



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References
Committee report:

The Torres Strait: Bridge and Border

AUGUST 2012

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This is the Australian Government's response to the report of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee Inquiry into the administration and management of health issues, law and order, conservation, biosecurity, climate change, border protection and economic development in the Torres Strait, *The Torres Strait: Bridge and Border*, as tabled on 26 November 2010.

The Torres Strait Treaty, which entered into force in 1985, defines the territorial boundaries between Australia and Papua New Guinea; establishes a Protected Zone to acknowledge and protect the traditional way of life and livelihood of the traditional inhabitants, including traditional fishing and free movement; and sets out a comprehensive consultative framework for the management of the common area.

There are well-established mechanisms for Australian, Queensland and PNG Government agencies to work as partners with local communities in the Torres Strait. The government welcomes the committee's observation that evidence presented to the committee shows clearly that government agencies in the Torres Strait work together to ensure that their assets are used efficiently and shared as necessary.

The government shares the committee's conviction that the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and the Torres Strait Regional Authority are key institutions in the overall governance structure of the Torres Strait and have a pivotal role in matters such as community policing, conservation, biosecurity, border security, economic development and Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea.

A comprehensive set of *Traditional Visit Guidelines* has been developed over time with the full agreement of community leaders from Australia and Papua New Guinea to protect the traditional way of life of the traditional inhabitants of the region. These guidelines are updated as required at Traditional Inhabitants' Meetings. The guidelines have been widely distributed in the Treaty region and will continue to be distributed by Treaty liaison officers in their regular visits to Treaty villages.

The government welcomes the committee's acknowledgement of the significant contribution by health care professionals in the Torres Strait and the committee's support for the initiatives of the Australian and PNG Governments to establish new, or improve existing, health facilities in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea.

The government recognises that responsive and effective action by all stakeholders to make the Torres Strait Treaty work at all levels, including through addressing the concerns of traditional inhabitants and countering any misunderstandings about the Treaty's provisions, will be critical to maintaining support for the Treaty and ensuring its long term sustainability.

The attached response to the committee's recommendations reflects the government's commitment to protecting the traditional way of life and livelihood of the traditional inhabitants of the region.

Australian Government Response to *The Torres Strait: Bridge and Border*

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>The committee recommends that through the Package of Measures developed by the Health Issues Committee, the Australian Government continue to support PNG initiatives to establish new, or improve existing, health facilities in Western Province so that PNG nationals no longer need to seek health care in the Torres Strait.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>	<p>The Australian Government continues to work with Papua New Guinea to improve health services in the Western Province, with a particular focus on tuberculosis services. AusAID is providing \$8 million over four years (2011-12 to 2014-15) to support the South Fly District TB Management Program. Key elements of Australia's support include the recruitment of a Tuberculosis Medical Officer and Tuberculosis Program Coordinator to provide tuberculosis services to Daru Hospital and outreach to the villages in the South Fly Region. Australian support also includes: a purpose-built sea ambulance which has been constructed to support mobile health clinics along the coast, with funding for operational costs; and upgraded infrastructure at Daru Hospital, with the completion of a interim five-bed tuberculosis isolation ward, and communications centre to support patient management including referrals from Queensland Health. In 2012, AusAID will fund construction of a purpose-built 22-bed tuberculosis ward at Daru Hospital (expected completion December 2012), upgrade the existing X-Ray machine and provide a GeneXpert machine that allows an indication of tuberculosis drug resistance within two hours (both are expected to be delivered in May 2012).</p> <p>At the request of the Government of PNG, in October 2011 AusAID scoped the infrastructure requirements needed to improve tuberculosis services in South Fly. AusAID will negotiate a package of support with the PNG Government to improve health service delivery in Western Province which may include refurbishing rural health facilities and related staff housing outside Daru.</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>The funding and implementation of activities under the Package of Measures is the responsibility of the respective governments according to jurisdictional coverage. Through the Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee and the joint PNG-Australia Ministerial Forum, the Australian Government will continue to work with Papua New Guinea to finalise and progress elements of the Package.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government give serious consideration to measures that would further facilitate the proposal for greater cross-border involvement by Australian health professionals in both the provision of services and capacity building on the PNG side of the border.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>	<p>The Australian Government has agreed a Facilitated Cross-Border Movements initiative with the PNG Government. The relevant Australian agencies have prepared the necessary guidelines and procedures to operationalise the initiative. The first facilitated cross-border movement took place in October 2011. Movements have since continued as required including for Health clinics.</p> <p>The initiative has made capacity-building and liaison activities easier to deliver, and enabled the transfer of PNG tuberculosis patients to the care of Western Province health services through joint Queensland Health-PNG clinics on Saibai and Boigu in the Torres Strait.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government use the Papua New Guinea-Australia Partnership for Development to detail the assistance it is providing to PNG to</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government will continue to use the Papua New Guinea-Australia Partnership for Development to guide its commitments on improved health service delivery in Papua New</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>improve the delivery of health services in the southern part of Western Province and to ensure that projects undertaken in this region are appropriately monitored and evaluated during implementation and after completion.</p>		<p>Guinea, including in the southern part of Western Province.</p> <p>The Partnership for Development is a framework for cooperation between the governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia which aims to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and other PNG development priorities. The Partnership establishes agreed priority areas for development, commits minimum levels of funding from both governments to support priority outcomes and focuses development efforts on service delivery.</p> <p>Australia’s specific commitments to improve the delivery of health services in Papua New Guinea are detailed in the Health Schedule to the Partnership for Development. The Health Schedule also includes resource indicators which track health spending on specific commitments by both governments.</p> <p>The Health Schedule was revised in 2011 to reflect the recommendation of the Development Cooperation Treaty Review to increase the focus on service delivery in the aid program. The revised health schedule agreed with the PNG Government, and the related Australia-Papua New Guinea Health Delivery Strategy 2011 – 2015, details Australia’s commitment throughout Papua New Guinea and priority provinces, including Western Province.</p> <p>The Australian Government is committed to strengthening the impact of all its programs and therefore performance is measured at strategy, program and activity levels. This monitoring includes processes such as annual performance reporting of programs, quality reporting of activities and evaluation reports of activities. The Australian Government monitors and evaluates all projects it</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		undertakes in the southern part of the Western Province. AusAID and the Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee (HIC) will continue to work together to ensure any activities to improve health services in the Western Province are appropriately reflected in agreements and appropriately monitored and evaluated.
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The committee recommends that to improve accountability and transparency of Australia’s development aid spending, AusAID’s Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) conduct an analysis of Australia’s funding in relation to Western Province in the Torres Strait region.</p> <p>This analysis must provide an accurate and quantifiable account of the effectiveness of Australian aid provided to Western Province in the Torres Strait region. Special consideration must be given to the outcomes of Australian Government initiatives in the region, including both technical achievements and outputs and changes in attitudes and behaviour.</p>	Noted.	<p>The Australian Government agrees that ongoing analysis of Australia’s funding in relation to Western Province in the Torres Strait region is important to ensure accountability and transparency of its development aid spending.</p> <p>AusAID will continue to undertake analysis of all funding it provides, and all activities it undertakes, in relation to the Western Province in the Torres Strait Region through its performance management and reporting system, which analyses the performance of programs against their objectives and from a development effectiveness perspective.</p> <p>The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) believes that the relatively small size of official development assistance provided to the Western Province of the Torres Strait means that the most appropriate mechanism to evaluate these activities would be AusAID’s program performance management and reporting system.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The committee recommends that the analysis mentioned in the previous recommendation also look closely at the extent and effectiveness of AusAID’s cooperation with Queensland Health and consider ways to ensure that their work in the</p>	Noted.	<p>The Australian Government recognises the need to ensure effective cooperation between AusAID and Queensland Health in the Torres Strait region given the connection between their respective activities and the strategic importance of the region.</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>Torres Strait region is seamless across the border and that their operations and funding complement each other.</p>		<p>The Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee (HIC) provides a forum for Australian Government agencies to work closely with Queensland Health to ensure that respective projects and processes complement each other.</p> <p>The HIC is a forum for the governments of Australia, Papua New Guinea and Queensland to discuss health issues affecting the Australia-Papua New Guinea border Treaty villages. It is chaired by the Australian Department of Health and Ageing and includes representatives from various Australian Government agencies, Queensland Department of Health, Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet, PNG Government and Western Province Administration. It facilitates increased cooperation and communication between these agencies and departments.</p> <p>These cooperative arrangements were evident in the close collaboration that took place between Australian agencies and Queensland Health to address issues in the Torres Strait region during the 2010 cholera outbreak in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea.</p> <p>Evaluations conducted through the aid activities quality reporting process include consultation with all relevant agencies and stakeholders. This includes consultation with Queensland Health, where appropriate.</p> <p>In September 2011, the Government of PNG, Commonwealth agencies and Queensland Health agreed to a staged transfer of PNG tuberculosis patients. This process has been successful, with only 15 PNG tuberculosis patients remaining under the care of Queensland</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		Health as of April 2012. The remaining patients will be transferred in June 2012. On 23 April 2012, the Government of PNG, Commonwealth agencies and Queensland Health developed an agreed process for communication and referral of PNG nationals presenting at a health clinic in the Torres Strait. A plan for ongoing clinical collaboration between Queensland Health and Western Province has also been developed.
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government review its funding to Queensland Health to ensure that such funding is commensurate with the actual costs incurred by Queensland Health in providing health care to PNG nationals.</p>	Not supported.	The Australian Government is continuing discussions with Queensland Health to better understand the level of services currently provided to Papua New Guinea nationals and identify ways to address increasing demands on the Queensland health system. The Government considers it is more appropriate to work with PNG governments to build health services particularly in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea to ensure a better public health approach and improve access by PNG nationals to health services in their own country.
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>The committee recommends the Australian Government offer assistance to help the Queensland Government fund the implementation of the new data collection systems for PNG nationals accessing health services in the Torres Strait; and provide funding, if required, for a review of the effectiveness of this system.</p>	Noted.	The Australian Government will continue to work with Queensland Health on data collection needs using current, well-established systems.
<p>Recommendation 8</p>		

