



Your Guide to Living in the Torres Strait

TAGAI STATE COLLEGE



An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. A white sandy beach curves along the edge of a vibrant turquoise lagoon, which transitions into a deep blue sea. A steep, forested hill rises from the beach, its greenery contrasting with the blue of the water. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

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MAIEM

SEW NGAPA

WELCOME TO THE TORRES STRAIT



DEMOGRAPHICS

The Torres Strait Nation supports an estimated population of 8,000 people. In the 2016 ABS census, 82% of residents in the local government areas of Torres Shire Council and Torres Strait Islands Regional Council identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island descent.

It is estimated that the Torres Strait Nation represents approximately 4% Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and 11.8% of Far North Queensland's Indigenous population. According to the ABS Census in 2011, almost two thirds (62.6%) of Australia's 52,616 Torres Strait Islanders live in Queensland.

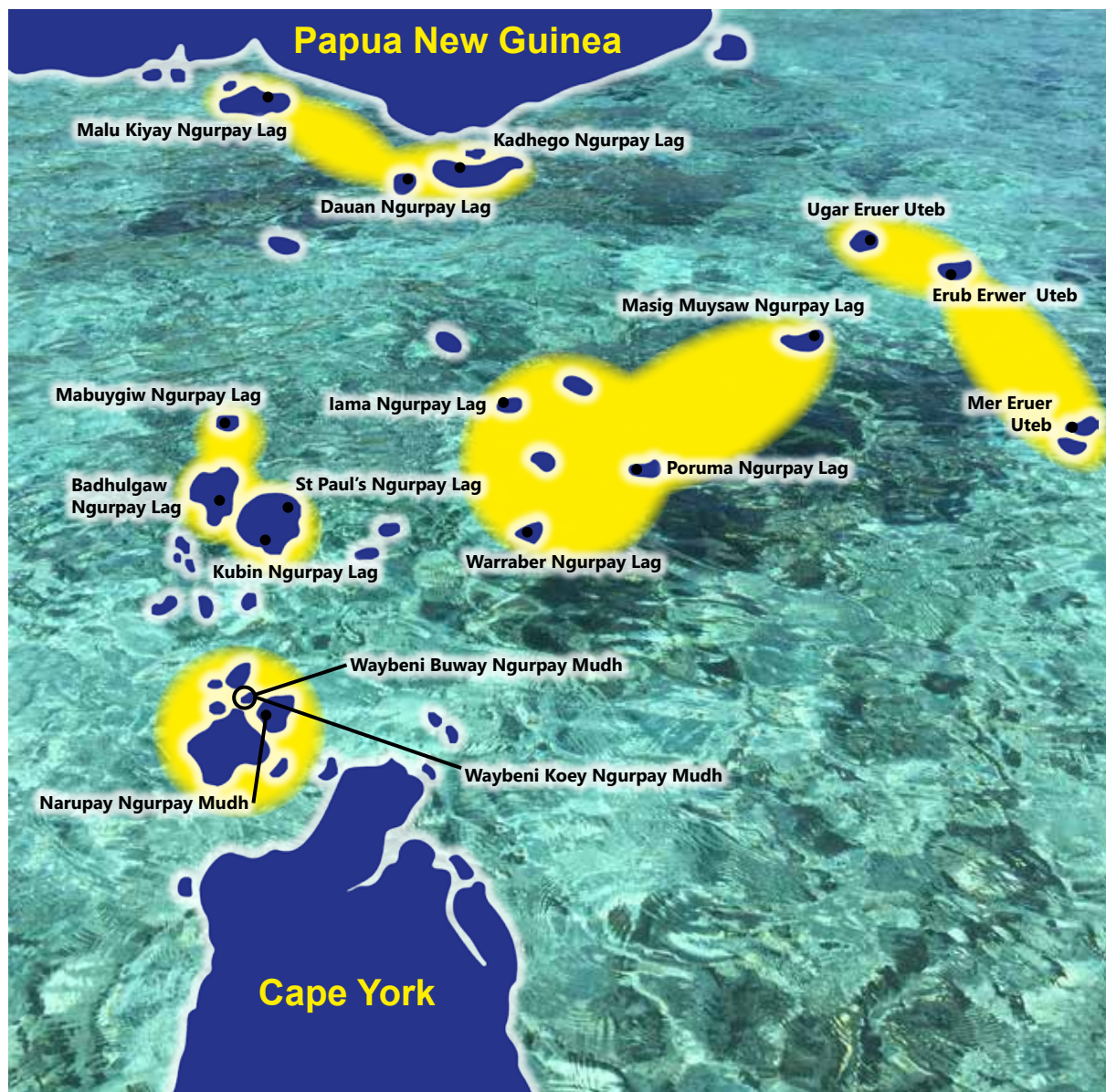
GEOGRAPHY

The Torres Strait is an archipelago of islands and accompanying coral atolls.

The region's islands are scattered over a geographic area of 48,000 square kilometres, from the tip of Cape York, north towards the borders of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

There are five Nations (traditional groupings) of islands in the Torres Strait. These are shown in yellow on the map below.

Note that the traditional names of islands and campuses are used by the College. Staff can assist you with pronunciation if required.



| | Communities | | Schooling | | |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Cluster | Traditional Name | Commonly Used Name | Tagai State College Campus | Traditional Campus Name | Number of Students |
| Kemer Kemer Meriam Eastern Islands | Ugar | Stephen Island | Stephen Island Campus | Ugar Eruer Uteb | 10-20 |
| | Erub | Darnley Island | Darnley Island Campus | Erub Erwer Uteb | 50-70 |
| | Mer | Murray Island | Mer Campus | Mer Eruer Uteb | 30-50 |
| Kulkalgal Central Islands | Iama | Yam Island | Yam Island Campus | Iama Ngurpay Lag | 50-70 |
| | Warraber | Sue Island | Warraber Island Campus | Warraber Ngurpay Lag | 50-65 |
| | Poruma | Coconut Island | Poruma Campus | Poruma Ngurpay Lag | 30-45 |
| | Masig | Yorke Island | Yorke Island Campus | Masig Muysaw Ngurpay Lag | 50-65 |
| Guda Maluyilgal Top Western Islands | Malu Kiyay | Boigu or Talbot Island | Malu Kiwai Campus | Malu Kiyay Ngurpay Lag | 45-65 |
| | Dauan Island | Mt Cornwallis Island | Dauan Island Campus | Dauan Ngurpay Lag | 20-40 |
| | Kadhego | Saibai Island | Saibai Island Campus | Kadhego Ngurpay Lag | 90-120 |
| Maluyilgal Lower or Near Western Islands | Mabuygiw or Mabuyag | Mabuiag or Jervis Island | Mabuiag Island Campus | Mabuygiw Ngurpay Lag | 45-65 |
| | Badhulgaw | Badu or Mulgrave Island | Badu Island Campus | Badhulgaw Ngurpay Lag | 150-200 |
| | Moa Island | Banks Island | St Pauls Campus | St Pauls Ngurpay Lag | 45-65 |
| | | | Kubin Campus | Kubin Ngurpay Lag | 20-40 |
| Kaywalagal Inner Islands | Kirriri | Hammond Island | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | Waybeni, Waiben | Thursday Island (T.I.) | Thursday Island Primary Campus | Waybeni Buway Ngurpay Mudh | 350-400 |
| | | | Thursday Island Secondary Campus | Waybeni Koey Ngurpay Mudh | 350-400 |
| | Narupay | Horn Island | Horn Island Campus | Narupay Ngurpay Mudh | 50-70 |
| | Muralag | Prince of Wales Island | N/A | N/A | N/A |

TRADITIONAL LANGUAGES

Standard Australian English is not the first (or sometimes even the second) language for Torres Strait Islanders. The common language spoken across the region is *Yumplatok*, an English-based creole.

