



[Good] [Tiwi News]
Pupuni Ngirramini

April 2026 | tiwilandcouncil.com



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**TIWI CULTURAL
FESTIVAL AND
TIWI FOOTBALL
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EDITORIAL

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

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PRODUCTION

Design by UniPrint,
Charles Darwin University

FRONT PAGE

Front Page – photo by Murray (Munkara) Knyvett

Back page – photos by Glenn Campbell

Message from the Tiwi Land Council Chair

We've had a lot of rain across the islands this season – it's been a big wet, and while that's good for country, it has created real challenges for our communities.

Right now, our roads are in very poor condition. Many areas are cut off or difficult to access, and this is affecting day-to-day life. One of the biggest issues we're facing is getting waste out of our communities, with trucks unable to move safely or reliably due to the state of the roads. This is not just inconvenient – it raises serious health and environmental concerns that we must address.

The Tiwi Land Council is working closely with the Tiwi Islands Regional Council to find practical solutions in the short term, while also continuing to push both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments for support. We are hopeful that we can resolve the immediate access issues soon, but we are also focused on securing long-term investment in our road infrastructure so that our communities are not placed in this position year after year.

We will continue to advocate strongly for roads funding, and we are looking forward to work commencing this dry

season on the road from Three Ways to Yapilika. This is an important project that will improve access and connectivity for our people.

As we move toward the middle of the year, we are all hoping the weather clears, the roads dry out, and people can start getting back out on country. June is an important time for bush holidays – a time to hunt, to fish, and to spend time with family. Being on country is central to our culture, our wellbeing, and our identity, and it's important that we can safely access our homelands.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the departure of our CEO, Brendan Ferguson. Brendan has made a significant contribution to the Tiwi Land Council during his time with us, and we thank him for his commitment and leadership. We are sorry to see him go and wish him all the best for the future.

The recruitment process for a new CEO is now underway. In the meantime, I would like to welcome Brenton Toy as Acting CEO and thank him for stepping into this role during this important time.

Thank you all, and I look forward to better conditions ahead as we move into the dry season.



Warm regards,
LESLIE TUNGATALUM
Chair, Tiwi Land Council

Message from the CEO

Awana mamanta!

This is my final update before I step down as CEO of the Tiwi Land Council.

Since my family's decision in December 2025 to relocate to Melbourne, I have had plenty of opportunity to reflect on my time working with the Land Council. Together, we have achieved a lot:

- We have rebuilt the organisation to a position of strength, with 30 capable staff
- We have supported the development of our Council members, half of whom are women and new to the Land Council
- We have implemented an improved governance structure, establishing the Executive, IPA and Tuwurrampila Cultural Heritage sub-committees
- We have established and grown a Tiwi Culture unit, initiating the Tiwi Cultural Festival, reinvigorating Kulama ceremony and working towards custodianship of the Patakijiyali Museum
- We have addressed a backlog of land use applications, negotiated improved terms on existing leases, and finalised a forestry lease over 30,000 hectares of Melville Island that will deliver income and jobs for Tiwi people over the next 40 years

• We have overseen dedication of the Tiwi Indigenous Protected Area, which will safeguard the cultural and natural values of Tiwi country for future generations

• We have created a Policy and Advocacy team, which works together with the Tiwi Leaders Forum to amplify Tiwi voices and advocate for community needs.

While these are some of the high-profile achievements, there have been many other milestones that have received less recognition. And none of this good work could have occurred without guidance from our Council, hard

work by our staff, collaboration with a wide range of Tiwi stakeholders and the trust and support of Tiwi people.

For all of that, and for the opportunity to work with Tiwi people on Tiwi country, I feel incredibly grateful.

I am delighted that Brenton Toy has put his hand up to take on the role of Interim CEO and I wish him – and all staff and members – the best of luck in taking the organisation forward. I'm confident that we have built solid foundations and will watch with interest as the Land Council goes from strength to strength in the coming years.

Mana Nimpangi



BRENTON TOY
Acting CEO, Tiwi Land Council



BRENDAN FERGUSON
(Outgoing) CEO, Tiwi Land Council

Policy and Advocacy Team Update – April 2026

Over the first few months of 2026, the Policy and Advocacy team has continued its work speaking up for Tiwi people and their priorities.

Economic development

Economic development continues to be a top priority. Since our last update, we have engaged in the Federal Parliamentary Committee for Northern Australia's *inquiry into preparing for emerging industries across Northern Australia*. In February, the TLC provided a submission to this inquiry (available on the Committee's website), and Policy and Advocacy Manager Brenton Toy and Land Use and Operations Manager Murray Knyvett appeared before the Committee in March.

Our input to the Committee highlighted the ambition of Tiwi people for economic independence, the industries that are already playing an important role in the economy, like tourism, carbon abatement, and the opportunity created by the recently signed agreement for the second forestry rotation. Through these industries, Tiwi people have shown they are not just bystanders to economic development on their country, but proponents. We also noted the important balance that Tiwi people have sought to strike, finding development pathways that align with Tiwi values of caring for people and country – which is increasingly important following the dedication of the Tiwi Islands IPA.

This inquiry has also been an opportunity to highlight the challenges and threats to economic development, in particular inadequate infrastructure and climate impacts that need to be planned for. We shared photos of Tiwi roads and the Paru inter-island ferry landing (the island's only vehicle access route to connect the islands' three major communities) – knowing that pictures tell a thousand words!

