

Strait *Talk*

SAGERR/WOERR 2026



Torres Strait Island
REGIONAL COUNCIL



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New homes for Mabuiag



In May, two new modular homes arrived in Mabuiag from Cairns. The homes included one three-bedroom and one two-bedroom modular dwelling. These are scheduled to be handed over to their new owners on 22 July.



Construction of both residences began at the Cairns QBuild Hub in November. The use of modern methods of construction ensures homes are fit for purpose because of the modular approach to building them. The homes are designed to withstand the tough environmental conditions of the Torres Strait. These include high humidity and seasonal weather challenges. The homes also meet the cultural and lifestyle needs of communities.

Mabuiag has worked closely with TSIRC throughout the planning and coordination process. While constructing the homes in Cairns allowed for greater control over manufacturing and a more efficient construction process.

This approach has enabled Council to deliver more homes of a higher quality in a shorter timeframe.

These homes form part of TSIRC's Stage 1 Housing Program, which prioritises housing delivery based on critical community needs.

Stage 1 funding was released on 27 September 2022. It marked an important step forward in addressing housing shortages throughout our communities. In October 2023, Council formally resolved to deliver the program through a staged approach in partnership with QBuild.





As part of TSIRC's ongoing partnership with the Department of Housing and Public Works to address housing needs across the Torres Strait, a total of seven new dwellings will be delivered in 2026.

This includes two homes on Mabuiag, two Plug ins on Warraber, two Plug ins on St Pauls and one Plug in on Masig.

The Housing Program reflects Council's ongoing commitment to improving community liveability and wellbeing across the Torres Strait. Alongside its partners, TSIRC is delivering homes that support safe, healthy and resilient communities.



Skills training for staff to benefit communities



Staff across TSIRC divisions attended training earlier this year in forklift operations, CPR and first aid, and management skills.

In May, six TSIRC staff on Masig attended forklift operations training. The Cairns Truck School delivered the national competency unit for operating a forklift truck. All staff passed the training, which included practical and theory tests. They now wait for the outcomes of their applications for the High Risk Work Licence.

Twenty-six divisional staff also attended CPR and first aid training at TSIRC offices in June. The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) provided financial support for the training, which Dawsons Training delivered on Thursday Island. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is a procedure a trained person can use on someone whose breathing or heart has stopped. It's a procedure used to save people's lives until emergency services arrive.





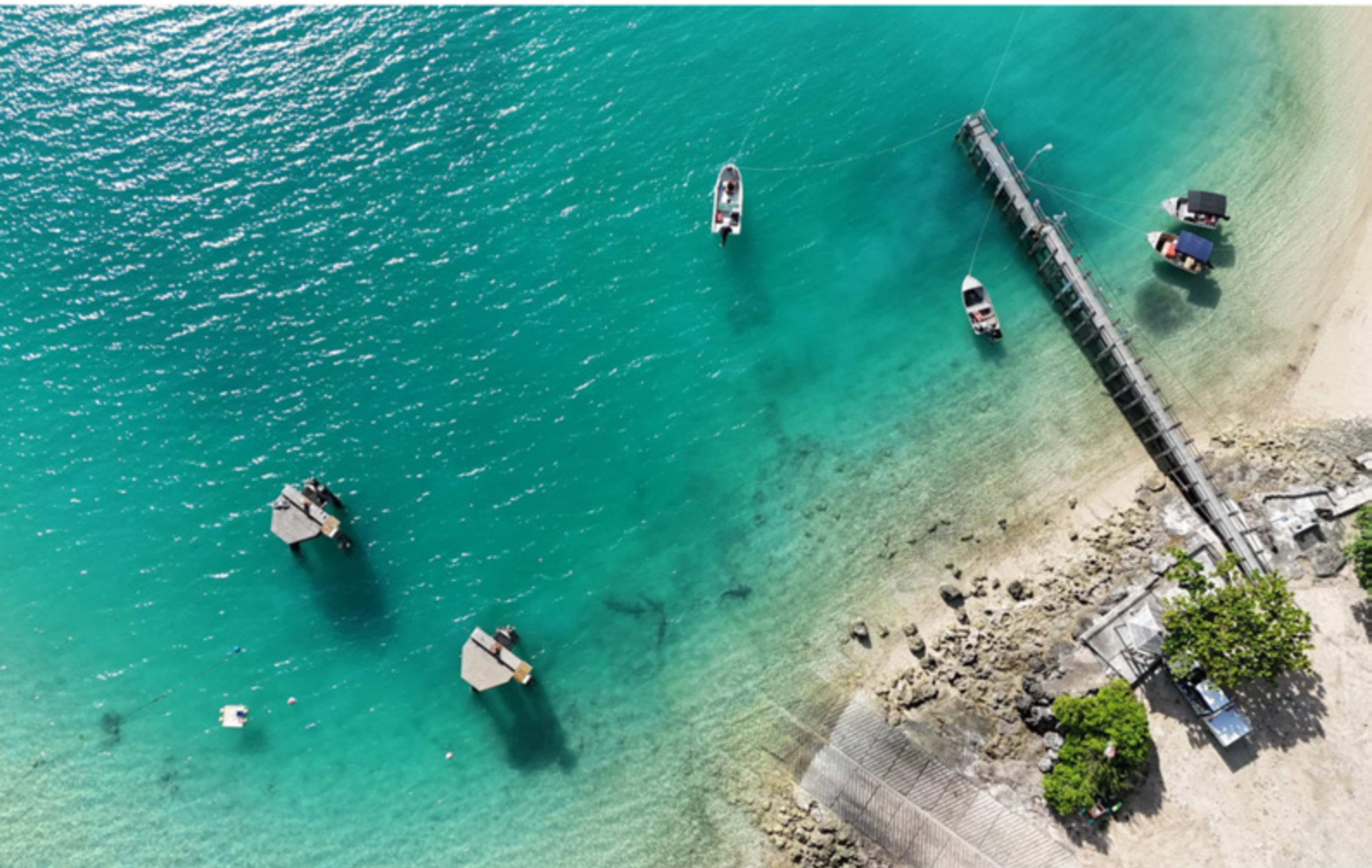
Last, Larissa Bani, Manager, Events and Engagement at Mabuiag, and Marcus Warusam, Engineering Operations Supervisor, Saibai recently completed management training. Both attended the Ignite Programme, development course for managers in local government.

The Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) runs the Ignite Programme for promising leaders. The LGMA offers training and development across advocacy, collaborative learning and professional development. The Ignite Programme develops emerging leaders through workshops and practical learning.

Engagement begins for phase 2 of economic development strategy

Phase two of the TSRA co-funded economic development strategy for TSIRC communities has kicked off.

Newly appointed Economic Development and Strategic Projects Advisor, Susanne Lutz, together with John Palmer from Emver Partners, will host meetings across all 15 TSIRC communities over the coming months. They'll work alongside Councillors to progress this next stage of the project.





‘For this phase, we’re working with communities to translate our Phase One findings into practical strategies that we can implement,’ Ms Lutz said.

Phase One findings included the strong desire for Torres Strait Islanders to own and control the resources in their region. Locals also highlighted challenges associated with native title and other land tenure arrangements, which have led to confusion and uncertainty.

Fisheries, the use of social housing for business, and tourism were also identified as key areas residents want to address through future development planning. ‘We’ll develop island-specific and regional economic action plans to reflect how communities want to grow.

‘Phase Two will identify local priorities, available funding, and how we can work with communities to deliver on these priorities,’ Ms Lutz said.



This work will drive the development of a 10-year strategic action plan. The strategic plan will contain individual community plans and a consolidated regional plan.

All plans are intended to be investment ready, allowing communities to begin their economic development journey without delay. Any Phase Two proposal for investment is expected to be commercially viable and make financial sense.

TSIRC will work with Emver Partners to deliver and complete this phase. The upcoming engagement is expected to support sustainable economic development, create jobs, and drive long-term regional growth.

Council is expected to endorse the final plan around October this year.

TSIRC receives Excellence in Biosecurity Award



In 2025, Torres Strait Island Regional Council became only the second recipient of the First Nations Award for Excellence in Biosecurity.

The Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry sponsors these awards as part of their public awareness and education agenda. They recognise and celebrate individuals, groups and organisations that enhance Australia's biosecurity system.

Community Services Executive Director Dawson Sailor said, 'This recognition belongs to all the Elders in the fifteen communities and all Indigenous environmental health workers.'

'We walk strong every day to protect Country, culture and people.'

The department recognised TSIRC's work in managing pests, weeds, animal health, and invasive species. Council's approach to biosecurity included surveillance, education, emergency planning, and hands-on responses.

These initiatives included the Exotic Fruit Fly Block Program, animal biosecurity to support desexing pets and monitoring diseases, and reducing the risks of rabies, ehrlichiosis and other serious illnesses from reaching mainland Australia.



Council's invasive species programs were delivered under the Torres Strait Regional Biosecurity Plan.

Mr Sailor recognised the role of TSIRC's environmental health workers in keeping the Torres Strait and mainland Australia free from the devastating impacts of disease.

'Our workers are on the frontline of biosecurity on every island.

'It's through their leadership, vigilance and cultural authority that keep our islands and all Australia safe from biosecurity threats.'

