



[Good] [Tiwi News]

Pupuni Ngirramini

March 2024 | tiwilandcouncil.com



TIWI IPA SET TO BE DEDICATED >> P6



STAFF BRIEF
SENATE COMMITTEE
IN CANBERRA >> P7



TUWURRAMPILA CULTURAL HERITAGE
FORUM VISITED THE MUSEUM AND
ART GALLERY OF THE NT >> P10

What's in this issue

Seagrass surveys find unusual species3

Ranger update4

IPA committee – communications training5

IPA set to be dedicated6

Senate Estimates7

Full Tiwi Land Council Elections8 & 9

Tiwi artworks at NT museum10

Fort Dundas 200th anniversary10

New book – Tiwi Story11

Jilamara Arts make headlines in Australia and overseas11

Xavier Catholic College12

Tiwi Design new arts exhibition centre12

Ceremonial and totemic songs recorded13

Renewable energy for Wurrumiyanga14

Commemoration ceremony after tragic Osprey aircraft crash14

Biosecurity measures ramp up15

Economic boost – Sea Darwin Sea Tiwi16

Legal opinion – Section 19 agreements17

Staff update & Tiwi seasons puzzle18

Magpies win woman's Tiwi premiership19 & 20

EDITORIAL

Pupuni Ngirramini is published by the Tiwi Land Council for the Tiwi People

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CONTACT

Contact the Tiwi Land Council at office@tiwilandcouncil.com

Media & Communications Officer
Alan James OAM
media@Tiwilandcouncil.com

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Message from outgoing Chair Gibson Farmer Illortaminni

I am filled with great pride as I reflect on the remarkable journey we've undertaken together as the Tiwi Land Council.

I am pleased to share the news of our recent council elections, a significant milestone in our quest for transparent and fair governance. Following one of the recommendations from the Australian National Audit Office review, we contracted the Northern Territory Electoral Commission to conduct the elections in December and January. By resolution of the full Tiwi Land Council last year a new method of choice for land council membership selection was agreed on. Positions are now decided by an externally conducted ballot, with 50% of these members required to be women. Elections were held in December and January, and soon the new council members, with 50% women representing their clan groups for the first time, will take up their positions. This move reaffirms our commitment to upholding democratic principles and ensuring that every Tiwi voice is heard and represented with integrity.

I am thrilled to report on the significant investment of \$13 million dollars last year into Tiwi businesses and organisations for economic development initiatives. This substantial funding will empower local entrepreneurs, support small businesses, and drive initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth within our community. It is through investments like these that we



lay the foundation for a prosperous future for all Tiwi people.

I am pleased to note the remarkable growth of our council over the past 18 months. From a modest staffing level, we have expanded to a team of 19 dedicated individuals. This expansion reflects our commitment to enhancing our organisational capacity to better serve the evolving needs of our community.

I am proud about the establishment of our Cultural Forum representing the eight clan groups, providing a platform for the preservation and celebration of Tiwi culture and heritage.

Additionally, the appointment of a dedicated Biosecurity Officer highlights our commitment to protecting our land and sea country, ensuring the sustainability of our natural resources for generations to come. In the future all vehicles and freight coming to the Islands will be inspected with the aim

of removing the threat of invasive plants and animals such as Cane Toads, Gamba grass and Fire ants.

I write this message with a mixture of emotions as I announce that I have completed my fourth term as Chairperson of the Tiwi Land Council. It has been an honour to serve in this role, and I am humbled to have had the opportunity to lead our council through some of its most transformative years. After what has been the longest term as Chair since the establishment of the Tiwi Land Council, I feel confident that the council is in capable hands as we continue to strive for the betterment of our community.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the support, dedication, and commitment to the Tiwi Land Council by the council members and trustees over the years I have served as Chair. It has been an incredible journey, and I am proud of all that we have accomplished together.

As I step down from this role, I do so with optimism for the future of the Tiwi Land Council and our community. I look forward to welcoming the incoming Chair.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your Chairperson.

Mana
Gibson Farmer Illortaminni

Message from the CEO

HULLO to all Tiwi and Tiwi Island residents.

It's now 2024 and the Dry Season will soon be here.

The Tiwi Land Council is well on the way to implementing the reforms recommended by last year's Australian National Audit Office Committee Report. If you haven't seen it, and would like to have a read, you can find the link on our website, or ask staff in our new office located in the Tiwi Islands Regional Council building. We should be there as we intend to have this office open each day of the working week. Please drop by with any business or just drop by to share a cup of tea and say, Hullo.

We will be out and about on the islands even more this year. We now have nearly all our new staff. This includes some Tiwi Staff from the islands, and we still have several Tiwi positions to fill. If you are thinking of working for us, please phone or better still, visit the office and ask.

Tiwi Land Council recently visited Canberra where we discussed some important island issues with Federal Ministers Burney, Plibersek, Attorney General Dreyfus and staff as well as our local member, Ms Marion Scrymgour.

Matters discussed included environment issues, those concerns

and dangers that are now obvious to all. The challenges from feral animals and plants, from rising sea-levels, loss of sea grass and from the many Ghost Nets now dangerously loitering along the Tiwi coasts. These are killing animals and fish, damaging reefs and beaches and making a pest of themselves in many ways, and they will continue to do so. They will not go away by themselves. Now that we have found out where they are, and how many of them there are, all effort must be made and will be made to get them out from Tiwi Seas. This will require a major effort – removing just one is a piece of hard work and we have found forty of them in twenty eight locations

We had a sympathetic hearing with the Ministers we spoke to recognising the importance of these issues, both here and elsewhere in coastal areas. We also discussed Bio-Security and what is needed to keep these islands safe from introduced menaces.

We left Parliament House with assurances of cooperation, support, information and advice for the ways forward. Our discussions also covered works by our new Cultural Forum. (All of these topics are covered in more details further on in this edition.)

As the Dry Season arrives you will

see increased Land Council activity, if you would like to hear more about our work please let us know – through our telephones or webpage, by visiting the office in Wurrumiyanga, or just by saying Hi in the street.

Finally, by the time you read our next edition, in June, the Tiwi Land Council will have a new CEO. I have enjoyed my time here. The past months have seen this land council grow and develop. It is now well placed to assist you, the Tiwi people, to manage these exceptional islands. I acknowledge the friendship and support I have received without exception from Chairman Gibson Farmer Illortaminni, trustees and all members of the Land Council, its staff and the wider Tiwi people.



Sincerely,
Robert Graham
CEO Tiwi Land Council

Rangers and scientists find unusual species in seagrass surveys



The Tiwi Rangers undertook seagrass surveys in the intertidal zone of northern Bathurst and Melville islands over four days from November 14 2023.

The work was carried out in collaboration with marine scientists from Charles Darwin University, James Cook University and Edith Cowen University.

The Rangers said that they had some great low tides in the mornings which allowed them to cover off on a huge survey area each day before the afternoon storms hit.

They used helicopters to survey on very low tides when intertidal banks were exposed.

With the helicopter they managed to survey a very large area in a short amount of time.

They surveyed around 2000 sites using the two helicopters.

They found seven seagrass species on the survey, including large *Enhalus* meadows which is something quite unusual.