It was positive to see such strong Tiwi engagement in this inquiry, with Tiwi



Road to Wurrumiyanga waste management facility

Enterprises, TITEB, and Tiwi Plantations Corporation and NT Port and Marine all providing submissions. We hope the Committee can visit the Tiwi Islands and see first-hand the opportunities and challenges for the future Tiwi economy.

The inquiry is timely, because over the course of this year and next, we will be working closely with Tiwi people and key stakeholders to develop a vision and plan for the future Tiwi economy. During the first few months of 2026, we worked with an organisation called The Next Economy to codesign our planning process. We spoke to Tiwi people, key stakeholders and TLC staff to understand what they want to get out of this process and what will make a good plan. We look forward to starting the consultations in the dry season.

Homelands

The second major project that the team is progressing is planning for Tiwi homelands. In March, we introduced consultants Bill Fogarty, Perri Chapman and Matthew Gray (Chapman, Fogarty and Gray Advisory) to our Full Council. Bill, Perri and Matt will be working with us during 2026: talking with traditional owners and homelands residents to understand their aspirations for the homelands, and the pathways to work towards their priorities. The consultations will start in May, with visits to all the accessible homelands, and continue during the dry season. We will be speaking with traditional owners and residents from all seven Tiwi homelands, and with clan groups who don't currently have a homeland on their country.

The TLC, along with the other land councils and Aboriginal Housing

NT (AHNT), continues to speak up very strongly to the Australian and NT Governments to properly fund homelands, including providing funding for new houses. The upcoming Aboriginal Housing and Homelands Conference (20-21 May) is an opportunity to keep homelands on the agenda. We look forward to representatives from our Council attending the Conference and sharing some highlights in the next newsletter.

Tiwi Leaders Forum

From 14-16 April, Tiwi Leaders Forum (TLF) Coordinator Jamie Scrymgour facilitated TLF Community Reference Group meetings in Wurrumiyanga, Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti. We look forward to providing an update on the outcomes in the June newsletter.

Waste management

The TLC team have also been pleased to support the Tiwi Islands Regional Council's swift response to the waste management emergency that developed in Wurrumiyanga in March. It's not new for the road to the waste facility to be

cut off – but this year the damage to the road is far more severe and is expected to last much longer due to the intensity and duration of the wet season.

With waste piling up around Wurrumiyanga, Acting TIRC CEO Heidi Dorn responded quickly to the emergency and enlisted the help of TLC and the Office of Township Leasing. With Heidi's leadership, TIRC has secured one-off funding to enable the transfer of waste off the islands to Shoal Bay and stop the back-log, allowing time for road recovery and to set the waste facility up to take further waste.

It has been great to see Tiwi stakeholders working together during this crisis. The next step is to get the road to the waste facility sealed and for a comprehensive waste management strategy to be put in place for the islands – the TLC continues to work collaboratively with TIRC and other stakeholders to achieve this.

Lastly, with Brenton Toy appointed to the Interim CEO position, Nicola Flook will step into the position of Acting Manager – Policy and Advocacy during this time.



Photo of Paru inter-island ferry landing shared with the Committee for Northern Australia



Nicola (Nikki) Flook – Acting Manager – Policy and Advocacy



James Scrymgour – Tiwi Leaders Forum Coordinator

Explaining Tiwi's fire and carbon project

Burning Tiwi country makes smoke which contains greenhouse gases.

These gases contribute to making the Earth warmer.

This is called global heating and it is changing the climate.

It's getting hotter, sea levels are rising and rainfall events are becoming more intense.

Smoke from Tiwi fires adds to the global heating problem - but Rangers are working to reduce the amount of carbon or smoke that goes into the air.

They do this by burning Country in Kimirrakinari - early in the Dry Season.

Kimirrakinari fires make less smoke... they also keep Country healthy.

By burning early and not burning too much Country Tiwi can earn carbon credits or ACCUs (Australian Carbon Credit Units).

Carbon Credits are valuable.

Tiwi Resources hold the Carbon Credits – then sells them when the price is right.

Because there is a lot of land on the Tiwis, Rangers can help Tiwi people make good money from carbon farming.

The profits flow back to all Tiwi - funding projects that provide jobs and training, keep country healthy, strengthen culture and support future programs.

But if fires are lit by people late in the dry season (after July) more country goes up in smoke and less carbon credits are earned.

The message from Tiwi Indigenous Protected Area Committee member John Wilson is clear.

"We set up that carbon program...if we burn that country wrong way that money goes up in smoke."



What happened with Tiwi fires in 2025?

Last year a significant milestone was reached by Rangers.

For the first time the Tiwi Islands recorded back-to-back good fire years.

In the past there has been a two-year cycle of a good fire year (where not much country is burnt by late dry season fires) followed by a bad year (where a lot of country is burnt by late fires).

This two-year cycle has been bad for country and bad for earning carbon credits.

It means that all the money made in good years must cover the bad years because no credits are earned.

It costs a lot of money to do the annual burning and operational expenses and fuel is going up every year.

In 2025, 24.1 percent of the Tiwi Islands was burnt - 17.2 percent in the early Dry Season and 6.9 percent in the late Dry Season.

By comparison 26 percent of the islands burnt in 2024 and 43 percent of the islands burnt in 2023.

Breaking the two-year cycle has been

a big achievement but Rangers finally did it.

This doesn't mean they can relax though.

The challenge will be to ensure 2026 is another good fire year on the Tiwis.

How did the Rangers achieve such a good result last year?

