



Tiwi Islands Community Workforce Plan 2025-2027

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	5	Workforce Demand:	
Introduction	6	Community Aspirations	17
How To Use This Plan	6	Short-Term	17
Step 1. Community Context	7	Medium-Term	17
Overview	7	Long-Term	18
Location	7	Tiwi Islands Paid Work Opportunities	19
Language	7	Key Findings	19
Population	7	Step 3. Identify future needs	22
Tiwi Land Council	8	Emerging and Growth Industries	
Key Organisations	8	on the Tiwi Islands	22
Vision Statements	8	1. Skilled Labourers	22
A Statement of Our Past	8	2. Tourism, Hospitality and	
Our Vision for the Future	8	Cultural Enterprises	22
A Statement about the Present	8	3. Health, Aged Care and Social Services	22
QuickStats	9	4. Environmental and Land Management	22
Employers on the Islands	10	5. Education and Early Childhood Support	23
Key Issues & Needs	12	6. Local Government and Public Services	23
Lack of Investment	12	Future Workforce Development	24
High Cost of Transport	12	Apprenticeships and Traineeships	25
High Cost of Consumables	12	What is a Traineeship?	25
Aged Infrastructure	12	What is an Apprenticeship?	25
Housing Understock	12	Group Training Service Options	26
Social Issues	13	Step 4. Issues Analysis	30
Education	13	Challenges and Barriers	
Employment	13	to Employment	30
Culture and Identity	13	Limited Local Job Opportunities	30
Lack of Amenity	13	Infrastructure and Housing Shortages	30
Lack of Basic Services	13	High Cost of Transport and Goods	30
Lack of Specialised Services	13	Low Incomes and Cost of Living Pressures	30
Low School Attendance	14	Education and Skills Gaps	30
Step 2. Workforce Research	15	Social and Cultural Challenges	30
Methodology	15	Lack of Amenity & Basic Services	30
Community Engagement Strategy	15	Opportunities for Employment	
Review Process	15	and Training	31
Endorsement	15	Vocational Training & Skills Development	31
Workforce Supply	15	Jobs Strong in Culture	31
Key Findings	16	Working on Country	31
Labour Force Participation	16	Community Services and Care Roles	31
Industry of Employment	16	Construction and Skilled Trades	31
Income Levels	16	Tourism and Hospitality	31
Rent/Cost of Living	16	Pathways for Young People	31

<i>Step 5. Develop Workforce Strategies and Actions</i>	33
Workforce Development Plan	33
Solutions Brokering into the Future	33
Communication and Collaboration	34
Workforce Cross Cultural Awareness:	
Both Ways	34
Cross Cultural Tuition and Training Programs	35
Skills First Nations: SEE Tiwi Grow	35
Skills and Training Collaboration Strategies	38
Training and Skills Development 2025-27	38
Skills Sets: Gradual Training Success	39
Small and Micro-Business	40
Governance Matters	41
Governance & Leadership Support Services	41
Business Capability & Entrepreneurship	41
Training & Mentoring Programs	41
<i>Step 6. Implement the strategies and actions</i>	42
Implementation Plan	42
Key Dates	42
<i>Step 7. Monitor, review and evaluate</i>	46
Review and Evaluation	46
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	46
Feedback and Data Analysis	47
Methodology Review	47
Reporting	47
<i>Annexure - Research Paper</i>	48

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Get Your Copy

Hardcopies of this Tiwi Community Workforce Plan are available from:

- Tiwi Regional Council
- Tiwi Land Council
- Tiwi Islands Training & Employment Board

Or download a digital copy from www.titeb.com.au

Introduction

The aim of this community workforce development plan for the Northern Territory's Tiwi Islands is to conduct an environmental scan, investigate the ambitions of a diverse range of stakeholders, including local community members, council and statutory members, employers, service agencies, to determine and implement workforce development pathways that facilitate increased local employment, training, and social/economic benefits for the Tiwi people.

The Community Workforce Plan is written to ensure that the main audiences, the Tiwi can navigate and use the references and resources to make informed decisions about their own respective work and skills

journeys. Links and references to other useful and relevant information is also embedded throughout the plan.

The plan's overall aim is to facilitate strong links between Tiwi who are gaining workplace skills and the real opportunities for paid work that becomes available in the local labour markets and beyond the Tiwi Islands. A large proportion of local and non-local business establishments that trade on the Tiwi Islands have contributed to this report in one way or another, particularly in creating jobs and prospective jobs opportunities that may become available over the next 2-3 years.

How To Use This Plan

This resource is multifunctional; it can be a useful resource to a broad spectrum of interest groups.

- **Students:** This resource can help students understand the local Labor market, identify potential career paths, and access training opportunities that align with their interests and skills.
- **Unemployed Tiwi:** Unemployed people can use this book to explore job opportunities, gain insights in the skills required for various roles, and find information on training programs that enhance their employability
- **Employed Tiwi:** This is also a resource for existing employed Tiwi who are considering trying a different occupation, information on what training is required or the development pathway for different industries will give insight into the opportunities available across the Tiwi Islands.
- **Employers:** Employers can refer to this resource to understand the local workforce landscape, identify potential candidates for job openings, and learn about the training and development programs available to support them to gain productive staff.
- **Scholars and researchers:** Scholars and researchers can use this book to gain insights into the workforce development strategies and initiatives in the Tiwi Islands, and to understand the social-economic context of the region.
- **Government and funding bodies:** Government agencies and funding bodies can refer to this resource to understand the local workforce, its opportunities and also challenges and barriers.



STEP 1.

Community Context

Overview

Location

The Tiwi Islands are located north of Darwin in the Northern Territory. The Tiwi people are the Traditional Owners of the Tiwi Islands, and their language is Tiwi.

The main communities are Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island, and Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti on Melville Island. There are eight main clan groups that make up the tribal blueprint, including Miyartuwi, Takaringuwi, Murrupurtiyanuwu, Wurankuwu, Jikilaruwu, Lorrula, Miyaringa, and Wulirankuwu (TLC, 2025).

Language

Over 82% of people on the Tiwi Islands speak Tiwi at home. English is widely spoken as a second language, particularly among younger generations, however only 12% speak English at home.¹

Population

The Tiwi Islands have a small population, with a high percentage of Indigenous residents. Wurrumiyanga has the largest population with over 1000 community members.

According to the Regional Development Australia (RDA) Northern Territory community profile (based on 2021 Census data) the Tiwi Islands have a usual resident population of 2,348 residing in 795 dwellings, with an average household size of 3.29. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the vast majority of residents (2,030) identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, while 193 are non-Indigenous. The median age is 26.



1. RDA (2021) Web page | <https://profile.id.com.au/rda-northern-territory/language?WebID=220>

Tiwi Land Council

Established in 1978, the Tiwi Land Council (TLC) recognises the Tiwi people as custodians of the Tiwi Islands and stewards of their cultural heritage. The Council is made up of 40 members, with representatives from the eight clan groups and trustees of the Tiwi Aboriginal Land Trust. Each clan group represented by one trustee and four council members.

Council membership is determined through an external ballot conducted by the NT Electoral Commission, with a requirement that 50% of councillor positions are held by women. Trustees are nominated by their respective clan groups and formally appointed by the Minister for Indigenous Australians (TLC, 2025).

Vision Statements

These statements were captured during the Research Project (see Annexure).

A Statement of Our Past

The Tiwi people of Bathurst and Melville Islands remained a unified entity repelling any unwanted effects of alien contact, embracing others, and generally enjoying authority over their own lives and customs for a period of two centuries.

Our Vision for the Future

Our vision is of an independent and resilient Tiwi society built on the orderly and well-managed utilization of our natural and human resources through reliance upon our own management, maintenance and protection of unique cultural and natural resource values for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations of Tiwi.

Key Organisations

In addition to the TLC, Aboriginal organisations operating on the islands include the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board (TITEB), Tiwi Plantations Corporation, Tarntipi Homelands Aboriginal Corporation, Mantiyupwi Aboriginal Corporation, and the Arnhem Land Progress Association.

Key government agencies involved in the region are the Tiwi Islands Regional Council (TIRC), Department of Children and Families, Department of Housing NT, Department of Health, Northern Territory Government, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Centrelink, and NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

A Statement about the Present

The Tiwi Land Council represents all Tiwi people in the protection of our land, sea, and environment, while at the same time supporting sustainable economic development to improve Tiwi lives through employment, income, education, and health opportunities. Our reputation is founded on our cultural and leadership strengths, following in the footsteps of our visionary leaders.

We believe that the Tiwi Land Council provides continuation of those processes now affirmed in legislation; recognising our one language and common and distinct customs; our constant contact with each other and shared hunting grounds and ceremonies; our established practice of calling meetings and seeking the advice of our elders that have served our people for thousands of years, and is a recognised and respected authority for the management, protection and development of our interests.

QuickStats

The following statistics have been drawn from various sources, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Tiwi Land Council (TLC) and Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board (TITEB).¹

Table 1 – Tiwi population and Indigenous status

Status	Data
Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander	86.5%
Non-Indigenous	8.2%
Not Stated	5.5%
Male	48.7%
Female	51.3%
Median Age	28

Table 2 - Age distribution of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

Age	Tiwi		NT	Aust
0-4	143	7.0%	8.8%	10.6%
5-14	369	18.2%	19.3%	22.1%
15-24	367	18.1%	18.7%	18.5%
25-34	321	15.8%	16.7%	14.5%
35-44	297	14.6%	13.4%	10.8%
45-54	277	13.6%	11.2%	10.1%
55-64	173	8.5%	7.3%	7.6%
65 yrs and over	78	3.8%	4.7%	5.9%

Death Rate

In 2017, the Standardised Death Rate (SDR) for Australia was 5.3, and it has continued to decline. For Aboriginal Australians, the SDR in 2017 was 9.8.² Our estimate indicates that the death rate on the Tiwi Islands was significantly higher than 9.8 in 2024.³

1. ABS (2021) Tiwi Islands 2021 Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, Web page | <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/IQSLGA74050> | TLC (2025) Web page | <https://tiwilandcouncil.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=210&id=65&smid=146> | TITEB (2025) Internal organisational data.

2. The SDR is calculated as deaths per 1,000 standard population, using the age distribution of the total Australian population as of 30 June 2001 as the standard (ABS, 2017).

3. ABS (2017) 3202 Deaths, Australia, 2017, Web page | <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3302.0Main+Features12017?OpenDocument>

Employers on the Islands

The table all employers on the Tiwi Islands that have lodged vacancies in the last five (5) years. The list is grouped by industry using both the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) and the Cultural Framework Classification. To better reflect the Tiwi workforce, a new category called “Feeding Community” has also been added.

Table 3 – Employers on the Tiwi Islands

ANZIC CODE	Cultural Framework Classification	Employer Name	Phone
A	Building the community	Plantation Management Partners Pty Ltd	
A	Servicing the community	TIWI RESOURCES	0403 047 221
A	Servicing the community	INDIGENOUS MARINE LOGISTICS PTY LTD	
A	Working on country	Mamirnikuwi Rangers	0410 843 696
E	Building the community	Bathurst Island Housing Association Incorporated	08 8978 3866
E	Building the community	SH Build	08 8988 4410
E	Building the community	WTD Constructions Pty Ltd	08 8919 4494
E	Building the community	DT Hobbs Pty Ltd	0428 898 683
E	Building the community	Murray River North Pty Ltd	
E	Building the community	Topnotch Construction, Darwin	0408 017 385
E	Building the community	IE PROJECT (NT) PTY LTD	
E	Building the community	NCP Contracting PTY LTD	08 8932 8124
E	Building the community	NT Link	08 8932 5000
E	Building the community	Tiwi Partners	0419 981 399
E	Building the community	Intract Australia Pty Limited	0472 752 585, 8930 2570
G	Feeding Community	Nguiu Club Association Incorporated	08 8978 3979
G	Feeding Community	Milikapiti Sports & Social Club Inc	08 8970 9312
G	Servicing the community	KT Enterprises (NT) Pty Ltd	
G	Servicing the community	Milikapiti Community Indigenous	
G	Servicing the community	Nguiu Ullintjinni Association Inc	08 8978 3981
G	Servicing the community	Piliyamyirra Supermarket	08 8970 9094
G	Servicing the community	Pirlanginpi Community Store	
G	Servicing the community	Outback Stores Pty Ltd	
H	NA	Clearwater Island Lodge	08 8978 3783
H	Servicing the community	NT Port And Marine Pty Ltd	
K	Servicing the community	Traditional Credit Union Limited	1800 828 232
N	Servicing the community	Relationships Australia Northern Territory Inc	
N	Strong in culture	Jipungwayi	0467739266
N	Supporting all classifications	Murrup (formerly Cathy Freeman Foundation)	
O	Servicing the community	Department of Housing NT	
O	Servicing the community	Department of Health	
O	Servicing the community	Northern Territory Of Australia	
O	Servicing the community	Australian Bureau Of Statistics	0433 343 391
O	Servicing the community	Centrelink	
O	Servicing the community	NT Police Fire And Emergency Services	
P	Supporting all classifications	Tiwi Islands Training And Employment Board	0438 373 383

ANZIC CODE	Cultural Framework Classification	Employer Name	Phone
P	Supporting all classifications	Xavier Catholic College	08 8978 3970
P	Supporting all classifications	Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School	08 8978 3986
P	Supporting all classifications	Milikapiti School	08 8978 3960
P	Supporting all classifications	Pularumpi School	08 8978 3961
P	Supporting all classifications	Tiwi College	08 8970 9024
P	Supporting all classifications	Cathy Freeman Foundation	0438 418 264
P	Supporting all classifications	Indigenous Literacy Foundation	0429 411 371
Q	Caring for family and community	Catholiccare NT OLD	08 8978 3921
Q	Caring for family and community	Red Cross	1800 733 276
Q	Caring for family and community	Calvary Community Care	0408 509 914
Q	Caring for family and community	Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation	08 8945 5211
Q	Caring for family and community	Star Disability and Medical Services Pty Ltd	0428 930 230
Q	Caring for family and community	CatholicCareNT	08 8978 3921
Q	Caring for family and community	Balanced Coordination Support Services	0428 085 001
Q	Servicing the community	Country Connect Pty Ltd	0419 773 556
Q	Servicing the community	Department of Children and Families	0477 336 729
Q	Supporting all classifications	FaFT	08 89783986
Q	Supporting all classifications	Menzies School Of Health Research	08 8946 8600
R	Strong in culture	Bima Wear Association Incorporated	08 8970 9235
R	Strong in culture	Jilamara Arts And Crafts Association	08 8978 3901
R	Strong in culture	Tiwi Designs Aboriginal Corporation Incorporated	08 8978 3982
R	Strong in culture	Tiwi Tours	08 8923 6523
R	Strong in culture	Ngaruwanajirri Inc	08 8978 3724
R	Strong in culture	Tarntipi Homelands Aboriginal Corporation	0407 518 598
R	Strong in culture	Munupi Arts And Crafts Association- Aboriginal Corporation.	043 474 2239
S	Servicing the community	Tiwi Enterprises Pty Ltd	08 8978 3755
S	Servicing the community	Randstad Pty Limited	08 8923 4300
S	Servicing the community	Corestaff Darwin	89426666
S	Servicing the community	Tiwi Islands Regional Council	08 8918 0402
S	Servicing the community	Tiwi Land Council Incorporated	

ANZIC Code Key Grid

Code	Industry Group
A	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing
B	Mining
C	Manufacturing
D	Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services
E	Construction
F	Wholesale Trade
G	Retail Trade
H	Accommodation & Food Services
I	Transport, Postal & Warehousing
J	Information Media & Telecommunications

Code	Industry Group
K	Financial & Insurance Services
L	Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services
M	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
N	Administrative & Support Services
O	Public Administration & Safety
P	Education & Training
Q	Health Care & Social Assistance
R	Arts & Recreation Services
S	Other Services

Key Issues & Needs

There are several serious problems that need to be fixed to give Tiwi people the same chances as other Territorians. One major issue is the lack of investment in basic infrastructure like roads, internet, or community services. In addition, there has been a long-term undersupply of housing, which makes it hard for people to live in stable conditions. Without stable housing and services, it's very difficult for anyone to keep a steady job.

Another big challenge is the high cost of transport. Getting to and from the Tiwi Islands is expensive, which makes everyday goods more costly. It also makes it very hard for people to travel for education, work, or business opportunities on the mainland. Since many Tiwi people earn less than the average income in the Northern Territory or the rest of Australia, these costs put a lot of opportunities out of reach.

Lack of Investment

Investment is desperately needed on the Tiwi Islands. There has been a lack of major infrastructure investment into the Tiwi Islands for at least a decade, resulting in limited infrastructure and services, which negatively impacts the cost of living and access to essential services.

High Cost of Transport

Transport between Darwin and the Tiwi Islands is expensive, particularly as the average personal income is \$223 per week. Access to the Tiwi Islands is by air or ferry.

There are daily flights to all three main communities, operated by Fly Tiwi, which is a subsidiary of Hardy Aviation. The plane ride is 20 minutes to Bathurst Island and around 35 minutes to Melville Island. Flights are priced around \$220 one way, or \$440 return (at July 2025).

The ferry is operated by Sea Link 4 days per week. It takes around 2 ½ hours to go one way from Wurrumiyanga to Darwin at a cost of \$60 one-way or \$120 return.

The ferry only stops at Wurrumiyanga on Bathurst Island. Residents from communities on Melville Island must get to the Inter Island ferry, which runs hourly from 8.00am to 4.00pm on weekdays.

The Inter Island Ferry costs \$5 per person each way, or \$45 per car. For a business vehicle the cost is \$114 each way.

High Cost of Consumables

Despite family or household incomes 2-3 times lower than NT or national rates, the cost of living on the Tiwi Islands is higher than average. On Bathurst, Wurrumiyanga has two supermarkets and two takeaway outlets. On Melville, Milikapiti and Pirlangimpi each have a supermarket. The supermarkets sell a wide range of food and everyday consumables, however the high cost of getting goods and services to the Islands result in goods being more expensive in Tiwi stores than on the mainland.

Aged Infrastructure

With very little investment in infrastructure on the Tiwi Islands, most of the buildings at all three communities are aged. Accessing funding to renovate, modernise or upgrade existing infrastructure is difficult. A range of statutory eligibility criteria must be fulfilled with agencies including the Tiwi Land Council, Office of Township Leasing, Northern Territory Protected Areas, Power and Water Authority and, depending on the application, environmental approval is also required. The approval process can take 1-2 years.

Roads within the main communities, and those leading to homelands, swimming holes, and fishing spots, have had little investment in over 10 years, making travel risky. Public amenities like toilets, drinking water, and shelter are often missing from parks, gardens, and even airports.

Housing Understock

Since the 1970s, Tiwi people have been negatively impacted by the ongoing housing understock. Housing stock that exists across all three communities is utilised and waitlists for public housing are extensive. Although the NT Government has released new housing subdivisions approvals, the houses will take time to build, and demand will increase over that time.