They recorded diverse invertebrate communities including sponges, hard

and soft coral and also observed bleaching on some hard corals.

Tiwi Resources has received Northern Territory Government Aboriginal Ranger Grant Program funding to undertake more seagrass surveys and to do more ongoing monitoring from 2024 to 2027.

This will again be in collaboration with the same marine scientists from Charles Darwin University and James Cook University.

This grant funding will allow the Tiwi Rangers to expand on the work undertaken in 2023 to record and monitor seagrass in the subtidal zones via boat using underwater monitoring techniques.

They will again focus on the north coast of Bathurst and Melville Islands and will use boats to survey deep areas, including a liveboard boat that will tow a camera and net and the smaller ranger boats will drop cameras and drones to survey the seagrass.

They will also use drones to survey smaller areas in the future.

This project will lead to a map of seagrass and other habitats (coral,

algae, sponges) in inshore waters.

This project will enhance understanding of turtle and dugong populations by examining their habitat.

These animals have significant cultural and conservation significance.

Understanding marine habitats are crucial to upholding the Tiwi Islander's commitment to sustainable Sea Country management.

Scientific data is limited for this area and good data is needed to support Tiwi Islander aspirations for sea country conservation and management.

Maps, data and reports will be provided to the Tiwi Land Council.



Tiwi Ranger Lifetime Achievement Award Finalist

Tiwi Ranger Colin Kerinaiu's hard work and dedication to his Ranger team, his country and his people was recognised last November at the 2023 NT Natural Resource Management Awards.

Colin, a proud Jikilaruwu man and Ranger for 18 years, was a finalist in the Lifetime Achievement Award category.

Although recently retired, he still makes an invaluable contribution to the Ranger team by continuing to share his extensive knowledge of culture and country.

Affectionately known as Yirrimiruwu (wedge-tailed Eagle), Colin has been a strong role model and is generous

with his time and freely shares his knowledge and experience with everyone who works with him.

His infectious personality and ability to make others laugh has helped to keep morale strong in the ranger group.

Colin played a key role in the success of numerous research projects over the years including long-term monitoring and protection of mammal populations on the Tiwis since 2013 with Charles Darwin University scientists and undertaking fire management and field work for the Tiwi Carbon Study and since 2008, the Tiwi Fire and Carbon Project.

Congratulations Colin – enjoy your retirement!



Photo: Annette Ruzicka (Country Needs People)

Tiwi Rangers trapping mosquitoes to detect diseases

Tiwi Rangers have been trapping mosquitoes for the Northern Territory Government's Centre for Disease Control NT Health Medical Entomology Unit.

The wet season program that started on 1 February includes testing mosquitoes for viruses that can cause severe disease in humans.

The aim is to help establish best prevention and control measures.

It is important that the Tiwi community knows what the traps look like and not to interfere with them so this key work can be carried out.

The traps used to collect adult mosquitoes are called carbon dioxide (dry ice) baited Encephalitis Vector Surveillance (EVS) traps.

Five EVS traps were set in the afternoon of the 1 February around Wurrumiyanga.

They were collected the following morning.

The mosquitoes have been sent to the Berrimah Veterinary Laboratory to test for the presence or absence of three viruses: Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV), Murray Valley encephalitis virus (MVEV) and Kunjin virus (KUNV).

Further adult mosquito trapping facilitated by Tiwi Rangers is planned for Bathurst and Melville Island during February to April.

Occurrences of JEV, MVEV and KUNV disease are rare in the NT however the consequences can be severe or fatal,



particularly with MVEV and JEV.

Other mosquito borne diseases such as Ross River virus can cause debilitating symptoms for several weeks or months.

It is best to avoid mosquito bites, particularly during the January to July period, with the evening and night the highest risk times.

Personal protection is the main sure way to prevent exposure to mosquito borne diseases.

Use of personal mosquito repellents is required when outdoors during the

evening and night, along with protective clothing such as long pants and long-sleeved shirts.

Ensure insect screens on houses are in good condition and ensure those who cannot protect themselves such as young children and babies are protected from mosquitoes.

There is a safe and effective vaccine to protect residents from Japanese encephalitis virus and the severe disease it can cause.

Visit the local health clinics on the Tiwi Islands for a free dose of the vaccine.



Tiwi Rangers win award for targeting destructive pujikatuwi (feral cats)

Tiwi Rangers were recognised at the 2023 NT Natural Resource Management Awards for their work on feral cats.

Feral cats are a huge problem – they kill over 6.2 million mammals, reptiles, and birds each day and are a leading cause of two-thirds of Australia's mammal extinctions.

On the Tiwis the fight to control feral cats is urgent because the islands are a haven for many threatened species that have gone extinct or significantly declined on the mainland.

Last November, Derek Puruntameri and Luke Ford proudly accepted the Indigenous NRM Award on behalf of the ranger team at the awards dinner at the Darwin Convention Centre.

Traditional Owners have been worried about feral cats for a long time and identified them as a key threat in their Tiwi Islands IPA Plan of Management (2023 – 2033).

"Feral cats killing them, killing all those animals, it's very bad for our country," said John Wilson, Tiwi IPA Committee member.

However current understanding of the behaviour and ecology of cats on the Islands is limited.

In 2022 Tiwi Rangers and ecologists trialed a range of feral cat control methods, testing different cage trapping lures.

They discovered that Felixer Grooming traps

work most effectively.

Despite limited resources Rangers removed 38 feral cats from Melville Island between June and September 2023.

Rangers are passionate about looking after country and want all Tiwi people to understand the threat cats pose to the Islands' unique wildlife.

"We didn't have cat's here before, want to get rid of those cats, they're destroying our animals, we want the rangers to get rid of cats." said the Tiwi IPA Committee member.

The work undertaken by rangers and ecologists, with the support of the Tiwi Land Council, has made a significant contribution to knowledge about feral cats on the islands and will inform effective control and monitoring programs in the future. It has also provided the necessary background for an application, submitted last year, for Australian Government Saving Native Species Grant funding for feral cat control over the next two years.

This Tiwi-led cat project will benefit numerous Tiwi threatened species and protect the Islands' unique biodiversity and cultural values for future generations.

"I hope to see no more feral cats eating all our lovely native animals," said Tiwi Ranger Nikita Puruntameri.



IPA Committee training to be good communicators

Tiwi leaders on the Tiwi Resources Board and IPA Committee have strong stories about country, people and culture that they want to share.

But standing up and presenting at meetings or forums or talking to the media can be nerve-wracking.

To help leaders feel more confident and relaxed about speaking up in public, a two-day communication skills training workshop was held in December in Darwin.

The course was recommended by Tiwi Rangers who completed it in March last year.

The Board and IPA Committee members chose the stories they wanted to talk about and learnt how to prepare and deliver presentations for a range of different audiences and forums.

Videos are a great way to tell stories and they enjoyed learning production and editing skills.

They also practiced interview techniques with each other – and then critiqued the results.

Comments from course participants included:

“The training went well, went good. Liked to hear about what we are all doing, listening to the other people talk.

“I found it useful, feel more confident, all that practice helped.”

“I liked all of it! Liked the way you talked about, your experience, the interviews, all that. I found it really interesting.”

