



TORRES SHIRE COUNCIL

*To lead, provide & facilitate a sustainable,
safe & culturally vibrant community*

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Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry into food prices and food security

Torres Shire Council is pleased to submit to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry into food prices and food security. The Indigenous Affairs Committee has launched this inquiry into food prices and food security in Remote Communities to examine “the situation in remote Indigenous communities, and the effect of supply chains and local businesses on the cost of food. The inquiry will also look at the role of regulators in dealing with the situation” (Parliament of Australia, Media Release, 28 May 2020).

1. INTRODUCTION

In preparing its submission, regard has been had by Torres Shire Council to the following Terms of Reference (TOR):

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs will inquire into and report on the issue of food prices and food security in remote Indigenous communities (“Remote Communities”).

The Inquiry will identify and report upon factors contributing to higher prices and situations where prices are considered unreasonable and in particular investigate whether there is price gouging in any remote community stores.

This investigation should pay particular attention to the availability and pricing of fresh and healthy foods in remote community stores.

The Inquiry will also consider licensing and regulation as well as the governance arrangements for remote community stores across Australia, and what action, if any, that the Australian Government and States and Territory governments could take to address price gouging in Remote Communities.

The Inquiry should consider, report and where appropriate make recommendations on:

- 1. The environment in which Remote Community retailers operate;*
- 2. The licensing and regulation requirements and administration for Remote Community stores;*
- 3. The governance arrangements for Remote Community stores;*
- 4. Comparative pricing in other non-Indigenous remote communities and regional centres;*
- 5. Barriers facing residents in Remote Communities from having reliable access to affordable fresh and healthy food, groceries and other essential supplies;*
- 6. The availability and demand for locally produced food in Remote Communities;*
- 7. The role of Australia's food and grocery manufacturers and suppliers in ensuring adequate supply to Remote Communities, including:*
 - a. identifying pathways towards greater cooperation in the sector to improve supply;*
 - b. the volume of production needed for Remote Communities;*
 - c. challenges presented by the wet season in Northern Australia as well as any locational disadvantages and transport infrastructure issues that might be relevant;*
 - d. geographic distance from major centres;*

8. *The effectiveness of federal, state and territory consumer protection laws and regulators in:*
 - a. *supporting affordable food prices in Remote Communities particularly for essential fresh and healthy foods;*
 - b. *addressing instances of price gouging in Remote Communities; and*
 - c. *providing oversight and avenues for redress;*
9. *Any other relevant factors.*

The Shire of Torres

The Shire of Torres is a Local Government Area located in Far North Queensland, covering large sections of the Torres Strait Islands and the northern tip of Cape York Peninsula north of 11°S latitude. It holds two distinctions—it is the northernmost Local Government Area in Australia and is the only one to abut an international border – it is at one point just 73 kilometres (45 miles) from Papua New Guinea. It is administered from Thursday Island.

The Torres Shire consists of Waiben, Ngurupai, Gealug, Muwai, Muralag, Palilug and areas of the Northern Peninsula of Cape York. The Torres Strait is made up of more than a hundred islands, traditionally known as Zenadth Kes and occupies the sea country between two mainland areas: Australia (Koey Dhawdhay) and PNG (Moegi Dhawdhay). The sea country is the recognised Native Land and Waters of Guda Maluyligal, Maluyligal, Kulkaigal, Kemer Kemer Meriam, Kaiwalagal - the seafaring nations of Zenadth Kes. Two dialects are spoken within three groups of islands, predominantly by the ‘creole’ languages. These dialects are Kala Lagau Ya and Meriam. Zenadth Kes was governed by Kod Systems, an ancient form of governing structure, prior to colonisation. The peoples of the Shire are First Nations peoples.

The Torres Strait

The Torres Strait is a body of water that lies between Australia and Papua New Guinea. It is approximately 150 kilometres wide at its narrowest point. To the south is Cape York Peninsula (the northernmost continental extremity of the Australian state of Queensland) whilst to the north is Papua New Guinea.

The Torres Strait links the Coral Sea to the east with the Arafura Sea in the west. Several clusters of islands lie in the Strait, collectively called the Torres Strait Islands. There are at least 274 islands which are grouped into five distinct clusters, 17 of which have present-day permanent settlements. Of these 17 islands, 14 have stores and incorporate a treaty that enables trade practices with Papua New Guinea Nationals. These clusters exhibit differences in geology and formation, as well as having individual cultural characteristics and language. Thirteen of the inhabited islands are located within the protected zone, as outlined in the Torres Strait Treaty.

