

Owen Stanley

# An Aboriginal Economy: Nguiu, Northern Territory



Australian National University North Australia Research Unit  
Monograph  
Darwin 1983

OUT OF PRINT



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## PREFACE

Dr Owen Stanley, a senior lecturer in economics at the NSW Institute of Technology, Sydney, and a graduate of the Australian National University, is a visiting fellow with the North Australian Research Unit in Darwin. His interest in the economics of Aboriginal communities is complementary to other studies of Aboriginal society in the north which are being carried out under the aegis of the Unit. Dr Stanley has recently completed papers on banking in Aboriginal communities, on the Gagudju Association and mining royalties and on Aboriginal arts and crafts at Nguiu and the market. These papers are in NARU monographs of proceedings of the 1981 and 1982 conferences of the Unit. Dr Stanley has also made a study of the economy of communities in the Daly River region which will be published at an early date. None of this work would have been possible without the cooperation of the Aborigines and the European organisations and individuals helping them; I here express the Unit's appreciation of this cooperation.

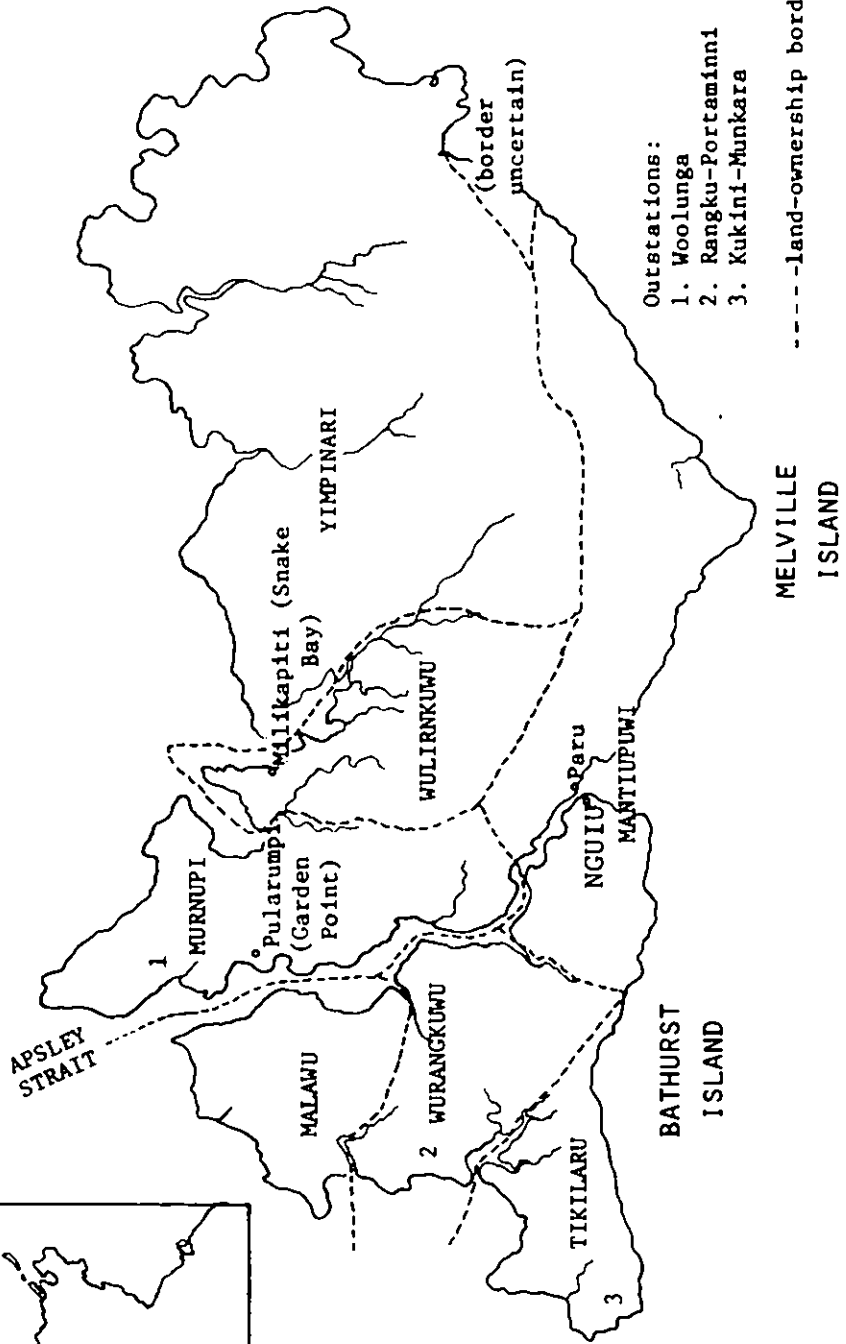
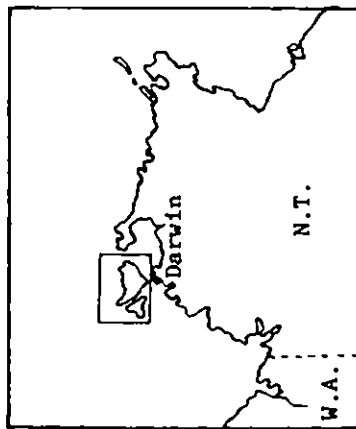
Peter Loveday

Field Director

NARU



BATHURST AND MELVILLE ISLANDS







## 1 THE TOWN

### Location and early contact

Some 60 kilometres north of Darwin are Bathurst and Melville Islands which, together with smaller surrounding islands, form the homelands of the Tiwi people. The Tiwi have a substantially uniform language and culture, distinct from those of other Aboriginal groups. Bathurst Island is 2,071 square kilometres and Melville Island is 5,697 square kilometres. The former is the more important economically and in terms of the history of European contact with the Tiwi. The map of the two islands which follows shows its towns and outstations, and the seven 'countries' into which the Tiwi divide their islands.

Asian sailors probably had contact with the islands in very early times although there is no recorded evidence of it. The first recorded contact was made by Dutch explorers in the early part of the seventeenth century who did not realize that there were two islands formed by Apsley Strait and called the land mass as they perceived it, Van Diemensland. In the eighteenth century M. van Delft charted the west, north and east coasts of the islands but again did not recognize that there were two islands. It is probable that the Portuguese obtained slaves from the islands in the eighteenth century. Malays sought trepang (although it was less common in the islands' waters than in other parts of north Australia) in the nineteenth century.

The French explored the islands in 1802 and then Philip Parker King followed for the British in 1818. King gave the islands their present names. The British established a fort near Pularumpi (Garden Point) called Fort Dundas in 1824. This was the first European settlement in northern Australia. The fort was constantly troubled by disease, poor supplies, robbery and murders by Tiwi and was abandoned in 1829. The British had imported buffalo from Timor for beef and released them when they left. These quickly multiplied and attracted the next European invader.

In 1894 Joe Cooper and his brother arrived on Melville Island to hunt buffalo. Shortly after their arrival the brother was killed and Joe was wounded by Tiwi attackers. Joe left but returned in 1900 and established a successful buffalo business at Paru, employing many Tiwi hunters. Cooper's camp became a safe place for European visitors and numerous European contacts followed, including a visit by Father Gsell M.S.C., in 1910. Father Gsell returned to begin a mission at Nguiu, across the Apsley Strait from Paru, in 1911. A school was established in 1912 and it quickly became very popular with the Tiwi.

By 1915 the buffalo had been largely shot out and Cooper began to log the cyprus pine which grew in the northern part of Melville Island. He established three timber mills which employed many Tiwi. Later fighting broke out because Cooper's workers took other men's wives and several men were killed. The government ordered Cooper and his workers to leave. Eventually, Joe Cooper and a party of about 60 people, being his workers and their families, travelled to Darwin in seventeen canoes.

By 1890 Malay visits had ceased but Japanese pearlers were working the islands' coasts. They traded with the Tiwi and employed some of them. In 1937 the government established a settlement at Pularumpi to counteract the trade with the Japanese which was leading to a number of mixed blood Tiwi. A settlement was established at Milikapiti (Snake Bay) during World War II as an army and navy base and Tiwi were employed on patrol and other activities. At the end of the War Milikapiti became a Government settlement for Tiwi.