Traditional Languages are also spoken and are an important part of the contemporary Torres Strait culture.

There are two main Traditional Languages of the Torres Strait: *Meriam Mir* and *Kala Lagaw Ya*. Each of the traditional languages has a number of dialects.

Meriam Mir (Eastern Islands) dialects:

- *Mer Mir and*
- *Erub Mir.*

Kala Lagaw Ya (Western & Central Islands) dialect:

- *Kala Kawaw Ya* (Top Western Islands)
- *Mabuyag* (Near Western Islands)
- *Kulkalgaw Ya* (Central Islands) and
- *Kawrereg* (Inner Islands or Kaywalagal and Kubin).

| English | Meriam Mir | Kala Lagaw Ya (Mabuyag Ya) | Kala Lagaw Ya (Kulkalgaw Ya) | Kala Lagaw Ya (Kawrereg Ya) | Kala Lagaw Ya (Kalaw Kawaw Ya) |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Welcome | Maiem | Sew Ngapa | Sew Ngapa | Sew Ngapa | Sew Ngapa |
| Good Morning | Debe Idim | Kapu Moegi Bathaynga | Kapu Bayludh or Kapu Moegi Bathaynga | Kapu Moegi Bathaynga | Kapu Boethaynga |
| Good Day | Debe Gerger | Kapu Goeyga | Kapu Goeyga | Kapu Goeyga | Kapu Goeyga |
| Good Afternoon | Debe Kikem | Kapu Kuuta | Kapu Kut | Kapu Kut | Kapu Kut |
| Good Night (Evening) | Debe Ki | Kapu Kubil | Kapu Kubil | Kapu Kubil | Kapu Kubil |
| How are you? | Nako Ma Nali? | Ni Midhikidh? | Ni Midhikidh? | Ni Midhikidh? | Ngi Midh? |
| I am well | Sikak Ka Nali | Ngay Matha Mamuy | Ngay Matha Mamuy | Ngay Matha Mamuy | Ngay Balbayginga |
| See you later | Le iako uadawer | Lak Kayne | Lak Kayne | Lak Kayne | Lak Kay |
| Goodbye | Le iako uadawer | Kapu Yawo | Kapu Yawo | Yawo | Yawa |
| Yes | Uau | Wa | Wa | Wa | Wa |
| No | Nole | Lawnga | Lawnga | Lawnga | Lawnga |
| Thank you | Esoau | Eso | Eso | Eso | Eso |
| Big Thank You | Au Esoau | Koeyma Eso | Koeyma Eso | Koeyma Eso | Koeyma Eso |

CULTURE

Torres Strait Islanders are a distinct group of peoples with their own traditions and beliefs which have developed over thousands of years. They have an intricate system of laws practiced and observed within an overarching lore framework. The Torres Strait is a conglomerate of families, clans, tribes, islands and sub regions with respective boundaries and jurisdiction.

Island culture, expressed through *Ailan Kustom*, is particularly aligned to a sense of stable, long established society – characterised by extended kinship, close knit family ties and social obligation. Whilst the majority of Torres Strait Islander population in Australia live outside the Torres Strait (80%), many maintain a strong sense of attachment to their homeland, regularly returning for social and family celebrations.

Protocols

- Learn the basic greetings in languages.
- Ask permission from traditional owners before visiting new areas.
- Look but don't touch things that are sacred.
- If there is a death in the community – do not initiate discussion about it with students or community members.
- Family relations across communities are extensive. Avoid speaking negatively of anyone to other community members.
- Participate in community events and celebrations, but avoid "island politics".
- Respect cultural practices such as island adoption, turtle and dugong hunting.
- Have respect for Elders and seek their advice on cultural issues.

Key Cultural Events

Feasts and ceremonies are an important component of the Torres Strait Island Culture. Key events in the Torres Strait calendar include:

- The Coming of the Light – celebrated on 1 July each year, commemorating the arrival of London Missionary Society (LMS).
- Tombstone Openings – the unveiling of a grave headstone, usually on the two or three-year anniversary of the funeral
- Winds of Zenadth Cultural Festival – a week showcasing the rich and diverse traditional singing, dancing, arts and craft exhibitions, feasting and tradition. The festival is held biennially in September on Thursday Island.
- Mabo Day – celebrates the historic judgment delivered in the High Court on 3 June, 1992, accepting the claim from Eddie Koiki Mabo and the other claimants that the people had occupied the island of Mer before the arrival of the British.
- Native Title Determination – people on each island celebrate the day Native Title was granted to them.
- NAIDOC Day is commemorated annually during a week-long celebration to recognise Indigenous Australians, their distinct and rich cultures and their contribution to Australia.
- First Torres Strait Councillors Meeting – celebrates the anniversary of the first councillors meeting held on Masig Island, marking the historic day in 1937 that leaders call for a greater role in managing the Torres Strait affairs.

COMMUNITIES

The islands of the Torres Strait vary greatly – especially in terms of their geologic formation, geographic location, population and the services that are available. Generally speaking, most communities offer the following services:

- Grocery store
- Health Centre
- Community Police
- Boat ramp

- Weekly barge services
- General utilities (power, sewerage, water, landline telephones, garbage collection)
- Hotel or canteen facilities
- EFTPOS

As outlined below, services such as motel accommodation, mobile phone coverage, childcare and Queensland Library services are only available in certain communities.

Badu

Population: 1000

Badu Island is one of the larger islands and is partly covered with mounds of basaltic rocks and lightly vegetated open areas. The island is fringed by both mangroves and white sandy beaches. Running creeks and seasonal waterholes are popular local swimming attractions.

Services: Art Centre, airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with permanent doctor, two grocery stores, Indigenous Knowledge Centre, post office, Centrelink Agency, sporting facilities (multipurpose courts, outdoor sports field), hotel, motel, Childcare Services, library service, TV reception, mobile coverage, internet access, live seafood exports.