The Treaty allows for a cooperative approach to managing the traditional movements of traditional inhabitants across the Torres Strait protected area. Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ) are the predominant entity that supplies food to the Torres Strait, NPA and mainland communities.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The environment in which Remote Community retailers operate

The Predominant retailers in our communities is the “IBIS” chain.

In 1905, Reverend FW Walker established Papuan Industries Pty Ltd. This was the beginning of the Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS) as we know it today. IBIS is the trading name of the Island Industries Board (IIB)

Statutory Framework

On 1 September 2016, the Governor-in-Council approved amendments to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984* (the Act). Amendments to the Act included a name change from Island Industries Board (IIB) to Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ).

IIB is continued in existence as CEQ. Another amendment was the change in financial year for CEQ/IIB to include a financial year ending 30 June.

CEQ has retained the Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS) as a registered trading name of CEQ. In the marketplace, especially the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area (NPA), CEQ is more commonly known by its trading name ‘IBIS’.

On 1 September 2016, the predominate supermarket and retail supplier in our communities – IBIS - changed to Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ). CEQ is a Queensland government statutory body with responsibility for commercial enterprises in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, currently primarily in retailing.

On 1 May 2017, the State Government transferred management of its operating stores to CEQ. CEQ has rebranded the previous Government/Department stores in consultation with Community with relevant local names under the Aboriginal Business, Industry and Service (ABIS) banner.

In 2017/18 the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Partnerships (DATSIP) Retail Stores were merged with the retail stores in IBIS and both operations are now managed by CEQ.

These former DATSIP stores now trade under the ABIS banner and are located in 5 remote communities: Palm Island; Lockhart River; Pormpuraaw; Kowanyama; and Doomadgee.

The functions of CEQ are:

- (a) to act as a commercial enterprise for the general convenience or benefit of the residents of the communities in which Community Enterprise Queensland performs its functions;
- (b) to provide the communities mentioned in paragraph (a) with access to a range of food, drinks and household items essential for a healthy life at a fair price;
- (c) to apply its operating surplus or assets to promote, support and improve its services and the general welfare, including the knowledge and skills, of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the communities mentioned in paragraph (a).

Examples of supporting residents—

- encouraging the development of trade, commerce and businesses in the communities
- supporting trade, commerce and businesses carried out by residents of the communities
- providing support for educational or health initiatives, local organisations and community programs or activities. (CEQ Annual Report 2018-2019).

CEQ provides employment and training opportunities for local people.

With the IBIS operational hub in Cairns, it operates four supermarkets, a service station, a hardware store and a department store in our Shire.

Aside from the IBIS stores, there is little competition. One smaller privately owned variety and minimart is attached to the local post office. A family outlet is also on Thursday Island and an Island and Cape Supermarket on Horn Island.

The IBIS stores opening hours are outlined in Appendix 1. These stores do not provide extended opening hours, as may be found in mainland Australian supermarkets, despite the fact that Torres Shire residents have the same requirements to residents on mainland Australia. The Shire has the following assets, functions and services:

- The Council-owned Regional Airport which links the Torres Strait and mainland Australia, as well as internationally. Horn Island passenger movement per annum have increased significantly with 194 seats occupied every day and serviced 2-3 flights daily to and from Cairns.
- The Seaport transport with Peddells travelling up to 2 times a day (seasonal) and *Sea Swift* twice weekly, as well as passenger and freight movements every day from Horn and Thursday Islands and between Thursday Island and Friday Island and the 13 other islands and Cape York.
- The Regional Hospital on Thursday Island that services Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC) and Torres Shire Council (TSC) includes:
 - Renal Dialysis Unit
 - Operating Theatre
 - Birthing/Maternity service
 - Primary, Secondary and Emergency Care
 - Allied Health, Mental Health and Oral Health for the region
- The Regional Secondary College
 - Year 6 to year 12 for the Torres Strait, NPARC, TSIRC and TSC
- The Main Administrative headquarters for Federal and State Government agencies responsible for servicing the Torres Strait, including:
 - Queensland Police Service and Queensland Ambulance Service
 - Border Force – Customs

- Courts Authority and Court
- Probation and Parole
- Queensland Health (Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service)
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Biosecurity and Quarantine
- Centrelink and Medicare
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Australia Post
- Bank

Torres Shire is the hub of the Torres Strait region as a capital city or large provincial town is elsewhere in Australia. It is the place to go for shopping, banking, health and business needs.

Whilst the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs is enquiring into food prices and food security, for completeness, Torres Shire Council draws the Standing Committee's attention to the fact that within the CEQ stable there is Community Home and Hardware Channel (known as "CHH").

