



Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts.
CANBERRA.

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Tiwi Land Council has been informed of a factually flawed and provocative article written by a Ken Eldridge appearing on your website under the heading "Forestry on the Tiwi Islands."

We attach an accurate article of our own for your posting.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Tipungwuti
Chairman

John.S.Hicks
Secretary

10th March 2009



Tiwi Islands Forestry Project

Sustainable opportunities for Tiwis

The Tiwi Island Forestry Project is bringing long term benefits to the Tiwi people. In partnership with traditional land owners, nearly 30,000 hectares of hardwood plantations have been established, and the Tiwis' aspirations of employment and future financial independence are starting to be realised.

The 18 points below summarise key aspects of the Tiwi Island Forestry Project and the opportunities it presents.

Background

1. There have been plantations on the Tiwi Islands since the 1960's. The Commonwealth government established nearly 5,000 ha of Caribbean Pine and Cypress on Melville Island.
2. After self-government for the Northern Territory, the plantations were given to the Tiwi Islanders, who in turn sought a long-term, low risk private enterprise partner.
3. Sylvatech commenced commercial operations on the Tiwi Islands in 1999 under long-term leases. By 2004, Sylvatech had planted about 5,000 ha of Acacia mangium.
4. A. mangium is an Australian hardwood species originating in high rainfall areas of northern Queensland and Papua New Guinea. It is grown extensively in South East Asia for wood fibre for pulp and paper manufacture. Its commercial growing life is about 8 years.
5. Great Southern purchased Sylvatech in 2005 and has planted 25,000 ha on Melville Island. Great Southern is Australia's largest commercial hardwood plantation manager, operating in all states of Australia.
6. Funding for establishing the plantations has come from investors in Managed Investment Schemes (MIS). Plantings up to the 2008 financial year represent investor outlays of over \$150 million.
7. The trees belong to the MIS investors, who have engaged Great Southern to maintain, harvest and sell the wood.

Tiwi Benefits

8. There is overwhelming Tiwi support for the plantations.
9. They provide Tiwis with an opportunity to develop their own land and become less reliant on government welfare programs.
10. Great Southern actively seeks to maximise Tiwi jobs by:
 - employing and training Tiwi forestry workers and apprentices
 - encouraging its contractors to do the same
 - paying the salaries of 10 Land and Sea Rangers
 - allocating work and providing management for Tiwi Enterprises, a Tiwi-owned forestry contractor

11. The forestry project provides significant economic benefits:
 - Salaries and work-related benefits direct to Tiwi Islanders total over \$1 million per year
 - Great Southern land and port rental payments and fees are approximately \$900,000 per year
 - Contracts performed by Tiwi Enterprises currently total around \$100,000 per year
 - Considerably more contract work is available to be taken up by Tiwis prepared to commit to forestry work
 - A trust fund to enhance development and training of Tiwi forestry employees is being established
12. Great Southern has also improved and built infrastructure. In 2007 and 2008 it spent \$4 million on over 80 km of roads. It provides support for many other areas of Tiwi development.
13. Full consultation is held with the Tiwi people before land is accessed in accordance with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.
14. The Project has been recommended for ISO 14001 Certification. Tiwi environmental amenity and threatened species on the islands are also protected by strict controls in place under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.
15. Plantations occupy less than 5% of the total land area of the Tiwi Islands.

Opportunities

16. Harvest is planned to commence in 2013. It is expected that once harvest starts, on average approximately:
 - 3,500 ha will be harvested annually, then re-planted
 - 500,000 m³ of wood chips, valued at over \$50 million, will be produced and shipped annually
 - 1-2 ships will be loaded at Port Melville each month
17. Great Southern expects to invest \$30 million+ in port, shiploading, chipping and harvest infrastructure.
18. Opportunities for future Tiwi participation will increase. From 2013, Great Southern anticipates spending more than:
 - \$20 million annually on new plantings and maintenance
 - \$20 million annually on harvesting



Contact details:

Chief Executive Officer, Tiwi Land Council - 08 8981 4898
 General Manager, Tiwi Island Forestry Project - 08 8943 1600



Tiwi Islands Forestry Project

Building an independent Tiwi future



"It means a job and earning money."

"There is the chance of meeting different people from different states and around the world."

"I get to learn stories from older people and how they did forestry long time ago."

"I want to finish my training and get all my forestry tickets such as chainsaw."

Bart Kerinaiaua, Apprentice, Great Southern Limited

"There are great opportunities for Tiwis to really get out there and work as a team and it could open a lot of doors for Tiwi people to become supervisors."

"It's good that there is a developing Tiwi company; a good opportunity to learn skills and become a supervisor."

"My vision is for more Tiwi people to have a go and work."

Trevor Wilson, Field Supervisor, Tiwi Enterprises



"Good pay, good wages. Being able to look after my family and pay off my car. Food for the kids."

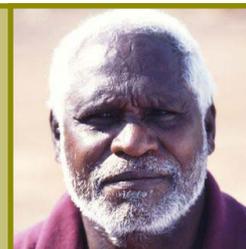
"Being well looked after in the camp."

"It is good to have forestry on the Tiwi Islands because it provides opportunities for the Tiwi People."

Warrick Puruntatameri, Works Crew, Great Southern Limited

"The forestry industry has shaped the lives of four generations of Tiwi people on these Islands. We remember their work and our work today with Great Southern that has always been about jobs for now, and for those generations of Tiwi to come. These plantations breathe life, not only for our environment, but for all our workers and for all Tiwi people."

Robert Tipungwuti



"I met Tiwi Islanders working for Great Southern Plantations, pruning trees, inspecting for termites, doing wildlife surveys and training on the job. These were young people, 18, 19 and 20, and they were absolutely enjoying themselves."

"I witnessed, first hand, a very strong and respectful partnership between the Tiwi Land Council and Great Southern Plantations."

"I witnessed a company and land owners who share a commitment, to break the bonds of welfare dependency and establish an economic base in the Tiwi Islands."

"I witnessed a strong commitment to reach a sustainable balance between economic development and protection of biodiversity."

Hon Alison Anderson, Northern Territory Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, 23 October 2008, following her visit to Melville Island