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>The committee recommends that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship ensure that its statistics on PNG nationals visiting Australia, including those in Australia receiving medical treatment, are complete and complement those collected by Queensland Health.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>	<p>The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) will continue to ensure its statistics on PNG nationals visiting Australia are complete. Furthermore, DIAC and Queensland Health have agreed on a process to ensure that these statistics complement those collected by Queensland Health.</p> <p>The variation in the numbers reported is primarily due to different reporting parameters. The statistics reported by Queensland Health refer to the number of times PNG nationals are treated at the Primary Health Centre, whereas the statistics reported by DIAC represent PNG nationals who identify on arrival that their sole purpose for travel is to seek medical treatment. DIAC's statistics do not include PNG nationals who arrive in Australia to undertake lawful traditional activity and subsequently seek treatment at the Primary Health Centre during the course of their traditional and lawful visit to the island.</p> <p>DIAC and Queensland Health have agreed to regular meetings between staff on Thursday Island and on the outer islands, in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the end to end process for the collection of statistics in relation to PNG nationals presenting for health treatment • Examine, analyse and reconcile differences and exceptions between the data collected by each agency • Explore an enhanced sharing of information process on clients.
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>The committee recommends that relevant Australian</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>This recommendation relates primarily to evidence the committee</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>government agencies combine their efforts to ascertain whether, or the extent to which, PNG nationals are coming to Australia to access social services, whether they are misinformed about their entitlements and, if so, the source of this misinformation and how best to correct it.</p>		<p>heard during its visit to the Torres Strait about PNG women choosing to give birth in Australia due to a belief that they would be eligible for the baby bonus and an improved chance of obtaining Australian citizenship.</p> <p>Relevant Commonwealth agencies can find no indication of significant numbers of PNG nationals giving birth in the Torres Strait in order to access social services such as the baby bonus, or to improve their chances of obtaining Australian citizenship. In 2010, there were 11 births registered in the Torres Strait by PNG women.</p> <p>To be eligible for the Baby Bonus, the claimant must meet residence requirements. To meet residence requirements the claimant must have legal residence status (such as an appropriate Visa) and be residing in Australia on an ongoing basis. That is, Australia must be their home. Anyone giving birth in clinics in the Torres Strait is required to provide proof of residency before such information is entered into the clinic's birth records.</p> <p>A child born in Australia on or after 20 August 1986 becomes an Australian citizen by birth only if at least one parent was an Australian citizen or a permanent resident at the time of the child's birth.</p> <p>The Treaty provides for the designation of Treaty liaison officers by Australia and Papua New Guinea who consult on a day-to-day basis with each other and with officials and traditional inhabitants in the region.</p> <p>A range of federal, state and local government agencies are involved in the management of the free movement provisions of the Treaty</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>but much of the day to day management rests with community leaders who have established a comprehensive set of <i>Traditional Visits Guidelines</i> for traditional inhabitants, consistent with the provisions of the Treaty. These leaders work with the Australian and PNG Treaty Liaison officers, based respectively at Thursday Island and Daru, who consult regularly on the implementation of the Treaty at the local level.</p> <p>Traditional activities are clearly defined, both in the Treaty and in the Guidelines. In addition, the Guidelines register clearly that “Traditional visits <u>do not include</u> activities that are not traditional, for instance visits to the medical clinic.”</p> <p>The Australian Government’s Treaty Liaison Officer conducts regular Treaty Awareness Visits with his PNG counterpart to Treaty villages where contemporary issues are raised. During these visits, these officers will continue to address any misinformation on entitlements.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10 The committee recommends that the Queensland Government consider, as part of its overall review of policing in Indigenous communities, increasing Community Police Officer powers in order to enable them to respond more effectively to incidents in Torres Strait island communities and providing appropriate training and supervision in the use of these powers. The findings of the recent Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry provide an ideal starting point.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Queensland Government responded directly to the committee on this recommendation in November 2011.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11</p>		

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>With regard to matters dealing with visiting PNG nationals, the committee believes the Australian Government has a direct responsibility. It recommends the Australian Government should confer with the Queensland Government on how best it, and particularly the AFP, can assist with any law and order issues that arise because of the shared border and the presence of PNG nationals in the Torres Strait.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The AFP confers with the Queensland Government through the Queensland Police on law enforcement issues. Broader issues are pursued under a wide range of existing mechanisms between Queensland Police and relevant Commonwealth agencies with border functions, including Customs and Border Protection, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), as well as between these agencies and their PNG equivalents.</p> <p>Further detailed information on AFP interaction with relevant Queensland, Australian and PNG Government agencies on law and order issues is provided under the response to Recommendation 22.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure that funding for the development of community management plans and the employment of community rangers is secure and commensurate with the maintenance and progress of these plans.</p> <p>In recognition of the important role of community rangers in both conservation and biosecurity, the committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with TSIRC and TSRA, gives consideration to making these positions permanent.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The <i>Working on Country</i> program is part of an overall Australian Government commitment of \$245.5 million until June 2013 to create up to 660 ongoing Indigenous ranger positions across the nation. This will provide long-term employment for Indigenous land and sea managers. Forty-two ranger positions have been approved for the Torres Strait, with groups to be established on all inhabited islands. Twenty-one rangers are currently employed, with the remainder to commence as soon as possible.</p> <p>The ranger groups are responsible for identifying and implementing the sustainable management of dugong and turtle within their community-based management plans. Other activities on both sea and land include researching and surveying significant coastal and marine habitats, seed collection and plant propagation, fire management and the maintenance of cultural sites. For Torres Strait Islanders, the land and sea are intrinsic to identity and the work of</p>