“It helped me a lot. Made me feel more confident about talking about my work in the future.”

“Very useful, interesting. Pupuni. Telling us what to expect when we talking to the television, talking to others, things to do.”

“I think the course was good. It was good for us to take note, to learn. Pupuni. All that thing about messages, that was good.”

“I really enjoyed watching the drawings come alive over the course of yesterday. Some of them were just amazing and really told a story without anyone having to speak to it.”



“Video was great. It was good that we was learning these tools. It’s good that we all came into this workshop, gave our inputs and we are going to take it back to our IPA and rangers too, everyone needs to know this.”

“Would be good for others to do this course. Good for the IPA, need the young ones, need to get young ones in the IPA, everyone can give something, doing the training will help. If I can do it, then they might be able to do it too.”

“It was good doing it (the course) again, specially that session on the media. I didn’t really get that last time. I’m really confident now that when I do my next interview, I can explain about how I want to do it. Not just answer their questions but tell them my story. A few new things I picked up this round – definitely!”



Tiwi IPA set to be dedicated as Rangers celebrate 25 years of protecting country

Tiwi Rangers Marbine Austral and Nikita Puruntatameri joined more than 20 other Indigenous Rangers and Traditional Owners to celebrate 25 years of Indigenous Protected Areas at Parliament House in Canberra in November 2023.

IPAs are an incredible success story for Australia and in the next couple of months the Tiwi IPA is expected to be dedicated.

The Canberra event hosted by Country Needs People marked the importance of the Traditional Owner-led biodiversity protection and cultural management program.

Strong cross-partisan support was demonstrated by the senators and MPs from across the political spectrum that joined the rangers to celebrate.

Nikita and Marbine met Minister Tanya Plibersek, Minister Linda Burney, Senator Dorinda Cox and many more.

The Australian IPA Program is one of the biggest networks of protected areas in the world - all run by Traditional Owners.

It's a great legacy to continue and the program brings multiple benefits to people, country, culture and through ongoing jobs, supports families and community life.

For Tiwis it consolidates Traditional Owners' long-term commitment to sustainable land management, preservation of cultural heritage and support of the Tiwi Ranger Program.

While in Canberra Nikita Puruntatameri and Marbine Austral witnessed the first dingo, Pumbah, to ever visit Parliament House.

Pumbah was there to advocate for the protection of dingoes and to raise awareness of the cultural and environmental significance of the species.



Photos: Country Needs People



Land councils meet ministers and brief Senate committee



Members of the Tiwi Land Council, Northern Land Council, Central Land Council and the Anindilyakwa Land Council met in Canberra in mid-February with Australian Government ministers and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

The councils also gave presentations to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee in Parliament House on 16 February.

Tiwi Land Council Policy officer Helen Daiyi gave the opening address to the senators.

Here is a transcript of her presentation:

Awana Mamanta. My name is Helen Daiyi, and I am employed as the Policy Officer at the Tiwi Land Council. I work closely with our Biosecurity and Environmental Officers, as well as our team of Anthropologists.

The Tiwi Land Council is one of the four Northern Territory Land Councils.

Currently, we have nineteen staff members, fifteen females and four males.

Our responsibilities lie with the Tiwi Islands, located 80 kilometres north of Darwin, the second-largest islands in Australia after Tasmania.

Over the past year, the Tiwi Land Council has focused on reform and rebuilding following a full audit by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO).

We are committed to implementing all ANAO recommendations and much of this reform has now been finalised.

These efforts aim to strengthen governance and accountability, especially in the areas of finances and service provision, including towards external stakeholders but particularly towards the land council's Tiwi clients.

A major initiative agreed upon by resolution of the full Tiwi Land Council last year was a new method of choice for land council membership selection—positions are now decided by an externally conducted ballot, with 50% of these members required to be women.

Elections were held in December and January and soon the new council members, with 50% women representing their clan groups for the first time, will take up their positions.

Challenging the patriarchy and dismantling the status quo. Something Tiwi women have always done!

One of our major priorities is protecting the islands' biodiversity against serious and very real threats from feral animals and invasive species, including cane toads, gamba grass, and fire ants.

The land council recently completed a survey for ghost nets around the entire coastline and identified 40 nets in 28 locations off our shores or tangled on

reefs, rocks, and beaches.

Rising sea levels are causing coastal erosion and the loss of seagrass, a food source for dugongs, turtles, and other animals.

We are planning measures to counter these damaging menaces.

Tiwi cultural mapping is a major project currently being undertaken by our team of anthropologists working alongside our resource and environment officers to ensure that our Tiwi cultural knowledge and sites are properly recorded and protected.

The Tuwurrampila Cultural Heritage Forum has been established to facilitate and oversee the implementation of Tiwi cultural heritage projects and events that support, strengthen, and sustain Tiwi culture.

We are committed to assisting Tiwi people develop viable business by encouraging culturally and environmental appropriate economic development on the islands.

Over the past year and a half, I have had the chance to observe closely as Tiwi people have been divided by a large gas company on one hand and environmental activists on the other.

Under current arrangements, the Tiwi Land Council does not have any statutory role in relation to the Tiwi Sea country

affected by that project because that is native title business.

The land council membership is composed of eight clan groups: the Jikilaruwu, Wurankuwu, Malawu, Mantiyupwi, Munupi, Marrikawuyanga, Wulirankuwu, Mantiyupwi, and Yimpinari.

Each clan has four councillors and one trustee.

It is the only representative body of the Tiwi people. The recent dispute has shown that it is high time for the Tiwi Land Council to become formally appointed as the representative body under the Native Title Act for Tiwi sea country.

The Tiwi Land Council is dedicated to bringing Tiwi people back together after this divisive time and ensuring that we become stronger with a determination to slowly and steadily secure native title recognition for all our Tiwi waters.

We are committed to working with our people to secure this kind of change.

Lastly, to our departing CEO and Chairman, thank you for your leadership and service. Robert, we are no longer moribund. Maningawu Gibson Farmer Illortaminni, the longest serving TLC Chairman to date. I know you will continue to fight the good fight for our people, because that's what Tiwi warriors do.

Full Tiwi Land Council Elections

In late 2023 by resolution of the full Tiwi Land Council a new method of choice for land council membership selection was agreed to. Tiwi Land Council membership positions are now decided by an externally conducted ballot, run by the NT Electoral Commission with 50% of Councilor positions now required to be women.

Jikilaruwu



Andrea Puautjimi



Valentine Puautjimi



TRUSTEE
Simon Munkara



John Benson Kelantumama



Agnella Tipungwuti

Malawu



Anastasius Vigona



Miriam Stassi



TRUSTEE
Richard
Puruntatameri



Sebastian Tipungwuti



Juliette Puruntatameri

Mantiyupwi



Cheryl Kerinauia



TRUSTEE
Wesley
Kerinauia



Bonaventure Timaepatua



Ainsley Kerinauia



Banita Ullungura Tipiloura

Marrikawuyanga



Donna Molaminni
(Burak)



TRUSTEE
Damien
Molaminni
(Burak)



Claire Cecilia Scrymgour



Neil Black



Adonis Wommatakimmi

run by the NT Electoral Commission

Elections were held in December and January with new members taking up their positions in March 2024. Each of the eight Tiwi Clans has four councilors with three-year terms and one Trustee per clan appointed for five year terms.