Employed Tiwi who are on the public housing waitlist have many day-to-day challenges due to unstable housing. Although they are providing services or support to the community by having a job, they do not get prioritised housing.

Stable accommodation is a key component of working and studying successfully. This challenge has the potential to cause ongoing negative impacts for Tiwi who are in employment or want to work.

Social Issues

Social problems like substance abuse, gambling, and domestic violence also impact on the ability of Tiwi people to access training and employment opportunities and to take the next steps in life. Many feel that healing, rebuilding trust, and restoring relationships are essential. While working with outside partners is welcomed when there is trust and respect, many Tiwi people feel that social issues must be addressed from within the community.

Education

Education is seen by the Tiwi community as a key part of development. There is strong support for bilingual education that includes both English and Tiwi language. Many community members believe that bringing back Tiwi language teaching will help build confidence, respect for culture, stability and belonging. It would also improve learning outcomes and help Tiwi people (particularly young Tiwi) see a future that includes both their Tiwi identity and opportunities in the Western world.

Employment

Employment is viewed as a path to a better life for individuals and the community. However, there are several barriers, including limited employment opportunities and the need to consider cultural responsibilities such as ceremony, kinship obligations and “humbug” (pressures from family or community). There is a strong desire for more Tiwi-owned businesses and respectful partnerships with non-Tiwi people who understand and value Tiwi culture.

Culture and Identity

The community wants to combine both Tiwi and Western knowledge systems. Maintaining a strong cultural identity is just as important as achieving economic success. Tiwi people have shown they are adaptable and capable of living in both worlds while protecting what makes their culture unique.

Lack of Amenity

While it is widely acknowledged that providing more active programs and facilities for children and young people can help keep them engaged and out of trouble, especially at night, there are very few structured activities for children and youth on the Tiwi Islands. All three communities have only a few parks and playgrounds, and there are no modern sports or recreation facilities — despite the Tiwi people’s strong sporting traditions. There is no town swimming pool, which means that many Tiwi children have never been able to cool off with a swim during the heat of the Build-up or the Wet Season.

The lack of public facilities limits opportunities for social connection and has a negative impact on community pride. Without safe and welcoming spaces, opportunities for exercise, relaxation, and community events are reduced, which can contribute to isolation, boredom, and anti-social behaviour.

Lack of Basic Services

There are no seniors’ programs and the loss of programs like CDEP, RJCP, and CDP, which once provided local labour for funerals, transport, arts, training, and community beautification, has left a gap in basic services. Since 2021, the end of mutual obligation, increased welfare payments, and high mortality have reduced unpaid community participation. While many people advocate for improvements, progress in remote communities remains slow.

Lack of Specialised Services

There is also a shortage of ongoing specialised services on the Tiwi Islands. Alcohol, drug, and gambling addictions affect all three main Tiwi communities. While some visiting services operate, they are limited and can’t meet the high level of need. Other allied health and social services are also in short supply, making it harder for people to get the help they need when they need it.



Low School Attendance

Education outcomes are improving, but there is still work to be done. School attendance has risen from around 57% in 2020 to 69% in 2024, but more effort is needed to get children attending every day (see Table 4). Better facilities, community programs, and family support all play a role in making education a consistent part of children’s lives.

Many stakeholders work collaboratively across the Tiwi Islands to continue encouraging a pro-education culture amongst Tiwi families, including:

- The school community, parents and carers
- EEAI Provider
- Tiwi School Support Service (TITEB)
- Murrup (Cathy Freeman Foundation)
- Tiwi Red Cross
- Palimayu Family and Children’s Centre
- NT Health Clinics
- NT Safe House
- Dept of Children & Families

The aspiration of having Tiwi progress into key and influential roles into the future can only become a reality if school and education are made a high priority by all Tiwi community interest.

Table 4 – Extract from the My School website, administered by Australian Curriculum, Reporting and Assessment Authority (ACARA)

School	Semester 1 2023	Semester 1 2024	Semester 1 2025
Milikapiti	83%	78%	70%
Pularumpi	78%	74%	66.9%
MCPS	58%	65%	69%
Xavier	52%	52%	43%

STEP 2.

Workforce Research

Methodology

Effective community engagement is crucial for the success of the Tiwi Islands Community Workforce Plan. The methodology used for community engagement, review, and endorsement of the plan by key stakeholders ensures that the plan reflects the values, aspirations and lived experience of the Tiwi people.

Community Engagement Strategy

The development of the Community Workforce Plan involved structured meetings with key Tiwi stakeholder groups, including the Tiwi Land Council Management Group, the TLC Cultural Committee the Wurrumiyanga Local Reference Group, local and visiting employers and the Tiwi Islands Employment and Training Board.

Structured interviews were conducted with representatives from the Tiwi Education Board, Tiwi Shire, and various service providers in health, education, aged care, and community services. Additionally, 26 employers on the Tiwi Islands were interviewed to gather their input.

Workforce Supply

The table below presents a socioeconomic snapshot of the Tiwi Islands, comparing key statistics with the Northern Territory (NT) and Australia overall. The data includes:

Review Process

The research by Iuliia Khukalenko and Therese Marie Puruntatameri (see Anexure) was presented to the Tiwi Land Council, the Tiwi Islands Employment and Training Board, and other key stakeholders. Feedback was sought through structured interviews and community meetings.

The review process ensured that the plan reflects the diverse perspectives and aspirations of the Tiwi community on work, training and the future of the communities.

Endorsement

The Tiwi Land Council and the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board endorsed the draft plan. A forum was then held to modify and endorse the plan based on initial feedback from the Department.

Ongoing annual forums will be conducted to report on the plan's progress, including Tiwi workforce trends, and to seek input for the next 12-month period.

- Labour Force Participation
- Industry of Employment
- Income Levels (Personal, Family, Household)
- Living Costs (Rent)



Table 5 – Workforce data

	Category	Tiwi		NT	Aust
People aged 15 and over	In the labour force	467	30.7%	35.4%	
	Not in the labour force	1012	66.5%	59.7%	
	Not stated	35	2.3%	4.9%	
Industry of employment (top survey responses)	Local Government		17.4%	8.3%	2.6%
	Grocery store		9.7%	3.5%	3.4%
	Primary Education		8.7%	3.2%	2.4%
	Secondary Education		4.7%	1.1%	1.7%
	House Construction		3.7%	1.0%	0.7%
Income⁴	Personal	\$223		\$323	\$540
	Family	\$492		\$947	\$1527
	Household	\$639		\$1318	\$1507
Expense⁵	Rent	\$80		\$130	\$300

Key Findings

Labour Force Participation

The Tiwi Islands have a significantly lower rate of labour force participation (30.7%) compared to the Northern Territory (35.4%) and Australia as a whole. A notably higher proportion of Tiwi residents (66.5%) are not in the labour force, in contrast to 59.7% in the NT and lower still nationally. This suggests that a large segment of the adult population in Tiwi is either unable or choosing not to engage in paid work, due to limited local job opportunities, cultural factors, educational access, and broader socioeconomic challenges.

Industry of Employment

The Tiwi Islands economy is highly reliant on government-funded and essential service roles. Employment in the Tiwi Islands is concentrated in a few key industries, particularly those tied to public services and community support (see also Table 3).

Local government is the largest employer, engaging 17.4% of the workforce—more than double the NT figure (8.3%) and far above the national average (2.6%). Other notable industries include grocery retail (9.7%), primary education (8.7%), and secondary education (4.7%), all with a higher share of employment than NT and Australia-wide.

Income Levels

Income levels across all categories (personal, family, and household) are considerably lower in the Tiwi Islands compared to both the Northern Territory and the national averages. The median personal income in Tiwi is just \$223 per week, significantly lower than \$323 in the NT and \$540 nationally. Family income is \$492 per week, which is almost half the NT average and less than a third of the national figure. Household income follows the same trend at \$639 per week. These low-income levels reflect limited employment opportunities and low workforce participation on the Islands, contributing to lower overall living standards compared to the NT and the rest of Australia.

Rent/Cost of Living

The median rent in the Tiwi Islands is substantially lower at \$80 per week, compared to \$130 in the NT and \$300 across Australia, which reflects subsidised community housing. While the reduced cost of living may help offset low incomes to some extent, it still points to the broader economic disparity experienced in the region.

4. Personal income excludes people aged 15 years and over who did not state their income. Family and household income excludes families and or households where at least one member aged 15 years and over did not state their income.

5. Occupied private dwellings where at least one person is Aboriginal and/or TSI. Note: Approximately 90% Tiwi Island locals rent. Approximately 6% own or have a mortgage.

Workforce Demand: Community Aspirations

Creating strong and lasting employment opportunities for Tiwi people involves building skills, respecting culture, and supporting local industries. The Community Workforce Plan has identified short term, medium term and long-term opportunities and challenges. Together, these efforts aim to support Tiwi people in finding meaningful work that respects and reflects their identity.

Short-Term

Our priority is to help Tiwi and non-Tiwi people understand each other's cultures, improving literacy and digital skills, and making it easier for people to meet job entry requirements.

- **Cultural Awareness Training:** Businesses operating on the Tiwi Islands need to gain an understanding of Tiwi culture in order to develop inclusive workforce practices that support and encourage local participation. This presents a valuable opportunity for Tiwi elders and community leaders to deliver cultural awareness training for employers and their staff. By offering this training, Tiwi knowledge holders can help businesses create workplace environments that are not only culturally respectful but also more effective in engaging and retaining local employees. Such programs can also support the successful integration of non-local, experienced professionals, who are essential for long-term skills transfer and the development of future Tiwi industry experts.
- **Understanding the Western Work Culture:** Tiwi workers entering employment also need to and understand and comply with set workplace rules and guidelines. This is a matter of safety and inclusivity. Programs like Tiwi Ready Course and Tiwi Tech courses help build capability and understanding of the Western working world that help jobseekers make informed decisions about their future work or learning pathways. Employers should also strive to have a strong and inclusive on boarding process that is made up of induction and training that clearly articulates the aims and objectives of the organisation or program and expectations of the individual employee.

- **Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Skills:** The SEE First Nations delivery grant aims to improve these Literacy, Language, Numeracy and Digital (LLND) skills across the Tiwi Islands. The ability to support Tiwi adults to increase LLND skills begins in July 2025. With an initial three (3) years that will hopefully continue well into the future. There has been an IT revolution on the Tiwi Islands, almost all community members own a smart phone, some also own smart TVs, tablets and computers. Community members are keen to enrol in this program that will be run on a set four (4) days per week in all three communities.
- **Employment Entry Pre-Requisites:** Tiwi people face significant barriers in accessing identification documents and training certification essential for employment, including systemic issues and geographical limitations. Challenges include limited access to birth registration and certificates, different naming conventions, high mobility and homelessness. Part of the role of Employment Services is to host the Births, Deaths and Marriages and NT Drive Safe in Tiwi Communities, which support the gathering of identification documents.
- **External Registered Training Organisations:** Many registered training organisations deliver training to Tiwi both on the Islands and in Darwin and other localities. Industry RTOs are highly valued they bring current training expertise that helps Tiwi improve their industry skill base and benefits employers who get to have trained staff.

Medium-Term

There is strong community interest in jobs that are grounded in Tiwi culture, such as working on Country, caring for family and community, and helping build and feed the community.

- **Jobs Strong in Culture:** The need for roles such as Tiwi language teachers, content creators, and cultural awareness teachers were strongly expressed in the research. However, there is not much appetite for government to re-introduce bi-lingual education into NT Schools in the foreseeable future. There is a high need for facilitators of both cultural Tiwi knowledge and

work force expectation including behaviours and conduct, these opportunities do exist in the current market and are documented in the workforce data of this publication.

- **Jobs Working on Country:** Opportunities in tourism and farming, including fishing, safari guides and farm managers. There are numerous, individual, clan based, and organisational aspirations to facilitate a range of jobs that involve being on the land or waters.
Tiwi people are naturally talented at being in sync with the natural environment. The Junior Rangers program which is based at Tiwi College, and the Tarntipi Eco Camp at Bathurst Island, has conducted surveys and assessments of different parts of the Islands with a exploring future business potential.
- **Jobs Feeding the Community:** There is much food insecurity on the Tiwi Islands, particularly on Sundays and Mondays when it is harder to access food or other basic needs. Examples of food related jobs are organising meals for guided tours, working in a commercial kitchen, or meal preparation for schools and other training settings. Research showed considerable interest in contributing to the development of Tiwi agri-business through new butchering skills (after a butcher came to the Islands) and providing fresh seafood to residents and tourists.
- **Jobs Caring for Family and Community:** Roles such as family support coordinators and community opportunities communicators. The role of supporting family is formalised differently than normal Tiwi protocols and overwritten by duty of care and legislation that needs to be complied with. These roles already exist in some capacities, but require a high level of literacy, numeracy, digital literacy and the ability to observe confidentiality.
- **Jobs Building the Community:** Involvement in existing roles and industries, such as construction and community services. Level of construction (see Table 3) versus lack of success in developing skilled labour for the construction market making this an underutilised opportunity on the Islands.

Long-Term

Planning needs to focus on strengthening education, reviving language programs, improving health, and supporting small businesses in tourism, hospitality, and food production.

- **Education:** Integrating Tiwi values into the curriculum, enhancing literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, and expanding adult education programs.
- **Language:** Reviving bilingual education programs and promoting both Modern and Traditional Tiwi languages
- **Culture:** Embedding cultural learning into education systems and promoting community harmony and unity
- **Health:** Improving physical and mental health education and support within schools and the community
- **Micro-Businesses in Tourism and Hospitality:** Micro-businesses play a crucial role in the Tiwi Islands' economy by providing income and fostering entrepreneurship. This theme encompasses various small-scale enterprises that contribute to the community's economic development and cultural preservation.

Key areas of focus include:

- **Tourism and Guided Tours:** Small entrepreneurs offer guided tours, fishing safaris, and cultural experiences to tourists. These businesses not only generate income but also promote Tiwi culture and heritage
- **Hospitality Services:** Establishments such as cafes and small restaurants provide local cuisine and hospitality services, enhancing the tourism experience and creating job opportunities
- **Community Service Organisations:** Broad spectrum services organisations provide food as a basic need, i.e. childcare and early childhood learning, the schools, sports and recreation programs, training programs and community events all feed their client bases within the Tiwi community context.
- **Baking and Catering Services:** Local baking and catering businesses offer traditional and contemporary food services for community events and tourists, supporting local food

production and employment Wild Catch and Seafood: Small-scale fishing and seafood businesses, including wild catch.

- Find out what jobs are currently available, the skills required and which employers are offering local work.

Tiwi Islands Paid Work Opportunities

Across 35 organisations surveyed as part of the Research Project, the Tiwi people represent a strong proportion of the total workforce, with some sectors such as local government, education, and social services showing local employment participation rates exceeding 57.81%. This demonstrates a high commitment to local employment and capability building.

We estimate that around 20 employers could not respond to the survey, the list below is all employers that have lodged vacancies in the last 5 years, some did not respond to the workforce survey.

Key Findings

Based on data collected from a diverse range of businesses and service providers on the Tiwi Islands, operating in construction, education, health, tourism, retail, environmental management, and government sectors.

Tiwi-identified local roles:

- 618 indicating an average local workforce participation of 57.81%

A wide range of new local positions are expected in 2025–2027, particularly in the areas of:

- Town services and administration
- Tourism and hospitality
- Cultural education and assistant teaching
- Environmental management.

Emerging Paid Employment Opportunities 2025/2026

ANZSIC Code	Industry	Role	No. of Positions	Location		
E	Construction/Trades and Labouring	Plant Operator	1	W		
		Trade Assistants	6	W		
		Labourer	15	W	M	P
		Carpenter	1	W		
		Electrician	1	W		
		Painter	1	W		
		Trade Assistant/Maintenance Officer	1	W		
		Maintenance	4	W	M	P
		Labour & Skilled Labourers	3	W	M	P
A	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	Coordinators	12	W	M	P
		Access to Country Officer	4	W	M	P
		Farm and Nursery Workers	6	W	M	
		Farm / Grounds	1	W		
		Oyster and Fish Trap Key Workers	5	W		
I	Transport, Postal and Warehousing	Diesel Mechanic	3	W		
		Mechanic (Apprentice)	1	W		
O	Public Administration and Safety	Fire Management	2	W		
		Social & Community Service Workers	5	W	M	P
		Town Services Officer	40	W	M	P
		Health and Safety Intern	1	W		
		Program Coordinators	4	W		

ANZSIC Code	Industry	Role	No. of Positions	Location		
G	Retail Trade	Retail	3	W		
P	Education and Training	Teacher/Assistant Teacher	30	W	M	P
		Student Services	2	W		
		School Support Services	9	W	M	P
		Manager	2	W		
		Grounds Keeper		W		
		Field Officer	2	W		
R	Arts and Recreation Services	Field Support Officer	2	W		
		Tourism Key Workers	5	W	M	P
		Tiwi Rangers	10	W	M	P
		Museum Workers	3	W		
		Tiwi Leaders Forum Coordinator	1	W		
		Arts Worker	20	W		
		Cultural advisor	2	W		
		Teacher's Aide	3	W		
		Artists	31	W		
		Tour Guides	3	W		
		Fishing Guide	1	W		
Q	Health Care and Social Assistance	Night Patrol Officer	11	W	M	P
		Feed Our Families Key Workers	5	W	M	P
		Casual - Family Group Home	1	W		
		Well-Being Officer	3	W	M	P
		Health Practitioner	1	W		
		Mobile Laundry Workers	5	W		
		Disability Support Workers	3	W	M	P
		Drivers	1	W		
		Domestic Assistance	1	W		
		Tiwi Engaged Officer	2	W		
		Garden Maintenance	8	W		
		Calvary Maintenance Services	6	W		
		Youth Worker	2	W	M	P
H	Accommodation and Food Services	Cleaners	13	W	M	P
		Hospitality/Housekeeping	1	W		
		Hospitality	5	W	M	P
		Catering and Cleaning Assistants	2	W		
		Bar Staff	16	W	M	P
		Security / Gate Staff	4	W	M	P
		Kitchen Staff	1	W		
		Cook / Cleaner	2	W		
		Casual - Hospitality	2	W		
		Kitchen Hand	1	W		
S	Other Services	Assistant Mechanic	1	W		

ANZSIC Code	Industry	Role	No. of Positions	Location		
L	Rental, Hiring and Real Estate	Vehicle Detailers	4	W		
		Community Housing Officer	1	W		
N	Administrative and Support Services	Management	5	W	M	P
		Administration	2	W		
		Managers	9	W	M	P
		Payroll Officer	1	W		
		General Manager	1	W		
		Administration Manager	1	W		
		Workshop Administration	3	W	M	P
		Office Administration Staff	1	W		
		Receptionist	1	W		
		Administration Officer	1	W		
		Receptionists	2	W		
		Senior Program Coordinator/ Team Leader	1	W		
		Workforce Advisors	13	W	M	P
		Support Officers	3	W		
		Trainer	10	W	M	P
		program coordinator	4	W		
		Workforce Mentor	7	W	M	P

* Total numbers reported across the Tiwi Islands in all locations

Key to locations:

- M = Milikapiti
- P = Pirlangimpi
- W = Wurrumiyanga



STEP 3.

