

Table 4.14 Flight Time versus Ferry Time

Service to/from Horn Island	Distance (km)	Flight Time (mins)	Ferry Travel Time at 20kn (mins)	Ferry Travel Time at 30kn (mins)
Kubin	39	20	63	42
Badu	54	20	87	58
Darnley	197	50	319	213
Yam	93	25	151	100
Coconut	106	30	172	114
Saibai	138	35	224	149
Boigu Island	145	40	235	157
Yorke Island	156	40	253	168
Murray Island	207	50	335	224

Note that the distances listed are "as the crow flies", hence the calculated travel times for ferries would in fact be longer as the boats navigate around other islands and reefs etc.

4.6.2 Freight

The freight related investigations produced the following overall findings relating to the project:

- Sea freight transport is vital to the islands and it sustains life rather than just improving it;
- Sea freight is presently expensive (not subsidised) and slow, however will not be overtaken by air freight due to issues such as high cost and weight restrictions associated with transporting goods by air;
- Sea freight in the Torres Strait region is in a hub and distribution arrangement, with bulk supply into Bamaga (Seisia), Horn and Thursday Islands and distribution to outer islands via normal barges.

Following the departure from the market of one of the freight operators that serviced the Torres Strait, freight movements are now only provided by a single operator, Seaswift. This has had a serious impact on all residents of the Torres Strait, as it has left them with a freight service that they consider needs major improvement. Currently, Seaswift is the primary provider of freight in and out of the region, with a sole lease over Horn Island and Thursday Island. Some freight is shipped to Seisia by Endeavour Shipping.

Also, wharfage and harbour dues at the Torres Strait are much higher than in other Queensland ports, which add considerably to freight costs and viability. For example, total fees are around \$19.50 per tonne at Thursday Island, as opposed to around \$3 per tonne at Cairns and \$6 per tonne at Townsville. However, it must be noted that it is not totally reasonable to compare the port charges at the Port of Thursday Island with those in Cairns or any other large mainland port. The Port of Thursday Island, like all of the PCQ ports, is managed financially by PCQ as an individual business unit. The costs of managing (operational, capital and maintenance costs) each port are recovered by PCQ from the activities in that particular port. Trade throughput for the Port of Thursday Island is very small (approximately 90,000 tonnes) compared to other ports (Cairns 1.16 million tonnes), and provides a low base to collect income from. The cost of infrastructure provision in the Torres Strait is also much higher than the comparable costs in mainland ports such as Cairns. Because of the high cost of infrastructure provision and the low volume of trade, the cost of providing port facilities in the Torres Strait will always be much higher than ports such as Cairns.

4.7 Priority Areas for Transport

The identification of issues, constraints and demands, and the consultation process so far has assisted in the development of priority areas for transport in the Torres Strait. These priority areas are broadly described below, including options (within or for the priority areas) which will be analysed and prioritised further in subsequent tasks for this study, or other recommended studies.

4.7.1 Contributions to maintaining Culture, Environment and Lifestyle

A number of possible measures have been considered with respect to transport that could contribute to maintaining culture, environment and lifestyle. Some of the priority areas include:

- Affordable passenger and freight travel costs;
- Safety, control and access for small boats (“dinghies”); and
- Provision of sea and air travel infrastructure to meet basic needs.

4.7.2 Improvements to Freight Movement

Improvements to freight movements include:

- Integration of passenger with freight using appropriate vessel or plane type to increase frequency of services;
- Investigate the implementation of roll-on roll-off ferry services to minimise freight movements by ship and barge; and
- Reduce freight costs to influence positive impact on lifestyle. Positive impacts may include reduced purchase cost and increased affordability of food and other household items which will allow for potential increases in disposable income and household savings.

4.7.3 Improvements to Passenger Movement

Possible improvements to passenger movements include:

- Integration of freight with passenger movements using appropriate vessel type to increase frequency of services;
- Upgrading of Horn Island airport facilities or services to allow increased passenger movements and possible reduction in fare costs
- Work across agencies to address travel costs for islanders and ways to better integrate modes;
- Work across agencies and private sector to consider roll-on roll-off ferry services; and
- Work across agencies to provide for safe travel for the sick, the disabled and school children.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 Targeted Consultation

5.1.1 Queensland Transport

Meetings were held in April 2005 with officers from the Infrastructure Planning Branch and Public Transport Management Branch to obtain an understanding of their past and current work in the Torres Strait region and to obtain first hand a background on the recent reports prepared by them.

The Infrastructure Branch prepared the 2004 Inspection reports for Marine and Air facilities and the Public Transport Management Branch prepared the 2004 Stocktake for Transport Services in the Torres Strait Region. These reports were reviewed and a summary of key comments are outlined in the previous section.

