



# REGIONAL PROFILE



## Definition of the Region

The Tiwi Islands are located between latitudes 11° and 12° South and longitudes 130° and 131°40' East. They are approximately 60km north of Darwin, and 20km north of the Australian mainland at the closest point across Clarence Strait.

Bathurst and Melville are the main islands in the group, with several much smaller islands close to the coastline. Melville Island is the second largest island off the Australian mainland at 5,788km<sup>2</sup>, and Bathurst the fifth largest at 1,693km<sup>2</sup> (Woinarski *et al.* 2003). The two islands are separated by Apsley Strait, which is approximately 70km long, and ranges from approximately 600m to 6km in width.

## History

At the end of the last ice age, between 18,000 and 20,000 years ago, the Tiwi Islands were connected to the mainland through what is now Coburg Peninsula. Rapid sea level rises between about 8,000 to 12,000 years ago separated the islands from the mainland and each other. It is likely that the original inhabitants of the Tiwi Islands were living in the area when it was still part of the mainland (Forrest 1998).

The first known written recording of a sighting of the Tiwi Islands was by Dutch navigator Pieter Pieterszoon in 1636. In 1644 another Dutch navigator, Abel Tasman sailed through Dundas Strait between the Tiwi Islands and Coburg Peninsula. Neither of these two established that the two islands were separate land areas.

Early contact with the Tiwi was characterised by violence and hostility. The first recorded contact was in 1705 when three Dutch ships led by Maarten van Delft spent several months exploring the Tiwi and Coburg coastline. They landed on the north coast of Melville Island on what is now known as Karslake Peninsula, and were met by spears in an attempt to drive them from the land. In contrast to other areas along the north coast, evidence suggests that the Tiwi were also consistently hostile to Macassans.

It was the British navigator Phillip Parker King who, in 1818, finally established that there were two separate land areas, and named them Bathurst Island and Melville Island respectively. King's

exploration led to the British becoming interested in establishing a settlement on the north coast of Australia, and in 1824 Fort Dundas was established on Melville Island near what is today Pirlangimpi. Continuing hostility between the British and the Tiwi along with other problems associated with the location led to the fort becoming abandoned in 1829.

One legacy left behind by the British was a number of buffalo that had been shipped from Timor. In 1895 the entrepreneur EO Robinson organised a shooting party for Melville Island, and by 1915 over 18,000 buffalo hides had been taken (Hooper 2000). As an off season activity, and as buffalo numbers became depleted, interest turned to cutting and milling the native cypress *Callitris intratropica*, and three sawmills were established on Melville Island between 1895 and 1916.

In 1910 the Roman Catholic Church was granted 10,000 acres on the south eastern tip of Bathurst Island, and in 1911 Father Francis Gsell established a mission site at Nguuu. The mission and ensuing government policies resulted in the establishment of communities as residential centres, which endures to today.

*“Whatever the total impact of contact in the historical period may be assessed as having been, the striking fact is that the Tiwi are today arguably Australia’s most intact Aboriginal group. Certainly they retain their fiercely possessive attitude toward their land and their culture, and they have a resolute determination to maintain controls over those essentials of Tiwi integrity”. (Forrest 1998)*



## Governance

The estimated Tiwi population of 1,062 in 1928 was based on nine 'bands' or 'hordes' made up of smaller family or clan groups (Campbell 2002). These groups met continually for ceremony and to determine unified joint responses to external threats. In 1882, Foelsche noted the common language and cultural traditions of a collectively unified Tiwi (Hicks 2000). Minutes of the Provisional Tiwi Land Council on 1 June 1977 state:

*"Everyone on the two Islands are related and are in constant contact... There has always existed an authority exercised by what are in fact the traditional owners, recognised and respected by all the people."*

The Tiwi Islands were declared Aboriginal reserves in 1941, and the Tiwi Land Council was created in 1978 following the passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1976)*, when tenure of the Islands was passed to the Tiwi Aboriginal Land Trust. Evidence suggests that the creation of the Land Council had less to do with land ownership than with the Tiwi desire to secure authority over all aspects of their lives (Hicks 2000).