Dauan

Population: 250

Dauan is small granite island close to the Papua New Guinea Border. The town has developed along a narrow coastal strip backed by steep hills. Dauan is the most northern mountain of Australia's Great Dividing Range which in the Torres Strait becomes a sunken chain of islands that once extended as a bridge to the northern landmass. There is no airstrip at Dauan so transportation is by boat or by helicopter.

Services: Helipad, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with permanent nurse, fortnightly GP visits, two grocery stores, sporting facilities (outdoor sport field, basketball court), guesthouse (six rooms), Council workshop/compound, water plant reservoirs/filtration collection wells, power station, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers only), TV reception, limited mobile coverage internet access.



Erub

Population: 400

The largest of the Eastern Islands, Erub (Darnley Island) is of volcanic origin, composed mainly of lava and ash which has formed rich soil. The island has many hills and good vegetation.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with permanent nurse, fortnightly GP visits,

IBIS grocery store (CEQ), sporting facilities (very large indoor and outdoor multipurpose courts, rugby league oval), demountable accommodation (15 rooms adjacent to airport), guest house (five rooms), power station, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers only), TV reception, limited mobile coverage and internet access.



lama

Population: 350

lama, also known as Yam Island, is part of the Torres Strait central group of islands. The island is positioned roughly in the centre of the region, approximately 93km north east of Horn Island. lama is a vegetated granite island with steep hill and is fringed with coral land flats.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with nurse, fortnightly GP visits, IBIS grocery store, sporting facilities (indoor and outdoor multipurpose courts, rugby league oval), guest house (five rooms), Augustine Lodge (five rooms), barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers only), SES shed, library, TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.



Kadhego

Population: 450-500

Saibai is approximately 20km long by 6km wide. The island was formed from alluvial sediment, built up over time from neighbouring Papua New Guinea's vast river systems, which are a mere 5 kilometres to the north. At an average of one metre above sea level, the island is a mixture of mangrove fringe, flood plain and brackish swamps. It is also subject to flooding and rising sea levels. The wet season deposits approximately 2 metres of rain, yet in comparison, the dry season leaves the island short of water. There are strong links with the Bamaga community on Cape York as many Saibai Islanders migrated there following floods in the 1950's.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with nurses, fortnightly GP visits, IBIS grocery store, SES shed, school accommodation, guest house, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers only), Saibai Community Development Corporation, Customs Office, Rangers/Customs shed, Community Centre, TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.



Kubin

Population: 150

Kubin Community is one of two communities on Moa Island. Kubin is located on the south side of the island, close to the airstrip. Moa Island is the second largest island in the Torres Strait. Similar to surrounding islands, Moa is characterised by mounds of rock and is lightly vegetated and well watered.

There is one airstrip which services both Kubin and St Paul's communities.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with permanent nurse, fortnightly GP visits, IBIS grocery store, Indigenous Arts Centre, sporting facilities (outdoor multipurpose courts, sports field), motel, SES shed, power station, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers only), TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.



Mabuyag

Population: 250

Mabuiag Island is partly covered with mounds of basaltic rocks, lightly vegetated and mostly well watered. Like the larger Moa and Badu Islands to its south, Mabuiag is part of the old submerged land bridge that ran from Cape York to PNG.

Centre with permanent nurse, fortnightly GP visits, IBIS grocery store, Cultural Resource Centre, sporting facilities (outdoor rugby league oval, undercover basketball court), Community Police Services, power station, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers only), TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health



Malu Kiyay

Population: 200-300

Malu Kiyay or Boigu is a large low lying island formed from alluvial mud deposited on decayed coral platforms by neighbouring PNG's large river systems. There is sparse vegetation except for mangrove swamps. The island is subject to flooding except the village which is built on the highest point. The island is also very susceptible to the predicted sea level rises from the greenhouse effect.

sporting facilities (school rugby league oval), Council guest house, power station, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers), TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with a permanent nurse, fortnightly GP visits, IBIS grocery store,





Masig

Population: 250

Yorke Island traditionally known as Masig is a coral cay situated in the Eastern area of the central island group in the Torres Strait, 2.7km in length and 800m at its widest point. The people of Masig are skilled navigators with a detailed knowledge of the reefs and have always occupied a central position in the Straits trading networks.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, Health Centre with two permanent nurses, fortnightly GP visits, three grocery stores (IBIS and two mini-marts), Reef Pilots station, Post Office agency, Centrelink agency, Lowatta Lodge Motel, SES shed, power station, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers only), TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.

Mer

Population: 450

The Murray Group comprises of three (Mer, Dauar and Waier) high level volcanic islands, characterised by red fertile soil and dense vegetation. They are located in the eastern end of the Torres Strait, within sight of the Great Barrier Reef. The islands are the home of the famous "Mabo Case" which resulted in the Australian High Court decision to grant native title to the Meriam people over Mer Island.

Services: Airstrip, Regional Council Office, sporting facilities (large sporting oval), Health Centre with nurses, fortnightly GP visits, IBIS grocery store, guest house, power station, barge ramp, TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.



Narupay

Population: 650

Narupay, also known as Horn Island, is a relatively flat island spanning approximately 53 square kilometres. It contains the Torres Strait's primary airport, which regularly services daily flights from Cairns and the outer Torres Strait islands. Narupay is administered by the Torres Shire Council, which is based on nearby Thursday Island.

Services: Airport, two grocery stores, , fire/SES station, two motels, hotel, museum, Health Centre with nurse, weekly GP visits, TV reception, mobile coverage, sporting facilities (multipurpose indoor court, gym), regular daily ferry services to Thursday Island.



Poruma

Population: 210

Poruma Island (in local language) is otherwise known as Coconut Island and is located 130km north east of Thursday Island. Poruma Island is a coral cay island in the Central Island Cluster Group. The ancestors of Coconut Island built their houses out of grass, coconut leaves and trees that floated down from the Fly River jungles of Papua New Guinea.

Services: Airstrip, helipad, Council office, Health centre with permanent nurse, fortnightly GP visits, two grocery stores, sporting facilities (multipurpose outdoor court, sports oval), SES shed, ergon power station, barge ramp with small pier, seafood (crayfish) factory, TV reception, limited mobile coverage and internet access.



St Paul's

Population: 300

St Paul's Community is one of two communities on Moa Island. It is located on the northern end of the Island, accessible by boat and airplane. Upon arrival at the Kubin airstrip, it is a 20 minute drive from the airstrip to St Paul's. A charter bus service is available, operated through a private operator at St Paul's. Alternatively, direct helicopter flights can be arranged from Horn Island.

is characterised by mounds of rock and is lightly vegetated and well watered.

Services: Helipad, Regional Council Office, Health Centre, IBIS grocery store, sporting facilities (outdoor multipurpose courts, rugby league oval), Motel, power station, barge ramp, pier, guest house facilities, TV reception, mobile coverage, internet access, fortnightly GP visits.

