongoing issues with social housing that had been left unresolved for too long. Mayor Gela requested that Council work more closely with

t h e

Minister on addressing these issues for our region. Minister Enoch expressed her vision of **“Council working together with State Government to assess local strengths and weaknesses and see local housing providers established”**.

Members of Council also discussed the capacity for our constituents to build and work on their own houses, which was often hindered due to policies that failed to consider the future of the region. Mayor Gela discussed the Indigenous Employment Policy, emphasising particular concern around the policy’s lack of monitoring. Mayor Gela briefed the Minister on TSIRC’s own Indigenous Employment Opportunity Plan, urging the Minister to support the plan and also discussed providing apprenticeship programs through the Council to improve repairs, maintenance and new constructions in communities reducing reliance on external support.

Minister Enoch advised that money should be locked into the Torres Strait, rather than taken back out of community and given to Fly-In Fly-Out (FIFO) companies and their employees.

The Minister discussed the opportunity for bundling projects so the opportunity for 2 or 3-year contracts can be assured to employees.

Continued next page....

Minister Enoch recognised that regional policies need to be implemented and acknowledged so that the Torres Strait has the capacity to build in their own region.

These issues are being addressed through the establishment of an Improving Economic Outcomes for the Community Steering Group. Its membership includes; Mayor Fred Gela, Mayor Pedro Napau Stephen of Torres Shire Council and members from the Director General's office at Department of Housing and Public Works and Department for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

Minister Enoch encouraged TSIRC to continue to work on strategic issues and to set small, brave goals and create action around those goals.

TSIRC in partnership with My Pathway would like to invite 15 ladies to attend a workshop to be part of leading culturally appropriate exercise programs for mums with newborns and small children.

Get Active

Start Playing, Stay Playing: a plan to increase and enhance sport and active recreation opportunities for women and girls

One week of **DANCE KOMBAT** Training:
 MONDAY
 TUESDAY
 WEDNESDAY
 THURSDAY
 Event at Zenadth Kes Cup

12th October – 15th October

Let's make exercise fun!

Must be registered with My Pathway – open to ALL Islands.
 The 15 ladies will return home skilled to lead exercise programs for mums with newborns and small children and play a part in improving health.

The respective islands will then be welcome to take part in a 12 Week Dance Challenge using Dance Kombat as the main exercise and following the 12 weeks there will be a Dance Off.

Workshop details:

- Learn from a Dance Kombat Trainer for one week and create an instructional dance DVD to take back to your community
- Learn about nutrition and healthy eating

Workshop location: **Hammond my pathway**

DANCE KOMBAT Queensland Government

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WORKERS GRADUATE!



Ten Environmental Health Workers from the Torres Strait Island Regional Council have graduated with their Certificate III in Indigenous Environmental Health.

TAFE instructor Aggie Hankin praised the 10 Environmental Health Workers (EHW's), noting they were wonderful to teach as they each had good underlying knowledge, strong skills, were keen and motivated to

learn more about their roles and responsibilities, and keen to assist in making healthier, safer communities. Ms Hankin believes the Environmental Health Workers demonstrated increased confidence throughout the course and set a benchmark for future students in this area.

Ewan Gunn, Manager Environment and Health, added that as a result the **EHW's are now exhibiting greater initiative, understanding and confidence in their roles** and are all very keen to start their Certificate IV in Indigenous Environmental Health. We would like to acknowledge assistance received from the Queensland Government through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Health Program.

Well done and exceptional work to those who attended!

COMING OF THE LIGHT



In 1871, The London Missionary Society (LMS) arrived on Erub Island in 1871, with their vision of bringing the 'light' of Christ to the Torres Strait. Former

gardens. The produce was then shared and cooked up for the feasting ahead.

The first thing one sees when arriving into the central village of Erub is an Akur Meta (traditional thatched hut) which was built by especially for the celebration. It is central to the performance space where the arrival of the LMS was recreated on the morning of another day of celebrations. Several hundred community members welcome and cheer on their family, who have gone to great effort to recreate the arrival of the LMS and its historical significance for their community.