Also in 1978 the Northern Territory Government initiated a new form of local government for small and remote communities. Milikapiti and Pirlangimpi communities became Community Government Councils in 1983 and 1984, with Nguu following in 1987. The aim was to create communities that could govern themselves by managing their own local affairs and municipal services (Campbell 2002). Wurankuwu on Bathurst Island remains an Aboriginal Corporation under Commonwealth legislation.

This structure resulted in a well-established group of clan leaders and representatives within the Tiwi Land Council with landowning authority over the management, protection and development of Tiwi interests, and municipal bodies with authority over community services. Although there was overlap in membership between the two systems and a respectful relationship, they largely operated in separate spheres.

In 1998 the NT Government announced its local government reform agenda, designed to amalgamate existing Community Government Councils in order to deliver a more efficient system of local government. The Tiwi put forward their proposal for regional government, and in 2001 the Tiwi Islands Local Government was formed.

The aim of Tiwi regional governance was to bring together traditional land owning leadership and community leadership in a single forum. It was hoped that such a forum would progress the goals of exploring development opportunities as a means of gaining self-determination and control.

The formation of Tiwi Islands Local Government did not entirely achieve the Tiwi aim of regional governance. Political acknowledgment and support for true regional authority is required if the Tiwi are to achieve more than mere local control over local government services.



## Population

The current population of the Tiwi Islands is concentrated in the three main communities of Ngiuu (Bathurst Island), Pirlangimpi (Melville Island) and Milikapiti (Melville Island). Wurankuwu is a smaller community on Bathurst Island (officially recognised as an outstation), and there are four other official outstations, all located on Melville Island.

The 2001 Census counted 2,228 people on the Tiwi Islands, which is approximately 1% of the total Northern Territory population. Tiwi made up 4% of the indigenous population of the NT, and 92.4% of the Islands' total population.

| Age group    | Tiwi Islands |              |              |              |            | Total NT       |            |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|----------------|------------|
|              | 1986         | 1991         | 1995         | 2001         |            | 2001           |            |
|              |              |              |              | total        | %          | total          | %          |
| 0-4          | 229          | 176          | 202          | 263          | 11.8       | 16,386         | 8.1        |
| 5-19         | 618          | 599          | 574          | 637          | 28.6       | 46,995         | 23.2       |
| 20-34        | 545          | 555          | 559          | 637          | 28.6       | 52,451         | 25.9       |
| 35-49        | 237          | 328          | 401          | 444          | 19.9       | 46,892         | 23.1       |
| 50-64        | 140          | 143          | 208          | 191          | 8.6        | 29,389         | 14.5       |
| 65+          | 36           | 54           | 65           | 56           | 2.5        | 10,616         | 5.2        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,805</b> | <b>1,855</b> | <b>2,009</b> | <b>2,228</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>202,729</b> | <b>100</b> |

Table 1: Population by Age Group (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001)



## Community Profiles

### Nguiu

Nguiu is the largest community on the Tiwi Islands, and is located on the south eastern coast of Bathurst Island. It is acknowledged as the 'capital' of the Islands, and houses the main administrative and finance divisions of Tiwi Islands Local Government. According to NT Government figures, the population of Nguiu was 1,410 at 30 June 2002.

Originally the site of the Catholic Mission in 1911, by the mid 1950's Nguiu boasted a chapel, radio hut, presbytery, convent, hospital and many other buildings. There were extensive fruit and vegetable gardens, a sawmill and dairy cattle. Tiwi attached to the Mission lived on the foreshore in semi-permanent structures, while another group of Tiwi lived further inland and visited the Mission on a daily basis (Forrest 1998).