Moa Island is the second largest island in the Torres Strait. Similar to surrounding islands, Moa



Ugar

Population: 80

Ugar is home to the region's smallest community. It is an island of volcanic origin, with rich fertile soil and dense tropical vegetation. Access by helicopter or boat only.

Services: Helipad, Regional Council Office, guest house, barge ramp, pier (small craft and passengers), sporting facilities (indoor and outdoor multipurpose courts), IBIS store, Health Centre, Telstra phone tower, Ergon power facility, TSIRC units (three units), TV reception, limited mobile coverage, limited internet access, fortnightly GP visits.



Warraber

Population: 250

Warraber also known as (Sue Island) is a 93 acre low lying coral island fringed with extensive home reefs and is located 100 km North East of Thursday Island. Situated on a coral cay, Warraber has an abundance of traditional foods such as wongai and coconuts. Fish, turtles and dugong inhabit the warm waters and coral reefs surrounding the island.

Services: Airport, regional council office, health centre, IBIS grocery store, power station, barge ramp, accommodation facilities at resort, guest house facilities, limited mobile coverage.



Waiben

Population: 3000

Waiben, commonly known as Thursday Island, is the administrative centre for the Torres Strait Islands and is administered by the Torres Shire Council. The island is traditionally divided into two parts:

- Port Kennedy – which covers the community living on the southern side of the island.
- TRAWQ – comprising the suburbs of Tamwoy, Rose Hill, Aplin, Waiben and Quarantine.

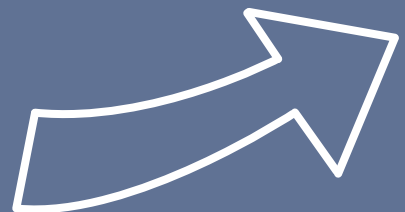
Services: Ferry service, motels, hotels, Regional Council Office, Health centre, hospital, Gab Titui Cultural Centre, library, childcare service, sporting complex (including gym & swimming pool), dentist, pharmacy, post office, police station, ambulance station, fire/SES station, grocery stores, takeaway stores, petrol stations (two), restaurants, cafés, butcher, bakery, Border Force, Quarantine, reef pilots, TV reception, mobile coverage and internet access.





ABOUT ISLAND LIFE

LIVING IN THE TORRES STRAIT



HIGHLIGHTS

There are many highlights to living and working in the Torres Strait. Some of these include:

- Sharing and understanding the lives of the people and cultural traditions in the Torres Strait.
- Friendly, laid back lifestyle.
- Living in our quiet and safe communities.
- No traffic lights or peak hour traffic.
- Talented and friendly students.
- Great fishing/boating.
- Meeting new people & developing strong friendships.

CHALLENGES

According to past and present staff, the most challenging part of working and living in the Torres Strait is the remoteness. Given that the majority of our teaching staff transfer from south eastern Queensland or large regional centres, many identify the lack of an existing network of family and old friends as a significant hurdle to overcome in their first year.

LOCAL'S TIP

Social Networks
Maintaining strong networks is the key to surviving and thriving in a remote community. Make sure you not only maintain connections with existing family and friends but work at establishing new friendships with locals.



HEALTH SERVICES

General health services in the Torres Strait tend to be bulk-billed.

Thursday Island

There is a 38 bed hospital on Thursday Island. The hospital is well equipped to handle most medical situations. Serious health cases are transported by the Royal Flying Doctor Service to Cairns, or further south if required. The Queensland Ambulance Service has several ambulances on Thursday Island, providing support at school, sporting and community events, as well as an efficient emergency response service.

The Community Wellness Centre located next to the hospital is available for routine appointments (minor injuries, emergent illnesses, immunisation, prescription medication, etc). After-hours medical service is available at the emergency department at the hospital. Physiotherapy and podiatry are provided through bulk billing. Dentistry services are offered by Queensland Health on Douglas Street.

Outer Islands

All outer island communities have access to a Health Centre based on their island. These centres are managed by Queensland Health and are staffed by either Registered Nurses and/or Community Health Workers. Masig and Badu have resident GPs who also conduct regular site visits to cluster communities. Through these centres, community members can access:

- Treatment of minor injuries
- Direct link to a doctor by phone
- Prescription medication
- General Practitioner appointments (scheduled visits: approx every 3-4weeks)
- Specialist appointments – including podiatry and nutrition (scheduled visits).

In the case of a medical condition requiring treatment at Thursday Island, Cairns or Brisbane, a doctor may request approved patient travel, in which case travel expenses are covered by Queensland Health for Medicare card holders. For medical emergencies, a doctor may request immediate medical transportation via a helicopter to Thursday Island.

LOCAL'S TIP

Before you come...
Be sure to get a copy of your medical history from your family's GP.
Pack a well-stocked first-aid kit – don't forget bandaids, bandages, antiseptic cream and treatments for mosquito bites. Speak with your GP or pharmacist about getting an additional supply of any prescription medication.

Pharmaceuticals

There is a pharmacy based on Thursday Island. Medication on outer islands may be sourced from the Health Centre or through mail order from the TI Pharmacy.

Inoculations / Immunisations

Tagai State College suggests that staff check with a medical practitioner about any recommended inoculations.

Malaria, Dengue Fever and Japanese Encephalitis

Cases of mosquito-borne diseases are sometimes reported in the Torres Strait. The majority of cases have occurred in the north-western islands along the PNG coast. Insect repellent and fly-screens usually offer sufficient protection. Consult your medical practitioner for further information and advice.

Tuberculosis

Tagai State College recommends consulting a medical practitioner prior to arriving in the Torres Strait about Tuberculosis, particularly for staff taking up duty in islands with the closest access to Papua New Guinea.

At the time of this booklet's publication, the adult BCG vaccine has not been available in Australia since December 2015.

CLIMATE

The Torres Strait is a tropical paradise, and therefore does not have four distinct seasons. Instead the year is roughly divided into summer (wet season) and winter (dry and windy season).

The average daily temperature across the Torres Strait is 29 degrees Celsius. The hottest month is traditionally November (31.4 degrees Celsius) while the coldest is July (27.6 degrees Celsius).

Rust and mould are common so you are advised not to bring valuable non-essential items with you.

"The Wet"

The wet season is usually between December and April with November notable as the build-up to the wet. The average rainfall during this period is 1,717mm. Humidity can be high and uncomfortable at times but the sea breezes and frequent showers offer some respite. Most buildings are air-conditioned.

"The Dry"

During the dry season, the prevailing winds are south-easterly, often between 20-30 knots. Combined with lower average temperatures, the constant winds ensure quite comfortable outdoor living.



