



Australian Government  
Office of Township Leasing

Executive Director of Township Leasing

# Annual Report 2023-24



## Acknowledgement

The Office of Township Leasing acknowledges Traditional Owners and their continuing connection to their ancestral lands, waters and communities. To all Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia we pay our respects to their Cultures, Country and Elders past, present and emerging.

The Executive Director respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culture. **Readers should be aware** that this report contains references and images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have passed.



**Australian Government**  
**Office of Township Leasing**

Senator Malarndirri McCarthy  
Minister for Indigenous Australians  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to present to you the Annual Report of the Executive Director of Township Leasing for the financial year 2023-24, for your presentation to Parliament in accordance with subsection 20R(1) of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.

Yours faithfully,

Pennie Talbot,  
Executive Director of Township Leasing,  
6 January, 2025.

# Township Leasing

The arrangements under Section 19A of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976 (ALRA)*, provide the mechanism to maintain the underlying Aboriginal land title while establishing secure, tradeable land tenure in Townships established on Aboriginal held land. This is the Township Leasing Model.

The Township Leasing Model offers certainty of tenure, the reliability of long term rental income streams and an enabling foundation for Township development. This foundation results in Traditional Owners building capability within their organisations, applying sound cultural decision making and articulating and implementing their vision and aspirations for their communities. The Model places Traditional Owners at the heart of the decision making for their traditional lands.

Residents of Townships in the Northern Territory established on land held in communal Aboriginal title have a right to experience the same opportunities, services and facilities that are available to residents in other Australian towns and cities. Secure land tenure supported through sound land administration is the foundation upon which this right can be realised.



Kardu Diminin Traditional Owners  
and Community members, Wadeye NT.



## Our Vision

Enabling choices through  
empowered partnerships.

## Our Commitment

Traditional Owners making  
decisions for their land.

## The Road Together

### Our Story of Cultural Integrity

Traditional Owners, past, present and emerging,  
are culturally responsible for managing their land.

This responsibility has not changed, despite  
the changing circumstances of history.  
The Executive Director commits to walking beside  
Traditional Owners as they continue to meet this  
cultural, social and economic responsibility.

Traditional Owners should be in control  
of decisions that affect them.

We are driven to help them succeed on  
their own terms and measures.

Our role is to deeply listen and learn from  
Traditional Owners and their communities.  
To listen to their dreams and ambitions.

Across generations.

To learn from knowledge systems past and present.

We work with Aboriginal communities to create  
an open dialogue about Township Leasing;  
what it is, what it means and how it works.

The impact of our work spans generations.

A bridge between two worlds and complex systems.

Our work is transparent and respectful, holding  
the highest regard for Aboriginal history,  
cultural practices, language and knowledge.

We work with Traditional Owners to help  
them realise their vision for their land and  
community — and we walk alongside them.

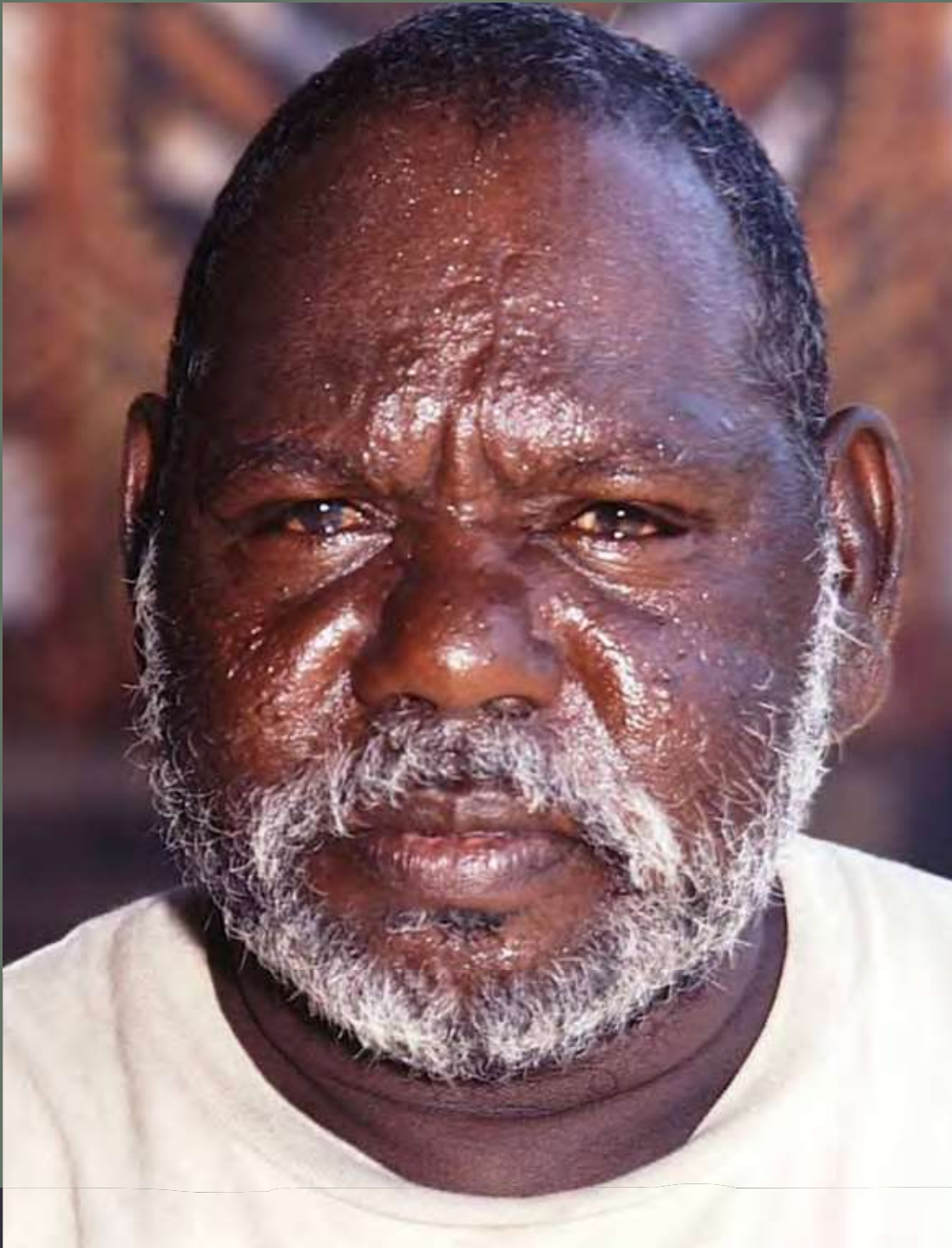
Openly sharing our resources and knowledge to  
empower choice and decision making for their land.

We cultivate and maintain partnerships  
that are sustained through generations;  
leaving a legacy for Aboriginal communities  
to thrive for generations to come.

However, we know that the journey of Township  
Leasing and land tenure administration is never  
a straight line, and we strive to ensure that every  
person, every leader in every community we work  
with — anywhere — has the tools, information  
and support they need to develop ideas and  
make decisions that have the greatest impact.

Our work will always be  
done side by side as partners  
with Traditional Owners.

We walk this road together.



“I want to empower my people by providing choices, choices that we in the bush have never had before.”

~ Walter Kerinaia, 'Grandfather of Township Leasing'

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# Executive Director Statement

Culture first, trust, partnership engagement and sharing knowledge – these are the four pillars that the work of the Office of Township Leasing (the Office) is built on.