Identify future needs

Emerging and Growth Industries on the Tiwi Islands

In 2025-2026 the Tiwi Islands will experience a shift in employment trends driven by infrastructure development, cultural tourism, community wellbeing services, and environmental sustainability. The data collected from 35 businesses and organisations highlights several industries identified for significant growth over the next two years.

1. Skilled Labourers

Trend: High demand for labourers, trades assistants, electricians, plumbers, and apprentices.

Key Skills Needed:

- Basic trade and construction skills
- Certificate II/III/IV/Trade certification
- Safety training and white card certification
- Fit for work Medical
- First Aid, CPR
- Specialised operating licences/tickets
- Apprenticeship-level qualifications in carpentry, civil construction, mechanics

2. Tourism, Hospitality and Cultural Enterprises

Trend: Expansion in marine tourism, guided cultural tours, accommodation, and food services.

Key Skills Needed:

- Customer service and hospitality
- Responsible service
- Food Safety
- Tour guiding, boat operations (coxswain ticket)
- Cultural knowledge, storytelling, and visitor engagement
- Retail and bar/catering services

3. Health, Aged Care and Social Services

Trend: Consistent demand for support workers in aged care, NDIS, and youth programs.

Key Skills Needed:

- Certificate II, III, IV in Aged Care or Disability Support
- NDIS Clearances and Ochre card requirements, National Police clearance
- Fit for work Medical
- First aid
- Mandatory reporting
- Personal care specific training
- Cross cultural awareness training
- Health promotion and community wellbeing training
- Administration and case coordination

4. Environmental and Land Management

Trend: Expansion of ranger programs and environmental fire management.

Key Skills Needed:

- Ranger training and conservation skills
- First aid
- Risk assessments and hazard training (Chemical/Fire/Exposure)
- Fire control, biodiversity monitoring
- Digital mapping, data collection

5. Local Government and Public Services

Trend: Continued investment in town services, night patrol, community safety, and administration.

Key Skills Needed:

- Administrative and IT skills
- Ochre card/ National Police clearances/ Federal clearances
- Supervisory and coordination skills
- Waste management and mechanical maintenance

6. Education and Early Childhood Support

CatholicCare runs early childhood childcare at three communities.

Trend: Strong and stable employment in schools, with focus on Tiwi assistant teachers and support staff.

Key Skills Needed:

- Certificate II, III, IV in Education Support
- Ochre card clearances
- Mandatory reporting
- First Aid
- Child development, classroom support
- Reporting and observations
- Cross-cultural communication

Table 6 – Projected Vacancies for 2025-2027 (all communities)

Industry	Location	Count	ANZSIC Code
Construction	WPM	5	E
Environmental land management	WPM	8	A
Port Services and accommodation / hospitality	P	8	I
Government/ Non-profit	W	6	O
Retail	W	4	G
Forestry	M	2	A
Port and Marine Services	P	5	I
Local Government	WPM	25	O
Maintenance and tourism services	WPM	34	I
Cultural Tourism	W	5	R
Aboriginal art and disabilities	W	2	Q
Education	P	4	P
Social well being	W	1	Q
Club and Accommodation	M	2	H
Youth and Family community work	W	1	Q
NDIS	WPM	1	Q
Motor mechanic Repairs	W	1	S

Industry	Location	Count	ANZSIC Code
Aged Care	W	2	Q
Health (W)	W	4	Q
Health (M)	M	2	Q
Guided fishing trips	M	3	I
Hospitality (W)	W	1	H
Building/Construction & Maintenance	WPM	5	E
Tenancy Management	WPM	1	L
Youth justice / NDIS	WPM	1	Q

Future Workforce Development

With 150 new local positions projected for 2025–2027, workforce development efforts must focus on:

- Vocational training (VET) pathways aligned to local industry needs.
- Apprenticeship and traineeships in construction, Tourism hospitality, and health.
- Flexible and culturally safe education models for school-based and adult learners.

Increased opportunity for Tiwi-led employment is also highlighted and underscores the need for sustained investment in training, housing, and support systems to ensure long-term employment outcomes for Tiwi people across all communities. Investment in incentives and career support will support Tiwi people to take up these roles and lead the economic and cultural future of their communities.



Apprenticeships and Traineeships

There has been very low investment into trainees and apprentices on the Tiwi Islands for the past 20 years. One of our main priorities is to ensure this investment increases through this workforce plan.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are increasing, with roles identified in mechanical trades, construction, tourism, and administration. Apprenticeships and traineeships provide vital pathways for Tiwi school leavers to upskill and help them transition to long-term employment on the Islands.

What is a Traineeship?

A traineeship is a structured training program that combines paid work with formal education. It allows individuals to gain practical experience and skills in a specific industry while working towards a nationally recognized qualification. Traineeships are available in various fields, such as business, hospitality, health care, and information technology. They typically last between one to two years, depending on the qualification and the industry. Traineeships are a great way to start a career, as they provide hands-on experience and valuable credentials.

Duration: A Traineeship generally takes 1 to 2 years to complete.

What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a structured training program that combines paid work with formal education, similar to a traineeship. However, apprenticeships are typically associated with skilled trades and technical fields, such as plumbing, electrical work, carpentry, and automotive mechanics. Apprenticeships usually last between three to four years, depending on the trade and the qualification being pursued.

During an apprenticeship, individuals work under the supervision of experienced tradespeople, gaining hands-on experience and practical skills. At the same time, they attend a registered training organization (RTO) to complete the theoretical components of their qualification. Upon successful completion, apprentices receive a nationally recognized qualification, which can significantly enhance their career prospects in their chosen trade.

Duration: Apprenticeships generally take 3-4 years to complete.

Local Government	Location	Total
Diesel Mechanic	WPM	2
Maintenance officers	W	2
Office Administration Traineeship	W	1
Construction		
Carpentry Apprenticeship	WPM	2
Civil Apprenticeships	WPM	2
Ports and Marine		
People and Wellbeing Traineeship	P	1
Maintenance officer Traineeship	P	1
Tourism Guide Traineeship	P	1
Tourism and recreation		
Tourism Guide Traineeship	M	1

People aged between 15 years old and 25 years old are the main target group for apprenticeships and traineeships. The TITEB Group Training Organisation (GTO) can assist local employers who want to invest into creating a local industry qualified workforce.

The GTO represents Tiwi young people, including:

- In school and doing a School Based Apprenticeship
- Not in school and seeking support to enter the workforce
- A job seeker/participant on the local Employment Services caseload
- An existing employee who wants to expand their career opportunities.

Incentives for Employers

TITEB receives Territory Apprentice Assistance Program funding, which can support Tiwi employers with wage subsidies for new apprentices or trainees. TITEB is keen to work with employers on the Islands to take advantage of this exciting opportunity.

Group Training Services Options

By creating trainee or apprentice position within their organisation, employers can build their workforce and train employees to their specific needs. They can also reduce costs through lower trainee wages and wage subsidies. TITEB Group Training Organisation (GTO) has developed three service options for potential host employers:

1. **New Placement:** Suitable for Tiwi people not on employment benefits or in school. Also suitable for Tiwi people living in Darwin but seeking a traineeship on the Islands.
2. **School-based Apprenticeship:** For Tiwi young people in years 10, 11 or 12.
3. **CDP Caseload:** For Tiwi people currently on employment benefits and seeking a traineeship or apprenticeship.

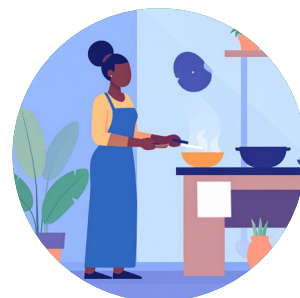
1. New Placement

1	GTO/Employer Meeting		- GTO information session - Assess best model
2	Vacancy Advertised		GTO advertises traineeship or apprenticeship
3	Interview Candidates		- GTO conducts interview process - Employer may join interview panel - Successful candidate
4	Placement Commences		Trainee or Apprentice commences placement
5	Trainee/Apprentice Induction		- Induction - Workplace familiarisation - LLND Assessment - WHS Requirement - Supervisor induction - Supports start from Day One
6	Trainee/Apprentice Supervision		- Supervisor contact confirmation - Monitoring Site Visit (MSV) (workplace visit) monthly - Supervisor MSV Support until completion
7	Training Plan & Enrolment		- Training planning & enrolment week 4-6 post PL - Confirm training plan & enrolment
8	Training Commences		Commence on-the-job training
9	Training Completion		Complete training
10	Career Progression		Continuing employment



2. School-Based Apprenticeship

1	GTO/Employer Meeting		- GTO brokers school-based apprentice vacancy - Consults with High School
2	Vacancy Advertised		GTO advertises vacancy
3	GTO Interviews Candidates		- Interview process - Employer may join interview panel - Successful candidate
4	Placement (PL) Commences		- School-based apprentice commences placement 2-days work 3-days school (compulsory)
5	Trainee/Apprentice Induction		- Induction - Workplace familiarisation - LLND Assessment - WHS Requirement - Supervisor induction - Supports start from Day One
6	Trainee/Apprentice Supervision		- Supervisor contact confirmation - Monitoring Site Visit (MSV) (workplace visit) monthly - Supervisor MSV Support until completion
7	Training Plan & Enrolment		- Training planning & enrolment week 4-6 post placement - Confirm training plan & enrolment
8	Training Commences		Commence on-the-job training
9	Training Completion		Complete training
10	Career Progression		- Graduation (Year 12 Equivalent) - Continuing employment





3. CDP Caseload

1	GTO/Employer Meeting		- GTO information session - Assess best model
2	Vacancy Advertised		GTO advertises traineeship or apprenticeship
3	Candidates Identified		TITEB Employment Services staff screen for possible candidates
4	GTO Interviews Candidates		- Interview process - Employer may join interview panel - Successful candidate
5	Placement Commences		Commence placement
6	Trainee/Apprentice Induction		- Induction - Workplace familiarisation - LLND Assessment - WHS Requirement - Supervisor induction - Supports start from Day One
7	Trainee/Apprentice Supervision		- Supervisor contact confirmation - Monitoring Site Visit (MSV) (workplace visit) monthly - Supervisor MSV Support until completion
8	Training Plan & Enrolment		- Training planning & enrolment week 4-6 post PL - Confirm training plan & enrolment
9	Training Commences		Commence on-the-job training
10	Training Completion		Complete training
11	Career Progression		Continuing employment



STEP 4.

Issues Analysis

Life in the Tiwi Islands is shaped by both its rich culture and its isolation. While the communities of Wurrumiyanga, Pirlangimpi, and Milikapiti are home to strong traditions and talented people, they face long-standing gaps in essential infrastructure, recreation, and community programs.

Decades of under-investment, combined with the loss of key employment

initiatives, have left limited opportunities for Tiwi people, especially young people, to engage in structured, healthy, and skill-building activities. Addressing these gaps is vital to improving quality of life, supporting community pride, and unlocking local potential.

Here is a snapshot of the barriers and opportunities identified in the Research Project:

Challenges / Barriers to Employment

Limited Local Job Opportunities

- Reliance on government and community service roles, with few private sector jobs.
- Lack of diverse industries reduces career choices for locals.

Infrastructure and Housing Shortages

- Aged and inadequate infrastructure, especially housing shortages, disrupts stability for workers.
- Extensive public housing waitlists mean even employed people may face unstable living arrangements.

High Cost of Transport and Goods

- Expensive travel to Darwin (\$220+ flights or \$60 ferry each way) limits access to education, training, and off-island jobs.
- High freight costs make everyday goods more expensive, straining low household incomes.

Low Incomes and Cost of Living Pressures

- Median personal income is \$223/week—well below NT and national averages—while goods are more expensive.

- Financial stress limits ability to afford training, equipment, or relocation for work.

Education and Skills Gaps

- Lower literacy, numeracy, and digital skills reduce competitiveness for jobs.
- Barriers in obtaining essential ID and certifications for employment.

Social and Cultural Challenges

- Substance abuse, gambling, and domestic violence affect workforce participation.
- Cultural responsibilities (ceremonies, kinship obligations, “humbug”) can conflict with work expectations.

Lack of Amenity and Basic Services

- Lack of pools, parks and playgrounds for children and young people.
- Lack of safe and welcoming community spaces for community members.
- Lack of basic services, previously provided by CDP participants.



Opportunities for Employment and Training

Vocational Training & Skills Development

- Tiwi Ready and Tiwi Tech courses to build workplace and digital skills.
- New SEE First Nations literacy/numeracy program starting July 2025.

Jobs Strong in Culture

- Cultural awareness training roles for Tiwi elders.
- Tiwi language teaching, content creation, and cultural tourism.

Working on Country

- Ranger programs, eco-tourism (e.g., Tarntipi Eco Camp), fishing guides, environmental management.
- Farming and agri-business opportunities, including seafood and butchery skills.

Community Services and Care Roles

- Aged care, disability support, family support coordinators, and school assistant roles.
- Training in confidentiality, mandatory reporting, and community wellbeing.

Construction and Skilled Trades

- Demand for carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and apprentices.
- Potential for more Tiwi-led building and maintenance teams.

Tourism and Hospitality

- Guided tours, accommodation services, cafes, catering, and local cuisine.
- Marine tourism and fishing safaris.

Pathways for Young People

- School-based and post-school apprenticeships and traineeships in trades, administration, tourism, and health.
- GTO support to connect youth to industry qualifications.

Table 8 – Key Issues: Barriers & Opportunities

Challenges & Barriers to Employment	Opportunities for Employment & Training
Limited job diversity - Reliance on government and community services - Few private sector roles.	Cultural-based work Tiwi language teaching, cultural awareness training, content creation, cultural tourism.
Infrastructure & housing shortages Aged facilities and long housing waitlists affect stability for workers.	Working on Country Ranger programs, eco-tourism (e.g., Tarntipi Eco Camp), fishing guides, land & sea management.
High cost of transport & goods Expensive travel to Darwin and high freight costs make living and working costly.	Agribusiness & food production Farming, seafood supply, butchery skills, catering, and commercial kitchen work.
Low incomes & cost-of-living pressures - Median personal income \$223/week below NT and national averages - Goods cost more than mainland.	Community services & care roles Aged care, disability support, family services, school support positions.
Education & skills gaps - Lower literacy, numeracy, and digital skills - Difficulty obtaining IDs and job prerequisites - Low school attendance rates.	Vocational training pathways - Tiwi Ready & Tiwi Tech courses - SEE First Nations program - Industry RTO training.
Social & cultural challenges - Substance abuse, gambling, domestic violence - Cultural obligations can conflict with work schedules.	Construction & trades Demand for carpenters, electricians, plumbers, apprenticeships, and skilled labour roles.
Lack of amenity & basic services - Lack of pools, parks and playgrounds for children and young people - Lack of safe and welcoming community spaces - Lack of basic services, previously provided by CDP participants.	Tourism & hospitality Guided tours, accommodation, cafes, catering, marine tourism, fishing safaris.
	Youth pathways School-based & post-school apprenticeships/traineeships in trades, administration, tourism, and health, supported by GTO.



STEP 5.

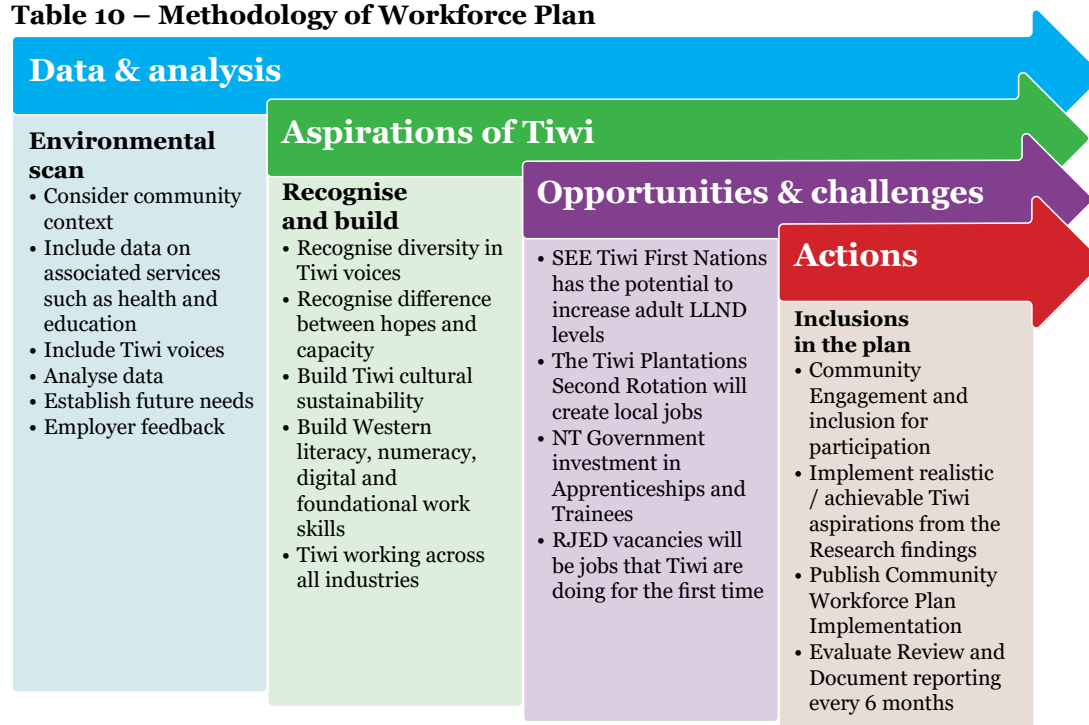
Develop Workforce Strategies & Actions

Develop a workforce action plan that responds to the issues that have been identified in the analysis.

Workforce Development Plan

The Workforce Development Plan was designed to produce a realistic and achievable Implementation Plan that will increase local employment in the Tiwi Islands in the years to come.

Table 10 – Methodology of Workforce Plan



Solutions Brokering into the Future

Despite the many challenges and barriers faced by communities on the Tiwi Islands, progress will continue. Tiwi leaders, stakeholders and partners are invested in creating a brighter future for all Tiwi people, including:

- Leadership and lobbying** for better services and infrastructure, which is a shared responsibility that Tiwi based organisations, statutory bodies and clans actively progress in their respective purposes.
- Stakeholder engagement and collaboration** to ensure that Tiwi people are given opportunities and respected as part of the workforce. This is one of the most important social and economic objectives into the future.
- Ensuring that strong skills development** continues, TITEB Training Hubs and other venues with adequate training facilities will be made available to all training organisations who have an interest on the Tiwi Islands.

