



TCICA Meeting Communiqué – May 2022

Cooktown played host to more than 25 mayors, councillors and chief executives from the Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance for the alliance's second meeting for the year on 10 and 11 May. Leaders discussed a variety of important issues for the Cape, Torres, and Gulf region and passed several resolutions to advance TCICA's interests.

TCICA Projects

TCICA is working on a range of key projects to deliver on its strategic intent of enabling cooperation and coordination, supporting regional growth, and advocating on regionally significant issues. Amongst important ongoing discussions on local government financial sustainability, sly grogging, health system reform, remote Indigenous housing, and freight equalisation, projects include:

Regional Resilience

TCICA continues to focus on regional resilience building and will soon submit a final application to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to fund coordinated regional resilience activities for the next two years, aligned to the soon-to-be-completed Regional Resilience Strategy.

Leaders endorsed in principle a Regional Drought Resilience Plan which was co-designed, developed and produced via a collaborative partnership between TCICA, the Rural Economies Centre of Excellence (via JCU), the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), Gulf Savanna NRM, Cape York NRM, Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), and key regional stakeholders. The purpose of the plan is to identify and plan for ongoing and future impacts of drought across the region and highlight pathways that the region can use to adapt to changes and build drought resilience.

Food security

TCICA has partnered with Health and Wellbeing Queensland on the development of a Remote Food Security Action Plan. In late 2021 Health and Wellbeing Queensland held a series of roundtables focussing on freight and supply chain matters, healthy housing, and economic development for solutions-orientated discussion related to addressing food security in the region. The information gathered during the roundtables is guiding the development of the action plan, which is expected to be released this year.

Tourism

TCICA is looking to the 2022-23 round of the Queensland Government's Remote Area Board program to progress community-led tourism opportunities, following 2021's assessment of eco-cultural tourism potential across the region. If successful, the project

will see a deeper level of engagement with several communities of high potential, an exploration of partnership opportunities, a forum to bring communities and investors together, the development of a templated process that steps out how successful joint ventures can be established, and linking interested parties up with programs to help build governance capabilities to support negotiations which are in the best interests of communities. The project will complement the development of a Tropical North Queensland First Nations Tourism Action Plan, the formation of Queensland first First Nations Tourism Council and leverage the State's and Commonwealth's significant interest and investment in Indigenous tourism product and experience development.

\$4.4 million Cape Resilience Project

Alex Ung of UNGANCO presented to leaders the \$4.4 million federally-funded Cape Resilience Project which will see world-leading cloud-based asset management systems implemented in nine member councils to address asset risk management and renewal. Aligned with TCICA's regional resilience objectives, the project will support councils better prepare for disaster events through planned maintenance scheduling and help councils drive business efficiencies by giving them the tools to optimise asset performance. Importantly, the project is a key opportunity for participating councils to collectively take advantage of industry best practices without the need to employ asset management experts and invest in large amounts of IT infrastructure. Up to eight part time staff will be embedded in councils for on-the-ground project support throughout the two and a half year life of the project.

Those councils not participating in this project will have the opportunity to participate in a round 2 application if the opportunity arises.

Plastics Pirate waste to energy project

Connor Clarke and Greg McLean of Plastics Pirate and Kenny Reid of Cooktown's Auswaste Environmental Services, spoke to TCICA about their plastics waste to energy project which will be piloted in Cape York. Together they are working to establish a hub at the Lakeland transfer station to process waste plastic from the agricultural sector and from the Cape and Torres Strait, to generate usable fuels including diesel, and eventually produce products such as lumber or materials from certain types of plastic waste.

Using the power of pyrolysis to turn plastic into treasure, Plastics Pirate is first to market in Australia with mobile plastic pyrolysis plants. Their point of difference is they produce usable fuels onsite and straight from the plant. They can process or repurpose five different types of plastics, including milk bottles, plastic bags and cling wrap, takeaway containers, and water bottles.

CSIRO is providing technical support.

Community justice matters

Mayors spoke of the need to reinvigorate Community Justice Groups (CJGs), which play an important role in communities to address justice-related issues using cultural leadership. Leaders felt that the role of CJGs had diminished over time and that group representatives are not provided with a clear understanding of the activities and services

of CJGs, especially as foundational group members and community Elders have passed on.