Today Nguiu is a modern community managed by the Nguiu Community Management Board under the Tiwi Islands Local Government umbrella. The Management Board is made up of 16 members who are elected through Skin Group meetings.

Facilities at Nguiu today include a Centrelink Agency, EFTPOS facilities, Commonwealth Bank Agency and a Post Office, all located in the Management Board office complex. Other facilities include a store, health clinic, pharmacy, recreation club, restaurant, police station, garage and workshop, childcare centre, respite centre, swimming pool, sport and recreation hall, two football ovals, golf course, market garden, and commercial accommodation. Nguiu also has a museum, and is the Islands base for Tiwi Tours.

Tiwi Designs produces artwork for sale both on and off the Islands, as does Ngaruwanajirri, a centre designed to provide employment for the disabled.

The Community Development and Employment Programme was introduced to Nguiu in 1994, and provides employees and equipment for a range of community service activities.

### Pirlangimpi

Pirlangimpi community is located at Garden Point, on the north west coast of Melville Island on the Apsley Strait. It was established from the stationing of a police officer at Garden Point in 1939, whose role was to act as 'Sub-Protector of Aborigines' and to control Japanese contact with the Tiwi. A number of 'incorrigibles' were taken from Darwin to Garden Point in the same year. In 1940 a Catholic Mission was established as an institution for part Aboriginal children, and the incorrigibles moved on to a new settlement at Snake Bay. By 1943 the Garden Point Mission had a wharf, market gardens and dormitories (Forrest 1998).

In 1967 the settlement was taken over by the Commonwealth Government's Welfare Branch, and in 1984 became Pirlangimpi under the NT Government's new form of local government.

At June 2002 the population of Pirlangimpi was 365, and the Pirlangimpi Community Management Board currently manages the community. Existing facilities include a Centrelink Agency, EFTPOS facilities, Commonwealth Bank Agency and a Post Office. Other facilities include a store, bakery, health clinic, laundromat, recreation club, police station, garage and workshop, swimming pool, sport and recreation hall, football oval,



and golf course. Pirlangimpi regularly hosts golf tournaments that are well attended by locals and visitors to the Islands, and has a tourist fishing resort that offers guided tours and accommodation. Munupi Arts produces artwork for sale both on and off the Islands.

The Pirlangimpi Progress Association was formed in 1971 and is credited with starting a number of business enterprises including the supermarket, fuel depot, social club, bakery and take away food outlet. It still operates many of these businesses today.

The Community Development and Employment Programme was introduced to Pirlangimpi in 1988, and provides employees and equipment for a range of community service activities.

### **Milikapiti**

Milikapiti is located on the north coast of Melville Island at Snake Bay. It was established as a Welfare Branch settlement in 1940 to take the 'incorrigibles' from Garden Point, and to prevent association between part Aboriginal children and traditional Aboriginals.



During WWII the settlement served as a military depot with construction of an airstrip and jetty, and all three services were represented in the area. Local men were enlisted as Coastwatchers, and 'rendered outstanding war service' (Forrest 1998). The Tiwi have continued their relationship with the Defence Services to this day.

As with Nguiu and Pirlangimpi, Milikapiti moved through Welfare control to become managed under a Community Government Council in 1983, and is now managed by the Milikapiti Community Management Board under Tiwi Islands Local Government. At June 2002, the community had a population of 491.

Facilities at Milikapiti include a Centrelink Agency, Traditional Credit Union and postal facility located in the Management Board Office. Within the community is a large modern store, health clinic, recreation club, garage and workshop, sport and recreation hall, football oval, and a tourist fishing resort. Jilamara Arts and Crafts produces artwork for sale both on and off the Islands, and also houses a museum.

Milikapiti also operates a Community Development and Employment Programme that provides for a range of community service activities.

### **Wurankuwu**

Wurankuwu outstation was established in 1994 as a resource centre and a population centre for people with links to the central west of Bathurst Island. It is located on the western side of Bathurst Island approximately 60km from Nguiu, with an estimated population of 50 at 2002.