Communication and Collaboration

Ongoing community engagement through structured meetings and forums, is a key aspect of communicating initiatives and opportunities that benefit the community. This includes:

- Tiwi Land Council is the statutory representative body of the Tiwi people; they are the highest point of consultation and advice on all activities that take place on the Tiwi Islands. TITEB has made a commitment to report and discuss, and seek advice on employment, training and education support biennially.
- Tiwi Land Council Cultural Committee is a strong group of Tiwi elected representatives who are dedicated to ensuring cultural safety, preservation and infiltration across all Tiwi activity. They are a collective of Tiwi knowledge holders and are consulted for advice and direction in important matters that impact Tiwi.
- Tiwi Islands Regional Council Community Meetings are held monthly at the three main communities, it's an opportunity to share information and to network with other stakeholders and Tiwi community members.
- Clan Group Information Sessions – The eight clan groups that make up the Tiwi communities have a structured meeting circuit. They welcome guests and the sharing of information about local jobs, training and educational information.
- Tiwi Leaders Forum is a collective of elected leaders that are the secretariate of progress and interactions with the leadership of the businesses that operate on the Tiwi Islands. They have quarterly meetings where the leaders seek information about the many activities that create the social and economic activity on the Tiwi Islands.
- Community events and Initiatives provide a great opportunity for networking and sharing experiences across all three communities on the Tiwi Islands.
- Social media and digital print have revolutionised the way information is disseminated in Tiwi, most organisations have a Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and other platforms that promote their core business activities to the public. Each main community has a Facebook Noticeboard that is the go-to for distributing information. Because

many community members don't have ongoing access to devices, printed information is also displayed on noticeboards at each community.

Workforce Cross Cultural Awareness: Both Ways

To ensure the ongoing success of local employment, all employers trading on the Tiwi Islands need to be committed to employing and supporting Tiwi to work and thrive in all industries. This type of inclusion should entail the following values:

- **Tiwi Culture:** The foundation/grounding of all socio-economic activity
- **Respect:** Everyone has the right to good service.
- **Belief:** Tiwi people can achieve highly.
- **Integrity:** Striving for excellence.
- **Diversity:** Our differences together build our strength.

The Tiwi Land Council, and Tiwi Cultural Committee and Tiwi Clan Groups supports these values and will encourage employers who trade on Tiwi Islands to increase their knowledge of Tiwi history, language, protocols, customs and acceptable interactions/behaviours within the Tiwi communities.

“Through strong inclusion mechanisms, cross cultural awareness training, and mutual respect, workforce success is achievable.”

Cross Cultural Awareness programs are highly recommended for all non-Tiwi who are either visiting the Tiwi Islands in an official work capacity or going to be based in the Tiwi Islands for work related purposes.

Some cross-cultural programs are targeted at Tiwi people to create a space for sharing and preserving cultural knowledge and traditional practices.

Each business/organisation should have a conscious policy, strategy or process that ensures that cross cultural awareness is regarded as an essential part of becoming a productive worker who can contribute positively to the community.

Employment Cross Cultural awareness tuition is provided to a large proportion of Tiwi who are transitioning into the western working world. The aim of shared investment into cross cultural awareness, is to progressively increase the balance of understanding and expectation to the benefit of all involved.



Cross Cultural Tuition and Training Programs

These local Cross Cultural Programs are resources for both Tiwi community members and non-Tiwi. The work-related courses are designed for employers who are committed to ensuring a safe and productive culture at their workplaces in the Tiwi Islands.

Kwaka Spiritual Healing Program

Kwaka Spiritual Healing Program is designed to help advance Tiwi culture. The program is based on respect of self and keeping Tiwi cultural traditions strong.

Contact: Marius Puruntatameri Mobile: 0439 157 136

Mamanta Workforce – Introducing Tiwi Culture into workplace

A cross-cultural awareness that facilitates knowledge of understanding Tiwi cultural protocols and how they can be incorporated into Western employment frameworks. Building rapport and transfer of working knowledge to Tiwi.

Mamanta Pty Ltd | Supporting Indigenous Business in the Northern Territory | www.mamanta.com.au

Tiwi Cultural Wellbeing Model

The Tiwi Cultural Wellbeing Model V4 was auspiced by the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board to support local staff at Red Cross in 2022. It was designed to support Tiwi respect values. there were contributions from Tiwi staff and Kevin Doolan from Red Cross, Therese Marie Puruntatameri and Marius Puruntatameri. The Model was initially created to use for supporting Tiwi to preserve their cultural frameworks and use them positively for interactions with non-Tiwi and for creating harmony in the progress of the Tiwi Islands into the future.

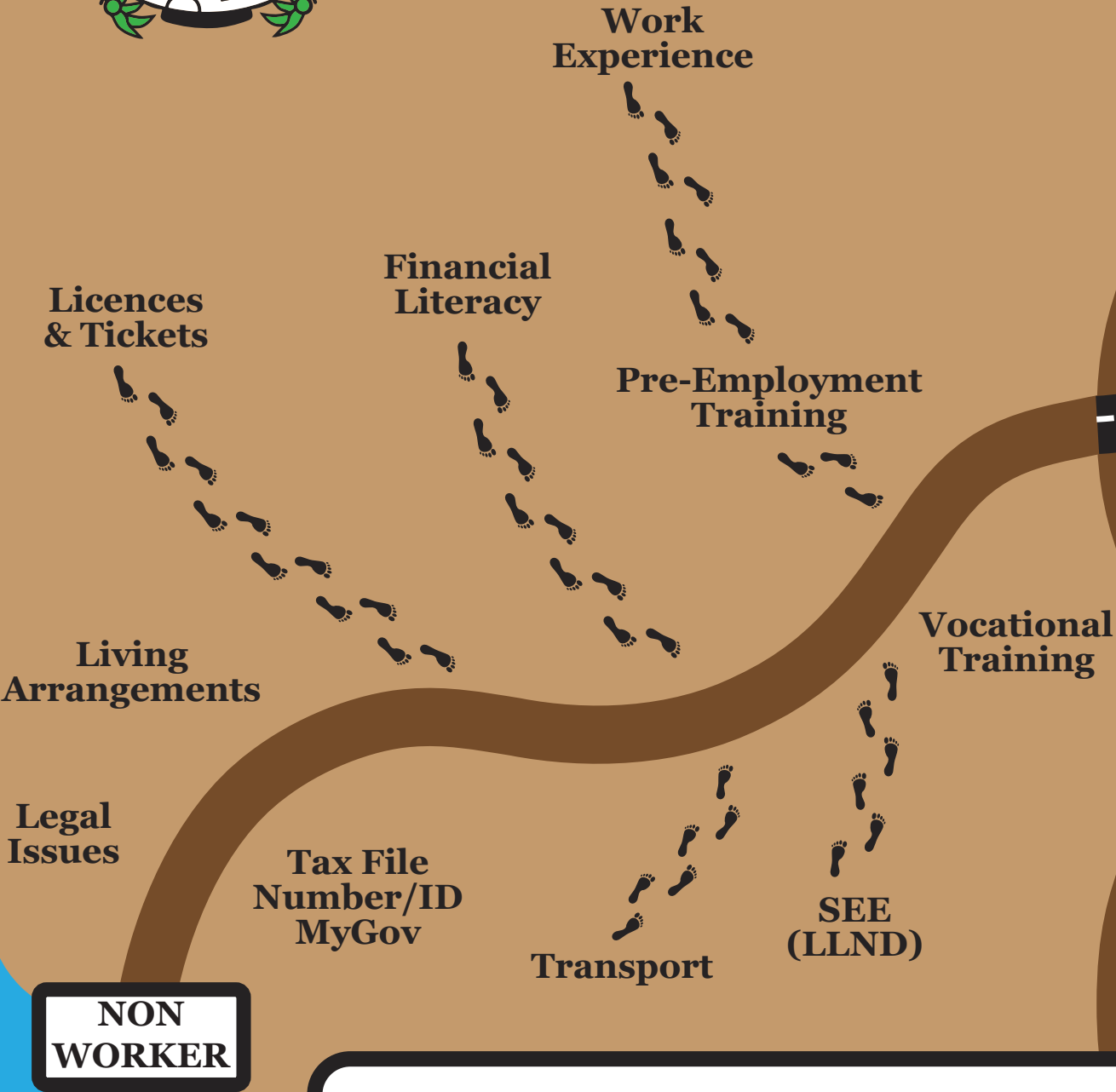
Skills First Nations: SEE Tiwi Grow

The journey to increasing the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills is well underway. The Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board, Registered Training Organisation has been successful in gaining the SEE First Nations Delivery Program for 3 years initially, 2025 – 2028. The SEE First Nations delivery grant is administered by DEWR and will be embedded in many adult education Vocation Education & Training (VET) training programs. These courses will all take place on the Tiwi Islands between July 2025 and December 2028.

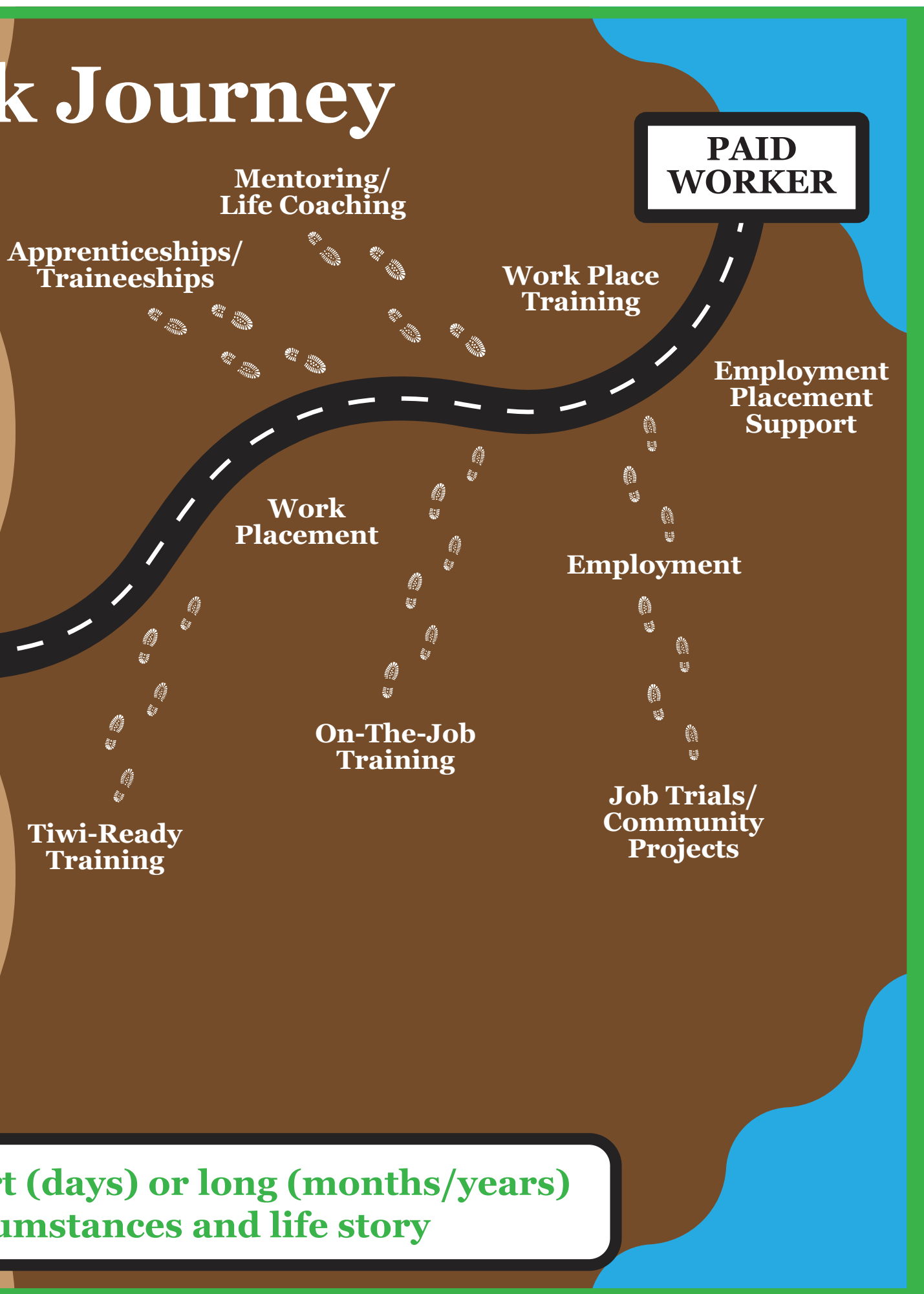
“The SEE Tiwi Grow program is available to all community members and is not limited to jobseekers/ participants. In Jan 2027 the SEE Tiwi Grow program will be available to Tiwi employers who would like to increase their local workforces LLND capacity and capability, we can tailor learnings to industry relevant materials.”



Tiwi Work



Your work journey may be short depending on your circumstances



Skills and Training Collaboration Strategies

The Tiwi Islands is a municipality, there is a collective of industries and workforce activities that together makes the region operate day to day. Some local employers engage directly with industry training organisations to ensure that their local staff gain skills. For example, CDU delivers Nationally Accredited Automotive Industry Training, and Outback Stores delivers high quality retail training to remote Stores and Supermarkets.

The Tiwi Islands has had its own Registered Training Organisation (TITEB), RTO 4742, since 1999. The scope and training programs are deliberately foundational and pre-employment level to build the foundations for good workforce productivity into the future. We provide foundational and Literacy, Language, Numeracy and Digital training and work with a large and diverse group of other NT and sometimes interstate Registered Training Organisations.

The Training Hubs at all 3 Tiwi Communities host external Training programs that will benefit the community. These Training Hubs, provide local staff and expertise, Success Agents, who work with the learner base, the external RTO and our Training staff to ensure that all aspects of the training are a success.

TITEB proudly partners, hosts and collaborates with:

- Batchelor Institute for Tertiary Education
- Charles Darwin University
- Swinburne University (Darwin Campus)
- Train Safe
- Remote Training Australia
- NT Government – Drive Safe Program (Learners & Provisional)
- Timber Training Creswick
- Plate Alloy Australia (Aluminium Boat Construction)
- National Training Alliance
- St John Ambulance
- North Australia Fire Solutions
- Reading and Writing Hotline
- SJT Civil Training
- Forest Works

Training and Skills Development 2025 - 2027

Training and skills development are the foundation to competent and informed workplace participation. TITEB and Tiwi Employers engage with external industry RTOs to facilitate ongoing skills development. Quality Industry Vocational Education Training in all areas will facilitate and produce skilled Tiwi that can contribute to the social and economic progress of their Island home.

The training lists below capture most of the training that will be delivered. There may be other VET Training courses that eventuate across the life of the plan (to December 2027). Where possible, this data will be captured to support ongoing data collection to inform trends over time.

Non-Accredited

- Pre-Pre Employment Training: Tiwi Ready
- Pre-Employment Training – Tiwi Money
- Pre-Employment Training – Tiwi Tech1
- Pre-Employment Training – Tiwi Health
- Mental Health First Aid
- Cross Cultural Awareness Training
- Pre-Employment IT Courses:
 - Basic IT Skills
 - Email and Internet
 - Teams
 - Word
 - Excel
 - Publisher

Short courses are 1-5 days in duration, for more information go to www.titeb.com.au



Industry Entry Training

Course	Training Code
Senior First Aid	HLTAID011
Senior First Aid – Provide CPR	HLTAID009
Construction Safety Training White Card	CPCWHS1001
Use hygienic Practices for Food Preparation	SITXFSA001
Participate in Safe Food Handling Practices	SITXFSA002
Operations on Unsealed Roads	VTP414
Responsible Service of Alcohol	SITHFAB021

Accredited Courses

Course	Training Code
Certificate II in Workplace Skills	BSB20120
Certificate II in Community Services	CHC22015
Certificate I in Skills in Vocational Pathways	FSK10219
Certificate II in Sports and Recreation	SIS20122
Certificate II in Hospitality	SIT20322
Certificate I in Engineering	MEM10119
Certificate II in Construction	CPC20120
Certificate II in Visual Arts	CUA10320
Certificate I in Maritime (Coxswain Operations)	MAR41018
Certificate I in Baking	FBP101201
Certificate II in Forestry Operations	FWP20122
Certificate II in Civil Construction	RII20720
Certificate III in Individual Support	CH33021
Certificate II in Fire Protection and Testing	CPP20521

Skills Sets: Gradual Training Success

Specific skills sets will be delivered in clusters across the 3 communities throughout the Community Workforce Plan Implementation from 2025-2027. The skill sets will enable part completions, a foundational wealth of knowledge for further skills sets. These types of structures make training more appealing and allow for high achievement without the pressure of time measured full qualifications.

Skills Sets List

Skill Set	Training Code
Workplace Foundations	BSBSS00125
Contact Centre	Bsbss00126
Infection Control (Retail)	HLTSS00065
Infection Control (Food Handling)	HLTSS00066
Infection Control (Transport and Logistics)	HLTSS000667
Infection Prevention and Control	HLT2200083
Food Handling	SITSS00068
Food Safety Supervision	SITSS00069
Housekeeping	SITSS00086





Small and Micro-Business

Some Tiwi aspire to starting their own business, this can be a cultural tourism venture, jewellery stall, cultural products, arts, bush foods and other small business ideas. There are 2 main visiting small business support services that can assist Tiwi who would like to set up their own small business.

For more information about self-employment and micro-enterprise you can contact:

Small business champions | Innovation in the Northern Territory | <https://innovation.nt.gov.au/ecosystem/advice/small-business-champions>

Your trusted business advisor in the NT | Business Enterprise Centre NT | <https://becnt.com.au/home>

We want to help you get started in business - Microenterprise Development | Community Economic Development | https://manyrivers.org.au/get-started-in-business/?utm_id=SEM_Grant&https://manyrivers.org.au/are-we-right-for-you/&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=19817085559



Governance Matters

The leadership and governance of all the businesses operating on the Tiwi Islands are an important part of improving job opportunities and training. As laws, rules, and ways of doing things change over time, there are many services available to support, guide, and invest in leadership and governance training.

What's the difference between Governance and Leadership?

Governance is about structure, oversight, and accountability. It refers to the systems, policies, and processes that guide how an organization is directed and controlled.

Leadership is about vision, influence, and execution. It involves inspiring and guiding people toward achieving goals.