CLOTHING

Your clothing should reflect the climate and modest culture of the Torres Strait. Torres Strait Islanders are quite modest in their dress and expect new members of their communities to dress accordingly. It is recommended that adults and young adults avoid:

- Exposure of the upper thighs, cleavage, midriff.
- Tight-fitting or see-through clothing
- Bikinis or swimwear worn in or around the community.

Given the warm weather all year round, natural fibres are preferable. Shorts, T-shirts and sleeveless dresses and tops are essential. Also consider a light, collared shirt for boating, a couple of pairs of jeans and a light weight jumper for an odd cool night during the dry season. As there may be occasions for an evening dinner or dance, a couple of semi-formal outfits are also recommended.

Women

At cultural gatherings, extra care should be taken to wear attire that covers the legs to the knees (or below) and the upper arms.



LOCAL'S TIP

South-bound clothes

If you are thinking that you will be traveling to cold locations during winter months, pack a few winter clothes. You could also leave some warm clothes with the family or friends that you are most likely to visit during your travels. After experiencing the warmth of the tropics, you will feel the cold traveling south!

REGIONAL DANGERS

In the Sea

Although the waters around the Torres Strait look inviting on a warm day, you must be constantly aware of the following dangers:

- Crocodiles
- Sharks
- Water snakes
- Stingers/box jellyfish (not common)
- Stone fish
- Stingray,
- Swift moving water currents

Swimming in the ocean is generally not recommended. Be sure to talk with local community members to identify the safer areas to walk, and swim.

On the Land

Snakes inhabit Cape York and all Torres Strait Islands. You should talk with local staff about venomous snakes that may inhabit your island. Mosquitoes in the Torres Strait may transmit Malaria, Dengue Fever, Ross River Fever and Japanese Encephalitis. Although your chances of contracting these are very small, you can reduce your risk by always wearing insect repellent and maintaining the fly-screens in your home.

All employees are asked to practise common sense in relation to personal safety. For example, locking doors at night or when out and avoid walking alone late at night.

LOCAL'S TIP

UV Protection

Every day, regardless of the weather or time of day, UV rays can burn skin quickly. Make sure to apply sunscreen each morning and re-apply throughout the day.

SHIPPING

Sea Swift is the main shipping company for freight to and from the Torres Strait:

41-45 Tingira St.
Portsmith, Qld 4870
Ph: 4035 1234
Fax: 40351249
www.seaswift.com.au

You must establish an account (credit card or direct debit) prior to arranging shipping for an order. All orders must be delivered to the wharf on the days indicated on the schedule. To make freight costs more economical, place larger orders less frequently or place joint orders with friends.

GROCERY SHOPPING

Local Stores

Fruit, vegetables, meat and other general groceries can be purchased locally through your island's local IBIS (Islander Board of Industry Service) or convenience store/s. The IBIS stores vary in size depending upon the location. On Thursday Island, the main IBIS store is comparable to an IGA supermarket and has a bakery for fresh bread. There is also a local butcher, TI Bulk Meats. On other islands, the stores are much smaller in size.

Badu Island has two locally-run stores which provide a similar service to IBIS. Thursday Island has three IBIS stores as well as two to three locally run convenience stores.

The produce available through local stores is generally limited in range and variety but is of a good standard (considering the journey from Cairns). For maximum quality and variety it is best to do your shopping on the afternoon after the barge comes in.

You should expect to pay at least 25% more for general groceries at local stores. Individual items can be 50-100% more expensive than you might find in a supermarket elsewhere in Queensland.

Mainland Stores

Given the limited range and higher prices, some residents place grocery orders through Cairns supermarkets, wholesale buyers, boating and fishing stores, fruit and butcher shops and have them freighted by barge. Whilst you have to pay for packaging, delivery and freight costs, it often works out cheaper to buy groceries through this method. It should be noted that shipping companies have minimum charges for freight.

Coles supermarket in Cairns offers a "Country Order" service to the Torres Strait. This is accessible through their online stores. Service fees are charged for packaging and delivery to Sea Swift. These costs depend upon the size of the order.

GENERAL SHOPPING

Thursday Island has a range of shops, selling everything from clothing to appliances, hardware to marine equipment. For those living on the outer islands, most of these stores will take mail orders, including: Mitre 10; Col Jones (Sports Power, Toyworld, and Retravisation); and Thursday Island Bulk Meats.

Beyond the Torres Strait, there is a vast array of products available through online shopping. Also, most large retailers based in Cairns will provide a remote shopping service. You may wish to sign up for catalogues and search websites for specials.

LOCAL'S TIP

Local Business Directory

The contact numbers for these stores are available in the Business & Community Directory (published annually by Torres News) or online: www.torresnews.com.au

ALCOHOL

In a few communities, alcoholic beverages may be purchased locally. Although there are no Alcohol Reforms in place, it is local protocol that the private consumption of alcohol is minimal.

Much like general groceries, purchasing alcoholic beverages in the Torres Strait is expensive, with a limited range to choose from. If freighting alcohol into a community, check with the local council by-laws. Also be conscious to wrap it discretely to avoid unwanted attention.

BANKING

Banking facilities on Thursday Island include:

- NAB branch on Douglas Street;
- Commonwealth Bank agency at the Australia Post Office;
- EFTPOS and credit card facilities at the majority of stores;
- ATMs: NAB, IBIS stores, Col Jones and most hotels, private grocery stores and other businesses.

On the Outer Islands withdrawal facilities are available through most IBIS stores and Council Offices (through EFTPOS facilities).

POST OFFICE

All mail for the Torres Strait is processed through the Thursday Island Post Office. Residents on Thursday Island should establish a post office box upon arrival as no door-to-door postal service exists. Except on Badu, which has its own Post Office, mail to the Outer Islands is generally distributed through the local Council Office.

Mail should be addressed as follows:

[Name of Recipient]

[Name of Island]

C/- Thursday Island Post Office, Qld 4875

LOCAL'S TIP

Before you come...

Due to the limited banking facilities across the Torres Strait, it is recommended that you have access to:

- Phone banking;
- Internet banking;
- Remote cheque deposit envelopes;
- Credit card or debit card.

LOCAL'S TIP

Staying Connected
Skype, Viber, WhatsApp, Messenger and other web-based phone applications offer an economical way to stay in contact with family and friends. The free-to-download apps allow users to make voice and video calls over the Internet to family and friends around the world.

RADIO

Two radio stations can be received – ABC FNQ and a local radio station (4MW TSIMA).

MOBILE PHONES

Most islands have mobile phone coverage through the Telstra's Next G network, however the quality of the coverage varies considerably.

INTERNET

Email is a great way to keep in contact with friends and family, however the quality and reliability of internet connections varies between locations. You may like to purchase a Telstra 3G connectivity device that can be used on most islands. All Tagai State College campuses have access to the Internet. As outlined in the departments *Code of Conduct*, staff are able to access this network for *limited* and *infrequent* personal use, as outlined in departmental policy.