Meanwhile the mission at Nguiu continued to develop and to attract more and more of the people of Bathurst Island as a place to live. The school had remained popular, medical care of varying degrees of professionalism had been provided since 1911, the people had been protected from many of the worst aspects of European influence, farming of various types had been undertaken since 1932, and some housing had been provided. The concentration of productive activity in Nguiu has continued and these facilities and sources of income have resulted in almost everyone on Bathurst Island living at Nguiu,

other than at holiday times. Two small outstations have been established recently and this may herald a limited move back to homelands.

The rest of this monograph is concerned with a description and analysis of the economy of Nguiu as it was in 1981. Nguiu is an interesting example of economic development in an Aboriginal community for a number of reasons:

- it is not subject to the strong cultural divisions which cause problems of consensus in some Aboriginal communities;
- it is almost entirely an urban community;
- local government, production and servicing institutions are old and well developed by comparison with most Aboriginal communities;
- it is close to Darwin.

#### Population and employment

The estimated population of Bathurst Island in December 1981 is shown in Table 1.

All the Europeans at Nguiu worked for the mission, schools, hospitals or Nguiu enterprises or were dependants of those who did.

Table 2 shows the employment of the Nguiu population; more detail will be provided later.

Table 1

<u>Bathurst Island Population</u>						
	Under 1 year	1-4 years	5-14 years	15 years and over	Tiwi Females aged 15-44 years	TOTALS
Tiwi	26	123	320	613	295	1082
European	2	8	9	65	-	84

Source: Nguiu Hospital Records

Table 2

	Tiwi	European		Total
		Religious	Lay	
Full-time employment	190	14	44	248
Part-time employment	11	-	1	12
Pensions*:				
Aged	38	-	-	38
Invalids	39	-	-	39
Widow's	36	-	-	36
Supp. Parent's	25	-	-	25
Wife's	10	-	-	10
UB & SB	50	-	-	50

\*Supp. means supporting; UB means unemployment benefit, SB means sickness benefit.



## Nguiu

Almost all people who live on Bathurst Island reside in the town of Nguiu. It is a large country town similar to that of a European Australian town of comparable population except that it is less tidy than some and the building and housing stocks are of poor quality. The layout of Nguiu is shown on the preceding page. The buildings in the town when classified by function (not ownership) are:

Religious:	Church Presbytery Convent
Community and Service:	Town Hall and Council Office Hospital Children's Clinic Boys' School Girls' School Museum (under construction) Store Nguiu Ullintjinni Club ('Beer Club') Service Block: Post Office, Bank Agency, Airline Agency, Ullintjinni Office Restaurant Police Station Power House Fish Shop
Workshops:	Housing Association Bima Wear Tiwi Design Tiwi Pottery Tiwi Pima Art Store Bakery Garage Carpentry Shop (Mission) Fishing Sheds
Accommodation:	Visitors' Block (Mission), four units Single Men's Accommodation Single Women's Accommodation Houses of various ages and styles: 150 total

Many of these buildings were originally owned by the Mission and had been transferred to the Tiwi organizations performing the relevant functions. Electricity, water and sewerage are provided to all substantial buildings including houses. Electricity is generated by three diesel powered generators, water comes from six bores with electric pumps some eight miles from town and there are three sewage treatment ponds. A new water tank was under construction in 1981. There are no bitumen roads although their construction is planned for the near future.

## Outstations

The outstation movement has had little effect on the Tiwi Islands. There are four likely reasons for this:

- Tiwi people are relatively harmonious by comparison with some other Aboriginal groups;
- there have not been major disputes over land ownership
- parts of the island have not become much more economically valuable than others because of tourism or the discovery of minerals or other resources and
- the Tiwi had not had to go through the legal investigation of land ownership to establish their land claims in the fashion required of non-reserve Aborigines under the Land Rights Act.

Nevertheless there are three embryo outstations settled by people whose forebears came from the areas in which they were created. Their main motives seem to be to protect their land and to find a quieter and more traditional lifestyle than can be lived in the town. These outstations may be described briefly.

#### Kukini - Munkara (Cape Fourcroy)

About fourteen people live there permanently. Most of these are adults. Their children are left with relatives at Nguiu during the school year but return to Kukini during weekends and holidays. The people live largely off bush tucker (much of it seafood) and all purchases and medical care are obtained in Nguiu. Kukini has no houses or facilities and people live in shelters. They spend much of the wet season in Nguiu where they are better protected from the weather. A Toyota Land-Cruiser is usually located at the site.

#### Rangku - Portaminni (near Wangiti Beach)

About eleven people live there permanently, most of them adults. Children are sent to Nguiu which is the service point as for Kukini. Bush tucker is an important part of their diet. A Toyota Land-Cruiser is usually located at the outstation.

#### Woolunga (Melville Island)

Normally only two people live there although many people visit it for hunting on holidays.

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) has made grants for water supply facilities at Kukini and Rangku. It is intended that these outstations be solar powered.

#### Paru

A small number of old people live at Paru across the Apsley Strait from Nguiu. These people travel by dinghy to Nguiu daily for shopping, to attend the beer club and to attend social and political functions. Paru is integrated into Nguiu and is treated as part of Nguiu rather than an outstation in later discussions.

## Organisations

Organisations on Bathurst Island fall into four groups: infrastructure institutions, independent enterprises, enterprises under the Ullintjinni Association, and a non-Tiwi enterprise operated from Darwin. This last enterprise, Tiwi Tours, brings tourists to Bathurst and Melville Islands twice weekly. They are shown Nguiu and its enterprises and are given an opportunity to buy Tiwi products. Tiwi Tour operators do not pay royalties to Nguiu but the art and craft enterprises benefit from the visiting tourists.

Below is a list of the organisations to be found on Bathurst Island and detailed descriptions will follow:

Infrastructure Institutions:	Mission Schools Hospital Nguiu Council Tiwi Land Council Housing Association Police Station Employment Office
Independent Enterprises:	Bima Wear Tiwi Design Tiwi Pottery Tiwi Pima Art Nguiu Club
Ullintjinni Association Enterprises:	Store Bakery Fish Trading Garage Gardening and Poultry Restaurant Bank Agency Post Office Airline Booking Agency
Non-Tiwi Darwin-Based:	Tiwi Tours

Table 3 summarises the essential revenue and expenditure items for each of these organisations. For the year 1980-81 part (a) of the table gives the income from main sources, as a percentage of total income for the organisation. Part (b) shows the percentage of revenue which has been absorbed by costs of various types. The last column shows profit earned as a percentage of total revenue or loss as a percentage of total revenue where the number is enclosed by brackets. Comments will be made about these revenue and cost items later.

Table 3

Revenue and Expenditure Items as a Percentage of Total Revenue

## a. revenue, per cent

	(a) Govt Grants	(b) NEATS <sup>1</sup>	(a)+(b) Total Operating Subsidies	Sales, Contract Income	Rent, Charges for Services	Other
<u>Infrastructure</u>						
<u>Institutions</u>						
Mission	48.7 <sup>2</sup>	-	48.7	-	51.3	-
Schools	100.0 <sup>3</sup>	-	100.0	-	-	-
Hospital	100.0 <sup>3</sup>	-	100.0	-	-	-
Council	75.8	0.7	76.5	14.2	7.3	2.0
Tiwi Land Council	-	-	-	-	-	100.0
Housing Assocn	76.6	0.6	77.2	10.7	10.7	1.4
Police	100.0	-	100.0	-	-	-
Subtotal	-	-	85.2	-	-	-
<u>Enterprises</u>						
Bima Wear	17.8	9.4	27.2	72.5	-	0.3
Tiwi Design	27.3	6.7	34.0	66.0	-	-
Tiwi Pottery	57.7	3.2	60.9	39.1	-	-
Tiwi Pima	38.5	3.1	41.6	58.4	-	-
Subtotal	-	-	36.1	-	-	-
Beer Club	-	-	-	97.7	-	2.3
<u>Ullintjinni Association</u>						
Store	-	0.5	0.5	99.5	-	-
Bakery	-	0.6	0.6	99.3	-	0.1
Fish Trading	57.9	-	57.9	42.1	-	-
Garage	-	-	-	100.0	-	-
Garden	72.2	1.3	73.5	26.5	-	-
Poultry	-	-	-	100.0	-	-
Restaurant	-	-	-	100.0	-	-
Admin. Centre	-	-	-	-	82.1	17.9
TOTAL	-	-	3.6	-	-	-

## Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>NEATS means National Employment and Training Scheme.<sup>2</sup>Estimated contribution by Catholic Missions.<sup>3</sup>The Mission and Government contributed to the running of the schools and hospital.