Munupi



Alexander
Puruntatameri



Justina
Puruntatameri



TRUSTEE
Karina
Coombes



Leslie Tungatalum



Laelia Dunn

Wulirankuwu



Gerry Mungatopi



Karen Tipiloura



TRUSTEE
Jeffrey
Puruntatameri
(Miller)



Stanley Tipiloura



Wendy Mungatopi Miller

Wurankuwu



Charlotte
Portaminni



Ron
Poantimilui



TRUSTEE
Brian
Tipungwuti



Jocelyn Tipungwuti



Edward Portaminni Jr

Yimpinari



Andrew Bush



Ellanora
Wonaeamirri



TRUSTEE
Mary Dunn



Edwina Brooks



Austin Wonaeamirri

Cultural forum members recognise Tiwi artworks at NT museum

Members of the Tuwurrampila Cultural Heritage Forum visited the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT in Darwin in February to view the extensive Tiwi collection held by the museum.

The members of the forum travelled from Milikapiti, Pirlangimpi and Wurrumiyanga.

Museum staff led by Aboriginal collections' curator Rebecca Raymond took their Tiwi visitors into the storage areas where approximately 1500 Tiwi objects are held representing almost 25 percent of the museum's Aboriginal collection.

The members excitedly recognised paintings and carvings made by relatives who have since passed away.

Preliminary discussions are underway between the Tiwi Land Council and MAGNT with a view over time to mounting a major exhibition made up from selected works from the collection.

The Tuwurrampila Cultural Heritage Forum was established after a recommendation put forth by Tiwi Land Council Members at Full Council in July 2023.

It was established to facilitate and oversee the implementation of Tiwi cultural heritage projects and events that support, strengthen and sustain Tiwi culture.

The committee was formed under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

It has a minimum seven Tiwi Land Council members and representatives from the eight Tiwi clan groups and the communities of Wurrumiyanga, Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti.



Records studied ahead of 200th anniversary of the establishment of Fort Dundas

Initial discussions are underway on how to mark the 200th anniversary of the establishment of Fort Dundas on Melville Island, the first outpost of Europeans in Australia's north.

On 20 February Kerry Nancarrow and Paige Taylor from the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT (MAGNT) hosted a visit by Tiwi islander Eymard Tungutalum and anthropologists from the Tiwi Land Council to study records of events and ceremonial activities that marked the 150th anniversary on 26 September 1974.

Eymard's great grandfather was captured by the British when they landed on Melville but he escaped and managed to alert his people to the landing.

When aged 19, Eymard attended the 150th anniversary ceremony.

During the visit to the museum he identified a number of people in photographs from the Peter Spillett Collection.

The British occupied Fort Dundas between 1824 and 1828, the first physical demonstration of Britain's claim to what was then known as New Holland.

Historians recorded tales of great hardships during the fort's existence and battles with the island's population.

The first landing party set ashore on 26 September 1824 at Punta Punta just south of Pirlangimpi (Garden Point).

A stronghold and a small settlement were built where about 120 people struggled to survive.

The garrison commander complained of bad relations with the Tiwi people, tropical storms, isolation and low food and medical supplies.

The garrison lasted less than five years before the British accepted defeat and departed in April 1829.

Tiwi people regard this as the first successful defence of Australia against the British.



New book showcases remarkable Tiwi stories that turn history upside down

A new book showcases stories of the Tiwi people's resilience, creativity and survival dating back to the 1800s.

The *Tiwi Story: Turning History Downside Up* by Mavis Kerinauia, Laura Rademaker and Tiwi historians details how islanders have had their fair share of stories that turn ideas of Australian history upside down.

"Tiwi Story is a powerful collection of pieces written by Tiwi people about their experiences of colonization," says Terri Janke, an Indigenous Australian lawyer of Wuthathi/Meriam heritage who is considered a leading international authority on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

"Their accounts are an important telling of past and present issues confronting Tiwi people and their culture, shining a necessary spotlight on a history of forced assimilation and suppression of Indigenous culture and language," she says.

"This book is testament to the strength of the Tiwi people and provides an insight into the ongoing impact of colonization on Indigenous cultures."

The book published by UNSW Press was funded by the Australian National University's project "Beyond Reconciliation: Truth Telling for Indigenous wellbeing" and has been in the making since 2015.

The book reveals, for example, how the Tiwi people claim the remarkable honour of having defeated a superpower.

When the then world's most powerful navy invaded and attempted to settle the Tiwi Islands in 1824, Tiwi warriors fought the British and won.

The Tiwi people remember the fight and oral histories reveal their tactical brilliance.

The book details how in 1911, Catholic priest Father Xavier Gsell decided to "purchase" Tiwi women and "free" them from traditional marriage, so girls would grow up Catholics.

But Tiwi women had more power in marriage negotiations than missionaries realised.

They worked out how to be both Tiwi and Catholic.

And it was the missionaries who came around to Tiwi thinking.

The book references the Tiwi's so-called "number one religion: Aussie rules football.

In the book Calista Kantilla remembers her time growing up in the mission dormitory

and Teddy Portaminni explains how the Tiwi history and culture are precious and owned by Tiwi and a source of strength.

Author Marvis Kerinauia says that telling the truth to the younger ones, the next generation, will make them strong.

"I believe history is for healing," she says.

"But you need to tell the whole story, the good and bad."

Laura Rademaker says "in the book



we argue that Tiwi people have a lot to be proud of from their history – there have been many strong Tiwi people who have built the communities of today."

"We are grateful to the many Tiwi people who contributed their oral histories and provided cultural advice," Laura says.

"In particular we want to thank Fiona Kerinauia and Ancilla Kurrupuwu, Magdalen Kalantumama, Francillia Puruntatameri as well as Sr Anne," she says.

"We are still working to write Tiwi histories and Mavis is publishing a children's book about her grandfather Louie Munkara to be published next year."

Laura says "we are also working



on a project about the history of Tiwi self-determination. We are interested in learning stories about the Tiwi outstation movement and other acts of Tiwi self-determination. We would love to know what other Tiwi would like us to find out more about too."

***Tiwi Story: Turning History Downside Up* published by UNSW Press, paperback RRP \$39.99**

Tiwi artists starring from New York to Sydney

Tiwi artists linked to the Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association at Milikapiti are continuing to make headlines both in Australia and overseas.

When the INXS band came together in Sydney each band member received a unique award crafted by Timothy Cook Kulama, whose artwork features circles to symbolise the moon and pwanga (dots), representing japalinga (star).

Band members Andrew, Tim and Jon Farris, Kirk Pengilly and Garry Gary Beers came together for the first time in six years at a lunch in Sydney in October, hosted by Universal Music (Australia) and Petrol Records.

The band has made an incredible contribution to the global music industry, reaching four billion streams.

Timothy has been creating paintings, prints and carvings at Jilamara since 1999 and has represented the art centre in numerous high-profile solo and group exhibitions.

In national recognition of his work, Timothy was commissioned to produce a vinyl for a restaurant awning at the Art Gallery of NSW.

For many years Timothy has focussed on the circular Kulama design.

