



# THE TORRES STRAIT LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT GROUP



## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

09/10/2020

### TORRES STRAIT & PAPUA NEW GUINEA BORDER BREACH

At approximately 3:00AM AEST Wednesday (07/10/20), 4 Papua New Guinean Nationals from the coastal village of Sigabadaru, breached the Australian border and landed their boat on Saibai Island, within the Top Western Islands of the Torres Strait.

Due to the time of day, the individuals had minimal contact whilst within the Saibai community, apart from a brief interaction with a local resident that they intended to visit. Local authorities were alerted to the unauthorised visitors by community members, which also prompted the 4 individuals to depart the community.

A representative from Queensland Health has confirmed that the resident involved in the interaction has been assessed as low risk for coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. Nevertheless, as a precaution, staff based at the local Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service Primary Healthcare Centre on Saibai Island will collect a swab for COVID-19 testing and undertake daily temperature checking. Full personal protection measures will be observed.

The Torres Strait Treaty normally permits cross-border travel for traditional purposes, between inhabitants of 14 Torres Strait communities and 13 coastal villages of Papua New Guinea, however a ban on cross-border movement has been in place, due to the coronavirus pandemic, since February 2020. This restriction on movement was initially enacted by the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and supported by the Torres Strait Local Disaster Management Group (TSLDMG). A ban on border movements then followed from the Governments of both countries, which is in place until further notice.

Significant, multi-agency, State and Federal personnel, and additional vessels have been based near the coast of Boigu and Sabai Islands since the ban on border movements was enacted, to provide 24hr, 7 day a week surveillance and monitoring. This can at times be challenging due to the size and complexity of the region, and all agencies involved have been working with communities to ensure comprehensive monitoring.

TSLDMG Co-Chairs Mayor Mosby and Mayor Malone, have commended the community for quick engagement of the local agencies and advised that “Communities should be alert, but not alarmed”, further adding “this was an important reminder of the need for increased personnel and vessels to remain protecting Australia’s most vulnerable border well into the new year”.

#### Important Community Contacts:

Please report suspicious border activities to Border Watch by calling 1800 009 623. For urgent matters or unauthorised visitor incidents, contact the Border Force Incident Control Centre (which operates 24/7 from Darwin) on 0468 591 229.

<b>Local Border Force Personnel:</b> Saibai Island - 07 4090 0110 Boigu Island - 07 4069 4518	<b>Local Queensland Police Service:</b> <i>Contact your local TSIPSO or:</i> Saibai - 0418 204 419 Boigu - 0477 388 653	<b>COVID-19 Concerns:</b> Contact your local Clinic, Call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit: <a href="http://www.health.qld.gov.au/">www.health.qld.gov.au/</a>
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#### Media Enquires:

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