"CHH is a retail operation consisting of hardware (both trade and domestic), homeware, electrical, furniture and active wear clothing. CHH is a combination of CEQ branded 'Col Jones Homewares' and T.I. Hardware. Col Jones' is an icon supplier (founded 1978) in the Torres Strait and NPA of quality home and giftwares, electrical furniture and traditional island clothing. T.I. Hardware is a Mitre 10 supplier of hardware related to both the domestic and trade segments of the market in the Torres Strait. The acquisition of T.I. Hardware (2015) and Col Jones (2017) was a natural extension of industry board trading. The acquisitions have improved CEQ's ability to improve social and economic circumstances in the region by providing employment pathways for local Indigenous persons that they may not otherwise have experienced..... These stores also provide goods and services into the Torres Strait and NPA regions. Growth planning for Col Jones and T.I. Hardware will see satellite stores in locations where space is available." (CEQ Annual Report 2018-2019).

In real terms, there is no effective competition between stores, and as outlined later in the submission, no effective competition in the supply chain.

Predominantly food is sold through IBIS, and whilst it is possible for residents to obtain goods from the large supermarkets in Cairns, they must be registered clients with *Sea Swift* and pay a premium for the transport. Families travelling to Cairns often return with supermarket goods in their suitcases.

The licensing and regulation requirements and administration for Remote Community stores

On 1 September 2016, the predominate supermarket and retail supplier in our communities - the Island Industries Board changed to Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ). CEQ is a Queensland government statutory body with responsibility for commercial enterprises in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, currently primarily in retailing.

CEQ was established by section 60D of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984* (the Act).

Reports of stores selling re-packed rice and flour in zip bags with no nutritional information on the back; or selling items where the used by date has been removed or is very out of date, or where extremely out of date items are sold as “sale” items are a regular occurrence.

Regulatory functions under the *Food Act 2006* (QLD) are undertaken by Torres Shire Council’s Health Inspector. Council has successfully brought matters before the court resulting in the closure of some food outlets and heavy fines. The *Public Health Act 2005* (QLD) regulates the used by, best before dates on food/retail items and QLD Health is the regulatory agency. Usual regulatory frameworks apply to any private sector business on the islands.

The governance arrangements for Remote Community stores

Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ) is an unfunded not for profit Queensland Government Statutory Board which is registered as a charity by the Australian Taxation Office (despite running the retail store “Col Jones” and *Mitre 10* on Thursday Island). It operates under the auspices of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (Justice, Land and Other Matters) Act 1984*. The IIB trades as the Islanders Board of Industry and Service (IBIS).

The role of IBIS is to provide good quality, nutritious food to the communities of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula (Cape York) Regions at the lowest possible prices. IBIS currently operates 20 retail stores in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area (NPA).

IBIS advise that “In 2002 the IIB was restructured and a new Board was appointed. The new board provided a mix of skillsets to better position IIB in the marketplace. The Company information may be found in **Table 1** below.

When this new Board took over the organisation was in serious financial distress with large debts and extremely poor trading results. The Board was given the task of revitalising the organisation and bringing it to a position where it was able to carry out its mandate whilst ensuring it became financially viable.

To this end the Board appointed a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and instructed him to examine, in detail, the operations of the organisation and to develop best practice systems and processes that would bring IBIS back to profitability. This has been achieved with the added benefit that IBIS now has sophisticated processes in place that have been designed to operate effectively in remote areas” (<https://www.ibis.org.au/governance/>).

Table 1 – CEQ Company Information (<https://www.ceq.com.au/about/corporate-profile/>)

	Australia	Papua New Guinea
Company Type	Private Company	Private Company
Registered Name	Contract Electrical (QLD) Pty Ltd	CEQ Papua New Guinea Ltd
Business Number	27 093 910 493	1-115088
Company Number	093 910 493	
Incorporation Date	26 July 2000	13 July 2017

Comparative pricing in other non-Indigenous remote communities and regional centres.

Whilst IBIS has a published pricing policy, its prices are generally similar throughout their stores. IBIS notes that “Most of the people living in the region serviced by IBIS stores are low income earners with families. The IBIS Pricing Policy has been designed to assist people on limited incomes with the opportunity of providing their families with healthy meals by making healthy food affordable. Only healthy/healthier foods are promoted in weekly advertising” (<https://www.ibis.org.au/governance/>).

Unfortunately, this assertion is both disingenuous and simply untrue. Whilst it may be true that only healthy (or mostly healthy) foods are advertised in the weekly advertising – unhealthy food is sold. A copy of the “local specials” may be found at Appendix 2.