Key comments from the discussions for consideration in the study were as follows:

- Establish the most effective way to travel between outer islands, Horn Island and Cairns at affordable rates;
- Consider whole-of-government approach to the movement of freight and passengers from Cairns to Horn Island and to outer islands;
- Condition (marine and air infrastructure) survey reports provide a good picture of the current situation;
- Consult with Department of State Development and Innovation and PCQ on current and future plans;
- Issues regarding cost of passenger travel by air and freight movement by barges to be considered;
- Modes of travel available assist in meeting people's basic needs, being:
 - Supplies (barge);
 - Medical (helicopter / plane); and
 - Visiting (plane / boat);
- Review the bulk supply and distribution of freight in the region; and
- Consider improvements to roads and cycle / walk infrastructure.

5.1.2 Torres Strait Regional Authority

A meeting was held on 25th May 2005 with the TSRA. Key comments from the discussions for consideration in the study were as follows:

- Fuel increased to \$2.40 per litre, with a range between \$1.40 and \$2.40;
- Growth in population due to former residents being attracted back;
- Treaty with PNG causing significant movement of PNG people in and out and increasing pressure on services;
- Vision to enjoy a life style available to ordinary Australians;
- All community roads sealed;
- Dredged channel alignments to be self cleaning;
- Future option may be a railway from Cairns to Bamaga. Real issue is price and quality of fruit and vegetables;
- Cost of inter-island air travel is very high. Personal travel choice is dictated by weather and cost;
- Future effective public transport services to look beyond the use of dinghies. Need multiple vessels, such as one for each island group. Cater for multiple needs like freight, passenger, tourist;

- Lack of emergency services at airports;
- Perception of air as unsafe and means of last resort;
- Disability incidence likely to increase. Transplants offered with 24 hour notice making time an issue. Access for disabled and able people an issue;
- Issue of speed limits, and why they are as high as 40kph?;
- Access road sealing from boat ramps to airport;
- A sealed road from the NPA to Cairns;
- Bicycles are commonly used, especially home to work; and
- School events such as sporting days and football transport.

5.1.3 Ports Corporation of Queensland

Meetings were held with the PCQ in April 2005 to seek responses to specific queries relating to PCQ's operation and ownership of assets and to seek PCQ's view on future passenger and freight movements in the Torres Strait.

Key comments from the discussions for consideration in the study were as follows:

- PCQ leases part of the Horn Island cargo facilities to Seaswift. The Fuel Wharf on Thursday Island is leased to Rebel Marine. All other facilities not leased are common user facilities. As indicated earlier in this report, all operational, capital and maintenance costs associated with the port are covered by income from port operations (cargo and passengers).
- In view of the low utilisation rate of existing facilities and the cost of providing infrastructure, it is unlikely that additional facilities are required to cover future trade growth.
- PCQ supports the Campbell Smith study report on the feasibility of a roll-on roll-off facility for Horn and Thursday Islands. The roll-on roll-off concept needs to be considered further. The concept required \$1.5 to \$2 million investment from PCQ to provide onshore facilities such as a dedicated ramp, carparking, lighting and office at both Thursday and Horn Islands. The rate of return from the investment did not meet PCQ requirements and the project did not stand up. There is a need to consider roll-on roll-off from the overall livelihood of the Torres Strait – health (ambulance on roll-on roll-off, school bus on roll-on roll-off, passenger bus on roll-on roll-off, garbage trucks on roll-on roll-off). Any investment by PCQ in ro-ro facilities is governed by rate of return guidelines set by Government. Alternatively to PCQ providing the onshore facilities, the State or Federal government may be able to provide funding for these facilities.
- It is understood that there will be seventeen cruise ships bringing tourists (to be held between Friday Island and Prince of Wales Island) to Thursday Island. The impact of tourism needs to be understood. The impact of increased tourism on the use and provision of passenger facilities to meet the demand of these cruise vessels must be further considered. Cruise vessels generally use their tenders or life rafts to bring passengers ashore. The existing facilities at Thursday Island do not provide ideal facilities for the transfer of these passengers.
- QT / DMR / TSRA / PCQ need to co-ordinate future capital and maintenance programs and save on establishment costs. Coordination between relevant authorities needs to be strengthened.
- With the Torres Strait being an island based community, the maritime facilities including cargo and passenger wharves, jetties, ramps, pontoons, mooring dolphins and channels all form an essential part of the community's transport infrastructure. This marine infrastructure in the Torres Strait is comparable to roads and passenger infrastructure (eg bus stations) in south-east Queensland. Future funding of these maritime based facilities must be viewed in a similar manner to the construction of roads in south-east Queensland.

