

COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION

INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY

SUBMISSION

**From: Nguiu Community Government Council
"Service Delivery in Remote Areas"**

Submission No.: IFUSUB/0036

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SERVICE DELIVERY IN REMOTE AREAS
NGUIU COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT COUNCIL
BATHURST ISLAND, NORTHERN TERRITORY

- CDEP WORKS EXTREMELY WELL AND PARTICIPANTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH INVOLVEMENT IN ALL FACETS OF THE COMMUNITY.

- SUBSTANTIAL COST TO COUNCIL IN TOP UP OF WAGES E.G. ADMINISTRATION, TRANSPORT, CRECHE

- SPORT AND RECREATION IS COUNCIL'S MAJOR LOSS AREA. THE PROVISION OF THIS SERVICE MAINLY FOR THE YOUTH (500 CHILDREN) IS REGARDED AS A TOP PRIORITY TO PREVENT BOREDOM, MISBEHAVIOR AND PETTY CRIME AND TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH.

- THE CRECHE DESPITE THE CURRENT BUILDING'S PRIMITIVE STATE IS IN ITS DEVELOPING STAGE. HOWEVER THE HEALTH AND EDUCATION OF THE PRE SCHOOL CHILDREN IS REGARDED AS ESSENTIAL. WE HAVE RECEIVED CAPITAL FUNDS FOR A NEW CHILD CARE CENTRE. CURRENTLY WE DO NOT HAVE ALL OF THE NECESSARY FUNDS DUE TO OUR STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO COMPLETE OUR MAIN PROJECT - A SWIMMING POOL COMPLEX. AN ACKNOWLEDGED CONCERN IS THE FUTURE OPERATIONAL COSTS OF THE CHILD CARE CENTRE AS LOCAL PEOPLE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO PAY FEES SIMILAR TO MAINSTREAM CENTRES.

- THE SWIMMING POOL IS ESTIMATED TO COST \$850,000 AND WE REQUIRE \$312,000 EXTERNAL FUNDING TO ACCOMPLISH THIS EXCITING PROJECT. THE BENEFITS TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF LOCAL CHILDREN IS WELL DOCUMENTED IN OTHER ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES. THE OPERATIONAL LOSS OF THE POOL COMPLEX IS ESTIMATED AT APPROX. \$100,000 DESPITE A PROPOSED \$2-00 ADMITTANCE CHARGE.
- LARGE EXPENDITURE OCCURS ON PLANT. WINDSCREEN REPLACEMENT HAS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY FLY IN SPECIALISTS. SMASHED VEHICLES HAVE TO BE BARGED OVER TO DARWIN TO BE REPAIRED. FREIGHT ON FUEL ESCALATES COSTS.
- THE MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS IS AFFECTED BY FLY IN SERVICES SUCH AS PEST CONTROL, PAINTERS, ELECTRICIANS, AND HIGH MATERIAL COSTS.
- OF COURSE THE PROVISION OF 8 FULLY FURNISHED COUNCIL OWNED HOUSES/ UNITS FOR THE RECRUITED STAFF IS A MAJOR COST.THE CONSTRUCTION COSTS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER THAN DARWIN DUE TO THE FREIGHT AND RECRUITED TRADESMEN.
- COUNCIL BUILT THE POLICE STATION AT A COST OF \$415,000 AND LEASES THIS PREMISES TO THE NT POLICE. RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION, POSSIBLY 2 HOUSES, MAY BE REQUIRED FOR 2 PERMANENT NT POLICE.

- POST OFFICE, BANK, CENTRELINK, AIRNORTH AGENCIES ARE OPERATED BY COUNCIL AT LOSSES. THESE SERVICES HAVE TO BE UNDERTAKEN FOR THE COMMUNITY AND THE COUNCIL IS THE LOGICAL PROVIDER. AT THIS STAGE PAWA AGENCY IS A COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT IS CURRENTLY SATISFACTORY.
- THE FLEDGING TIWI TOURS ENTERPRISE AND THE VISITING PERSONNEL ARE INCREASING THE DAILY AND OVERNIGHT POPULATION OF OUR DEVELOPING TOWNSHIP.
- ROAD COSTS ARE EFFECTED BY FACTORS SUCH AS HIGH FUEL COSTS, FREIGHT AND THE WET SEASON. AS PRIVATE ENTERPRISES AND OUTSTATIONS CONTINUE TO DEVELOP ON THE ISLAND THE EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL WEATHER ROADS BECOME GREATER. THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PROPOSED CAPE HELVETIUS ROAD SHALL BE A PRIME EXAMPLE OF INCREASED ROAD MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY. OUR COMPETITIVE CIVIL WORKS GANG REGULARLY UNDERTAKES PRIVATE WORKS AND PRODUCES WELCOME EXTERNAL INCOME.
- AS OVER 3,550 AIRCRAFT LAND ON THE COUNCIL AIRSTRIP EACH YEAR THE REQUIREMENTS OF CASA HAVE TO BE STRINGENTLY ADHERED TO AND THUS INCREASE OUR OPERATIONAL COSTS. THE UPKEEP OF THE WELL USED TOILET FACILITIES IS AN ONGOING COST.
- URBAN DRAINAGE, HOUSING LOT SERVICING AND FENCING OF OLDER RESIDENTIAL AREAS ARE REQUIRED WORKS WHICH PERMIT.

