

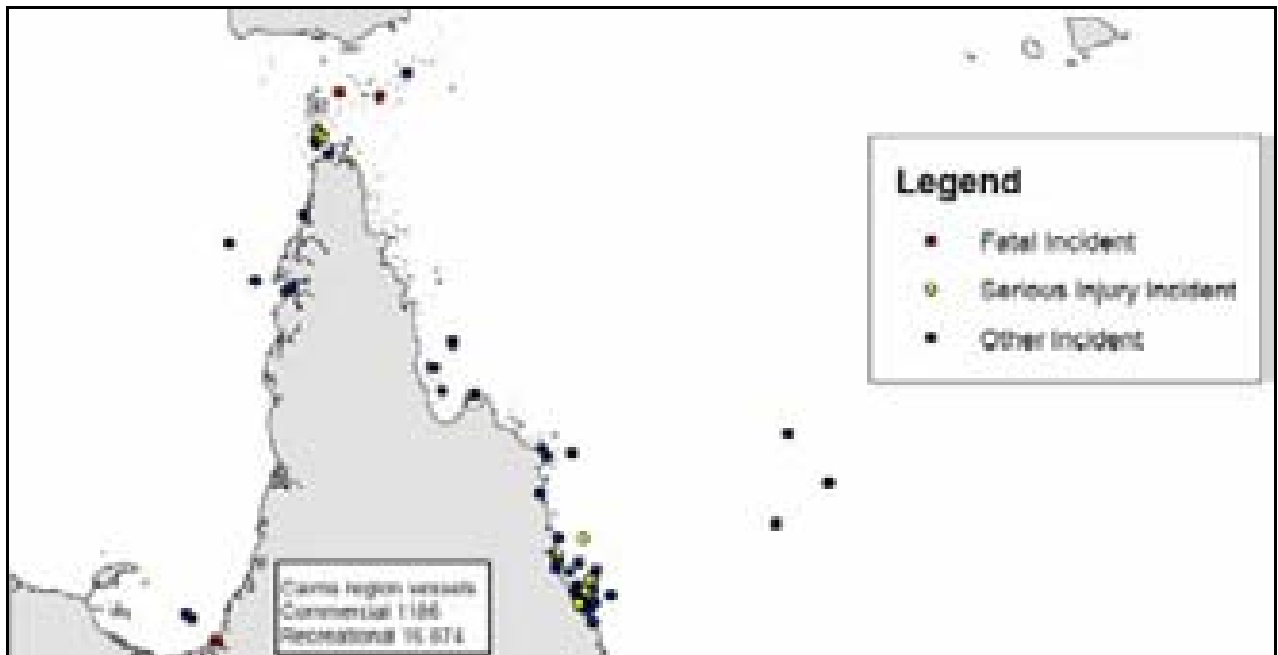
Sea Transport Safety

The marine investigation unit of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) was contacted for information pertaining to recent accidents and incidents with large trading vessels in the region. The data provided related to five incidents that occurred after July 1995 and before 2004:

- a) A man overboard from the vessel Murshidabad in 1996;
- b) A close quarters situation between the Maersk Taupo and a small dive runabout off Ackers Shoal Beacon in 1997;
- c) The grounding of the vessel Thebes on Larpent Bank in 1997;
- d) The grounding of the vessel Dakshineswar on Larpent Bank in 1997; and
- e) The grounding of the vessel NOL Amber on Larpent Bank in 1997.