TSIRC's **Divisional Manager for Erub, John Armitage** invested a great amount of care and thought into coordinating the week-long celebration with activities that reflected and celebrated the earlier days of festivities. John's grandmother was a senior woman in the community and he grew up with her stories of the Coming of the Light.

John also developed his ideas from speaking with our **Executive Officer, Daisy Ketchell** who had fond memories of the celebrations of her childhood. Daisy was also instrumental in securing funding from Ged Erub Trading for the July 1 Celebration at Kemus Bay and Council's Discretionary funding for the feast and celebrations on the following day. This year's Coming of the Light was a well-



Community Police Officer and All Saints Church Warden of Erub, **Elder Dick Pilot** says that the teachings of the LMS

changed their community and he believes it helped his people to become more compassionate and minimised conflict in community. "In the early days a boat came to Darnley from England. It was on its way to Cape York having left Daru." He said after LMS "we were able to go to another man's house to help out and share with our people". The teachings of the arrival and belief of LMS were handed down from our ancestors; from our fathers, to us."

The opening ceremony of the Coming of the Light Festival was presented at the July TSIRC Council Meeting on the Monday. Erub's four tribal groups came bearing gifts of bananas, sweet potato and cassava grown in their



coordinated celebration, which saw everyone from the community pitching in and working towards the vision of celebrating and preserving their traditions.

“Lead with grace, lead with humility” - Mayor Gela

In his opening address for July 1, **Mayor Gela** spoke of the importance of the Coming of the Light for the Torres Strait, and the culture and lore of Erub that influenced the teachings of his mother, who he believes, helped to shape him, and his career.

The Mayor also commended the community for their hospitality and said for as long as I can remember the hospitality of Erub has always been there. Mayor Gela thanked “all the women, the hunters, the children and the whole community for helping out”.

Pastor Samuel Kem Kiwat who has been instrumental in spiritual guidance in the community said that the Festival is celebrated to remember the ancestors from back in the day, and that the London Missionary Society have made the Torres Strait what it is today.

All Saints image ©Australian Museum

“The church is not the building, the church is the people” Pastor Kiwat

At the heart of Erub Community is the beautiful, run down All Saints church that was built by hand from burnt coral and basalt in 1919. All Saints was a Heritage Listed in 1982 for its cultural and historical significance.



In an effort to preserve cultural heritage the Mayor announced that Council will be making a financial contribution and with the support of TSIRC's building team, working alongside members of the community we would be able to commit towards the restoration work needed to preserve and upgrade the All Saints church. Council are also approaching other key stakeholder groups seeking their assistance and support as it is something that a lot of our churches throughout the Torres Strait Region need.

Mayor Gela said he was pleased to "return back home" and that churches across the region - which are an important community place of worship - have deteriorated over time due to lack of financial capacity. Churches are a critical part of our history and lives. They are a testament to the commitment and the sheer hard work of our forefathers and local communities.

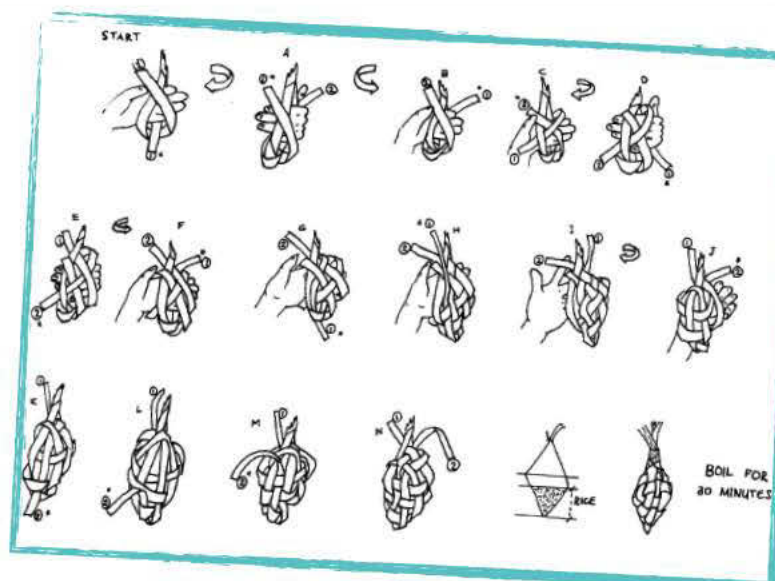
“After all it takes a community to build a community” Mayor Gela said in his closing speech.