- GARBAGE DUMP IS AN INCREASING COST AND A REDEVELOPMENT OF THIS FACILITY HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN IN THE PAST YEAR
- BATHURST ISLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION CONSTRUCTS 7 TO 8 HOUSES PER YEAR.
- NGUIFU COUNCIL'S EFFORT TO ACHIEVE LOCAL COMMUNITY REVENUE EFFORT THROUGH SERVICE TRANSPORT FEES WOULD BE WELL ABOVE THAT OF MAINSTREAM COUNCILS PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE LOW MEAN INCOME OF THE LOCAL TIWI PEOPLE. HOWEVER THE LOCAL PEOPLE ARE COMMENCING TO CHANGE THEIR BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND THEREFORE NOT ENABLE COUNCIL TO DEDUCT SERVICE TRANSPORT FEES.

CR. BARRY PURUNTA
COUNCIL PRESIDENT
24 MAY 2000

BERNIE MCCARTHY
COUNCIL CLERK

Nguiu Community Government Council

AN INTRODUCTION TO NGUIU, BATHURSTISLAND

Nguiu, with a population of over 1450 (approximately 1,350 being Tiwi's) is on the south-eastern corner of Bathurst Island and 80 kms north of Darwin. The climate has two distinct seasons; hot and wet and warm and dry.

Transport to/from Darwin is mainly by two Darwin based regional airlines - Airnorth and Wimray, which provide at least 6 regular daily services. Other charter operators do land at Ngulu from time to time. Normal Darwin to Ngulu flying time is less than 20 minutes though it can be longer depending on air traffic congestion over Darwin. Heavier goods are brought into Ngulu by the Tiwi Barge on the high tides, usually on Wednesday or Thursday mornings.

On Bathurst Island the majority of the population live at Ngulu with 50 Tiwi's living at Wurankuwu (Ranku) Outstation 60 kms west of Ngulu. Tiwi is the predominant language in both its "old" and "new" forms. Almost all Tiwi's speak English as a second language and they have preserved many of their traditional ceremonies and customs, particularly those associated with funerals. Hunting and gathering "bush tucker" are a feature of Tiwi life particularly on Sundays which is seen as family day.

House construction and maintenance is undertaken by Bathurst Island Housing Association (BIHA), a Tiwi owned Aboriginal Corporation. The Ngulu Council collects rents on behalf of BIHA which under-takes all work associated with building and maintaining Tiwi houses. Non Tiwi's live in houses/units owned by Council or other Ngulu organisations.

Most Tiwi houses were built in the early 1970's and are at the end of their economic lives. Over the last five years BIRA has built around six houses per year using funds from the State/Commonwealth Housing Agreement. The 1995 Five Year Housing Plan identified a need for 105 new houses and 30 upgrades to meet the estimated population needs of 1250 by the year 2000.

However, as stated above, the population of Ngulu already exceeds the 1350 causing overcrowding in houses unsuitable for even two or three people. (In late 1996, 20% of houses at Ngulu had more than 10 occupants with the median number of occupants for all houses being 7). To address this issue the Commonwealth Government has introduced the Health Infrastructure Priority Program (HIPP) which will provide funds for the construction of homes over the next few years.

In addition to HIPP initiatives, the newly formed Indigenous Housing Authority of the NT, MANT, (a Commonwealth/Territory initiative under the State/Territory/Commonwealth Housing Agreement) is being asked to provide a further \$1m a year to build five or six houses. The combined HIPP and IHANT funding should alleviate some of the current overcrowding.

The Ngulu Store and Take-away is the major food outlet. It is owned and operated by the Ngulu Ullintjlnni Association (NUA) another Tiwi owned Aboriginal Corporation. NUA employs a non Tiwi manager and has both Tiwi and non Tiwi staff. There is a limited range of fresh food available and prices are considerably dearer than those in Darwin. Sandwiches, drinks, etc are sold at the tuckshops at both the Boys' and Girls' schools. Many Tiwi's supplement their diet by "bush tucker" which consists mainly of fish, shellfish, pig, reptiles, buffalo, wallaby and other mammals gained in hunting expeditions, particularly on Sundays.