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		<p>the rangers is in many ways about maintaining country, identity and culture. The activities of ranger groups are negotiated annually between the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) and the traditional owners from the land or sea country where work is undertaken.</p> <p>The Australian Government works closely with Papua New Guinea's Department of the Environment and Conservation (DEC), including co-chairing (through DSEWPaC) the Environmental Management Committee under the Torres Strait Treaty. DEC has demonstrated a strong commitment to work with PNG Treaty communities in the Western Province to develop community-based management plans for the sustainable management of marine turtle and dugong, along the lines of those plans developed by Australian Torres Strait communities with TSRA. Australian agencies will lend further appropriate expertise and advice on this work as it is requested, particularly through the Environmental Management Committee mechanism.</p>
<p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>The committee recommends that AusAID, in conjunction with local communities in the Torres Strait, consider ways that would enable much greater engagement by PNG villagers in the work of community rangers in the Torres Strait as a means of educating and training them in conservation and biosecurity and in managing their environment.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agrees that increased engagement between PNG villagers in the work of community rangers in the Torres Strait is an important means of educating and training villagers in conservation and biosecurity and in managing their environment.</p> <p>Community rangers in the Torres Strait already have considerable engagement with villagers in the Torres Strait. The TSRA facilitates this engagement. Community rangers engage with villagers both directly and through the inclusion of community villages in formal</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>In particular, the committee recommends that the Australian Government support the TSRA’s efforts to engage coastal communities in Western Province in turtle and dugong conservation.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>processes such as Treaty Cycle meetings.</p> <p>Approximately four times a year TSRA staff engage with the PNG Western Province villages of Sigabaduru, Mabaduan and the Australian communities of Boigu, Saibai and Dauan. Activities include awareness raising and communications on research and other activities that promote sustainability. TSRA is committed to working with Treaty villagers on implementation of the turtle and dugong community-based plans. TSRA has developed Community Based Turtle and Dugong Management Plans in all Australian Treaty communities. All the Plans have been officially endorsed by the appropriate traditional elders and clan based representatives of each community with the exception of the Kaiwalagal region (Inner Western Island Group), who are yet to update and endorse their Plan. TSRA are finalising the development of a regional catch monitoring database to store voluntary dugong and turtle catch data and create a tool for community education and community-based decision making in regard to significant pressure areas, implementation of traditional hunting closures and other culturally acceptable management tools. The analysed data, along with the Management Plans, will be used to assist PNG to adopt similar management arrangements for sustainable hunting practices in their Torres Strait communities. TSRA and other Australian government agencies are continuing to work with Western Province Treaty villages, PNG officials and other stakeholders to progress the development of community-based management plans for the sustainable use of critical marine resources, including turtle and dugong, in Western Province Treaty villages. This was a commitment given through Australia’s bilateral engagement in the Environmental Management Committee (EMC), a consultative body</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>The committee recommends further that the Australian Government fund a number of scholarships for PNG post-graduate students whose research would be linked to the community management plans now in operation in the Torres Strait and the work of community rangers.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>	<p>for detailed consideration of Torres Strait environmental issues.</p> <p>The engagement of rangers with communities is only part of the way Australia engages with PNG communities. TSRA regularly interacts directly with Western Province community members and the Australian Government’s Treaty Liaison Officer conducts regular Treaty Awareness Visits with his PNG counterpart where contemporary issues are raised, including relevant environmental issues.</p> <p>DSEWPaC has also worked closely with the Sea Turtle Foundation to increase community awareness of sustainable management of turtle and dugong in Western Province communities. This is through the provision of educational material, training of teachers and working with fishers themselves.</p> <p>Australian Government Scholarships to Papua New Guinea are awarded in areas of study that have been identified by the PNG Government as priority training for national development. Reflecting best practice, these priorities are determined by a Joint Steering Committee (JSC) with majority PNG Government representation as well as representatives from civil society, donors and academia. The Joint Steering Committee informs the scholarships selection panel, which it oversees, of these national priorities on an annual basis and the selection panel awards scholarships accordingly.</p> <p>AusAID is represented on the Joint Standing Committee and will recommend post-graduate scholarships be awarded to students whose research would be linked to the community management</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		plans now in operation in the Torres Strait and the work of community rangers. However, the final decision rests with the JSC and will reflect Papua New Guinea's national development priorities.
<p>Recommendation 14</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure that there is adequate funding available for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular assessment of stocks of protected or vulnerable marine species in the Torres Strait; and research into the nature and size of the catch by traditional inhabitants and the illegal or unauthorised harvest of marine turtles, dugong and bêche-de-mer in the Torres Strait. 	Noted.	<p>The Australian Government recognises the importance of access to current and accurate data and research relating to the management of fisheries in the Torres Strait. Several research projects are currently being funded by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) as well as DSEWPaC. Research in the Torres Strait is also funded by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). The Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) coordinates this research and also advises research bodies on strategic directions, priorities and potential funding opportunities for Torres Strait fisheries research.</p> <p>The PZJA agencies which comprise the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), TSRA and Fisheries Queensland¹ collectively fund research work in the Torres Strait to around \$1.2 million per annum and researchers are actively encouraged to engage with local communities wherever possible.</p> <p>TSSAC, a subcommittee of the PZJA, is the advisory body for identifying strategic directions, priorities and potential funding opportunities for Torres Strait fisheries research. TSSAC does not directly commission research but is responsible for ensuring</p>

¹ Fisheries Queensland is a service of the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>research in the Torres Strait is conducted in a coordinated manner with other research bodies.</p> <p>TSSAC has developed guidelines to determine strategic research priority areas for fisheries in the Torres Strait. TSSAC has also produced a <i>Strategic Research Plan for Torres Strait Fisheries 2009</i> to describe how it will use research opportunities to improve management of the fisheries resources of the Torres Strait. This plan includes a focus on both stock assessment and catch monitoring for turtles, dugong and bêche-de-mer.</p> <p>Current research projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery of the <i>Holothriascabra</i>(Sandfish) population on Warrior Reef. Sandfish is one species of bêche-de-mer and has been subject to overfishing; • Development of cultural protocols for conducting research in the Torres Strait; • Refined stock assessment and Total Allowable Catch estimation for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster fishery; • An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster fishery. <p>Important research on the size and status of bêche-de-mer stocks was undertaken in 2009 (<i>Torres Strait Hand Collectables, 2009 survey: Sea Cucumber by Skewes et al 2010</i>). The survey work found that the density of a key species of the bêche-de-merfishery, <i>Holothuriawhitmaei</i>(Black teatfish), had increased significantly since 2005. Density data indicates that this species has recovered to near natural (unfished) densities.</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>The data collected during the 2009 survey indicates that most other species are considered to be at or near virgin stock biomass. Data collected during the survey also revealed that is highly likely that some species may have had a low biomass to begin with.</p> <p>The 2009 survey found that the density of <i>Holothuriafuscogilva</i> (White teatfish) appeared to be increasing and that the density of <i>Thelenotaananas</i>(Prickly redfish) appeared to be stable with the average size larger than previous years' surveys.</p> <p>The relative abundance of the highest value species <i>Holothuriascabra</i> (Sandfish) was assessed by visual surveys in 2010. Survey densities were found to be at similar levels to 2004, however, numbers of juveniles showed a large increase. The Sandfish population was made up of possible seven year classes representing a significant breeding potential. The survey raised questions as to the relative impacts of burrowing of Sandfish, illegal fishing, and or low recruitment on the observed numbers of Sandfish. A further survey using different techniques was undertaken in March 2012 to coincide with environmental conditions that best compare to those of previous scientific surveys in the area. The results of this survey will be published in late 2012.</p> <p>It is also expected that the implementation of Community Based Harvest Strategies that will instigate strategies to mitigate against localised depletion and collect fishery and fishery-independent data will assist with the further recovery of stocks in the Torres Straitbêche-de-mer fishery. In collaboration with developing the harvest strategies, a research project assessing suitable areas for ranching of bêche-de-mer and trochus is also being executed.</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>Other government agencies/departments operate in the Torres Strait, including DSEWPaC and its recently announced National Environmental Research Program that includes a Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait research hub with up to \$25.8million in funding. The Torres Strait focus of the hub will be securing the resilience of environmental assets and communities in the Torres Strait. Particular attention will be paid to addressing cumulative threats, including invasive species, climate change, human exploitation, potential pollution from settlements and economic development in Papua New Guinea. Research in the Torres Strait is also funded by CSIRO and the FRDC.</p> <p>Capacity for catch monitoring or assessment of marine turtle and dugong species will also be developed via <i>Caring for our Country</i> funding with <i>Working on Country</i> funding supporting the implementation of the Community Dugong and Turtle Management Plans in the Torres Strait.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensure that when allocating funding for research projects in the Torres Strait, relevant agencies place a high priority on projects that demonstrate a commitment to engaging local communities in the formulation and design of these projects and, where possible, to training local Indigenous people in research techniques and sustainable management.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>One of the key investments of the National Environment Research Program (NERP) is a Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait and Rainforest Hub with up to \$25.8 million for research over the period 2010-11 to 2014-15. The priorities and design of research projects under this hub will draw extensively on consultation with a range of stakeholders, including communities and the TSRA. The NERP Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait and Rainforest Hub will involve researchers from a range of institutions, including the James Cook University, CSIRO, Australian Institute of Marine Science and Queensland University. A Steering Committee has been established to oversee the rollout of this research hub and a TSRA representative</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>has been a member of that committee since its creation in June 2010.</p> <p>A monitoring and evaluation program has been developed for the NERP, which will include reports on the level of community consultation and engagement in the research, as well as providing details of the program’s research outputs, project deliverables and outcomes.</p>
<p>Recommendation 16</p> <p>The committee recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a high priority, the Australian Government consider engaging AusAID and other Australian agencies working in PNG such as ACIAR as partners with Australian research bodies working on the Australian side of the border. This partnership, which would include local communities, would be designed to ensure that work on the PNG side complements, builds on and reinforces the conservation and biosecurity work being done on the Australian side; In line with this priority, the committee recommends that wherever practical, researchers or project officers working in the Torres Strait are encouraged to establish or strengthen partnerships with counterparts in PNG so that work on both sides of the border is complementary and builds critical networks of researchers who are then 	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agrees that partnership between Australian agencies working in Papua New Guinea and Australian research bodies working on the Australian side of the border is a high priority.</p> <p>The Australian Government partners with a number of Australian research bodies on both sides of the border which conduct studies relating to Papua New Guinea. This is through initiatives such as the National Environmental Research Program. As a standard practice, Australian researchers develop partnerships with the local PNG communities and PNG officials, as appropriate, in the prosecution of their research activities.</p> <p>An example is the ACIAR project, <i>Animal health surveillance systems for Papua New Guinea</i>. This project aims to facilitate more rapid reporting of incursions of exotic diseases and outbreaks of newly emerging diseases. This project is a collaborative partnership between James Cook University, Murdoch University, and a range of stakeholder organisations in Papua New Guinea including the</p>

