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Jensen outlines commitments to Torres Strait communities

KATTER'S Australian Party candidate for Leichhardt, Rod Jensen, says the communities in the Cape and Torres Strait deserve a candidate who will listen to their concerns and work hard on their behalf to bring their voice to Canberra if elected in the May 21 election.

Mr Jensen said what he is hearing is a need for upgraded marine infrastructure, more opportunities for economic development, housing and telecommunications.

"The Torres Strait Regional Council's call for marine upgrades chimes really well with the KAP's miniports policy proposal.

"A core priority for communities in the nation's north is reliable transport infrastructure, and for the residents of the 15 divisions that make up the regional council, not having the ability to travel between the islands comprises the health, safety and standard of living of many residents, who rely on marine access to for health care, education, and just to do a basic grocery run."

Mr Jensen said he supports the communities' call for equitable access and will work hard on behalf of the leaders to see that their calls are heard.

Mr Jensen said alternative methods of travel between communities and the mainland, such as by air, is largely unaffordable.

"Some of the access points are badly deteriorated, as you would expect given the conditions and the pounding the infrastructure receives from the elements."

Mr Jensen said economic developments opportunities for residents would be greatly enhanced by better digital communication infrastructure, and is echoing calls by leaders and residents for "digital bridges" between the islands.

"Everything is online nowadays and we have the technology to connect even the most remote parts of the country but lack the urgency from government to prioritise high speed access in the far north. This is something I've been hearing about across the Cape region as well.

"There's no reason people in the Torres Strait should be cut off from the benefits of fast internet and mobile services, as more and more services such as health and education are being delivered online, but need latest generation tech to be effective.



"The poor state of the digital infrastructure which in some cases is many generations old reinforces the social exclusion that many people in remote places already feel, and I am on a mission to see that this message is carried forward."

Mr Jensen said advocating for better housing options in Torres Strait is a priority of his, and looks forward to working with Regional Council for more funding.

"A new establishment is upwards of \$800,000 I am hearing, and an almost impossible ask for a local government to come up with that kind of money.

"More variety in the types of housing available to suit the different needs of tenants is an absolute must, as are different types of shelter to cater to residents who are couch surfing or in need or more permanent accommodation."

Mr Jensen said he would support a renovation program which aims at upgrading existing accommodation, as well removing asbestos which makes some housing unlivable, and reduces the overall stock of housing in the communities.

"The challenges in the Torres Strait are very real, but together we can all make a difference.

"I am loving the opportunity to get to know a part of the world very few people visit let alone work for, and meeting with the residents and feeling their love of their home is a strong reminder of why I am running for this job in the first place."

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