



Diocese of North  
Queensland

*The Right Reverend Saibo Mabo  
Regional Bishop – Torres Strait  
Assistant Bishop Diocese of North Queensland*



Anglican Church  
of Australia



## **The Committee of the Senate, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade**

Dear Members

Thank you for your letter outlining your area of work. In response, I would like to provide you with information that I can gather from my priests who live in the various islands of the Torres Strait. These islands are remote and for you to travel to them would be very expensive. In addition, it is difficult for you to obtain information through reliable sources. As Bishop of the Anglican Church in the Torres Strait, I can use my priests to acquire information for you. All my priests hold Blue Child Safety Cards and are Theologically qualified (most hold Diploma of Theology). They are also well respected elders within their own communities. They have provided me with the following information on tidal surges.

**Flooding of the island. Note:** I have no Anglican priest on Saibai or Boigu Island, which are flood prone islands. Fr Frank Whap on Mabuiag Island, reported that the last tidal surge, the water came up into the grounds of Mission House. It had never been there before and it passed right through the flat roof house on the Mission House Property. On Yorke Is on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 04, the water came right outside the church itself. It passed through one of the houses on the island. The tidal surge was reported to be 3 meters and such a high tide had never been seen before. At the same time according to Fr John Noah, Murray Island, also experienced a similar tidal surge. The water came up very close to the Church and some village homes were damaged.

I feel what is needed from you is an education program throughout the region explaining tidal surges, tsunamis and all possible effects of Global Warming in Language and Creole that Torres Strait Islanders can understand. Then we can be made aware of what might happen and when it could happen. Also surveys of low lying areas on the island would be beneficial. Then buildings at risk could be either moved or protected and sea walls. Islanders would be pleased to work on such projects.

**Health in the Torres Strait** The islands are covered by Primary Health Centre. The centre of this is on Thursday Island which has a hospital, doctors and dentists. The only dentists are on Thursday Island. This means that a toothache can become very expensive and will require a visit to Thursday Island for treatment. There are doctors on Thursday Island, Yorke Island and Darnley Island. Moa Island, Mabuiag Is, Murray Island, Coconut Island and Horn Island have no doctors. If any is seriously sick on these islands they will have to be flown to Thursday Island. This is very expensive as air fares are prohibitive. Anyone with serious health problems is flown to Cairns where they are far from close family and friends. At present, if anyone requires dialysis, they must live in Cairns as the renal unit is still not functioning on Thursday Island. Diabetes and renal failure are major problems in the Torres Strait. If there is any specific information you require, please ask me and I will endeavor to find it through my priests.

Many Blessings

Bishop Saibo Mabo