

Thank you, senators, for your invitation.

I wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding region.

I would also like to note my condolences to the ALC on the recent loss of their Deputy Chairman, Mr. Amagula. He was a man of cultural integrity, knowledge, and authority. A strong advocate for Land and Sea Rights, who stood not just for Anindilyakwa people but for all Aboriginal people. His presence and contribution will be sorely missed by those of us serving Traditional Owners in the NT Land Council sector.

I am Helen Daiyi, Project Officer for the Tiwi Land Council. I am a Rak Mak Mak Marranungu woman whose ancestral lands are located on the Delissaville/Wagait/Larrakia Aboriginal Land Trust, which we call '*Gurrindju*'. I am also Tiwi, as inherited by my maternal grandmother. She belonged to the Miyartuwi Skin Group and Tarnakuwi '*Flying Fox*' Tribe. It is through my matrilineal line I stand before you as a Tiwi woman, representative of the Tiwi Land Council.

The TLC is the smallest of the four Territory Land Councils with a present staff complement of 16 persons (12 female, 4 male). We have recently gone through a period of expansion and organizational change. Our present priorities are 1, internal reform; 2, recruitment of Tiwi staff on the islands and, and 3, facing land management challenges associated with numerous, potential feral animal and weed species (Cane toads, gamba grass, fire ants, the acacia escaped from plantations on the island - to name only several of the most dangerous ones. If these get a hold, they will, scientists tell us, alter the islands' environment in a radical way and lead to species decline and extinctions as has occurred on the adjacent mainland.

In April 2023 the Council removed the previous administration following a damning external review that was commissioned by the TLC itself. Our CEO's remit includes internal reforms in response to this review – being wide reforms in policy as well as practice. Since this the TLC has been further reviewed by the *Australian National Audit Office* (ANAO). This, their Performance Review, was finalized in xx 2023. It made 13 recommendations. All have been accepted and the Land Council has

began to action them. Our responsive timetable expects that all are fully implemented by February 2024.

Central to these reforms are the Tiwi people for whom the TLC intends to provide modern, professional services in fulfilling its Land Rights Act responsibilities. The Land Council now operates in an open and wholly transparent manner. The Land Council has introduced elections and intends to continue with membership chosen by fair elections with the islands' population advised in advance and participation encouraged and welcomed. Elections have been and will be independently conducted by the *N.T. Electoral Commission* in accord with a published timetable. Staff are recruited by merit through quality HR procedures. The Land Council is committed to diversity in all forms and has begun taking steps to enhance gender and age diversity.

In July, a resolution was passed at Full Council for the establishment of a TLC Cultural Committee. The recommendation was put forth in response to concerns raised about younger generations of Tiwi not engaging with cultural activities e.g., not speaking fluent Tiwi, not following kinship rules (going wrong side) or non-participation in ceremony. Underpinning this are high rates of crime, violence and suicide.

The purpose of the committee is to advise, facilitate and oversee the implementation of projects and events that support, strengthen, and sustain Tiwi culture. The TLC acknowledges the intrinsic value of Tiwi culture for all Tiwi people as a nation. Language and ceremony form a large part of culture and are essential to the wellbeing and identity of Tiwi people. Our fear is knowledge may become distant, inaccessible, and perhaps ultimately a matter of heritage rather than a culture of living traditions.

The TLC Cultural Advisory Committee was officially formed on Thursday 19th October 2023 at Wurrumiyanga. It was then submitted to the Full Council on Monday 23rd October 2023 at Wurrumiyanga, and was unanimously endorsed.