After 17 years of implementing the Township Leasing Model, we have a deep understanding of how to work alongside our Traditional Owner partners to realise their aspirations.

This past year has seen the Office working to document this knowledge and our approach so that it becomes embedded despite the inevitable changes that the future will bring. The very nature of the way we work, listening deeply to our partners, building robust partnerships through shared respect and effective action, and demonstrating that we care about the outcomes we facilitate, creates expectations. We are proud of these expectations and even prouder to meet them now and into the future.

Township Leasing partnerships transcend the timeframes usually contemplated by standard policy and programs, easily outliving careers and inevitably incorporating the passing of aspirational leaders and key community members. To ensure they survive changing personnel and personalities, the Office is better articulating and documenting our way of working. This will assist our existing and new staff to understand how the way we engage with our partners is central to our ability to achieve outcomes. It will also help our partners by ensuring consistency and certainty.

You will notice a change in the look and feel of this year's Annual Report. This is our first step in building the fabric of the way the Office of Township Leasing delivers on the expectations of our partners. We spent the last year identifying and defining how and what we do to deliver the outcomes made possible through the Township Leasing Model. We have created a communications strategy that highlights our unique approach. This strategy will be implemented through the next reporting period and will bring changes to the way we inform our existing and potential Traditional Owner partners and other stakeholders about the Township Leasing Model and our work to bring secure tenure supported by sound land administration to the Townships we work with.

We continue to deliver on our strategic priorities; Maintain Cultural Integrity, Build Capability, Secure Tenure and Advance Economies. This year we have worked closely with the broader Tiwi Islands community on the purchase of Port Melville, a nationally significant piece of industrial infrastructure on Tiwi land that underpins the existing and future Tiwi economy. We have also seen the near completion of the Mutitjulu Business Hub, a vision of the Mutitjulu Traditional Owners that was embedded in their Township Lease. The housing upgrades at Wurankuwu (Ranku) are well advanced. When complete in late 2024, they will provide improved amenity for the Portaminni Traditional Owners and increased numbers will be able to live on their traditional lands.

Each of these projects (for more details see the body of this report) required collaboration, innovation, commitment and, in some cases, patience from all concerned. I am immensely proud of the way the Office was able to persevere, find solutions and deliver these key projects for our partners. The outcomes demonstrate the opportunity that exists for development in remote Townships on Aboriginal held land and how Traditional Owners can prepare for these opportunities through the Township Leasing Model.





View at Wurrumiyanga Tiwi Islands.

This year has also seen continued interest in the Township Leasing Model from Traditional Owners across the Northern Territory. We are committed to an exchange of knowledge with current and future partners about their choices, initially whether Township Leasing is the right solution for their community, then whether a Community Entity, or partnered transition with the Executive Director of Township Leasing (Executive Director or EDTL) is the appropriate structure for them. The Office understands that these decisions are complex and will necessarily take time. Our approach of genuine, early engagement, through patient and collaborative methods provides an environment where Traditional Owners and community members are supported to make decisions on the future use of their land.

This is demonstrated through our partnership with the Kardu Diminin clan, Traditional Owners of the land on which Wadeye is situated. We have been working with them for over three years to broaden their knowledge, appreciation and understanding of their choices with respect to their Township. This support has extended to facilitating the development of a Masterplan for Wadeye, the articulation of their story and aspirations, and frequent visits by myself and Office of Township Leasing staff (in line with our agreed strategic engagement framework) to ensure all community members understand the choices available to them.





Aerial view flying into Wadeye, NT.



Traveling through Tiwi Islands.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Minister Burney for her support throughout her term as Minister for Indigenous Australians. A highlight of this was Minister Burney's agreement to provide interim funding to keep Port Melville operational during its administration. This was crucial to keeping the Tiwi economy functioning. Importantly, funding was also provided for the Tiwi Traditional Owners to undertake the necessary due diligence to understand the future viability of the Port business. This assessment enabled Tiwi to make an informed decision regarding their potential acquisition of the business. The Minister's support has secured a vital piece of economic infrastructure for the Tiwi people, one which they can build on for jobs, growth and the further development of their forestry industry.

I look forward to working closely with Minister McCarthy during the coming period to deliver the key initiatives to continue to progress the Model. These initiatives include establishing a measurement and evaluation program for Township Leasing. The Office is eager to understand the impact we create through our work, and more importantly how to improve it. We will develop a measurement and evaluation methodology that can be applied across all aspects of the Township Leasing Model and utilised by others involved in delivering secure tenure through sound land administration.

I would like to thank all the stakeholders we have worked with throughout the year to help us deliver outcomes for Traditional Owners; the National Indigenous Australians Agency, Northern Territory Government, Land Councils, community and non-government organisations, contractors and individuals. We work within a complex ecosystem and without your support would not be able to achieve all of what we do.

My team has worked tirelessly throughout the year to build and maintain the partnerships that are the essence of the Office's work. Without their incredible skill, dedication and pure tenacity we could not deliver on the expectations that our reputation brings. Thank you all for your empathy, commitment and hard work.

Finally, I would like to thank our Traditional Owner partners for their guidance, vision, friendship and support. I especially recognise the incredible dedication and guidance provided by our senior leaders across the Northern Territory who passed this year. My Office and I pay our respects to family, friends and community. We are all poorer for their passing.

As always, the Office will continue to engage with purpose. Placing our Traditional Owner partners at the forefront of decision making for their land. Walking alongside them as they build the Townships they aspire for; Townships that create opportunity and hope for their children.

Pennie Talbot,  
Executive Director of Township Leasing.





Enjoying the sunset looking towards Wadeye  
from Airforce Hill on Karlu Diminuin Country.

# OTL By the Numbers 2023-24



19 OTL Staff **47%** were First Nations (at 30.06.24)



**4** Whole of Township Leases

**11** New subleases/underleases  
(entered into)



**67** Commonwealth Assets  
(Childcare Centres, Offices  
and Safe Houses)



**26** Housing leases across  
26 Townships

**25**

Building and  
development  
applications  
received



**17**

Alice Springs Living Area Leases  
to 15 Housing Associations



**60** OTL visits to  
Townships

**36** Township Leasing  
information sessions provided  
to Traditional Owners





# 391+

11 Consultative  
Forums Held

Over 391  
Consultative Forum  
Attendees

## \$1,917,968

Rental Revenue 2023-24

## \$1,280,425

(GST inc.) Indigenous  
Procurement Spend

## \$151,136

(GST inc.) Capital Works investment

## \$28,262,696

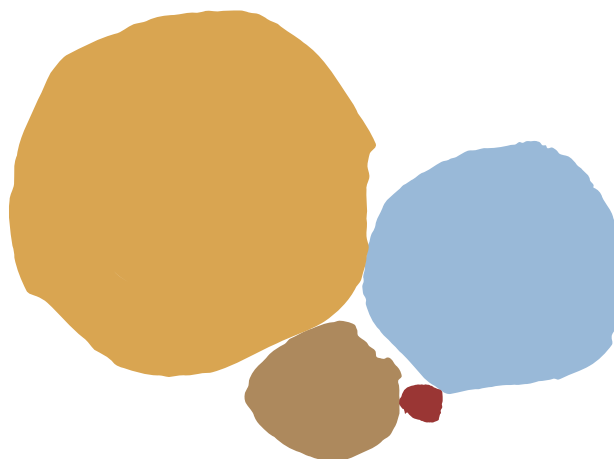
in Total Rental Revenue since 2007

## \$506,753

(GST inc.) invested in Traditional  
Owner Capability Development

### Total Rental Revenue by sector:

- 46% Northern Territory Government/  
Local Government
- 32% Business
- 17% Non-government Organisations
- 5% Commonwealth Government



# Culture First



# OTL Staff Community Trip



Bush tucker lunch cooked by the Munupi Arts Centre Team.