The Kulama ceremony is the Tiwi initiation which coincides with the harvest of wild yam.

Canvasses by Jilamara's Johnathon Bush received top billing at the Independent 20th Century and the Armory Show in New York late in 2023.

The Australian gallery at the event was among more than 200 galleries exhibiting paintings and sculptures from across the world.

Critics pointed out the New York entry was Johnathon's first at the show but said they hoped it will not be his last.

Through beige and white stripes his canvasses mimicked jilamara, the body painting technique utilised by his Tiwi community.

Johnathon has also been selected for the Country Road plus NGV mentoring program for the National Gallery of Victoria where he has been paired with senior Jilamara artist Pedro Wonaeamirri to develop an ambitious new multi-panel ochre painting.

Other Jilamara artists making an impact on the national and international stages are Michelle Woody Minnapinni at the Art SG Singapore Art Fair and Kaye Brown at the Adelaide Biennale of Contemporary Australia Art.

Kaye also visited the South Australian Museum's historical collection to see art works from Milikapiti while she is developing new artwork.



Xavier Catholic College looking forward to another year of highlights



Xavier Catholic College in Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island is off and running for the 2024 school year with a strong culture of support and care for students, says the Principal Rhett Bowden.

“Our students are continuing to develop positive learning habits and skills and are working collaboratively with teachers and staff,” Rhett said.

“Our school community thanks all our staff for their ongoing efforts and care.”

Rhett said the college achieved great results in 2023.

Highlights included:

- Graduation of our Year 12s
- Senior students working with TITEB and receiving their White Cards (able to work on building sites, roads etc) and 'TIWI READY' program certificates
- Many off-island excursions
- Sporting activities with Tiwi College
- AFL game against Darwin Clontarf representative team
- Seniors representing TIWI BOMBERS AFL women's and men's teams
- Bush Camp
- Visits from schools from down south
- And, importantly, lots and lots of LEARNING!

“Special thanks goes to Angelo Orsto and Josh Leane, our Deputy Principals, for their leadership and guidance,” Rhett said.

“Most importantly, we thank our students for their energy, determination and resilience. We look forward to another successful year of schooling in 2024.”

With the Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School, the college forms a Catholic Education Precinct that provides education for students from pre-school to Year 13.



New exhibition centre expected to be completed in 18 months

Work has begun to build a new arts exhibition centre on Lot 431 Puantulura Street Wurrumiyanga and is expected to be completed within 18 months.

Tiwi Design is on track to repurpose their existing carving shed into a museum, archive and media centre showcasing a collection dating back five decades.

The centre will include a store and feature artwork including collectable ironwood carvings of ceremonial poles and creation story figures, ochre paintings and traditional ceremonial items like tree-bark, tunga, spears and headdresses.

The upgrade also includes a new wood carving shed and working cultural display that will run alongside the centre's tourist program in forestry.

Tiwi Design manager Steve Anderson said the exhibition centre would provide new opportunities to celebrate the work of past and present artists.

“It will be phenomenal for the local people when they see it and when they've got their own little place they can go and look at, say

their husband or grandfather's work, and sit with it,” he said.

“Not only will the locals be able to see work from loved ones that are no longer with us from our collection that are going to be rotated regularly but the visitors to the island will be able to come in and look as well.”

The proposed plans include a new museum alongside a pre-approved eco-hostel.

Mr Anderson said the new centre would also display previously unseen artworks dating back to the facility's establishment in 1968.

“We've got beautiful stuff we've collected since the art centre began in '68 and there's all this work that can't be seen so apart from getting it built, the onus is getting to actually work with one or two identified individuals who have got the knowledge, the wisdom and the right cultural protocols to curate the show and tell the story of the history of Tiwi,” he said.

The 2310 square metre site also features the Tiwi Design Guest House, an ecolodge providing accommodation for visitors.

The project has received funding from NT Tourism, NAVA and Darwin Community Arts.



Ceremonial and totemic songs recorded under cultural forum project

The Tiwi Land Council's newly established Tuwurrampila Cultural Heritage Forum has recorded Tiwi men and women singing innovative and culturally important Tiwi ceremonial and totemic songs.

Experienced recordist Francis Diaschenko recorded the performances.

The project includes retrieval of historic recordings, including songs recorded by anthropologist Baldwin Spencer in 1912 up to more recent years.

Transferred into a new media form they are being shared with recordists, the Tuwurrampila Cultural Forum and Tiwi people in general.

About 15 Tiwi men and women - young and old - were selected to have their traditional cultural songs recorded as part of the project.

The singers included Tony Pilakui, Wally Kerinauia, Marius Junior; John Wilson; Bernard Tipiloura, Francis Orsto, Callista Kantilla, Wayne Pilakui, Virgil Kerinauia, Regina Tipungwuti, Francilla Puruntatameri, Mary Moreen, Jacinta Tipungwuti, Pedro Wonaeamirri and Richard Tungatalum.

The first three senior Tiwi singers recorded were Wally Kerinauia, Richard Tungatalum and John Wilson.

Richard had a large repertoire

of songs that included several yirrikipay (crocodile) songs, boat songs including a macassan boat song and a song Tiwi sing and dance to at their deceased father's funeral.

Wally was a little slow to start but really got in to the swing of singing and the only thing that prevented him from singing longer was that he had to catch a plane to Darwin for a medical appointment.

Wally's songs were about a shark totem, parents, funeral, pig, grader and bulldozer, and Jesus when Pontius Pilate tore off his shirt.

A slight reticents on the part of John Wilson, did not hide his magnificent voice for traditional singing with his songs Djurrupe, steam ship, shark and magpie geese.

The recording project will also include ethnomusicologist Geneveive Campbell collating a large number of historic songs so that they may be distributed to the descendants of the singers.

Under the project, the descendants of the old singers may also like to record the same songs.

If Tiwi singers wish to have songs recorded contact Alan James the Media Officer or anthropologists Helen Haritos, Nicole Ng and Isabelle Favre at the Tiwi Land Council.



Pirrawayingi, Francis Diaschenko, Tony Pilakui & Joe Giuseppe



Jacinta Tipungwuti, Francilla Puruntatameri & Regina Tipungwuti



Francis Orsto, Callista Kantilla & Virgil Kerinauia



Pedro Wonaeamirri & Mary Moreen



Wally Kerinauia



Wayne Pilakui



Marius Junior



John Wilson



Richard 'Hadlee' Tungatalum



Member for Arafura
Manuel Brown
Image: NT Government.

Ground-breaking project set to deliver renewable energy to Tiwi's largest community

Wurrumiyanga, the largest community on the Tiwi Islands, will reduce its reliance on diesel when a new battery and solar array becomes operational in the coming months.

The Northern Territory Government's Solar Infill and Energy Storage Pilot Project is another step closer to completion with the battery energy storage system currently undergoing testing in the Darwin suburb of Berrimah.

The ground-breaking project will deliver 50 percent renewable energy to the 2000-strong community.

The Member for Arafura, Manuel Brown said "it is great to see our largest community on Bathurst Island driving down emissions. Testing underway means my community will get more renewable energy soon."

The community is already operating on some solar.

