



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Project 1.3.4 – Communication, community engagement and enhance delivery

May 2008 Final Report

Project Leader: Mr Damian Miley, Torres Strait Regional Authority.

Summary

The TSRA appointed Vic McGrath as the Land & Sea Management Unit Community Liaison Officer on 7 February 2007. A work plan covering the period 2007/08 has been previously submitted.

Vic has undertaken a number of field trips to the outer islands as part of the various elements of land and sea management business. On each visit, he talks about his current role, including his work with the RRRC and the MTSRF programs.

In the current reporting period, the key activities of the CLO include:

- Attended and participated in a workshop for project 1.3.5;
- Assisted Dr Green on field trips to 5 communities;
- Presented at the MTSRF Annual Conference;
- Facilitated a visit by the RRRC Torres Strait Research Manager to Thursday Island.

Vic is a key member of MTSRF's Torres Strait Steering Committee and regularly has input along with the LSMU Manager who chairs these meetings.

This report covers the Community Liaison Officer's (CLO's) activities for the 2007/08 financial year.

Description

Final report on liaison activities and communication products completed during milestone period 15th Dec 2007 to 30th May 2008 and assessment of effectiveness and delivery against plan.



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Project Results

Description of the results achieved for this milestone

The CLO's work plan which has been submitted in previous year 1 reports, sets out the longer term objectives of the position including MTSRF responsibilities.

Vic commenced work as the CLO at the LSMU on 7 Feb 07. He has a broad range of general information dissemination and liaison responsibilities in this role including:

- coastal erosion;
- climate change;
- NRM related grants;
- capacity building of Torres Strait Prescribed Body Corporates (PBCs);
- assistance with community consultations and identification of priorities and project opportunities;
- assistance with the development of LSMU related policies and plans;
- assistance with project monitoring and evaluation;
- project management;
- assistance with NRM grants;
- liaison with LSMU Technical Advisory Group on an "as needed" basis.

The CLO works closely with all members of the LSMU team in ensuring information is presented in a coordinated manner.

MTSRF related activities of the CLO in year 2

As the CLO is part-funded by MTSRF, he is required to work with the Manager (LSMU) in achieving contractual milestones and reporting requirements for MTSRF projects. This also involves actively supporting him with related cash flows, payments and contractual arrangements.

Four MTSRF funded projects that the CLO is currently directly engaged in include:

- ***Climate Change Impacts in Torres Strait – Building resilience and planning adaptation strategies (1.3.1)***

Key activities:

- Accompanied Dr Green on field trips in April 08 to Saibai, Boigu, Poruma, Warraber & Iama Islands for consultations with community members to:
- Provide baseline information on climate change issues from a global, national and local perspective;
- Discuss local traditional knowledge and how this might be recorded and fed into processes to inform and assist adaptation planning in the region.

- ***Ecological Role & Potential Economic Value of Sponges in the Torres Strait (1.3.2)***

Key activities:

- The CLO has played a support role through ongoing liaison with the Masig Council and locally contracted Islander divers prior to and during field visit by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) project team. With the TSRA also contributing financially towards this project, Vic's involvement will continue to ensure partnership agencies are kept abreast of the operation.

- ***Project Communication (Community Engagement and Enhanced Delivery (1.3.4)***

Key activities:

- Aside from the activities identified in the other MTSRF project areas, the CLO presented an overview of Torres Strait projects at the MTSRF Annual Conference held in Cairns 28 April to 1 May 2008.
- In March 2008, the CLO attended the MTSRF Torres Strait Steering Committee meeting in Cairns and in May, facilitated a visit by the RRRC Research Manager, Joelle Prange to discuss the progress and future of MTSRF in the region.

- ***Data Synthesis and Development of Torres Strait Component of Integrated Report Card (1.3.5)***

Key activities:

- The CLO attended the second IRC workshop in Cairns on 13 & 14 March 08 to further refine the suite of pilot indicators previously developed for Torres Strait projects. The draft list from this exercise has been circulated to the LSMU Technical Advisory Group for their input, particularly in regard to the terrestrial component. The response has been positive and valuable, and their suggestions have been incorporated into the draft schedule. The CLO will continue to visit Islander communities to seek their input and eventual ratification of priorities. In-principle support has also been given by the TSRA Executive for liaison with key stakeholders.

Proposed activities for Year 3 (2008/09)

- Continuation of presentations to remaining communities as part of the LGAQ project to incorporate land and sea issues into individual community plans;
- A further two six monthly presentations to the TSRA Board on MTSRF project progress and outcomes;
- Local radio interviews;
- Regular written briefs to TSRA Environment Portfolio Member for quarterly Board meetings;
- Updates posted on land and sea section of TSRA website and quarterly newsletters;
- Information on projects displayed at TSRA booth during Torres Strait careers market in July 2007;
- Continued liaison with Masig community regarding the sponge project;
- Ratification and implementation of revised scientific research protocols for working in Torres Strait;

- Assistance with finalisation and “road testing” of IRC project indicators;
- Liaison with program 5 (climate change) and program 4 (species of conservation – turtle and dugong) program leaders; and bridging role as a conduit between the programs and community;
- Transfer of CSIRO database on Torres Strait related scientific research projects to TSRA website;
- Preparation of milestone reports as required;
- Implementation of relevant recommendations of Bill Arthur’s CRC Torres Strait Review as deemed necessary by MTSRF Torres Strait Steering Committee.

Problems and opportunities

As anticipated in previous milestone reports, the changes brought about by the new Queensland Government local government reforms (particularly as they relate to Island Council amalgamation) continue to present political, managerial and logistical problems for all service delivery agencies that provide support functions. The remainder of the 2008 calendar year is expected to be a transition phase in their establishment. This merger into a single centralised administrative hub will have some obvious benefits but these are unlikely to become a reality for some time.

The CLO underwent health problems requiring major surgery during this reporting period resulting in an unexpected disruption to the delivery of this project. Vic returned to work in early March 2008 and continues to maintain an important role.

The CLO’s involvement in the roll out of a number of new and ongoing LSMU programs will provide several opportunities to discuss and raise the profile of the MTSRF projects. These include:

- Sustainable Land Use Studies on 6 island communities (Boigu, Saibai, Dauan, Iama, Masig and Erub) initially in 2007/08, and on the remaining 9 communities throughout 2008/09;
- A Regional Ecosystem Mapping project connected to the above;
- Current JCU coastal erosion modelling and future sea level studies;
- Development of a Regional Investment Strategy to guide the future investment of Natural Heritage Trust funds in the Torres Strait region post-June 2008.
- It has been suggested by RRRC staff that the CLO would benefit from liaising with key staff of the Aboriginal Rainforest Council in Cairns for a cross-fertilisation of ideas in enhancing community engagement and enhancement of service delivery. This opportunity will be taken up during future visits to the mainland.

During next milestone reporting period

- Opportunistic presentations to either TSRA executive or full board in 2008/09;
- Further field visits to Masig to liaise with Sponge Project team, Masig Council, community and local project recruits during stage 2 of the project;
- Further liaison with communities re Indicators for IRC project (1.3.5);
- Familiarisation and awareness raising of new MTSRF projects for 2008/09;
- Transfer of Torres Strait scientific research database developed by CSIRO to TSRA website for broader access by local stakeholders.