- Aerial Burning: Helicopters covered 13,847 km of country and Rangers deployed 61,237 incendiaries over 26 burning days.
- Ground Burning: 1,198 km was travelled by Rangers using the Too Easy Fire Stick (vehicle-mounted drip torch) to light fires from roadsides.
- 79.1 helicopter hours were flown over the dry season, with 10 Traditional Owners directly involved in burning operations.

But late fires were still a problem

Last year about 17 fires were deliberately lit by people along roadsides after the July 31 cut-off date.

Five of these fires appear to have been lit in one day by a single person travelling to Rocky Point on Bathurst Island.



New funding for Tiwi Junior Rangers

Great news! The Tiwi Junior Ranger Program has funding until the end of 2027.

This means that Rangers, elders, CDU and the NT Government will be able to continue to deliver work experience opportunities, VET training in conservation and ecosystem management and cultural education activities to Tiwi students.

NIAA Junior Ranger funding was due to run out at the end of last year but Tiwi Resources successfully applied for an extension to the program.

Developing a Junior Ranger Program is a Key Action in the Tiwi Islands IPA Plan of Management (2023- 2033).

IPA Committee members advocated strongly for a Junior Ranger Program right from when planning started in 2020.

Committee member, John Wilson, welcomed the extension of the program.

“Our young people need training to become rangers,” he said.

“We need a Junior Ranger program so young ones can become rangers when they leave school.”

The new funding allows us to expand the program to include Xavier Catholic College with the first joint activity was

held in February and the second in March.

Xavier students joined Tiwi College students at Picka for two weeks of Certificate 1 training in safe work practices and ecosystem restoration.

Tiwi College Principal James Faraone said it was great to have the Xavier students on campus.

“It’s an excellent opportunity to bring the two schools together,” he said.

“We’re very happy Junior Ranger the funding came through and that the Program could be expanded to include Xavier. Our first week was great...the students enjoyed catching up with their friends and they worked really well together. We look forward to a productive year of collaborative learning.”

Xavier VET Coordinator Henri King said that undertaking the VET training in February with the Tiwi College students had been fantastic experience for the Xavier boys.

“The boys were outstanding...they coped well with being out of their home environment and stepped up and worked hard,” he said.

“It was great to see all of the students pulling together as a team to complete the assessments.”

At the end of the two weeks of training 19 young men and women had completed the Work Safety

unit and 21 had completed the Support Ecological Restoration unit.

CDU VET trainer Jacqui Paine the training had been a success.

“We certainly found the students were engaged and lovely to teach,” she said.

Xavier Principal Rhett Bowden said it was brilliant to see Xavier and Tiwi

College working so closely and well together.

“We are extremely proud of our young men and women who participated in the program and very grateful to the Tiwi Junior Rangers and CDU for the opportunity to participate,” he said.

“The students have already learnt so much and are inspired to continue with this study and program.”



Warning about dangerous Yirrikipayi



Rangers and elders are worried that too many kids are risking their lives by swimming in the sea.

The Tiwis are home to lots of very big and very dangerous saltwater crocodiles.

All animals -including people - are food for yirrikipayi.

It's a big concern for everyone.

As part of the Tiwi Junior Ranger program rangers and elders have been visiting schools across the islands to educate students about crocodiles.

Ranger Stanley Tipungwuti delivered nine "croc" safety talks to students over three weeks – a fabulous effort.

He was recently on a boat doing a patrol up the Apsley Strait and saw young kids jumping off the ferry pontoon at Wurrumiyanga with older kids watching on.

He couldn't believe what he was seeing and told Xavier Catholic College students that they needed to look out for the young ones.

"You're leaders here in the school and you need to lead when you're outside school too," he said.

"You were watching those little kids. I was shocked to see them swimming in the sea...you need to keep kids safe from yirrikipayi"



Kids are taking too many risks with yirrikipayi according to IPA Committee member, John Wilson.

"They've got to stay out the water... they can't swim in the sea. It will be a tragedy if one of them gets eaten," he said.

Tiwi Resources Board Chair Alice Munkara said the ranger talks about crocodile safety were very important and young people, particularly in Wurrumiyanga, need to listen.

"Kids are jumping off the pontoon into the sea, it's too dangerous, they don't realise. They need to be aware of those crocs.

Those kids, once they've gone, they can't come back. It will bring big heartache to the community. It will be terrible."

IPA Committee member Marilyn Kerinauia said kids need to hear what the rangers are saying.

"It's not safe, the crocs, they eat people. They can grab the kids, stay out of the sea. Don't jump off that pontoon. I've seen people taken away by crocodiles. It's not safe, those kids might die, they won't

come back to us."

A highlight of the Rangers' visit was a huge Yirrikipayi skull (big thanks to the Crocodile Management Team in Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife!).

Students were so excited to see such a big skull up close and learn more about crocodile biology.

Pularumpi teacher Kaira Leung said the kids are still talking about the skull. "They loved it," she said.

Stanley reminded everyone not to clean fish or camp near the waters' edge.

"Yirrikipayi are very intelligent...they watch you...they're good at hiding and can sneak up and grab you when you're not expecting it.

Thanks to Alice Munkara, John Wilson, Regina Kantilla, Dion Apuatimi, Marilyn Kerinauia, Lorenzo Kerinauia, Patrick Grant, Joseph Warlapinni and the Crocwise team in Darwin for helping the Rangers get crocodile safety messages out to schools.

And thanks for hosting us Milikapiti School, Xavier Catholic College Wurrumiyanga, Pularumpi School, Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School and Tiwi College and remember - DON'T TAKE RISKS WITH YIRRIKIPAYI!

Tiwi crocs get colourful

The Yirrikipayi safety campaign got a whole lot more colourful this year.