LANDLINE PHONES

Phone calls within an island community are priced at local rates however calls between islands or to the mainland are STD. The following tips are suggested to reduce phone bills:

- Shop-around between providers;
- Select a plan that suits your likely phone habits – think long-term rather than the first few weeks when regular STD calls may be required;
- Try to make STD calls during off-peak, or discounted times (often after 7pm);
- Link phone account with internet and mobile accounts to maximise any available discounts.

TELEVISION

Free-to-air digital television is available across the Torres Strait. Many residents also choose to install pay-TV. Costs associated with pay-TV installation and subscriptions are the responsibility of the tenant. (Note: once installed, satellite dishes are difficult to relocate between residences).

NEWSPAPER & MAGAZINES

The local newspaper, *Torres News*, is published weekly and is a must for keeping up with local topics and issues.

For state, national and international news, you can order most of the wide-distribution newspapers from Col Jones Newsagency (Thursday Island) or view the latest headlines on the Internet.

Torres News is also available online via subscription.

TRANSPORTATION

Vehicles

Many staff, especially those with families, choose to bring cars with them to their new island home. This is more popular on the bigger islands such as Thursday Island, Horn Island, Mer, Badu, Erub, Mabuia and Moa. Four wheel drive vehicles are popular as they can be used to tow boats and access dirt roads.

Be warned: the constant exposure to sea air can result in rust and cause problems to the moving parts of the vehicle. It is advisable to talk with other staff members if you are considering purchasing a vehicle. Reliable, older cars are very popular choices.

Consider taking advantage of the concessional registration rates available through Queensland Transport.

Fuel

The cost of fuel varies considerably between communities. Thursday Island generally offers the cheapest fuel, at approximately \$2.00 per litre for unleaded petrol. On the outer islands, fuel prices can reach closer to \$3.00 per litre. Most islands sell unleaded and diesel fuels.



RECREATION

The Torres Strait provides a range of recreational options which can easily keep you busy during your free time. Although the wide range of entertainment options which are common to major regional centres are generally not available on the islands, the key to enjoying your time is to remain open-minded about experiences.

Boating and Fishing

To make the most of their location, many staff purchase recreational fishing boats. The most common type of boat used by staff is 5-6 metres in length.

Whether your plan is to feel the sea-breeze in your face or visit a far-away beach, boating in the Torres Strait is superb. Just be sure you are respectful of traditional ownership and seek advice on where to anchor your boat.



It is important that safety remains your number one priority when out on the water. Police undertake checks of registration, licences and safety equipment. This means ensuring that you have adequate fuel, all required safety equipment, a first aid kit and plenty of drinking water.

Fishing is a favourite local passtime. Sweet lip, coral trout and mackerel are common in most areas. Chat to the locals about the best fishing spots or persuade others to disclose their secret GPS marks.

Photography

Our beautiful environment makes for postcard perfect shots. Just be sure you are respectful of privacy, culture and traditional ownership. If you are unsure about taking photos at cultural events and memorials, ask an Elder or Traditional Owner for advice.

The boating conditions in the Torres Strait require that boat crew are experienced and well informed at all times.

LOCAL'S TIP

- Seek advice from knowledgeable locals/ staff members
- research tide and weather patterns: Check out "BouyWeather or WillyWeather" for boating conditions forecasts
www.buoyweather.com/index.jsp
www.willyweather.com.au

Community Involvement

Getting involved with your Island's community will help you both personally and professionally. Try learning craft from locals, assisting with preparations for local ceremonies and events or teaching adult-learning classes.

ACCESS

Access to the Torres Strait island communities is primarily by plane or boat. Three communities (Thursday Island, Dauan and Ugar) are only accessible by boat or helicopter.

Horn Island Airport

All flights to and from the Torres Strait come through the Horn Island Airport.

Qantaslink Airlines (Qantas' regional airline) flies a Dash 8 aircraft direct from Cairns to Horn Island return up to twice per day. Flying time is approximately 2 hours. The cost for these flights generally ranges between \$175 – \$550 one way. A baggage limit of 23kg applies to these flights. Additional baggage can be pre-purchased.

Skytrans operates a flight service between Cairns, Horn Island and Bamaga.



Thursday Island

There are two bus-ferry-bus services which can transport you between the Horn Island Airport and Thursday Island.

These private operators are:

Rebel Marine

Phone 07 4069 1586

www.torresstraittours.com.au

McDonald Charter Boats

Phone 1300 664 875

www.tiferry.com.au

Outer Islands

Staff traveling to outer islands will need to board a light aircraft (5-9 seater depending upon destination) at the Horn Island Airport.

Most destinations are accessible through regular service flights, provided through Skytrans. A baggage limit of 20kg applies to these flights – excess baggage charges apply.

Skytrans

Phone 1300 759 872

www.skytrans.com.au

LOCAL'S TIP

Private outer island charters

Access to the outer islands outside of service flight schedules is available through chartered flights, that is, the private rental of a plane. This can be a good, convenient option if the cost can be shared amongst a group of people.



QUARANTINE

Quarantine rules in the Torres Strait aim to stop the accidental spread of pests and diseases from one location to another. You can view the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services guide to quarantine in the Torres Strait online.

Restriction Zones

The government has established restriction zones for the movement of certain items, these are:

- Papua New Guinea to the Torres Strait Protected Zone (outer islands);
- Torres Strait Protected Zone to the Special Quarantine Zone (Thursday Island Group); or
- Any of these locations to mainland Australia.

Restricted Items

Items that you cannot move between these restriction zones and the mainland are:

- Birds, eggs, fresh feathers;
- Plants, planting material;
- Meat, animal products; and
- Vegetables and fruit.

There is no quarantine restriction on moving seafood. Present an esky to Quarantine officers before transporting it on a plane, e.g. to Cairns.

Moving Vehicles & Cargo

Quarantine tightly monitors the movement of cargo in the Torres Strait. This includes vehicles and machinery. If you are moving cargo or machinery from the Torres Strait outer islands to the Thursday Island Group or from anywhere in the Torres Strait to mainland Australia: ensure your cargo is free from soil and from plant and animal residue; remove potential water reservoirs including buckets and other containers – these provide a potential breeding site for exotic mosquitoes that can carry disease; and arrange for a Quarantine officer to inspect your cargo before it leaves the island. The officer will give you a permit to verify that your cargo has been checked and is free from pests.



PETS

The following should be considered prior to moving a domestic pet to the Torres Strait:

- Tagai State College recommends that you do not bring pets.
- There is an approval process, should you wish to apply to bring a pet with you to live at staff accommodation.
- Pets are not permitted at many staff residences and may not be able to be accommodated.
- Pets are not permitted inside staff accommodation – they must be kept outside.
- Stray and unsterilised dogs are common across all communities.
- There are limited veterinary services available – injured animals generally need to be transported by air to a veterinarian in Cairns (a very expensive trip).
- There are no kennels or boarding houses in the communities – consider bringing your pet with you during school holiday periods.

