

**MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE**

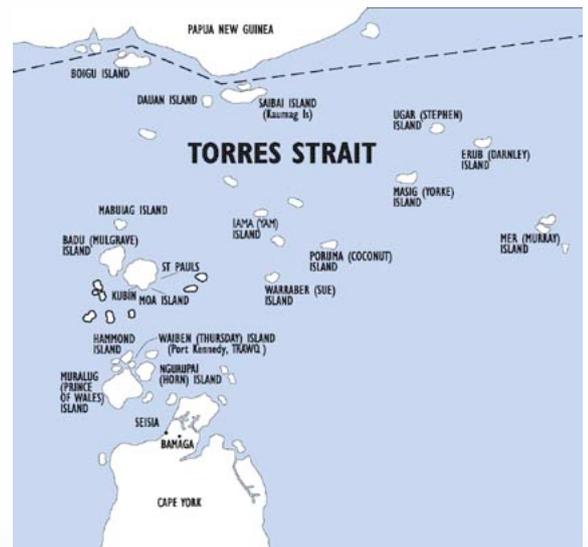
12<sup>th</sup> August 2020

**COVID-19 UPDATE - TORRES STRAIT & PAPUA NEW GUINEA BORDER**

Community concerns have been raised recently over the growing number of Coronavirus cases in Papua New Guinea, particularly given the proximity of communities within the Torres Strait Island Regional Council’s local government area.

**Continuation of ban on border movements:**

As a preventative measure, during its Ordinary Meeting on 18th February 2020, Council resolved to ban all travel of Papua New Guinea Nationals and Torres Strait Islanders under the Torres Strait Treaty and further resolved that no permits would be signed to allow trade or travel between the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea, until further notice. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT), who provides treaty liaison and oversight, then also moved to endorse this ban by officially closing the international border.



The international border (as shown by the dashed line above) is in close proximity to the TSIRC communities of Boigu, Dauau & Saibai.



TSIRC Mayor Cr. Phillemon Mosby & Deputy Mayor Cr. Getano Lui Jnr. inspect the border from Saibai Is. Last Friday, the proximity of the PNG coastline can be seen in background.

**Increased border presence & multi-agency response:**

Since the pandemic’s inception, Council has worked with all applicable agencies to ensure additional resources and an increased presence in the region to prevent cross-border transmission and facilitate any medical emergencies that may still be permitted under humanitarian conditions.

Last week, TSIRC Mayor Cr. Phillemon Mosby, whom is also Chair of the Torres Strait Local Disaster Management Group, inspected the border near Saibai Island.

During his visit Mayor Mosby stated, “We were very pleased to see both the number of vessels patrolling the border, and the number of personnel on ground. Due to the close proximity of PNG and ease of accessibility to our communities however, we must continue to maintain a close vigil of the border and as such, have requested that the increased multi-agency presence remain until at least the end of the year”.

- ENDS -

**Media Enquires & Interviews:**

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