But this project will provide an additional 1.1 megawatt solar array, together with a 1.75 MVA battery energy storage system.

The battery system will provide 3 megawatt hours of storage capacity.

Once testing of the battery

system is complete at Berrimah, it will be transported to Wurrumiyanga where another round of testing will take place to ensure successful integration with the grid.

The project is estimated to reduce diesel fuel consumption by 519,000 litres in the first year of operation by introducing additional renewable energy technology, with works expected to be completed by May 2024.

The \$6.1 million project is part of the Territory Labor Government's commitment of \$10.4 million to date for the

Renewable Remote Power Program.

This project will contribute to the government reaching a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030, which includes an average of 70% renewables in all communities supplied by the Indigenous Essential Services program.

Minister for Renewables and Energy Kate Worden said "the Northern Territory is in the process of transitioning to a future where renewable energy will play a greater role in our energy consumption."

"The Wurrumiyanga Solar

Infill and Energy Storage Pilot Project will give the community cleaner power and reduce the need to rely on diesel generators," she said.

"We are working towards our target of net zero emissions by 2050 and projects like this will play a significant role in achieving this."

Mr Brown added "a renewables future is now one step closer for the Wurrumiyanga community and we look forward to extending the lessons learnt from this project to other remote Territory communities."

Planning underway to commemorate tragic Osprey aircraft crash

A commemoration ceremony for the tragic Osprey aircraft crash on Melville Island last year will be held on 27 September.

Manuel Brown, the Member for Arafura, recently met with Tiwi Land Council Chair and staff and representatives from the US Marine rotational force and Australian Defence Force officers to plan the ceremony.

The parents and family of the three deceased US military personnel are expected to travel from the United States for the ceremony.

Plans are underway for a memorial plaque to be placed on the site and a Tiwi Cultural ceremony will be performed.

A large gathering of dignitaries and national media are expected to attend.

Many Tiwi islanders were praised for the roles they played when the MV-22B Osprey carrying 23 US personnel crashed near Pickataramoor during Exercise Predators Run on August 27.

Local emergency services were at the scene almost immediately after the crash.

Multiple organisations, including Careflight, NT Police and NT Health, helped get injured marines to Darwin for treatment.

US marines have been rotating through the NT for training since 2012, improving interoperability between US forces and the Australian Defence Force.

The 27 September ceremony will pay tribute to the fallen marines: Corporal Spencer R. Collart, Captain Eleanor V. LeBeau and Major Tobin J. Lewis.



Biosecurity measures stepped up Tiwi Islands

By biosecurity officer

TIANA BREMNER-KOSTRZEWA

Since I joined the Tiwi Land Council last October we have carried out 72 regular inspections of vehicles and freight coming into the Tiwi islands. Thirty-two of them were in January.

Biosecurity awareness is about identifying risks that could be harmful to your islands such as feral animals, weeds, pests, and mud. Biosecurity is what you need to do to keep animals and plants out that don't belong on the Tiwi islands".

While the changes have come in relatively quickly most people have been fantastic with minimal vehicles and machinery failing inspections and those that have failed, for the most part, have not needed a great deal of work to get them up to scratch.

It has been great to see that most people have embraced the changes to biosecurity measures and are keen to assist where they can.

While there will always be exceptions to the rule most people have been very keen to do the right thing.

Our first lot of cane toad traps have now arrived and are ready to be set up at the freight yard in Wurrumiyanga.

eDNA kits have now arrived so testing will begin shortly. We are still

awaiting the arrival of the the toad fencing as well as fencing for the other freight yards.

Our greatest achievement for 2023 and in my time with the Tiwi Land Council so far has been getting the Prohibited Species List passed by the full Tiwi Land Council in November.

This will help reduce the number of unwanted pets becoming feral and breeding in the wild with restrictions on what plants and animals can be brought to the islands and the conditions under which the approved animals can be brought over.

In 2024 the documents and information will be linked to the Land Council website for ease of application and reference so people travelling or relocating to the Tiwi islands can make sure they are aware of what can and cannot be taken to the islands.

The inspections will be ramped up over time to start educating passengers on planes and boats and not just those sending freight.

Please remember, if you wish to take machinery, vehicles, or belongings to the Tiwi Islands, they must be clean, free from all seed, plant materials, dirt, cane toads and other pests.

If they do not meet these standards, your goods will not be allowed to travel to the islands until they are thoroughly cleaned.



Tiana Bremner-Kostrzewa



Tiana Bremner-Kostrzewa conducting a vehicle inspection



Weed seeds in vehicle radiator



Cane Toad traps



Cane Toad



Gamba Grass fire

New jobs and economic boosting ventures planned after take over of award-winning eco-tourism company

Tiwi Enterprises Ltd has been granted \$1.5 million to purchase Sea Darwin Pty Ltd, a multi-award winning company established in Darwin in 2008, in a bold move that will create jobs and promote tourism across the Tiwi Islands.

The sale facilitated with funding from the Tiwi Land Council's Indigenous Economic Stimulus Package creates a viable business on country, on the Tiwi islands, for the Tiwi people.

The company now called Sea Darwin-Sea Tiwi is expected to announce new job and economic boosting ventures soon.

Plans include the introduction of wilderness escapes with expert guides, island sunsets trips and tailored culturally-driven experiences that are delivered in environmentally sustaining ways on the islands' ancient and delicate lands.

The company's boat assets include Olive Ridley (22 seater) Flatback (32 seater) as well as two Sprinter Mini Coaches Dugong (16 seater) and Saltie (12 Seater).

Sea Darwin Pty Ltd built a reputation as one of Australia's top tourism companies, providing experiences on Darwin Harbour and sea turtle tours to Ngulbitjik (Bare Sand Island).

Operating on a family-based business model with products that attract Advanced Eco and Respecting our Culture accreditation, the company provided interactive products that showcase the history, habitat and intrigue of Darwin Harbour and the coastal area beyond.

While the company's core business is marine tourism, it has been running charters to the Tiwi islands and providing shore-to-ship support both inside and outside port limits for 14 years.

It has also been providing supplementary services including commercial boat charters and marine-based supply services.

The company was established by respected Darwin businessman Jim Smith.

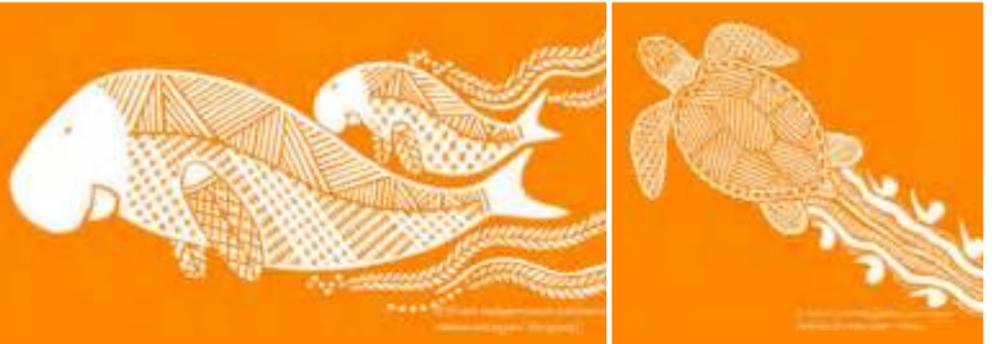
The Business Sale Agreement between Sea Darwin Pty Ltd and Tiwi Enterprises Ltd was signed on 7 July 2023.