Governance & Leadership Support Services

Aboriginal Governance and Management Program (AGMP)

E: info@agmp.org.au

PH: 0475 440 021

A: Level 1 Yeperenye Centre 34- 38 Hartley Street, Alice Springs NT 0870

PO BOX 1464, Alice Springs NT 0870

- Delivered by Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NTI)
- Offers culturally appropriate mentoring, training, and governance resources.
- Supports boards and managers of Aboriginal organisations to strengthen leadership and self-determination.
- Website: aboriginalgovernance.org.au

Aboriginal Partnerships and Reform (APR) - NT Government

E: AboriginalAffairs@nt.gov.au

PH: 08 8999 8905

A: Level 12 NT House, 22 Mitchell Street, Darwin NT 0800

GPO BOX 4396 Darwin NT 0801

- Focuses on Aboriginal leadership, capability building, and culturally responsive governance.
- Includes programs like First Circles Leadership and Closing the Gap initiatives.
- Website: aboriginalaffairs.nt.gov.au

Business Capability & Entrepreneurship

Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network (NTIBN)

E: admin@ntibn.com.au

PH: 1300 192 164

A: 76 Esplanade, Darwin City NT 0800

- Peak body for Indigenous businesses in the NT.
- Offers business support, advocacy, networking, and access to the Blak Business Directory.
- Operates the Indigenous Business and Employment Hub.
- Website: ntibn.com.au

Cross Cultural Consultants

E: admin@cccnt.com.au

PH: 08 8912 2510

A: Apartment 117/5 McCourt Rd, Yarrowonga NT 0830

- Provides governance frameworks, strategic planning, and capacity building tailored to First Nations organisations.

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA)

- Offers business mentoring, accelerator programs, and workshops.
- Supports procurement, marketing, financial planning, and more.

Training & Mentoring Programs

Saltbush Social Enterprises - SEE First Nations Program

E: info@saltbushnt.org.au

PH: 08 7915 7001

A: Nylander St, Parap NT 0820

- Delivers LLND (language, literacy, numeracy, digital) training through culturally relevant, arts-based learning.
- Supports employment and further study pathways.
- Website: saltbushnt.org.au

First Nations Executive Education (FNEE)

- Offers immersive entrepreneurship and governance training for First Nations leaders.
- Focuses on leadership, finance, governance, and sustainable development.
- Website: ecole-dirigeants-premieres-nations.hec.ca

STEP 6.

Implement the strategies & actions

Engage the appropriate individuals and/or organisations and work toward achieving identified actions and outcomes.

Implementation Plan

The acquisition of quality training delivery on the Tiwi Islands takes good planning, time management and robustness to improvise when training plans are disrupted. Logistics include, working through the training plans, dates, accommodation, insurances, travel, (air road and/or ferry). Large material requirements for training need to be sent ahead of schedule on a sea barge to ensure the correct resources for the training to be delivered.

Accessible and clear communication between all stakeholders in the coordination is the key to creating learning experiences that will impact the local labour forces positively. Tiwi employers and stakeholders have many years of cohesive collaboration with many training bodies, this is the process that enables great learnings that will be utilised into the future.

Key Dates

SEE First Nations Delivery Grant

- Wurrumiyanga, October 2025
- Pirlangimpi, February 2026
- Milikapiti, March 2026

To find out more about the SEE program in your community, contact the local Training Hub or TITEB Employment Offices.

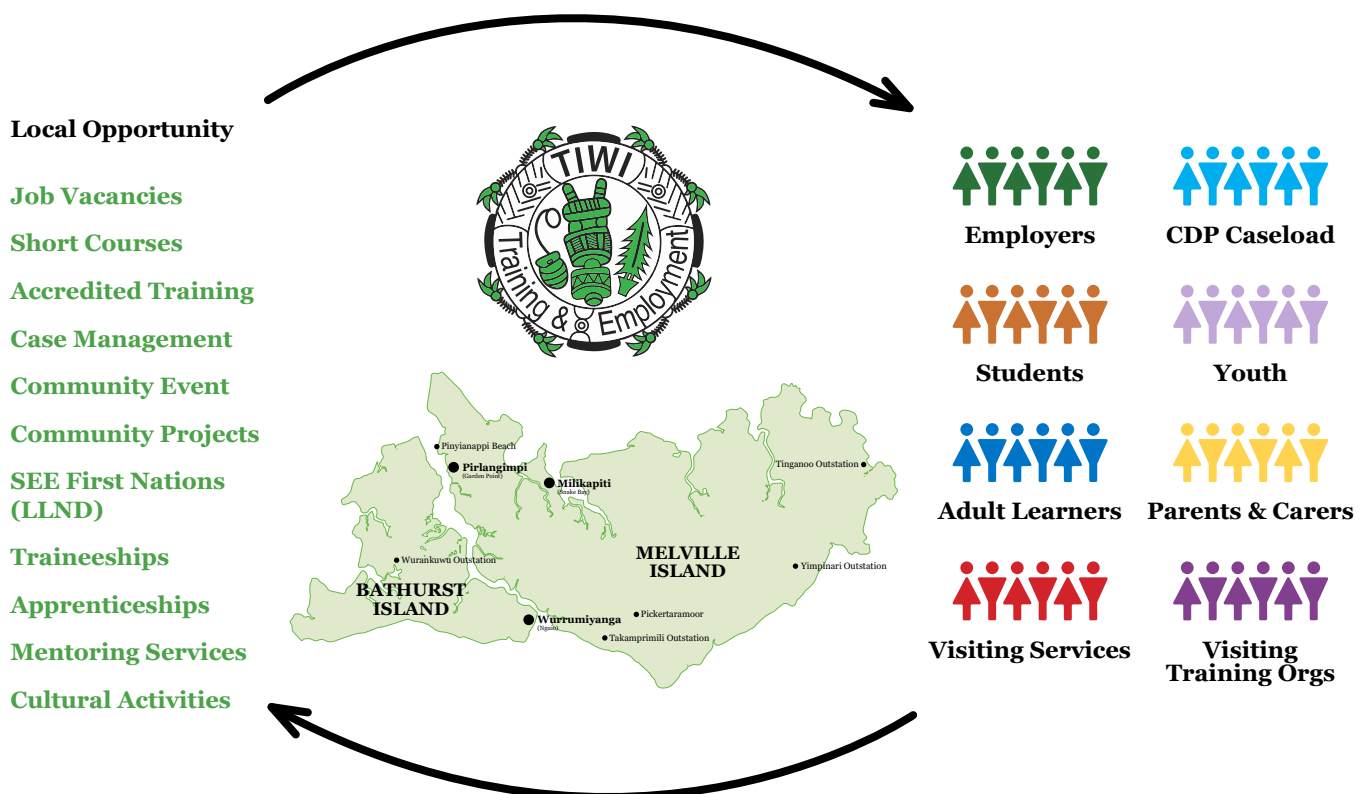
- Plantation Training Program, July 2025
- Digital Telehealth Skills Sets

The Training Tables show the types of training that take place throughout a calendar year, the Tiwi learner year is from 1st March to 31st November.





TITEB Engagement Strategy 2024-2027



Implementation Plan

Community Objectives	Relevant Strategies	Actions	By Whom?
Improving Community Wellbeing and Health	Health: Improve physical and mental health education and support within schools and the community.	Launch SEE Tiwi Grow program and embed health education in adult learning.	TITEB, NT Health Clinics
	Jobs Caring for Family and Community: Create roles like family support coordinators.	Recruit and train Family Support Coordinators with LLND and confidentiality training.	TITEB, CatholicCareNT, Red Cross
	Community Service Organisations: Provide food, childcare, recreation, and wellbeing programs.	Expand Feed Our Families program and school-based meal services.	Tiwi Schools, Red Cross, Local NGOs
Improving Social Cohesion and Inclusion	Cultural Awareness Training: Help businesses understand Tiwi culture.	Deliver Mamanta cross-cultural training to employers.	Mamanta Workforce, Tiwi Land Council Tarntipi Group
		Promote the Tarntipi Eco Camp Cross Cultural Emersion programs	
	Understanding Western Work Culture: Support Tiwi workers in learning workplace rules.	Run Tiwi Ready and Tiwi Tech courses.	TITEB Employers
Building the Tiwi Economy and Job Opportunities	Language and Culture: Revive bilingual education and embed cultural learning.	Develop Tiwi language teaching roles and cultural curriculum.	Tiwi Schools, Cultural Committee, Clan Groups, Arts & Culture Centres, Museum, other key Tiwi stakeholders
	Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Skills: Build basic skills.	Implement SEE First Nations program across all communities.	TITEB RTO, Community Members, Employer LLND projects
	Employment Entry Pre-Requisites: Make it easier to get ID and certificates.	Host Births, Deaths and Marriages and Drive Safe services locally.	TITEB, NT Government
	Jobs Strong in Culture: Create employment in Tiwi language teaching, tourism.	Recruit cultural advisors and tour guides.	Tiwi Designs, Munupi Arts, Tourism Operators, Julamarra, Museum
	Jobs Working on Country: Grow tourism, farming, ranger roles.	Expand Junior Rangers and eco-tourism initiatives.	Tarntipi Homelands, Mamirnikuwi Rangers, Tiwi College
	Jobs Building the Community: Train locals for construction and service jobs.	Launch apprenticeships in carpentry and civil trades.	TITEB, SH Build, WTD Constructions, BIHA
	Micro-Businesses in Tourism and Hospitality: Support small ventures.	Provide training and grants for catering, seafood, and guided tours.	Many Rivers, NT Innovation Hub, Business Enterprise Centre

Community Objectives	Relevant Strategies	Actions	By Whom?
Building the Tiwi Economy and Job Opportunities	Apprenticeships and Traineeships: Provide paid training.	Expand GTO placements in trades, tourism, admin.	TITEB GTO, Tiwi Employers
	Timber and Wood Industry: Facilitate forest works and AFWI (Australian Forest and Wood Project) to increase local timber industry employment.	Promote, engage and support as many Tiwi community members to seek careers in the Forestry Industry	TITEB, Tiwi Plantations Corporation, Tiwi Land Council, Industry RTO's, AFWI, Forest Works, Forestry Hub
		Engage highly skilled Registered Training Organisations to increase the capacity and capability of local workers	
		Support the Plantation and other Island based ventures where Timber will be utilised	
Building Skills and Education Levels		Encourage the development of wood industry microbusiness	
	Education: Enhance literacy, numeracy, digital skills.	Deliver foundational and accredited VET courses.	TITEB, CDU, Batchelor Institute
	External Registered Training Organisations: Bring in skilled trainers.	Host RTOs at Training Hubs for industry-specific skills.	TITEB, External RTOs, Tiwi Industries eg. retail
	SEE First Nations Program: Provide structured training.	Launch SEE program in July–October 2025.	TITEB, Community Learners
	Vocational Training Pathways: Align training to local needs.	Develop industry-aligned pathways in construction, hospitality.	TITEB, Employers, NT industry groups, VET Community of Practice
Improving Infrastructure and Public Spaces	Governance Matters: Implement governance, leadership & supervision training	Develop training for different stakeholder groups, distinguish between leadership & management	TITEB, AICD, NTIBN, External RTOs
	Jobs Building the Community: Train locals for construction work.	Offer apprenticeships and traineeships in building trades.	Construction Industry employers building on Tiwi Land
	Local Government and Public Services: Expand town services.	Recruit Town Services Officers and Night Patrol staff.	Tiwi Islands Regional Council, NT Health, NT Corrections, Safe House

All training programs and job vacancies are publicly advertised in advance on physical noticeboards, email network and social media.

STEP 7.

Monitor, review and evaluate

Monitor the strategies and actions and make changes that respond to changing workforce circumstances.

Review and Evaluation

To ensure the effectiveness and continuous improvement of the Community Workforce Plan, a review and evaluation process will be implemented. This section outlines the key performance indicators (KPIs) and the methodology for assessing the plan's progress.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

1. **Employment Rates:** Increase in the number of Tiwi people employed in various sectors, including forestry, tourism, construction, community services, and self-employment

Year	Job Placements	13 wk Outcomes	26 wk Outcomes
2023/24	176	44	37
2024/25	150	53	44
2025/26			
2026/27			

2. **Increased Apprentice and Trainee Rates**

Year	Apprentice / Trainees	Ongoing	Completed
2024	1	1	0
2025	14	12	0
2026			
2027			

3. **Training Completion:** Number of participants completing training courses and obtaining certifications in areas such as IT skills, first aid, construction safety, and vocational education

Year	Enrolments	Completions	Continuations
2024	178	148	8
2025	218	208	10
2026			
2027			

Feedback and Data Analysis

- **Monitoring:** Six-monthly data analysis reports against KPIs.
- **Annual Reviews:** Conduct annual reviews of the plan's progress, involving key stakeholders, including the Tiwi Land Council, local government agencies, employers, and community members.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish feedback mechanisms to gather input from the community and stakeholders on the plan's implementation and effectiveness.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Collect and analyse data on:
 - Employment rates
 - Training completion
 - Literacy and numeracy improvement,
 - Apprenticeships and trainee
 - Other KPIs to assess progress and identify areas for improvement.



Methodology Review

The processes and techniques employed in developing this Community Workforce Plan will be reviewed in June and December each year. Actions for a methodology review include:

- Documenting failures
- Identifying and addressing methodological flaws, such as errors in data collection or analysis
- Exploring alternative explanations or approaches, and
- Performing additional background research.

Reporting

By implementing this review and evaluation process, the Community Workforce Plan can be continuously refined and adapted to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of the Tiwi community.

The Northern Territory Government will receive reports against this Community Workforce Plan as follows:

- **Mid-year review:** Tracking progress, feedback and data analysis
- **Annual reporting:** End of calendar year, report summarising the plan's achievements, challenges, and recommendations for future actions.

ANNEXURE

Research Paper

**Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board
(TITEB)**

**THE FUTURE OF THE TIWI ISLANDS:
A TIWI COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE**

Iuliia Khukalenko
Therese Marie Puruntatameri

Wurrumiyanga, Tiwi Islands
2025

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
Literature review	7
Theoretical framework	10
Method.....	11
Participants	11
Process	12
Survey Instrument.....	13
Data analysis	13
Results.....	13
Theme 1. Education.	13
Theme 2. Language	15
Theme 3. Culture	16
Theme 4. Leadership.....	17
Them 5. Humbug	19
Theme 6. Unemployment	21
Theme 7. Tiwi Way vs. Western Way.....	22
Theme 8. Health and Wellbeing	24
Theme 9. Future for Children	25
Theme 10. New Job Opportunities	26
Discussion	31
Conclusion.....	35
Reference list	36

Introduction

Tiwi are unique Aboriginal people who predominantly live in Bathurst and Melville islands in Australia's Northern Territory. The population of the Tiwi islands is approximately 2,400, residing in three main communities. The largest, Wurrumiyanga (former Nguiu), is located on Bathurst Island, and the smaller communities of Milikapiti and Pirlangimpi are on Melville Island. There are also smaller settlements and outstations including Wurankuwu, Paru, Pickataramoor, Taracumbi, Yimpinari (Conder Point), Takampirmili, Pitjimirra and Four Mile. The land is owned by eight clan groups, with administration shared between the Regional Council and the Tiwi Land Council. The Tiwi language, in two main forms – Traditional Tiwi and Modern Tiwi – is the first language for the majority of the population. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), 76.8% of islanders speak Tiwi at home.

Indigenous Australians generally have lower levels of formal education, literacy and numeracy skills, and well as poorer health outcomes compared to non-Indigenous Australians. The social and economic disadvantage affecting a significant proportion of the Indigenous population, along with its impact on health, education, and welfare, is well documented (Parmenter & Trigger, 2018). Tiwi are no exception: the Tiwi workforce has not grown in recent decades, as anticipated by the government. In response, the Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism (DITT) engaged the Tiwi Islands Training and Employment Board (TITEB), an organisation dedicated to improving employment and training opportunities for Tiwi, to develop a Community Workforce Plan (CWP). This plan will be created in close consultation with community members and other stakeholders. DITT has provided TITEB with a planning guide and the flexibility to adapt and refine the plan to enhance its effectiveness. To improve the likelihood of success, TITEB has decided to prioritise the depth and authenticity of the local Tiwi community's voices, taking into account "the importance of creating the conditions that enable people to take control of their lives" (Marmot, 2011). As a result, this community-informed research aims to align the aspirations of the Tiwi community with those of supporting stakeholders.

The current authors recognise the significance of conducting research that is both ethically and culturally safe. To achieve this, we worked alongside Tiwi elders (cultural committee) and referred to existing guidelines for ethical conduct of research (New South Wales

Department of Health, 2004). This is community-informed research, where the Tiwi community is an equal partner in the research process. This approach aims to foster a partnership with Tiwi towards positive community outcomes that are sustainable beyond the life of the research (Wilson, 2018). In this type of study, a researcher is a facilitator who uses “their expertise not to direct but to serve community research interests” (Flexner et al., 2021). The non-Indigenous researcher made every effort to uphold these principles by participating in cultural training, building meaningful and respectful relationships with community members, reflecting on her research methods, and collaborating closely with participants, the literature, and other researchers.

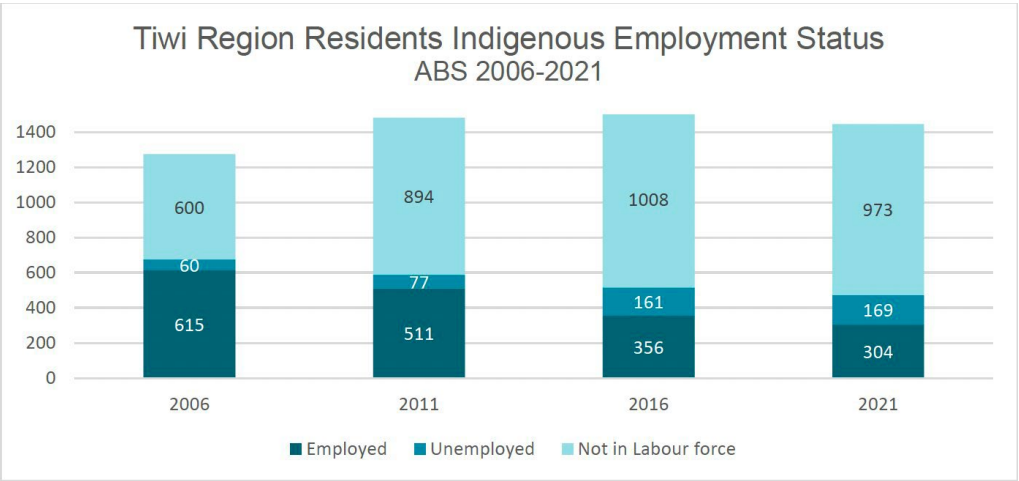
The primary aim of the study was to gain insight into the Tiwi community's perspective on enhancing their quality of life through economic and social lenses. Specifically, we conducted semi-structured interviews, aiming to explore participants' aspirations, goal setting, community connection, cultural experience, overall wellbeing, resilience, and the impact of employment on these factors. This qualitative data was supported by an ethnographic component, addressing the following research question: **What factors, according to the Tiwi community, influence an improved quality of life both economically and socially?** Based on existing literature and work, we hypothesise that quality of life in the Tiwi Islands is shaped by several key factors such as infrastructure, health services, housing, community safety, education, and employment opportunities. We presume that these factors interact with the pressures of broader societal expectations, that could be identified as Western or associated with modernity, affecting local aspirations. The insights gained from this study into factors unique to the Tiwi people aim to assist educational and employment organisations and services in developing strategies to improve the employment experience for Tiwi employees and maximise Indigenous employment and financial stability.