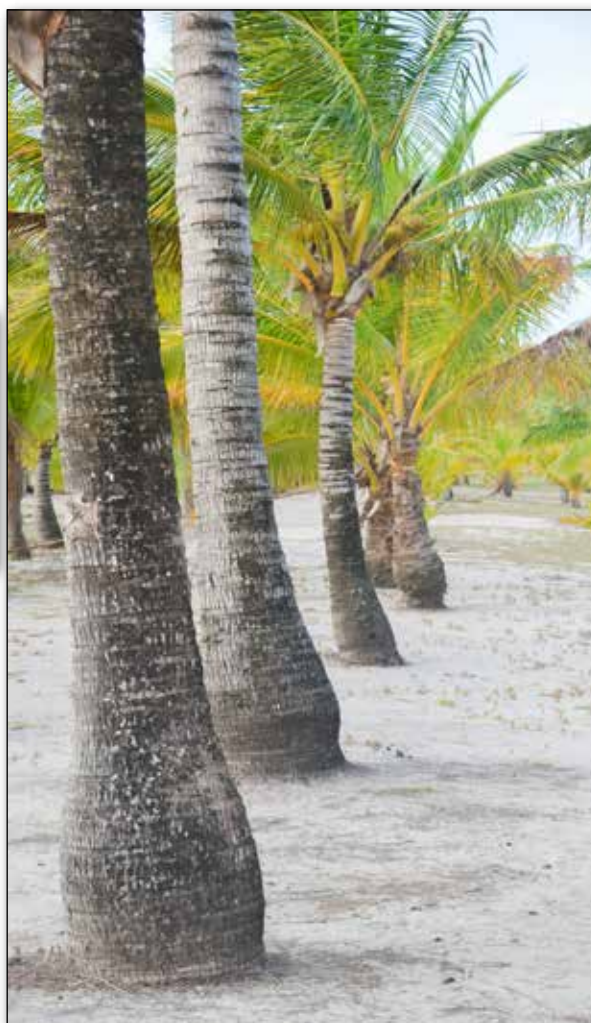
LOCAL'S TIP

Animal Crates
Airline-approved crates for domestic pets are available to hire through DogTainers:
Ph: 1300 13 52 52
www.dogtainers.com.au

- Staff accommodation does not include animal-proof fencing for employee accommodation. It is the owner's responsibility to provide this.
- Brown bush ticks are prevalent during the dry season.
- If available through local stores, the range of pet food options is limited.
- Bring a supply of appropriate medication (e.g. for tick, fleas/mites, heartworm, digestion worms), toys and general care products as these are not always available to purchase locally.
- Ensure pets are fully vaccinated.
- Some communities require dogs to be formally registered (e.g. Thursday Island).

LOCAL'S TIP

Pet owners, beware: Do not buy a new pet until you have applied in writing to the Local Accommodation Committee and they have approved your application. If you choose to own a dog, you may be disadvantaged when it comes to applying for accommodation relocation. If you have a dog or cat, you will be expected to have your residence professionally treated for lice and fleas when you vacate.



Transportation

Domestic pets are transported by QantasLink through Australian Air Express. Owners of domestic animals being moved from the Torres Strait to mainland Australia must obtain an Animal Permit from the Quarantine Office on your island or at Horn Island Airport.





YOUR NEW ISLAND HOME

LIVING IN STAFF ACCOMMODATION



ABOUT YOUR LOCAL ACCOMMODATION COMMITTEE

The LAC, or Local Accommodation Committee, is your representative body of volunteer employees charged with the management of Employee Housing. The LAC is primarily responsible for:

- maximising the allocation of available housing;
- coordinating emergent maintenance issues;
- informing tenants of their responsibilities;
- conducting regular inspections; and
- resolving local disputes;

The LAC is made up of elected, volunteer college staff members. It is managed by the Local Accommodation Officer (LAO).

Local Accommodation Committee

Tagai State College
PO Box 1000, Thursday Island QLD 4875
Phone: (07) 40306333

Email: lac@tagaisc.eq.edu.au

LAC CONTACTS

You are welcome to discuss any housing issues with any Committee member.

All Committee members:

- have copies of tenancy guidelines and forms
- can raise issues on your behalf with the LAO
- can raise issues on your behalf at regular LAC meetings.



TENANCY

Types of Accommodation

There is a range of accommodation across the Torres Strait, including: 1 & 2 bedroom units, 2 & 3 bedroom duplexes and 3 & 4 bedroom houses.

Types of Tenancy

The LAC will classify a dwelling as one of the following:

Sole Tenancy: A tenant and his/her family have exclusive use of a dwelling. Sole-tenancy dwellings are normally provided for families of two or more people.

Individual Tenancy: a dwelling occupied by a one-person household is because of the design of the dwelling e.g. a one bed unit.

Multi-Tenancy: a dwelling that is shared by a number of tenants. Each bedroom in a multi-tenancy dwelling is normally allocated for the use of one person.

RENT

The Department of Education subsidises the rent of all eligible tenants in staff accommodation housing. A small amount of rent is deducted from the tenant's pay each fortnight.

ALLOCATION OF HOUSING

The LAC allocates staff accommodation in accordance with the Department of Education Employee Housing Management Guidelines and Procedures.

Advertised Vacancies

All new staff accommodation vacancies are advertised (internally through the college's Sharepoint Announcement page) for existing staff wishing to apply for relocation.

The LAC will consider all applications for relocation in accordance with the Department of Education's Employee Housing Management Guidelines and Procedures.

Any costs associated with voluntary relocation is at the staff member's expense.

TENANCY GUIDELINES

All prospective tenants of Teacher Housing should have read the following information:

- EA2 – Education Queensland Employee Housing Tenancy Information
- 17a – Renting a home: a Tenant's guide to the rules of renting in Queensland

These documents can be made available on request to the LAC.

Eligibility

For a Staff member to be eligible for Employee Housing, they must meet the following criteria:

- Be a temporary or permanent Department of Education employee (not casual); and
- Be an employee who has been transferred or appointed into a locality (from outside that locality) to meet a need or service; and
- Be an employee who does not own a private dwelling within 50 kilometres by road of the locality of employment at any time during the period of employment at that locality.

Applying for Tenancy

You should complete an *Employee Housing Application Form*.

The LAC will consider your application and either accept or reject your application. You may lodge a an appeal if you are unsuccessful or dissatisfied with your allocation.

TELEPHONE & INTERNET

Regardless of the nature of the tenancy, the telephone and internet charges are the responsibility of the tenant/s. New tenants who chose to connect their landline upon arrival may apply to have the expense reimbursed through their Transfer/Appointment Expense Claim form.



ELECTRICITY & GAS

Thursday Island & Horn

Electricity is provided through Ergon Energy.