## 2 INFRASTRUCTURE INSTITUTIONS

### Mission

Father Francis Xavier Gsell arrived on Bathurst Island to establish the mission on June 8, 1911. During 1910 the government had offered for sale grazing leases which covered a large part of Bathurst Island but none of them were taken up. Father Gsell obtained a lease and the government's assurance that Bathurst Island would become an Aboriginal reserve. He then selected a site for the Mission which he thought was neutral in terms of Aboriginal ownership.

He arrived with a prefabricated cottage but soon began a substantial building programme with the aid of local Tiwi. In a few years they had built a well, presbytery, church, school, convent and numerous other buildings. In 1912 another priest, two religious sisters and seven part-Aborigines arrived from Darwin and the school was established. At this stage there were no 'handouts': everything had to be earned. This remained an important principle in the subsequent development of Nguiu. The commercial approach extended to Father Gsell's attack on polygamy. The Tiwi typically promised their female children before birth and one man could have more than one wife. Fr Gsell offered to 'buy' all female children for \$4 worth of goods. Then when the girls were of marriageable age, the Mission encouraged the girls to choose husbands who agreed to be monogamous. This scheme was successful.

Much of the Mission activity after the Second World War had been directed to making Nguiu an economically independent community. Administrative changes introduced by the Whitlam government in the 1970s were designed to give Aborigines a high degree of local selfgovernment and Tiwi obtained control in most areas. But a strong mission influence has remained. Money was introduced to the Tiwi in 1951 when wages were set at 2/- plus keep per week. The canteen sold tobacco and other 'luxury' items. When pensions and child endowment were granted to Aborigines the cheques were paid directly to the Mission which converted them to goods and distributed the goods to those entitled. Wages remained very low and in 1969 they were \$4.50 per week for Tiwi. In August 1969 a major increase occurred when the government introduced the Training Allowance Scheme which resulted in men being paid \$25 to \$36 per week and women being paid \$19 to \$27 per week depending on skills and nature of the work.

Until 1970 the Mission ran all important economic activities but since then the Mission's functions have become simplified as other (Tiwi controlled) organisations have developed to carry out many roles previously performed by the Mission. Its main functions are now the provision of religious and other support and guidance, the running of the schools and hospital and the provision of some housing. Table 4 shows the number of European staff employed at Nguiu for selected years from 1936. It can be seen that while the trend has been for increases in the number of Europeans, the most recent figure represents a decline, reflecting attempts to involve more Tiwi in the organisations.

In January 1982 the religious staff and those associated with the mission numbered twenty-two as shown in table 5. There are no Aboriginal religious staff although there had been some Aboriginal nuns from Port Keats in the past. The following is an outline of the functions of the mission staff.

The priest is the religious leader at Nguiu but he also performs many other functions. He is the Community Adviser, he sits on the Nguiu Council and the Housing Association and he is the manager of the Tiwi Land Council.

Three Brothers teach in the Boys' School, one Brother does general work, mainly at the school, and there are two semi-retired Brothers who work in the community generally. One of the semi-retired Brothers is an important amateur mission historian and the other assisted in Council roadworks.

Table 4

	<u>European Staff: Nguiu<sup>1</sup></u>					
	1936	1958	1962	1969	1978	1982
Priests	2	2	2	2	2	1
Brothers	2	5	5	4	5	6
Sisters	3	4	3	6	9	7
Other European	1	2	5	15	63	45
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>59</b>

<sup>1</sup>Figures for 1982 were obtained on fieldwork in January 1982  
 All other figures were taken from Sue Crawford: *Spears to Crosses* ANU PhD Thesis, 1978, page 27

Three Sisters teach in the Girls' School, two are nurses in the hospital and one Sister manages Bima Wear. One Sister does diverse jobs including the running of the Home Domestication Course for the Housing Association.

A number of lay Europeans work for the hospital and schools and these will be discussed separately. There are, however, two lay European carpenters who work directly for the Mission.

Two Tiwi women are employed as cleaners on church buildings and one woman works on Department of Social Security (DSS) problems and as a clerical assistant for the Tiwi Land Council. In addition, three young Tiwi men work for the Mission's carpentry shop.

#### Carpentry Shop

The Church owns a carpentry shop which does some work for the Council, maintains and renovates Church buildings and sells a small number of tables, stools, cupboards and coffins. It employs two European carpenters and three young Tiwi who it is hoped will be apprenticed in the near future. Wages are split between the Council and Church with the Council paying the Tiwis' wages and the Church paying the Europeans' wages.

Table 5

'Mission' Employment in January 1982

	Number
Priest	1
Teaching Brothers <sup>1</sup>	3
Other Brothers	3
Teaching Sisters <sup>1</sup>	3
Nursing Sisters <sup>2</sup>	2
Other Sisters	2
<hr/>	
Total religious staff at Nguiu	14
Lay European Men	2
Tiwi Women <sup>3</sup>	3
Tiwi Men <sup>4</sup>	3
<hr/>	
Total employed	22

<sup>1</sup> Salaries were paid by the Department of Education

<sup>2</sup> Salaries were paid by the Department of Health

<sup>3</sup> Two women had their wages paid by the Council

<sup>4</sup> Wages were paid by the Council

## Mission Houses

The Mission owns a total of 39 houses of the following styles:

Table 6

### Mission Housing Stock

Name	Description	Number
Sigal	Resembling two small steel demountable houses joined by an open verandah	37
Margaret Mary	A concrete block house with a large breeze-way. Experimental	1
Log Cabin	A small conventional-style house built of logs from Tiwi Treated Timber. Experimental	1
		<hr/> 39

All of these houses are being bought by their occupants and 'repayments' are \$15 per week. However, there is a fear that the occupants will lack the resources to maintain their houses properly when privately owned and it has been suggested that the Housing Association take over the Mission houses. The Association would then let the houses to the Tiwi and ensure proper maintenance.

## Schools

The school was established in 1912 and has always had high acceptance among the Tiwi. It now has two parts, a boys' school and a girls' school, which are reasonably well equipped for educational and sporting purposes. Apart from numerous classroom buildings there are two basketball courts, a handball court, trampolines, gym equipment and a large open area for games. This latter area is used by children after school under informal supervision. After school, weekend and holiday activities are organised and these include sailing, fishing, hunting and camping. The schools also arrange visits to distant parts of Australia.

The 'user pays' principle is applied to all non-scholastic activities at the school. The children's parents bear the costs of trips and also pay for the children's lunches. The school has a desk outside the bank agency on days when family allowances are received and people are encouraged to pay for lunches from those allowances. In January 1982 the total amount outstanding for lunches was \$2050. Steps have been taken to ensure payment of debts.

Education is bi-lingual and the schools employ many Tiwi in the preparation and presentation of Tiwi material. A summary of employment in the schools is provided in Table 7. Teaching Brothers and Sisters have had a lower turnover than lay teachers. Student numbers are provided in Table 8. Attendance rates are very high and informal observation suggests that the schools have a very high acceptance in the community. Much of this comes from the strong Tiwi studies component in the education structure.

St Teresa Girls' School: This school organises the pre-school, enrolls girls from Grade 1 to Grade 10 and boys from Grade 1 to Grade 5. Most teaching of Tiwi language and culture takes place in Grades 1 to 5.

Xavier Boys' School: The boys' school is run by the Christian Brothers with the aid of four lay teachers and five teaching assistants. The schooling is a mixture of academic studies, manual trades training and some Tiwi studies. The Tiwi studies include literacy, culture studies and traditional wood carving.

#### School Finances

Catholic Missions and the Northern Territory Department of Education both contribute to the running of the schools. The Department of Education reimburses Catholic Missions for all wages and salaries for teachers and teachers' assistants, pays operational costs and contributes on a dollar-for-dollar basis for the purchase of various school equipment. The ten full time literacy workers are paid from a Commonwealth Government Study Grant and four part time literacy workers are paid from a grant from the NT Department of Education. Most of the purchasing outlays represent imports from the mainland. There are no school fees and so income from local sources is very minor.

