



T.E.A.C.A
Top End Aboriginal Conservation Alliance
Shop 9, Rapid Creek Business Village
Trower Rd MILLNER, NT 0810

To: The Environment, Communication and the Arts - Senate Committee.
Re: Mining and Forestry Operations on the Tiwi Islands.

The Top End Aboriginal Conservation Alliance (TEACA) is concerned about a number of issues relating to the breaches cited from the current commercial forestry operations on the Tiwi Islands. The TEACA coordinator has already shared some of these concerns with representatives of The Wilderness Society, when they recently visited Darwin. We understand that the Tiwi Land Council remains supportive of the ongoing expansion of the commercial forestry industry on the islands, via the company Great Southern Plantations (GSP).

TEACA fully recognises and supports the rights of TOs to speak for their own country, however, it is very clear that not all Tiwi people support this commercial enterprise on the islands. It will no doubt be noted in other submission to the Senate, that there was a petition signed by over 100 Tiwi women, opposing the expansion of the GPS forestry operations. Tiwi women remain totally unrepresented on the Tiwi Land Council.

The TEACA coordinator has reasonably good knowledge of Tiwi natural resources, via research undertaken with TOs on the islands, over a number of years - together with Glenn Wightmann (Botanist with the Parks & Wildlife Services NT), we helped to record traditional Tiwi knowledge about their plants and animals.

This comprehensive study was published several years ago in a book titled "Tiwi Plants & Animals". The TEACA coordinator also participated (as a Parks technician) in the Tiwi Islands flora & fauna surveys, undertaken in the 1990's by Parks & Wildlife Services NT, with the involvement & assistance of TOs. As such, the following comments come can be considered to come from an informed perspective.

- Species of national significance. There are a number of species of national significance that may be impacted by the continued poor management of the commercial GSP forestry operations - they are; The Red Goshawk, Migratory Birds, Dugong, Marine Turtles, numerous species of Dolphins/Whales, Freshwater Turtles, Dunnarts, etc.

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- The Plains Turkey or Kori Bustard is one species already observed to have become rare/extinct on the islands, most likely due to a combination of modern

hunting techniques/transport and the mass clearing & planting of a non native timber species, in their preferred habitat (open grassy plains).

- Suggest that the NTG and Tiwi Land Council undertake immediate comprehensive flora & fauna surveys, to ascertain any changes in biodiversity, since the last survey in the 1990's.
- Suggest that, due to cultural and family considerations, some Tiwi people who wish to give evidence be assisted to give their statements to the Senate Committee, in a confidential manner.
- Suggest some of the Senators consider visiting these beautiful islands, as soon as practicable, to observe first hand the impacts of the forestry operations that are already apparent, particularly from the air.
- Note the dwindling habitat of one very culturally important 'species' (not currently recognised by western science) - the Nyingawi or 'Little Hairy Men'. More details on this 'species' habitat and resource requirements may be ascertained from the TOs themselves, if they wish to openly discuss them.
- Suggest that future investigations involve some commercial scrutiny of the imposing very long term involvement of John Hicks on the TLC - and that any submissions received by his wife or her friend, be declared a conflict of interest, as it is our understanding that the nature of these relationships was not divulged in their written submissions to Senators.
- That the large scale use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and termite control be halted immediately and clean/green alternatives be adopted to ensure that soil and waterways remain uncontaminated.
- That the ongoing opposition of a number of Tiwi women to sand mining and commercial forestry be more adequately addressed. A petition opposing the forestry expansion, signed by over 100 Tiwi women, called the 'Strong Women's Group' should be viewed and considered by all Senators, when making their recommendations.

Thank you for considering our comments and suggestions,

Sincerely

Donna Jackson

Coordinator - TEACA