

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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TCICA SUBMISSION

Draft Far North Queensland and North West Queensland Regional Transport Plans

The TCICA welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the draft Far North Queensland and North West Queensland Regional Transport Plans.

TCICA is a membership-based regional organisation of councils representing the 14 local governments of the Torres Strait and Cape, 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 and effectively advocate regional positions and priorities. 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.

Long term strategic regional transport planning is important to help support transport decision-making and the planning and development of transport systems. Setting and agreeing high-level objectives and transport priorities in collaboration with local governments and other regional stakeholders will ensure that strategic thinking is informed by the practical realities facing our communities.

The TCICA makes the following comments on the draft plans:

Far North Queensland and North West Regional Transport Plans

Section 1.3 Strategic alignment

[Comment] During 2019 the TCICA will develop a Strategic Opportunities Plan for the Cape and Torres Strait region, funded under the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning's Remote Area Board Program.

The Strategic Opportunities Plan is intended to guide the types of investment and inform the strategic allocation of funding into infrastructure and services in the region, and create a platform from which elected leaders can maturely and constructively engage across all levels of government, community and industry. It will be a clear and purposeful strategy to deliver the best regional development outcomes for the Torres Strait and Cape region, including Weipa and Mornington Island.

Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance (TCICA) Inc
ABN: 34 409 793 644

Our members: Aurukun Shire Council; Cook Shire Council; Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council; Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council; Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council; Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council; Mornington Shire Council; Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council; Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council; Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council; Torres Shire Council; Torres Strait Island Regional Council; Weipa Town Authority; Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council.

Table 1: The strategic fit of Regional Transport Plans

[Recommendation] The recently released Queensland Freight Strategy – Advancing Freight should be included under the Queensland Government’s Strategic Planning section. The Regional Transport Plan should also include commentary on Alignment with the Queensland Freight Strategy.

Far North Queensland Regional Transport Plan

Page 39 Competing needs of road users

[Comment] The progressive sealing of the Peninsula Development Road will necessitate significant improvements in telecommunications and digital infrastructure networks to ensure road user safety and improvements to emergency and disaster management responses. There are more than 50 mobile blackspots on the PDR identified by the Commonwealth Department of Communications and Arts in its mobile black spot database of reported black spot locations.

Page 41 Providing access to affordable and available transport options

[Comment] The only access for Torres Strait Island communities to essential services, general cargo and fresh produce is via sea or air. Limited or no competition on freight routes and scheduled passenger services drives up living costs and greatly restricts economic, employment and education opportunities for local people.

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[Comment] Timber exports to international and domestic markets is also a growing industry in Cape York, with recent investments in Wik Timber’s hardwood harvesting project near Weipa and in Cape York Timber’s commercial timber mill in Cooktown.

Pages 46 and 47 – Improved social outcomes and liveability

[Comment] 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.

Cape and Torres communities are 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.

Page 55 – Measures of success

[Recommendation] Include greater access and connectivity to information as a measure of success, with the proposed indicator being mobile communications coverage (see the measure of success table at page 48 in the North West plan).

Page 58 Actions – short term

[Recommendation] Include the Peninsula Development Road at A1.09.

Page 60 Benefits of sealing roads in Far North Queensland Region

[Recommendation] Change Cape Indigenous Mayors Alliance to Torres Cape Indigenous Council Alliance.

Page 63 Priority 2 alignment

[Recommendation] Include Queensland Freight Strategy (relevant also to Priorities 1, 3 and 4).

Page 65 Actions – short term

[Recommendation] Include at A2.01 a strategic corridor investigation for a sea route west from the Cape to Kakadu to carry tourists from Weipa to Darwin return, and to facilitate export opportunities and diversification of the Weipa and Western Cape economies.

[Recommendation] Include an action to reduce sea freight transport costs through the investigation of opportunities to increase competition on key transport routes.

[Recommendation] Include an action for the development of a strategic outlook for agriculture and forestry with particular references to the proposed Lakeland Irrigation Scheme, timber harvesting in Cape York and cattle exports out of Weipa.

[Recommendation] Include an action for an Affordable Freight Review to investigate freight options to address the cost of living and getting access to basic goods in the more remote parts of the region (replicating A1.10 in the North West RTP).

Page 75 Actions – short term

[Comment] It is critical that the Queensland Government continues 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 for continuity of regional route planning and seat availability. 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.

[Recommendation] As part of A3.16, TMR should consider incorporating local ferry services into the Local Fare Scheme, 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.

Page 85 Delivering in partnership

[Comment] The TCICA looks forward to working in partnership with the Department of Main Roads and Transport to identify new and innovative ways to leverage ATSI-TIDS funding, new investments in the Cape York Regional Package and other road investments including the Commonwealth's Roads of Strategic Importance initiative, for the benefit of all communities in the Cape and Torres Strait.

North West Regional Transport Plan

[Comment] There is no priority that addresses better coordination of transport and infrastructure services, e.g. like Priority 4 in the Far North Queensland plan. A commitment to better coordination should be a feature of all RTPs.

Page 50 Actions – short term

[Recommendation] Include an action to evaluate the Local Fare Scheme (replicating A3.16 in the Far North plan at page 75).

[Recommendation] Include a fourth priority – Better Coordination of Transport Infrastructure and Services, with four short term actions that replicate the four actions at page 81 in the Far North Queensland RTP.

Thank you for giving TCICA the opportunity to provide this submission. We look forward to ongoing engagement with the Department of Transport and Main Roads to achieve our regional goals and help drive social and economic prosperity for all of our communities. If you require further information, please contact TCICA Executive Officer Melinda Eades on 07 4050 1808 or by email to melinda.eades@nparc.qld.gov.au.

This submission should be read in conjunction with the following submissions:

- *Cook Shire Council;*
- *Far North Queensland Organisation of Councils; and*
- *Any other submission from a TCICA member council.*

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