Buffalo Trading, a Tiwi enterprise, owns and operates a store and social club, and the community also has a small school, health clinic (not permanently manned), football oval, and postal facilities. A project officer manages the community and is responsible for essential services, housing and administration. An elected member represents Wurankuwu on Tiwi Islands Local Government.

The other official outstations on the Islands are small and have no services apart from bores and generators. They are Paru (7 houses), Taracumbi (2 houses), Yimpinari (1 house) and Takamprimili (1 house). All are located on Melville Island.



## Education, Training & Employment

Nguiu has two Catholic schools, offering education from pre-school to junior secondary. Wurankuwu also has a Catholic primary school, while Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti have NT Government schools offering primary education only. A significant number of students attend educational institutions in Darwin.

| Type of institution | Male       | Female     | Total      |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Pre school          | 13         | 21         | 34         |
| Infants/Primary     | 187        | 156        | 343        |
| Government          | 90         | 67         | 157        |
| Catholic            | 97         | 89         | 186        |
| Secondary           | 54         | 49         | 103        |
| Government          | 10         | 10         | 20         |
| Catholic            | 38         | 35         | 73         |
| Other non-Govt      | 6          | 4          | 10         |
| TAFE/Tertiary       | 10         | 16         | 26         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>264</b> | <b>242</b> | <b>506</b> |

**Table 2:** Enrolment in Educational Institutions (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001)

The Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board was established in 1999 and coordinates all vocational education and training activities on the Tiwi Islands. It is a Registered Training Organisation, and manages one of only two NT funded Group Training Organisations operating a new apprenticeship scheme.

At April 2003 the Board had agreements with seven Registered Training Organisations who provide training on the Islands, and 142 apprentices employed through the Group Apprenticeship Scheme.

Apprentices are only employed in areas where there are sustainable employment opportunities, and are currently working in the fields of baking, carpentry, civil operations, local government, retail, education, fishing, forestry, essential services, motor mechanics, child care, aged care, environmental health and indigenous health.

In addition to apprenticeships, the Board provides other accredited training that enhances skills and creates pathways to apprentices or direct employment. These include child care, health

work, welding, small engine mechanics, chainsaw operations, small boat handling, first aid, art and craft, literacy enhancement, computer operations and small business operations.

In 2003 the Board constructed the first of a proposed cluster of training centres on the two Islands, which will substantially increase their capacity to provide on site training.



| Employment sector   | Males | Females | Total |
|---------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Employed with CDEP  | 219   | 145     | 364   |
| Other employment    | 131   | 122     | 253   |
| Unemployed          | 68    | 31      | 99    |
| Not in labour force | 358   | 443     | 801   |

**Table 3:** Employment by Sector (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001)

| Industry                            | Males | Females | Total |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Agriculture, forestry & fishing     | 20    | 0       | 20    |
| Manufacturing                       | 6     | 0       | 6     |
| Construction                        | 24    | 0       | 24    |
| Retail trade                        | 18    | 29      | 47    |
| Accommodation, cafes & restaurants  | 8     | 7       | 15    |
| Transport & storage                 | 13    | 0       | 13    |
| Finance & insurance                 | 0     | 3       | 3     |
| Property & Business Services        | 3     | 4       | 7     |
| Government administration & defence | 151   | 75      | 226   |
| Education                           | 24    | 51      | 75    |
| Health & community services         | 24    | 63      | 87    |
| <i>Health services</i>              | 20    | 38      | 58    |
| <i>Community services</i>           | 4     | 17      | 21    |
| <i>Undefined</i>                    | 0     | 8       | 8     |
| Cultural & recreational services    | 14    | 9       | 23    |
| Personal & other services           | 19    | 9       | 28    |

**Table 4:** Employment by Industry (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001)





## Health

As with other predominantly Aboriginal areas, the Tiwi Islands suffer poor health status. In the 1990's the Tiwi Islands had arguably the worst overall health statistics for any population group in Australia (Tiwi Health Board 2001). Issues included renal disease, diabetes, heart disease, ear disease and mental health. Drug and alcohol abuse, suicide and domestic violence were also major health and social concerns.

