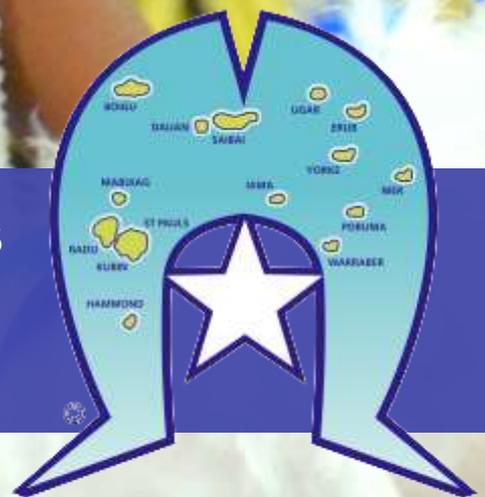




Queensland Government Deputations
October 2016



Torres Strait Island
REGIONAL COUNCIL



Infrastructure

Policy & funding supports for ports, air & road access

Presented by: Mayor Fred Gela

Author: Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Presented: 4 – 7 October 2016

Recommendation:

That the Queensland Government:

- Fund:
 - A feasibility study that considers non-engineered solutions for all-tide access to Ugar Island and support identification of funding sources for a staged approach to adequately address access issues for Ugar Island.
 - Provision of marine infrastructure at Mer
 - Provision of a jetty on Mabuiag
 - Repair/replacement of the Saibai jetty and berthing dolphins.
- Assist Council in negotiating tri-level policy and the complexities and gaps in the Federal/State funding mix.

Background:

Our sea is our national highway. Everything, including fresh food, is sent from Port to Port. To meet the critical to life transport needs of the Torres Strait region we require:

- Essential infrastructure (jetties, barge landings, navigational aids)
- Ongoing maintenance and dredging of marine access routes to allow safe barge landings in extreme weather conditions
- Water vessels that can access all tides.

Marine infrastructure in the Torres Strait requires investment to meet State and National standards.

The average cost of providing a basic sealed road in remote Far North Queensland is in the order of \$1 million p/km. If the TSIRC region were land based, and following the current access routes to each community, a minimum of 518km of roads would be required at a minimum cost of \$518 million dollars to provide an arterial road, with unsealed access roads exiting to each community. If a sealed access road were to loop around connecting each community the land-equivalent distance is 808km, at an average cost of \$808 million dollars.

The cost of providing marine infrastructure that meets standards and provides for the usage needs of communities is miniscule in comparison. Our requests are basic and reasonable.

Major funding streams available to local government for transport networks focus primarily on road networks. The focus of transport and related infrastructure funding on road networks disadvantages our region due to the primary role that water transport plays in essential commercial, government and personal transport needs of our region.

While acknowledging the Queensland government provides funding through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme (TIDS) we also note that the Scheme is underfunded to meet our infrastructure requirements.

A complex mix of policy and funding arrangements apply to roads and land and water-oriented transport networks and infrastructure across Federal, State and Local government

jurisdictions. We seek your support in our advocacy efforts with the Federal government regarding the transport network needs of the Torres Strait.

We align to the objectives and outcomes of the *Roads and Transport Alliance Memorandum of Agreement* (July 2013) but again point out the emphasis on road networks in this document.

Key Issues:

Ugar

As Ugar community is surrounded by reef, freight access has always been limited to high-tide entry. As a result of this, Ugar community are regularly without essential supplies.

Ugar does not have an airstrip and access is limited to chartered helicopter (return flight is up to \$3,000 per person) and dinghy – dependant on the tropical weather and seasons.

Council engaged an engineering consultant to assess options for access to Ugar. The recommended option - which protected the reef area - was preliminarily costed in the mid \$30 millions.

Council has secured \$3 million from TSRA to progress towards a solution and is now seeking additional resources and funds to solve these critical to life infrastructure issues more effectively.

TSRA as our major funder have indicated that engineered (infrastructure) solutions are cost prohibitive and non-engineered (non-infrastructure) solutions need to be investigated. Previous feasibility studies on all-tide access for Ugar have focused on engineered solutions.

We therefore need to conduct a feasibility study into the non-engineered solutions for all-tide access for Ugar.

Mabuiag & Mer

In the Torres Strait the roads and marine infrastructure projects on Mer (Murray) and Mabuiag are a particular priority as they will upgrade essential transport infrastructure for use in all conditions.

Access to Mer is currently via beach landings – there is no jetty and only a barge ramp that was not properly engineered when constructed nor has Native Title validation. A jetty, barge ramp, berthing dolphin, navigation aids, concrete hardstand area and lighting are required.

In the period 1st April 2014 to 30th March 2015 there were 672 registered visitors to Mer. This number does not include the significant numbers of unregistered Traditional visitors arriving from Papua New Guinea under the Torres Strait Treaty, and community visitors from other islands. Across the Torres Strait the per annum movements of PNG nationals into the Torres Strait is 50,000.

Mabuiag also requires a jetty.

Estimated cost for the completion of marine infrastructure for Mer and Mabuiag is \$9.55 million in total.

Saibai

The berthing dolphins and jetty at Saibai are damaged. TIDS has recently assessed Saibai's marine infrastructure needs. We have requested a copy of the TIDS assessment report which includes indicative costing of works.