In September 2023, all OTL Staff participated in a week-long cultural immersion. We were hosted by our Tiwi Island partners spending a night on each of the Munupi, Wulirankuwu, Portaminni and Mantiyupwi traditional lands.

This was the first time OTL has undertaken this type of development for our staff, but it certainly won't be the last. The benefit of building relationships between the whole OTL Team and our Traditional Owner partners are already being realised with OTL staff who work away behind the scenes gaining valuable insights into how our engagement staff work and the challenges and aspirations of our partners.

The trip started with a Welcome to Country on the beach at Pirlangimpi, with a beautiful view across the Aspley Strait. From then on for the next five days, the team experienced the beauty of the Tiwi country and warmth of our partner's hospitality. A particular highlight was our evening meals shared with our partners, time to sit and share stories and get to know each other and, most memorably in Milikapiti, being interrupted by the local buffaloes!

We spent a night under the stars at a bush camp, undertook important conversations about cultural understanding next to the turquoise blue Arafura Sea, visited the exquisite Ranku waterhole for a swim and finished the visit touring the Wurrumiyanga museum to understand the ancient and more recent history of the Tiwi Islands, including their extraordinary contribution to Australian Rules Football.

A special thanks goes to the OTL Engagement team who did amazing work pulling together the itinerary and ensuring the trip went off without a hitch. An even bigger thanks for the generosity of our Tiwi Families and Partners who gave us their time, sharing their knowledge and cultural values.

The quotes from staff surrounding this story show the impact it had on them both professionally and personally. As the Office grows, we will continue to provide staff with these essential opportunities to connect deeply with our partners to promote understanding, insight and a shared perspective. Through this we will continue to build the purposeful partnerships which are the bedrock upon which we work together to achieve the aspirations of Traditional Owners.

Pictured:

1. OTL Staff enjoying lunch at Pirlangimpi.







*"I found the cultural immersion trip to Tiwi's so enriching and rewarding. I felt blessed to be learning and listening to the stories from each of the Traditional Owner groups that we visited on their land and the places we went were amazing, and I am thankful I got to experience this with my fellow work colleagues."*

– Craig Singleton,  
Asst Director Township Leasing and Engagement



2-3. OTL staff are welcomed to country by the Munupi Family.

4. Munupi Arts and the OTL Team.





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*"Having the opportunity to visit so many beautiful places, hear the stories related to them and spend time with our partners outside the everyday work environment was a real privilege. I will remember the week for a very long time. The experience has improved my ability to understand our partners perspectives and this has already changed the way I work."*

–Tom Jenkins,  
Director Strategic Reform

5-7. The OTL Team spent the afternoon at Pitirramirra with Tammy and Shane talking about cross-cultural interactions.

8. Purrampunarli (Karslake Peninsula).





9. The OTL Team gathered at Purrapunarli (Karslake Peninsula) with the Wulirankuwu Family (Milikapiti).

10. The OTL Team at Putjamirra.

11. Story telling at Purrapunarli (Karslake Peninsula).

12. The OTL Team learning about the history of the Tiwi College at Pickertaramoor.





13

13. Learning about the bush medicine and tucker around the Tarntipi Bush Camp.

14. Sitting around the campfire at Tarntipi Bush Camp.

15-17. Enjoying songs, stories and the stunning location at Tarntipi Bush Camp.



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*"It was such a special experience that has given me context and enforced how the work that I do contributes to the OTL Vision. I was enlightened in my understanding of traditional cultural practices and how these are interwoven into the work OTL does. It brought OTL staff and the Traditional Owners closer together, especially the overnight stay at Tarntipi Bush Camp."*

—Rachel Fleming,  
Asst Director Township Leasing and Engagement





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18. Visiting the heritage listed Church at Wurrumiyanga.

19. Touring the Wurrumiyanga Museum.

20-21. Screen printing at Tiwi Arts, Wurrumiyanga.

# Enabling Choice



# Traditional Owners Being Informed

The Office of Township Leasing has been approached throughout 2023-24 by several Traditional Owner organisations interested in finding out more about the Township Leasing Model. This builds on an increased level of interest across the Northern Territory over the last few years.

The Office treats all enquiries equally, engaging with Traditional Owners to understand their reasons for investigating Township Leasing and gauge the type of information and support they require to achieve their aspirations.

As in all our work, these engagements are two-way conversations, with the Office learning as much about the Traditional Owners and community as they do about the choices available to them. We understand that this early, genuine engagement is crucial to building the cultural understanding and trust needed to create the conditions for a partnership to thrive. Once established, these conditions contribute to the Office being able to have the range of difficult, complex and at times confronting conversations needed to support Traditional Owners to make decisions that can have significant

impact on future generations.

Because of the gravity of these decisions, decisions which span generations, we understand that they take time. We engage with patience and at a pace set by each Traditional Owner group individually. We do not rush but take our time to make sure our new partners, and all stakeholders, have had time to gain the knowledge and understanding they need to be confident in their decision-making process.

We understand that a Township Lease does not suit all situations and that Traditional Owner organisations are at different stages of their development and have differing capabilities. We strive to ensure the information we provide is balanced and gives both sides of the story. We do this by carefully preparing our engagement materials, facilitating

access to independent expertise, encouraging visits to Townships whose land is managed both through a Community Entity and in partnership with the EDTL, and collaborating with Land Councils and others to ensure an open and unbiased approach to information sharing.

The Wadeye case study (following page) shows the length and depth to which the Office goes to support Traditional Owners to make decisions about their land.

For Alice Springs, we work towards being a resource provider and connector, whenever the land holders need it, in order for them to achieve their long-term goals.





Kardu Diminin Traditional Owners meet with Traditional Owners from the Tiwi Islands to discuss Township Leasing, Airforce Hill, near Wadeye.

### Case Study

# Wadeye

Since 2021, when first receiving a request from the Kardu Diminin Corporation (KDC) seeking information on Township Leasing, the Office has been working in partnership with the Wadeye Traditional Owners to support them to understand their land tenure choices.

This year, following on from the previous year's work, KDC members had the opportunity to visit the Tiwi and Gunyangara (Ski Beach, Gove) to see Township Leasing at work on the ground. Based on this knowledge, consultations and the information provided by the Office, the Traditional Owners were supported to articulate their vision for Wadeye.

This included introducing KDC to some trusted collaborators who had expertise in two areas—master planning and communications. To ensure this important work was driven by the Traditional Owners, the Office facilitated the introduction, following that all arrangements and work was completed without OTL participation.

The resulting work, the creation of the Kardu Diminin story and a comprehensive master plan for Wadeye into the future has been particularly well-received by the Traditional Owners. Discussing the benefits of the work with them, they describe its importance in building confidence, helping the broader Wadeye community understand their vision and being able to present to other stakeholders how they will improve outcomes for all Wadeye residents.