The Junior Ranger Program asked artist Fiona Kerinauia for help with getting saltwater crocodile safety messages into Tiwi schools and she contributed a series of beautiful drawings for students to colour in.

Over the past couple of weeks Rangers and elders have been judging the artworks while delivering Crocwise safety messages.

Many students put in a lot of hard work and the judges had a tough job picking winners.

Tiwi Resources Chair Alice Munkara said there were so many there were many beautiful drawings it was hard to choose.

"The kids all did an amazing job, not just the ones that were the winners. It's really important for them to learn about crocodiles. Crocs are too dangerous. Swimming, jumping off the pontoon into the sea, it's too dangerous."

The prizes for the winning artworks included basketballs and footies.



Congratulations to the winners.

- **Milikapiti School:** Austin Wonaeamirri, Cass Kerinauia, Martha Desantis and Summer Warlapinni.
- **Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School:** Nigella Tipungwuti, Vivian Kerinauia, Dominica Munkara and Terrisha Fernando
- **Pularumpi School:** Marlene Brooks, Lachlan Kantilla, Kaicia King, Millie Puruntatameri, Joseph Burke and Elkin Dunn.
- **Xavier Catholic College:** Allysha Lee Turner, Sebanthia Champion, Shekima Tipungwuti, Braxton Nagawalli.



Tiwi College stronger with good engagement in classrooms and on Country

Awungana Mamanta!

It has been a strong and positive start to the year at Tiwi College.

After the impact of Cyclone Fina at the end of 2025 the College has worked hard to recover and reopen and it has been great to see students back, settled and ready to learn.

Since returning, the College has been in a good place.

The campus has been repaired and looks safe, welcoming and ready for learning. Students have returned happy and have been getting back into routines, with good engagement both in the classroom and out on Country.

There have been many great learning experiences this term.

Students have taken part in activities across the islands, including trips to Shark Bay, Munupi Arts and Milikapiti.

These activities connect learning to culture and Country which is very important for our students.

The Junior Ranger Program has been a highlight this term.

Both senior men and senior women have been involved and we have also worked closely with Xavier College on Bathurst Island, bringing students together to learn and train on Country.

The program helps students build skills, confidence and knowledge about their environment, including important safety learning like crocodile awareness.

We are continuing to build strong pathways for students after school.

This includes working with TITEB, who recently visited the College to talk with students about jobs, training and future opportunities on the Tiwi Islands.

These opportunities are important in helping students see what they can do after school.

We are also strengthening links with local businesses and industries, including forestry, Port Melville, and marine businesses like Sea Darwin / Sea Tiwi.



These partnerships help create real job pathways for our students and connect school learning to future work opportunities.

There has also been positive growth in staffing.

We have welcomed new teachers, Tiwi staff, and support staff, and introduced new class structures to better support students.

This includes new middle years classes for young men and young women which is already making a positive difference.

Across the College, there have been other important developments.

Our new Enterprise Bargaining

Agreement (EBA) has been approved, improving conditions for staff.

We have also had strong discussions with the Board around the future direction of the College, including planning for facilities and long-term development.

Throughout the term, staff have shown great teamwork and flexibility, especially during busy weeks and when covering for each other.

Students have also had some great

achievements, including senior students gaining their learner driver certificates and building important life skills.

Overall, it has been a very positive start to the year.

The recovery from Cyclone Fina has not only helped us rebuild but also made us stronger as a College.

We will continue to focus on strong learning, culture, and creating real opportunities for our students into the future.



Legal Matters



ALEX CLUNIES-ROSS
Principal Legal Officer



BEN NILES
Senior Legal Officer

In January this year, Ben Niles joined the Tiwi Land Council Legal Team as our Senior Lawyer. Since then, Ben and I have been working closely together to support Tiwi Land Council's operational teams with legal advice and assistance. Our main focus areas have been helping to prepare Land Use Agreements on time, and supporting the development of governance frameworks for new Tiwi Land Council sub-committees. We have also provided legal input into the permit review project and helped with submissions on public policy and law reform led by the Tiwi Land Council policy team.

I have been really encouraged by the strong commitment shown by Tiwi Land Council Councillors to improving governance and making fair and transparent decisions. One area that can sometimes be challenging is managing conflicts of interest. Because Councillors are often board members of other organisations or representatives of landowner groups and communities, it is common for them to have some connection to the matters being discussed.

When thinking about conflicts of interest, the key question is whether a person will benefit personally from a decision, such as receiving income, or whether their role in another organisation could affect their ability to make decisions in the best interests of Tiwi Land Council. Tiwi Land Council Council bodies openly discuss these situations when they arise and decide together how to manage them. In some cases, this may mean that a member steps out of the room during a decision. Tiwi



Land Council is continuing to strengthen its practices in this area to make sure decisions are fair, open and transparent for all Tiwi people.

Brenton Toy appointed Interim CEO

The Tiwi Land Council has appointed Brenton Toy as Interim CEO, commencing 13 April 2026.

Brenton is a Tiwi man and will be well known to community members across the Islands. Currently the Manager

of Policy and Advocacy, Brenton has been managing the Land Council's relationships with a wide-range of stakeholders, including the Australian and Northern Territory Governments, our Land Council peers, and other Aboriginal peak bodies across the NT.

Brenton also brings extensive experience working within government, primary with the NT Department of Education as well as the NT Institute of Sport. But he may be best known for his long-term involvement with the Tiwi

Bombers, dating back to his time as Head Coach and General Manager in 2007-2009.