Table 7

#### Employment in Schools during 1981 School Year

	<u>Teachers</u>				<u>Teaching Assts</u>				<u>All Tiwi</u>				TOTAL			
	European		Tiwi		European		Tiwi		Literacy Workers	Clerical	Clnrs	Gar- deners				
	Relig.	Lay	M	F	Relig.	M	F	M						F	M	
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	F	F	M				
<u>Schools</u>																
<u>St Teresa</u>																
<u>(co-ed.)</u>																
F/T	-	3	4	9	-	2	-	-	4	4	4	6	1	2	1	40
P/T	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	1	3	-	-	-	10
<u>Xavier</u>																
<u>(boys)</u>																
F/T	3	-	2	2	-	-	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	3 <sup>1</sup>	1 <sup>2</sup>	16
P/T	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
<u>Totals:</u>																
F/T	3	3	6	11	-	2	1	-	8	4	4	6	1	5	2	56
P/T	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	1	3	1	-	-	11

<sup>1</sup>One cleaner was paid by the Council

<sup>2</sup>Paid by the Council

F/T means full time; P/T means part time

Table 8  
Student Enrolments, Tiwi and European, February 1981

	Pre-School	Primary	Secondary	St Teresa Totals	Xavier	Totals
Boys	20	88	-	108	76	184
Girls	18	127	43	188	-	188
Totals	38	215	43	296	76	372

#### Hospital

Fr Geell provided some medical care from his first arrival at Nguiu. However, Sister Gabriella, who arrived in 1938, was the first qualified person to do so.

There is now a large hospital at Nguiu. A doctor visits the hospital from Darwin every two weeks and patients are evacuated in cases of serious illnesses. Table 9 shows employment at the hospital.

Table 9  
Hospital Employment during January 1982

Nursing Sisters (religious)	2
Lay Female European Sisters	2
Tiwi Male Health Workers	3
Tiwi Female Health Workers	8
Tiwi Female Clerical Worker	1
Tiwi Female Cleaners	2
Tiwi Male Gardener <sup>1</sup>	1

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<sup>1</sup> Wages paid by Council

Tiwi Health Workers, rather than European staff, are used to dispense treatment wherever possible. Europeans tended to obtain health treatment in Darwin rather than at the hospital. For the month of December 1981 hospital records showed the following: nineteen pregnant women at Nguiu, forty-five adults admitted, and twenty-eight people evacuated to Darwin. There were thirty-three registered leprosy cases of which eight were active and receiving treatment, and there were fifteen TB cases of which four were active and receiving treatment. All of the leprosy and TB patients were Tiwi. Respiratory diseases were the most common diseases for people of all ages and minor cuts, boils, burns and ear infections were common. The store carried a range of health related products such as cough mixture, headache tablets, dressings, vitamin C enriched foods, low calorie drinks and sweeteners.

The hospital also runs a Baby Health clinic located near the more populated part of town which is used mainly for the treatment of mothers and babies.

The Department of Health reimburses Catholic Missions for most of the cost of running the health service. The Department's support is in the form of Grant-in-Aid in the following areas: operational costs, repairs and maintenance, capital equipment and buildings. The details of the allocation are determined by Catholic Missions.

#### Nguiu Council

The development of the Council began with the formation of the 'Tribal Council' in 1961. Its formation was encouraged by the Mission but there was no effective local government until the formation of the Village Council in August 1971. This led to the formation of the Town Council in 1973. Nguiu Council is now often described as Nguiu Shire Council although it is not a shire. The name is a reminder from the past that it was once hoped the two islands would become a shire. In October 1980 it applied for status as a Community Government Council and if this is granted it will have more independence than at present. Every Tiwi on Bathurst Island over 18 years of age is eligible to vote for the Council in secret ballots which are held every August.

Tiwi have four skin groups and Table 10 lists their totems.

Table 10

#### Tiwi Skin Groups

Skin One	Skin Two	Skin Three	Skin Four
Mullet	A bush fly	Pandanus	A special stone
Ironwood(two of)	Woolybutt flower	Flying fox	found at Partuwapura
Mosquito female	Red ochre	White cockatoo	Stone
Mosquito male	Stingray	House fly	Stone found at
Jabiru(two of)	Mud	Bamboo	Parmilinguwaliyi
Crocodile	Fire		Wren
	Sun(two of)		March fly
	Red flowering		Bloodwood
	swamp grass or		
	weed		

#### Source:

J.Pye: *The Tiwi Islands* (Bathurst Island Mission, N.T. 1977) pages 16,17



Each skin group elects four council members (making sixteen councillors in all). A President is elected in addition to the councillors and this position is usually rotated between the skin groups annually. The President also becomes the Assistant Community Adviser. The priest also sits on the Council as Community Adviser. The Council is the most representative of organisations at Nguu and consequently possesses influence beyond its formal functions. The President, for instance, is often called upon to help settle disputes over non-council matters. The Town Hall serves as a meeting place and a place for entertainment and on any day there are usually a large number of men and women (separately) playing cards. In addition to the usual functions associated with such a body the Council regulates entry to Nguu and controls imports of alcohol.

The Council installs and runs all essential services at Nguu such as power, water, sewerage, hygiene, parks and gardens and roadworks. Power, water and sewerage are installed in all substantial buildings (including houses). Householders pay \$5 per week for these services. The Council bids for and sometimes wins government contracts for construction and maintenance on the Island. It has adequate plant for its functions, including nine landcruisers, cars and utilities, three trucks and one bus, eight tractors and one each of a grader, roller, barge, loader and a 12 foot boat. The boat is used to ferry people to and from Paru. However there are two problems associated with the effective use of the plant. Firstly, at any one time a high proportion of the plant has been out of use because of damage. In 1981, up to half of the plant was unusable and a grader needed repairs in Darwin costing \$29,000. Secondly, Tiwi drivers were inclined to use Council vehicles for their own purposes including pleasure-drives, hunting or giving friends and relatives lifts when they should have been engaged in Council business. The Council had its own vehicular service facilities but sometimes had work done by the same garage. It engages in no enterprises other than those already mentioned.

A summary of Council employment is provided in Table 11. Workers employed by other organisations but whose wages are paid by the Council are not included. The semi-skilled and unskilled workers shown were employed on roads, vehicle maintenance, town beautification and electrical and plumbing work. All Council employees worked a 30-hour week and received four weeks annual leave in July for 'bush holidays'. Tiwi wages were low, about \$3.50 per hour.

Table 11

Council Employment during January 1982

	Lay European		Tiwi		Totals	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Town Clerk	1	-	-	-	1	-
Office Staff	-	1	-	2	-	3
Electricians	2	-	-	-	2	-
Plumbers	2	-	-	-	2	-
Mechanics	1	-	-	-	1	-
Apprentices	-	-	6	-	6	-
Semi and Unskilled Workers	-	-	35	2	35	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>5</b>

The Council has problems retaining a Clerk. There had been four clerks in the previous five years and there was a period of seven months up to October 1981 when there was no clerk. The priest and various other Europeans acted in the position for short intervals and for specific tasks.

In mid-January 1982 the Clerk declared that he intended to stay for at least another two years. One week later he resigned and returned to Adelaide. He felt he had to contend with two problems at Nguiu which Europeans often experience in similar communities: difficulty in controlling employees and in getting schooling for their children. The Clerk felt he was being judged as if he were Clerk of a Council with European workers and the low productivity of Tiwi labour and Council plant created great frustrations for him.

One of his children attended the local school where, he said, the boy spent 'all his time' on Tiwi studies. In an attempt to improve his son's education his wife began teaching the son at home. This created family tensions and his wife and children left for Adelaide in mid-January 1982. He left one week later.

Some comments can be made about the finances of the Council. Although it is dependent on government subsidies for about 76 per cent of its gross revenue it is not the only highly dependent council in the Northern Territory. Subsidy rates for some other councils, all of them in predominantly white towns, were: Darwin 44 per cent; Katherine 45 per cent; Tennant Creek 77 per cent and Alice Springs 37 per cent. Contract work by the Council is important for its finances and was regularly sought by the Council. Sometimes the work was subcontracted to other Tiwi organisations such as the Housing Association.

Wages are the major expenditure, amounting to 58 per cent of gross revenue. Apart from wages, contracting expenditure and depreciation, all other items are imported from Darwin.

The Council experienced a substantial deficit in 1980-81 and this was much larger than the two previous years. Apart from general increases in costs while government subsidies remain constant, the main reason for the increased deficit was an increase in the fuel bill for the power house. The nature of government subsidies changed between 1979-80 and 1980-81 and the real value of government grants fell. The government argued that the Council was paying wages for workers who should be paid by other organisations. So gardeners for the hospital and schools were transferred to health and school departments payrolls, the Bima Wear gardener became paid by that organisation and a woman who is a clerical assistant for the Tiwi Land Council and works on Department of Social Security (DSS) problems was transferred to the Tiwi Land Council payroll. In addition, the Council sacked some workers and reduced the working week for those working forty hours to thirty hours.