This approach, where resources are made available to Traditional Owners early in the Township Leasing decision making process, has proved to be a powerful tool. Helping groups to define their vision and basing decisions upon well-considered collective ideas of Township future development gives Traditional Owners certainty about how to move forward.





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*"We got to move forward in a new direction and build this country for our people, People of Wadeye on the Kardu Diminin country"*

–Steven Pultchen,  
Traditional Owner and Elder



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1-5. Extensive consultations were held with the Kardu Diminin families and other Wadeye clan groups.



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Mr.S. Bunduck (dec), right leading  
Community Consultations, Wadeye



**Update**

# Alice Springs Living Areas

In 2020, the Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC) the representative body of the Alice Springs Town Camps Housing Associations, signed a Local Decision Making Agreement with the Northern Territory Government.

As part of this agreement was a commitment to transfer the Underleases held by the CEO Housing over 17 Alice Springs Living Areas (also known as Town Camps) to Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC). This transfer would allow the implementation of a community housing model developed by TCAC and their subsidiary Community Housing Provider, Central Australia Community Housing (CHCA) to manage housing and infrastructure on the Town Camps.

The Office of Township Leasing continues to work closely with TCAC, CHCA and the Northern Territory Government to ensure the transfer is sustainable. The transfer was originally expected to occur on 30 June 2023, however due to the complexity of funding and contractual arrangements the transfer is now expected to occur in 2025. The Office will continue to support Tangentyere to meet the aspirations of the Town Camp residents to regain control of the housing and other assets on the Town Camps within a suitably capable, culturally appropriate structure.



A Spinifex Pigeon in the Alice Springs Botanic Gardens.

# Partnership Engagement

Township Leasing Highlights 2023-24







# Tiwi Islands, Wurrumiyanga



The Mantiyupwi Traditional Owners were the first to enter a Township Lease. They continue to provide inspiration and advice to other Traditional Owners regarding the benefits of the Township Leasing Model.

They hosted a visit from the Kardu Diminin Corporation members who are considering whether the Township Leasing Model is right for their circumstances. They were joined by Maningrida and Yarralin Traditional Owners who are also considering the land tenure options available to them.

During the visit they attended the Mantiyupwi Consultative Forum meeting to experience how the group collectively makes land use decisions and see on the ground how the dreams of the Mantiyupwi elders have developed and progressed through the implementation of the Township Lease

This development continues with sublease and other development applications being progressed through the year. These included new staff (Government and Private Contractor) housing, bike track, fish trap, refurbishment of the Family and Children’s Centre, future workers camp site, Carving Shed and Aged Care Services expanding their facility.

The future needs of the community are also being considered through the expansion of the airport boundary and new terminal building. These applications and future plans were considered at a Consultative Forum where over 100 members attended. This high attendance rate is a demonstration of the level of engagement and interest in Township Leasing matters within the Mantiyupwi Traditional Owners.

**Population:**

1668

**Traditional Owner Family:**

Mantiyupwi

**Year Township Lease Signed:**

2007

**Term:**

99 Years

**Annual Rental Revenue:**

\$1,082,910

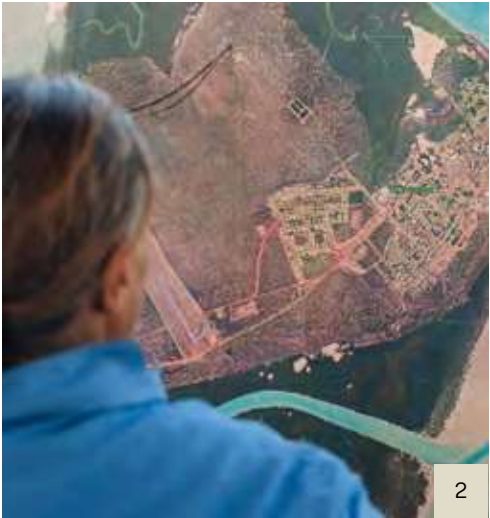
Pictured right:

Ngaruwanajirri Arts Centre, also known as The Keeping Place, Wurrumiyanga.









1-6. Mantiyupwi Consultative Forum members attending meetings at Wurrumiyanga.  
7. Sign at Wurrumiyanga.





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# Tiwi Islands, Wurankuwu (Ranku)



## Wurankuwu (Portaminni)

We continue to work closely with the Portaminni Traditional Owners to build the Ranku infrastructure that will enable residents to remain in the Township year-round. We are starting to see more residents returning to live in Ranku.

An upgrade of the existing housing and related infrastructure commenced with an expected completion date in early 2025. This work will increase the number of families able to stay in Ranku and ensure there is capacity for future expansion if required. This work has been funded with support from NIAA and the project is being managed by the Northern Territory Government. This collaboration is an example of how the Office is able to facilitate outcomes for our Traditional Owner partners.

To support the increasing numbers, the Catholic Primary School has recommenced. It was pleasing to see strong attendance in Term 2 and residents were hopeful that, weather permitting, this would continue through to the end of the year.

The OTL team has supported the Portaminni corporation with a tenure application within the Township boundary to develop a prawn farming trial site. This has significant potential to drive sustainable economic activity for the Township in the future.

A Consultative Forum was held with over 55 members in attendance. This demonstrates the level of engagement and interest by Portaminni Traditional Owners in achieving their aspirations for their Township. Over the next year, the Office will support these aspirations through enabling the development of a Masterplan for Ranku and articulating Traditional Owners vision for the future.

**Population:**  
80

**Traditional Owner Family:**  
Portaminni

**Year Township Lease Signed:**  
2011

**Term:**  
99 Years

**Annual Rental Revenue:**  
\$16,728



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1. Portaminni Consultative Forum members.
2. Inspection of the housing upgrade works at Ranku.
3. Taking a break from the Consultative Forum Meeting.





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4. Ranku Community.  
5-9. Portaminni Consultative Forum meetings.



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# Tiwi Islands, Milikapiti



## Milikapiti (Wulirankuwu)

The Wulirankuwu Traditional Owners continue to build their community-based business, demonstrating how the Township Leasing Model can drive sustainable economic outcomes in remote Northern Territory communities.

The Milikapiti Fishing Lodge, purchased by Wulirankuwu Pty Ltd two years ago, continues to go from strength to strength. It continues to provide strong returns for the Traditional Owners and is fully booked for two years in advance. This long-term sustainability has been underpinned by the sound business model developed through OTL support when the business was first acquired.

Adding to this, the Wulirankuwu Motel opened six new rooms and is taking bookings from tourists, government, contractors and other visitors providing another option for accommodation in the community and further income diversification for the Traditional

Owners. In addition, the car hire business continues to support this visitation. Not only do these businesses improve the economic outcomes for Township residents, providing jobs and income throughout the community, they also improve service delivery by creating the ability for agencies ease of access to Milikapiti.

Our everyday work of land administration continued throughout the year with applications for a range of developments including new staff (Government and commercial) housing, refurbishment of the Childcare Centre, handover to NTG of seven new sites for future houses, the police station expansion, a cyclone shelter and progress towards a new water park and oval for the community. Applications were considered by the Consultative Forum with over 30 members in attendance.