TSIRC was nominated by Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC). AMRRIC takes a co-design approach and is led by the needs and wishes of the communities they work with.

The Northern Territory based organisation works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support the health and wellbeing of companion animals and their owners in First Nations communities.





Traditional Inhabitants Meeting on Daru Island

The first ever out-of-session Traditional Inhabitants Meeting (TIM) was held on Daru Island from 21–22 May.

Representatives from Australia and Papua New Guinea discussed challenges under the Torres Strait Treaty, a 40-year bilateral agreement between the two countries.

Leaders from the Torres Strait and 13 PNG treaty villages attended. Torres Strait Island Regional Council was represented by Cr Rocky Stephen (acting Co-Chair), Cr Ted Mosby and Executive Director of Community Services Dawson Sailor.

The TIM worked through solutions for free cross-border movement, definition of traditional activities and fisheries. Representatives also discussed travel bans, permit processing and health.

The Torres Strait Treaty was signed in December 1978 and came into effect in February 1985. It defines the border between Australia and Papua New Guinea and provides a framework for the management of the common border area.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is the responsible organisation for the Torres Strait Treaty on behalf of the Australian Government.

Both the TIM and the annual Joint Advisory Council (JAC) meetings were created to bring representatives of the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) area to discuss issues and activities, report concerns, and make recommendations and seek solutions to problems that arise.

Councillors will next meet with Australian and Queensland government agencies in July in preparation for more formal talks. The PNG Government will then host the high-level Joint Advisory Council meeting in Port Moresby later this year.

Ailan Tok with Adeah Kabai

I am a proud Saibai Islander from the Koey Buway Tribe (Umay Clan) and a degree-qualified Civil Engineer with a strong background in the mining and resources sector.

I commenced employment with TSIRC in April 2016, as the Divisional Manager on Saibai Island, and then I transitioned into Engineering Services.

I am currently employed as the Head of Engineering and have also had the privilege of acting in the role of Executive Director of Engineering Services on various occasions.

What initially attracted me to TSIRC was the opportunity to return home and contribute directly to the communities of the Torres Strait. Having grown up on Saibai Island, I understood the unique challenges faced by our people and wanted to use my professional skills to make a positive difference.

As Head of Engineering, I oversee Council's Engineering Operations across all 15 island communities, providing strategic leadership for essential services, infrastructure and capital works. I also work closely with council staff, community leaders and partners to ensure critical infrastructure projects are delivered safely, efficiently and in a manner that meets our people needs.

At present, I am particularly proud to be involved in the Saibai and Dauan Jetties Replacement Project.



This is a significant investment in essential marine infrastructure that will improve freight operations, passenger access, safety, and long-term serviceability for both communities.

Working for TSIRC provides a unique opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people across the Torres Strait. The work can be challenging at times due to the remoteness of our communities and the logistical complexities involved, but that is also what makes it so rewarding.

Despite the many constraints we face, our staff consistently find ways to deliver positive outcomes for our communities. If you are passionate about making a difference and enjoy working in a dynamic and diverse environment, TSIRC offers some incredible opportunities. Contributing to the future of our island communities is something truly special.

Outside of work, I enjoy watching and supporting local sporting teams and events. Most importantly, I value and enjoy spending as much time as possible with my family, particularly my children. They seem to be growing up far too quickly, so I try to make the most of every opportunity to be involved in their lives and activities.

Kai Kai Corner

Creamy garlic pipis

By Tia Hart



Ingredients:

- Fresh pipis
- Pasta, any kind
- 8 garlic cloves, minced
- 100g unsalted cooking butter
- 300g thickened cream
- 50g parmesan cheese block, grated
- 1 tablespoon chili flakes
- Salt, to taste

1. Purge and thoroughly wash pipis.
2. Boil pasta.
3. Mince garlic cloves, set aside about 2 cloves for the sauce.
4. In your frying pan, add 50g of butter and 2/3 minced garlic. Cook on medium-low heat until fragrant.
5. Add your fresh pipis to the pan with your butter and garlic. Place lid on top of pan and allow to simmer on medium-low heat, casually tossing the pan every minute or so.
6. Once the shells have completely opened, remove from pan and place in a large bowl.
7. Place pan back on stove, add the rest of your butter and minced garlic. Cook until fragrant.
8. Add 300g of thickened cream to pan and cook for 3-4 minutes.
9. Add 50g grated parmesan cheese and stir until melted.
10. Add chili flakes and salt, to your liking.
11. Add pipis back to pan and stir. Allow to simmer for 1-2 minutes.
12. Drain the pasta and divide among serving bowls.
13. Spoon the pipi sauce generously over the top and serve immediately.



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