Brenton's appointment follows the Full Council's decision in March 2026 to readvertise the CEO role, with applications for this second round closing on 17 April. At the request of the Full Council, outgoing CEO, Brendan Ferguson, will continue to provide support to Brenton and the Council in a part-time capacity until a permanent CEO has been appointed.

Judge thanked for her care, humanity and empathy in emotional ceremony

Tiwi islanders have recognised and thanked Deputy Chief Judge Tanya Fong Lim for the care, humanity and empathy she showed in Tiwi court hearings.

Elders farewelled Judge Fong Lim in an emotional ceremony last November ahead of her retirement in February after a distinguished decades-long career.

Judge Tanya Fong Lim started presiding over the Tiwi circuit of the Local Court well over a decade ago and fell in love with the islands and Tiwi people.

Judge Fong Lim relished travelling to the Tiwis every month in order to hear and determine matters brought before the Local Court.

Elders say Tiwi people, particularly women who are so often the brunt of illegal behaviour which gives rise to charges, were grateful for the presence



of Judge Fong Lim in Tiwi courts.

They cited the care, humanity and empathy with which she heard and determined matters on the Tiwis.

At the ceremony in November she may even have shed a tear in the emotional ceremony, showing how much she cared for the Tiwi people.

"I was privileged to serve the Tiwi people for over 10 years. We had mutual respect in matters before the court and that was reflected in the fact that I never had any security issues when sitting in the council rooms on Wurrumiyanga and Milikapiti. And the very small room at Pirlangimpi," Judge Fong Lim said.

"I was able to meet sister Anne on several occasions and appreciated her insight into the Tiwi people," she said.

"I was especially privileged to work with the very professional interpreter service led by Mary Dunn and also enjoyed working with Tiwi elder Luke Tipuamautamerri until his recent retirement as the resident corrections officer on the islands.

"The dance for me at my last sitting was very special and a memory I will treasure forever."

A Workforce Plan Written From Country: Tiwi People Leading Their Own Futures

When governments talk about workforce planning, it is often framed through data, projections and policy levers developed far from the places they are meant to serve. On the Tiwi Islands, something very different has emerged.

The Tiwi Islands Community Workforce Plan 2025–2027 is not just another policy document. It is a living, community led roadmap shaped by Tiwi voices, Tiwi knowledge and Tiwi aspirations — grounded in culture, place and lived experience. While its origins sit within the Northern Territory Government’s Regional Towns framework, the final plan stands firmly apart as a genuinely Tiwi designed response to workforce development.

This is a plan written from Country.

Led by the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board (TITEB) and endorsed by the Tiwi Land Council and all eight Tiwi clan groups, the Community Workforce Plan flips the traditional script. Instead of asking communities to fit into pre designed economic models, it asks a far more powerful question: what does meaningful work look like for Tiwi people, now and into the future?

Community ownership at its core

From the outset, the plan was designed to belong to the community. Tiwi people were not consulted as an afterthought — they were the architects.

Community members, elders, clan groups, employers, schools, service providers and young people all contributed their perspectives on work, training and opportunity. The result is a shared workforce aspiration roadmap that speaks not just to job numbers, but to dignity, identity and long term wellbeing.



The plan identifies short, medium and long term employment opportunities across sectors that matter to the Tiwi way of life: caring for family and community, working on Country, building and feeding the community, education, health, tourism, cultural enterprises and environmental management. It also names, honestly and clearly, the real barriers people face — housing shortages, high transport costs, limited infrastructure, literacy and digital access, and the ongoing impact of past policy failures.

By naming these realities, the plan creates space for solutions that are practical, culturally safe and achievable.

Research grounded in culture, guided by Tiwi knowledge

A defining strength of the Tiwi Islands Community Workforce Plan is the depth,

integrity and cultural authority of the research that underpins it.

Highly respected researcher Julia Khukalenko undertook the workforce research through extended physical immersion in the Tiwi Islands, working directly with community members, employers, leaders and cultural authorities. This was not a fly in, fly out exercise. Time on Country, deep listening and adherence to Tiwi cultural protocols shaped every stage of the research process.

Critically, Julia’s work was guided by Tiwi cultural co author and knowledge holder Therese Puruntatameri, who acted as her cultural sounding board throughout the project. Therese’s role ensured that Tiwi worldviews, values, language considerations and cultural obligations were properly understood,

respected and embedded — not translated through a westernised policy filter. This partnership was essential in safeguarding cultural integrity and ensuring the research reflected Tiwi realities rather than external assumptions.

Together, this two way approach to research — combining rigorous methodology with Tiwi cultural authority — ensured the Community Workforce Plan is authentic, grounded and trustworthy. The inclusion of Julia’s research paper as a formal annexure to the plan provides transparency and credibility, while standing as a powerful example of how research in remote communities should be undertaken: collaboratively, respectfully and through the lens of the people whose futures it seeks to support.

Sea Rights gathering on Thursday Island

A Sea Rights gathering on Thursday Island, was hosted by the Governor General, Her Excellency Sam Mostyn and her husband Mr. Simeon Beckett SC. on January 15–16, 2026. This brought together Torres Strait leaders to demand legislative recognition of Sea Country rights, commercial fishing rights, and co-governance of marine areas, coinciding with the 90th anniversary of the 1936 Maritime Strike. The Tiwi Land Council (TLC) was invited as observers and the Deputy Chair with TLC members and staff attended.

