



## THE TORRES STRAIT LOCAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT GROUP



### JOINT MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

#### GLOBAL COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS) PANDEMIC

Yesterday afternoon (17/03/20), members of the Torres Strait Local Disaster Management Group (TS LDMG) held an extraordinary meeting specifically in response to the global COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Pandemic.

All key regional agencies were represented in this forum including Mayors from the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), Torres Shire Council (TSC), Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC), and Queensland Health as the lead agency for this pandemic.

#### **The following key resolutions were made, *and moved*, during this extraordinary meeting;**

1. The Torres and NPA LDMG's request that State and Federal Govt impose a non-essential travel ban to our region on their staff in accordance with the Business Continuity Plans applicable to those Department and Agencies. It is the intention of LDMG's to protect our vulnerable population and 'flatten the curve' should COVID-19 enter our communities.
2. The LDMG's seeks an urgent decision from the Commonwealth for ABSTUDY support to effect the early return of Boarding School students to their home communities – to limit later possible exposure of communities to COVID-19, LDMG's will work with Queensland Health advice to manage any quarantining required for this group.
3. The LDMG supports early return of Boarding School Students to their families in the region in general.

#### **The following key regional mitigation approaches were also confirmed during this meeting;**

- *Non-Essential Travel:*  
All non-essential travel is not permitted to the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), Torres Shire Council (TSC), Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC) jurisdictional areas. In addition to this, all 3 Councils have implemented employee travel restrictions throughout the region.
- *Border Movements Under the Torres Strait Treaty:*  
On 15/03/20, Prime Minister Marape, of Papua New Guinea, placed a ban on cross-border travel for traditional purposes under the Torres Strait Treaty. The ban will remain in place until further notice. Australia respects the Government of Papua New Guinea's decision to exercise its right to take this action under Article 16 (3c) of the Treaty.

This action follows the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) resolution in its February Ordinary Meeting to restrict border movements by cessation of permit issuing.

- *International Ship Visits:*

During its March Ordinary Meeting, the Torres Shire Council (TSC) resolved to cease further visitations by cruise ships to Thursday Island until further notice.

- *Horn Island Airport:*

The Horn Island Airport and associated facilities remain operational, however in the event that a declaration is made and announced by either the Prime Minister or Premier, Torres Shire Council (TSC) will then close the airport to other than emergency services, freight and other approved services. Public announcements will occur should this be the case.

### **Key Queensland COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Information as of 17/03/20:**

- No cases have been reported within the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), Torres Shire Council (TSC), Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC) jurisdictional areas.
- Queensland has had 78 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus), including 10 new cases.
- Queensland Health can confirm all cases remain isolated in appropriate accommodation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Nine patients have recovered.
- Contact tracing is still underway for the 10 new cases. Queensland Health will notify the community if any other public health alerts are required.
- Queensland Health is urging anyone who has been overseas in the last 14 days and has a fever or any respiratory symptoms to see a doctor immediately. Please call ahead to your local medical centre and let them know your symptoms and travel history, this will help them prepare for your arrival.
- Queenslanders can do their part by practicing good hygiene and staying home if you're sick. Washing your hands properly and often is the gold standard of health advice that can help prevent viruses from entering your body.
- Anyone with concerns can call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or find up-to-date reliable information on the Queensland Health website at [www.health.qld.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/coronavirus)

- ENDS -

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