



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

Submission for

**THE SENATE INQUIRY INTO FORESTRY, MINING AND
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ON THE TIWI ISLANDS**

Mantiyupwi Pty Ltd is the commercial arm representing the Mantiyupwi Land Owning Group of Traditional Owners for southern Bathurst and Melville Islands.

We are writing this submission to explain our position in regards to our Tiwi Forestry Project. The Mantiyupwi have approximately 5000 hectares of Forestry plantations on our land.

We believe our Tiwi Forestry Project plays an essential role in the economic and social development and well being of our people today and into the future.

We, the Mantiyupwi, were the first Traditional Land Owners to agree to a Township Lease of Wurrimiyanga (Nguiu). Part of the reason behind agreeing to the Township Lease was to create a real economy with real jobs, real wages and a real life for our children and our children's children into the future.

The Township lease also allows us to realise the great Australian dream of home ownership. But we need real jobs and wages to realise that dream.

Our people want to work and live fulfilling lives on the Islands but this can only be achieved by creating a real economy.

Having one or two core industries on the Island including our Tiwi Forestry Project and Aquaculture and Sea Management opportunities, in the near future, is the key. The Tiwi mining industry is largely short term, but the income created allows us to invest in the economic and social development of the Islands.

Traditional Owners established Tiwi Enterprises Pty Ltd, largely from proceeds from Forestry and mining. Tiwi Enterprises Pty Ltd is a wholly Tiwi owned and operated company that aims to foster economic development on the Islands and is preparing to access a significant percentage of future Tiwi Forestry contracts.

The Arts and tourism industries are important cottage industries as are retail, small businesses such as a motel development, food outlets and the like. But not all Tiwi are artists, not all Tiwi want to be a tour guide.

Currently, the Tourism industry on the Islands is marginal, at best, while the Arts Industry is heavily reliant on welfare/CDEP in order to survive. From 2013, the Tiwi Forestry Project is expected to begin harvesting and we estimate that \$30-\$40 million dollars every year will be generated in contracts to harvest, chip, transport, replant, maintain and grow our Tiwi Forestry assets. The potential for hundreds of Tiwi jobs is real.

Indirect employment opportunities created by our Tiwi Forestry Project are also real. Workers need to be fed, workers camps need to be cleaned and maintained, roads need to be developed and maintained, vehicles need repairs and maintenance...the Tiwi nursery will need to provide seedlings... hospitality...horticulture...civil works... bookkeeping... office work...small business opportunities...apprenticeships...the training and real employment opportunities for our people are enormous.

Sure, we have to get our Education and 'Participation' right and our own Tiwi College, heavily funded by our Tiwi Forestry Project, is part of getting that right. Our Tiwi Forestry Project provides over \$400,000 per year directly for the operation of our Tiwi College, including 100% of lease payments from Port Melville and a Forestry Training and Participation Trust fund, as well as 'in kind' support including our Defence Force Cadet Program, Clontarf football Academy, Structured Work Placements, Forestry Cadet Program and Junior Land Ranger Program.

Traditional Owners also gain financial benefit from lease payments, which allows us to buy washing machines, fridges, freezers...things that most Australians take for granted but that we would not otherwise be able to afford.

But the big ticket item that our Tiwi Forestry Project provides us with is our need to have real jobs for our kids to strive for once they leave school...or what are we educating and training them for...the welfare cycle of CDEP or Work for the DOLE? We refuse for that to continue to be the only option for our kids.

Unlike many Ranger programs in the Territory, our Tiwi Forestry Project has provided full, unsubsidised wages for our ten Tiwi Land and Sea Rangers for over three years and that is continuing into the future.

We hear comments from some non-Tiwi that “all your land is gone to forestry”, when we know the truth is that less than 5% of our land is used for our Tiwi Forestry Project. That leaves over 90% of our land available for us Tiwi to go hunting...for us to manage our land as we always have, just as we manage our Tiwi Forestry Project for the benefit of our people.

Over 90% of our land is available for any threatened species to use...

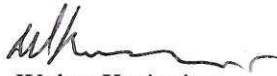
People must realise that it is us, the Tiwi, that are the threatened species... we die younger than most...we have disastrous literacy and numeracy outcomes...health, housing, youth suicide, unemployment, self esteem... are all at unacceptable levels. Economic Development and jobs, jobs, jobs are a massive part of the answer to solve Indigenous disadvantage. Some jobs are available in the Art and Tourism industry but nowhere near the scale that is being created by our Tiwi Forestry Project.

We are often frustrated by Government who keep telling us that they are listening to what we are saying when, in our experience, this is just not the case. We hope that this Senate Inquiry will listen to what we, the Tiwi, are saying. What we are saying is, rather than more hoops to jump through...rather than continual inquiries and investigations into our Tiwi Forestry Project, we actually want a leg up...a hand from Government to make our Tiwi Forestry Project a world class forestry project...and a recognition from Government that hey, the Tiwi are having a real go at creating an independent, prosperous and harmonious Tiwi community.

We certainly don't claim that everything the Mantiyupwi, the Tiwi or our Tiwi Forestry Project does will be perfect. Mistakes will be made and things can always be improved but we Tiwi are actually trying to create positive, proactive initiatives rather than falling back on the passivity of the past.

The days of Non-Tiwi people telling us how we should live our lives, because they think they know what is good for us, is over. That time is gone. We, the Tiwi, have our own vision for our own people...a vision that that involves educating our kids...a vision that means that education leads to real jobs and a fulfilling life...a vision that has the best that both Tiwi and Western life has to offer...and a vision that **must** include our Tiwi Forestry Project if it is to be realised.

Yours sincerely,



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