#### Tiwi Land Council

Before 1978 the Tiwi on Bathurst and Melville Islands were represented by the Northern Land Council in matters covered by the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, 1976. In that year, however, the Tiwi Land Council (TLC) was formed to represent all Tiwi. The basis of the TLC structure is the Aboriginal Land Trust which holds the title to the two islands. The Trust is composed of one principal land owner from each of the seven tribal lands shown on the map of the islands. Each of these principal land owners nominates five people to act on his behalf. The current council presidents from each of the three Tiwi towns are added bringing the numbers on the TLC to 38.

The TLC has a small executive but it is unimportant to its operations. The executive has met only about twice in the previous four years. Ad hoc committees are formed from time to time to undertake specific tasks such as meetings with the Northern Land Council. It has a manager (the priest) and employs a Tiwi clerical assistant. The clerical

assistant spends much of her time assisting the community with DSS problems. The full TLC meets on the first Wednesday of every fourth month and most business is discussed by meetings of all members.

The TLC operates as a clearing-house for grants received under the act. The act requires that money must be distributed to incorporated Aboriginal organisations and must be done so within six months of receipt. All money received comes from royalties from mining projects elsewhere in the NT. The TLC shares in the 40 per cent of royalties allocated to Northern Territory land councils on a per capita basis, but it does not receive much money for redistribution. In the 1980-81 financial year its total expenditure was only \$51,462. Most of the money was allocated to the Tiwi town councils or for special projects.

Funds which came into Nguu from the TLC in 1980-81 were:

	\$
Grant to Nguu Council	8,000
Grant to Mission for houses at Paru	10,000
Pay to Tiwi Land Councillors resident in Nguu	4,000
Administration, lunches, etc. for meetings	4,000
	-----
Total	\$26,000

There was some uncertainty about the boundaries of the lands on Bathurst and Melville Islands. This was so for two reasons. The Land Rights Act granted ownership of Aboriginal Reserves without a land claim inquiry. This meant that the Tiwi had not had a forum for debate and analysis of land ownership which has been required of many other communities. There was no mining or other intensive economic activity on the Islands (other than in the towns) so that an individual's income did not depend on the land to which he belonged. This meant that there have been no intensive disputes over land ownership.

The TLC had yet to devise general attitudes and policies concerning the distribution of the substantial funds which it expects to receive in the near future from increased mining in the NT. Such policies will no doubt emerge when the TLC's income grows substantially.

#### Bathurst Island Housing Association

A housing organisation has existed since 1972. The existing housing association was incorporated under the Northern Territory Associations Incorporation Act 1979. The tenants are the members of the association and they elect a committee of eight members in annual elections. The association manager and the Community Adviser (the priest) sit in on committee meetings.

The Association owns 110 houses of various ages and styles in Nguu. The most recently built houses, near the cypress pine plantation shown on the town map, have concrete floors, a wide verandah around the house, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a laundry, a

large breeze-way and an outside toilet block. In 1980-81 only three houses were completed at a cost of \$80,000 each. Reforms were taking place and it was anticipated that in future six houses will be completed per year at a cost of \$35,000 each. Tenants had been charged rent of \$8 per week but in January 1982 it was raised to \$16 per week. Rent outstanding in December 1981 was \$6,176 and measures are taken to apply social pressure to ensure repayment of debts. The size of the debt may increase as the new rent comes into effect.

The Association also finances a 'Home Management Course' which is intended to assist Tiwi to live in and care for their houses. A religious sister manages the course and it employs four Tiwi women. The programme was started by the Mission and was taken over by the Association. All normal repairs and maintenance are provided by the Association.

Houses are used intensively and some are overcrowded. They are generally allocated to people on the basis of their positions on a waiting list although allocation remains a highly political issue (as it is in comparable situations in European Australia). There were fifty families on the waiting list in January 1982 and this list is likely to grow, even with the optimistic production rate of six houses per year, because of population growth.

Residents spend much of their time under favourite trees in their own or neighbour's yards but otherwise use their houses in the usual way, although some people sleep out in the dry season.

Employment by the Association is shown in Table 12. At present all workers receive wages although the manager is in the process of restructuring work so that workers will be subcontractors rather than employees. It is hoped that this will greatly increase their productivity. The turnover of staff is low and there are six Tiwi boys on a waiting list for jobs with the Association. All electrical and plumbing work is done by the council although one of the Tiwi workers has begun training in the installation of copper pipes.

Table 12

Housing Association Employment during January 1982<sup>1</sup>

	<u>European</u>		<u>Tiwi</u>		<u>Totals</u>	
	<u>Mission</u>	<u>Lay</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>
	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>				
Manager Housing Assocn	-	1	-	-	1	-
Manager Domestication Course	1	-	-	-	-	1
Carpenters	-	2	4	-	6	-
Apprentices	-	-	3	-	3	-
Other	-	-	7	4	7	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>

<sup>1</sup> The number employed in 1981 was much lower.

The association's plant is adequate for its tasks. It includes two utilities, one dump truck, a backhoe and a tractor. It also has a large workshop with the required wood-working machines.

All of the materials used in building, apart from sand, are imported from Darwin. The Association managed a timber treatment plant, called Tiwi Treated Timber (TTT), which is owned by the Conservation Commission of the NT. It was not operating during the second half of 1981, and it was intended that the plant would provide all structural timber for the association once it was reopened. In the past TTT cut local timber, treated it with arsenic for resistance to insects, and exported it to Darwin. The venture was profitable and should remain so. There is ample timber on Bathurst and Melville Islands for this and other timber-based enterprises.

Several comments can be made concerning the financial situation of the Housing Association. Firstly, the financial year 1981 was not a successful one for the association even though it earned a surplus. Production and therefore employment were down. By the end of the calendar year the manager had left and TTT had been closed. Secondly, the Association does not resemble a private building and leasing company since a private company would have to pay interest and dividends on the capital used to add to the housing stock. Capital for housing construction was gratis. Finally, the doubling of rent should approximately double collections in the 1981-82 financial year.

#### Police Station

The Northern Territory Police have a small station at Nguiu. It is staffed by two partly trained male Tiwi officers. They perform limited police duties. Registration of motor vehicles, for instance, is undertaken by officers who visit Nguiu for that purpose. Some law-and-order issues are handled in the traditional way. In 1981, for instance, a man who had broken into the beer club was not charged but returned to his own clan for punishment.

#### Contract Building

In 1981 three large contract building projects had been let to European companies. These were the building of the new store and extensions to the Nguiu Club and the building of a new water tower. These employed labour in the following numbers in January 1982 although employment varied greatly over time.

Table 13

Employment on Contract Building

	European	Tiwi (all men)
New Store	4+	1
Nguiu Club Extensions	2 to 6	2
Water Tower (Contract work)	2	-

Employment Office

The Department of Employment and Youth Affairs has an officer responsible for the Department's policies as they affect Bathurst and Melville Islands. In a three-week cycle he spends two weeks on the Islands and one in Darwin. He assists the Tiwi with the Department's correspondence, arranges 'career visits' to Darwin, assists with NEATS subsidies and keeps a job register. Prior to 1959 there was very little unemployment in Nguiu but the reduction in employment by the Council has created substantial unemployment. There were about fifty people registered as unemployed in January 1982.

### 3. PRODUCTION AND TRADING INSTITUTIONS

#### Bima Wear Incorporated

Bima Wear is the oldest of the independent enterprises. It was started in 1969 by Sister Eucharía who is still its manager. The original aim was to make clothes for Tiwi people although now Bima exports most of its produce to the mainland. The introduction of a training allowance scheme made it possible to start the firm. The allowances were used to pay the wages for the eight Tiwi women who originally worked for Bima Wear. A loan of \$100 was given by the Church for materials and was subsequently repaid. In the early years profits were made because wage costs were met by the Allowances and in 1973 the original second-hand sewing machines were replaced by new electric machines. Until 1978 Bima Wear operated as an unlimited liability sole trader under Sister Eucharía and in that year it became incorporated. The workers are the members of Bima Wear Incorporated and it has an executive of seven members.

