

From: s47F
To: s47F
Cc: s47F
Subject: RE: Table for responses for EMG_Minister meeting Torres StraitDOC [SEC=IN-CONFIDENCE-BUDGET]
Date: Wednesday, 3 November 2010 10:49:04 AM

Hi s47F

As requested, some more detail on the Torres Strait issue follows. I'm not sure how much detail you were envisaging, so please let me know if you want more or less than I've provided here.
thanks, s47F
s47F

Because of their low elevation, a number of Torres Strait islands experience significant inundation during king tides. The effects of this are multiplied when storms occur at the same time. Their coastlines are subject to significant erosion which is threatening infrastructure. Addressing this will require construction of sea walls, and the relocation of some water and sewage plants. Over the longer term there is real potential that some communities may have to relocate, and there is a need for significant adaptation work to address this threat. s22

That the work is unavoidable is more certain. The need has been assessed by James Cook University which has been working for some years with the TSRA on coastal management issues.

There has been increasing pressure from the region for Australian Government assistance, particularly given that significant assistance is provided to Pacific neighbours to address similar issues. In response, in May 2010, \$1.0m was granted from the FaHCSIA portfolio for the installation of tidal gauges to monitor sea levels to support planning decisions. An additional \$0.4m from the Climate Change portfolio was allocated for research into climate change impacts in the region. There was some criticism locally on the basis that much research has already been done, and concrete action was what was needed.

Given that responsibility for the sort of infrastructure proposed by the TSRA would normally lie with State and local government, an issue for the Australian Government will be to determine to what extent it becomes involved. There is a history of essential infrastructure in the Torres Strait being funded and delivered jointly by the Australian and Queensland Governments, and in the absence of a settled policy on the provision of infrastructure to Indigenous communities in remote areas there will be an expectation that this arrangement, which has been very successful, will continue.

If there is an inclination to assist in providing rising sea level mitigation works (and the broader strategic significance of the Torres Strait suggests that this may be the appropriate course), the issue is to identify which agencies have responsibility. For the last twelve years half the region's infrastructure funding has come from the Indigenous portfolio (with the other half from Queensland) but there are other portfolios with an interest and the new emphasis on supporting regional Australia may serve to focus their attention on this issue. We are already working closely with the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency which has a keen interest on the research side but does not currently have infrastructure programs. In late November 2010 we will be convening a roundtable of all the portfolios which potentially have a contribution to make. The aim of the meeting will be to inform those portfolios of the level of need, and to identify relevant programs and determine what assistance could potentially be offered.

From: s47F

Sent: Tuesday, 2 November 2010 5:28 PM

To: s47F

Cc: s47F

Subject: RE: Table for responses for EMG_Minister meeting DOC [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi s47F

I have gone through our completed document with s47F and he has asked that more information be provided on the Torres Strait (TSRA) item. In particular, could we have more detail on what the problem is, and how it will be addressed noting that funding was not included in the budget.

Thanks,
s47F

s47F

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Indigenous Budget and Coordination Branch
Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination
s47F

s22