Ngulu is a designated "dry" community with the only alcohol being sold at the Ngulu Social and Sporting Club. It is illegal to bring alcohol into the Community or to have alcohol in your home: large court fines are imposed for those who offend. The Club that is owned by Tiwi community members sells only light and full strength beer and a limited number of soft drinks and is open between 4 - 7 pm Monday to Saturday. Profits from trading are distributed to designated Tiwi projects.

Alcohol abuse is seen as a significant health and social problem at Ngulu. Currently, there are three agencies offering rehabilitation services for alcohol dependent individuals. Initiatives undertaken to reduce domestic violence include the establishment of a Warden Scheme with Women and Men patrolling in separate vehicles; the abolition of jug sales at the Club banning of people from the Club who cause problems at home after attending the Club; and the limiting of beer ticket sales to the first 2 1/2 hours of trading.

Permanent police at Ngulu are now provided on a trial basis and the NT Police at Pirlangimpi undertake regular overnight patrols. Day to day policing is assisted by the two Tiwi Community Police Officers. They receive basic police training and are strongly supported in their efforts by the NT Police and Ngulu Council through the Ngulu Warden Scheme. A new police complex at Ngulu was opened in September 1998 complete with holding cells and quarters for visiting police officers.

Ngulu Community Government Council (the Council) was established in 1987 under the NT Local Government Act and consists of a President, Vice President and 14 Councillors (3 women and 11 males). The 16 Councillors are elected for two years (next election due November 2001) and meet at least monthly to establish guidelines and policy for implementation by Council staff.

Currently Council is responsible for nine programs: Employment (CDEP), Family, Road Maintenance, Sport and Recreation, Transport, Family (Creche and Women's Night Patrol), Social Harmony (Includes Men's Night Patrol & Community Corrections), Administration and Council Workshop. In addition, Council is the agent for NT Power and Water Authority, Australia Post, the Commonwealth Bank, Centrelink and several other government agencies.

The Council Clerk is responsible for the overall administration of nine Council programs and is assisted by over 60 full / part-time staff the majority of whom are Tiwi.

In administering the nine programs, Council has developed as its Mission or over-riding purpose / goal to **improve fire quality of life for all Tiwi's at Nauiu, Bathurst Island**". Accordingly, Council has three main visions one of which is that all paid jobs at Nguiu by the Year 2010 will be held by Tiwi's. This is the new Tiwi dreaming and a benchmark for measuring progress in achieving its mission.

Thus, the Employment, Sport & Recreation, Family and Social Harmony programs become central in achieving Council's vision of a better future.

Through its Employment Program, Council manages a large Community Development & Employment Program or CDEP (work for the dole) with over 250 participants who work for four hours a day in various organisations at Nguiu. Many participants work a full 7 hour day with their CDEP pay being "topped up- by the organisation to which they have been allocated for work.

As mentioned below, there are an increasing number of Tiwi's who now work full time at award wages for Tiwi owned and managed businesses and the recently commenced Sylvatech forestry project should ensure that over the next three years that 100 or so Tiwi's are in full time employment. These initiatives should reduce the current high unemployment rate back towards the national average.

The Tiwi Health Board is responsible for improving the health of Tiwi's on both Islands. The Board manages the operations of the Ngulu Health Centre which was originally established and run by Catholic Mission was taken over by Ngulu. Council in January 1994 and then transferred to the Board on 1 April 1998. The Health Centre Team is made up of 14 Tiwi Health Workers, three registered nurses and two resident doctors.

The operation of the Warden's Scheme falls within the Social Harmony Program and is jointly funded by the Council, Territory Health Service and the NT Living With Alcohol Program. This program has established a youth drop-in centre open during Club hours and is in the process of establishing bush camps where young people can be taught culture and hunting skills.

The main sources of Council funding are from the Commonwealth and Territory Governments. For example, the Commonwealth Government through ATSIC funds the Council's Employment Program (based on CDEP mentioned above) and the operation of community TV re-broadcasting of five Darwin TV channels (ABC, SBS, Channel 7, 8 and Imparja).

The NT Government provides Council with an Operational Subsidy (in lieu of rates normally charged by local governments) along with grants provided under the Commonwealth Government's Financial Assistance Scheme (General and Road funding).

To make up for the shortfall in government funding, Council levies charges on all adult residents at Ngulu for general services, local transport and power generation. While non Tiwi's pay Service Fees to Council for garbage collections and the maintenance of the general town amenities eg. parks and gardens, rent and power charges depends on the employing organisation.

In addition, Council raises funds by cashing cheques for community members and the conduct of several agency services on behalf of several government agencies. This allows Council to raise some \$400,000 per year in discretionary money.