Table 2 illustrates the cost of food and groceries in our Shire compared to mainland Australia and illustrates that there is not a positive price point towards healthy food such as fruit and vegetables. It is understood that there are week-by-week fluctuations in price. The store comparison is between the Thursday Island IBIS Supermarket and a Woolworths supermarket in south west Queensland (a regional country centre).

Table 2 – Comparison of Prices

Product	Weight	Woolworths Price (\$)	IBIS TI Price (\$)	\$ Variance	% Variance
Multi Grain Bread	1 unit	\$ 1.60	\$ 8.99	\$ 7.39	561.88%
Generic Brand Butter	250 grams	\$ 3.70	\$ 5.70	\$ 2.00	154.05%
Western Star Butter	250 grams	\$ 4.00	\$ 5.00	\$ 1.00	125.00%
Tomatoes	kg	\$ 3.00	\$ 9.49	\$ 6.49	316.33%
Apples	kg	\$ 4.50	\$ 4.99	\$ 0.49	110.89%
Grapes	kg	\$ 3.00	\$ 7.49	\$ 4.49	249.67%
Butternut Pumpkin	kg	\$ 1.00	\$ 3.49	\$ 2.49	349.00%
White Potatoes	kg	\$ 2.00	\$ 4.29	\$ 2.29	214.50%
Roast chicken	kg	\$ 2.90	\$ 8.82	\$ 5.92	304.14%
T-Bone Steak	500gram	\$ 10.50	\$ 15.06	\$ 4.56	143.43%
Sausages	1.5 kg	\$ 7.50	\$ 12.48	\$ 4.98	166.40%
Continental Creamy Carbonaro	85grams	\$ 1.50	\$ 3.05	\$ 1.55	203.33%
John West Tuna	95 grams	\$ 2.30	\$ 3.22	\$ 0.92	140.00%
Moccona Coffee	400 grams	\$ 15.00	\$ 55.72	\$ 40.72	371.47%
Bacon	kg	\$ 11.00	\$ 13.99	\$ 2.99	127.18%
6 crumpets	1 unit	\$ 1.85	\$ 4.99	\$ 3.14	269.73%
Chicken Kiev	4 per unit	\$ 10.00	\$ 11.20	\$ 1.20	112.00%
Steam Fresh Veg	1 pkt	\$ 3.00	\$ 5.99	\$ 2.99	199.67%
Twinings Tea	10 grams	\$ 7.00	\$ 25.73	\$ 18.73	367.57%
Arnott's Monte Carlo Biscuits	250 grams	\$ 2.00	\$ 4.80	\$ 2.80	240.00%
Total		\$ 97.35	\$ 214.49	\$117.14	220.33%

Table 2 demonstrates that this modest family food and grocery shopping is 220.33% more expensive at IBIS on Thursday Island than at “Woolies” in a regional town in SW Queensland.

Council observes that another area of concern in the operation by CEQ IBIS is fuel sales across the region. Historical anecdotal evidence has suggested that fuel prices are inflated beyond the margin of Cairns (\$1.19/litre) in comparison to Thursday Island (\$1.59/litre). The cost of fuel should only be marginally more than that of the logistic cost in shipping fuel to the island. As the reported shipping cost by Seaswift for bulk fuel may only be 6-10c/litre. This price is surely evidence of an inflated margin?

CEQ will never be able to achieve either the Coles slogan of: “Down, Down the Prices are Down” or the Woolworths slogan of “The Fresh Food People”, as it does not have the economies of scale of the supermarket giants, nor supply chain savings because of the chain’s ability to maximise their critical mass. Thursday Island and Torres Shire does have a demographic base to substantiate lowering of prices, as presently occurs in a large country town to support a reduction in cost of food prices. Furthermore, as Thursday Island (TI) is a hub for the Outer Islands, where communities visit for their health, banking, business and other needs, cost reduction on this Island makes sense.

Torres Shire Council asserts that food prices paid by our remote communities could reduce significantly if:

- (a) The drivers of supply chain overheads are addressed;
- (b) The larger market players have a presence in the remote communities’ markets or alternatively price equalisation strategies are implemented by the existing supplier (competition being the better instrument of the two); and
- (c) Government incentives are directed towards remote indigenous communities.

Recommendations on strategies for price equalisation from the House of Representatives Standing Committee (“the Standing Committee”) on Indigenous Affairs would be welcomed so as reduce the degree of price imbalance between larger supermarket chains and niche supermarkets such as CEQ. Council also recommends that the Standing Committee considers, in the short term, the introduction of a food subsidy scheme for remote indigenous communities in the same way as currently exists with a travel subsidy scheme for air travel in our region.

