



## *Tiwi Islands Local Government*

### TIWI ISLANDS LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

The Tiwi Islands has a population of approx. 2,500 people living in four main Communities on Bathurst and Melville Islands 70km north of Darwin.

The Budget of Tiwi Islands Local Government is approx \$18mil. If the Health Board, Training Board and Land Council is added the total budget would exceed \$30mil.

For a number of years it has been the wish of the Tiwi people to amalgamate the various boards and Councils into a whole of government structure that would increase employment opportunities and more importantly increase self-determination.

In July last year the Northern Territory Government after many years of discussions formed Tiwi Islands Local Government.

The formation of Tiwi Islands Local Government saw the amalgamation of three Community Government Councils and an Aboriginal Corporation. It would be fair to say that the first 9months saw many problems caused by a number of different factors. At the June meeting of council members agreed to a total restructure in order to create an efficient organisational structure.

At the same meeting members also agreed to a staged plan to amalgamate the Training and Employment Board, The Health Board and the Land Council into a whole of government structure.

Tiwi Islands Local Government is a member of the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory.

The constitution of Tiwi Islands Local Government give Council the responsibility for the delivery of a wide range of services many of which are outside the responsibilities of most other local government councils.

At this stage, because we are presently under a Grants Controller, I am unable to give a break up the dollars spent in various areas over the last year, however I can give an overview of activities undertaken.

There are wide ranges of services that TILG provide that are normally provided by other areas of government.

The council acts as a

- postal agency for Australia Post,
- a banking agency for the Commonwealth Bank,
- a Centrelink Agency,
- operator for the power and water supply on behalf of the Power and Water Authority and in the case of one community, it is attempting to supply power without any subsidy or assistance from government ( the recent funding to purchase diesel for power generation by ATSIC has now been withdrawn)
- Manages and operates four aerodromes.
- Maintains all road networks on both Melville and Bathurst Islands.



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- Operates telecommunication services in all communities.
- Operates along with the Health Board all cultural, social and community services.
- Conducts local bus services and a boat crossing service across Apsley Strait.
- Operates a Child Care Centre.
- Along with the Tiwi Island Training and Employment Board conducts many training programs.
- Operates CDEP Program with approx 500 participants.

These services along with the normal council services provide many challenges in delivering services to our communities.

Other levels of government normally provide the majority of services listed.

Tiwi Islands Local Government like most Aboriginal Councils do not have an income base like other councils (rates) but is totally dependant on grants provided by various areas of government.

The continual task of Grant Application, reporting and acquittal of grants is a huge task consuming a great deal of time and resources that are never fully covered in the administrative allowances provided in programs.

Community services such as Centrelink are provided at cost by councils with the administration allowances not meeting the cost of delivering services.

As outlined earlier, TILG is not in a situation at this stage to detail the costs or to provide any break down of the areas mentioned with the increasing responsibilities that have been outlined. However, it is clear that the resources available to administer and deliver services are becoming increasingly limited.

The one example that can be provided is that with a total staff in excess of 500 people, the allocation of staff to Human Resources is zero while a council like Darwin City with a staff of 350 has a full HR division.

In the case of Tiwi Islands Local Government there has been continuing offers of assistance and talk of establishment grants by the Northern Territory government but to date, a year after the formation of TILG, the results have been nil.

It would appear that per capita funding direct to TILG would be more cost effective than the present system where many hours and a great deal of resources are wasted in obtaining funding and administering monies before they are distributed.

Tiwi Island Local Government would be happy to provide further evidence and information.

John Cleary  
CEO

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