During the **Coming of the Light** in Erub community members and guests were lucky enough to feast on **Poso**, a small hand-woven basket filled with rice and steamed in fresh coconut milk. Several staff were also lucky enough to learn the delicate and complicated weaving technique as taught by Master Poso maker **Mrs Lala Ina Pilot**.

Although the recipe is taught only by being shown the techniques, **Strait Talk** are sharing some of the key ingredients and tips that they learnt in an effort to encourage the tradition to be passed on.



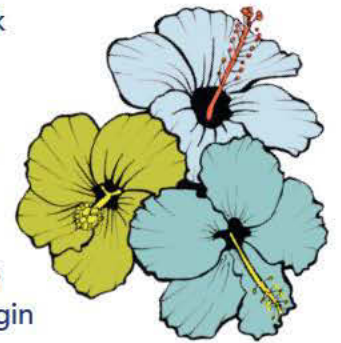
POSO

Ingredients:

- Young coconut leaves (yellow)
- Rice
- Pumpkin (optional)
- Fresh coconut milk

Method:

- Take the unopened, yellow and soft coconut leaves from the top of the tree and begin weaving.
- Pour in washed rice mixed with thin small slices of pumpkin through the open neck of the Poso basket and fill up to the shoulder. You need enough room for the rice to expand when it cooks.
- Scrape coconuts to make your milk and place in a large flat pot.
- Boil fresh coconut milk and place Poso in neatly.
- Poso is ready when it has expanded all the way up to the top.
- Serve in a hand-woven green coconut leaf basket.
- Find your local Poso maker for further instructions.



Find more photo's from St Pauls and Erub's Coming of the Light celebrations on page 23.



STORY OF AUKAM

I recall as a child, often when the moon was full, I would sit on my father's lap and he would tell me a story that was told to him by his mother.

A long time ago on the island of Saibai lived a woman named Aukam.

Aukam did not work during the day nor when there was no moon. Aukam would only weave mats when the moon rose at night. When the moon set, Aukam would lay down her weaving and would sleep.

The moon saw this and fell in love with Aukam. One night, when all was quite and everyone was asleep on the island of Saibai, Aukam sat weaving to the light of the moon. The moon could not resist his love for her any longer and came down and took her up to the sky.

Today, their love burns brightly for all to see, for within the bright circle of a full moon, you can still see Aukam weaving her mats, for all to see.

As told to Ella Kris.

COUNCIL MEETING DATES

September 21 & 22, 2015 - Boigu

October 27 & 28, 2015 - Mer

November 17 & 18, 2015 - Badu

December 15 & 16, 2015 - Hammond



General public are welcome to attend.

Any member of the public wishing to make a deputation / representation must give notice in writing to Council two weeks prior to the meeting. These may be provided to the Divisional Manager, or emailed to the Chief Executive Officer, Ms Dania Ahwang, at info@tsirc.qld.gov.au

Please note Council Meeting locations may change. Please contact your Divisional Manager or call 07 4034 5700 for an up to date list.

MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM OUR CEO



On behalf of the Torres Strait Island Regional Council I would like to congratulate,

George Mosby from Poruma, **Albert Bann** from Iama, **Billy Dau** from Boigu and **Wabay Marou** from Mer for completing all of their training required under the Construction, Plumbing and Services Integrated Framework Apprenticeship on 18 May 2015.

This is a success story that not only reflects their hard work but the commitment they have put into their training and study over the past few years.

This achievement is a fantastic milestone for them, not only as individuals but also for their families, their Communities, and Council as a whole.

Council looks forward to continuing to work with our apprentices during their bright future as qualified Tradespeople.

