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INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORIES
Regional Development Organisation
Australia

Vision Statement

Working together to create a thriving future for our island communities

愿景声明 - 携手合作为我们的岛屿社区创造繁荣的未来

Pernyataan visi - Bekerjasama untuk membina masa depan yang berkembang untuk masyarakat pulu kita

Pernyataan wawasa - Sama-sama berusaha mewujudkan masa depan yang berkembang maju untuk komuniti pulau kita

Number: 01/2025. Date: 29/6/2025.

IOT RDO Community Newsletter – Mid 2025 Edition

Message from the Chair

The IOT RDO continues to focus on fostering collaboration to support sustainable development, economic diversification, and improved liveability across the Indian Ocean Territories.

One of our major initiatives, the independent review of the IOT supply chain, was completed in late 2024 and presented to the Department and the Minister's Office. The report is now publicly available, and several improvements, including a larger air freighter and changes to primary (previously priority) bags at check in, have made a difference in the supply chain. The Joint Committee has also commenced early discussions on further implementation strategies. I thank all committee members and stakeholders who contributed to this important work.

We've also made strong progress on the development of a Regional Engagement Framework for the IOT, led by Centred Solutions. Consultations were held on Christmas Island in March and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in June 2025. The framework, which will support more coordinated regional action on complex issues, will be finalised and delivered to the IOT RDO in the coming weeks.

In June, the Committee came together on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands for a team-building workshop, cultural tour, and dedicated sessions to shape the 2025–26 Annual Business Plan and Budget. During our recent visit, the RDO met with representatives from Fulton Hogan, the Department of Defence, and AECOM to discuss the CKI Airfield Upgrade. This was a valuable opportunity to gain insights and ask questions. I thank all members for their ongoing contributions and collaboration.

I'm also pleased to formally acknowledge Carolin Buncle Diesner, who commenced as Director of the IOT RDO in February 2025. Carolin has already made a strong and positive impact, bringing valuable experience and leadership to the role. We also extend a warm welcome to Alana Shaylor, who has recently joined the team as Office Assistant.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank Bianca McKinney for her dedication and invaluable contributions during her time as the Director of the RDO. Her commitment and hard work have left a lasting legacy, and we wish her every success in the future.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support and engage with the IOT RDO. We look forward to continuing this important work together.

Farzian Zainal
Chair of the Indian Ocean Territories Regional Development Organisation

Administrator of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands

About the IOT RDO

The Indian Ocean Territories Regional Development Organisation (IOT RDO) is part of the national Regional Development Australia (RDA) network, which consists of 50 organisations across the country funded by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCSA).

The RDA network brings together local leaders who work with all levels of government, business, and community to support economic growth and sustainable development in their regions.

The IOT RDO focuses on building strong, resilient, and confident communities on Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. We work to unlock local opportunities, drive investment, and support long-term regional development in the Indian Ocean Territories.

What We've Been Working On

IOT RDO Annual Business Plan 2024-25

Each year, the IOT RDO develops an annual business plan that outlines the organisation's key activities, priorities, and resources for the coming financial year. The plan aligns with the IOT RDO 2030 Strategic Regional Plan and the Australian Government's Regional Investment Framework. The 2025–26 Business Plan is being finalised and will be published once approved by DITRDCSA.

Independent review of the IOT supply chain

A key priority in the IOT RDO 2030 Strategic Regional Plan, the independent review of air freight, shipping, and passenger transport services was commissioned jointly by the IOT RDO and Christmas Island Business Association (CIBA) in early 2023. The Joint Committee, comprising representatives from the IOT RDO, CIBA, the Shires of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and local MP Ms Marion Scrymgour, has overseen the review.

The review, undertaken by Centred Solutions, was completed in late 2024. Findings were presented to DITRDCSA and the Minister's office. While formal feedback is still pending, the Joint Committee has reconvened to implement actions.

The full report is publicly available on the RDO website: IOT Supply Chain Review report.

Regional engagement framework for the IOT

Identified as a key priority in the IOT RDO 2030 Strategic Regional Plan, the IOT RDO has worked with Centred Solutions to co-design a Regional Engagement Framework. The framework seeks to unite government levels, the private sector, and community stakeholders to collaboratively address priorities supporting sustainable growth and liveability and other complex issues.

Stakeholder consultations were held on Christmas Island in March 2025 and

the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in June 2025. The framework will support the Australian Government's Regional Investment Framework and complement existing engagement efforts by the Administrator's office, DITRDCSA, Commonwealth agencies, MPs, and local government. The final framework will be delivered to the RDO in the coming weeks.