5.1.4 Torres Shire Council (TSC)

A meeting was held on the 26th May 2005 with TSC. Key comments from the discussions for consideration in the study are as follows:

- Governance review may lead to TSC managing services provision for all Torres Strait;

- Thursday Island growth is redevelopment and densification;
- Horn Island and Thursday Island accommodates the majority of population growth and is the main service point for the outer islands;
- Airport is the priority issue with a need for public transport from Thursday Island to airport;
- Want longer runway on Horn Island;
- Increased patronage will lead to reduced fares;
- Perception in the Torres Strait that the lack of competition in air and freight leads to rise in prices;
- Small boat facilities are a major issue as this is a principal form of travel;
- Small boat safety requirements cost about \$300 to purchase which includes an Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) and other safety equipment. Most vessels have this equipment, however the biggest issue for emergency calls is running out of fuel;
- Ferry services issues with rough weather – 35kn is too rough, people now not happy to wait for late travel;
- Airfare prices are too high, with mixed ideas about impact of safety;
- Berthing facilities, water depth, fender piles all negatively impacted on the former cat service Giomi;
- QantasLink can only load 41 passengers in the current 50 seat service for flights out of Horn Island (load issue);
- Freight to outer islands with unloading to a dumb barge may overcome some dredge problem areas;
- Considering new community arm for Horn Island, need a new arm on pontoon at Thursday Island due to competition between commercial operators and small boats. Issues presently with dangerous fixed structures and water washing over walkway area;
- Dumping of faulty vehicles into the Torres Strait market is a big cost to local people and dumping cost big issue;
- Transport to Cairns improved with the road route, being low cost to the user;
- No tenure issues for airport extension;
- Some discussions on export potential (passengers) through Thursday Island;
- Transport subsidies an issue;
- Horn Island is the only non-subsidised regional route;
- Growth from returning islanders and others to work;
- Recently four applications for higher density dwellings; and
- Dialysis unit from Thursday Island.

5.2 Issues Identification Workshop

5.2.1 Workshop Outline and Objectives

A half-day workshop was conducted with key stakeholders to identify issues known to the project stakeholders that will impact on the development of TSTIP. The workshop was held in Cairns and the workshop attendees included stakeholder representatives with knowledge in the areas of land use planning, transport infrastructure development and transport services delivery. This workshop was mainly attended by agencies and it was decided that follow up meetings would be held on Thursday Island with TSRA, TSC, and ICC etc.

The workshop was focussed on identifying issues that were established through consultation with key stakeholders and from the review of documents made available. The major theme of the workshop was to seek from the attendees their view of the issues identified by the study team and to allow for stakeholders to provide any additional issues.

The broad areas for identifying issues included:

- Sea infrastructure and services;
- Air infrastructure and services;
- Road Infrastructure;
- Freight;
- Public Transport; and
- Cycling, walking and travel options for people with disabilities.

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- Identify recent transport infrastructure planning in Torres Strait;
- Review data and information on demography, passenger, freight, public transport, walking and cycling;
- Identify key implications for the Torres Strait transport infrastructure; and
- Ideas for a vision for transport in the Torres Strait.

5.2.2 Workshop Findings

The following issues emerged from the 13th April 2005 Issues Identification Workshop and were discussed with the Torres Shire Council, the Torres Strait Regional Authority and the Island Coordinating Council for their comment and views. Many of these are issues with broader implications than just transport, but are considered vital to determining future strategies for transport.

Table 5.1 Issues Identified From Cairns Workshop

Grouping	Issue
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus of transport in the next 20 years – sea versus air <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic sustainability - Contribution to maintaining culture, environment and lifestyle • Air transport – by 2007 most Torres Strait communities will have access to all weather sealed airstrips <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of air infrastructure - Affordability; Cost of air travel between islands • Sea transport – Boats are a very common and widely used form of transport for local people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safety, control, access for small boats - Roll On Roll Off ferry option - Possibility/viability of ferry services (fast ferry?) between islands - Freight demand and supply in the future - Frequency of barge services/cost/availability of fresh produce - Passenger demand and supply in the future (subsidies) • School transport • Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of transport infrastructure & its effects on tourism - Provision of services to meet visiting population needs
Torres Shire Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight transfer Horn Island to/from Thursday Island • Ferry services Horn Island to/from Thursday Island • Cairns to/from Horn Island cost and frequency • Horn Island passenger ferry facilities • Horn Island freight facilities, access & charges • Possible provision of roll-on roll-off facilities
OTSI Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled transport and access to transport infrastructure - Where should the emphasis lie in catering to special needs? • Cycling and walking - Investment in walking and cycling facilities • Emergency evacuation facilities and user costs • Airport maintenance and reporting officers network • Public Transport - Need for public transport subsidies for OTSI communities • Road Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs in place (TIDS) to improve roads to all weather conditions - Priorities for OTSI roads
Specific Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of barge ramp on Mer • Lack of maritime facilities on Prince Of Wales Island • Low tide access to Stephen Island • Air access to Stephen Island
Issues currently being addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritime facility structural maintenance (program in place) • Condition of berthing dolphins (replacement program in place) • Long term sea access strategy, including dredging of access channels • Paving and sealing Yam airstrip (scheduled for 2006-07)

