

Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance (TCICA) Inc

Chair: Mayor Vonda Malone
Deputy Chair: Mayor Eddie Newman
Treasurer/Secretary: Mayor Peter Scott

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Statement on Local Fare Scheme

The Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance (TCICA) strongly supports an ongoing commitment by the Queensland Government to its successful Local Fare Scheme initiative.

Constituted in November 2013, the TCICA is a membership-based organisation representing the 14 local governments of the Cape and Torres Strait, including Weipa and Mornington Island. We operate as a collaborative partnership of councils to represent the common interests of local governing bodies within the region.

Our members are committed to working together with the State and Federal governments to help shape place-based responses and solutions to the challenges and opportunities in front of us.

Since being reinstated and expanded, the Local Fare Scheme has helped to improve the standard of living in remote parts of Far North Queensland by facilitating greater access to health, education, employment, recreation and community services by local residents.

Importantly, the scheme is also helping to keep families connected to culture and tradition by providing affordable travel options for people to attend significant events and activities in other communities.

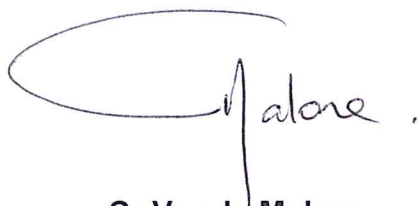
One in five families in many communities in the Cape and Torres region are low income, earning less than \$33,800 per year according to the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). Without the subsidy, air travel for these families would be cost prohibitive. For example, it would cost a family of four \$4,960 for a return journey from Darnley (Erub) Island in the Torres Strait to Cairns, and around \$3,200 for a family of four to travel from Mornington Island to Cairns and return.

Cape and Torres communities are also significantly disadvantaged during the summer wet season when access by road is impossible for months on end. Life for many would grind to a halt without regular and affordable air services between communities, impacting employment, health and education services, and opportunities for social and family engagement.

The TCICA calls on the Queensland Government to continue the Local Fare Scheme to ensure a reasonable standard of access continues to exist between the Cape and Torres Strait regions, and to commit to funding the scheme for at least three years in the 2019-20 Budget. This modest commitment will ensure people living in remote areas of Far North Queensland do not lose their lifeline to crucial services and family connections.

The TCICA also encourages the Government to conduct a review of the scheme and consider incorporating local ferry services into it, providing a seamless point A to point B travel subsidy as opposed to a subsidy for only one part of an entire journey. Ferry services are an essential mode of transport for many Torres Strait communities and some in the Northern Peninsular Area, particularly where residents must travel by inter-island ferry first to access air travel.

We urge the Government to make an early decision on funding to provide certainty to our communities and to the airlines that service them. Without this certainty, residents cannot plan to attend appointments, events and activities and airlines do not have the confidence to commit to ongoing services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Malone", with a large, sweeping loop at the beginning.

Cr Vonda Malone
Chair
4 February, 2019

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