Dania Ahwang
Chief Executive Officer

Strait Talk invite all of our staff, community members and stakeholders to send us their stories, ideas and photos because Strait Talk belongs to YOUPLA!

Please get in touch at info@tsirc.qld.gov.au or leave a message with our Customer Service Officer, Naila Nomoa on 07 4034 5700



TSIRC DEBT RECOVERY

Council has embarked on a debt recovery project with a primary focus of collecting debts owed to Council.

At amalgamation Council inherited all outstanding debt of former island councils including both commercial and housing debts, which in some cases have never been legally pursued. This growing debt balance is impacting on Council's ability to deliver core local government services to the community and therefore is a key priority for Council to address.

To assist Council with the recovery of over \$23 million dollars in debt, Council has engaged Collection House an external debt recovery agency. In addition to the services of Collection House, Housing Officers across the region will be liaising with community members to establish payment arrangements for outstanding rental payments. Council is working collaboratively with debtors and is offering formal payment arrangements to debtors who acknowledge their outstanding debt and who are committed to entering into a repayment plan.

If you are unsure if you have an outstanding debt with Council please contact Council's Debtor team at debtors@tsirc.qld.gov.au or your local divisional office or dedicated Housing Officer.



From the office of Federal Member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch

There has been some great news recently for the Torres Strait region. Firstly, I'm pleased to say that mobile phone coverage is set to improve on Erub Island with the announcement that a new base station will be built there. It is one of three locations in Leichhardt to benefit from the Abbott Government's \$100 million Mobile Black Spot Programme. Construction will be rolled out over the next three years.

Apprentices in the Torres Strait will get more help than ever before with the start of the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network. The new programme will help employers recruit, train and retain apprentices from before they begin right through to completion. Skill360 Australia will provide the service on Thursday Island while another organisation, MRAEL Limited, will offer outreach services to Boigu, Coconut, Darnley, Dauan, Hammond, Horn, Murray, Stephen and Masig.

Congratulations are in order for the Torres Strait Island Regional Council. They received nearly \$55,000 in funding to build war memorials on 14 islands across the Torres Strait commemorating the service of local veterans. The funding, through the Australian Government's Saluting Their Service grants programme, gives us the opportunity to recognise the hundreds of Islanders who spent years protecting Australia's safety as the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion.

In fact, I was honoured to meet one of the last surviving members of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, 91-year-old Mr Mebai Warusam, last year when I was on Sabai. Mr Warusam's children had misplaced his military service medals and so I contacted the Department of Veterans' Affairs and was able to have the medals reissued – along with an official Certificate of Appreciation from the Australian Government signed by myself, the Prime Minister, and the Minister for Veteran's Affairs. I presented a very proud Mr Warusam with his medals and certificate in April this year in front of the entire island community. The efforts and sacrifices of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion must not be forgotten, and I'll continue to work hard to ensure they receive the recognition they deserve.

Finally, I am profoundly disappointed that this year I was unable to visit Erub Island for the Coming of the Light festivities. I was in Vietnam at the time as a convenor for the Australian Global Tuberculosis Caucus where I had the opportunity to meet with world experts regarding treatment for tuberculosis, malaria and other mosquito borne diseases – issues of great relevance to the Torres Strait region. I trust the day was a great success, and I look forward to catching up with you in the near future.

Esso and best regards,

The Hon. Warren Entsch MP
Federal Member for Leichhardt

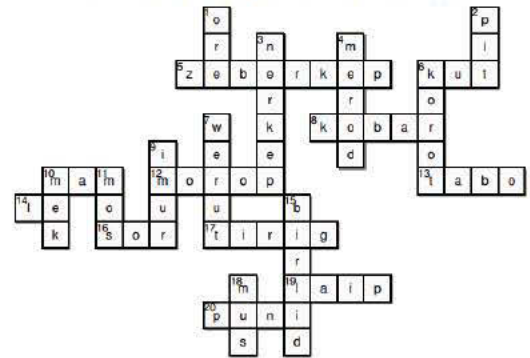


Last Christmas TSIRC used Cr. David Bosun's artwork on our Christmas Card. We are looking for something just as meaningful this year. If you know of an artwork made by someone in your community that would suit this year's Christmas Card please email our team at info@tsirc.qld.gov.au or call Cairns office on 07 4034 5700