5.3 Options Assessment Workshop

Workshop type meetings were held with Torres Strait Islander Groups including, Island Co-ordinating Council (ICC), Torres Shire Council (TSC) and Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) on Thursday Island during August 2005. The transport system options for Torres Strait in 2026, were established through the stakeholder consultation process and using demand analysis for transport services and infrastructure.

5.3.1 Workshop Outline and Objectives

The workshop meetings were held to ensure Torres Strait Islander and Technical Working Group involvement in the discussion and selection of transport system option for 2026, and the associated strategies and actions. The objectives of workshop included:

- Discussions on results of options assessed;
- Discussions on recommended options; and
- Discussions on strategies and actions.

The 2026 Transport Options for the Torres Strait that were discussed included:

- Continuation on current services with some improvements;
- Establish a second passenger and freight hub at central island;
- Hub and spoke arrangement, using the four language groups for passenger transport by ferry; and
- Rail line from Cairns to Bamaga.

5.3.2 Workshop Findings

A transport options workshop was conducted with the Torres Shire Council on Thursday 6th October. Key outcomes from this workshop include:

- Equity is a significant issue and needs to be considered in all options. Many things that cannot be justified on the basis of economic rationalism should be undertaken for equity reasons.
- Torres Shire Council previously lobbied the State Government to subsidise air travel between Horn Island and Cairns, and TSC also supported having two airlines to promote competition. The State Government advised TSC that one regulated service is more cost effective than two, and that airfares would not be subsidised;
- The inclusion of a second major access point to the Torres Strait would have significant implications to the operation and economic viability of the existing Horn Island airport;
- Torres Shire Council has put forward a proposal to PCQ to take over the operation of Port Kennedy;
- Discussions with QantasLink need to be undertaken to determine the benefits of upgrading airport facilities at Horn Island.

A transport options workshop was conducted with the Island Coordination Council on Thursday 7th October. Key outcomes from this workshop include:

- The evaluation of transport options for the Torres Strait must not only consider transport viability aspects but also economic development externalities which could potentially be created;
- Transport costs within the Torres Strait and to Cairns are expensive and are not affordable to most local residents. There is a need for increase competition and subsidies on passenger travel and transportation of freight, otherwise people will remain mobile impaired or use unsafe means to travel (eg use of a dinghy over long distances);
- There is a desire by the council to increase tourist visitation by introducing direct flights from Cairns to Yorke Island where there are new tourist facilities;

5.3.3 Presentation of Draft TSTIP

A meeting was held on the 19th January 2006 in Cairns with the Technical Group to review the Draft TSTIP. A number of items were discussed and resolved including changing the format, and presenting the recommendations regarding infrastructure and consequent services separately. The Technical Group members discussed each recommendation and changes were agreed at the meeting.

5.4 Air Travel User Survey

5.4.1 Survey Preparation

Following discussions between the Technical Working Group members, it was agreed that a small user travel survey be undertaken in the Torres Strait. The travel survey was considered as part of the development of a transport infrastructure plan for the Torres Strait. One of the major reasons for the survey was to develop realistic solutions and provide more information on people's travel patterns. This included determining why they were travelling and their opinions about the services available to them.

A draft survey form was prepared to cover the sea and air transport services and infrastructure components. Comments were received from the Technical Working Group members on the draft survey, and following approval for funding and the final survey form, the survey task was implemented. A copy of the travel survey is attached in **Appendix A**.

Letters were sent to the CEOs of Yorke and the TSC, seeking permission to conduct the travel survey at Yorke Island and Horn Island airports respectively.