Whatever approach is finally supported by the Standing Committee, what is inescapable is that any improvement in the quality, cost and supply of food is economically sensible, as it will return dividends through reduced cost of health care in our communities by assisting in the reduction of nutrition-related “lifestyle” disorders such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes mellitus and chronic renal disease and their complications in Indigenous people.

Barriers facing residents in Remote Communities from having reliable access to affordable fresh and healthy food, groceries and other essential supplies and the role of Australia’s food and grocery manufacturers and suppliers in ensuring adequate supply to Remote Communities

This issue is addressed above. Perhaps the other single most significant causative factor in restricting reliable access to affordable food is a lack of an Integrated Freight Strategy and the maintenance of a shipping monopoly.

The Cape and Torres Strait region suffers from a lack of an integrated freight strategy. This increases the risk of inefficient decision making in relation to road and rail corridors, connectivity to ports and duplicated infrastructure. The \$260.5 million Cape York Regional Package committed to the upgrade of key roads (particularly the state-controlled Peninsula Development Road) and infrastructure in Cape York to better connect areas of economic opportunity in the region is obviously beneficial.

The Torres Shire Council submits that an upgrade of the port facilities and freight handling capacity at Seisia wharf for sea freight from Cairns to Seisia and the Horn Island and Thursday Island wharves for distribution to Horn Island, Thursday Island and the Outer Torres Strait Islands (OTSI) are warranted as part of an integrated freight strategy.

Coastal Sea Freight Service

Recommendation 1 of the Queensland Government Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee Report No: 59 – Inquiry into Coastal Sea Freight, December 2014 proposed:

“The Legislative Assembly note the considerable benefits a regular coastal sea freight service would provide to the Queensland economy, including providing an environmentally sustainable alternative to road and rail freight, reducing road congestion, improving safety, reducing road maintenance costs:

providing resilience to the transport supply chain in times of natural disaster and flow on benefits to the dive tourism and defence sectors.”

Torres Shire Council requests that the Standing Committee considers the above recommendation during its deliberations. The establishment of a regular coastal sea freight service could foster diversity in commercial shipping service providers in the Torres Strait region, thus providing on-flow economic benefits to the region. Furthermore, a commercially operated coastal shipping service that achieves interoperability between freight modes and reduces supply chain costs to the region’s businesses and residents could have positive impacts on the region’s economy.

Cost of Living

The absence of a regulated competitive intrastate shipping industry is a terrible break on our economic development. It profoundly compounds the disproportionately high cost of living experienced by our communities and unquestionably reduces prosperity and good health in our region.

Transportation cost for goods and services for Council’s operations and for the communities of our region is alarming. Our procurement data reveal that for many items the shipping cost adds between 50% - >100% to overheads. This adds to mark-up of prices of goods illustrated in Table 2 – and this is for basic foodstuffs. The negative impact on health due to the cost of fresh fruit and vegetables and better-quality food being so high is already noted. This situation is a national and Queensland disgrace - especially when considering that in the Torres Shire LGA:

- 0.0% are in least disadvantaged quintile; and
- 44.7% are in most disadvantaged quintile

The state of Queensland profile is vastly different, as follows:

- 20.0% in least disadvantaged quintile
- 20.0% in most disadvantaged quintile

(Source: ABS 2033.0.55.001 Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2016, (Queensland Treasury derived)

Whilst the current shipping cost negatively impacts on economic development, cost of living and quality of life, a more competitive industry engaged in intrastate shipping, governed by appropriate

safety regulation, would be a godsend for our region – replacing the displaced pearling industry. Torres Strait Islanders have always been a seafaring people.

It is vital that there is a freeing up and expansion of affordable shipping licences and registration conditions so that our people may obtain these licences and compete in the shipping market. In turn, this not only has an obvious economic benefit in fostering more jobs and new industry in the region; but it will also lead to reducing the cost of living for our communities. It has the potential to significantly reduce the cost to build and develop in the region. Housing stock will increase. The quality of the housing stock will improve and will lead to the growth of a housing industry. Social housing will be enhanced.

One of the biggest current deficiencies in Queensland’s Freight Strategy is the lack of attention to investment in freight infrastructure, a point stressed in Council’s representation on this matter at the Queensland Parliamentary hearing in Cairns into Intrastate Shipping. To this end, Council reconfirms its commitment to Recommendation 1 of the Queensland Government Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee Report No: 59 – Inquiry into Coastal Sea Freight, December 2014 that

“The Legislative Assembly note the considerable benefits a regular coastal sea freight service would provide to the Queensland economy, including providing an environmentally sustainable alternative to road and rail freight, reducing road congestion, improving safety, reducing road maintenance costs, providing resilience to the transport supply chain in times of natural disaster and flow on benefits to the dive tourism and defence sectors.”

