

# Summary of key outcomes

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Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee meeting  
30 April 2013 in Cairns

The Torres Strait Cross Border Health Issues Committee (HIC) met in Cairns, Australia, on 30 April 2013. The HIC is a biannual forum to identify health issues arising in the Torres Strait Treaty Zone and South Fly coast of Papua New Guinea (PNG), and work collaboratively to address them. Attendees included representatives from the PNG National Department of Health, Western Province Health Service, Daru General Hospital, Australian Department of Health and Ageing, Queensland Health (as represented by the Department of Health, the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (HHS) and the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area HHS), Australian Agency for International Development, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

Tuberculosis (TB) remains an important communicable disease of concern in the Torres Strait Treaty cross border region. Members commended PNG's achievements since the last HIC meeting (October 2012) in strengthening TB treatment and management in Western Province's cross border region consistent with DOTS protocol as well as broader primary health activities, with AusAID support.

In particular, members noted progress in implementing the main recommendations of the *Evaluation of Risks of Tuberculosis in Western Province Papua New Guinea* report by Associate Professor Emma McBryde to improve TB management in Western Province. These improvements also contribute towards the continued implementation of the joint PNG-Australia Package of Measures to address cross border health concerns.

HIC confirmed the Clinical Collaboration Group as a sub-committee of HIC, and endorsed the Clinical Collaboration Group's Terms of Reference. This Group will provide a forum for PNG and Australian clinicians to discuss clinical management and effective cross border TB program delivery in accordance with international standards of care. HIC endorsed the Clinical Collaboration Group's high-level work plan and noted work already underway following the Group's first meeting in Daru, Western Province on 21 February 2013. A key priority for the Group will be to finalise a template for cross border clinical communication to assist with referring PNG patients from Torres Strait to PNG.

HIC agreed to review and update its 2010 HIC Communication Protocol to promote better ways to share important and up-to-date cross border health information with Torres Strait Treaty Protected Zone traditional inhabitants and other interested parties.

Members also considered and will finalise a framework for sharing cross border communicable disease surveillance information to support effective and targeted use of cross border health resources.

HIC discussed the need for a work plan, and agreed to finalise an initial work plan out of session.

HIC will meet again in the second half of 2013.

*endorsed by HIC on 20 May 2013*