Key Outcomes and Discussions:

- **Sea Country Rights:** Leaders demanded that Sea Country rights be formally recognized in law, emphasizing the need for Traditional Owner decision-making power over activities in their waters.
- **Keynote Address:** Registrar Katie Stride from the National Native Title Tribunal presented on navigating complex jurisdictional offshore rights, particularly regarding the Blue Economy and the Nature Repair Act.
- **90th Anniversary:** The gathering marked the 1936 Maritime Strike, in which Torres Strait Islanders protested against the dangerous conditions in the pearl diving industry.



- **Foreign Fishing Incident:** During the gathering, a foreign fishing vessel was reported near Cape York, highlighting the immediate security and resource management concerns of the region.

The gathering aimed to move from traditional, often non-representative, regulations toward a system where indigenous rights are fully embedded in modern legislation.

Source: *National Indigenous Times*

Meet Jarrakalani

– a new journey and tourism link between Darwin and the Tiwi Islands

Meet *Jarrakalani* (Tiwi Name for Sea Turtle) – a new journey and tourism link between Darwin and the Tiwi Islands.

Across the waters of the Arafura Sea, a new chapter is beginning.

Jarrakalani, the newest vessel for Sea Darwin Sea Tiwi, was built with a clear purpose – to strengthen the connection between Darwin and the Tiwi Islands and to open the door for more people to experience the culture, stories, and spirit of Tiwi Country.

For many years, the Tiwi Islands have welcomed visitors eager to learn about the rich traditions, world-renowned art, and vibrant community life that make the Islands so special.

But as interest in Tiwi tourism has grown, so too has the need for reliable, comfortable transport that

can safely bring visitors, community members, and businesses together across the sea.

That vision led to the creation of *Jarrakalani*.

Purpose-built as the flagship vessel for Sea Darwin Sea Tiwi, *Jarrakalani* has been designed to support more than just travel.

She will carry up to 46 visitors to cultural tours, art centre visits, sporting events, festivals, and community gatherings – creating new opportunities for Tiwi businesses while sharing Tiwi culture with the wider world.

Her name reflects the deep connection between the Tiwi people and their sea country, and her journey represents something bigger than a ferry service.

Jarrakalani is about bringing



people together – visitors, artists, families, and communities – and strengthening the pathway between Darwin and the Islands.

With bookings already secured from large groups and interstate visitors, excitement is building as *Jarrakalani* prepares to begin operations in Darwin. The vessel is expected to play an important role in growing Tiwi tourism and supporting

local economic opportunities for years to come.

Soon, Sea Darwin Sea Tiwi will proudly celebrate her arrival with a special media launch in partnership with Tiwi Land Council – marking the beginning of many journeys across the water.

Because every journey to the Tiwi Islands should start with a story. And *Jarrakalani* is ready to help tell it.



Tiwi Islands road upgrades

The Australian Government and Northern Territory Government have committed \$75 million to upgrade roads in the Tiwi Islands.

The funding was allocated to improve Melville Island roads, linking communities, forestry plantations and the ferry terminal to Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island.

In October 2024, the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure completed the upgrade of Paru Road as identified as a priority. This included the construction of a new bridge for approximately \$30 million.

The remaining funds have been allocated to upgrade around 16 km of Pirlangimpi Road, from the Paru Road intersection.

These works are anticipated to be publicly tendered in March 2026 with the contract award anticipated mid-2026.



Mantiyupwi oyster farm – growing strong on sea country

Under a wide blue Tiwi sky, the Mantiyupwi Oyster Farm crew stand proudly beside their vehicle, the Apsley Strait behind them and the ferry pontoon framing the horizon.

What began as a trial is now clearly becoming something much bigger.

In mid-February 2026, the Mantiyupwi Oyster Farm team welcomed staff from the Darwin Aquaculture Centre to Wurrumiya for an important grading and sampling visit.

Timing was carefully planned around tides, with a 1.4m low tide still workable for accessing the longline.

Weather, currents and logistics all form part of daily life for the crew.

The objective was clear: Retrieve oysters and spat; grade and measure growth and survival; prepare additional baskets; undertake NT Shellfish Quality Assurance Program (NTSQAP) and return stock safely to the lines.

The results were encouraging.

Spat that had initially been placed in socks were ready to move into 3mm baskets.

Growth rates were strong.

Survival rates were positive.

Salinity at 32 and water temperature at 30°C showed the oysters were thriving in local conditions.

For the crew, Urban Kerinauia, Virgil Kerinauia, Les Morris Ullungura and Guy Munkara, grading is more than a technical exercise.

It is hands-on, practical aquaculture in action. Baskets are lifted, oysters sorted, sizes assessed, and stock redistributed to maximise growth.

Every movement builds skill and confidence.

Les and Urban held up freshly graded oysters, thick shells, healthy weight, clean growth lines. In another moment, hands cupped mature oysters ready for market consideration.

Nearby, stacks of baskets showed the infrastructure steadily expanding.

This is no longer just a concept. It is now production.

The February grading builds on momentum created during the 2025 Field Day where the Mantiyupwi Oyster Program was showcased to partners and community members.

That event demonstrated:

- Strong inter-agency collaboration
- Growing technical confidence of the Tiwi crew
- Practical proof that Blacklip Rock Oysters can be farmed successfully in the Apsley Strait
- Clear community interest in the program

Since then, the project has advanced significantly:

- Expansion of baskets and floats
- Improved grading systems
- Structured growth and survival data collection
- Ongoing NTSQAP compliance
- Strengthened partnership with Darwin Aquaculture Centre

The oysters photographed in February represent another step forward – moving from feasibility into early-stage production.

