



MEDIA RELEASE

21 March, 2013

TSIRC Community Police to come under QPS banner

The Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) has nurtured and improved the Torres Strait Community Police Service upon established solid pre-amalgamation foundations to create a model which is both enticing to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and delivers for community.

TSIRC are proud of the distance its Community Police service has come and are fortunate that it will now be handed over to QPS who will continue to grow and shape the service as dedicated specialists.

TSIRC Mayor Fred Gela said that today, the Community Police Service had been fully reared by Council, with 36 Community Police Officers on ground and two administration staff.

“To see our Community Police in uniform when I am visiting our islands gives me a sense of security and reassures me that our constituents have access to, when required, this essential front line service at there finger tips,” Cr Gela said.

“It has not been a slap-dash effort either.

“We have established the Community Police professionally and in accordance with all requirements, while always working closely with QPS.

“Since establishment, we have seen many reported incidents where our Community Police Officers have performed outstandingly, resolving situations that would have otherwise escalated without their presence - which alone proves the Service’s success,” he said.

“Now that the service is fully grown and established we are happy to hand it over to the capable hands of the QPS whose professionalism and structure will ensure that our people retain the quality service of Community Police on ground.” Cr Gela said.

Mayor Gela said he would like to thank Premier Campbell Newman for seeing this transition take place.

“Labour had this on their table for a long time and all it needed was some political will,” he said.

“I would like to acknowledge the Liberal Government and the Premier’s leadership for finally seeing this through.

Earlier this month, Police Minister Jack Dempsey and Police Commissioner Ian Stewart met with TSIRC to discuss the transition.

Mr Dempsey is eager to make the transition as smooth as possible with a policing plan tailored to suit the needs of our communities.

“We want to get these policy initiatives right for the people of the Torres Strait – we want to have the community driving it,” Mr Dempsey said.

“Particularly with cross-border issues the police service does a lot of the hard lifting on behalf of the other agencies.

“We want to give the power back the communities and are looking at giving Community Police Officer’s new ways to deliver service,” he said.

Mayor Gela said that Community Police presence under the watch of QPS would also provide a level of reassurance in terms of capacity building.

“The Community Police Officers will now be provided with a clear career path under the QPS and will be given the opportunity to enter into the justice entry program to work as a sworn officer,” he said.

Mayor Gela also said that the Local Government footprint within communities came with the responsibility to assist in reducing the number of criminal offences within the region.

“We need to look at statistics and discover reasons behind these offences,” Cr Gela said.

“For example, if juvenile offenders are rising in numbers we need to work out why? Some use boredom as an excuse, but I know it's due to lack of opportunities and the many other contributing factors that need a whole of government approach to resolve. Jail is not always the answer,” he said.

Mr Dempsey agreed, saying that part of the overall police model would be early intervention for young people and not taking away what families already did with respect and honour.

“The QPS are always seeking for ways to work with communities to make local areas great places to live,” Mr Dempsey said.

Mayor Gela said that working in partnership with QPS on Torres Strait’s Policing Model securing the footprint and the transition is only one of many steps yet to come.

“We’d like to continue talking about the idea of a cluster service concept with a police station in each cluster of islands,” he said.

“This way it would only take a short trip in an efficient watercraft to attend to situations in each community promptly.”

“We will be having many more discussions about the future of the Community Police Service in the Torres Strait and how it is going to be administered, but we are excited that the first steps are underway,” Mayor Gela said.

ENDS

For media enquiries please email jess.james@tsirc.qld.gov.au