**NATSIEH 2019 ABSTRACT SUBMISSION   
(All sections in red must be completed)**

# Presentation Title:

Safe and Healthy Drinking Water in Indigenous Local Government Areas Project

**Abstract. *Word Limit: 500 words or less (approximately 1½ A4 pages).***

**Insert abstract here:**

The “Safe and Healthy Drinking Water in Indigenous Local Government Areas Project Pilot” being undertaken by Queensland Health, Tropical Public Health Services (Cairns) in partnership with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and other Cape York Indigenous Councils is designed to safeguard selected Torres Strait Island communities from public health risks attributed to illness caused by exposure to unsafe drinking water or lack of a continuous water supply.

The project adopts a new approach to building the capacity of Indigenous water operators to assure the ongoing safety and quality of water supplied while improving regulatory compliance. The project is also a key strategy for promoting the well-being of the Indigenous population in the Far North and is an essential step towards ‘Closing the Gap’.

The project began in late 2016 and to date has been rolled out to 11 pilot sites in the Torres Strait Island Regional Council area being Hammond Island, Warraber Island, Poruma Island, Saibai Island, Boigu Island, Mabuiag Island, Masig Island, Ugar Island, Yam Island and two communities on MOA Island (Kubin and St Pauls). As well as three mainland Cape York communities which include Hope Vale, Lockhart River and Wujal Wujal.

A key objective of the project is to implement a scalable intensive support strategy which continues until confidence and competence is demonstrated. It aims to promote drinking water and public health awareness as well as embed community support and mentoring into water operations to ensure a safe drinking water. Other objectives include facilitating upgrades to infrastructure and technology that is “fit-for-purpose and fit-for-place”. Upgrades to infrastructure primarily focus around disinfection and monitoring, which is essential to remove microbiological pathogens and verify the safety of drinking water. It also introduces Indigenous operators to technology and systems considered standard by water service providers in most major centres around Australia.

A fundamental success of the project has been zero boil water alerts (attributed to E. coli) in supported communities who have undertaken the program. Furthermore there has been a reduction in the number of microbial drinking water incidents (*E.coli* detection incidents) across the far North Indigenous communities. In 2016 alone prior to implementation of the Project, 16 *E.coli* drinking water incidents were reported in remote Far North Queensland indigenous communities. This reduced to 10 incidents after the first year of implementation (2017), to two incidents in 2018, the second year of the Project.

The project has demonstrated ongoing sustainable results and efficient use of investment, by better management of drinking water supply systems. The project also found that an effective model of safe drinking water delivery for remote Indigenous communities should include five ‘prerequisites for success’ to ensure equitable access to safe drinking water, these include cross-agency collaboration, tailored design for each community, cultural competency by government agencies engaging in Indigenous communities, appropriate water treatment training and technology, and ongoing mentoring and support for remotely-located water operators. This initiative has adaptive potential for other remote communities and other basic service delivery, including wastewater treatment and solid waste management. (word count: 500)

**Abstract Summary.** *A summary of no more than 100 words is required.*

The “Safe and Healthy Drinking Water in Indigenous Local Government Areas Project Pilot” being undertaken by Queensland Health, Tropical Public Health Services (Cairns) in partnership with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council and other Cape York Indigenous Councils is designed to safeguard selected Torres Strait Island communities from public health risks attributed to illness caused by exposure to unsafe drinking water or lack of a continuous water supply.

The project began in late 2016 and to date has been rolled out to 14 sites throughout Cape York and the Torres Strait. A key objective of the project is to implement a scalable intensive support strategy which continues until confidence and competence is demonstrated. Other objectives include facilitating upgrades to infrastructure and technology that is “fit-for-purpose and fit-for-place”. A fundamental success of the project has been zero boil water alerts (attributed to E. coli) in supported communities who have undertaken the program. (word count: 152)

**Co Presenter(s) Details**

**Presentation Title:**

**Safe and Healthy Drinking Water in Indigenous Local Government Areas Project Pilot**

**Biography.**

**Co presenter One Details**

**Title (Dr, Mr, Ms, Mrs etc.):** Mr

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**Co Presenter One Biography (Maximum of 150 words):**

Chris Blake, Tropical Public Health Services (Cairns), Team Leader with the Environmental Health Indigenous Support Team. Chris has been with the state health department for 10 years and most recent notable achievements include the development and implementation of Water Risk Management Plans across 9 hospitals in the Cairns Region; Developing and co-ordinating the roll out of the Safe and Healthy Drinking Water in Indigenous Local Government Areas Project across 14 indigenous communities throughout Cape York and Torres Strait. Chris has international experience working in East Timor and the Solomon Islands as well as mining industry experience in the gas field of Southern Central Queensland. Chris, loves working in Environmental Health and has a very keen interest in drinking water operations and drinking water quality.

Originated from Riverstone in NSW but reckons Far North Queensland in the best spot in Australia and slowly becoming a Queenslander however stops short of supporting the Maroons in the NRL State of Origin. Chris loves fishing, camping, going opal mining in Lightning Ridge with his dad and spending time with his wife and kids.

**Co presenter Two Details**

**Title (Dr, Mr, Ms, Mrs etc.):** Mr

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**Co Presenter Two Biography (Maximum of 150 words):**

Adeah is based on Saibai Island in the Torres Straits. Having studied at CQ Uni in Rockhampton, Adeah gained a Bachelor in Civil Engineering in 2013. Adeah is the Manager Engineering Projects & Operations - Divisions 9-15 and is responsible for the delivery of major capital projects and also the operations of aerodromes, wharves, roads, solid waste collection, water and wastewater services to the 7 Divisions. Adeah is passionate about ensuring sustainable services are provided to the communities.

**Co presenter Three Details**

**Title (Dr, Mr, Ms, Mrs etc.):** Mr

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**Co Presenter Three Biography (Maximum of 150 words):**

Mark is based on Iama Island in the Torres Straits. Mark has been actively involved in the delivery of water and wastewater services in the Torres Straits for 18 years. Having taken on the role of Manager Operations Water in 2016. Mark oversees the technical officers whom provide expert advices and support to all 15 divisions and also mentoring and technical support for Divisional Engineering Officers and Water Operators. Mark is passionate about cray fishing and service delivery in the Torres Straits and provides valuable opinions and expertise to others on projects and operational activities.

**Authors (non presenting)**

**Title (Dr, Mr, Ms, Mrs etc.):** Mr

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