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<p>well positioned to collaborate in further research. AusAID could act as a key coordinator in forging these links.</p>		<p>National Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection Authority.</p> <p>The key coordinator for forging research links will vary depending on the type and subject of research. Therefore, AusAID will not always be the most appropriate agency to act as coordinator.</p>
<p>Recommendation 17</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government assist Torres Strait Islanders to assume a central role in biosecurity-relevant studies, including research into management of indigenous flora and fauna, and surveying and monitoring threats to their localities, such as illegal fishing or the introduction of harmful weeds or pests.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government recognises the importance of involving Torres Strait Islanders in the sustainable management of the Torres Strait land and sea environments. The employment of Indigenous rangers through the recently established Land and Sea Management Unit will play an important part in strengthening this involvement. The involvement of Indigenous communities is also important to effectively manage biosecurity risks to the region. A strong public awareness campaign currently educates Torres Strait Islanders in the biosecurity threats of concern, encourages reporting of pests or diseases and promotes compliance associated with the movement of quarantine risk material. The Australian Government also recognises the valuable contribution that Indigenous Australian quarantine officers make in securing the integrity of the border.</p> <p>Fisheries Management</p> <p>As member agencies for the PZJA, the TSRA, AFMA, DAFF and Queensland Fisheries² work closely together to deliver a fisheries management consultative structure that provides for Traditional Inhabitant involvement.</p> <p>The TSRA facilitates the participation of Traditional Inhabitant</p>

