



Tiwi Land Council – Opening Statement to Senate Estimates

We would like to begin by acknowledging the Larrakia people, the traditional owners of the land from which we meet you today and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at this meeting today.

For the Tiwi Land Council, this has been a year of significant achievement — a year that reflects the strength of the steady work of our people over many years.

First and foremost, we celebrate the dedication by the Minister of the Tiwi Islands Indigenous Protected Area, following a five-year consultation process led by our Tiwi Rangers, traditional owners, and community leaders. This milestone represents the Land Councils long-term commitment to safeguarding Tiwi country and knowledge for generations to come.

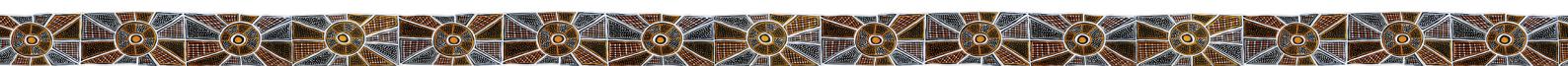
The IPA dedication also strengthens our land and sea management partnerships — creating meaningful employment and supporting young Tiwi to remain on country, working in ways that honour both Tiwi culture and contemporary environmental practice.

Alongside this achievement, the Tiwi Land Council has made substantial progress in managing land use applications across our islands. Through close collaboration with our members, we have significantly reduced the number of outstanding applications — now down to five currently under consideration. This represents a major step forward in ensuring our land use decisions are transparent, timely, and aligned with the aspirations of our people.

In the spirit of reform, we have also initiated a comprehensive review of our permit system, with the aim of improving efficiency and consistency. This work recognises that while permits play a vital role in protecting Tiwi country and community wellbeing, the system must evolve to better support both cultural and economic development.

We are also pleased to report that the Tiwi Land Council has strengthened its participation in key areas of government policy work with the establishment of a policy unit. A clear example of this is our involvement in the Joint Steering Committee on NT Remote Housing, where alongside the other three Land Councils and Aboriginal Housing NT, we sit as partners with the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments to advise on housing and homelands policy and investment under the historic \$4 billion National Partnership Agreement for Remote Housing and Homelands.

Through this collaboration, we continue to reinforce the message that investment in homelands must remain central to the Agreement. For Tiwi families, homelands are not optional — they are the foundation of identity, culture and wellbeing. Sustained investment in housing, infrastructure, and essential services in our homelands is essential to keeping our people strong and our communities



thriving. The TLC is commencing a master planning process for our homelands to better understand the investment and policy change needed to support homelands living on our Islands.

The Land Council continues to progress our Tiwi Leaders Forum which provides an opportunity for community and organisations to come together to identify locally led solutions for improved service delivery. This is also a place where we can start to grow our next generation of leaders.

In July this year the Land Council staged the second Tiwi Cultural Festival, a vibrant celebration of Tiwi culture, blending traditional and contemporary art forms. Central to the program were performances of Yoi—traditional ceremonial dance by both Tiwi and visiting indigenous artists from other parts of the NT. The festival also featured a fashion parade, live music, an expo with bush tucker demos, arts and crafts, and Pukumani pole painting workshops. By including dancers from other Indigenous communities, the festival fosters cultural exchange and unity. For the first time we joined the festival to the Tiwi AFL grand final. This dynamic program positions the festival as a key platform for cultural preservation, education, and long term economic development including tourism.

From land use to cultural protection, from ranger programs to housing reform and economic development, our focus remains on achieving tangible benefits for Tiwi people.

We thank the Senate and the Minister for your ongoing engagement with our Council, and for the support that enables us to carry forward the vision of our past leaders — to protect our country, strengthen our culture, and build a future of opportunity for the next generation of Tiwi people.

Thank you.
7 October 2025