**Population:**

486

**Traditional Owner Family:**

Wulirankuwu

**Year Township Lease Signed:**

2011

**Term:**

99 Years

**Annual Rental Revenue:**

\$327,711



1



2



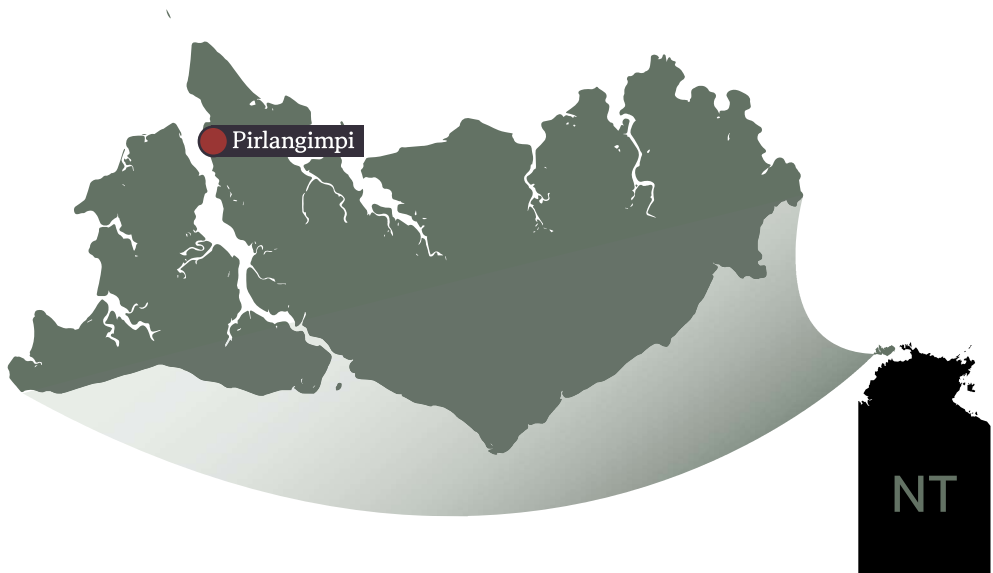
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1. Milikapiti Airport Terminal.

2-3. Wulirankuwu Family members at a Milikapiti Consultative Forum.



# Tiwi Islands, Pirlangimpi



## Pirlangimpi (Munupi)

OTL continues to work closely with the Munupi Traditional Owners to realise their aspirations for Pirlangimpi now and into the future. This includes providing support to understand the options available for economic and social investment. To do this, the Munupi Consultative Forum has established a Working Group to assess opportunities and provide advice back to the Consultative Forum to assist in decision making. OTL's Engagement Team met regularly with the Working Group through the year to discuss the range of potential businesses and social infrastructure in Pirlangimpi.

OTL business as usual continued throughout the year with our land administration role facilitating a range of applications and developments within the Pirangimpi Township. These included new staff housing (Government and commercial) such as Catholic Dioceses accommodation, the hand-over of 10 community houses in the new subdivision and subleasing of a further nine lots to NTG for future housing. We were also able to conclude a long running matter in relation to a tourism facility in the Township which should see a long-term benefit to Traditional Owners.

**Population:**  
372

**Traditional Owner Family:**  
Munupi

**Year Township Lease Signed:**  
2011

**Term:**  
99 Years

**Annual Rental Revenue:**  
\$330,543



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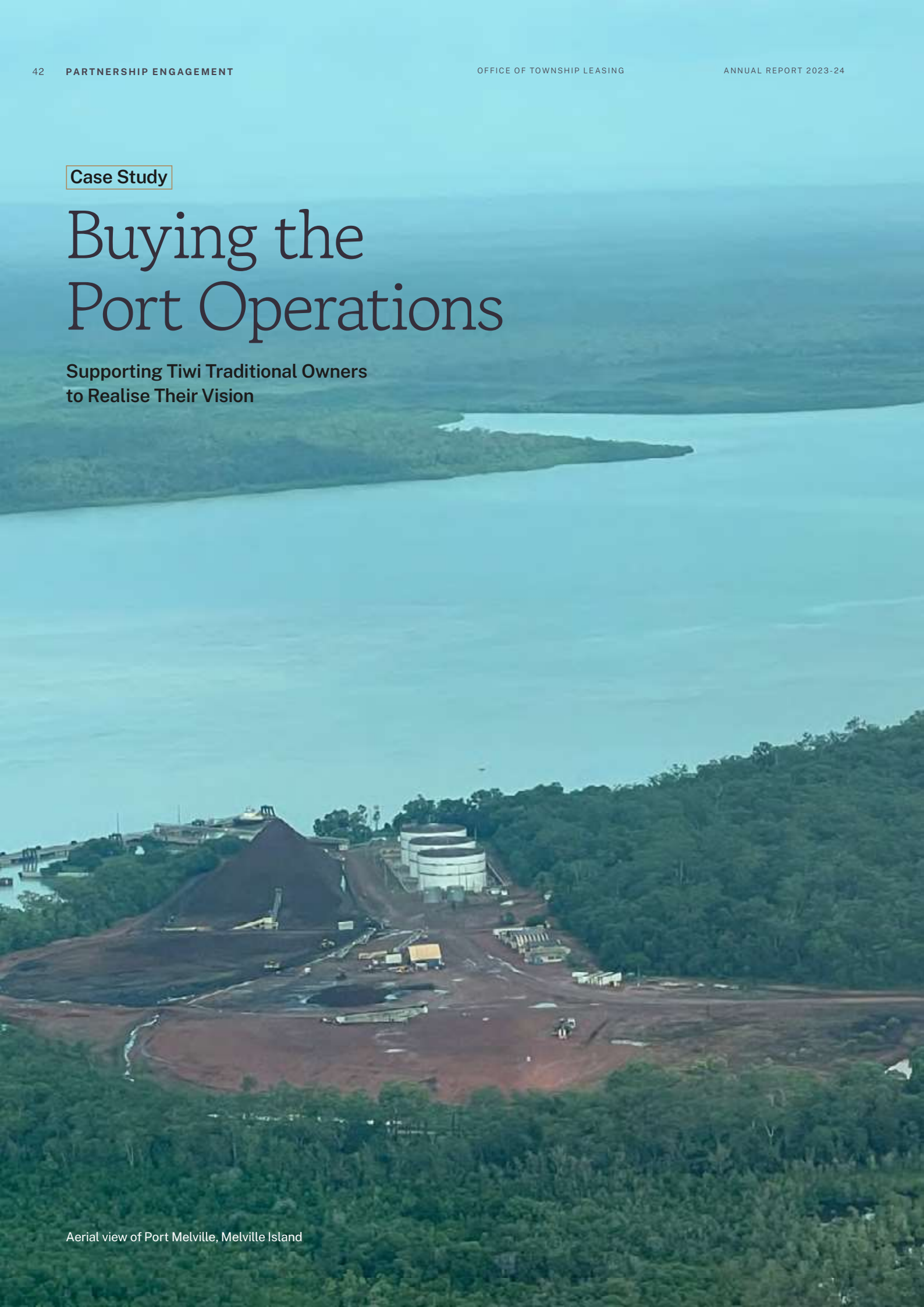
1-3. Munupi Consultative Forum Working Group members identifying potential development opportunities for their Township.




Case Study

# Buying the Port Operations

Supporting Tiwi Traditional Owners  
to Realise Their Vision



Aerial view of Port Melville, Melville Island



Port Melville is a deep-water port strategically located on the Tiwi Islands. It falls within the boundaries of the Pirlangimpi Township Lease and is subleased to Port Melville Pty Ltd, a 100% Tiwi owned business.