The establishment of a regular coastal sea freight service could foster diversity in commercial shipping service providers in the Torres Strait region thus providing flow-on economic benefits to the region. Furthermore, a commercially operated coastal shipping service that achieves interoperability between freight modes and reduces supply chain costs to the region’s businesses and residents could have positive impacts on the region’s economy.

Whilst QANTAS flights to Horn Island from Cairns have been curtailed during the COVID-19 pandemic and whilst QANTAS plans to introduce a staggered/slow return to a full 7 day a week service from Cairns to Horn Island return service, this has resulted (and will continue to result for the next two months) in *Sea Swift* being the monopolised food carrier to the Torres Strait – not just the only sea-based carrier to the Torres Straits.

Whilst noting that negative impacts in food supply and pricing occurred throughout Australia during COVID-19, the impact of this monopoly on food quality, availability and prices are clear and detrimental for our region because compared to many other places in this country, the Shire started with much higher supply and food costs, and much lower food security, diversity and quality outcomes. Simply put, so long as there is no real competition and extremely high overheads, nothing will change.

The volume of production needed for Remote Communities – future demand

So far as Torres Shire is concerned, the following statistics provide a valuable indication of future demand projections and likely future production needs in our communities:

Table 3 Median age projections

LGA/State	As at 30 June			Change
	2021	2031	2041	2021–2041
	Years			Years
Torres (S)	30.5	33.2	34.5	4.0
Queensland	37.9	39.4	40.7	2.8

The median age is the age at which half the population is older, and half is younger. These median age projections have been calculated by Queensland Treasury using the Queensland Government population projections, 2018 edition. Data are updated twice every five years. The next planned update is in November 2021. (Source: Queensland Government Population Projections, 2018 edition (medium series).

These figures mean that as at 30 June 2041, the median age will increase by 4.0 years compared to an increase of 2.8 years for the rest of Queensland.

Table 4 Population by Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage quintiles(a), Torres (S) LGA and Queensland, 2016

LGA/STATE	Quintile 1 (most disadvantaged)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (least disadvantaged)
LGA / State			— % —		
Torres (S)	44.7	45.4	9.9	0.0	0.0
Queensland	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0

The quintiles are population based and derived at the Queensland level (state based quintiles and not national based quintiles) (Source: ABS 2033.0.55.001 Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2016, (Queensland Treasury derived).

These statistics mean that more than twice the number of people who are most disadvantage reside in our local government area compared to the rest of Queensland.

Table 5 Population(a) in remoteness areas(b), Torres (S) LGA and Queensland, 2016

LGA/STATE	Remoteness Area					
LGA / State	Major City	Inner Regional Australia	Outer Regional Australia	Remote Australia number %	Very Remote Australia number %	
	number %	number %	number %			
Torres (S)	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.00	0.0	3,610 100.0	
Queensland	2,957,012 63.0	941,834 20.1	667,630 14.2	71,328 1.5	52,722 1.1	

(a) Population based on 2016 usual resident population. (b) Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Area (RA) classification using ARIA+ mean scores. (Source: ABS, Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS): Volume 5 - Remoteness Structure, July 2016, cat. no. 1270.0.55.005; ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016)

These figures demonstrate the preponderance of our community remaining in a very remote area of Australia.

Table 6 Total Family Income

LGA/State	Numbers	Median
Torres (S)	60 low-income families (8.8%)	Median total family income of \$99,788 per year
Queensland	115,233 low-income families (9.4%)	Median total family income of \$86,372 per year

(a) Includes same-sex couple families. Excludes 'Lone person', 'Group', 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households. Excludes overseas visitors. (b) Includes partially stated and not stated income responses. (Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2016, General Community Profile - G02 and G28)

These figures demonstrate that the mean total income of families in the Torres Strait is higher than in Queensland (concentration of professionals, executive, business owners and public servant salaries in the Shire) and that there is also a significant number of our communities relying on the social wage (refer Table 4). They also reveal that the population by 2041 will live longer than the current age, with a population that remains in the region. These are important factors to consider when planning to address food security and addressing price and supply chain challenges

The effectiveness of federal, state and territory consumer protection laws

Torres Shire Council is not aware of any Office of Fair Trading (QLD) action on food pricing in our Shire. Neither is there any specific information regarding consumer protection in the Shire in its Annual Report. A more rigorous compliance focus in Remote Communities would be advantageous.