The Nguíu market was limited and in 1972 Bima Wear made an agreement with Cashman's of Darwin to make school uniforms. Cashman's supplied materials to Bima Wear which made the uniforms and Cashman's marketed them. After Cyclone Tracy, Cashman's went out of business. Bima Wear then negotiated an agreement with another Darwin firm but it also went out of business leaving Bima Wear with a large stock of partly and wholly completed uniforms. This experience resulted in a change in sales policy and now Bima Wear supplies uniforms to schools directly. It also makes a range of clothes for sale to locals, for sale outside Nguíu and to tourists who visit Nguíu.

In 1981 Bima Wear produced about 17,000 items of several different kinds. About 2,000 school uniforms were sold directly to three schools in Darwin, one in Alice Springs and the schools on Bathurst and Melville Islands. All of the schools are Catholic. About 10,000 other items of women's and children's clothing were produced. They were sold at Nguíu (the main market), Milikapiti, Pularumpi and Peppimenarti (in the Daly River Reserve). Port Keats in the Daly River Reserve, which was once supplied by Bima Wear, has developed its own workshop. There is a growing tendency for Aboriginal communities to establish their own clothes-making factories and this, together with continuous competition from Darwin retail outlets, means that markets are hard to find and keep.

About 5,000 items were jobs done for Tiwi Design (to be described later). These included:

- Contract sewing of hems for Tiwi Design products like wall hangings, place-mats, table-cloths and sarongs. These constituted about 60 per cent of the items but involved little sewing.
- The making of fashion-art clothing from Tiwi Design material. These were about 40 per cent of the items.

Tourists who came to Nguíu in growing numbers, Europeans who visited Nguíu for other purposes, Tiwi who bought presents before they left Nguíu for holidays or training, and Arnhem Land Art Gallery in Darwin purchased most of these items. Sister Eucharía rightly saw the production of fashion-art material as the appropriate future direction for Bima Wear. She had begun the establishment of a screen printing workshop behind the Bima Wear factory where she hoped to employ five young women. The main reason for its establishment, rather than expanding employment in Tiwi Design, is that the latter would no longer employ women and so women would not receive benefits from expansion of this part of the business. Tiwi Design was unhappy with this development. This segregation of the sexes in employment, and in many other activities, is entrenched in Tiwi society.

Table 14

Employment in Bima Wear in January 1982

	<u>European</u>		Tiwi		Totals	
	Mission	Lay	M	F	M	F
Manager	1	-	-	-	-	1
Supervisor	-	1	-	-	-	1
Machinists:						
Senior	-	-	-	3	-	3
Skilled	-	-	-	8	-	8
Junior	-	-	-	3	-	3
Gardener	-	-	1	-	1	-
Totals	1	1	1	14	1	16

Employment in Bima Wear is shown in Table 14. Increases in wage costs have caused constant financial problems in recent years and in late 1981 the workers agreed to receive wages below the award so that the level of employment could be maintained. Wage rates in January 1982 were: seniors \$4 per hour, skilled \$3.50 per hour, juniors \$3 per hour and the gardener \$4.30 per hour. All of the machinists were young, with their ages between 16 and 32 years, and there was a low turnover of staff. Marriage and pregnancy were the main reasons for resignations. They worked a 35-hour week, had four weeks paid leave in July for Bush Holidays, had one weeks paid leave at Christmas and received sick pay. All of the women were trained at Bima Wear. One of the semi-retired Brothers did unpaid repairs and maintenance at the factory and Sister Eucharika was not paid by Bima Wear.

Bima Wear now has modern machines (all of which it owns) and a large new factory which was completed in March 1979. The building cost \$305,000 and was financed by a government grant.

Considered financially, Bima Wear was probably the most successful of the independent enterprises: it made a surplus in 1980 and 1981, although about one quarter of total revenue was composed of government subsidies. Bima Wear expected substantial reductions in government grants in the future. 'Exports' constituted about 70 per cent of total sales revenue. About 19 per cent of sales went through the company of the Aboriginal Arts Board in 1979-80.

## Tiwi Design

Tiwi Design had its origin in 1969 when Madeleine Clear, an art teacher, arrived in Nguu and began teaching wood-block printing. The production of material printed with wood-block designs of animals and birds started shortly after and later developed into silk screen printing on fabric, which is Tiwi Design's main activity now. The first workshop was under the Old Presbytery and was begun with a donation of \$500 and two sewing machines from the Mission. The existing factory was financed by Catholic Missions and is a large steel building with a cement floor. Equipment is adequate for current production



plans. Tiwi Design is now an incorporated association with the workers constituting the members.

Tiwi Design applies designs to such items as T-shirts, sarongs, place-mats, table-cloths, wall hangings, lengths of material and to some garments produced by Bima Wear. The designs are both modern and traditional. The modern designs involve images of men, animals, birds, plants and representations of that type. Such representations do not exist in traditional Tiwi art. Traditional designs involve circles and stripes, cross-hatching and dots which represent patterns of stars, totemic places and episodes from traditional stories. Some of the products have been successfully shown at exhibitions. Any sewing required by Tiwi Design was done by Bima Wear.

About five per cent of the value of output is sold to Nguui residents. Many of these items are printed T-shirts. Some items are sold to tourists through Bima Wear's showroom at Nguui, about 21 per cent through Arnhem Land Art Gallery, and the rest to other retailers throughout Australia. Tiwi Design's craft adviser considers that there is ample demand for the product although work which is being done for Bima Wear is likely to be greatly reduced when Bima Wear's screen printing operations begin. All of the fabric and dyes are imported from the mainland.

One European craft adviser (whose salary is paid by a government grant) and six Tiwi men were employed in January. All of the Tiwi have been trained at Nguui. Two have worked since the start and one worker has been there eight years. In the past, two women were employed sewing borders of material but male and female employees could not work together successfully and all such work is now done by Bima Wear. In July 1980 the reward system changed from wages to piece rates. The earlier payment formula used was:

$$(\text{Price received by Tiwi Design for the item less Cost of material}) \times (1 - 0.15)$$

The 15 per cent charge was made to cover overheads but it proved to be insufficient and was later increased to 30 per cent.

#### Tiwi Pottery

In the middle 1960s, Keith Lodge and Ivan McMeekin, staff members at the University of NSW, were working on a programme to introduce potting to Aboriginal communities. On hearing of this, the Catholic Bishop of Darwin, Bishop J.P. O'Loughlin, sought their advice on establishing activities at Nguui. Later, Madeleine Clear encouraged Eddie Puruntatameri to go to Bagot potting training unit which had been established in 1968. Another Tiwi, John Bosco Tipiloura, joined Eddie later. Eddie returned to Nguui in 1971 determined to start a pottery business. In 1972 a government funded feasibility study was conducted and a factory was established in 1973. Tiwi Pottery is now a partnership between Eddie and John Bosco although two other Tiwi men work with them. It also employs a craft adviser.

Almost all of the produce is exported to the mainland or sold to visiting tourists. A wide range of items is produced: coffee and beer mugs, vases, tea pots, plant pots, jugs, bowls, jars and similar items. They are decorated with a mixture of traditional and western designs - figures of animals and men. The potters have exhibited on the mainland and gained awards at shows.

Three Tiwi men who work for Tiwi Pottery are skilled potters and one is in training. They are paid on piece rates (\$35 per 4' x 4' board of pots, for instance) excepting for firing weeks (about ten per year) when they are paid \$120 per week plus a firing commission if their pots are being fired. The workers commonly earn \$160 per week although they do earn up to \$300 per week.

The factory is a small iron shed with a concrete floor whose construction was financed by a government grant. Much of the equipment, including the kilns, has been built and maintained by the Tiwi workers. The kilns now need to be replaced by larger ones. Clay, which is the main material input, is obtained locally and collected as a truckload. This is sufficient for more than a year's production.

Three comments may be made on its financial structure.

- Tiwi Pottery is very heavily subsidised, even excluding the subsidy for the craft adviser, and the men are concerned about the proposed cut in subsidies.
- Only 3 per cent of sales went through the company of the Aboriginal Arts Board in 1979-80 although almost all of the produce is exported to the mainland.
- Wages and other payments to labour dominated expenditures.

#### Tiwi Pima Art

Tiwi Pima Art is an enterprise which sells traditional artifacts for Tiwi artists on Bathurst and Melville Islands. The artists produce the goods in their homes and bring them to a shed in Nguiu where they are stored and then sold to tourists and to distributors on the mainland. Tiwi Pima was restructured in June 1980 to become the Tiwi Ngaripuluwamigi Aboriginal Corporation (hereinafter called Tiwi Pima). The suppliers of artifacts are the members of the Corporation.