Initially constructed in 2013, Port Melville underwent a \$130 million expansion in 2015-16, by its then Singaporean owners, to enable the export of forestry products produced from plantations managed by the Tiwi Plantations Corporation. The facilities at the Port include a floating concrete wharf providing a 220-metre berth face capable of docking vessels up to 50,000 Deadweight Tonnage (DWT), a 110-metre floating concrete jetty supported by mooring piles and linking the wharf to the landside facilities, and a 30 million litre fuel storage and supply system.

In December 2022, the Singapore based parent company of Port operator, NT Port and Marine Pty Ltd (NTPM), was placed in administration. As a result NTPM was also placed into administration. The key role the Port plays in the viability of the Tiwi forestry operations was immediately recognised by the administrators who worked to ensure Port operations continued during administration.

In early 2023, when woodchip exports resumed after COVID, the administrators reached out to OTL seeking working capital to support Port operations. Working closely with Tiwi Plantations Corporation, the Tiwi Land Council (TLC) and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), we were able to secure funding to keep the Port operating while the sale process was undertaken. To further support operations, the Department of Defence entered into a fuel supply contract. This represented a new revenue stream for the Port and an important step in assuring the future viability of the infrastructure.

As the sale progressed, the Board of Port Melville Pty Ltd realised that they were best placed to both own and operate the Port. Following a due diligence process (also funded through OTL) which identified both a recommended purchase price and substantial diversification opportunities in the future, the Board determined to make a bid to purchase the Port operations business. It was also important to ensure the future of forestry on the Tiwi Islands.

A key piece of the puzzle to secure the ongoing operations of the Port was recognition of its strategic national importance. This was realised during a visit by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence the Hon Richard Marles accompanied by then Assistant Minister McCarthy. Their commitment to ensure the ongoing viability of the Port through an increased use of fuel storage and supply by the Australian Defence Force provided the certainty needed for the Board of Port Melville to commit to the purchase.

The finalisation of the acquisition is anticipated to occur in the first quarter of 2024-25, with funding supported through NIAA, TLC and commercial partners. This is a major step in the economic development of the Tiwi Islands, with Traditional Owners now in control of the industrial infrastructure which drives economic empowerment across the Tiwi Islands and will impact local jobs, trade and small business opportunities. The foresight by early Tiwi leaders to establish the conditions for the current generation of leaders to take these opportunities should not be understated. The next generation of Tiwi will have brighter futures because of it.

This project demonstrates a successful whole of Australian Government collaboration to secure this key asset of strategic national importance. To ensure its sustainability and underpin future growth, this collaboration is set to continue. Assuming the acquisition completes as anticipated, the OTL is committed to supporting Port Melville Pty Ltd to undertake an economic viability assessment which will inform the business's capital needs to diversify income. Following this assessment we expect to be engaging further with our Commonwealth Government colleagues to source this capital and create lasting economic empowerment for Tiwi Islanders.



# Central Australia, Mutitjulu

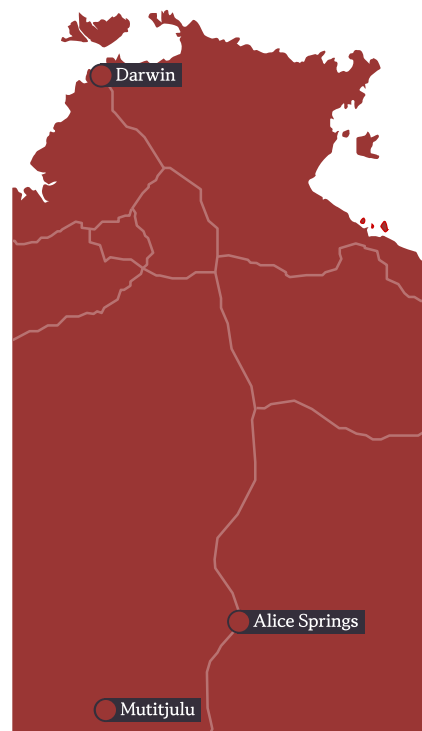
We are pleased to report that while not officially opened at the time of writing, the Mutitjulu Business Centre was near completion. The Business Centre was part of the original vision of Traditional Owners on signing the Township Lease in 2017. Mutitjulu Traditional Owners and residents recognised the lack of a dedicated office space and central hub for community activities. This meant that often important business was conducted away from the community, meaning people had to travel for business, excluding some and hampering local engagement. It was envisaged that the business hub would provide office space for the Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation and meeting space for other essential service providers.

The Mutitjulu business centre marks a transformative moment for the community. It stands as a testament to their vision, resilience and ability to overcome barriers. OTL are excited to start holding our next Consultative Forum Meeting in a space that represents the aspirations of our Traditional Owner partners.

It is equally satisfying to report progress on the of construction of new housing, which was also negotiated by the Anangu Traditional Owners as part of the original Township Lease benefits package. Working closely with National Parks and the Northern Territory Government 12 lots have been identified with construction commencing on four houses in the first tranche of works. The commencement of works is an important step towards activating the potential of the Township Lease.

The everyday work of land administration continued through the year with regular visits by the OTL engagement team. The Traditional Owners considered land development applications at Consultative Forum meetings. The future development of the community was also discussed, with a commitment to undertake Masterplanning for the Township acknowledged by OTL.

In the coming year, following the opening of the Business Centre, we will work on developing a Masterplan for the Township. We will work with our Traditional Owner partners, Central Land Council, Parks Australia and other stakeholders to build capacity and capability with the aim of transitioning the Township Lease to a community entity at some time in the future.



## Population:

348

## Traditional Owner Family:

Anangu

## Year Township Lease Signed:

2017

## Term:

67 Years

## Annual Rental Revenue:

\$161,149



View of Kata Tjuta from  
the road to Mutitjulu.





1-3. Mutitjulu Consultative Forum members hard at work.







# Executive Director Report

Year ended 30 June 2024

Subsection 20R(1) of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 provides that the Executive Director must act as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year to prepare and give to the Minister for presentation to the Parliament a report on the operations of the Executive Director for the year.

# Establishment of the Office of the Executive Director of Township Leasing

The position of the Executive Director of Township Leasing is established pursuant to section 20B of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (the Land Rights Act). The position is an independent statutory office holder that sits within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Indigenous Australians.

The Executive Director holds and administers leases on behalf of the Commonwealth in the Northern Territory. The Executive Director cannot own freehold title land. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is responsible for conducting negotiations on behalf of the Commonwealth.

On 30 September 2021, Ms Pennie Talbot was reappointed as the Executive Director of Township Leasing for a period of five years by the former Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Rtd). On 27 September 2018, Ms Pennie Talbot was previously appointed to the position of Executive Director for a term of three years by the then Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Ret'd).



Aerial view flying into Wadeye, NT.



## Office of Township Leasing

The Office of Township Leasing is the administrative Office of the Executive Director. Its primary role is to work alongside the local Consultative Forums to empower Traditional Owners to advance economic and social participation and administer leases on behalf of the Executive Director.

### Administrative Arrangements

In 2023-24, the Executive Director operated from offices in Darwin and Canberra (1 officer). The Office of Township Leasing is located in Darwin city. At the end of the reporting period the Office had 19 staff of which 47 per cent identified as First Nations.

Office of Township Leasing staff are Commonwealth public servants engaged under the Public Service Act 1999 and employed by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (the Agency). As set out in subsection 64 (4A) of the Land Rights Act, the Office is subject to separate budget provisions to the Agency and is funded by an appropriation from the Aboriginals Benefit Account.

