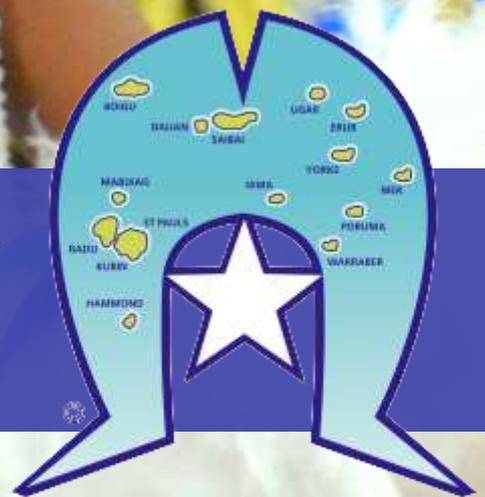




Queensland Government Deputations
October 2016



Torres Strait Island
REGIONAL COUNCIL



Housing

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 4 – 7 October 2016

Recommendation:

That the Queensland Government:

- Allocate a major component of the new Federal Housing funding to the housing needs of the TSIRC region
- Ensure housing program dollars also fund essential-to-life infrastructure required to establish new housing.

Background:

To meet our current and future housing needs Torres Strait Island Regional Council must be prioritised in housing funding commitments.

In 2016 - 17, the newly formed Housing Services department within Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) aligns Council's various portfolios as asset owner, housing service provider, tenancy manager and builder for our housing assets. This realignment further supports Council's vision of a sustainable, affordable, fit-for-purpose asset base both now and into the future.

Operationally, Council is committed to delivering sustainable regional and economic development for the Torres Strait. Our key focus areas moving forward will be sustainability, improving operating efficiency and building local capacity.

Lengthy Federal-State-Local Government arrangements, combined with complex land use negotiations have had a significant impact on the delivery of new housing in the Torres Strait region.

Although it has taken some 7 years, 73 new homes are on track to be built under NPARIH by early 2017 with 35 homes already completed.

Key Issues:

Overcrowding

Overcrowded and inadequate housing is a significant issue in the Torres Strait (see Table 2). A total of 1500+ people from 302 families are currently living with other family members across our managed housing stock of 925 dwellings.

At least 30% of all TSIRC households are overcrowded or not meeting the health, disability and child safety needs of families.

An additional 132 families are living outside our region due to overcrowding in the Torres Strait (Level 3 Moderate category). Many of these families are living in inadequate housing in Cairns.

Table 1 – Housing List Priority Levels		
Level	Need	Description
1	Very High (VH)	Homelessness, Child Safety Issues, Disability or Medical needs
2	High (H)	Living in Community in overcrowded situation
3	Moderate (M)	Living outside of community who are applying to relocate to community

Table 2 – Housing List numbers by Priority Category				
Priority Level	Wait List numbers		Living in Region	Living out of Region
	Families	Persons		
1	131	655	655	
2	171	906	906	
3	132	585		585
TOTAL	434	2146	1561	585
Current total housing stock in region managed by TSIRC	925			

This data and related issues support Queensland accessing the lion’s share of the Federal housing budget, and allocating a significant component of that state fund to the housing needs of the Torres Strait.

Building our Region

There are families not on the waiting list who hold professional and trade qualifications and cannot return to the Torres Strait due to lack of housing. Similarly, there are highly skilled people living in the Torres Strait who are ready to leave due to overcrowding.

Our housing situation therefore also acts as a barrier to building capacity in the region by preventing highly skilled Torres Strait Islanders returning home, and forcing people to leave due to overcrowding. Lack of housing hinders mobility into and out of the Torres Strait and so also impacts on the development and retention of skills and experience in the region.

Fit for purpose infrastructure networks are essential to supporting increasing demand from housing and other building programs in our communities. Housing funding programs must provide for essential infrastructure. Without drinking water, waste water, power and roads infrastructure houses cannot be built.

Where homes have historically been constructed without these essential to life services we have later had to add them at significant cost to Council and the Queensland government.

Council has a proven record of delivering good quality housing in harmony with our community because we are building for our family. We will continue to maintain our high standard of work whilst achieving the delivery of new houses under the NPARIH program.

Council delivery of new builds and maintenance provides a critical contribution to the development of skills, knowledge and economic development opportunities in our region. Reducing the layers and layers of bureaucracy absorbing much needed program dollars is critical. Quality and compliance can be effectively achieved with leaner bureaucracy.