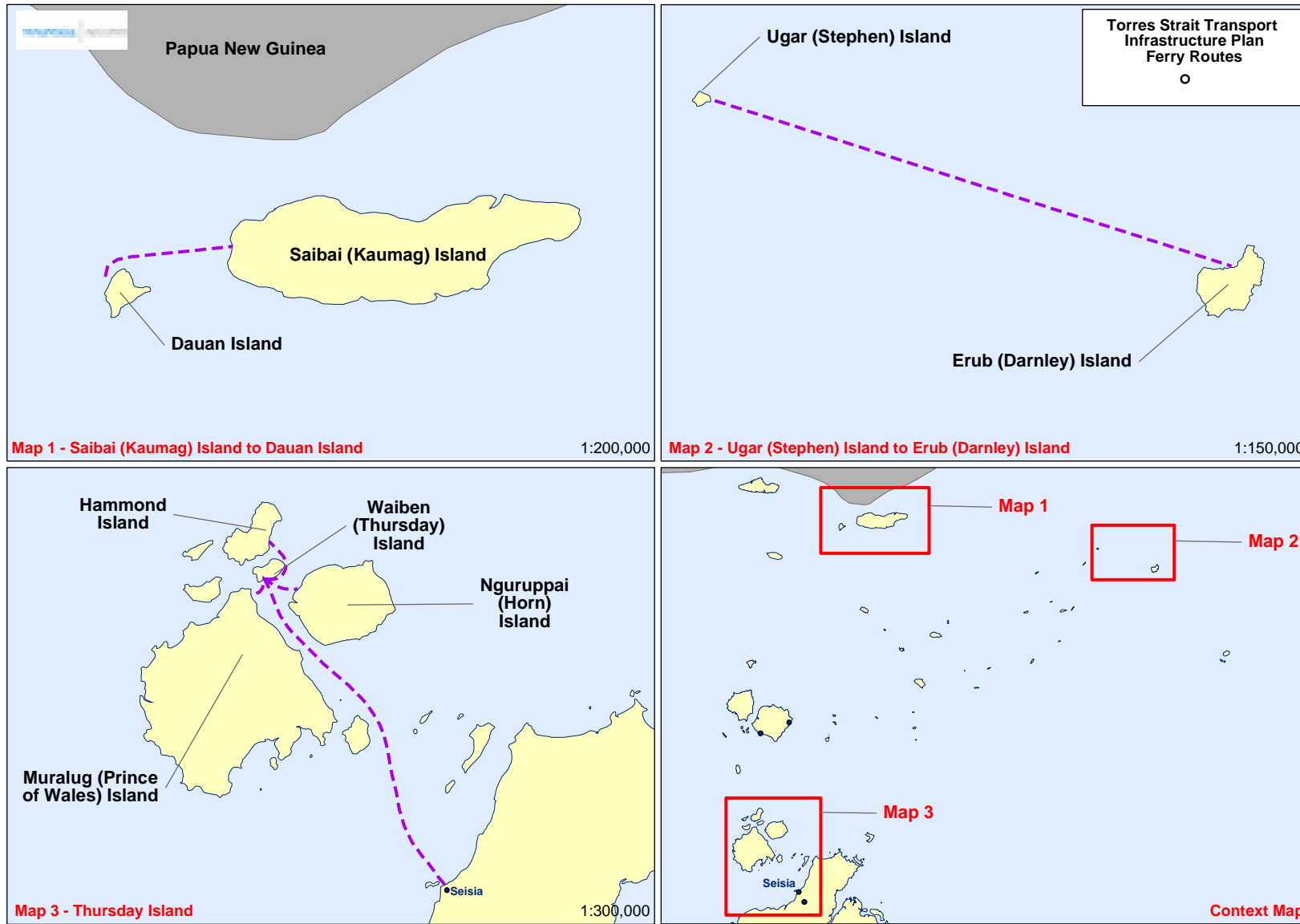
Figure 3.7 shows the location of marine accidents that have occurred in northern Queensland in 2004.

Figure 3.7 Location of Marine Accidents in Northern Queensland (2004)