² Fisheries Queensland is a service of the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>involvement through the Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee. TSRA coordinates the engagement of Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) members in the consultative process of the PZJA and supports capacity building for Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people to assist with their participation. IFAC members are involved in various PZJA advisory committees and working groups, and also attend the annual bi-lateral fisheries meeting between Australia and Papua New Guinea.</p> <p>The TSRA also coordinates the delivery of regional and local level land and sea management initiatives in the Torres Strait and supports communities in accessing additional financial and technical support and information about the sustainable management of their environments.</p> <p>The TSRA is providing a regional centre-of-operations function for the Torres Strait Land and Sea Indigenous Ranger Program. The Ranger Program provides opportunities for improved community-based land and sea management through the employment of Indigenous rangers.</p> <p>Consultants and researchers have been engaged to assist with improving understanding about the significance, condition and management requirements of the ecosystems and the flora and fauna of the Torres Strait. Community consultation visits, meetings and field inspections are regular occurrences, facilitated by the operational on-ground support of rangers.</p> <p>The TSRA is building on its success with the initial Ranger Program to expand the program to the communities that do not have a ranger presence. The priority work plan of the rangers is established through the <i>Torres Strait Land and Sea Management Strategy</i> and</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>the <i>Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular Regional Plan 2009-2029</i>.</p> <p>AFMA staff, situated on Thursday Island, provide fishers and the public with information about the rules and regulations for fisheries in the Torres Strait. Stakeholders and the public are able to contact/visit the office to discuss fisheries matters and find out about the management of fisheries in the Torres Strait. Fisheries management staff also visit communities to discuss key issues and to ensure communities are empowered with the appropriate information to assist with the management of fisheries resources.</p> <p>Biosecurity AQIS, through its Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) program, has primary responsibility for managing the quarantine aspects of the movement of people and cargo through the Torres Strait. To achieve effective border management NAQS employs staff on all inhabited islands of the Torres Strait Protected Zone as well as on Horn Island, Thursday Island and Bamaga. There are currently 29 AQIS staff employed in the Torres Strait and on the Northern Peninsula Area; of these twenty-six are Indigenous.</p> <p>The Torres Strait islands are identified as a key risk pathway for the movement of NAQS target animal and plant pests and diseases from Papua New Guinea and otherneighbouring countries. As such, this region is the focus of regular risk-based scientific surveys for the early detection of target organisms.</p> <p>To enhance the ability of AQIS to manage and respond to biosecurity risk, the NAQS program is aware of the importance of educating Torres Strait Islanders in the biosecurity threats of</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>concern, encouraging reporting of pests or diseases and promoting compliance associated with the movement of quarantine risk material.</p> <p>This is currently achieved through a strong public awareness component of the program, delivered through local AQIS officers, regular local radio segments and visiting specialist scientists employed by the NAQS program. Torres Strait Islander groups such as general community members, local council employees such as Environmental Health Workers and Animal Management Officers are actively engaged by the NAQS to meet these objectives.</p> <p>AQIS will explore further opportunities with the recently established Land and Sea Management ranger groups to enable them to attain a greater awareness and understanding of the potential impact of the introduction of harmful pests, weeds and disease.</p>
<p>Recommendation 18</p> <p>The committee recommends that DFAT assume the leadership role in exploring ways with relevant border control agencies to make better use of modern technologies to identify travelers visiting the Torres Strait. The aim would be to implement as soon as practicable an improved means of identification for people crossing the border in the Torres Strait that would be in keeping with the spirit of the Treaty.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Torres Strait Treaty recognises the importance of protecting the traditional way of life and livelihood of the traditional inhabitants of the region in a cross-border context. The free movement provisions permit traditional inhabitants to travel for traditional purposes in, and in the vicinity of, the Protected Zone without the visa and passport controls which normally apply to international travel. There is no legal requirement for identification documents.</p> <p>Although a visitor pass system has been established, the lack of identifiable documents poses both law enforcement and border protection issues. Commonwealth and Queensland agencies will continue to work to minimise deficiencies in the visitor pass system.</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>Commonwealth agencies are receptive to considering options for an improved means of identification for people crossing the border in the Torres Strait but recognise that the introduction of a more rigorous identity system could be viewed as being a substitute for a passport and, therefore, not in keeping with the spirit of the Treaty.</p> <p>Relevantly, a voluntary system of boat identification for PNG Traditional Inhabitant vessels will begin during 2012.</p>
<p>Recommendation 19</p> <p>The committee recommends that DFAT jointly with DIAC, Customs and Border Protection, the AFP and Queensland Police review the ways in which government agencies currently work with local communities as partners to promote border security. The intention would be to consult with local communities to gauge their views on how their role in border security could be improved and to use this process to strengthen the intelligence network on the ground in the Torres Strait.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>There are well-established mechanisms for government agencies to work with local communities as partners, including to promote border security.</p> <p>The Treaty provides for the designation of Treaty Liaison Officers by Australia and Papua New Guinea who consult on a day-to-day basis with each other and with officials and traditional inhabitants in the region. The Treaty also established the Joint Advisory Council (JAC), co-chaired by senior officials from the PNG and Australian Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to review implementation of the Treaty. The JAC is an advisory and consultative body, comprising members of national, state and provincial governments, and traditional representatives. One of the many consultative committees which inform the JAC is the annual Traditional Inhabitants Meeting (TIM) which is co-chaired by traditional leaders from Papua New Guinea and Australia.</p> <p>The TSRA together with a wide range of Commonwealth, State and Local Government agencies has been involved in Regional Plan Working Groups (RPWG) as part of the TSRA led Integrated</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>Service Delivery (ISD) Project. Border security issues fell within the auspice of the Safe Communities RPWG.</p> <p>In the work completed to date by the ISD Project Team, there has only been limited involvement by border protection agencies in the RPWG discussions.</p> <p>The TSRA proposes that the new Regional Plan Action Group for Safe Communities, to be formed in the next stage of the ISD Project, would have representation from all agencies involved in border protection in the region.</p> <p>Further discussion on ISD is provided in the response to Recommendation 32.</p>
<p>Recommendation 20</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to support and fund adequately the effort to combat illegal fishing in the Torres Strait.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>Illegal foreign fishing is one of the eight identified threats which impact on Australia's maritime security. Customs and Border Protection has a collaborative relationship with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), Defence, DIAC and a number of other agencies to cooperate in the delivery of the Government policy affecting illegal foreign fishing in Australia's northern waters.</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection is responsible for both the offshore surveillance and response which is co-ordinated through Border Protection Command and the onshore processing of illegal foreign fishers and their vessels.</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>AFMA is responsible for the efficient and sustainable management of Commonwealth fish resources on behalf of the Australian community. In particular, AFMA undertakes prosecution action against illegal foreign fishers in consultation with the Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions, where appropriate.</p> <p>DIAC is responsible for providing detention and removal services of illegal foreign fishers once the onshore processing is complete and they have been transferred from Customs and Border Protection to DIAC or DIAC's Detention Services Provider.</p> <p>Over the past five years, the comprehensive response to illegal foreign fishing has had a positive effect which is demonstrated by the decreasing number of apprehensions and suspect sightings in Australia's northern waters. Due to the deterrence effect of Customs and Border Protection's air and sea presence in northern waters, foreign fishing vessels have retreated from, but remain just outside of, Australian waters. Surveillance shows that these vessels now make only shallow incursion into our waters.</p> <p>It should be noted that the decrease in apprehensions does not equate to a decrease in the risk associated with this threat. Any reduction in offshore surveillance and response in northern waters could see a return to large scale illegal foreign fishing in our waters. Customs and Border Protection, AFMA and DIAC all maintain a dedicated presence in the Torres Strait with staff primarily based on Thursday Island. Customs and Border Protection also maintains two temporary processing facilities on Horn Island and at Weipa for the processing of illegal foreign fishers located in the Torres Strait area.</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>In addition, Commonwealth authorised fisheries officers employed by AFMA and Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol based on Thursday Island undertake duties to protect fisheries resources in the Torres Strait in line with the Torres Strait Treaty. Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol are contracted to provide compliance services on behalf of the Australian Government for Commonwealth fisheries matters in the Torres Strait as part of the Protected Zone Joint Authority.</p> <p>The Australian Government works cooperatively with Papua New Guinea including hosting annual fisheries bilateral meetings and has encouraged Papua New Guinea in its efforts to control illegal fishing. AFMA is currently facilitating a Fisheries Officer exchange program with Papua New Guinea's National Fisheries Authority (NFA). The capacity building project, which has been funded through AusAID, will provide opportunity for PNG Fisheries Officers to visit Australia and receive training in a range of fisheries compliance topics, including investigations, evidence collection and handling, brief preparation and legislation awareness. The Australian Government gave a banana boat to the NFA Fisheries Office in Daru which was delivered in April 2010 to assist their enforcement capability in the Torres Strait region.</p>
<p>Recommendation 21</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide the funding needed to expedite the charting of uncharted waters in the Torres Strait, with priority given to the waters between Saibai and Boigu and the area north of these islands.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The charting of uncharted waters in the Torres Strait is a priority for Navy and this work is conducted in accordance with the availability of funding and assets. Navy manages the National Hydrographic Surveying and Charting Programme (Hydroscheme) to support Australia's national maritime transport infrastructure. A number of</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>The committee recommends further that the Department of Defence provide the committee with periodic updates on the progress being made to chart the waters of the Torres Strait.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>	<p>outstanding areas in the Torres Strait, including the southern coast of Papua New Guinea between Deliverance Island and Parama Island, which includes Saibai and Boigu islands, have been identified for survey activity and chart production in the current edition of Hydroscheme.</p> <p>The survey areas between Saibai and Boigu islands and north of these islands primarily consist of shallow waters and are suitable for Light Detecting and Ranging (LIDAR) operations. However, weather conditions in these areas restrict LIDAR operations to a period between September and January each year.</p> <p>The Australian Hydrographic Office estimated it would cost \$7.2 million to contract commercial survey areas along the southern coast of Papua New Guinea. Navy has been unable to fund this activity from within its allocation due to higher priority Defence tasking taking precedence. While some work has already been undertaken by Navy assets in the area, completion by Navy alone is anticipated to take three years. Navy would expand its hydrographic programs, including through contractor support, should increased funding become available.</p> <p>The Department of Defence agrees to provide periodic updates to the committee on the progress made to chart the waters of the Torres Strait and proposes to do so annually.</p> <p>The current status of survey progress in Torres Strait is shown in Figure 1 at Appendix 1.</p>
<p>Recommendation 22</p> <p>The committee recommends that, in consultation with law</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The AFP continually reviews its presence in the region. In doing</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>enforcement and border security agencies working in the Torres Strait, the AFP review its presence in the region and consider whether it adequately meets the level of risk and community expectations.</p>		<p>this, the AFP confers with partner agencies at both state and federal level. The AFP is engaged with communities in the region. Such engagement allows for feedback on performance to ensure community expectations are being met.</p> <p>The level of risk associated with the border is met through a whole-of-government approach to law enforcement. As well as intelligence sharing through a range of fora (outlined below), the Thursday Island Office (TIO) has in the past 12 months responded successfully to a number of investigation referrals from partner agencies, as well as supporting joint agency responses to border incursions, namely border controlled drug seizures.</p> <p>The AFP TIO, which was established in 1998, comprises one sworn Resident Federal Agent rotated on a two to three year basis, one permanently locally engaged Special Member and an operational vessel. The AFP TIO was established in response to recommendations from the 1997 Prime Ministerial Review of Commonwealth Surveillance in Illegal or Illicit Cross Border Activity in the Torres Strait. The TIO provides an investigative and intelligence primary law enforcement presence in the Torres Strait to enforce Commonwealth law.</p> <p>The Resident Agent Thursday Island (RATI) and Special Member contribute to the Combined Intelligence Group (CIG) comprising representation from AFP, Queensland Police Service (QPS) and Australian Customs and Border Protection, which examine collective intelligence assessments of criminal threats in the region and develop operational responses to those threats. The CIG also receives additional intelligence from the Cairns Regional Intelligence Meeting (CRIM), which ensures that a larger</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>geographic focus is taken when assessing the potential criminal threat level at the border. Papua New Guinea has also established its own CIG, which includes the AFP Senior Liaison Officer (SLO) in Port Moresby, with both groups meeting annually to facilitate the bilateral exchange of intelligence. The meeting aims to coincide with the annual Trans National Crime Conference (TNCC), which includes representation from both Australian and Papua New Guinea law enforcement agencies, to discuss transnational crime issues that affect both nations and the regional impact.</p> <p>TIO staff routinely participate in both DFAT meetings and council forums to engage communities on law enforcement issues, as well as visiting where possible the geographically remote communities via the TIO office vessel.</p> <p>TIO participates in Joint Cross Border Patrols (JCBP's) which run three times per year and provide opportunities for law enforcement agencies from Australia and Papua New Guinea to work in a collaborative manner, progressing opportunities for intelligence collection and sharing on illegal cross border movements. These patrols have realised an increase in community contacts and improved relationships with Papua New Guinean partner agencies. The JCBP's underpin and support the collaborative and whole-of-government approach to law enforcement in the Torres Strait. The patrols are central to the collection of intelligence by all agencies and are used by the CIG as the basis for targeting opportunities for Australian law enforcement agencies based in the Torres Strait.</p> <p>In 2010, the AFP SLO in Papua New Guinea obtained Law Enforcement Cooperation Program funding to provide an information technology platform to the National Criminal</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>Intelligence Unit (NCIU) within the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) based in Daru. This was to enhance the capacity of police in the Daru region to better communicate and pass criminal intelligence through to the PNG Transnational Crime Unit. The computer and internet connectivity proved immediately valuable with the sharing of intelligence on criminal matters.</p> <p>SLO at Post has visited Daru annually and provided assistance to RPNGC to attend Daru to investigate crimes of a transnational nature. SLO also facilitates, through LECP funding, the participation of RPNGC officers in Torres Strait regional patrolst.</p> <p>Should an event occur that requires a response beyond what can be provided by stationed AFP staff, additional resources would be deployed.</p>
<p>Recommendation 23</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> place a high priority on implementing practical measures that need to be taken in the short term to assist local communities in the Torres Strait better deal with and, where possible, mitigate the problems caused by higher sea levels and extreme weather events; and 	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government is aware of the problem of coastal erosion and inundation impacting housing, infrastructure and cultural sites in Torres Strait communities. While the Australian Government has been involved over a number of years in the provision of environmental health related infrastructure in the region, in cooperation with the Queensland Government, generally it is State and local governments that have lead responsibility. The Australian Government has a number of national funding programs</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the need for an education and training program designed specifically to assist those communities in the region most at risk from the damaging effects of changes in climate. The intention would be to determine how best to assist people to remain productive members of their community in a changing environment. 	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>that contribute to broader objectives such as disaster resilience, infrastructure and regional development.</p> <p>With regard to climate change risks, further work is needed to understand local circumstances to enable effective site-specific responses to coastal erosion and inundation. For example, in some instances past planning decisions about the location of houses and infrastructure in low lying areas have caused inundation to become a problem during king tides. Also, the ocean behaviour in the Torres Strait is quite complex and how it may change with climate change is not well understood.</p> <p>The Australian Government is helping to address key information gaps, including better projection of sea level heights, which will help inform robust land-use planning, and further assessment of erosion and inundation risks and identification of adaptation options where this work has not been done. All initiatives are being progressed in collaboration with the TSRA.</p> <p>The Australian Government does not have jurisdictional responsibility for implementation of community level education and training. However, the TSRA is in the process of identifying a number of communication needs and products to build community understanding of climate change and the potential adaptation responses. Ranger training under the Torres Strait Ranger program also provides rangers with skills that support emergency responses to weather and tidal impacts on communities.</p> <p>Local councils in conjunction with Emergency Management Queensland are involved in the ongoing training of SES volunteers to assist communities deal with the impacts of extreme weather</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		events.
<p>Recommendation 24</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government lend its full support to CSIRO’s ‘climate adaptation flagship’ and ensure that adequate funding is made available to the institution to continue this initiative.</p>	Noted.	<p>CSIRO is currently planning research in partnership with the DSEWPaC’s National Environmental Research Program and the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility. This research is likely to examine the nature of potential climate change impacts on natural resources and communities, potential development trajectories and viable adaptation strategies.</p>
<p>Recommendation 25</p> <p>In conjunction and closely connected with this initiative, the committee recommends that the Australian Government fund a study into socio-economic developments in the region, including in the South Fly District and their implications for water and food security and population movements in the area.</p>	Noted.	<p>The Australian Government recognises the value and importance of studies into the socio-economic developments of the Torres Strait region and their implications for water, food security and population movements in the area.</p> <p>A large volume of research has already been completed on socio-economic issues in the South Fly District. AusAID has found these existing studies to be of great value and comprehensive.</p> <p>An example of this research in the South Fly District can be found in ACIAR’s Memorandum of Understanding with the OK Tedi–Fly River Development Corporation. Some of its current program of work addresses socioeconomic developments in the context of food security concerns in the region. For example, it is investigating ways of improving the capacity of women to more effectively engage in the vegetable and floriculture industries.</p>
<p>Recommendation 26</p>		

