

Tiwi Land Council

## Opening Statement

27 February 2025

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, Traditional Owners of this land, and thank the Committee for having us today.

My name is Austin Wonaeamirri. I'm the Deputy Chair of the Tiwi Land Council, a proud Andranagoo man from Melville Island.

Attending Senate Estimates gives us Council members a chance to learn more about how our Council is regulated and ensure that the Tiwi Land Council continues to serve our Tiwi people with accountability and purpose.

But it is also a chance for us to share our story.

Since the last Estimates hearing, we have continued to progress our agenda of improved governance and administration:

- We have reestablished our Executive Committee, and approved a revised Governance Framework, to improve the efficiency of Land Council decision-making.
- We revised the Charter for our Audit and Risk Committee, which provides critical oversight and feedback on our internal controls.
- We have closed out a series of Land Use Agreements, providing economic opportunities for our Tiwi people on Tiwi country.

Good governance is not just about rules. It is about ensuring that our Tiwi people trust the Land Council to make the right decisions for the future of our Tiwi people.

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My name is Justina Puruntatameri. I'm a member of the Tiwi Land Council, a proud Munupi woman and a traditional owner of Rangini.

The Tiwi Land Council's role is explained in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. But Tiwi people also expect more of the Land Council. They look to its leadership in matters of culture, country and community.

The issue of suicide is critical. Too many of our young Tiwi people have taken their own lives in recent months. They are not just statistics; they are our sons, daughters, nieces and nephews.

The Tiwi Land Council holds culture as a protective factor. That is why we established the Tuwurrampila Cultural Committee – to strengthen our traditions, language, and identity.

We also know that local stakeholders must work together, not in silos. Too often, our people are forced to navigate a fragmented system where health, education, employment, and social services operate separately, leaving critical gaps in care.

The Tiwi Leaders Forum will bring together local stakeholders—our old people, emerging leaders, government and service providers—to discuss and implement Tiwi led solutions to Tiwi problems.

A consistent message from our Tiwi people is their desire to access and live on their country. Our people are seeking more homelands housing, but there's not enough money to maintain existing housing and infrastructure. And only 1% of homelands funding in the NT is directed to Tiwi homelands.

Our vision is one in which Tiwi people can be strong in their culture, living on their country and participating in the economy with high quality education and training and meaningful jobs. This is the vision that we have for future Tiwi generations.