The usual range of Aboriginal artifacts is produced (excluding woomeras and didgeridoos which are not traditional items for Tiwi) with a special emphasis on wood carving in which the Tiwi have a comparative advantage. In 1979-80 the Aboriginal Arts Board purchased 33 per cent of the value of Tiwi Pima sales. High transport costs and storage costs for retailers resulted in retail prices for the artifacts being high in relation to the return received by the artists. It has been estimated that the hourly earnings of the maker of a Pukumani Pole was \$8 and for ironwood carving it was \$2 in 1980 (Report on Aboriginal Artifacts Marketing, June 1981, Arts Research, Training and Support Limited).

Tiwi Pima employed a craft adviser; about ten men and fifteen women from the two islands supply artifacts and most of the suppliers live on Melville Island. About four men and five women on Bathurst Island were regular suppliers.

#### Nguiu Ullintjinni Club (Beer Club)

The Nguiu Club is the only source of alcohol on the island. It was originally run by the Ullintjinni Association but became an independent institution with its own committee, which in 1981 was composed of the same people as were on the Council. All adult members of the community are entitled to vote on club matters.

It occupies a brick building next to the football oval and is in the process of greatly expanding its building. The club is financially very successful but, like similar clubs in other Aboriginal communities, it has frequently been a source of problems.

The club opens from 4.00 pm until 6.00 pm every day other than Sunday. Each Tiwi customer is entitled to purchase four cans of beer at \$1.25 each, which have to be drunk on the premises. On many occasions, however, individuals give or sell their cans to relatives or friends who drink them at the club, so that some drinkers consume many more

than four cans. On a typical day some 200 to 300 men and a small number of older women drink at the club. Many of the old people who live at Paru journey to the club daily.

Several controversial issues have arisen about the operation of the club. Some Nguiu residents (mainly women) wanted alcohol banned from the island. Although this view is often expressed it is generally countered with the argument that such an act would cause more men to go to Darwin for alcohol. But many family problems, absenteeism, car accidents, health problems and even deaths have been alcohol-related. It is a common belief that perhaps thirty deaths in the previous eight years have been associated with alcohol.

Women are more concerned about alcohol than men, possibly because they take a greater share of the undesirable consequences, and they exert considerable influence on alcohol policy. The following example illustrates this. In 1978 the Beer Club decided to extend the beer limit on Saturdays from four to six cans per drinker. The Mother's Club expressed its disapproval to the Council and Beer Club executive and the decision was reversed. The alcohol issue provides a source of disunity between men and women at Nguiu.

Then there are issues concerning management. Club management is often under pressure to extend the four-can limit, to extend drinking hours or to grant special favours. Generally such pressure has been resisted. The Council controls imports of alcohol to Nguiu and permission to import a carton of cans may be obtained after an application to Council which includes a letter from the intended importer's wife giving her approval. This system works reasonably well but it is also a source of pressure and dispute. Finally, there is the problem of security. The Club has often been broken into by people trying to obtain beer.

It is perhaps tempting to assume that problems at Nguiu would be reduced if the town became dry but the abolition of alcohol could easily lead to greater problems including the exodus of men, illegal imports, the home-making of alcohol (with all the associated health risks) and boredom. It is probably better that the community remains wet and learns how to handle alcohol problems. Many people seem to be well aware of the problems and some even seem to have an exaggerated fear of alcohol, attributing illnesses and death to alcohol when medical opinion emphasises other causes.

The club has had problems retaining a manager. The previous manager resigned in October 1981 and ad hoc arrangements were made until December when the new manager arrived. The current manager has had previous experience in an Aboriginal community (at Oenpelli).

The Club also employs a part-time European gardener and three part-time Tiwi men. Expansions to the club will cost \$173,000 which will be financed from past profits and a small loan. When completed the expanded club will employ three barmen, as well as the men currently employed.

#### Nguiu Ullintjinni Association Incorporated

The Ullintjinni Association manages a number of enterprises which are considered to be essential in the community. 'Ullintjinni' means 'fun'. The aim of the Association is to provide certain services and to make profits to be used for the benefit of the community. The community elects a committee of twelve people annually, including a president and vice-president. Three members are usually elected from each of the four skin groups.

The Association's activities are diverse and accounting and control are wisely vested at the activity level. Table 15 shows profits across activities:

Table 15

Profits and Losses from Ullintjinni Association Enterprises  
1980-1981

	\$	% change of profit from previous year
Store	+130,067	+ 42
Bakery	- 24,118	- 6
Fish Trading	- 25,027	+ 12
Garage	- 65,785	-169
Garden	- 5,338	+ 11
Poultry	- 4,790	+ 39
Restaurant	+ 12,155	+118
Administration	- 96,292	-224
Loss from Trading	- 79,128	+ 16
Extraordinary item re Fish Trading	- 5,488	
Total Deficit	-\$84,616	

The third column in the table shows the change in the profit performance of the enterprises by comparison with 1980. A '+' indicates an increase in profit or a reduction in loss and the percentage indicates the change in profit (or loss) by comparison with the 1980 figure. As can be seen, the performance of the Association improved between 1980 and 1981, i.e. the loss declined by 16 per cent. The store and restaurant showed substantial improvements while the garage and administration suffered much higher losses.

The store, restaurant, garage and the fish business sell to Nguiu residents directly, the garden exports a small amount of its product to the mainland as well as supplying goods to the store and restaurant. The bakery and poultry business supply the store, restaurant and bakery.

A brief account of each of the Association's activities follows.

#### Store

The store is the sole source of groceries (apart from eggs and bread which can be purchased from the restaurant), hardware and clothes in Nguiu (apart from such items as T-shirts purchased from Tiwi Design and some clothes purchased from Bima Wear). There is a wide range of groceries although there is a limited range of brands; hardware items include axes, billies, lamps, fishing tackle; and clothes are very limited in design. The prices overall are above those in comparable shops in Darwin, with the prices of such items as cigarettes being substantially higher.

The store occupies an old iron shed but it will move to a large new building in 1982 which will cost \$600,000. The Association is contributing \$60,000 and the rest of the capital was provided by a government-guaranteed loan over forty years. It is hoped that the range of goods and brands can be expanded after the move. Employment is not expected to increase greatly, however.

The store employs a male Tiwi manager, one male worker and nine female Tiwi workers, all of whom are full-time. The manager is assisted by an adviser on store administration who visits the store one day each month. Unaccounted-for losses were a serious problem and it was hoped that the visiting adviser could assist in limiting them. The size of the problem is exemplified by the store's mark-ups: goods are marked up by forty per cent but this yields an actual mark-up of only twenty-three per cent. The difference is a measure of the loss through inefficiency and 'theft'. Nevertheless profits increased substantially between the financial years 1980 and 1981 and store profits have been used to support other activities of the association which were unprofitable.

### Fish Trading

Fishing has always been an important leisure and, until recently, economic activity for the Tiwi. In the early 1970s a fish trading company was established for the purpose of providing a local market for fish. It ceased operations in December 1980 after the manager of the enterprise left.

Fish Trading sold directly to Nguiu residents through a fish shop near the barge ramp. Dugong and turtle were sold as well as fish. It had a European manager and five male Tiwi workers. Plant consisted of a large freezer, nets, other fishing equipment, an iron fishing shed and a large fishing boat called the Midas.

The purchase of the freezer and the Midas were part of a \$100,000 capitalization programme which had disastrous results. The Midas cost \$40,000 (second-hand) and was intended to allow substantial off-shore fishing. Efficient use of the boat required regular day and night fishing but the workers were not prepared to do this. Crews wanted to attend the beer club, social and sporting events and as a result very little use was made of the Midas. Eventually, when the manager left, the Midas was beached 'for protection' and was later vandalized. Attempts to sell it failed. The Midas produced only a small amount of fish for market.

This experience suggests that operations based on simpler technology are more appropriate: fishermen could use their dinghys (powered by outboard motors) to catch fish and sell to the company which would resell to local and mainland markets.

### Garage

The garage is the only place for servicing and repairing private motor vehicles and outboard motors in Nguiu. It also services and repairs the Mission vehicles, Ullintjinni Association vehicles, some Council vehicles (when the Council workshop is unable to do all of the work required) and some vehicles and outboards owned by people who live on Melville Island. These are important services for the community since Aborigines value mobility highly but tend to treat vehicles and motors roughly.