Background

According to the 2021 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021), Aboriginal people comprise 86.5% of the population of the Tiwi islands, compared to 26% in the Northern Territory and 3.2% across Australia. Regarding education, only 1.4% of the population hold a degree, while for 22%, the highest level of education achieved is Year 12. The median weekly household income is less than half the averages in the Northern Territory

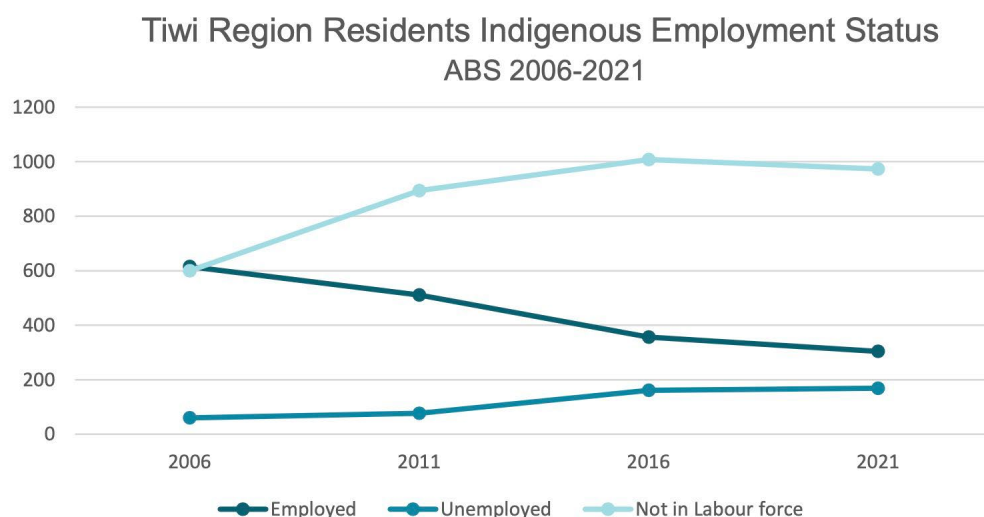
(\$1,318), standing at \$639. In the Northern Territory, the Aboriginal unemployment rate was as high as 64% in 2001 (Maru & Davies, 2011). The situation has improved since then; however, unemployment remains a social issue in modern Aboriginal communities. This is particularly true for the Tiwi Islands, where Indigenous employment has been declining. The specific numbers are shown in Fig. 1, and the trend is illustrated in Fig. 2.

Figure 1
Tiwi Region Residents Indigenous Employment Status



(Tremblay & Boyle, 2022)

Figure 2
Tiwi Region Residents Indigenous Employment Status



More specifically, in 2017, the Aboriginal unemployment rate was 36.8% in Wurrumiyanga, 14.6% in Milikapiti, and 14.1% in Pirlangimpi (Northern Territory Information and Services, 2024). Notably, approximately half of the available jobs were part-time positions. The top industries by filled jobs included education and training in Wurrumiyanga, accommodation and food services in Milikapiti, and retail trade in Pirlangimpi. Nearly half of all employers were government agencies. The most common occupation was Community and Personal Service Workers, accounting for 26% of the workforce. In 2021, 26.3% of Aboriginal Tiwi residents worked full-time, while 35.5% were unemployed, compared to an unemployment rate of 20.8% in the Northern Territory and 12.3% across Australia among Aboriginal people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

To address this, the Community Development Program (CDP) administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) was launched to support job seekers in remote Australia. The CDP aims to help individuals build skills, overcome employment barriers, and contribute to their communities through activities and training. Meanwhile, the Australian Government has committed to reforming remote employment by replacing the CDP in two stages. The first stage introduces the new Remote Jobs and Economic

Development (RJED) program, a \$707 million initiative developed in partnership with First Nations people. This program aims to fund 3,000 jobs by 2027 gradually. According to the NIAA, the RJED program “will support people in remote communities to move into meaningful jobs that communities want, with fair pay and conditions” (National Indigenous Australians Agency, n.d.). The second stage involves designing and delivering a new remote employment service to assist individuals who are not yet job-ready by providing them with the skills and resources they need. To guide the implementation of the RJED program and the new remote employment service, a First Nations Reference Group was established in March 2024.

Literature review

Quality of life is a complex, broad concept with no uniform definition; however, according to the World Health Organization (1995) the quality of life is “an individual’s perception of their position in the in the life in the context of the culture in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns” (The World Health Organization Quality of Life Assessment (WHOQOL), 1995). At the same time, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples perceive their wellbeing differently from contemporary constructs derived from European contexts that dominate Australian institutions and society. According to the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (2010), First Nations Peoples in Australia view wellbeing as a holistic and multidimensional concept that extends beyond individual health to include the physical, social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing of the entire community. This collective approach contrasts with the more individualistic perspective that underpins existing formal quality of life measures.

Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart, and Kelly (2014) created the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework, which emphasises seven key areas essential for achieving positive social and emotional wellbeing. These domains include: 1) family and kin, 2) community, 3) spirit, spirituality, and ancestors, 4) body, 5) mind and emotions, 6) country, and 7) culture. In their comprehensive literature review of 95 full-text articles on quality of life (QOL) and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, Butler at al. (2019) revealed nine broad interconnected dimensions: autonomy, empowerment and recognition; family and community; culture, spirituality and

identity; country; basic needs; work, roles and responsibilities; education; physical health; and mental health.

In the Interplay Wellbeing Framework by Wilson et al. (2019), employment and work are identified as key areas for future development and growth, with all the domains being highly interconnected within Aboriginal communities. At the same time, some responsibilities and roles inform everyday activities and can be viewed as occupations (Gibson et al., 2020), such as responsibilities towards family and kin, passing down cultural practices and knowledge, caring for the land and leadership. This interconnectedness is reflected in the government programs. For example, the Cultural Framework, developed by Informed Solutions (NT) Pty Ltd. in 2014, is applied within the context of the Community Workforce Plan for remote communities in the Northern Territory (Northern Territory Government, 2014). This framework categorises jobs into five cultural fields: 1) Jobs Strong in Culture, 2) Jobs Working on Country, 3) Jobs Caring for Family and Community, 4) Jobs Building the Community, 5) Jobs Servicing the Community. By organising jobs into these cultural fields, the framework helps current and future job seekers identify their career interests, boost employment demand, and guide the creation of new enterprises to ensure a sufficient workforce. This method aims to allow job seekers to explore community positions that align with their cultural interests and empowers Indigenous individuals to pursue careers that resonate with their cultural identity.

At the same time, while “the concept of occupations continues to evolve and be informed by pluralistic cultural paradigms, the perspectives of occupations in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain largely unexplored” (Gibson et al., 2020). Several key factors contribute to the high unemployment rates in these communities, including insufficient skills, dependency on welfare, and ‘pretend’ jobs, such as those supported by government programmes (Hughes & Hughes, 2010). Bailey et al. (2021) explored employment issues within the Aboriginal population, focusing on healthcare professions. In their qualitative study, researchers identified barriers and regional strategies for improving career pathways. The results revealed that Aboriginal people face challenges at every stage of their career journey, from pre-employment to further education and workplace integration. At the community level, barriers such as “lack of encouragement from family and community” and “lack of local role models” were highlighted. At the recruitment stage, financial pressures and inflexible HR practices were among the obstacles. In the workplace,

participants noted issues such as unclear roles and career pathways, racism, and unsupportive management. Respondents stressed the importance of Aboriginal leadership at all organisational levels and emphasised the need for governance and management structures that prioritise cultural safety and values in policies and practices.

Maru and Davis (2011) analysed the paradoxical situation of lots of job vacancies and lots of unemployed locals in remote places. They applied social capital and social network theory to their research in the Anmatjere region. The authors highlighted the importance of networks and social norms in shaping employment within mainstream economic sectors in remote communities. Their data revealed that Aboriginal interviewees viewed social networks as a key factor in securing employment. However, dense bonding networks and established norms may also limit employment opportunities and discourage Aboriginal people from pursuing paid work. Based on interviews and focus group discussions with employed Aboriginal people, three key implications of the bonding network structure in the Anmatjere region were identified (Maru & Davies, 2011).

The bonding network structure in the Anmatjere region has three significant implications for Aboriginal employment, which may also apply to other Aboriginal communities. First, cultural expectations around income sharing within close-knit networks, or even the “obligations to share wages with extended family” (Parmenter & Barnes, 2021) can diminish the financial gains of paid work, discouraging employment uptake. Second, conflicts between traditional Aboriginal norms (Gibson et al., 2020), such as extended sorry business, and market-based workplace expectations contribute to employment challenges and may lead to discrimination by non-Aboriginal employers. Finally, while dense networks facilitate the sharing of job information, they can also restrict access to new opportunities, highlighting the importance of weak ties in effective job searching. These dynamics underscore the nuanced barriers Aboriginal individuals encounter in pursuing and maintaining employment within their communities (Maru & Davies, 2011).

Despite the valuable insights provided by studies on Aboriginal employment barriers in regions like Anmatjere, there remains a notable gap in research specifically concerning employment dynamics among the Tiwi people. The unique social and cultural structures within the Tiwi community may similarly influence employment trends, yet these factors have not been sufficiently explored. This study addresses this gap by examining the

employment experiences and challenges specific to the Tiwi population, providing a targeted understanding that can inform policies and initiatives designed to meet their community's unique needs and aspirations.

Theoretical framework

The Turtuni Framework, developed by Tiwi researcher Mavis Kerinaiaua (Kerinaiaua, 2023), is a tool designed to foster shared understanding and collaboration between Tiwi community members, researchers, and other stakeholders. Inspired by the Turtuni pole and grounded in Tiwi perspectives on caring for country, culture, and people, it serves as a bridge between Tiwi worldviews and Western science. By incorporating Tiwi perspectives and cultural aspects into research process, the framework ensures that the study is viewed and conducted through a Tiwi lens.

In this study, the Turtuni Framework is used as Tiwi cultural compass and an indicator of the Tiwi vision considering Tiwi fundamental values and how can we work together collaboratively – this is encompassed in ngarrawanajirri, which means getting together and working together (Kerinaiaua, 2023). Turtuni is a guideline or “pathway that bridges western science of research and Indigenous ways of researching in a fusion of collaboration of both worlds” (Kerinaiaua, 2023). It is important that Tiwi people actively participate in any implementation or action plans based on this study, as this research remains open to discussion and guided by shared collaboration.

The Turtuni Framework includes several essential elements. It embodies the yiminga, the life, pulse, spirit, and kinship of the Tiwi people, and honours the spirits of Murrakupuni (country) and the ancestors safeguarding land and sea. The yukurri ngirimipi, or four main skin groups, represent governance, kinship, and the social and cultural structures that enact milimika, a ceremonial clearing that symbolises creating a collaborative space where roles and responsibilities are understood. Arawunikiri (the male spear), featuring the tuwarra (crocodile tail), represents protection of land and sea, while the numuriyaka (female spear) complements this balance. Japalingini amintiya pamijini (ceremonial head and arm bands) signify Tiwi identity, belonging, and connection to country, language, and heritage. The Turtuni pole, central to the framework, represents the past, present, and future generations of Tiwi people coming together in shared understanding. Kartukuni (ironwood leaves) symbolise the smoking ceremony for healing

and welcoming, acknowledging that collaboration sometimes requires reconciliation. Finally, Mwalapwara (footprints) represent the collective journey and pathway for collaboration.

Method

This is community-based research in which the Tiwi community is an equal partner in the research process. This approach aims to foster partnership with Tiwi people towards positive community outcomes that are sustainable beyond the life of the research. A qualitative mixed methods research strategy has been chosen to address the research question. The first method is a semi-structured interview. The second is a participant observation, which allowed approaching quality of life problems through observing people in a natural setting. Qualitative data from the interviews was analysed, clarified and explained through ethnographic analysis. The study received approval from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (ethics ID 2024/HE001068) and from the Tiwi Land Council (project code S005).

Participants

The participants are the First Nations Australian people living in the Tiwi islands. According to the 2021 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021), there are 2,348 Tiwi people, living mostly in Wurrumiyanga (1,421 people), Milikapiti (414 people), and Pirlangimpi (313 people). The total number of adults is 1,583, including men and women aged 18–85. There are four skin groups: Miyarituwu (Pandanus), Takaringuwi (Mullet), Marntimapila (Rock), and Wantarringuwi (Sun). Using a stratified sampling method, the population was divided according to age, gender, and skin groups. As a result, the sample consists of eight Pandanus people, nine Mullet people, six Rock people, and seven Sun people, aged from 18 to 73, with an equal distribution of men and women.

For 67% of participants the highest level of education was Year 11 and below, and 20% had completed a Certificate or Diploma. No participants held a university degree. Seventeen people were interviewed in Wurrumiyanga, seven people in Milikapiti, and six people in Pirlangimpi. The final interview study sample consists of thirty people (N=30). Participants for the ethnographic study were fifteen Tiwi people who were close to the researcher in their everyday life: colleagues, parents at school, and Catholic Church parish

members in Wurrumiyanga. The interviewees' names as well as specific details that could potentially identify participants or non-participants are not disclosed in this paper to maintain the confidentiality of those who participated.

Process

Participation in the study was voluntary. To reimburse informants' time, all participants received a \$50 Visa prepaid gift card. Recruitment was conducted through invitations signed by the TITEB CEO, which were handed out by the researcher along with the information statement for the study.

Participants were selected through a combination of community leader recommendations and random sampling. Engaging with participants presented challenges, as “Aboriginal people are understandably suspicious and reticent about universities and academics conducting research in their communities” (Welsh & Burgess, 2021). The researcher spent three months living in Wurrumiyanga before the interviews began, building relationships, allowing community members to ask questions, and helping them learn more about her life and the project. Ultimately, there were four refusals out of thirty-four invitations. The interviews were conducted in September, October and November 2024, while ethnographic observations and field notes were collected from August 2024 to January 2025.

Since all interviews were conducted by the same female, non-Indigenous interviewer, there was a possibility that her cultural background and/or gender may have limited participants' openness. To mitigate these risks, efforts were made to create a more culturally safe space. First, a Tiwi person was involved during the invitation stage. Second, Indigenous research methods, such as yarning, were employed. Third, interviews were conducted in locations chosen by participants, such as their workplace, the bush, or the beach. These approaches aimed to encourage openness, elicit richer data, and ensure the research adhered to established cultural protocols (Daniels-Mayes, 2021).

Respondents who requested transcripts of their interviews were provided with them before analysis commenced. Preliminary findings were presented and validated by the Cultural Committee prior to drafting the final paper, ensuring the research upheld community perspectives and priorities. Thus, Tiwi voices were central to the research process, analysis, and outcomes.

Survey Instrument

The initial set of interview questions was borrowed from Bailey et al. (2021). Following consultations with representatives of the Northern Territory Government, the interview guide was expanded to include questions from Maru and Davies (2011), which were specifically designed to elicit participants' perspectives on local employment issues within a broader livelihoods framework. Subsequently, an additional round of consultations was conducted with the Tiwi Land Council representatives and cultural advisors. This collaborative process led to further refinement of the questions to ensure cultural appropriateness and clarity for potential interviewees. On average, the interviews lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes. The shortest interview was 23 minutes, while the longest extended to 3 hours and 2 minutes.

Data analysis

Audio recordings were imported into the *USyd Research Data Store (RDS)*, and MS Stream was used for automated transcription. The transcripts were manually improved, as existing software does not always accurately transcribe speakers with the Tiwi accent. The software NVivo was used to assist analysis of the data sourced from interviews. Responses were analysed using the thematic analysis offered by Braun & Clarke (2006). An initial set of 52 codes was developed, following consultations with an Indigenous co-researcher in the generation of ten themes. As part of the data interpretation process, the authors employed reflexive thematic analysis, which emphasises acknowledging researchers' biases and assumptions. Given the team's composition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, reflexivity was crucial to the analysis. This process involved critically reflecting on social positions, identities, and knowledge to understand their influence on data interpretation.

Results

The data analysis identified ten key themes central to Tiwi aspirations: education, language, culture, leadership, humbug, unemployment, Tiwi Way vs. Western Way, health and wellbeing, future for children, and new job opportunities.

Theme 1. Education.

All the respondents emphasise the importance of education, “Education is the key”, “Most important in life is education”. However, for Tiwi people, education is a complex concept that encompasses two ways of knowing: the Western way, learned at school and the Tiwi way, passed down from family or community elders. Respondents expressed a desire to see the balance of those knowledges for their children, and many respondents mentioned that elders must be invited to school on a regular basis. Especially, it is relevant for those who have not had an opportunity to learn their culture in their families, “People that are running the culture here, they only get their own relative kids, and they pass it on to them, and they're not actually trying to encourage others, like, come here and actually sit down”. Others argued that the curriculum should be revised to better align better with the realities of the community life, “I think school needs to redo their curriculum and focus more on what is important now. Students should learn social science, economics, how to look after your home, health, your body, hygiene, all this, focus more on that”. They believe that making education more relevant to students’ lives could help address attendance issues.

Young people who have had the opportunity to compare their schooling on the islands with their education elsewhere, are often dissatisfied with the discipline and structure of Tiwi schools, “I'm going to play and I'm going to get to see my friends, and I'm going to have food there. But it's never really about education”. Although the school system received some criticism, Tiwi people generally acknowledge that schools cannot be solely blamed for a lack of success in life. They believe that “It all starts with family”. Many agree that children from “strong families” – those who receive love and support at home – tend to perform better and achieve more in life.

With respect to adult education, the majority of respondents identified TITEB as the primary resource for educational opportunities. Notably, TITEB is seen not only as a service provider or a transitional step between school and the workplace but also as a key driver for social change, “How to prepare next generation of good leaders? TITEB has that opportunity to do that”. Some ideas for new courses were offered, with the focus on both hard and soft skills (discussed below). Higher education, however, does not appear to be a prominent theme. Some Batchelor Institute alumni who considered pursuing further education reported struggling to navigate the options. One interviewee, who began their degree but was unable to complete it for financial reasons, said, “Obligations with family and working at the same time was a bit too much for me and I couldn't cope”. Others

choose not to pursue further education because of the fear of homesickness or because “They don't have the skills to cope with society outside of their own society. They feel comfortable at home with other families that they can talk to”.

Theme 2. Language

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), the majority of the Tiwi population speaks Tiwi as their first language at home. However, it is no longer taught in schools as it was during the bilingual program, which ran from 1975 to 2008. Most respondents in this study, apart from a few elders, reported that they either understand Traditional Tiwi but can only speak Modern Tiwi, or do not understand Traditional Tiwi at all. Traditional Tiwi, also referred to as “*Old Tiwi*,” “*Hard Tiwi*,” or “*Proper Tiwi*,” is a source of concern for many, who fear it may disappear along with its last speakers. As one respondent remarked, the same fate may threaten Modern Tiwi: “*We have more of a Tiwi accent than Tiwi language.*”

Language is directly related to culture and identity; however, since colonisation, Aboriginal people in Australia have been expected to learn English, and “little value was placed on their languages” (Simpson et al., 2009). Government policies have contributed to some confusions, such as a lack of recognition of the advantages of bilingualism or the perception of Indigenous languages as supplementary, confined to families rather than being integral to the school curriculum. At the same time, it is widely recognised that students whose first language is not the dominant language face significant disadvantages in schools where instruction is delivered exclusively in the dominant language (UNESCO, 2003). Bilingual education programs introduced in Australia in the 1970s were aimed at addressing these issues.