Christmas Island Economic Future Working Group (EFWG)

The Christmas Island Economic Future Working Group (EFWG) was established mid-2024 to identify practical, community-informed solutions to the island's economic challenges. With members drawn from across industry, government, and the community, the group serves as a collaborative forum to guide the island's economic transition and promote long-term resilience. While it is not a decision-making body, the EFWG provides advice to the Australian Government via the Administrator and offers a shared voice on local priorities such as land use, infrastructure, workforce development, and investment opportunities.

Since its formation, the EFWG has held five meetings, culminating in agreement on several key priority action areas. These include addressing underutilised accommodation and infrastructure, enhancing access to natural assets and how to better support our youth. Project planning to guide implementation is now underway, led by Vanessa Bennett from C Change, with funding provided by the IOT RDO.

Environmental Scan on Insurance in the External Territories

The RDO were pleased to be engaged by Sapere Research Group who have been commissioned by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (the Department) in conducting an environmental scan into the availability and affordability of insurance for residents and businesses across the external territories, including the IOT and Norfolk Island. This follows advocacy raising awareness of insurance challenges, including availability and affordability in these regions. Interviews with community members are underway and findings will inform government policy and broader market assessments.

Review of Tourism Service Delivery in the IOT

Tourism continues to be a key growth opportunity. The RDO is collaborating with various stakeholders to explore future tourism service management, with potential for a larger RDO role.

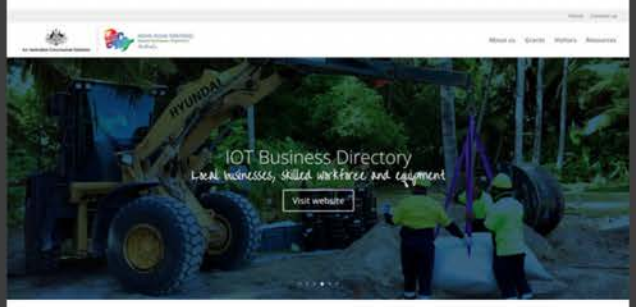
Recent engagements, including presentations by Dr Noreen Breakey and discussions with tourism strategist Linda Wayman, reveal strong community support for tourism growth alongside identified governance gaps at the regional level. These findings will guide the RDO's role in future coordination, destination development, and capacity building as part of the 2025–26 business plan.

Tourism Infrastructure Developments on Christmas Island

The RDO also welcomes the news of an approach to market conducted by the Department to engage services for property management agency to lease the former Christmas Island Resort and Casino site. Additionally, the RDO is pleased to note the recent building application approval from the Shire of Christmas Island for the development of an eighteen-room motel on Gaze Road (the former Virgin's Castle site). These are significant milestones in infrastructure development on Christmas Island.

IOT Business Directory

The IOT RDO developed the IOT Business Directory to showcase local businesses and skills, supporting advocacy for training and employment. To add or update your business details, please visit the website and complete the online form.



Committee news

Committee memberships

On 14 October 2024, the Chair of the IOT RDO formally welcomed the new Committee members for the 2024–25 term:

- Bianca McKinney (CKI) and
- Tracey Krepp (CI).

Bianca and Tracey joined continuing members:

- Sarah Coote (CI)
- Stephanie Lai (CI)
- David McKinney (CKI)
- Thomas Battcher (CKI)

The RDO thanks all members for their commitment to supporting sustainable development across the Indian Ocean Territories.

Call for Expressions of Interest – IOT RDO Committee

The IOT RDO is seeking two new Committee members for the 2025–26 term, commencing 1 October 2025. If you're passionate about the sustainable development of the Indian Ocean Territories and have experience in areas such as regional development, community engagement, or industry leadership, we encourage you to apply.

EOIs close 31 August 2025. To apply or learn more, visit: https://indianoceanterritories.com.au/resources/

IOT RDO Committee Membership 2025-26 - Information Pack

IOT RDO Committee Membership 2025-26 - Application form

Annual General Meeting

The IOT RDO Committee held its Annual General Meeting on 14 November 2024. The Committee is pleased to announce its office holders:

- Farzian Zainal – Chairperson
- Thomas Battcher – Deputy Chairperson
- Bianca McKinney – Secretary
- Stephanie Lai – Treasurer

Committee Meetings and Workshops

The IOT RDO Committee held meetings on 20 March and 12 June 2025. Key agenda items included presentations on the development of the Regional Engagement Framework for the IOT and an update on the Annual Business Plan.

From 10–13 June 2025, Committee members met on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands for a series of workshops and activities. This included a team-building session, a Cultural Tour, and dedicated workshops to develop the 2025–26

Annual Business Plan and Budget.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for early November 2025.

Working together to create a thriving future for our island communities

Our door is always open. Please reach out to Committee members or the Director if you have issues or ideas you'd like to discuss.

Chair: Farzian Zainal
Deputy Chair: Thomas Battcher
Committee Members: Bianca McKinney, Sarah Coote, Stephanie Lai, Tracey Krepp, David McKinney
Director: Carolin Buncle Diesner

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