The images tell an important story. They show:

- Tiwi men leading marine operations on their own Sea Country
- Confidence handling stock and infrastructure
- Pride in progress
- A program transitioning from trial to enterprise

Urban, Virgil, Cameron and Guy are not just employees. They are building capability in marine operations, stock management, biosecurity awareness and production planning. Each grading cycle strengthens both the oysters, and the team.

With infrastructure scaling (additional baskets, planned line expansion, purpose-built punt underway), the Mantiyupwi Oyster Farm is entering a higher responsibility phase.

Production remains limited, not yet full commercial volume, but there is



now enough quality product to begin showcasing the Tiwi-grown Blacklip Rock Oyster to locals and visitors.

This is a critical transition:

- From trial to reputation
- From demonstration to identity
- From feasibility to pride

The February 2026 grading confirmed something important:

- The oysters are growing.
- The systems are working.
- The crew are ready.

And the Mantiyupwi Oyster Farm is firmly on its way.



COMMUNITY QUICK RESPONSE GRANTS

Aboriginal Investment NT's **Community Quick Response Grants** are open for applications throughout the year.

Apply for **up to \$20,000 to support one-off projects** in urban, regional and remote Aboriginal communities and homelands across the NT.

To learn more about the Grant or to apply, visit aboriginalinvestment.org.au/community-quick-response-grants

📷 [aboriginalinvestment_nt](https://www.instagram.com/aboriginalinvestment_nt)
📘 [AboriginalInvestmentNT](https://www.facebook.com/AboriginalInvestmentNT)

ABORIGINAL INVESTMENT

Seagrass vital for healthy Sea Country

Seagrass is a “wonder plant” that meadows around the Tiwi Islands allowing marine biodiversity to flourish and provide critical habitat for marine biodiversity, improving quality and protecting the coast from erosion.

In March, Tiwi Rangers developed a whole new appreciation for seagrass at a workshop at the Centre for Tropical Water and Aquatic Ecosystem Research (TropWATER) at James Cook University in Cairns, Queensland.

The Tiwi team joined other groups from across northern Australia at the workshop.

Amy Munkara said it was great learning from other rangers, especially from groups in the Torres Strait.

“It was my first time learning about seagrass,” she said.

Dugongs and green turtles –species of both cultural and global conservation significance—mainly feed on seagrass.

An adult green turtle eats about two kilograms of seagrass a day while an adult dugong eats about 28 kilograms a day.

The TropWATER team taught Rangers about data input and why it is important to record things the same way each time when conducting seagrass surveys.

Rangers learnt about habitat analysis and how to use drone mapping software - following on from field trips on Tiwi Sea Country last year.

They also learnt how to identify seagrass and different types of corals and algae from samples in the lab.

Ranger Shenaida Bush found the workshop “mind-blowing.”

“It was really helpful to learn - I loved that seagrass research,” she said.



“Before I went to the workshop I thought there was only one type of seagrass and now I can identify many different types.”

Seagrass meadows are also important to climate change because they store large amounts of carbon dioxide from the ocean.

Unfortunately, a snorkelling trip to Green Island was cancelled due to wet weather but Rangers were able to visit the Cairns Aquarium.

This gave them a great opportunity to observe marine habitats and identify the species they had been learning about all week.

The trip certainly helped improve the Rangers’ understanding of what lives in Tiwi Sea Country.

Ranger Henry Kerinauia was very positive about the TropWATER workshop.

“It was great, really good to learn from other mob in Cairns - we learned about seagrass in the Torres Strait too.”

New Telecommunications Completed in Ranku

Telstra has successfully completed the installation of a new 4G-lite satellite small cell and telecommunications tower in Ranku, funded through the TLC NT Indigenous Economic Stimulus Package.

This completed project provides improved mobile coverage and connectivity to the community through modern satellite-supported 4G-lite technology.

Residents can now benefit from more reliable communication services, making it easier to stay connected with family, access online services, and engage with education, health, and emergency support.

For Tiwi people, this initiative delivers lasting benefits—supporting digital inclusion, strengthening local economic opportunities, and enhancing community safety and wellbeing.



Biosecurity matters

Awana mamanta!

Welcome to the first biosecurity article for 2026. It has been a busy time over the last few months with over 500 inspections completed. One of the biggest things that has come up is the taking of plants to the islands.

As the need to protect the islands is at the forefront of my mind it is important to remember that we have protocols in place to ensure that the Islands are kept safe from pests, weeds and diseases.

The Tiwi Land Council has two approved suppliers for plants that have been carefully and thoroughly checked to ensure that they comply with the standards needed to send plants to the Islands, these are Territory Native Plants and Darwin Plant Wholesalers.

When purchasing plants from these two suppliers it is important to remember that the TLC will still need to approve any and all plants that are purchased to ensure that they will not pose a threat to the natural flora and fauna on the Islands.

Approval can be given by first contacting the TLC and providing a list of plants that would be required.

You can then with an approval email from TLC contact one of the two suppliers and provide them with the plants wanting to be purchased.

Once the plants are sent to the



Tamara South
Quarantine and Biosecurity Officer

barge company the TLC Quarantine and Biosecurity Officer will then inspect the plants before they are transported.

Please remember, if you wish to take machinery, vehicles, freight or plants 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 and inspected.

For any queries or guidance contact the Quarantine and Biosecurity officer on 0483 210 298.



