



TORRES SHIRE COUNCIL

To lead, provide & facilitate a safe, sustainable and culturally vibrant community

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MEDIA RELEASE

PREMIER AND HER CABINET MEETING IN THE TORRES STRAIT

Torres Shire Council welcomed the Queensland Premier and her Cabinet to the Shire on Monday 5th September 2022, where the Cabinet will meet and where Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk and her Ministers will hold community meetings and attend a community reception. Upon arrival at the Horn Island International Airport, Kaurareg PBC Chair Milton Savage welcome Premier Palaszczuk to Kaurareg country.

Mayor of Torres Shire Council, Cr. Yen Loban, said today, “On behalf of Torres Shire Council, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to the Premier and her Ministers to our beautiful island home. It is great to have the Queensland Parliament sitting here in our region as it allows Ministers the opportunity to speak freely to our community members, NGO’s, community organisations and local governments and to engage and speak frankly about their issues, concerns, challenges and opportunities”.

Mayor Loban hosted Mayor Patricia Yusia, Mayor of the Northern Peninsula Area Council, and Mayor Phillemon Mosby, Mayor of Torres Strait Island Regional Council during a Joint Local Government Deputation with Premier Palaszczuk, Deputy Premier Miles and Member for Cook Cynthia Lui. The Councils came together to raise several regional priorities for the Torres Strait and NPA, including recommendations for the Palaszczuk Cabinet to consider.

Cost of Living

Mayor Loban said, “Our current high cost of living is one of the most devastating issues that is crippling our local communities, our local businesses and our local economy. For the Torres Strait and NPA region, we are located over 1000klm away from our major resource centre, being Cairns. We live and operate in one of the most isolated and remote locations in QLD. The flow on effect is the extremely high cost of living experienced by the residents. The Cape and Torres Strait region suffers from a lack of an integrated freight strategy. The shipping monopoly in our region not only marks the absence of a regulated competitive intrastate shipping industry but is also a terrible break on our economic development. It profoundly compounds the terrible cost of living experienced by our communities and unquestionably reduces prosperity and good health in our region”.

The region is experiencing sky high prices rocketing for everyday costs including fuel, freight, food, air travel, energy prices, goods and services. A further economic feature challenging the region is the fact that 81.8% of the population in the region is in the most disadvantaged quintile compared to 20% for Queensland.

Mayor Loban advised, “In addition to the high cost of living, the Torres Shire Council discussed investment for much needed infrastructure, shipping, the pressures and economic development in the region, telecommunications to name a few. We have prepared for this important visit and will release the data and details after we meet with the Premier and Cabinet”, said Mayor Loban.

Housing Crisis and the Need for Investment

Mayors raised the current housing crisis in the region due the lack of a Remote Indigenous Housing Investment Program. Since the end of the NPARIH program, introduced by the former Labor Government aimed at closing the gap in Indigenous Housing, there has been no commitment for housing.

Dalassa Yorkston CEO said, “In our region, the homelessness rate is 376.1 per 10,000 persons compared to Queensland’s homelessness rate of 45.6 per 10,000 persons. When comparing the number of Government Employee Housing building developments to that of social/community housing in the Shire over the past 8 years, the contrast is striking, 46 GEH building units constructed (unit dwellings, town house dwellings, houses) and only 2 social/community housing building units constructed (unit dwellings, town house dwellings, houses)”.

The CEO continued, “Essentially, the statistics reveal that we have not catered for the population growth in our communities, resulting in young families still living at home as we have not received investment to cater for the next generation”.

The Mayors of the region called upon the Palaszczuk Government as a matter of urgency, to make representations to the Federal Labor Government to restore NPARIH (NPRH) funding to the region.

Telecommunications in the Torres Strait and NPA

The Palaszczuk Government was called upon by the local governments to support the region and make representations to the Federal Labor Government so that the peoples of the NPA and Torres Strait are afforded the same quality and reliability of telecommunications services as the rest of Australia.

For the Torres Strait and NPA, regional communities have the same business, economic, educational, social and service delivery requirements as elsewhere in Australia. “In our region, the quality and reliability of telecommunication services fail, not only during storm events and cyclones, but absent these events. There is unreliability of internet and mobile services with slow speeds, inadequate network capacity, dropouts, black spots and lack of geographical coverage”, said Mayor Loban.

Support for the Masig Statement

The Masig Statement is beautifully crafted, creatively presented, and wholeheartedly accepted both at the commemoration of the 85th Anniversary of the First Island Councillor Conference that took place on Masig Island on 23rd August 2022 and since. It was developed in consultation with the Mayors, Deputy Mayors, CEOs and local governments of the region in the lead up to the 85th Anniversary of the First Island Councillor Conference that took place on Masig Island on 23rd August 1937. The Mayors also called upon the Palaszczuk Labor Government to support the Masig Statement and work with the local governments of the region to realise its ambition.

Dalassa Yorkston noted, “This year (2022) has been a very significant year. It is the year the Prime Minister of Australia announced the Federal Government’s formal support for the ***Uluru Statement from the Heart*** and enshrining the ***Voice into the Australian Constitution***. It is the 30th anniversary of Mabo. It is the 30th anniversary of the Torres Strait Islander Flag. It is the 85th Anniversary of the first Councillors Conference at Masig. It is the year that the Queensland Government announced the ***Tracks to Treaty***”.

Mayor Loban noted, “For Torres Shire, we have been privileged to have the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Minister Linda Burney and Senator Nita Green three weeks ago, and now the Premier of Queensland and Cabinet being hosted this week”. Mayor Loban continued, “In addition, Ministers expressed support for a number of proposals put to them by Council, I will be announcing these after Parliament has ended. Today marks the beginning of a committed and collaborative relationship between the Palaszczuk Government and our Shire and region. We look forward to working closely together to achieve much needed outcomes for our Shire and region”, Mayor Loban concluded.

End Release.

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