

MEDIA RELEASE

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2020 Vision: One Boat

Regional Assembly Model for the Torres Strait

TSIRC Mayor Frederick Gela deputized with the Senator for the Northern Territory and Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion and Local Member for Leichardt, Warren Entsch seeking support for the reformed Governance Model best described and widely known as One Boat. The deputation was to advocate for the 'One Boat' Regional Governance approach for the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

With the support of Cr Sabatino and Cr Baira, Mayor Gela attended "to remind the Ministers that One Boat will continue to be pursued, and hasn't been forgotten." The One Boat coalition is made up of the three Local Government Mayors; Mayor Frederick Gela, Mayor Napau Pedro Stephen and Mayor Bernard Charlie and TSRA Chair, Mr Joseph Elu.

Through earlier consultations and discussions back in June 2014, it was highlighted that the required reform of the current unwieldy governance structure would be resolved through a Regional Governance Model.

"One Boat would absorb the roles, responsibilities and powers of all of the Local Governments" (TSIRC, Torres Shire Council, Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council) "...and the Torres Strait Regional Authority, our Commonwealth Statutory Body. Without strong political support and will, of both the State and Federal Government we'll not be able to achieve our 2020 Vision." Mayor Gela stated that "TSIRC will be pursuing membership rights to the Melanesian Spear Group Committee (MSG) to elevate and seek support from our international Pacific Nation brothers and sisters in regards to greater governance reforms post 'One Boat'."

During 2013 and 2014 the Coalition discussed the benefits of a united Regional Governance Model, best described as 'One Boat', with Prime Minister Tony Abbott MP, Minister Nigel Scullion, Local Member for Leichardt, Warren Entsch and earlier in 2015, with Mr Warren Mundine, Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Committee.

At that time, it was agreed that both levels of Federal and State government should consult further with the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula stakeholders to progress the matter. To date, this consultation by both levels of government has not progressed, resulting in a significant interruption to the schedule for roll out.

The vision of One Boat is to streamline regional governance arrangements, reduce duplication and address gaps in service delivery. Mayor Gela said "...by removing this additional layer of bureaucracy funding should be more readily available to hit the ground, cutting through red tape, with decisions more coordinated and streamlined."

"There's a history to the One Boat journey, initially we didn't quite gain support on the establishment of a Transitional Committee involving all stakeholders tasked with the responsibility to work towards implementation of the new Government arrangement. We are now in a position to form an Implementation Committee to ensure we achieve traction."

Minister Scullion supports Torres Strait Islanders aspirations to improve governance arrangements. "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 proving real empowerment at the local level," Minister Scullion said.

Previous key dates for One Boat

- May 2014: Leaders Forum on Thursday Island
- June 2014: Prime Ministers Deputation in Canberra
- Feb/March 2015 on Thursday Island: Minister Nigel Scullion, Billy Gordon (Member for Cook) Warren Mundine (Indigenous Advisory Committee)
- June 2015: Deputation to Senator Nigel Scullion and Minister Warren Entsch in Canberra.

Council are asking that Federal Government formally endorse supporting the establishment of a 'One Boat' Governance Transitional Committee.

Further information can be obtained by contacting our Community Engagement and Media Officer, Bianca Barling on 0400 856 333 or bianca.barling@tsirc.qld.gov.au