### Township Leases held by the Executive Director 2023-24

Section 19A of the Land Rights Act allows Aboriginal Land Trusts to grant a Township Lease over a community on Aboriginal Land to the Executive Director. All current Township Leases have been signed under section 19A of the Land Rights Act, except the Township Sublease covering Mutitjulu, which is undersigned pursuant to section 20CA.

In the 2023-24 Financial Year, the Executive Director held four township leases covering five communities. See [Table A](#) for details.

## Section 19 Leases held by the Executive Director 2023-24

Under section 19(3), of the Land Rights Act (s19), an Aboriginal Land Trust may grant an estate or interest in land to the Commonwealth for any public purpose.

The Executive Director, with the approval of the Minister for Indigenous Australians, enters into s19 leases over community housing and other government assets on behalf of the Commonwealth.

See [Table B](#) for further details.

### Section 19 Housing Precinct Leases

It is current Government policy that any significant Commonwealth investment in assets located on Aboriginal Land must be secured by a long-term tenure arrangement such as a lease.

In the Northern Territory, Section 19 Housing Precinct Leases are held either directly by the Northern Territory Government or by the Executive Director on behalf of the Commonwealth. Unlike a Township Lease, a Housing Lease only covers the lots used for public housing within a community.

The Executive Director does not provide tenancy management services to communities. Where the Executive Director holds the Housing Leases, the Executive Director subleases the community housing to the Northern Territory to allow Territory Housing access to maintain and build new houses and enter into tenancy agreements with occupants. The Northern Territory Government consults with the community through Local Housing Reference Groups. See [Table B](#) for further details.

## Australian Government (Commonwealth) Asset Leases

The Executive Director has direct management of Australian Government asset leases located in the Central Land Council and Northern Land Council regions. The Office, however, also manages several other leases in the Northern Land Council region on behalf of the National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Department of Education and Training. The arrangement simplifies the administration of leases and helps to ensure that these assets are maintained.

In 2023-24 the Executive Director administered Commonwealth Asset leases that secured assets such as early childhood centres, safe houses, Government Engagement Coordinator complexes, offices and residential accommodation. See [Table C](#) for further details.

## Alice Springs Living Areas held by the Executive Director 2023-24

The Alice Springs Living Areas (also referred to as the Alice Springs Town Camps) are 17 distinct communities situated in and around the fringes of Alice Springs. Fifteen separate Housing Associations hold leases over the Town Camps they manage housing for. These leases have been issued either under the Special Purposes Leases Act (NT) or the Crown Lands Act (NT).

It has been 14 years since the Executive Director, on behalf of the Australian Government, entered into 40-year leases with the Housing Associations. The Executive Director simultaneously granted an underlease in the form of a Housing Management Agreement to the Northern Territory Government.

Under these agreements, the Northern Territory Government assumes responsibility for all areas located within the Town Camp boundary and captures all infrastructure, including housing, open spaces, roads, parks and community centres. The current Housing Management Agreements commenced on 1 July 2023 for a term of one year. Refer to [Table D](#) for further details

## Services provided by other bodies

In 2023-24 the Executive Director engaged service providers and contractors (both government and non-government) for:

- An audited trust account and rental collection services
- Repairs and maintenance
- Capital works
- Property assessments
- Surveying
- Consultative Forum Meeting support
- Master planning
- Business Feasibility services
- Office of Township Leasing database support
- Alice Springs Towns Camp housing association administration
- Infrastructure project management services
- Translation services
- Cultural awareness

During the year under review the Executive Director also engaged the following contractors:

- Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Association
- Bathurst Island Housing Authority
- Colliers International NT
- DICE Pty Ltd
- Saltwater People
- Kardu Diminin Corporation Limited
- Tiwi Training and Employment
- PWC Indigenous Consulting (PIC)
- Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation
- Port Melville Pty Ltd
- Larkin Byrne
- Tenbagsfull
- Tiwi Resources
- Tiwi Enterprises
- Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation





**Table A – Communities covered by Township Leases held by the Executive Director of Township Leasing in 2023-24**

#	Community	Location	Date of Execution	Term
1	Wurrumiyanga (Nguui)	Bathurst Island	30 August 2007	99 years
2	Milikapiti (Snake Bay)	Melville Island	22 November 2011	99 years
3	Wurankuwu (Ranku)	Bathurst Island	22 November 2011	99 years
4	Mutitjulu	Central Australia	16 March 2017	67 years
5	Pirlangimpi	Melville Island	26 June 2017	99 years
Total 5				

**Table B – S19 Housing Precinct Leases held by the Executive Director of Township Leasing in 2023-24**

#	Community	Region	Lease Start Date	NT Sublease Start Date	Tenure
1	Lajamanu	CLC	29.06.2011	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
2	Hermannsburg	CLC	29.06.2011	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
3	Yuendumu	CLC	11.04.2013	11.04.2023	Aboriginal Land
4	Areyonga	CLC	23.10.2012	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
5	Kaltukatjara	CLC	23.10.2012	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
6	Kintore	CLC	30.05.2013	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
7	Mt Liebig	CLC	23.10.2012	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
8	Nturiya	CLC	23.10.2012	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
9	Papunya	CLC	23.10.2012	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
10	Pmara Jutunta	CLC	23.10.2012	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
11	Willowra	CLC	30.05.2013	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
12	Ali Curung	CLC	01.07.2013	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
13	Nyirripi	CLC	01.07.2013	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
14	Ampilatawatja	CLC	18.07.2013	01.07.2023	Aboriginal Land
15	Imanpa	CLC	25.09.2013	01.07.2023	CLA
16	Wutunugurra	CLC	25.09.2013	01.07.2023	CLA
17	Imangara	CLC	25.09.2013	01.07.2023	CLA
18	Wilora	CLC	08.10.2013	01.07.2023	CLA
19	Tara	CLC	08.10.2013	01.07.2023	CLA
20	Titjikala	CLC	08.11.2013	01.07.2023	CLA
21	Alpurrurulam	CLC	30.04.2014	01.07.2023	CLA
22	Atitjere	CLC	18.07.2014	01.07.2023	CLA
23	Laramba	CLC	18.07.2014	01.07.2023	CLA
24	Santa Teresa	CLC	21.9.2015	01.07.2023	CLA
25	Engawala	CLC	17.06.2016	01.07.2023	CLA
26	Binjari	NLC	08.03.2017	01.07.2023	CLA
Total 26					

**Table C – Commonwealth Asset Leases Administered by the Executive Director of Township Leasing or Office of Township Leasing 2023-24**