Answers to Ella's Take 5 from page 6

Ella's Take Five

SOME EASTERN ISLAND WORDS FOR HUMAN BODY PARTS



Across

5. KIDNEY (zeberkep)
6. MUSCEL (kut)
8. BACK OF THE HEAD (kobbar)
10. BLOOD (mam)
12. FOREHEAD (morop)
13. NECK (tabo)
14. MOUTH (je)
16. BACK (sor)
17. TEETH (trig)
19. EAR (lalp)
20. EYE (puni)

Down

1. LIVER (ore)
2. NOSE (pit)
3. HEART (nerkep)
4. CALVES (merod)
6. BLADDER (korot)
7. TONGUE (werut)
9. CHIN (imur)
10. FEET (mek)
11. LUNG (mos)
15. RIB CAGE (birild)
18. HAIR (mus)

Created on The Teachers' Corner and Cross



NO BUTTS

TSIRC Quit Smoking

Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Is offering all TSIRC staff who smoke the opportunity to register for a **FREE** Quit Smoking Program.

THE PROGRAM CONSISTS OF:

- Regular telephone contact with Quitline (at a time that suits you)
- 16 weeks supply of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (patches, gum, or lozenges)
- Partners/spouse/immediate family member of TSIRC employees registered on the program can participate for free (*conditions apply*)

The decision is yours, all you need is the will and to register

To take the first step to a healthier you, contact **Ella Kris** on **(07) 4048 6222** or Ella.Kris@tsirc.qld.gov.au for a registration form

TSIRC COMMITMENT

We have committed to the health and wellbeing of all employees and their family to become a "Smoke Free" workplace and home. TSIRC has partnered with the Queensland Government in a nationally recognised programme to assist all those employees and their family who wants to "Quit Smoking" through a confidential and planned approach to succeed in their personal commitment towards a healthier life.

A joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative under the National Partnership on Preventative Health



Cancer Australia has developed the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cancer Framework** to identify national priorities for the many communities, organisations and governments whose combined efforts are required to address the disparities and improve cancer outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Cancer Australia's Framework provides high-level guidance and direction to all sectors to harness, maximise and leverage collaborative arrangements to improve cancer outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The findings in this Framework can assist in the development or review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer control plans and strategies to ensure collectively we are targeting the priorities that sit within each of our areas of influence.

Our North, Our Future: A Vision for Developing North Australia

On 18 June 2015 the Federal Government released its White Paper on Developing Northern Australia: Our North Our Future. In this paper, Northern Australia is broadly defined as the parts of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn, from Western Australia to Queensland, an area of approximately one million people, including the Torres Strait.

The purpose of the White Paper is to seek to drive down the current high cost of living in the North. It is the Governments belief that it should not be providing services that could be provided by a business, and instead, the role of the Government is to build the economic environment to enable business to develop.

There are 5 core themes in the paper, these are:

- Making it easier to use natural assets, in close consultation with, and the support of, Indigenous communities.
- Providing a more welcoming investment environment
- Investing in infrastructure to lower business and household costs
- Reducing barriers to employing people
- Improving governance

The paper discusses issues related to the Torres Strait, such as:

- Land Tenure (Treaty arrangements)
- Water for Economic Development
- Tropical Health Research Facilities
- Existing programs that are of benefit to Northern Australia
- Existing programs that are of benefit to Northern Australia Torres Strait Treaty

Council suggests that:

- There is Torres Strait representation within the Advisory Group and Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia
- During economic development there is full consideration and support of the natural beauty and resources within the Torres Strait and the essential need for it to be preserved for future generations
- Eco Tourism be pursued
- Whilst land tenure in the Torres should be simplified it is essential that Native Title is preserved.
- The need for sea and air transportation infrastructure for remote communities to be included within eligibility for Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility concessional loans.