The availability and demand for locally produced food in Remote Communities

Aside from Council's sponsored and supported community garden (a hobby garden), there is no reliable and accessible fresh fruit and vegetable production in our Shire. There is a proliferation of mango trees on Thursday Island and some other indigenous fruit trees scattered throughout the Shire. The geography of Thursday and Horn Island do not support this production and overcrowding limits its possibility on Thursday Island.

In large measure, there are insufficient areas to successfully undertake primary food production on land in our Shire. Our communities continue traditional hunting practices and families supplement their diets and food supply through fishing, including for sea turtles and dugong. This is the point. The Shire is 1,000 kms from Cairns on the mainland and, given the absence of land-based food production in the Shire, in a very real sense, this means that food security and supply are very real concerns for our communities. The impact of climate change on sea-based food and land-based supply presents as an existential threat to the peoples of the Torres Strait.

CONCLUSION

So far as food security, food supply and food pricing are concerned, it is surely a disgrace that this country's ancient peoples, the First Australians, are required to live like this?

The mix of high cost of food and poverty are incubators for petty offending (such as theft), and are a direct contributors to poor health and the continued blight of shortened life expectancy. Morbidity and mortality rates are always contextual and one of the important contexts is the difficulties associated with readily available, high-quality, low-cost food, and especially fresh food. "Over recent decades, there has been a rapid rise among Indigenous people of nutrition-related "lifestyle" disorders such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes mellitus and chronic renal disease and their complications. This epidemic of disabling and often fatal chronic diseases in Indigenous Australians is also occurring in disadvantaged groups in many other countries". (Gracey, M.S. (2007) Nutrition-related disorders in Indigenous Australians: how things have changed. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 186(1), 15-17. 10.5694/j.1326-5377. 2007.tb00779).

The Parliament of Australia knows this to be a truth, but little has changed.

On behalf of Council, I submit this response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry into food prices and food security and trust that it has regard to the recommendations contained herein. I trust that this submission assists the Standing Committee with its deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Chief Executive Officer.

Dalassa Yorkston

Chief Executive Officer

Appendix 1 – CEQ Stores in Remote Communities – Torres Strait, Cape York/NPARC and Aboriginal Communities on the Mainland

Torres Strait



Boigu Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Toby St, Boigu Island, 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7000

Fax: (07) 4214 7003

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30 - 1 and 3-5:30

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Clytie Banu



Coconut (Poruma) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Mimia St, Coconut Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7030

Fax: (07) 4214 7033

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Genavieve Faud



Darnley (Erub) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh Groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Darnley Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7060

Fax: (07) 4214 7063

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5:30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Daisy Ketchell

**Dauan Island Store****Services Available**

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Dauan Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7010

Fax: (07) 4214 7013

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 9-12 and 1-5:30

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Tina Asela

Manager: Daisy Ketchell



Horn (Nurupai) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Outie Street, Horn Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4212 1400

Fax: (07) 4212 1403

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 6.45pm

Sat: 9am to 6pm

Sun: 1pm to 6pm

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Eileen Morseu



Kubin Community Store (Moa Island)

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

- Fuel

Address

Kubin Village, Moa Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7110

Fax: (07) 4214 7113

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8:30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Milford Waria



Mabuiag Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Mabuiag Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7100

Fax: (07) 4214 7103

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Harriet Bani



Murray (Mer) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Murray Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7080

Fax: (07) 3056 3390

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Teafo Salee



Saibai Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

School Rd, Saibai Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7040

Fax: (07) 4214 7043

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Terry Gough



St Pauls Community Store (Moa Island)

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit
- Fuel

Address

St Pauls Village, Moa Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7120

Fax: (07) 4214 7123

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Karina Rawson



Stephen (Ugar) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Stephen Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7090

Fax: (07) 3056 3213

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 10am to 12pm. Closed for lunch for 1 hour, then re-open from 1pm to 5pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Telly Gela



Warraber (Sue) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit
- Fuel

Address

Warraber Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7051

Fax: (07) 3102 9153

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Nansella Bowie



Yam (Iama) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities

- Telstra prepaid credit
- Fuel

Address

Mosby St, Yam Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7020

Fax: (07) 4214 7023

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Florie Lui



Yorke (Masig) Island Store

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit
- Fuel

Address

Cnr Aou's & Barney Rd, Yorke Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4214 7070

Fax: (07) 4214 7073

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5.30pm

Sat: 9am to 12pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Jessie Mosby



Bamaga Store (Mainland Australia)

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Main St, Bamaga, QLD 4876

Phone: (07) 4048 6500

Fax: (07) 4048 6503

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8am to 6pm

Sat: 8am to 4pm

Sun: 9am to 3pm

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Warren Turner



Col Jones – Thursday Island Betta Home Living

Services Available

- Electrical appliances
- Computers & accessories
- Air Conditioning
- Furniture and Bedding
- Sports Power
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities

Address

80-82 Douglas St, Thursday Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4212 1680

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8:30am to 5:30pm

Sat: 9am to 1pm

Sun: Closed

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Jack Redden



Napranum

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Lot 320 Wa Tyne Street, Napranum, QLD, 4874

Phone: (07) 4048 6551

Fax: (07) 4069 7806

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8.30am to 5pm

Sat: 9am to 1pm

Sun: 8.30am to 5pm

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Mark Smith



Rosehill Community Store Thursday (Waiben) Island

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

Waiben Esp, Thursday Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4212 1700

Fax: (07) 4212 1703

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8am to 6pm

Sat: 1pm to 6pm

Sun: 1pm to 6pm

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Timikah Mudu

Manager: Mark Smith



T.I. Mitre 10 Thursday (Waiben) Island

Services Available

- Building hardware
- Timber
- Paint & accessories
- Gas bottle refill
- Gardening
- Fishing
- Outdoor leisure
- Plumbing supplies
- Power tools
- Auto and marine products
- EFTPOS facilities

Address

Cnr Douglas & Blackall St, Thursday Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4212 1670

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 7.30am to 5pm

Sat: 9am to 1pm

Sun: 9am to 1pm

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Craig Brown



T.I. Supermarket Thursday (Waiben) Island

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- ATM and EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit
- Fuel
- Catering service

Address

121 Douglas St, Thursday Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4212 1600

Fax: (07) 4212 1612

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8am to 6pm

Sat: 8am to 3pm

Sun: 9am to 3pm

****Public Holiday Hours****

Fri 10th April Good Friday: Closed

Sat 11th April Easter Saturday: 8am to 3pm

Sun 12th April Easter Sunday: 9am to 1pm

Mon 13th April Easter Monday: 9am to 1pm

Sat 25th April Anzac Day: 1pm to 5pm

Mon 4th May Labour Day: 9am to 3pm

Manager: Dave Hunter



Tamwoy Community Store Thursday (Waiben) Island

Services Available

- Fresh groceries
- EFTPOS facilities
- Telstra prepaid credit

Address

9 Olandi St, Thursday Island, QLD 4875

Phone: (07) 4212 1900

Fax: (07) 4212 1903

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri: 8am to 6pm

Sat: 1pm to 6pm

Sun: 1pm to 6pm

****Labour Day Hours****

Mon 4th May : Closed

Manager: Rita Morseu

Appendix 2 - IBIS Specials



IBIS

SPECIALS



On Sale 8th to 21st June 2020

Find us on

Fresh



Diced Beef*

\$24⁹⁹
kg



Pork Leg Roast*

\$11⁹⁹
kg



Thin BBQ Sausages 1.5kg*

\$12⁴⁹
pack



Whole Honeydew

\$3⁷⁹
each



Pears

\$3⁹⁹
kg



Pineapple

\$3⁹⁹
each



Green Capsicum

\$4⁹⁹
kg



Medium Carrots

\$2¹⁹
kg



Whole Green Cabbage

\$5⁹⁹
each

\$4⁹⁹

Save 81c

\$2.38 per 100g

Valcom
Green Curry
Paste
210g



\$6⁶⁹

Save 24c

\$2.31 per 100g

Kellogg's
Nutri-Grain
290g



\$24⁹⁹

Save \$14.00

\$0.28 per 100mL

Coca Cola
No Sugar
24x375mL



\$5⁴⁹

Save 76c

\$0.55 per 100g
Meadow Lea
Salt Reduced
1kg



\$10⁹⁹

Save \$2.80

\$1.83 per 100g

Mrs Mac's
Quiche
Lorraine
12x50g



\$6⁹⁹

Save \$1.54

Weight
Watchers
Meals
300-350g
Varieties



\$2.00 to \$2.33 per 100g

\$5⁹⁹

Save 86c

\$0.60 per 100g
McCain
Winter Veg
1kg



\$8⁴⁹

Save 75c

\$6.43 per 100g
Nescafé
Sachets
10pk Varieties



\$9⁹⁹

Save \$1.04

\$1.11 per 100mL

Morning
Fresh
Dishwashing
Liquid
900mL



\$8⁹⁹

Save \$1.02

\$1.00 per 100mL

Fab
Laundry
Liquid
900mL
Varieties



On sale 8th to 21st June 2020 inclusive. Stock availability may vary from store to store. No rainchecks. Savings based on normal sell price at time of print.
*Warwick Meats brand only.