



# AUSTRALIA



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## **13<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

20 May 2014

### **Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

#### **Statement by Mr Joseph Elu, Chair, Torres Strait Regional Authority**

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I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their elders both past and present.

This afternoon, I would like to speak about the practical application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the Torres Strait Regional Authority in our strategic planning process, and in the design of our service delivery model.

The Australian Government announced its support for the Declaration on 3 April 2009. Along with the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, the announcement demonstrated the Government's commitment to strengthening the relationship and ensuring genuine engagement with Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Government's overarching approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage is through the Closing the Gap strategy. The Government is accountable to the Australian people through the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap report which is tabled in Parliament annually.

The Government's priorities in Indigenous Affairs are getting children to school, getting adults into real jobs and ensuring communities are safe, with the ordinary law of the land observed. The Government is committed to a

new engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, one that aims to achieve the Closing the Gap targets more quickly.

In 2009 the Torres Strait Regional Authority restructured its service delivery programmes to align to the Closing the Gap Building Blocks which focus on Early Childhood, Schooling, Health, Housing, Safe Communities, Economic Participation and Governance and Leadership. We are about to complete our first four year development plan which was based on this structure and which reports on our achievements for the Torres Strait region.

Our next Torres Strait Development Plan is for the period 2014 -2018. In this plan we have included the 46 Articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the standard to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and respect. We have included in our Development Plan, a mapping between the outcome statements from our eight service delivery programmes to the 46 Articles in the Declaration. The Torres Strait Regional Authority is proud to inform the Chair that these programmes directly contribute to 36 of those Articles. The mapping between Outputs and Articles enables the Torres Strait Regional Authority not only to monitor and report on progress towards Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage, but also towards the realisation of the rights and aspirations of all Indigenous peoples in the Torres Strait.

Thank you for hearing me today – or as we say in our Mother tongues - Koeyma Eso, and Au Esoao.