

SENATE ESTIMATES OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning Senators,

My name is Karina Coomes, I am the Trustee for Munupi Clan group.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I am joined by my colleagues – Cheryl Kerinaiaua, Anastasius Virgona and Tyeanne Heenan – Tinoco.

The Tiwi Land Council is dedicated to the care for and advancement of our Tiwi Islands.

Firstly, welcome to our new CEO, Brendan Ferguson, who brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective.

We also thank outgoing CEO Robert Graham for his 18 months of stabilising leadership and implementation of the ANAO review recommendations.

We also welcome our new Chair Mr. Tungatalum and acknowledge the ten years of service given by outgoing Chair Gibson Farmer Illortaminni.

The full Tiwi Land Council has recently met, after elections held in December & January, with fifty percent of new members being women, making our Council more representative of our Tiwi community. Our voices bring balance and enrich our decision-making processes.

The Tiwi Land Council recently completed a staff restructure in order to better serve the Tiwi people, aiming for more efficient operations and improved communication, accountability, and service delivery.

We proudly announce the Tuwurrampila Cultural Committee, ratified by the full Land Council to guide culturally significant decisions, ensuring respect for Tiwi traditions and values and providing a means to achieve cultural initiatives identified as priorities for the Tiwi Islands and our communities.

We are collaborating with NIAA to establish the Tiwirrampila Leaders Forum aimed at better coordinating and creating opportunities for emerging Tiwi leaders.

A critical issue is suicide.

Late last year, we had two suicides within weeks.

Our Cultural Committee and Tiwi Leadership Forums aim to address this.

Tiwi culture and self-determination can be protective factors. Enhancing social and emotional wellbeing involves maintaining connections to country, culture, spirituality, and kinship networks. Investment in Tiwi culture and self-determination is fundamental to healing.

The Land Council continues to implement the ANAO audit recommendations, with many addressed and others ongoing.

Securing rights over Tiwi Sea country is crucial for our identity and culture, enabling us to manage marine resources sustainably and benefit directly from them. We aim to reset relations with oil and gas stakeholders, ensuring appropriate processes around their activities and future engagement. We have met with them twice in the past three weeks to further discuss what this might look like.

We are committed to assisting Tiwi people with culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable economic development opportunities that give us financial independence.

In closing, the Tiwi Land Council is committed to a future where our cultural heritage and community wellbeing are prioritised. We are excited about the positive changes and opportunities ahead, supported by new leadership, diverse voices, and our Cultural Committee.

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Thank you.