- Sole & Individual Tenants are responsible for the payment of electricity and gas. Upon arrival tenants must establish an electricity account in their name – a bond may be required.
- Multi-Tenants are not required to pay electricity or gas costs.

Outer Islands

Electricity is paid for in the form of "power card". This is a pay-in-advance system. \$20 and \$50 cards can be purchased through Community Council Offices. These cards are inserted into the appropriate slot in the meter box - much the same as a phone card. The amount is automatically added to the available credit. It is your responsibility to maintain adequate credit in your meter box.

- Sole & Individual Tenants – are responsible for the payment of electricity and gas.
- Multi-tenants – retain power cards and receipts as expenses can be reimbursed.

KEYS

Keys are the tenant's responsibility, and if lost will incur a charge payable by the tenant. When vacating accommodation, keys must be returned to the Local Accommodation Officer. An additional surcharge for changing of locks may be levied if keys have not been returned and thus are not available for incoming tenants. Each unit of accommodation on Thursday Island and Horn Island has a master key for all locks.

INSPECTIONS

As with all rental properties, spot checks, half yearly and end of year inspections will be carried out by the Local Accommodation Committee members. Written notice and details of requirements are provided to tenants prior to these occurring.

CURTAINS / BLINDS

Curtains are not generally provided but there may be curtains or blinds left by a previous tenant at times.

FURNITURE

Before your uplift, seek advice on the type of furniture and white goods which may already be in your allocated accommodation. Also note that limits (in cubic metres) are lower volume for departmental uplifts to accommodation where furniture is provided.

WHITE GOODS & APPLIANCES

The Department provides the following appliances in staff housing: combined refrigerator and freezer, chest freezer and washing machine.

The style, age and condition of the white goods vary dramatically. If any of the provided white goods become faulty, you should submit a maintenance form to the Facilities Team (Tagai Business Services Unit).

Split-system and wall/window-mounted air conditioners are installed in staff housing in the Torres Strait. To maximise efficiency (and reduce electricity consumption) ensure all windows and doors are closed prior to turning the system on. It is the tenants responsibility to regularly clean air filters.

No general kitchen ware is provided in staff accommodation, such as crockery, cutlery, pots and pans. Employees may also wish to consider bringing the following appliances with them: television, stereo, ironing board, iron, microwave, toaster, kettle and electric frying pan.

MOWERS AND WHIPPER SNIPPERS

Some mowers and whipper snippers are available for use through the LAC for multi tenants only. Staff volunteers look after these lawn mowers and whipper snippers.

Sole tenants should consider bringing at least their own mower and whipper snipper. Lawn and general grounds maintenance will be your responsibility for the duration of your tenancy.

LOCAL TIP

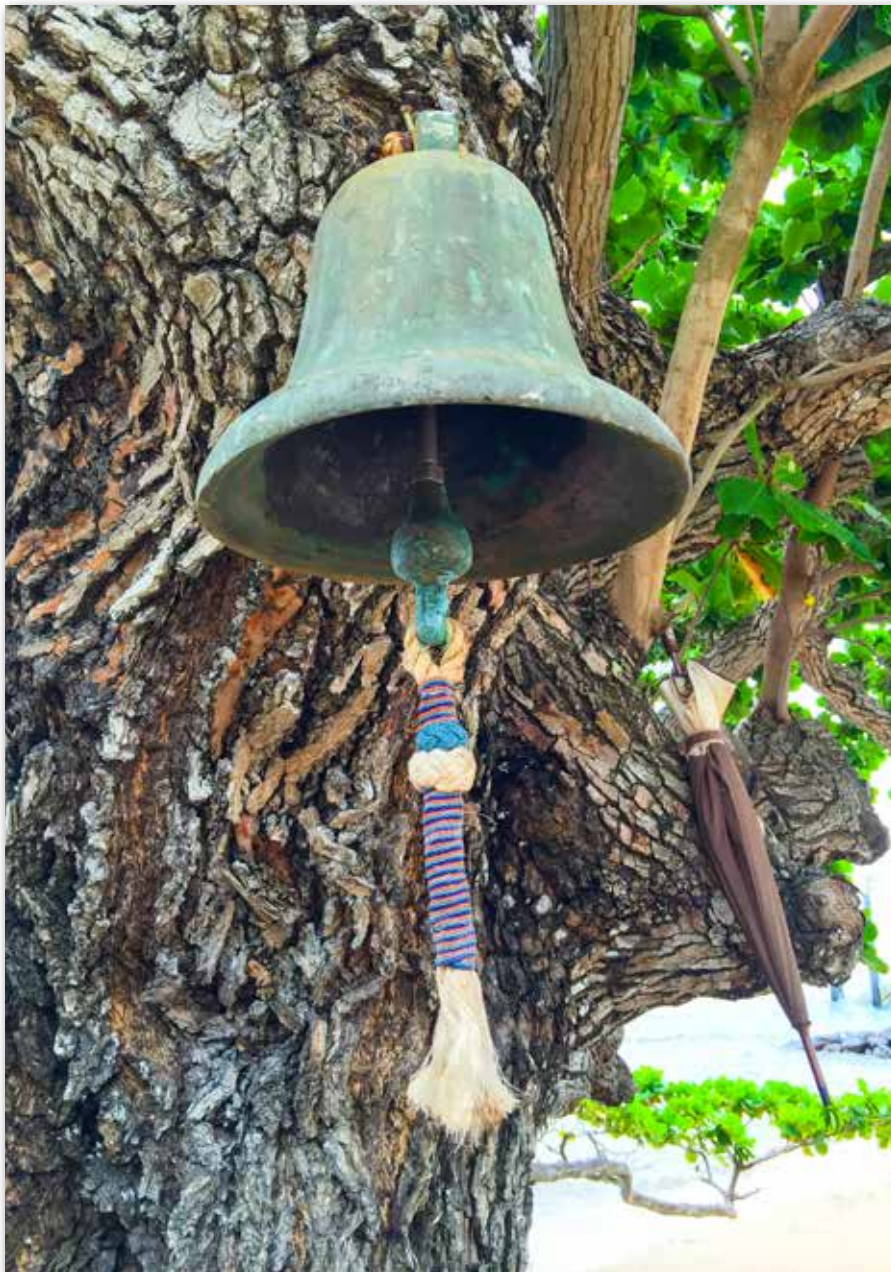
Lawn maintenance

When you arrive in January, you may find the grounds of your accommodation a little overgrown.

Be prepared:

- Despite first appearances, your lawn would have been mowed prior to the holidays.
- During the wet season, you may need to mow your lawn weekly.

If it all gets too much, there are locally owned and operated yard maintenance services for hire on Thursday Island.



Tagai State College
Thursday Island
PO Box 1000
Phone: (07) 4030 6333

Email: contact@tagaisc.eq.edu.au
www.tagaisc.eq.edu.au