



# Melville Island Lodge

Northern Territory, Australia

February 23rd, 2009

**Senate Standing Committee on  
Environment, Communications and the Arts**  
Via email to: [eca.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:eca.sen@aph.gov.au)

## Submission for

### **THE ENQUIRY INTO TIWI ISLANDS MATTERS FORRESTRY-MINING-ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comment concerning your Enquiry into Tiwi Islands Matters. I am not an expert on Tiwi or Indigenous Affairs but have some personal opinions, which I'd like to share with the Committee, based on the time I have spent, and the business dealings I have had, with the people of the Tiwi Islands.

#### **About the Submitter**

- The Submitter owns Melville Island Lodge, a recreational sport-fishing and hunting tour business situated in the Tiwi township of Milikapiti. The business employs 10 people and generates annual revenues of around \$2million.
- Melville Island Lodge operates within the terms of a Land Lease and Licencing Agreement issued by the Tiwi Aboriginal Land Trust and managed by the Tiwi Land Council. The business currently contributes approximately \$100,000.00 per annum of direct income to the Tiwi people.
- The Submitter is a member of the Tiwi Land Council Audit Committee and has recently been asked to join the Tiwi Island Local Government Finance Committee.
- The Submitter has either owned or managed businesses for 25 years. Prior to commencing the Melville Island Lodge business, the submitter was founder and Chief Executive Officer of Royal Wolf Containers, a company which, at that time, employed 250+ people and generated annual revenues well exceeding \$100million.

#### **What the Tiwi's want**

The Submitter has frequented the Tiwi Islands since 1998 during which time I have got to know and understand the Tiwi people, their culture and their personal aspirations reasonably well. For as long as I can recall, the Tiwi leaders have promoted a "vision" for their people which is discussed and embraced throughout the communities I have visited. It calls for:

1. The best possible education and training for Tiwi people
2. The opportunity for Tiwi's to gain meaningful employment on their own land
3. The opportunity for Tiwi's to own their own home on their own land

The Tiwi "vision" is no different to the vision or aspirations of most Australians and the Tiwi strategy to achieve their vision is sound and straightforward: **Better Education & Training + local Business Development = Tiwi Jobs...!**

The Tiwi's know this is not a short term strategy, but thanks to the will and determination of Traditional Owners and the Tiwi Land Council a number of strategic and very important platform initiatives have already been put in place. They include:

- The construction and successful commencement of the Tiwi College
- The introduction of Great Southern Plantations and other smaller businesses to the Tiwi Islands
- The appointment of a qualified Tiwi Business Development Manager who's role is to investigate and recommend other potential Tiwi based business opportunities

**What the Tiwi's need to help achieve their vision:**

- Strong core business activity that provides Tiwi jobs and income
- Genuine support and encouragement to achieve their desired outcomes
- Meaningful consultation between the Tiwi Land Council and relevant Government Agencies in order to formulate and implement a Tiwi Islands Business Development Plan that satisfies both Tiwi objectives and standard Government environmental and regulatory framework.

**What the Tiwi's don't need:**

- 'Analysis Paralysis'...being constantly bogged down with Government policy agenda, Committees, Fact Finding Missions, Consultants, Workshops and "do-gooders"...
- Convoluted Government communication channels and decision making processes.
- Competing Government agendas.
- A Tiwi school leaver being told his work choices are limited to basket weaving or picking up litter...!

**Doing Business with the Tiwi's**

The Tiwi's have been excellent business partners for Melville Island Lodge. The Executive Committee of the Tiwi Land Council has an open, transparent and highly competent approach to conducting business which has enabled us to successfully expand the Lodge business for the financial benefit of both parties.

The people of the Tiwi Islands conduct their business affairs professionally, competently and with honesty and I would therefore have no hesitation in recommend them as business partners to any organisation seeking to develop business on the Tiwi Islands.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to present comment. This Submission contains private opinions which don't necessarily agree with the opinions of Melville Island Lodge staff or fellow members of committees I represent.

Yours sincerely,



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Managing Director  
Melville Island Lodge

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