Tiwi Seasons

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 Marrakatari

Welcome new staff

KIARA PETTERSON | Tiwi Culture & Engagement team

We welcome Kiara Petterson to the Tiwi Land Council Tiwi Culture & Engagement team. She is a Rak Mak Mak Marranungu woman from the Finnis River region and has kinship connections to Tiwi through her father. Through her mother, she is connected to the Wardaman people from the Katherine region and Wagadadam from the Torres Strait Islands.

Kiara completed her Bachelor of Laws last year, and previously worked at a commercial firm in Brisbane, and at the Northern Land Council here in Darwin. Kiara has a keen interest in ALRA and Native Title and is excited to be re-entering the NT Land Council sector after completing her studies in 2025. Most important, learning and reconnecting with her father's family, and serving Tiwi people.

We are pleased to have you on board.



ANA RALLO GARCÍA | Governance, Risk and Compliance Officer

Please welcome Ana Rallo García, who has recently joined Tiwi Land Council as Governance, Risk and Compliance Officer. Ana is originally from Spain and has recently relocated to Darwin to begin this new role.

Ana brings experience across governance, legal and project support roles, having worked in institutional environments such as the European Parliament and UNESCO. She holds legal qualifications in both Spanish and French Law, and has recently completed a Master's in International Cooperation and Project Management, with a focus on community-led projects. She is passionate about multiculturalism, and her key focus throughout her legal studies has been the protection of human rights within Indigenous communities.

Ana is looking forward to learning more about the work of Tiwi Land Council and contributing to governance and compliance initiatives that support Traditional Owners and Tiwi communities. Outside of work, she enjoys travelling, learning languages, and spending time by the sea.



AIMEE LEVEY | Human Resources Coordinator

Hello, it's a pleasure to introduce myself to the Tiwi Land Council and the Tiwi community.

Originally from the Hunter Valley in NSW, I've spent many years travelling and exploring different parts of Australia. In 2015, I made the move from Brisbane to Darwin. I then had the opportunity to relocate to Kakadu, where I spent five years living and working in a remote community an experience that was both rewarding and memorable. In early 2025, my family and I made the decision to return to Darwin. There is no doubt that the Northern Territory truly has our hearts.

I'm a proud mum to a very active and fun-loving three-year-old who certainly keeps our household busy, full of energy, and endlessly entertaining.

Professionally, I bring over 10 years of experience in the People & Capability field, working across government, not-for-profit, and private sectors. Throughout my career, I've partnered with leaders and teams to support workforce strategy, build capability, and foster positive and inclusive organisational cultures. I'm passionate about supporting people to thrive in their roles and contributing to meaningful outcomes.

I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Tiwi Land Council and am excited to be working alongside the community. I look forward to meeting you all and getting to know everyone.



Mega exciting weekend of festival and footy set for mid-dry season

In a place where Australian Rules Football and art are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric it's only fitting that these two passions unite in a powerful celebration of Tiwi identity and community.

The Tiwi Cultural Festival alongside the Tiwi Islands Football Grand Final are among the most anticipated events on the Northern Territory's tourist calendar.

And the dates for this year's double-day extravaganza are set.

The Tiwi Cultural Festival will be held on Saturday 18 July.

The Tiwi islands football grand final will be held at Wurrumiyanga the next day, Sunday 19 July.

Hosted by the Tiwi Land Council and Tuwurrampila Cultural Heritage Committee, the Festival brings together Elders, artists, families and visitors to honour Tiwi culture, creativity, and community spirit.

For conference and incentive groups, this two-day Festival provides an unforgettable opportunity to engage meaningfully with Tiwi culture while supporting community-led initiatives.

Whether through participation in workshops, attending the football, or visiting art centres and local stalls, delegates are immersed in the richness of Tiwi life.

From a corporate social responsibility (CSR) perspective, your involvement can go even further.

NT Business Events can help integrate CSR initiatives into your group's itinerary, whether that's through in-kind contributions, sponsorship, volunteering, or other forms of support that leave a lasting positive impact.

The Tiwi Cultural Festival not only strengthens intergenerational knowledge-sharing and economic opportunity but also invites visitors to gain a deeper appreciation of Tiwi land and sea care practices, artistic traditions, and cultural resilience.

Hundreds of visitors are expected to pack ferries, boats and planes to converge on Wurrumiyanga, near Stanley

Tipiloura Oval, for the festival organised by the Tiwi Land Council with the help of other Tiwi stakeholders.

Visitors should book ferry tickets early so as not to be disappointed and miss out.

The festival will kick off with the opening of an Expo, including a range of stalls, workshops and activities.

Among them are expected to be Border Force and Australian Defence Force displays.

Top Indigenous artists and bands will perform throughout the day and evening.

The Tiwi Islands, comprising Melville and Bathurst Islands, are recognized for their significant biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Last year the United States Marines also sent a delegation, signalling good relations between the US force and Tiwi islanders after the 2024 Osprey helicopter crash that killed three marines.

Wurrumiyanga is the heart of Tiwi culture.

Visitors can visit the Patakijiyali Museum where you will uncover stories of the Tiwi's mission days and the islands' involvement in World War II.

They can also visit Tiwi Design, one of the oldest and most artistically diverse art centres in Australia.

The Tiwi Football grand final has become one of the most iconic games embedded into Australian Football League culture.

The match never disappoints.

Last year the legendary grand finals drew thousands of people to Wurrumiyanga Oval on Sunday to see the men's Imalu Tigers and women's Muluwurri Magpies claim victory in 2025 Tiwi Islands Football League grand finals.

For many, the Tigers' win was an emotional victory and an unexpected outcome given the Magpies were unbeaten all season.



Tiwi Cultural Festival and Tiwi Football grand final

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 July 2026