In 1995 the Tiwi Land Council proposed the formation of the Tiwi Health Board with the aim of empowering Tiwi people to improve health by taking over service delivery. In December the same year, the Commonwealth Government offered additional funds to the Tiwi to run one of four indigenous health care trials. The aim of the trials was to achieve a more coordinated approach to the delivery of health care services, and improve the quality of care. The Tiwi trial was operated through the Tiwi Health Board, which included an additional aim of transferring the responsibility for health services from the Territory Health Service to local administration.

The Commonwealth Government carried out a review of the trials in 2001, which showed that considerable progress had been made towards all aspects of reform, including:

- Enhanced service access.
- Improved service appropriateness.
- Improved individual empowerment.

(Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care 2001).

This is supported through Tiwi Health Board statistics within in the same time frame, including:

- 80% reduction in loss of kidney function amongst renal patients.
- 4 years sustained reduction in death and renal failure.
- 11.5% reduction in hospital admissions.
- Reduction in suicides.
- Mental health, youth and chronic disease programmes fully operational.
- Operation of the first indigenous owned pharmacy.

(Tiwi Health Board 2001)

Since its inception, Tiwi Health Board activities broadened from the treatment and prevention of disease to encompass the social well being of the community as a whole. This is shown through the broad variety of facilities and services that have been offered, including:

- A renal dialysis unit at Nguiu.
- Health centres in all four communities.
- A soon to be commenced \$2.5m modern health centre at Nguiu.
- Aged Care services and facilities in all communities, including a new respite centre at Nguiu.
- Chronic disease programme.
- 'Tiwi for Life' – a Tiwi initiative with a focus on prevention through education and training.
- Youth services and life promotion.
- 'Ngaruwuniwani Heath Team' – focus on mental health, social and emotional well being, and offering services in all communities.
- Ongoing education and training for service deliverers.
- Implementation of national quality assurance standards.

Recent funding issues have placed the operation of Tiwi Health Board programmes in jeopardy and despite their successes, continued function is not assured.



## Housing

The majority of housing on the Tiwi Islands is sourced through the Indigenous Housing Authority of the NT, a partnership between the Commonwealth and NT Governments that allocates funds to areas based on needs analyses. As with many other areas across the NT, there is a distinct shortage of suitable housing, with severe overcrowding often identified as a priority issue. Some existing dwellings are poor standard, and waiting lists are common.

Nguiu, Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti each have housing associations that manage the construction and maintenance of housing stocks using both local employees and outside contractors.



| Household type      | Indigenous           |                       | Other                |                       |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
|                     | Number of Households | Persons in households | Number of Households | Persons in households |
| One family          | 315                  | 1390                  | 32                   | 98                    |
| Multi family        | 78                   | 631                   | 0                    | 0                     |
| Lone person         | 23                   | 24                    | 30                   | 38                    |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>416</b>           | <b>2,045</b>          | <b>62</b>            | <b>136</b>            |
| Mean household size | 4.8                  |                       | 2.7                  |                       |

Table 5: Household Structure (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001)

| Dwelling Structure                  | Tenure Type              |        |                            |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------|----------------------------|
|                                     | Owned or being purchased | Rented | Other (includes rent free) |
| Separate house                      | 0                        | 451    | 15                         |
| Flat or unit                        | 0                        | 0      | 4                          |
| Improvised home, tent, sleepers out | 0                        | 0      | 3                          |

Table 6: Housing Type by Tenure (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001)

## Essential Services

Electricity is generated by on-site diesel power stations in all four communities. Payment operates through a card system, where consumers pre-purchase cards for insertion into individual meters.