All the respondents were very enthusiastic about the return of bilingual education to schools, and none of them could or wanted to explain why it was stopped. One respondent said, “It was the government. I'm not sure, but it's disgraceful because I know that learning Tiwi, reading and writing in Tiwi, what that did was it accelerated the Tiwi young students' learning. It gave them confidence”. In her book “Tiwi story”, a Tiwi researcher Mavis Kerinaia writes, “It was shock when, in October 2008, the bilingual program was dismantled in a day”. She reports that the Tiwi language booklets, stories, and other

pedagogical materials were binned, calling it “cultural vandalism”. However, one of our informants says that “some items and some stuff, bilingual stuff, they in the, it's on my side”. Another school worker confirms, “Old resources are still somewhere at MCPS,” but these materials are not being used. “My dream, other dream is, I want to have a bilingual, bilingual education back to school”, they continued.

For the Tiwi community, bilingual education was valued not only because it helped maintain the Tiwi language, but also because it provided a respected place for Tiwi teachers, “It would be a good job for many people”. Some people see themselves in this sector, “I'm passionate about retaining and maintaining our Tiwi language, the proper language, not the new Tiwi, the old Tiwi, and also culture”; Without sounding arrogant, I would see myself as someone who's in control of how things are done, to ensure that the Tiwi language is being taught, reading and writing”. A lot of other different job opportunities associated with the bilingual education, such as interpreters, “cultural awareness teachers”, instructional designers, and mentors have been mentioned.

Theme 3. Culture

Tiwi people are well known for being strong in their culture. They do not only maintain or preserve it, but they also live it and create it constantly, “Well, my main thing is creating this culture, because I want young generation to follow, and I want young people in school can see”. However, this topic is too broad to discuss within the scope of this research. For this reason, we will focus on the balancing the duties associated with paid employment and cultural responsibilities, which is a challenging task in remote communities with tight kinship connections.

Even though all the respondents agree on the importance of balancing what they call the “Western way” and the “Tiwi way”, when asked to imagine a hypothetical situation of choosing between performing their job responsibilities and attending a cultural event, they hesitated to respond. Older respondents tend to prioritise their family and culture, “If I need to go bush, I just go bush” or are encouraged to prioritise it due to family pressure, “My wife will say, be a Tiwi. Why don't you do your Tiwi stuff first?” Moreover, Tiwi want non-Tiwi to understand the importance of cultural responsibilities and respect that, “We want them to participate in the rules and policy. But we've got our own kinship policy, too.

There are days when your driver's not going to be driving because he has to go to a cultural ceremonial, he's probably has to go to another community”.

Younger generations tend to choose their cultural responsibilities as well, but they emphasise the importance of communication with their managers, “The most important thing to do in that type of situation is always communicate with your boss. Let them know what day it is, when it's going to happen. Apply for the leave before it happens”. Even though some respondents deny any disregard for work ethics among Tiwi, “I've never met anyone who used their Aboriginality as an excuse, as a bypass”, others observe the opposite, “A lot of these mob just, when the church service is finished, a lot of these mob, they should be going back to work. And they just use that for excuse, and just sit there, or they go with their friends”.

Despite the clash of different responsibilities, Tiwi people believe that they are balancing them well, and it is becoming easier with time, “In the past, there has been, tension between employers and cultural practices but I don't see that nowadays. I think it's changed. It has changed a lot, you know, over a period of time”. Not only the necessity to attend cultural events, but also cultural protocols such as avoidance rules have been acknowledged at the workplace. A respondent who works for the police reports, “When it's family members fighting, I just stay back”, and further they explain, “We have the right not to go if it's family”. Thus, while balancing paid employment and cultural responsibilities remains challenging, Tiwi people keep developing strategies to navigate these demands.

Theme 4. Leadership

There are three main issues related to leadership in the Tiwi community, according to respondents: inconsistent leadership, abuse of power, and avoidance of leadership roles.

1. Inconsistent leadership is associated with employee turnover on the islands, “The main struggles was, since our nice principal left, passed away, the struggles was getting new every three years, new principal, new leadership, changes in leadership”, “Because some workplace, there's always changing supervisors and managers and things like that, and having a new set of mind coming into the community is a whole another learning process”. Tiwi people feel that outsiders

come for money and other benefits without worrying about sustainability, “People that come to work in remote communities have perks, job perks, right? Free flight, rent is being paid for, all that. They have a lot of expectation in themselves, not knowing Tiwi people. And then when they hit the ground running, that changes”. The lack of understanding of the specifics of the community frustrates locals significantly, “Those people that have never been in the community and coming to change things”.

2. Power abuse includes cases of corruption, nepotism, and negative influences. This topic was hard for Tiwi to discuss, “You see land groups. Certain favoured families have so much power. I can't say much”. However, some examples were shared. There was a case when politics and interclan competition banned the projects that were already supported by the government, “We can partner with whoever we want, but we can't until we get out Section 19. I feel like there's someone who doesn't want us to run. I don't know if they're worried about power getting taken off them, or the community starts recognising our company more than theirs, or I'm not too sure, but there is someone putting a hold on us.” Another respondent did not share their thoughts during the interview but contacted the researcher later and asked to add the following to her data, “Often people keep vacancies for their family members and don't share with others”. Others feel the same way, “You've got to look at nepotism too, it comes in place when choosing who can get access to work, land, trust, money or preference for a home, getting a new home.” Finally, several people mentioned that they are not happy with the example that leaders set, “I reckon if the elders stop it <gambling>, everyone will stop it”.
3. Avoidance of leadership roles. When sharing their vision for the future, the majority of respondents said that they want to see more Tiwi in leadership positions. At the same time, they admit that Tiwi tend to avoid management roles even when they are skilled and trained for a job, “He's a White person working as a manager worrying about it, can you imagine the effects of someone who is Tiwi, who has family here, working as a manager here, and has to worry about everyone? And you have relatives that are constantly asking: Are there more jobs? How is this supposed to be fixed? You're supposed to be our voice”. Another respondent explains, “I have known people who are managers in Darwin. But then you ask them, why don't you come back home and work and be a manager there? And they're like, “Nooooo, too much, too much drama. And it goes into every job.”

As for the government leadership, it is also seen as somewhat problematic. On one hand, some Tiwi people feel they have little agency in the decision-making, “At the moment, there's not enough consultation. They're not talking to the Tiwi people”. On the other hand, some Tiwi question their readiness for self-determination, “We talk about self-determination here, but we're not quite there. It's like the horse in front of the cart. We need to sit together as a team to co-design community development”. An elder suggests their vision for the future is the Tiwi-government relationship, “I would like the government to keep listening to the Tiwi people. The most important thing for me is about their well-being, including their attitudes. That's number one. Number two is empowering Tiwi people. And number three, this is important, putting Tiwi people in responsible positions and allowing them to make mistakes. Because that is where they will learn”.

Them 5. Humbug

The word “humbug” is used in Aboriginal communities with a specific meaning, which is similar to what (Peterson, 1993) defines as a “demand sharing”. Sharing is an intrinsic part of Aboriginal communities and is often associated with generosity. However, many informants identified this phenomenon as one of the biggest problems in the community, alongside issues like drugs, alcohols, domestic violence, and gambling. “Humbug is the biggest thing here, especially on paydays. It's really hard. They're family, you know”, shares one of the respondents. Another is unsure about keeping their job: “Humbug is another problem. You can get a job, work, and then you got family humbugging you, you know”?

There is a point of view that Aboriginal sense of money is not materialistic, “We live in a money-oriented world. It doesn't suit our Tiwi image to adopt this mindset”. Some people are unfamiliar with the concept of saving money and budgeting, “Especially for me and my sister, it's hard to say no because we don't have any kids, but you have your salary. They say, “What are you holding money for?” In some cases, this might affect people's financial security, “We try and break that cycle where we get my money, if I get my pay, I'm giving another thirty people out of my family <...> Some of us, I know, I was one of them, I'm not gonna lie, where we'd get our pay on a Thursday, and the following Tuesday, it's out”.

This attitude does not apply for all Tiwi people. One respondent wanted to save some money, but they had to hide their salary from the family with help of their non-Tiwi friend. Others try to set boundaries openly, but this is not always possible for them, “It could cause some damage, yeah, and there would be arguments that will be continuous, they might end up getting in a physical fight. They might be disowned from that family and that sort of stuff. I find it hard to hold back tears sometimes saying, why do I have to give you?” This quote highlights that the issue goes beyond just a fight; it involves potential family ostracism. Consequently, some people choose to prioritise family harmony, “I’m not really worried about money. I’ve lost too much family because of money, you know, lost connection because of fighting over money. Humbug, arguing for things that they don’t have but we have”.

Humbug seems to be viewed as a cultural norm, in contrast to Western societal values, “Family humbug is the one, the killer. If you have boundaries, you get into fights. They think, who the fuck do you think you are? You think you’re a White person?” In this context, attempts to set boundaries are seen as an external influence, which could be perceived as a threat to the Tiwi way of life. Conversely, sharing and expecting to be shared with is seen as a way of following the traditions of their ancestors, “Humbug is normal, normal thing, yeah. I share, we got it from our, we heard it from our people, you know, even my grandmother, whatever you got, just give, you know”; or “Sharing is caring. Plus my mum always said, the more you share, the more blessing you give back”. For younger generations, it is especially difficult to object, “Although the boundaries are mostly for our cousins and our nieces and nephews. But when it comes to aunties and uncles, oh, very difficult one. There are certain aunties and uncles where you can set their boundaries and there are ones where you just know you can’t”. Some simply accept this norm, “We have to live with that”.

At the same time, not everyone sees humbug as a heritage from their ancestors, “It’s not really culture, that comes from that. When we were nomadic people, we hunted and shared. You have to eat that food quickly and share it out. You have to change now. That humbug, some people like it because that’s how they feel contributed or feel loved”. Many people emphasize the importance of boundaries, offering different behavior tactics to deal with this complex issue.

The phenomenon of humbug has significant implications for working life, for example, the avoidance of managerial positions, as mentioned earlier, “It's just always so much humbug, so much drama. You'd rather not be a manager at a school, like here, where the majority of the workers at the school are Black, Aboriginal Tiwi people. It's never good”. Additionally, the expectation to share makes the idea of making money within the community especially challenging, “You got to learn to say no. The biggest problem we got is saying no to a family. If you want to make money to run a business in the community, you have to learn to say no because the problem is family pressure that's the biggest problem we got here.” Humbug remains a complex issue, deeply entwined with both cultural values and socioeconomic realities.

Theme 6. Unemployment

As it was discussed earlier, unemployment rates are high in remote Aboriginal communities, and the Tiwi islands are no exception. However, the lack of jobs is not always the primary reason for it. While the majority of informants list unemployment as one of the biggest issues in the communities (especially outside Wurrumiyanga), an equal number of people admits that finding a job is always possible if a job seeker makes an effort and shows persistence, “I don't think there are no jobs. They're not just working hard enough to look for it”. Moreover, older generations feel that the labour market situation is improving, “There's a lot of opportunities. They have a lot of opportunities now than what we had when we were young”.

Many reasons were suggested for the reluctance of people to look for paid work. For example, one respondent speculates, “Jobs are there for everyone. But many of them have a fear. That they aren't going to get it. It all falls down to lack of confidence, low self-esteem. They might look down on themselves. Coming out from a local person perspective... You and I could be pointing out to others the services and things. Where some of the locals, you know, they're very spectacle on things, very quiet. They don't believe in themselves, which is the saddest part for me”. This lack of confidence might stem from low levels of literacy and numeracy, lack of family support, negative past experiences or family humbug, “It's a good opportunity for us, but it's a lot of pressure, because our family, our people, they demand, demand, demand... But for myself, if I want to put my hands up for that, like

family wanted me to put my hand up for the TLC chair last year, but I said no. But someone has to be responsible”.

Another reason that respondents mentioned is the reliance on government support, which some find damaging, “Instead of sitting down 24/7 in the card game and wait for money to come to you, because you gotta work to get money. Living in a reality world. That you currently sit back and wait for money, but there's nothing free anymore”. Another respondent went further, “I'll just say straight, I think some of my people are lazy. They like to be given stuff. With our Tiwi people, honestly, just saying, they've been given a lot of stuff and opportunities to do this, and been given stuff all the time, and they've just become lazy”. There is also dissatisfaction with non-Tiwi occupying “Tiwi positions”, as one respondent expressed: “Top jobs. They're bringing people from the other side. This is jobs for my people” even though they recognize that Tiwi people may not always have the necessary training and skills for these roles.

The respondents see the solution to these problems not only in creating more jobs on the islands but also in more profound changes within the community, “Well for me I want to see more jobs here; I want to see more taking responsibility”. A practical suggestion is not just to introduce new courses and expand training but to foster stronger collaborations between outsiders who come to work in the community and locals, “The other thing that needs to happen is that I don't hear very often when outsiders come in, mainly Westerners, to our communities, I don't hear them say this. I've come here to train you, Tiwi person, so you can take my position”.

Theme 7. Tiwi Way vs. Western Way

Comparison of Tiwi culture and lifestyle with Western models is another recurring theme. While a deeper exploration of complex postcolonial issues is beyond the scope of this research, nearly all respondents mentioned the pre-contact or mission days as relevant to the present, “We can't blame colonisation. We need to wake up, too”. “White influence” is constantly reflected upon, “If we worry about the White man's side we're gonna forget about our culture,” or “Instead of stay under the White people, I want Tiwi to be on top. Let's take up our own job. Our own people, our own community. Lead our community”.

The expression “Tiwi way” is used extensively to emphasise the uniqueness of the Tiwi people, their attitudes, beliefs and the way of life. Being part of contemporary Australia, Tiwi inevitably compare themselves with a broader Western society. They highlight differences in behaviour, communication, and other aspects of life, starting with their attitude to time, “Anything that is new, they tend to sort of pull back and then trying to get a better understanding on what are you trying to say or what are you trying to deliver”. Tiwi people want to be understood, “They don't know how we have survived. It's because we were isolated from the mainland. We had our social structure structured our way. We had our governing system. In a way that suited us. We had that to keep us in line as Tiwi people”. The Tiwi are open to teaching newcomers about their culture, “So cultural awareness teachers are a great job opportunity”.

Despite the desire of self-determination, the Tiwi people acknowledge the need for support, “We have non-Tiwi, you guys are educators actually coming through and saying, look, hey, this is how you do stuff. This is how it will work. And by having you guys... This is a calming feeling. It's good because we will then gain some sort of experience. And pick up something positive, something new and then probably utilise that within the future”. While the Tiwi are wary of those who arrive for selfish reasons, they feel accountable for those who benefit the community, “We need to have securities for the safety of the staff because we have some great people coming here, like some successful people that have graduated”. They believe that cooperation and mutual support is beneficial for everyone, “We work together into the future. That's the way”.

The initial hypothesis that broader Western societal expectations pressure Tiwi people and influence local aspirations was not supported by our data. While Tiwi people acknowledge feeling some external expectations, their response is to hold firmly to their identity, “Sometimes I feel like I can't do that thing, and I'm like, I can't be like you. You can't make a person to be like you, like when you put in your shoes, and you can't fit”. Tiwi people take pride in their identity, which is rooted in their history, family, social organisation, and culture. They want others to recognise and understand their uniqueness, “You can't make us change to be white or something if we come in being Tiwi. Sometimes we can't make a decision straight away. It takes us time to gel in our mind. It's really slow learning, slow decision making, and non-Tiwi have to accept that”. At the same time, they acknowledge

the need to adapt, “Everything goes quick in the Western world. And here we are, so slow. We need to catch up”.

The strategy the Tiwi people employ is complex, requiring them to navigate the challenges of living in two worlds simultaneously, “Well, the challenge is you got to bring two worlds together and understanding both ways of living, of culture. Bring it together, our culture and language and western language were blend in the machine. But now it's cultural that understanding that new way of blending together. Learning how to live life, it's a challenge.” This perception of dual existence highlights the high adaptability, strength, and resilience of the Tiwi people, as described by an elder, “I've actually adapted that and it was so easy for me. I'm happy to be an Aboriginal, happy to be a Tiwi person and happy to speak English, happy to work and happy to travel and see different places and meet different people”.

Theme 8. Health and Wellbeing

These themes include a wide range of different codes, the most recurring of which are “mental health,” “appointments,” and “diet.”

There is a contradictory attitude towards mental health in the Tiwi community. While some are satisfied with existing programs and want to see more such support in the community, others do not understand the whole concept, “They don't really see it. I don't know, because of the age, it's not really a real thing to them. They don't really believe in mental health”. One of the informants, who was very skeptical, later admitted his negative experience, “Mental health. Mental, this and this. You didn't grow up with mental health, you didn't have mental health. How are you mental now? It doesn't make sense”. Later they shared, “I want to communicate with you for the next year, and then the year after that. Communicate to the same person over and over. Earn the trust, earn the feeling, and then it will be like, okay, I know someone does care how I feel, how I think. But it ain't like that; a month later someone come your job and say to do the same thing. And then that process starts again”.

When asked about new job opportunities, people mentioned the clinic and issues related to appointments, “Other jobs, support, especially in the health system. For me, I find that there's a lack of support, locally support by language speakers <...> Some of our people have, you know, English as their second language.”. Some were satisfied with newly introduced teleconference appointments, “People go for appointments to Darwin, and the

appointment is just like a quick five-minute talk, and you have to go all the way to Darwin just for that. Stay the night, come back, and you know. They've actually built, I think it's like a teleconference thing. I liked how they did that. That was one big step which I was very happy about”.

Unhealthy diets are a concern for Tiwi people, with high prices in local shops and the inability to go hunting being key factors. For community members, hunting without a vehicle is nearly impossible. According to the informants, older people are particularly vulnerable to dietary changes: “The age care facility have all the Western food. But Tiwi food like mangrove worms, mud mussels, long bum... all that stuff is a medicine that will clean the inside. All the sickness that we have inside, even cancer. We have wild honey. All the bush tucker, they need this”. Providing bush food for elderly people was identified as a new job opportunity by four respondents.

Theme 9. Future for Children

When asked about their dreams for the future of their communities, all respondents, without exception, mentioned children and youth. Their aspirations are focused around three main areas: bush holidays, new facilities in the communities, and education (as discussed above).

