
Media Release | Local Fare Scheme

Continuation of Local Fare Scheme vital for Torres Strait Communities

The Queensland Government's Local Fare Scheme assists people in Torres Strait to access affordable air travel within the region and to mainland Australia.

Families across the Torres Strait will be disadvantaged if the Queensland Government discontinues the Local Fare Scheme (LFS) in June 2017.

2011 ABS data indicates that the median income for our residents is \$314 per week. Torres Strait Island Regional Council Mayor, Fred Gela said "Torres Strait Islanders, on average, earn \$25,000 less per year than people living on mainland Australia however they are paying up to three times the price for food (of average quality), petrol and transport. The Local Fare Scheme has been a real benefit to these families, allowing access to affordable travel, and must be continued."

The LFS assists by offsetting the high cost of travel for many families living in the Torres Strait. TransLink figures indicate that around 2,000 people access the scheme each year and each passenger saves around \$370 per flight.

Mayor Gela has lobbied both State and Federal government on the disproportionate costs and said "the high cost of freight and travel for community members also contribute to the growing gap between low income and high cost of living. Many communities are severely restricted with travel options and suffer major access issues. Residents of Dauan and Ugar have no landing strip and are limited to helicopter at great expense".

"Travel options are dependent on tidal heights and weather and coastal conditions. Previously residents from Ugar were entitled to a State Government subsidy to ensure fairer accessibility for transport as a return flight from Ugar can cost over \$3000".

TSIRC also subsidised air travel over the Christmas season in 2014 for both Dauan & Ugar communities from our own revenue to support families who were unable to afford travel costs.

Local Resident from Badu, Alenka Morseu said "The local fare scheme is affordable and convenient for families..." Prior to this "... I would have to risk travelling into Thursday Island by dinghy. Living in the outer islands of the Torres Strait there aren't many job opportunities so covering costs is difficult for most families. We live in a high cost area and the local fare scheme has given us relief."

Mayor Gela continues to lobby the State Government to provide parity for affordable and accessible travel for people who are living remote, to ensure they are not further disadvantaged. Mayor Gela said "The LFS is a lifeline for many low-income families in the Torres Strait, especially those living on the outer islands and struggle to meet the high cost of living."

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