The Power and Water Corporation and the Northern Territory University carried out extensive experiments on tidal power in the Apsley Strait from 1993. While the results were promising, the cost of the required supporting infrastructure limits further development at this time.

The domestic water supplies for Nguiu, Wurankuwu and Milikapiti are sourced from production bores, while Pirlangimpi sources water from a permanent spring that is pumped into a 1 million litre holding tank. A bore field has been identified for Pirlangimpi should an upgrade be required in the future.

All communities have water borne sewerage systems pumped into sewerage ponds.

The Power and Water Corporation controls essential services on the Islands through contract arrangements, either with individual Community Management Boards or outside contractors.

## Transport

There are approximately 250km of roads on Bathurst Island, not including numerous cultural, hunting and recreational tracks. Formed roads provide good access west of Nguiu to Cape Fourcroy, Cape Helvetius and Port Hurd, and north to Wurankuwu community. Further north, flat bladed tracks provide access to Interview Point and Caution Point with only some sections gravelled. There is minimal all weather access to other parts of the Island. Sealed roads are confined to 14km within Nguiu community.

Melville Island has approximately 280km of road, again excluding numerous seasonal tracks. A combination of gravel and formed roads provide reasonably good access between Milikapiti, Pirlangimpi, Paru and Pickertaramoor, all of which are in the western half of the Island. Access to the eastern side of the Island is limited to flat graded tracks which, although accessible during most wet seasons, are of very poor standard. Sealed roads are limited to Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti internal roads.

The Islands are well serviced by air, and the three major communities have community owned and licensed aerodromes with sealed airstrips. Landing areas are also located at Port Hurd (Bathurst Island), Pickertaramoor, Rolla Plains and Maxwell Creek (Melville Island).

There is a regular public transport service (RPT) to the Islands, with Nguiu serviced three times a day and Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti twice daily. Air charter flights are common outside the RPT's, and are the only available air service to Wurankuwu community.

The Tiwi Islands rely heavily on shipping services for the majority of freight transport, and each community has a government owned barge landing with associated hard stand area. Pirlangimpi, Milikapiti and Wurankuwu landings are concrete ramps, while the Nguiu ramp is gravel. A Tiwi owned ramp was also constructed at Paru in 1996, and an additional landing south of Pirlangimpi is due for completion in 2004. This will be used to load logs for export under the existing forestry project on the Islands, as well as other commercial shipping.

Tiwi Barge Services Pty Ltd is a joint venture with the Tiwi Land Council, and provides a regular barge service to each community. It also provides a regular service to the Port Hurd Marine Harvest Aquaculture Facility, and operates regular charters as required. During 2003 Tiwi Barge more than doubled its capacity with the purchase of *Tiwi Islander*, taking total capacity from 140 tonnes to 290 tonnes for general, chilled and frozen cargo.

Current projects aimed at improving sea transport include a high speed passenger ferry between Nguiu and Darwin, and an inter-island ferry that currently operates between Nguiu and Paru with the capacity to carry vehicles and small machinery as well as passengers.



## Communications

Satellite dish receivers provide a television service to the Islands, broadcasting ABC, Imparja and 7 Central. ABC Radio National is also transmitted to the area. Local news and information is provided through BRACS (Broadcasting for Remote Area Communities Service) in Nguiu, Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti, and through 'Tiwi Times', a monthly newspaper prepared by the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board.

The Tiwi Islands are connected through Telstra to the national telecommunications system, and a CDMA tower erected at Nguiu in 2003 provides

a mobile telephone service to that area. Similar upgrades may be available for the remainder of the Tiwi Islands, but at 2003 there is no other mobile telephone coverage.

During 2003 the Tiwi Islands became one of a number of initiatives under the Commonwealth's 'Networking the Nation' program to improve online capabilities to community councils. The project provided a web publishing template, training in IT business systems, establishment and support of a local area network and funding for on and off site IT support.