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government assist PNG to undertake complementary studies of climate change in Western Province by providing funding for research, opening up research opportunities for PNG researchers to work alongside Australian researchers in this area and for Australian researchers to work in PNG. For example, the Australian Government should consider offering scholarships or traineeships for PNG students to participate in CSIRO's climate adaption flagship.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government recognises the importance of collaborative research into the impacts of climate change in Papua New Guinea and provides support for such collaboration.</p> <p>Under the \$328.2 million International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative(2008-2013), the Australian Government has provided \$20 million for the Pacific Climate Change Science Program (PCCSP) to assist decision-makers and planners in Pacific Island countries and East Timor better understand how climate and oceans have changed and how they might change in the future.</p> <p>Activity under this program includes collaboration between researchers from Papua New Guinea and Australia. Researchers from the PNG National Weather Service (NWS) and Australian scientists are working together to better understand Papua New Guinea's changing climate.</p> <p>At the end of 2011 Australian researchers joined with NWS researchers in Papua New Guinea to discuss scientific findings. During this visit a climate projection software tool and a climate database management system was installed at the NWS. These will assist in the collection and analysis of information relating to the past and future climate of Papua New Guinea.</p> <p>Nationals of Papua New Guinea are eligible to apply for post-graduate scholarships under the Pacific Future Climate Leaders Program (2009-2013). The \$3 million Program provides adaptation-related capacity-building which includes support to the University of the South Pacific for community education programs, the development and delivery of climate change courses and</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		scholarships.
<p>Recommendation 27</p> <p>The committee recommends that ACIAR consider including climate change and the implications for coastal villages in PNG's southern region in its research priorities for PNG (traditional fishing, the conservation of species, including the dugong and turtle, and emergence and/or spread of exotic pests).</p>	Noted.	<p>AN ACIAR project, <i>The early warning and drought preparedness for improving management of crop production in Papua New Guinea Project</i> (ASEM/2006/129), which concluded in late 2010, demonstrated the potential for climate forecasting in some coastal areas of Papua New Guinea. This project retrieved long-term rainfall data for Papua New Guinea, examined its relationship with El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and investigated the utility of a drought warning tool to help maintain food security (sweet potato) and farm income (coffee).</p> <p>ACIAR undertook formal consultations with Papua New Guinea (government, private industry and NGOs) throughout 2011 to identify research priorities for 2012 - 2015. During the country consultation process, the following climate change related research areas were identified as high priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research to enhance sustainable log supply chains and the efficiency of small to medium sized value-adding wood processing enterprises; • research into models for enhancing and scaling up community engagement in tree growing and sustainable forest management; and • research to facilitate efficient and equitable implementation of REDD+ and lessen impacts from climate change on forests and plantations.
<p>Recommendation 28</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Minister for</p>	Noted.	There are no known impediments to consideration of climate change