ENCOURAGING OUR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER TRADIES

Erub mechanic and tradesperson, **Jacob Gutchen** has successfully completed his Certificate 3 in Diesel Fitting. Jacob worked with Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) before Remote Fleet Management took him on to service TSIRC fleet across our islands. In the recent Torres News interview Jacob commented, "It's been a long journey. One of the advantages of training in a remote area is you have to learn to improvise and do everything", Remote Fleet Management said that Jacob has not only been servicing and repairing everything from cars, trucks and earthmoving machinery, he is also up to date on computer diagnosis for late model vehicles and communicates and coordinates with other stakeholders so that work can be efficiently carried out in community.

In 2013 Jacob's work efforts were recognised when he was awarded the 'Inspirational Apprentice' award at the 2013 Torres Strait Employment and Training Recognition Award night at Thursday Island.

Mayor Gela and Cr Sabatino were on Kirriri (Hammond) last month to present Jacob with his Certificate. As reported in the Torres News, Mayor Gela stated "This has been an important step in supporting local capacity building in the region." "When TSIRC first started there were many apprentices in the region, but at that early stage we lacked the

capacity to keep them..." "We improved this by putting it out to tender and a professional private contractor stepping in, now as a result we have quality tradesmen. "Cr. Sabatino said "This skills transfer is critical to get trades back to the region, hopefully we will be able to foster a few more like Jacob."

Jacob's mother is a well-known Erub artist, **Florence Gutchen**, well-known for her innovative



ghost net weaving creations and is a current finalist for the prestigious Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Arts Awards. Florence tells Strait Talk "when I was young I missed out on an education, I didn't finish school, so I didn't want my kids to miss out too. Jacob's father, Kapua asked him to go to TAFE as there are few opportunities for our kids here"

"Now he is a professional tradesperson, I'm really proud. When we received his Certificate I burst into tears. Our Torres Strait nation needs more skilled people to come and work here, we need more employment for our people."

"At some point I'd love Jacob to come home to his community, but Jacob now needs to make a decision about where he is going to go on this next part of his journey."

Remote Fleet Management wishes Jacob well on whatever career path he chooses and hope to continue to work with Jacob well into the future. We expect he will go a long way in his chosen trade, "he is an inspiration to others and leads by example." Remote Fleet Management also set up a bank account for Jacob donating their \$1,500 Australian Government Apprenticeships Incentive to get him started.

The co-operation between **Remote Fleet Management, My Pathway, Torres Strait Island Regional Council** and private contractors in providing a pathway to employment for people like Jacob is what it will take for our apprentices to be adequately supported and receive high quality training if we are to train people from our region.

Again we commend Jacob and our recent plumbing graduates, **George Mosby, Albert Bann, Billy Dau** and **Wabay Marou**. We look forward to working with many more tradespeople from the Torres Strait.



On Wednesday 22 July 2015 TSIRC attended the **Tagai Careers Expo** held at TRAWQ Hall on Thursday Island. The purpose of this event was to provide career



information to

students and

community members and provide them an opportunity to make more informed decisions about their desired career pathway.



Teena Akiba, Training and Development Officer, and **Kimberley Biggs**, Human Resources Officer, attended the Expo on behalf

of TSIRC to promote our organisation, the services we provide and the career opportunities available with us.

COMING OF THE LIGHT

SOCIAL PAGES

St Pauls



Thanks to our Divisional Manager, Lydia Mene for photos from St Pauls

Erub



OUR TEAM

Professional development, workshops and training, leadership, team-building activities and meetings all contribute towards improving and skilling up our local workforce so that we can continue to improve our service delivery for all of our communities and constituents.



NOLGA Palm Island Conference



Mabo Day Cairns



PM's Visit



Senior Managers supporting staff at Tafe



Mabo Day Cairns



Disaster Management meeting



IKC Workshop



NAIDOC Indigenous Business Conference



Mabo Day St Pauls



Taipans at Mer



Mabo Day - Kirriri (Hammond)



Torres Strait Island
REGIONAL COUNCIL

TORRES STRAIT ISLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

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