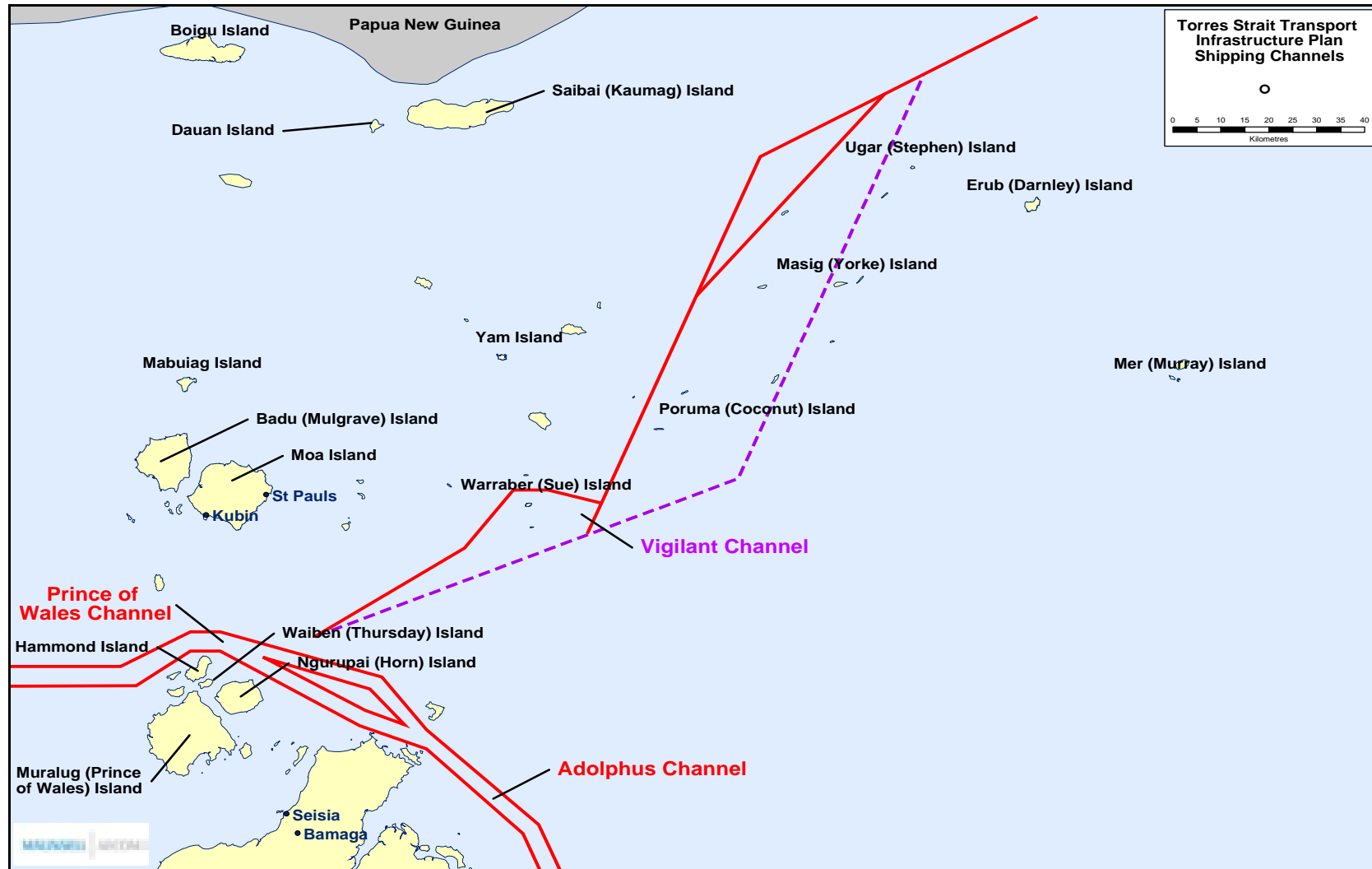
Source: MSQ: 2005

Figure 3.8 Existing Ferry Services



Source for Base Map: MapData Sciences Pty Ltd

Figure 3.9 Major shipping channels



Source for Base Map: MapData Sciences Pty Ltd

3.2 Air Infrastructure and Services

The airport at Horn Island is the regional hub and air gateway to southern centres. Operated by the Torres Shire Council, the airport can currently handle propeller driven commercial craft. TSC would like the airstrip lengthened, and QantasLink (the main commercial carrier) would like to see improved terminal facilities to cater for growing demand.

The airstrip at the Masig Community (Yorke Island) also serves as an airline hub with direct flights to and from Cairns. Additionally, it services the requirements of locally based commercial fishermen, and provides an alternative access to southern ports for nearby community residents.

Most communities will have access to a sealed all-weather airstrip by 2007 as a result of an accelerated program of sealing over the past few years. However, Ugar and Dauan do not currently have fixed wing services. Dauan is currently serviced by chartered helicopter flights and supported by a Council operated ferry service to a nearby community with an airstrip. Similar arrangements are being re-established at Ugar. Hammond is serviced, as are all the islands surrounding Port Kennedy, by ferry service connections to the gateway airport at Horn Island.

Councils are responsible for passenger facilities at community airstrips, and these vary from a dedicated air-conditioned lounge and shop at one island, to no passenger facilities on other islands. However, most airstrips have at least a waiting shelter. There is no correlation between community size and on ground facilities, with some of the busier airstrips having no passenger facilities.

All passenger handling is done by pilots on arrival. Although some freight is carried, it consists mostly of the personal effects of passengers, vital spares or perishables. Most flights are short-haul in nature, with the average flight distance being 118 kilometres and costing \$200, equating to an average flight cost of around \$2 per kilometre.

Figure 3.10 All existing airstrips will be sealed all-weather airstrips by 2007



Figure 3.11 Air passenger transport is vital for government and business



Another issue is the increasing burden being placed on community councils to maintain and manage upgraded facilities. Whereas many councils could maintain an unsealed strip, sealed surfaces and the need to comply with recent changes to the air safety and security regimes will stretch the resources of even the largest community. An externally funded and coordinated program of training and maintenance is becoming a high priority.

The existing air service routes for each community in the Torres Strait are identified in **Figure 3.12**.

An important aspect of air infrastructure is 24 hour access to emergency transport. This is provided by the combination of airstrips, and helicopter landing pads and access roads at the various communities. However to be effective, the sealed road must link to the community centre and local clinic or medical centre.