

## Princely visit to Torres Strait



H.S.H. Prince Albert II with Alick Tipoti

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Even though they live worlds apart, Torres Strait Indigenous artist and activist Alick Tipoti and His Serene Highness (H.S.H.) Prince Albert II of Monaco have united to help protect the world's oceans.

H.S.H. Prince Albert II, who is known for his efforts to tackle climate change and his commitment to protect the marine environment, will visit Mr Tipoti and his family at his home on remote Badu Island in the Torres Strait, in Queensland. This meeting will form part of a new feature documentary for cinema, which will also include the history of the Badulgal people of Badu and the Monégasque people of Monaco.

Australian film producer Trish Lake, from Freshwater Pictures, said this was a story about two communities on opposite sides of the planet, Monaco and Badu Island, which are concerned by climate change and the many threats to the future of the oceans.

The men first met at an exhibition in Monaco in April 2016, where Mr Tipoti was a featured artist at 'Taba Naba – Australia, Oceania, Arts by Peoples of the Sea' exhibition, hosted at the Oceanographic Museum. The six-month exhibition drew attention to threats facing the oceans. When Mr Tipoti heard about H.S.H. Prince Albert II's interest in climate change, he invited the Prince to visit his island home of Badu, where they were already experiencing the effects of rising sea levels during king tides.

"Alick invited Prince Albert to his remote island home in the Torres Strait to see his way of life and to swim with the turtles, dolphins and dugong... and possibly dodge a few crocodiles. Prince Albert accepted the invitation and two years later, the adventure is beginning," Ms Lake said.

"Alick and the Badu community are going to show the Prince their way of life," she said.

H.S.H. Prince Albert II will discuss the relation between the Badulgul people and the sea with Elders and hear about the challenges facing remote communities like Badu Island including rising sea levels, plastic pollution in the ocean and the scourge of 'ghost nets' – abandoned or discarded fishing drift nets which are the invisible killers of large sea creatures like turtles, dugong, dolphins and sharks.

Mr Tipoti, a linguist, artist and dancer wants to ensure his Melanesian ancestors' language and culture continue in Badu and the Torres Strait, while H.S.H. Prince Albert II wants to uphold the legacy of his great, great grandfather, Monaco's Prince Albert I, who was a navigator and great supporter of science, art and nature. Like his ancestor, H.S.H. Prince Albert II is committed to the cause of conserving the oceans. Leading Monaco Explorations, H.S.H. Prince Albert II is engaging political and economic decision-makers from all over the world, and is carrying the message to the highest authorities and to the wider public, to guide decisions that will define tomorrow's ocean management. A commitment also shared through the advocacy and awareness-raising work of the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, which was built by Prince Albert I and opened in 1910. Now his great, great grandson sees climate change as the ocean's greatest threat.

The feature documentary will be directed by award-winning Queensland filmmaker Douglas Watkin (ELLA) and the film crew will be led by Australian cinematographer Mark Broadbent, as Director of Photography. The 85-minute film is due for a cinema release world wide in 2020. The film will give opportunities for emerging Queensland Indigenous filmmakers, including those from the Torres Strait, to be mentored throughout the film's production.

Support for the film comes from organisations that include the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, the Australian Marine Conservation Society and Johnathan Thurston's Skytrans Airline, which is the leading airline in the Torres Strait.

Recent Freshwater Pictures feature documentaries include the The Eulogy, which recently won the prestigious 2018 Williams Documentary Award; Frackman, named one of Australia's top ten films by The Guardian in 2016; Wik Versus Queensland, which premiered at the Sydney Film Festival earlier this year and screens on SBS-On Demand and NITV; and Love Opera, which is currently in production. This documentary will be financed as an independent feature film in Australia.

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