Official hand-over took place on 1 October.

Five months into the ownership the concentration has been on mastering the previous ownerships expertise. It has been a great start to the new journey and Tiwi Enterprises consider the transition successful.

The Tiwi Land Council supported the purchase by Tiwi Enterprises Ltd, an enterprise owned by the eight landowning groups of the Tiwi Islands.

The non-profit Tiwi Enterprises Ltd, which was formed in 2007, provides services for the development of Tiwi Islands economic activity and the employment of Tiwi people.



Section 19 Agreements under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)



By **KALIOPI HOURDAS**
Tiwi Land Council Principal Legal Officer

Hello reader,

For this edition of Pupuni Ngirramini I have chosen to write about section 19 agreements under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth)* ('ALRA').

I have chosen this topic given land use and its related economic development is such an important issue for the Tiwi Land Council ('**Land Council**'), Tiwi people and people that undertake activities on the Tiwi Islands.

Under the ALRA there are lots of different types of agreements that fall under the category of "section 19 agreements". Section 19 agreements are also referred to as "land use agreements". I like to use the phrase "land use agreements" because that phrase focuses attention on 'land use' and 'having an agreement'. Either way, usually, the two phrases are referring to the same idea, the approval to occupy and/or undertake an activity on Tiwi land.

Important function and obligations

Under the ALRA, one of the key functions of the Land Council is to: "...CONSULT WITH TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL OWNERS OF, AND OTHER ABORIGINAIS INTERESTED IN, ABORIGINAL LAND IN THE AREA OF THE LAND COUNCIL WITH RESPECT TO ANY PROPOSAL RELATING TO THE USE THAT LAND."

In relation to dealings with land, the Land Council must not direct the Tiwi Aboriginal Land Trust ('**Land Trust**') to enter into a land use agreement UNLESS the Land Council is satisfied that:

- the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land understand the nature and purpose of the proposed land use agreement and, as a group, consent to it;
- any Aboriginal community or group that may be affected by the proposed land use agreement has been consulted and has had adequate opportunity to express its view to the Land Council; and
- in the case of a grant of an estate

or interest (for example, a lease)-the terms and conditions of the proposed land use agreement are reasonable.

Land use agreements – meaningful consultation, consent and feedback

The Land Council must meaningfully consult before it seeks consent and feedback in relation to a proposed land use agreement. To meaningfully consult and to obtain consent or feedback in relation to the nature and purpose of a proposed land use agreement, a significant amount of information is required in relation to the proposed land use. This is one of the reasons why it is very important that land use requests follow the formal application process that the Land Council has in place. Seeking verbal consent from one person without making a formal application is not the proper way to ensure traditional owners and clan groups get the proper information and proper opportunity to consider the nature and the purpose of the proposed land use agreement.

One reason why land use applications are delayed or unable to be assessed as quickly as applicants would like is because of the time it takes to gather all the information required for the Land Council to fully understand, assess, and consult regarding the proposed land use. The following is a list of the type of information required from an applicant before Land Council staff can

meaningfully consult with the relevant traditional owners and clan group(s) regarding a land use application:

- Identifying the legal name of the person, business or company that will be the lessee or licensee.
- A description of the proposed land use activity – what is the proposed business or proposed use of the land? Is it access to land for research or is it to run a business? The viability of the business or purpose of the research.
- Identifying the location and the size of the land that will be used.
- Rent or licence payments.
- What potential social benefit will be delivered to the community as a result of the proposed land use.
- What potential economic benefit will be delivered to the community as a result of the proposed land use. For example, employment opportunities.
- Social impacts – positive impacts, safety, reputation of Tiwi people and risk of harm.
- Environmental impacts – positive and risk of harm.
- What environmental rehabilitation will be required after the land use comes to an end?
- What infrastructure upgrades will be required – for example, how will the

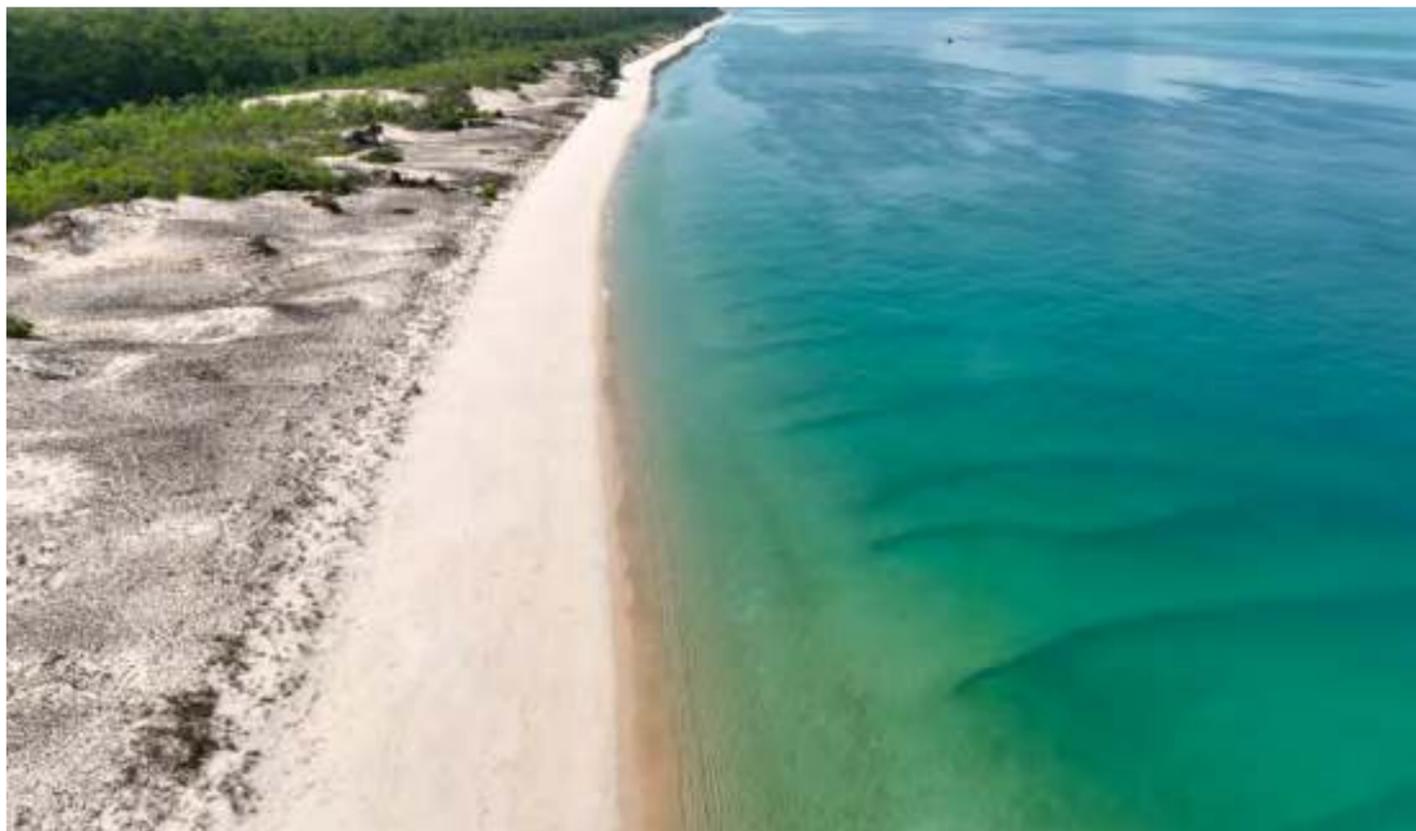
site have power and water?