Bush holidays refer to a period of approximately four weeks during the dry season when Tiwi people spend time in the bush. It is much more than just camping; this time is dedicated to learning extensively about the land and culture, “Country, camping, taking the kids out, hunting, gathering. For a week, sometimes for the weekend. We can teach our kids”. This is both a cultural and spiritual experience, with one of the youngest informants sharing, “When we are out Bush, we just feel like we're connected with the family who has passed away”. Given the societal changes, time in the bush remains crucial for developing and strengthening the Tiwi identity, “For now, it's Western way of living. So we actually push a little bit our cultural way. But when coming up school holidays. which is also called bush holidays, people go and live.” Many people support the idea of creating job opportunities outside of communities in the bush, “Jobs, in particular, we need a lot like land management. It would be good to have land management programs thriving as it will, you know, sort of take the young ones out on their country to learn about their homelands”.

Suggestions for facilities and activities for children and youth include a Sports and Recreation Hall, a Youth Centre, an Art and Craft Centre, and a Drop-In Centre or any other place where children can spend their free time. Such centres would not only help alleviate boredom, which is often cited as a reason why children start consuming alcohol and drugs, but also create potential job opportunities for adults, “I have relatives who all work and there's always no one to take care of the nieces and nephews. It stops parents from working. And also this centre would provide so many job opportunities”.

Theme 10. New Job Opportunities

New job opportunities offered during the interview are classified using the Cultural Framework developed by Informed Solutions (NT) Pty Ltd. (2014). This framework organises jobs into five cultural fields: Jobs Strong in Culture, Jobs Working on Country, Jobs Caring for Family and Community, Jobs Building the Community, and Jobs Servicing the Community.

1. Jobs Strong in Culture

These aspirations highlight the Tiwi community's vision for advancing education, language, and culture, with a particular focus on revitalising bilingual education.

- **Tiwi Language Teachers:** Teaching Tiwi language, both traditional and modern, in schools or community settings.
- **Tiwi as a Second Language Teachers:** Teaching Tiwi language to those for whom Tiwi language is not their mother tongue.
- **Content Creators:** Developing resources such as textbooks, storybooks, exercises, teaching aids, and digital tools in Tiwi language
- **Instructional Designers:** Creating educational materials and curricula that integrate Tiwi language and culture.
- **Program Coordinators:** Overseeing bilingual education programs and ensuring their implementation aligns with community goals.
- **Community Linguists:** Documenting, preserving, and revitalising Tiwi language through research and community projects.

- **Cultural Awareness Teachers:** Providing training on Tiwi culture and traditions to non-Tiwi individuals and organisations.
- **Workplace Mentors:** would guide Tiwi in balancing their cultural values with Western work ethics, offering support on managing conflicts fostering effective communication with employers, “Not often everyone has that encouragement or support or sound on board, someone to talk to and listen to. It's good to see a role of an engagement officer slash mentor that works with the individual or group setting”.

2. Jobs Working on Country

The suggestions can be broadly categorised into two primary areas: tourism and farming.

1) Tourism

- **Fishing Safari Guide:** Leads fishing trips, blending Tiwi traditions with modern techniques, promoting sustainability and cultural awareness.
- **Hiking Tour Guide:** Leads guided hiking tours, sharing knowledge of the local landscape, history, and culture with tourists while ensuring safe and enjoyable experiences.
- **Birdwatching Guide:** Leads birdwatching tours, sharing knowledge about the diverse bird species in Tiwi territory, including their cultural significance, and promoting eco-tourism and environmental education.

One respondent shared their vision: “I would like to see a fishing tourism business happen here, because there isn't one here in this community, there is in the other two. So, to take people out on the boats, fishing, seeing them enjoy, catch a big barra, over here on the Tiwis. Something along the lines with our waters, and yeah, a nice little 10-hut dollar little area for them to stay for a few days, or whatever”.

B) Farming. The following ideas were suggested:

- **Farmers:** “The old people used to grow their own garden, they grew watermelon, they grew pawpaw, bananas. They sold a lot of stuff, they made money”.

- **Managers and Specialists** for fish farms, oyster farms, and prawn farms.
- **Sea Slug Harvester:** Focuses on the collection, processing, and sale of sea slugs, particularly targeting markets like China, ensuring sustainable practices and high-quality products.
- **Fishing Business,** “I like to see people have a license for fishing. They can sell fish in Darwin. They're doing a fish trap out there. They can't sell any fish out there. They have to give it to the community. I like to see is people giving license for netting, you know, and crab, crab, you know? To sell in Darwin. You can sell a crab, and this is what I heard, it's \$80 a crab. Here, they sell it for \$30. I like to see a business. A proper business”.

3. Jobs Caring for Family and Community

- **Family Support Coordinator:** A role to assist individuals in managing the pressure of family demands and humbug, helping them set healthy boundaries while supporting their employment ambitions, ensuring they do not have to choose between work and family obligations.
- **Community Opportunities Communicator:** This person will be responsible for sharing information about new job opportunities and educational courses within the community, fostering connections and encouraging participation. As one of respondents suggested, “My people are not really technology. You come and you talk to the central area, where people hang out, people meet up, talk. Where people sit down and they listen. Oh, it's opportunity. It's not late for you. If you're 50 or 40, it's not too late. Never too late for you to learn”.
- **Bush Recovery Mentor:** Elders guide and support individuals returning from prison, providing cultural healing and life skills through bush-based programs that promote connection to land.

Tiwi hope that if centres like a Sports and Recreation Hall, a Youth Centre, an Art and Craft Centre, or a Drop-In Centre are established, they will create opportunities for roles such as Youth Engagement Officers, Art and Craft Facilitators, Sports and Recreation Coordinators, Childcare Support Workers, Cultural Mentors, and Youth Career Advisors.

4. Jobs Building the Community

Not many new jobs were suggested in this sector; rather, respondents expressed a desire to see Tiwi people involved in existing roles and industries, “When I went on the road to the festival, I saw the crew doing the bitumen. And I said to my group, I don't see a Tiwi person working with that group. So, employing indigenous personnel should be included when they come to work on the Tiwi islands.” Similarly, “Tiwi Enterprise they got that graveyard the headstone. I seen it, I seen how they made. If somebody can take over that kind of job it might be a lot of skill, but it would be good to learn those kind of skills. One headstone you can sell for \$500”. All the Wurumiyanga dwellers mentioned the pool, because they find it extremely unsafe that children swim at the sea, “Crocs gonna take them because crocs are hungry people. They're a hungry mob. They're hard to find food. So if we muck around in their water, they'll attack”. They all desire the pool to be renovated and reopened. Many respondents also desire to see more houses, a new stadium, a “Cultural Knowledge Centre,” Mental Health Centre, and Recreational Centre built in their communities.

5. Services in the community

- **Bush Food Supplier:** Specialises in sourcing and delivering traditional bush foods, such as mangrove worms and wild honey, to elderly and vulnerable community members to ensure their dietary needs are met with culturally appropriate and medicinal foods.
- **Community Dietician for Indigenous Nutrition:** Focuses on promoting healthier eating habits within the community by incorporating traditional bush foods into modern diets, offering guidance on affordable, nutritious food options available locally.
- **Telehealth Coordinator:** Manages and facilitates telehealth appointments for Tiwi community members, ensuring smooth connections for consultations with health professionals and improving access to healthcare services without the need to travel.

A range of new small business idea were offered:

- **Tyre Repair Service:** “I want to do my own. I was thinking about doing tyre repair. If I retire I'll buy a tyre machine, a compressor and I'll set it up. On the weekend, they shut everything and they won't do any tyres.
- **Ice Production:** “I was also looking at an ice machine. Buying ice machine to make ice, you can sell it for \$10 and \$5. Anyone can do that”.
- **Taxi Service.**
- **Delivery Services** from Darwin and within the communities.

Growing the private business sector is a key ambition for the Tiwi community, “I like to see educated to people with that private enterprise, okay? I reckon, I reckon private enterprise will make jobs, okay, make money for them”. They recognize the significant role of TITEB in this process, “People will come see if they talk about private enterprise, and how to run it, do that business. I reckon that you give a lot of people, you know, it's like giving out white cards. But with, with business training, they need probably, not two or three days. They need about, probably good four or five weeks, or six weeks. Then come back and just again, just check up how he's going”. Another courses and training expected from TITEB are the following:

- **Tiwi language course for adults:** Those who speak Modern Tiwi would like to study more of Old Tiwi, and any version of the language would be suitable for those who are not confident Tiwi speakers.
- **Financial Literacy course:** A course designed to help Tiwi individuals improve their financial management skills, focusing on budgeting, saving, and navigating the cultural aspects of sharing resources while maintaining personal financial security.
- **Art Sales and Marketing Course:** Teaches Tiwi artists how to effectively sell carvings, paintings, and other artworks, focusing on pricing, marketing strategies, and connecting with potential buyers.
- **Repair and Maintenance Workshops,** “It's not enough training for like a big workshop where people do with their hands, fixing motors, fixing mowers, fixing chainsaws. And then you can obtain skill. And when you see that some things are chucking out the dump, things that shouldn't be in the dump, you can fix it”.

When considering the introduction of new opportunities for Tiwi communities, it is essential to recognize the community's expressed fatigue with constant changes and their preference for a gradual decision-making process. As such, new initiatives should be introduced cautiously and incrementally, with extensive consultation and iterative yarning cycles to ensure community engagement and ownership. Moreover, Tiwi community members prioritize supporting and sustaining existing job opportunities over the promotion of new ones, highlighting the importance of stability and long-term viability over innovation. Additionally, a significant aspiration within the community is the replacement of non-Tiwi personnel in existing roles with trained Tiwi workers. To achieve this, a shadowing model, where Tiwi individuals work alongside experts and specialists with the goal of eventual role succession, should be prioritized and supported. This approach aligns with the community's values, promotes self-reliance, and strengthens local capacity while fostering trust and respect.

Discussion

Yukurri ngirimipi, or the four main skin groups interviewed for this research, represent diverse perspectives on the Yirrara Tiwi Ratuwati. Despite the diversity of opinions, the Tiwi people share a strong sense of belonging and operate according to the concept of Milimika, where everyone understands their roles and responsibilities. Any imbalances identified were acknowledged and reflected upon, with ideas for improvement (Karutukuni) proposed to address these issues. These efforts aim to eliminate disharmony through learning, accepting responsibilities, and working together to create a Mwalapwara for the future.

Education is believed to be the key to future development and growth by the Tiwi people, who understand it as a two-dimensional concept. This includes both Western academic ways of knowing on one hand and Aboriginal knowledge passed down through generations from their ancestors on the other. While the first way of knowing is seen as a tool to navigate the modern world and achieve professional success, the second shapes Tiwi identity and is regarded as a key element of their well-being. In the literature, these two forms of education often oppose, with Indigenous education emphasising learning through observation and practice, while much Western formal education is characterised by its structured, directive nature and reliance on explicit instructions (Battiste, 2019). However,

the Tiwi people seem to view these approaches as complementary, valuing both and striving to integrate them.

Our data supports the observation that “conventional education to employment pathways are inherently challenging for Aboriginal peoples in remote communities” (McRae-Williams, 2014). Respondents in this study describe the current situation with a phrase “You can see it, you can be it”, highlighting the lack of Mwalapwara or role models in the community. Many are unaware of the opportunities available or who can guide them. As one current student shares: “My mum didn't know where to go, where it was. She knew that you have to do something, but she didn't know what exactly”.

Bilingual education, unlike higher education, is something the Tiwi people understand deeply, have experience with, and want reinstated. Some community elders strongly advocate for primary education to be conducted in Tiwi, “the education system here needs to be in Tiwi. Because our kids, the curriculum also, it needs to be in Tiwi. No English”. This reflects the approach taken when the bilingual program was running and aligns with sound pedagogical principles (Wigglesworth, 2020). Bilingual education, which centres on teaching and learning in a child’s mother tongue, operates on the principle of building upon what children already know. It begins with a focus on literacy in the native language, breaking tasks into manageable steps. The first step is acquiring the dominant language for instruction, followed by transferring reading and writing skills, which are more effectively developed when initially established in the child’s first language. Tiwi understand this well, “Because how do you teach a child who English is a foreign language? How do you teach their child English concept? You need to be an interpreter as a teacher”.

The right of communities to keep and strengthen their Indigenous languages and also have a say in how their children are educated were established in Australia’s National Policy on Languages (Bianco, 1987). They are recognised in The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007, and signed by Australia in April 2009 (Simpson et al., 2009). Remaining strong in their language and culture can be identified as central aspiration of the Tiwi. It is essential to recognise that Tiwi individuals express a sense of wholeness, pride, flexibility, and resilience, with a deep commitment to preserving their cultural identity. As one respondent noted, “Leadership role is making sure that Tiwi will always be Tiwi”. This statement

underscores the Tiwi's prioritisation of cultural continuity, suggesting that leadership within the community is viewed as a means of safeguarding their cultural identity while adapting to external challenges.

Despite “a perceived tension or contradiction between engagement with the market economy and maintaining Indigenous values and culture” (Parmenter & Barnes, 2021), Tiwi appear to believe that stable employment can be beneficial and does not necessarily lead to a loss of culture, provided there is respectful and clear communication in the workplace and cultural awareness from both sides. At the same time, several studies on Indigenous retention have found that a lack of cultural awareness among non-Indigenous employees and limited opportunities for professional development are significant factors affecting retention (Deroy & Schütze, 2019; Lai et al., 2018). Tiwi experience shared during yarning cycles confirm the statement that “low quality cultural training might not be only ineffective but even harmful” (Parmenter & Trigger, 2018).

Australian Aboriginal kinship systems are intricate and highly complex. Being “at once spiritual, social, and economic” (Rademaker, 2019), kinship can be both a source of strength and support, but it can also significantly affect working life in many ways. Leadership issues and avoidance of management positions often stem from kinship pressures, which “make it almost impossible for an Aboriginal person to sustain a management position, and the few who take on such a role are subject to constant demands, and abuse if they refuse to comply” (Mahood, 2012). The complex socio-cultural phenomenon of humbug, discussed in the results section, requires further investigation because it seems to be tied to the profound philosophical concepts of the Tiwi worldview, “Aboriginal people from remote communities in particular are not materialistic or acquisitive, thus have no need for bank accounts and to save for later or to put a deposit on a house or such Western capitalistic concepts. Money is something that goes in and comes out (McHugh et al., 2020). Our data neither fully support nor deny this claim, indicating ambiguous attitudes toward money and the phenomenon of humbug.

Having more jobs in the community, especially Indigenous-owned businesses, is one of central aspirations for community development and growth. However, the lack of training, skills, and business mindset among many Tiwi people is seen as an impediment. There is significant hope associated with non-Tiwi individuals who come not for personal gain, but

with a genuine intention to train and support Tiwi, ultimately aiming to transition the roles to Tiwi workers. According to our data, Tiwi generally feel comfortable with non-Tiwi colleagues because Tiwi culture, along with culture-related needs and responsibilities, is largely recognised in the workplace, “while paid employment was recognised as important to provide basic needs, the wellbeing aspects focussed on work opportunities that facilitated participation in and maintaining cultural heritage, empowerment and Indigenous-owned businesses providing opportunities for family” (Butler et al., 2019).

Tiwi slowly observe a shift from focusing on rights to considering responsibilities. The majority of problems identified as the most significant, such as drugs, alcohol, gambling, domestic violence, and humbug, are perceived as issues that must be addressed within the Tiwi community by the Tiwi themselves. Despite some constructive criticism of government policies, education systems, and infrastructure, Tiwi tend to avoid blame, preferring to focus on *kartukuni*, which represents a sign of welcoming and healing within the Turtini framework. Respondents frequently discuss restoring relationships within the community and with non-Tiwi individuals, seeing their future in collaboration and mutual support.

When considering these findings, it is important to take into account certain limitations of the study. Firstly, the interviews were conducted by the non-Indigenous female researcher. The cultural background and/or gender of the interviewer may have influenced participants' willingness to share their experiences openly and honestly, potentially limiting the depth of the data collected. However, to build rapport and trust, the interviewer spent three months in the community, actively participating in community life before commencing interviews. The researcher lived in the Wurrumiyanga and had the opportunity to build relationships within the community, although this was not the case for residents of Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti.

Secondly, audio-recording may have discouraged participants from sharing openly. In some cases, respondents shared additional thoughts when the recording was stopped. To address this, involving Tiwi people during the invitation stage and incorporating the elements of Indigenous research methodologies, such as Yarning, helped foster a more culturally safe environment for participants. Participants chose the time and location that best suited them, whether it was at the beach, in the bush, or at their workplace.

Furthermore, Indigenous researcher made contributions to the analysis and reporting of the data, as well as to the overall development of this paper.

Finally, although the sample size and diversity were strong, the participants may not fully represent the entire Tiwi population. This study focused on the experiences of thirty Tiwi individuals who took part in the project, and their perspectives may differ from those of other Tiwi people. Nevertheless, there was considerable agreement among participants on key issues, including the view that education and employment positively impact various social domains. Likewise, the commitment to maintaining the Tiwi language and culture emerged as a unifying factor across diverse groups.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the Tiwi community's perspectives on improving their quality of life, focusing on both economic and social factors. This study provides insights into the Tiwi community's aspirations and challenges, with a focus on improving quality of life through education, employment, and cultural preservation. The findings underscore the importance of integrating elements of those identified as Western and Tiwi knowledge systems, reaffirming that both are critical to fostering professional success while maintaining Tiwi identity. Education, particularly bilingual programs, was identified as a cornerstone for development, highlighting the need to revive Tiwi-language instruction to ensure cultural continuity and support learning outcomes.

Employment was seen as a pathway to individual and community well-being, but challenges such as limited skills, training opportunities, and cultural dynamics, including kinship pressures and humbug, complicate workforce participation. Despite these hurdles, the Tiwi community expressed a strong desire for locally owned businesses and meaningful collaboration with non-Tiwi individuals, emphasising mutual respect and cultural awareness in workplace interactions. This demonstrates "the Tiwi's adaptability, and their capacity to sustain and reinvent their identity in relation to the nation state and the contemporary global economy" (Simpson et al., 2009)

The study revealed a shift in community attitudes from focusing on external rights to embracing internal responsibilities. Many participants acknowledged that pressing social

issues like substance abuse, gambling, and domestic violence must be addressed from within the community, with the Tiwi people leading the charge for positive change. The act of welcoming and healing emerged as a crucial theme, emphasising the need to restore relationships within the community and foster collaboration with external partners.

A significant challenge identified was the lack of role models, with many Tiwi feeling disconnected from available opportunities. The tensions between Tiwi values and Western economic systems were explored, with participants recognising the potential of stable employment while often prioritising cultural continuity. Furthermore, the complexities surrounding leadership, kinship, and humbug, along with the pressures these bring to community life and employment, were critical points of discussion.

The Tiwi community expressed a clear desire for leadership that supports their cultural identity while fostering a future of collaboration and mutual support with non-Tiwi individuals. While there are limitations to this study, the findings underscore the importance of culturally informed policies and practices that consider both the aspirations and the challenges faced by the Tiwi community in their pursuit of a better future.

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