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>Foreign Affairs consult with his PNG counterpart about removing immediately any possible impediment to the Environment Management Committee and the JAC considering climate change in the Torres Strait.</p>		<p>in the Torres Strait by either the Environment Management Committee (EMC) or the JAC. The EMC is co-chaired by PNG and Australian national departments of environment. The EMC meets annually immediately preceding and at the same venue as the JAC and an EMC Working Group meets two to three times each year to progress EMC work intersessionally. The Torres Strait Coastal Management Committee, whose membership includes the PNG Department of Environment and Conservation, provides a report to the EMC. Representatives of PNG and Australian national departments of environment attend the JAC, together with members of other national agencies, state and provincial governments, and traditional representatives.</p>
<p>Recommendation 29</p> <p>The committee recommends that DAFF monitor developments with the PZJA during the coming twelve months. Further, at the end of that period, it consult with representatives from the Indigenous and non-Indigenous fishing sectors in the Torres Strait and with the Queensland Government to ascertain whether, in their view, the PZJA is making progress in remedying the problems identified in this report.</p> <p>The committee recommends that DAFF prepare a report for the minister for his/her consideration and for the report to be</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Agreed.</p>	<p>In 2008, the Protected Zone Joint Authority commenced a review of its administrative processes. In 2010, the Protected Zone Joint Authority Standing Committee agreed to the recommendations made by the review and many of these are now being put in place to streamline administration. For example, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority took over the secretariat role of the Protected Zone Joint Authority from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry towards at the end of 2010. This is expected to streamline administration and reduce duplication. Protected Zone Joint Authority agencies will continue to review processes and look for opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>The Australian Fisheries Management Authority undertakes routine consultation (through management advisory committees) with</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
provided to the committee.		<p>stakeholders from all sectors and this process offers opportunities for concerns to be raised.</p> <p>The Australian Fisheries Management Authority has prepared a review of Protected Zone Joint Authority administrative functions for submission to the Protected Zone Joint Authority during 2012.</p>
<p>Recommendation 30</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government look closely at the operation of the Customs facility on Saibai with a view to increasing the opportunities for greater integration of effort across all agencies engaged in the Torres Strait.</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the government establish a working group to consider the sharing arrangements for government assets in the Torres Strait with a view to identifying any areas for improvement, any real or potential points of conflict in the sharing of assets and how they could be resolved. The committee recommends that a copy of this assessment be provided to the committee for its consideration.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p>	<p>Australian government agencies in the Torres Strait recognise the importance of close cooperation in order to be effective in carrying out their respective responsibilities. The Government notes that the Committee cited numerous situations where agencies support each other. Indeed, the Government notes the Committee’s view that “evidence presented to the committee shows clearly that government agencies in the Torres Strait work together to ensure that their assets are used efficiently and shared as necessary”.</p> <p>Well established mechanisms enable Commonwealth and State Government agencies to work with each other and with local communities as partners in the Torres Strait. Australian Government agencies will continue to work closely with each other and with Queensland Government agencies to maximise the opportunities for greater integration of effort across all agencies engaged in the Torres Strait, including in the use of built infrastructure which is very costly in the Torres Strait.</p>
<p>Recommendation 31</p>		

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>The committee recommends that the Royal Australian Navy remain in close consultation with all relevant agencies working in the Torres Strait in order to arrive at a decision regarding a Navy presence there that would best support Australia’s whole-of-government effort in the region.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Resident Naval Officer Thursday Island (RNOTI) organisation, comprising three personnel and one utility vessel, was established in 1988 to provide logistic support to Navy patrol boat activities in the region. Navy assessed the requirement for RNOTI against this primary function and determined that the patrol boat visit rate did not justify the permanent positioning of Navy personnel on Thursday Island. In 2009 there were nine visits with an average duration of approximately one day, and just eight visits with an average duration of approximately four hours in 2010.</p> <p>RNOTI’s contribution to whole-of-government efforts in the region involved the limited use of its utility vessel to support border security operations and DFAT’s Torres Strait Treaty awareness program. Customs and Border Protection agreed the support provided by RNOTI could be met through other Defence resources and the withdrawal of RNOTI would not affect border security operations. DFAT is using private charter vessels to maintain the Treaty awareness program now that RNOTI has been disestablished.</p>
<p>Recommendation 32</p> <p>The committee recommends that agencies take note of the observations about ‘consultation overload’ and make real efforts to dispel the notion that government officials fly in and out.</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government, the Queensland Government, the two local councils and the TSRA form a working group with the aim of developing a</p>	<p>Supported.</p> <p>Not supported.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, Queensland agencies and local representatives will continue their efforts to strengthen consultative mechanisms and to develop a more streamlined and integrated approach to service delivery in the Torres Strait, while avoiding consultation overload.</p> <p>Following the amalgamation of Community Councils into three Local Government Councils in the Region, the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Leaders agreed to work together to reduce</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>more streamlined and integrated approach to service delivery in the Torres Strait.</p>		<p>duplication in service delivery and achieve coordinated planning within the Torres Strait Region. The TSRA recognised there was a need to involve all levels of government to undertake planning and coordination of their respective agency's plans.</p> <p>Community consultations occurred in 2008 with community members and elected leaders, supported by teams with representatives from the TSRA, the Queensland Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ATSIS, at that time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) and Local Government.</p> <p>These consultations formed the basis of the <i>Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Plan 2009-2029</i> (the Regional Plan). In July 2009 the Regional Plan was co-signed by the TSRA Chairperson and Mayors of the Torres Shire Council (TSC), Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) and Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC).</p> <p>The Regional Plan requires that '...the region will establish an Integrated Planning and Service Delivery Framework. This Framework will be directed by a Steering Group of elected leaders and senior representatives from the three levels of Government. The primary purpose of the Steering Group will be to ensure that Integrated Planning and Service Delivery is undertaken to achieve effective implementation of this Regional Plan.'</p> <p>While this implementation statement from the Regional Plan predates the <i>Torres Strait: Bridge and Border</i> Report Recommendation 32, the intended outcomes are almost identical. The ISD actions described below are in response to the Regional Plan.</p> <p>A joint agency ISD Coordination Unit comprising TSRA and ATSIS</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>staff, and a higher level ISD Project Steering Committee has been formed to drive and oversee the ISD Project and reform, including enhanced community engagement.</p> <p>To achieve an integrated approach to service delivery, seven Regional Plan Working Groups (RPWG), aligned to the key regional priorities and the Council of Australian Governments <i>Building Blocks for Closing the Gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians</i> were established. The RPWGs comprised representatives from the three levels of Government and included most agencies and organisations involved in service delivery in the region. The RPAGs were established in late 2009 to complete Service Delivery Mapping. This involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ identifying all current services in the region; ○ highlighting gaps and duplications of services; ○ prioritising community issues that need to be addressed; and ○ identifying short, medium and long-term actions and Key Performance Indicators. <p>Service Delivery Mapping was completed in 2011 and the RPWGs were disbanded in December of the same year.</p> <p>Upon completion of the Service Delivery Mapping, all government agencies and local elected leaders agreed to develop an Integrated Service Delivery Agreement that would deliver the outcomes of the Regional Plan. This whole-of-government document is currently in draft form and contains a list of action statements that government agencies can commit to, to address the identified gaps and duplications in service delivery and deliver the benefits that are identified in the Regional Plan. The ISD Agreement will commit agencies to deliver outcomes in an agreed timeframe. The aim is for the Agreement to be endorsed by high level representatives of the</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>Queensland and Australian Governments.</p> <p>The ISD Coordination Unit and Steering Committee are currently working to formalise an Integrated Service Delivery Governance Framework for a coordinated approach to the delivery of services to communities in the region. The proposed Governance Framework comprises structured bodies which will be responsible for overseeing, coordinating, providing advice, actioning tasks, updating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the ISD Agreement. An ISD Governance Framework Discussion Paper has been distributed to stakeholders.</p> <p>Another output of the Service Delivery Mapping and 2008 Regional Plan consultations are Community Booklets for each of the 18 communities in the Torres Strait and a booklet for the Northern Peninsula Area. The purpose of the booklets is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provide feedback to communities, and clearly outline the issues each community identified during the consultations in 2008 as well as what has been achieved or is in progress by 2011 (using a traffic light system); ○ outline the services government agencies are currently providing to each community and the Region as a whole (a ‘directory of services’); ○ support the development and implementation of the ISD Agreement; and ○ provide a baseline or ‘snap shot’ of each community in 2011, against which progress and change can be measured. <p>Draft booklets are being validated with communities and will be published and distributed through community workshops during 2012. They will also be provided to service delivery agencies to help them in their planning and engagement with communities.</p>