Commonwealth asset leases held by the Executive Director – Total: 35

Government Engagement Coordinator (GEC) Complexes – Total 19					
#	Community	Lot	Region	Executed	Tenure
1	Ali Curung	248	CLC	25.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
2	Ali Curung	249	CLC	25.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
3	Areyonga	48	CLC	25.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
4	Atitjere	80	CLC	10.08.2015	CLA
5	Haasts Bluff	75	CLC	12.03.2014	Aboriginal Land
6	Lajamanu	420	CLC	01.05.2013	Aboriginal Land
7	Numbulwar	237	NLC	14.06.2018	Aboriginal Land
8	Hermannsburg	192	CLC	25.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
9	Kaltukatjara	96	CLC	25.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
10	Papunya	262	CLC	25.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
11	Yuelamu	86	CLC	25.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
12	Willowra	136	CLC	03.05.2013	Aboriginal Land
13	Mt. Liebig	43	CLC	29.10.2014	Aboriginal Land
14	Engawala	67	CLC	17.06.2015	Aboriginal Land
15	Imanpa	91	CLC	17.06.2015	CLA
16	Yuendumu	633	CLC	10.08.2015	Aboriginal Land
17	Santa Teresa	321	CLC	07.05.2016	Aboriginal Land
18	Alpururulam	169	CLC	20.01.2017	CLA
19	Gapuwiyak	159	NLC	5.02.2019	Aboriginal Land
Child Care Centres – Total 16					
#	Community	Lot	Region	Executed	Tenure
20	Yuelamu	98	CLC	03.05.2013	Aboriginal Land
21	Lajamanu	322	CLC	23.07.2012	Aboriginal Land
22	Santa Teresa	335	CLC	06.08.2013	Aboriginal Land
23	Areyonga	83	CLC	05.07.2013	Aboriginal Land
24	Kintore	128	CLC	05.07.2013	Aboriginal Land
25	Atitjere	335	CLC	18.07.2013	CLA
26	Haasts Bluff	81	CLC	05.07.2013	Aboriginal Land
27	Kaltukatjara	237	CLC	30.07.2014	Aboriginal Land
28	Mount Liebig	22	CLC	01.07.2015	Aboriginal Land
29	Nyirripi	54	CLC	16.09.2015	Aboriginal Land
30	Titjikala	13	CLC	07.05.2016	CLA
31	Laramba	93	CLC	02.06.2016	Aboriginal Land
32	Yarralin	116	NLC	25.11.2017	CLA
33	Robinson River	33	NLC	23.03.2018	Aboriginal Land
34	Ali Curung	80	CLC	14.06.2018	Aboriginal Land
35	Minyerri	71	NLC	07.09.2018	Aboriginal Land

Table C – Continued on next page



**Table C – Continued**Commonwealth asset leases administered by the Office Of Township Leasing –Total: 32

Government Engagement Coordinator (GEC) Complexes – Total 17					
#	Community	Lot	Region	Executed	Tenure
36	Bulman	81	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
37	Galiwinku	321	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
38	Gapuwiyak	171	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
39	Gunbalunya	622	NLC	26.10.2023	Aboriginal Land
40	Maningrida	700	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
41	Milingimbi	235	NLC	16.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
42	Ngukurr	409	NLC	16.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
43	Ramingining	259	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
44	Ramingining	260	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
45	Peppimenarti	54	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
46	Minyerri	92	NLC	01.07.2013	Aboriginal Land
47	Palumpa	105	NLC	16.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
48	Wugularr (Beswick)	183	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
49	Wadeye	608	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
50	Robinson River	87	NLC	01.07.2013	Aboriginal Land
51	Robinson River	89	NLC	01.07.2013	Aboriginal Land
52	Yirrkala	243	NLC	17/08/2012	Aboriginal Land
53	Maningrida	717	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
54	Ngukurr	424	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
55	Ramingining	265	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
56	Wugularr (Beswick)	188	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
57	Peppimenarti	25	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
58	Peppimenarti	91	NLC	18.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
59	Wadeye	650	NLC	18.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
60	Wadeye	375	NLC	18.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
61	Waruwi	48	NLC	21.10.2014	Aboriginal Land
62	Minjilang	Land adj to 223 and 224	NLC	17.8.2012	Aboriginal Land
63	Manyallaluk	28	NLC	17.08.2012	Aboriginal Land
64	Emu Point	7274	NLC	01.07.2013	Aboriginal Land
65	Jilkminggan	82	NLC	13.02.2014	CLA
66	Aputula	7	CLC	05.07.2012	CLA
67	Wugularr	193	NLC	15.09.2016	Aboriginal Land

**Table D – Alice Springs Living Areas (Town Camps) subleases held by the Executive Director of Township Leasing in 2023-24**

#	Housing Association	Town Camp	Tenure
1	Mpwetyerre Aboriginal Corporation	Abbotts Camp	Special Purpose lease
2	Ilparpa Aboriginal Corporation	Ilparpa	Special Purpose lease
3	Karnte Aboriginal Corporation	Karnte	Crown lease
4	Anthelk-Ewlpaye Aboriginal Corporation and Hoppys Camp	Hoppys	Special Purpose lease
5	Anthelk-Ewlpaye Aboriginal Corporation	Charles Creek	Special Purpose lease
6	Anthelk-Ewlpaye Aboriginal Corporation	Kunoth	Special Purpose lease
7	Akngwertnarre Association Incorporated	Morris Soak	Special Purpose lease
8	Anthepe Housing Association Incorporated	Drive In	Special Purpose lease
9	Aper Alwerrkng Association Incorporated and Palmers Camp	Palmers	Special Purpose lease
10	Ewyenper-Atwatye Association Incorporated	Hidden Valley	Special Purpose lease
11	Ilperle Tyathe Association Incorporated	Warlpiri	Special Purpose lease
12	Ilyperenye Association Incorporated	Old Timers	Special Purpose lease
13	Inarlenge Community Incorporated	Little Sisters	Crown lease
14	Mount Nancy Association Incorporated	Mount Nancy	Special Purpose lease
15	Mount Nancy Association Incorporated	Basso's Farm	Special Purpose lease
16	Yarrenyty Arltere Association Incorporated	Larapinta Valley	Special Purpose lease
17	Nyewente Association Incorporated	Trucking Yards	Special Purpose lease
Total 17			



# Expenditure Statement



## Expenditure Statement 2023-24

Under subsection 64(4A) of the Land Rights Act, the activities of the Executive Director are funded from the Aboriginals Benefit Account. Full financial details of the Aboriginals Benefit Account are in the financial statements of the National Indigenous Australians Agency, submitted to the Minister under subsections 63(2) and 70(2) of the Public Service Act 1999, and to the Finance Minister under section 42 of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013. The statements are subject to scrutiny through the Senate Estimates Committee process.

A summary of expenditure and revenue arising from the activities of the Executive Director of Township Leasing for the year ended 30 June 2023 are provided here (right).

The total Township Lease Revenue received is also included. This is updated annually and demonstrates the cumulative benefit secure tenure arrangements generate for Traditional Owners and their Townships.

2023-24 Expenditure	(\$ exclusive of GST)
Employee expenses	2,503,747
Travel-related expenses	578,507
Contractor Services	1,094,610
General administrative expenses	732,808
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>4,909,672</b>

2023-24 Township Lease Revenue	(\$ exclusive of GST)
Wurrumiyanga Township Lease	1,082,910
Milikapiti Township Lease	327,711
Wurankuwu Township Lease	16,728
Pirlangimpi Township Lease	330,543
Mutitjulu Township Lease	161,149
Groote Township Lease	1,073
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>1,917,968</b>

Total Township Lease Revenue (since Headlease implemented)	(\$ exclusive of GST)
Wurrumiyanga Township Lease (2007)	12,569,743
Milikapiti Township Lease (2011)	3,209,753
Wurankuwu Township Lease (2011)	182,855
Pirlangimpi Township Lease (2017)	1,968,387
Mutitjulu Township Lease (2017)	825,670
Groote Township Lease	9,506,259
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$28,262,696</b>



Gibson Farmer Illortaminni,  
Tiwi Traditional Owner.





**Executive Director of Township Leasing**  
**Annual Report 2023-24**

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