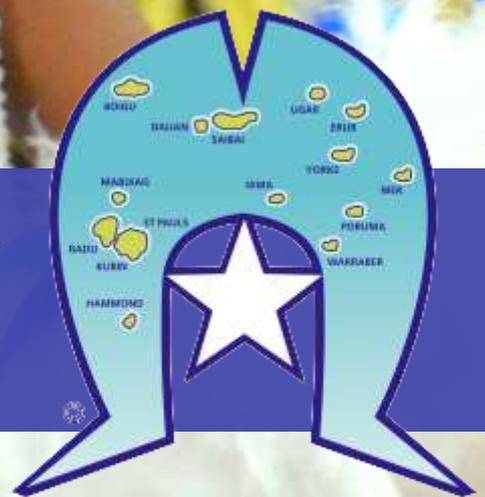




Queensland Government Deputations  
October 2016



**Torres Strait Island**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL



## **Standalone Housing**

**Presented by:** Mayor Fred Gela

**Author:** Torres Strait Island Regional Council

**Presented:** 4 – 7 October 2016

### **Recommendation:**

That the Queensland Government:

- Fund the extension of electrical infrastructure by Ergon to service Lots 501, 502 and 503 on Murray Island
- Work with Council to ensure essential to life services to all homes across the Torres Strait

**Background:**

Lots 501, 502 and 503, Murray Island, were built in 2001 prior to the formation of Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC). They were not supplied with reticulated water, sewer or power supply. The houses on these lots were fitted with unreliable solar systems with battery banks and back up generators.

In 2007 the whole standalone power system (panels, batteries and generator) at each house was replaced. The battery systems have a useful life of 6 years and the systems have now failed and are urgently in need of replacement.

Across the Torres Strait there are other houses constructed prior to formation of TSIRC which do not have essential to life services such as water, waste water and power.

**Key Issues:**

Council has worked with the Northern Regional Office of the Department of Housing and Public Works to determine options for power supply for Lots 501, 502 and 503 going forward. Continuing with a solar solution would cost around \$600,000 for the three properties.

A revised quote is being sought from Ergon to extend electrical infrastructure to service these three lots. Permanent power supply was quoted in early 2015 around \$350,000 but did not include Native Title validation, survey, vegetation clearance and other matters.

With a useful life of only 6 years for the battery units, solar systems significantly increase whole of life costs compared to permanent power supply. We question the reliability of the solar units given the history of failure rate at the Mer houses.

Lots 501, 502 and 503 are located amongst other undeveloped lots identified in the sustainable land use plan, so power supply to current homes may also benefit future housing. The power supply route proposed by Ergon also passes the Rural Transaction Centre (commenced prior to formation of TSIRC) and so could also supply this building when it is commissioned.

Permanent power supply is the most sustainable solution and provides the greatest value for money, benefits to future development, and lowest maintenance requirements.