TCICA resolved to write to the Attorney-General highlighting the importance of maintaining CJGs and ensuring group members are empowered to play a key leadership role in guiding community justice matters.

Built Environment Integrated Information System (BEIS)

Michael Coots and Don Hayes from the Department of Seniors, Disability Services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships introduced leaders to their Built Environment Integrated Information System which has been developed as a tool to support Councils better understand community attributes and assets. The BEIS is freely available to Councils and its use as a mechanism to help with areas such as infrastructure development, tenure matters, land planning, and asset management is strongly encouraged.

NDIS business opportunities

Leaders heard from the Department of Seniors, Disability Services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships's Lauren McFarlane about the Department's work to encourage and help develop new businesses to address NDIS service needs, as well as processes for NDIS worker screening.

There are currently 369 NDIS participants across the Torres and Cape region, with \$20 million in unspent funds. Local people and providers are being encouraged to consider how they can capture business and employment opportunities to meet significant unmet demand for services.

The Department can help Councils connect community members to learn about NDIS provider, employment and business development opportunities. NDIS business development seminars will be held in remote locations which are yet to be determined. The seminars will cover topics such as information about the sorts of jobs and businesses people can do in the NDIS, insights about registration requirements and guidance about starting and running a business. The Department is also working with QAIHC to understand barriers for community-controlled health services to becoming NDIS providers.

Local Government Association of Queensland

LGAQ's Tony Goode updated TCICA on actions agreed to following the recent Indigenous Leaders Forum (ILF), including an agreement that the ILF write to the Premier calling for concerted action to address serious health system failings in Doomadgee.

Councils were strongly encouraged to consider regular grant opportunities under the Gambling Community Benefit Fund and RACQ's philanthropic fund, which could support communities to purchase beach cleaning machines to remove beach pollution.

Leaders discussed LGAQs advocacy in the lead up to the Federal Election and were briefed on voteforlocal.com.au, the website set up to help voters compare the major parties on an important issue.

Mayors were asked to consider participating in LGAQ's advocacy visit to Canberra during the Australian Local Government Association National Assembly from 19 – 22 June to participate in important discussions on housing, and to join a Mayoral delegate to Japan in the coming months.

Bertiehaugh Road and proposed closure by Australia Zoo

Cook Shire Council briefed leaders on the move by Australia Zoo / Terri Irwin to seek the closure of the gazetted Bertiehaugh Road reserve which traverses through part of the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve and sits within Cook Shire. This has been an ongoing matter for TCICA, with the alliance resolving in 2018 and 2020 to keep the road reserve open. The road is an important historical link between Mapoon and New Mapoon and cuts around 360 kilometers off the return journey for people travelling between these two communities.

Leaders noted concerns about the lack of Australia Zoo's engagement with Traditional Owners and that not one local Indigenous person was employed on the wildlife reserve. Further, when Mayors met with Australia Zoo in Mapoon early 2020 they indicated their strong willingness to work with Australia Zoo to ensure that responsibility for the appropriate protection, interpretation and maintenance aspects of Bertiehaugh Road would be shared. This was to address Australia Zoo's concerns about people trespassing on the wildlife reserve, fires and habitat loss, and increased management costs, yet Australia Zoo has failed to engage in any constructive discussion.

TCICA resolved to write to the State Government to re-affirm its 2018 and 2020 positions on Bertiehaugh Road, that being to keep the road open.

Glencore's Aurukun Bauxite project

Andrew Clarkson and Cameron Woolla from Glencore briefed leaders on the progress of the Aurukun Bauxite project, which is expected to generate hundreds of jobs in the region through the 22 year life of the mine. Glencore is currently advancing the development of a Partnership Agreement with Traditional Owners, informed by family consultation. The company is awaiting the review of its draft Environmental Impact Statement by the Coordinator General, with other key approval and agreement requirements in focus throughout 2022.

Over 250 parties have expressed interest in participating in building and construction works and Glencore has commenced pre-employment training for the development of a strong local workforce in partnership with Kapani Warrior Pty Ltd, Cape York Employment, and now RESET. Local people continue to participate in a range of activities including access track clearing, geotechnical test-pitting, heritage and ecology surveys, and water monitoring to build skills.

Next Meeting

TCICA's next meeting is scheduled for 12 & 13 July, in Cairns.