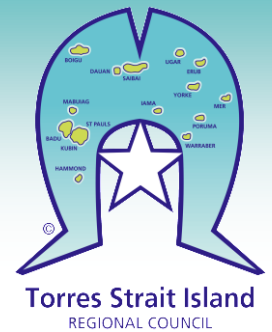


## MEDIA RELEASE:

### **TSIRC plans major regional initiatives and adopts a \$107M budget for 2015 / 16**



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Torres Strait Island Regional Council adopted their \$107 million 2015 / 16 budget at their June Council Meeting in Erub community this week.

Mayor Gela and Councillors thanked Council for their hard work in ensuring the first budgeted operating surplus in TSIRC history. The Mayor reiterated to Council that this operating surplus of \$1.4 million, although significant, shouldn't detract Council from their goal of achieving sustainability. Mayor Gela also stressed Council's priority of debt recovery and asset management over the coming months.

Council is now in a much stronger financial position to deliver important regional initiatives and to move towards the next phase of further empowering and building capacity in their communities. 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. Mayor Gela said it is now time to 'turn the ship around' and continue working towards the regional vision of 'One Boat'.

As seen by both of the unqualified audits from the previous two financial years - Council will continue to maximise its cost efficiencies so that it can best respond to changing State and Federal funding conditions and reforms.

Mayor Gela stated that "...as the State Government seem to be moving towards a dismantling of the Modern Award, we continue to watch the horizon. If some of these negotiations do take place, we will need to reshape our entire business model due to increased and unbudgeted costs to Council. This would mean increasing revenue and decreasing expenses in our overall operations and structure."

Local Government Association Queensland's (LGAQ) Chief Executive Greg Hallam is also concerned as it will "make it more difficult for Council's to manage their workforces and would entrench the inherent unfairness of having Council employees doing the same or similar work getting different pay and conditions".

The recent reforms that are being discussed in State Parliament are also on LGAQ's radar as "community expectations increase, funding for local government has decreased. It is estimated that the shortfall in Queensland is somewhere in the vicinity of \$1 billion."

Torres Strait Island Regional Council will continue to monitor and respond to the changing financial landscape so they can continue to improve on and deliver important services, major infrastructure projects and increase employment for their people. Council's main priorities for the 2015 - 2016 financial year include:

- Stakeholder engagement, economic development and advocacy to improve our services for our constituents.
- Healthy and well communities.
- Seawalls and other major infrastructure development.
- Expanded housing choice.

Further details of Councils 2015 – 2016 Operational Plan can be found at <http://www.tsirc.qld.gov.au/publications/plans-and-reports>

For 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](mailto:bianca.barling@tsirc.qld.gov.au)