Once this information is available, Land Council staff can undertake the consultation phase. However, they must consult in a manner that is culturally appropriate and can only consult when traditional owners or clan groups are available. For example, a clan group may not be available due to a funeral.

Once the consultation phase is completed and only if the relevant traditional owners have consented to the proposed land use agreement, the application will be taken to a meeting of the full Land Council for the Land Council to decide whether to move forward with a land use agreement. Until the Land Council directs the Land Trust to enter into a land use agreement and until the Land Council has, by way of resolution, authorised the affixing of its common seal to a land use agreement, the land use agreement cannot be entered into.

My recommendation to future applicants is to be very clear about the details of their land use proposal (keeping in mind that changes to the details could result in having to start the consultation phase again), provide all the necessary information to relevant Land Council staff as quickly as possible and to keep in mind that the Tiwi Islands are not owned by individuals.

Land use applications are available from the Land Council's office and any person wanting to make a land use application should contact the Land Council's office to discuss the application process and timeframes.



Farewell Message to Sonja Hoffman

We are sure members will know staff member, Sonja Hoffman, our tireless worker who works with members, arranges transport and all the other necessities for holding the land council's many meetings. Unfortunately, Sonja now finds that she needs to head back to her home state of Queensland.



Ms Hoffman has been an invaluable asset to our organization, her many works characterised by dedication, and unwavering commitment to the Tiwi people and land rights. Always willing to go above and beyond, always assisting councillors with various issues, such as communication and mobile phones, always displaying her exceptional work ethic and dedication.

Beyond your remarkable skills and accomplishments, it is your warm demeanour, kindness, and collaborative spirit that have truly endeared you to all of us. You have been not only a colleague but also a friend, always ready to lend a helping hand or offer a word of encouragement when needed. Your positive attitude and enthusiasm have brightened even the most challenging of days, and for that, we are profoundly grateful.

As you venture forth into new horizons, please know that your legacy here at the Tiwi Land Council will endure. While we will miss your presence, we are excited for the opportunities that lie ahead for you.

On behalf of the entire team, I want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your hard work, dedication, and friendship.

Robert Graham, CEO

New appointments to support Tiwi projects



Two new key appointments have been made to the Tiwi Land Council.

Michaela Tipungwuti and John Sebastian Pilakui are our new field support officers to be based out of our new office in Wurrumiyanga.

Michaela and John recently attended a new employee HR induction in Darwin which included learning about the Aboriginal Lands Right Act (ALRA) 1976, the land council's Code of Conduct and various other policies.

They took part in briefings on the council's

2024 agenda and priorities, met Darwin staff and attended a viewing at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT).

These are critical positions that have been created to support the council on the ground and to assist in delivering key project related tasks across all areas of the organisation.

The appointments herald an exciting era for the council and more exciting news is to come.

Welcome Michaela and John!

Tiwi Seasons

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- Kurukurari
- Mumpikari
- Marrakatari
- Yirriwinari
- Munuputari
- Kumwari



Shark feeding off Seagull Island

Magpies wins first Tiwi women's premiership in thriller



The Muluwurri Magpies won the first Tiwi Islands Football League Women's premiership, capping a hugely successful inaugural competition where more than 300 women in seven teams competed over a 14-rounds season.

The Magpies seized victory in a thrilling one-point win over the Tapalinga Superstars in front of a frenzied crowd at Wurrumiyanga oval on Bathurst island on Sunday 10 December.

More than 1,000 spectators, including many who packed the ferry from Darwin, travelled to the oval to witness the historic game that added another chapter to the brilliance of Tiwi football.

"It was pretty emotional," said Mary Dunn, who worked for years to bring a women's competition to the islands.

"It took a long time for it to all come together ...it finally did, which is amazing," she told the ABC.

"It brings the communities together and it brings a lot of the family groups together, especially for our women, making them strong women in the future."

The premiership cup is named the Mary Dunn Cup.

Tapalinga was the in form side throughout the finals and looked to be on the path to victory when they led by 16 points at half-time of the grand final, thanks to four goals from 16 year-old Shakayla Gardiner-Dunn.

But the Magpies regrouped and came storming home, with the leagues best and fairest, Arthurina Moreen, starring in the ruck while Jess Stassi booted three goals.

It was a nail-biting finish.

Tapalinga had their chances in the final minutes as the ball was locked close to their goal but the Magpies held on grimly.

The Magpies' Jodie Palipuaminni was named best on ground.

The black and white mob swarmed on to the ground when the siren sounded.

"The atmosphere was incredible," said Danyon Smillie, the AFLNT's remote development manager.



The creation of a women's Tiwi competition follows the introduction of the Tiwi Bombers women's team in the Northern Territory Football League.

Since the local men's competition began in 1968 football has become like a religion on the islands, producing a long list of stars who became household names in the football world.

According to the AFLNT community participation in the sport across the islands is the highest in the country.

Almost half the population plays across the men's and women's competition.

Mary Dunn said the women's competition is another step towards improving women's health on the islands.

"Us mob in Aboriginal communities we have a lot of health issues, especially with diseases like diabetes," she said.

"It's good that a lot of women actually come out and are starting to take care of themselves in regard to the illnesses that we have out here and getting fit and healthy and being stronger mums."

A local squad of women umpires

completed coaching courses during the 2023 season.

The AFLNT hosted open forums last March to gauge interest in the competition and the first meeting attracted 50 women.

During the follow-up meetings the group agreed to competition rules, structures and plans for the season ahead.

The expansion across the Tiwi Islands is linked to investment from AFLNT, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to increase participation of Indigenous women and girls in AFL, as well as youth engagement across the Northern Territory.

The committee is 100 percent run by women, including match day responsibilities, umpiring, and coaching, and plans are already underway for 2024, to bring the TIFL Women's competition in line with the men's during the dry season.

The AFLNT's Danyon Smillie said "this

inaugural TIFL Women's season has had remarkable engagement with over 300 women taking the field, each club has shown enormous growth over the season with all teams training together and working towards making the league strong."

"It's with the support of league sponsor Tiwi Partners and community leaders like Mary Dunn and the effort she has put in on and off the field, regularly umpiring and officiating games that have made the inaugural season so successful."

Victoria Canning, a Ranku Eagles player, said "our first training session we had over 100 girls turn up, the competition is becoming huge, and this season has been amazing for the Islands."

"It's a close-knit small community, it's like a religion here, everyone gets around it on a footy day the whole community comes down to watch the women play," she said.

Mary Dunn said "the ladies are already talking about next season."

Magpies victorious