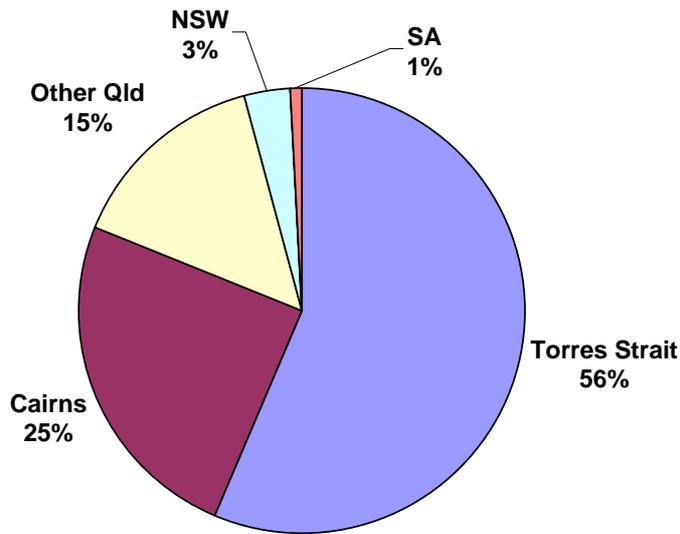
Two study team members travelled to Horn and Yorke Island airports and interviewed as many travellers as possible on Wednesday the 31st of August (9am to 5pm), and Thursday the 1st of September (10am to 5pm) respectively. Over the two day period, 117 survey responses were received, which was slightly higher than the targeted sample of 100 surveys. The surveys were entirely voluntary and did not include the collection of personal information, other than typical demographic data.

A summary of the key findings are graphically presented below, and comments are provided with respect to the findings where relevant.

5.4.1 Traveller Profiles

As shown in **Figure 5.1**, over half of the respondents were residents of the Torres Strait. Almost all other users surveyed came from Queensland cities or towns, with only 4% from interstate.

Figure 5.1 Residence of Travellers

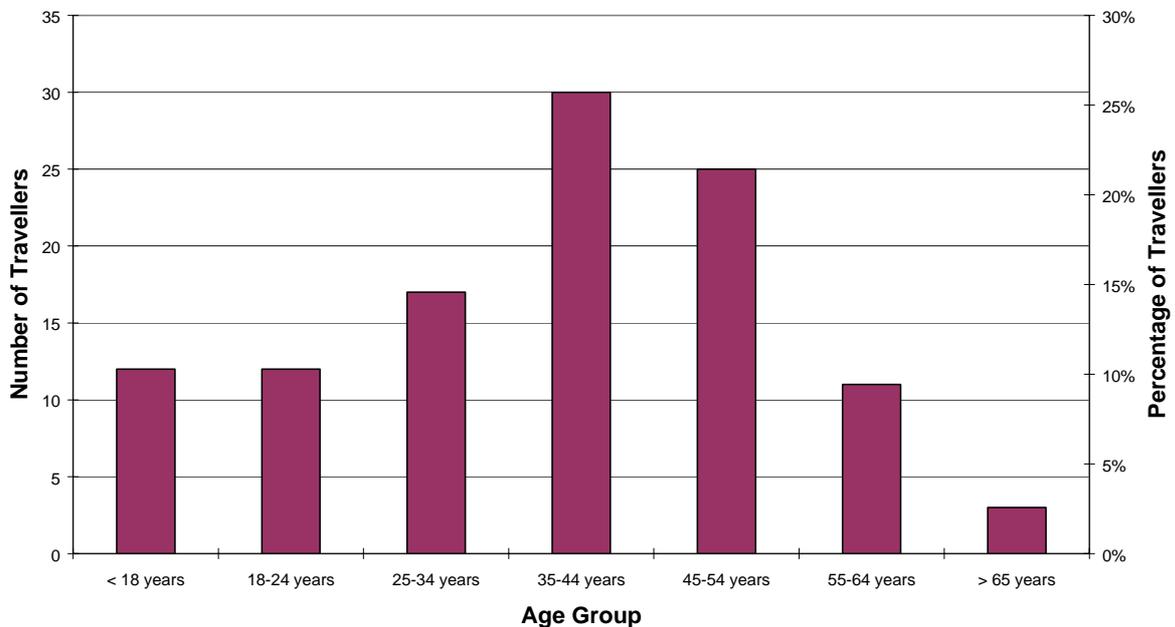


117 Responses

The age of the travellers surveyed is presented in **Figure 5.2**. Half of all the users were aged between 35 and 55 years. A greater number of younger travellers (under 24 years old) were surveyed than older travellers (over 55 years old), however this may be a reflection on the age profile of residents in the Torres Strait, where the average age is 25 years.

Slightly more male users were interviewed (59%) compared to females (41%).

Figure 5.2 Age of Travellers



110 Responses