Within Ngulu there are several independent businesses / organisations which employ Tiwi's and contribute to the local economy. These include BIMA (Bathurst Island Mothers Association), Tiwi Designs, NUA (previously mentioned), Tiwi Tours, the Nguiu Sporting and Social Club and the Store.

Sporting activities include a strongly supported Tiwi Island Football League (8 teams from both islands compete), men's and Women's basketball and related activities at the Sport & Recreation Centre. The Council's Sport & Recreation Program also assists old people to meet and take part in hunting/fishing activities.

The Catholic Church through Catholic Mission remains influential at Nguiu (the Mission being established in 1911). The Catholic Education Office manages both the Girls' School (Murrupurityanuwu - infants and girls primary/early secondary), and Xavier Community Education Centre (Boys' School - primary/secondary and Adult Education). Combined enrolment is 300. Both schools employ Tiwi and non-Tiwi teachers with an emphasis on bilingual education (children up to Yr 4 are only taught in Tiwi).

In 1997 Xavier CEC established a Vocational Education and Training (VET) Program for young people aged 15 -19 and will endeavour to bring them back into the classroom to provide vocational type training.

Council in conjunction with the NT Employment and Training Authority (NTETA) and the Catholic Education Office (through Xavier CEC) has established the Ngulu Training Centre to provide vocational courses. Council provided the "old" Council Office, NTETA refurbished the building and CEC is the registered training provider.

The Training Centre provides a wide range of courses including First Aid, Driver Education, Boat Handling and Introduction to Computing. These are very important in the general education of Tiwi's, though increasingly over the next few years the emphasis will turn to direct vocational training.

The Tiwi Land Council (TLC) is the legal owner of all land on the Tiwi Islands. It consists of representatives of the traditional land owners on both islands and is responsible for administering matters related to land ownership and use.

The TLC has fostered the establishment of the Tiwi Health Board. This was in response to both the Territory Governments' initiative to "pool" their funding (the Commonwealth to provide additional funds through the PBS and MBS) in establishing a Coordinated Health Care Trial. The Trial commenced on 1 January 1998 and is progressing extremely well with a greater emphasis on public health education that had been previously possible eg. the new Tiwi for Life Program commenced early in 1999.

TLC is working to establish several additional large business ventures on the Islands. To date the most successful is Tiwi Tours which conducts 1-2 day eco tours of Bathurst Island. A large scale timber plantation project commenced in late 1997 on Bathurst Island (near Ranku) though the Company hopes to develop 40,000 hectares on Melville Island over the next six years. This project could employ up to 100 Tiwi's in a few years time.

Another potentially large project is to commence with Pivot Ltd (a Victorian based farmers Co-operative) agreeing to lease the Barra Base at Port Hurd. Initially Pivot will investigate the feasibility of producing 1000 tonnes of 3 kg barramundi (fish farming) for sale to Coles / Woolworths food stores in Australia. If the trial is successful over the next three years they envisage scaling up the project to produce over 10 000 tonnes per year (employing over 200 people)

To assist in providing a trained workforce for these ventures the TLC has established a Regional Training Committee (Tiwi Islands Training and Education Board) to investigate the training needs required for each Tiwi enterprise and how to provide the required training.

In relation to appropriate dress by non Tiwi's on Bathurst Island, Tiwi dictates modest clothing. For non Tiwi women this means no short skirts, short shorts or tight body hugging clothes (the showing of thighs is frowned upon by the older Tiwi ladies). Because of the generally hot weather all year round it is recommended that only cotton clothes be worn as any other material causes you to sweat profusely. Please note that Tiwi women wear dresses while swimming so as not to reveal much of their bodies.

For non Tiwi males short shorts are not really appropriate; nor are brief swimming shorts. However, bare chests, arms are generally acceptable.

Generally casual clothes are worn with T shirts, skirts, long shorts, or trousers being the most popular outfits. BIMA Wear sells plenty of light weight cotton outfits.

At times, Nguiu township (paticularly at the Airport) is infested by small sandflies that have a nasty bite. Wearing of long sleeve shirts and long trousers to the airport using reduces the chances of being bitten. A coating of RID on exposed areas before going to the Airport is usually a very good idea.

Additional Information can be gained from:

- Nguiu Community Government Council 1997/8 Annual Report
- Teresa Ward Toward an Understanding of the Tiwi Language / Culture Context a handbook for Non Tiwi Teachers, Nguiu Literature Production Centre.
- Tiwi Island Land Council 1995/6, 1996/7 & 1997/8 Annual Reports
- Nguiu Web site at: www.nguiucouncil.nt.gov.au
- E-mail: nguiu_council@octa4.net.au

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