

## 1.2 Profile of the Torres Strait

The Torres Strait is a unique cultural, historical and geographical region of Australia. It is located between Cape York and Papua New Guinea. The Strait consists of approximately 100 islands of which 15 are inhabited and administered by Community Councils. These Councils provide essential services to their communities. The region has an international border with Papua New Guinea.

The population of the Torres Strait is approximately 8,000 of whom 6,300 are Islanders of Melanesian descent. Most outer Island populations are between 100 and 500.

The administrative and commercial centre of the region is Thursday Island. Thursday Island, Horn Island and Prince of Wales Island has a population of about 4,000.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Island Co-ordinating Council (ICC) are the recognised Commonwealth and State peak bodies to be consulted on regional needs.

Most Islands are accessible by light aircraft and there are regular services from Horn Island. The Islands also receive a weekly barge service which supplies essential food items and fuel. The Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS) operates retail

stores on the outer Islands and Thursday Island.

Each community has adequate water and electricity systems.

The Queensland Education Department operates Primary Schools on the outer Islands. Thursday Island hosts Primary and Secondary schools and a College of TAFE. All outer Islands also have medical health centres operated by the Queensland Department of Health. All Islands receive at least 2 television channels and have telephone services. Limited postal and banking services are also available.

Employment prospects on the outer Islands are limited. Most people are reliant on the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) and Social Security benefits for their basic incomes.

Some Islanders are also involved in subsistence gardening and fishing as well as commercial fishing. Others are employed in a variety of public sector positions including Health, Education, Customs, Quarantine and Local Government.

Island Councils receive grants from the Commonwealth and State Governments to assist them in their operations.