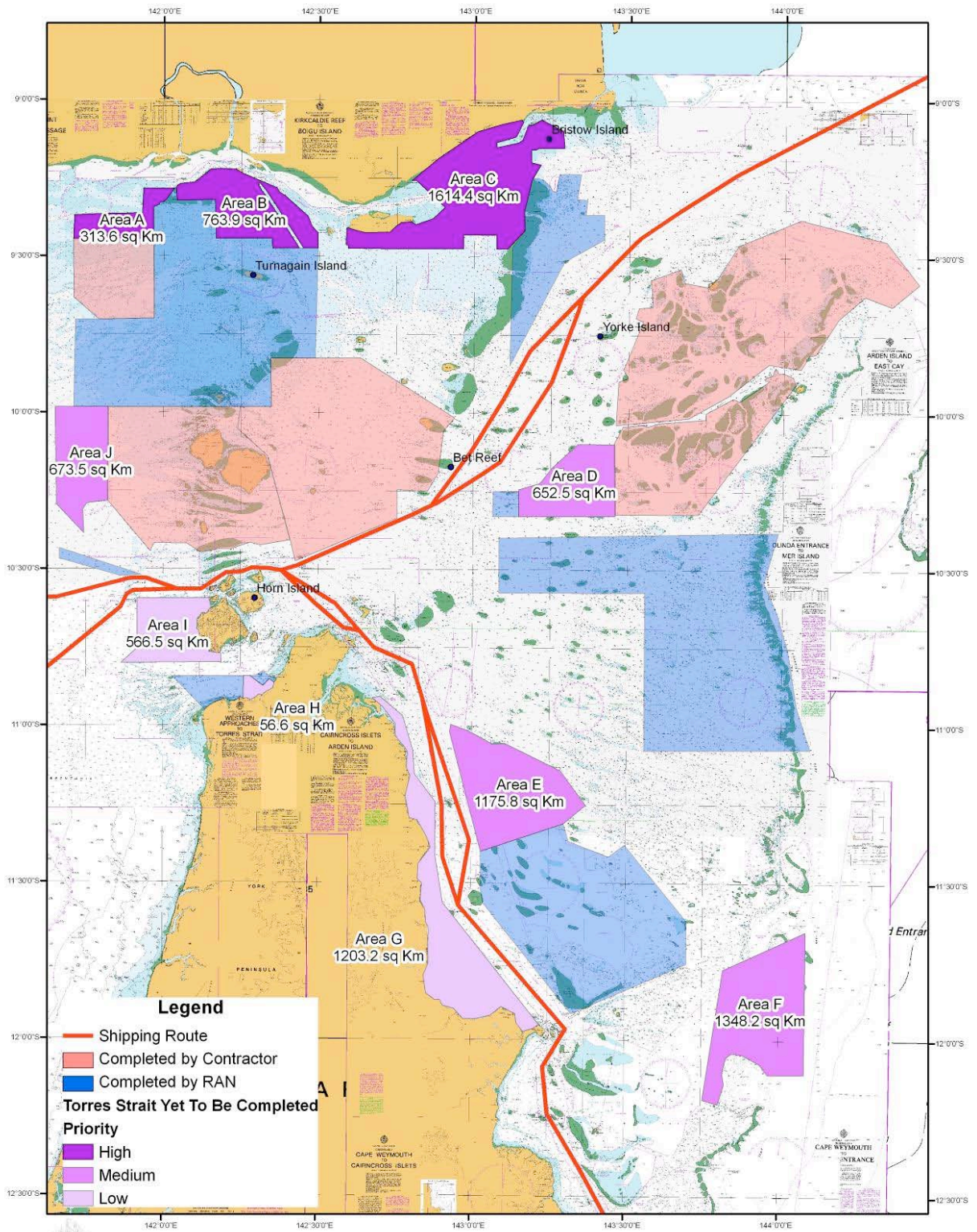
Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>Recommendation 33</p> <p>The committee recommends that DFAT examine the working of the consultative mechanisms with a view to developing, in collaboration with their PNG counterparts, initiatives that would encourage and assist PNG representatives to attend and participate in all joint activities, build their capacity to contribute to decision making and importantly to follow through with agreed actions.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>DFAT will continue its efforts to strengthen consultative mechanisms and promote participation by PNG counterparts.</p> <p>The Joint Advisory Council, the Traditional Inhabitants Meeting, the Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee, the Environmental Management Committee and the Bilateral Fisheries Management Meeting are consultative mechanisms which involve both Australian and PNG officials. Representation is broad including from DFAT, the Western Province administration, PNG Government and local organisations.</p> <p>The annual Papua New Guinea-Australia Ministerial Forum is also used to foster greater participation by PNG counterparts.</p> <p>Papua New Guinea, and Western Province in particular, will continue to receive support to build capacity and involvement in the funding and administrative needs of the Treaty.</p>
<p>Recommendation 34</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with the PNG Government, establish ‘Torres Strait cooperation’ as a standing item on the agenda for the annual bilateral ministerial meetings or forums.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The 2008, 2009 and 2011 Papua New Guinea-Australia Ministerial Forums included the Torres Strait as an area of discussion. (There was no Forum in 2010.) Although no standing agenda exists for the Ministerial Forum, the Torres Strait will continue to be discussed as it is an important part of the bilateral relationship.</p>
<p>Recommendation 35</p>		

Recommendation	Position	Comment
<p>The committee recommends that DFAT explore the reasons for the different perceptions held by traditional inhabitants and State and Commonwealth authorities on the effectiveness of arrangements under the Treaty and report on its findings. This report to include suggestions on ways to reconcile these differences.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government recognises that strong coordination between traditional inhabitants and government authorities is critical to ensuring a consistent perception of effective Treaty implementation. The different perceptions held on the effectiveness of arrangements under the Treaty reflect the complexity of implementation.</p> <p>There is a broad array of consultative mechanisms in place to foster participation and input by a range of stakeholders, including traditional inhabitants.</p> <p>Australian Government agencies will continue to work to ensure that the Traditional Inhabitants Meeting is as consultative as possible, with transparent outcomes ensuring effective implementation. Treaty liaison visits by DFAT, PNG and Queensland authorities continue to use and adapt effective communication techniques to ensure that all parties are familiar with Treaty enforcement initiatives.</p>
<p>Recommendation 36</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government recognise that the removal of derelict vehicles from the islands is a major environmental concern and one that requires close consideration. The committee believes that the Australian Government should take some responsibility for the safe disposal of vehicles purchased by Commonwealth officers for use in the Torres Strait.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government notes the concern expressed by the Torres Shire Council over the number of derelict vehicles on Torres Strait islands. The Australian Government agrees that the Commonwealth has a responsibility for the safe disposal of vehicles purchased by Commonwealth officers for use in the Torres Strait.</p> <p>The Australian Government is advised by relevant Commonwealth agencies that there would be very few, if any, Commonwealth vehicles that have been abandoned in the Torres Strait. Vehicles are</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>primarily leased from Cairns and then returned to Cairns, or occasionally sold by tender.</p> <p>The broader issue of removal of derelict vehicles is a matter for the Torres Shire Council.</p>
<p>Recommendation 37</p> <p>The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider additional funding for Horn Island Airport especially in the areas related to safety, security and border control.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>The Australian Government notes the importance of Horn Island Airport as the primary airport in the Torres Strait, linking communities with each other and with the mainland.</p> <p>Over the last three years, the Australian Government, together with the Queensland Government and TSC has provided a total of \$10.3 million in funding to Horn Island Airport for a range of safety, security and border control projects.</p> <p>In addition to the Australian Government's Regional Airport Funding Program, the government's Regional Passenger Screening Program (RPSP) funded security training for up to three officers at Horn Island Airport between 2006-07 and 2009-10.</p> <p>The Australian Government's Regional Development Australia Far North Queensland and Torres Strait (RDA FNQ&TS) Committee Regional Roadmap, which enables relevant local governments and communities to identify priority infrastructure investment requirements, was completed in July 2011. The Roadmap identifies an initiative for 2012 around developing a Cape York and Torres Strait integrated aviation model which should consider Horn Island Airport. The Australian Government through the Department of Regional Australia is continuing to engage in discussions regarding</p>

Recommendation	Position	Comment
		<p>priorities with the RDA FNQ& TS, TSRA, TSIRC and the TSC.</p> <p>The Australian Government will continue to consider applications for funding under relevant programs. The Australian Government is progressing the outcomes of the Regional Roadmap discussions and the Regional Network Analysis.</p>

Current Status of Survey Progress in Torres Strait



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