## Economic Development

In 1999 the Tiwi Land Council assessed the Tiwi economy at \$25 million/year. This was made up of \$11.5m commercial fishing generated by non-Tiwi interests, \$9.5m 'welfare economy' generated by Tiwi, and \$4m enterprise and non-welfare payments accruing to the Islands' organisations and business sector (Tiwi Land Council 1999).

Previously, in 1986, Tiwi leaders had identified the urgency of developing an independent economy as a route to improved social outcomes, and elimination of the destructive influence of welfare dependence. This led to the establishment of the Tiwi Islands Community Trust as a commercial replica of the Land Council.

The Trust's initial economic development was by means of joint venture partnerships in forestry, tourism, cultured pearls and coastal barging. The risks associated with joint venture and marginal profits resulted in all joint venture partnerships being ended apart from Tiwi Barge Pty Ltd. The two tourism joint ventures, Tiwi Tours and Barra Base Lodge, were purchased outright by the Trust, while Tiwi Pearls was sold at considerable profit. The Melville Forest Products joint venture was terminated in 1997 due to incompatible aspirations between the joint venture partners.

Lessons learned from joint venture operations led to a set of requirements for future economic development on the Islands:

- Tiwi employment.
- Tiwi participation as landowners receiving rents.
- Tiwi participation through investment once the operation had been proved commercially viable.
- A small share of product revenue without damaging commercial viability and investor aims.

In 1996, a Tiwi economic development strategy was commissioned and developed by Street Ryan and Associates Pty Ltd. While the Strategy provides a comprehensive assessment of mostly small enterprise and internal opportunity, it has been the belief of Tiwi leaders that one large core enterprise on the Islands will provide the springboard for sustained, long term economic development. This is currently being realised through forestry and aquaculture.

### Forestry

In 1995 the Tiwi Land Council commenced discussions with Sylvatech Australia Pty Ltd with a view to establishing large scale plantation forestry on the Islands. In 1998 the Tiwi had executed options over land in favour of Sylvatech, of which almost 6,000ha had been taken up by July 2003. Majority plantings are fast growing *Acacia mangium* destined for the woodchip market. Associated with plantation establishment is the harvest and export of historic *Pinus caribaea* plantings and native timber. Tiwi involvement in this project includes:

- Compliance with Tiwi Training and Employment Strategy.
- Land rental with leases over 30 years.
- Investment in *Acacia* plantings.
- Production share of FOB product price Melville Island.
- Approval and compliance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

### Aquaculture

In 1999 Marine Harvest, the largest aquaculture company in the world, commenced a \$6m trial and constructed barramundi sea cages at Port Hurd off the west coast of Bathurst Island. By mid 2003, they were harvesting and marketing 20 tonnes of farmed barramundi each week. Tiwi involvement in this project has been negotiated and includes:

- Tiwi employment.
- Rental of the Barra Base Lodge as the land base of the project.
- Opportunity to purchase cages.
- Crop share when commercially viable.
- Environmental approvals and compliance.



## Football

No profile of the Tiwi Region would be complete without a mention of Australian Rules football. It is believed that Catholic missionaries introduced Australian Rules football to the Tiwi Islands in the 1930's. In 1952, Ted Egan and Father Collins formed the St Mary's Football Club in Darwin. Most of the team was made up of Tiwi people living in Darwin, and Brother Pye operated as talent scout for the Club on Bathurst Island.

The Nguilla Football League was formed on the Tiwi Islands in 1968, and comprised five teams. After 1990 the name changed to the Tiwi Islands Football League, and has had up to eight teams in the competition. Currently there are seven teams.

Football has been taken into Tiwi culture with the Tiwi Islands Football League grand final the biggest day of the year. Permits are waived for the day, and spectators come from all around Australia and overseas. In 2003, more than 1,500 visitors and football identities arrived in Nguuu for the final.

Many Tiwi footballers have been signed on to play with Darwin and southern clubs over the years, and the tradition continues.

