

Dear Senator Birmingham,

I wish to correct some factually incorrect statements made to the Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts, References Committee.

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the Tiwi Land Council's recent response to "Possible Questions for the Tiwi Land Council" (8 September 2009) in regard to the Committee's current Inquiry into Forestry and Mining on the Tiwi Islands.

At page 6 in response to question 8, the Tiwi Land Council's response states at point 2:

"More recently in 2003, Tiwi Islands Local Government employed a committed environmental strategist from Adelaide - Sarah Alpers."

This statement is factually incorrect for three reasons:

1. I was not employed by the Tiwi Islands Local Government. I was employed by the Northern Territory Government, funded by the Australian Government.

2. My employment on the Tiwi Islands was not in 2003, but from May 2006 to April 2007.

3. I was not employed as a "committed environmental strategist", but as a Development Coordinator to offer governance support for the Tiwi Islands Local Government, assist with community projects, and develop and promote New Local Government with the transition to Shires. My professional background is law and my 16 year career prior to working in Tiwi had been solely based working with Aboriginal people and the criminal justice system.

Further again at page 6 in response to question 8, the Tiwi Land Council's response states at point 2:

"Ms Alpers and her colleague Ms Maren Dumbleton founded a group at Nguuu of generally older Tiwi women on the basis of their being "strong women."

This statement is again factually incorrect. Myself and Ms Dumbleton did not found a group of older Tiwi women. On arrival in Nguuu in 2006, I met members of the already existing Wangatunga Strong Women's Group. As one of my community projects, I provided assistance and support to the Group at their request, through for example, arranging for their Women's Centre to be painted, liaison with Red Cross, accounting assistance, and support for attendance at a Healthy Eating Camp.

I am concerned to read such fundamental factual errors and am grateful for the opportunity to correct them.

I would greatly appreciate receiving confirmation of this email and also receiving your advice as to how the errors will be corrected, particularly if the Tiwi Land Council submission remains in the public domain.

Thank you for your time in considering these matters. I wish you and your Committee all the best with your inquiry.

Sarah Alpers