Garage facilities are inadequate and old and include above-ground petrol storage. Operations in the past had been plagued by a high turnover of European staff (although one manager stayed for two years) and substantial bad debts. Many Tiwi have been sent to Darwin to gain training in motor mechanics although most have not completed their training. Nevertheless, the level of training in such matters is high in the community. The garage had made substantial losses over the last three years and changes have been made which, it is hoped, will result in an improved financial performance in the 1981-82

financial year. The garage currently employs a European manager/mechanic, one European mechanic and two male Tiwi mechanics, all of whom are on piece rates.

#### Garden and Poultry

Farming of various forms is one of the oldest enterprises on Bathurst Island. Dairy farming was established in 1932 and was soon supplemented by a goat herd. Milk, butter and cream were produced. During the War the project was abandoned and the animals were allowed to run wild. Beef cattle had been introduced after the War but there was no cattle farming in 1981. Peanuts, bananas and coconuts have been grown for many years.

In 1981, farming took the form of the cultivation of a cleared area and egg production some thirteen kilometres from Nguiu. Horticulture had ceased and the farm was just being maintained by slashing. A European and a Tiwi worker (both males) were employed on this task and on poultry management. The farm has good soil, is well equipped, and could grow any commercial crop that can be grown in the Top End. Three problems have plagued the farm:

- there has been insufficient water during the past dry seasons. This has been overcome by the recent completion of a bore and the installation of irrigation equipment throughout the area of cultivation;
- fire in the dry season is a constant hazard and has retarded the growth of many plantings;
- the distance of the farm from Nguiu has made labour difficult to supervise and means that farm labour has been inefficient.

The following is a summary of the current condition of the crops.

Banana trees are not well-grown for their age. Tiwi customers prefer imported bananas because of their superior colour to locally grown ones.

The coconut trees are not well-grown either. There is potentially a large market for coconuts and seedlings in Darwin and some seedlings from the coconut grove in Nguiu have been exported.

Mango trees are still too young to provide a large crop but there is potentially a large market for them in Darwin.

The cashew trees are adequately-grown and are in fruit. There is potentially a large market on the mainland and elsewhere. Many more trees ought to have been planted.

Palm trees are grown in a palm shed on the farm and seedlings from it have been sold in Darwin.

*Pinus radiata* trees were experimentally planted some years ago. These trees have grown very slowly and *radiata* would not be a commercially successful crop.

The poultry plant has 900 hens (white leghorns) which are rotated with others from Darwin every few months. Pullets are also imported from Darwin. The shed is lit 18 hours per day and the hens are fed five times per day. The production rate is about 60 per cent (hens laid per day) and all of the produce is sold in Nguiu. Poultry production employs a man for one hour per day.

There is some discussion of reintroducing beef cattle farming. Diseases such as blue tongue are serious threats. However an abattoir is to be opened at Pularumpi and such a venture could be successful.

#### Restaurant

The restaurant, developed from a staff kitchen for Europeans run by the Mission, was opened in February 1980. It sells meals, a range of fast foods (including soup, cooked chickens and hot dogs) and some groceries such as bread and eggs. Most revenue is earned from fast food and grocery sales. It is the sole source of fast food in Nguiu and is a major source of meals for the Tiwi.

The restaurant building has a large kitchen (occupying half of the floor area) and an ample dining room which is rarely used. The building cost \$265,000 and was transferred from the Mission to the Association on its completion. The Ullintjinni Association contributed \$35,000 to the capital cost.

All of the bread and eggs are purchased from the bakery and farm and the rest of the foodstuffs are imported from Darwin. The restaurant employs three Tiwi men, three Tiwi women and one European lay woman, and it is managed by the manager of the Association.

A major loss was made in the first year of operation but the profit in 1981 was acceptable and the restaurant is likely to remain a profitable and important enterprise.

#### Administrative Centre

The Administrative Centre provides administration for the Association, some administrative functions for the schools and hospital and runs the Post Office Agency, the Airline Agency (for Air North) and the Bank Agency.

In 1980-81 the centre became overstaffed and this resulted in a substantial loss. The need for men and women to work separately was a major cause of overstaffing. For example, the needs for labour in the bank agency varied over a fortnight and labour ought to have been moved between the agency and other clerical duties. This movement was not possible if it resulted in men and women working together. There were twelve Tiwi working in the centre in 1981 but by January 1982 there were only five Tiwi working there: one man managed the Post Office and Airline Agencies, one woman managed the Bank Agency and another woman worked as an assistant; two Tiwi men and one European woman work on administration for the Association; the European manager of the Association controls the operation of the centre.

The bank is an agency of the Commonwealth Savings Bank. It is open from 8.00 am until 2.30 pm (excepting for tea and lunch breaks) on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and is open only in the morning on Wednesday and has late trading on Friday. The two Tiwi women employed at the agency were trained at Nguiu.

Banking is often a problem in Aboriginal communities but this is not so in Nguiu. Problems usually arise because of the limited range of banking functions performed by agencies and because agencies hold insufficient cash to meet community demands for the cashing of DSS and other cheques. Firstly, Nguiu has excellent communications with Darwin (by direct telephone facilities and numerous flights daily) so that many businesses in

Nguiu deal directly with Darwin banks. This means that there is little demand for the Agency to expand its facilities. Secondly, the Agency is allowed to hold up to \$20,000 in cash at close of trade so that the Agency rarely has insufficient funds, even when there are substantial early morning withdrawals. If more cash is needed the Agent telephones Darwin and it is usually sent quickly. The bank judges that the Agency is efficiently run and that the manager is one of the best to be found in Aboriginal communities.

The Ullintjinni Association's policy on the cashing of cheques is as follows: DSS pension cheques must be deposited, unemployment cheques and child endowment cheques can be cashed. As is typical of such communities, depositers leave only a small amount of money in accounts at any one time.

Various bodies collect fees on pension and other cheque receiving days. The schools have a desk outside the agency to collect money for lunches which are provided to school children; the Housing Association has a desk outside the bank to collect rents and the Bank Agency accepts payments for rents payable on Mission houses.



#### 4 ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NGUIU

##### Social Accounts for Nguiu

In this section the structure of the Nguiu economy will be described in ways similar to those used to describe any national economy.

The standard social accounting framework used for the analysis of national economies is designed to facilitate consideration of the causes and solutions to certain problems. The usual problems are related to unemployment, inflation and the rate of growth of per capita income. Since the publication of J.M. Keynes's 'General Theory of Employment Interest and Money' in 1936 solutions to these problems have been conceived in terms that have resulted in a particular social accounting framework being most useful. The causes of and solutions to such macroeconomic problems in Aboriginal communities, however, suggests a different emphasis on the economic data. In addition, there are other problems peculiar to Aboriginal communities which justify a different emphasis on data.

Aboriginal communities are very highly dependent for resources on the Australian community generally. This is a problem in itself, resulting in the community being dependent on external politics, domination by government officials and a feeling of dependence. It also means that the causes and solutions to the problems associated with unemployment, inflation and economic growth rest largely outside the community.

For these reasons our discussion begins with an arrangement of income data which reflects the level of economic dependence of the Nguiu economy.

Table 16 shows the sources and types of 'disposable income' for the year 1980-81. For this purpose disposable income is defined as:

'Wages, pensions and family allowances after income tax, plus net profit after taxes, less net losses after taxes'.

Profits from all activities on Bathurst Island are owned by the Tiwi and form part of their income.

Tiwi disposable incomes are:

Per capita	\$1,855
Per adult (18 years and over)	\$3,837

Real per capita incomes are likely to be above these estimates for three reasons. Firstly, rents for many of the houses are uneconomically low. Secondly, it is likely that the accounting rate of depreciation used by the Housing Association is unnecessarily high (and so the accounting surplus is less than the economic surplus). Thirdly, income from food gathering is not included in the estimates. Food gathering is largely a leisure activity and similar leisure activities are not completely included in National Income estimates. This means that a comparison of Tiwi and Australia-wide incomes is not greatly distorted by this omission.

Table 16

Sources and Types of Disposable Incomes  
1980-81

Types	\$ m	%	Sources	\$ m
Net Personal Incomes				
(i) Tiwi	1.967	74.6	Direct Mission and	2.178
(ii) European	0.630	23.9	Government Expendi-	
	2.597	98.5	ture and DSS payments	
Operating sur- pluses net of tax and de- preciation <sup>1</sup>	0.040	1.5	Govt Subsidies and operating grants for activities	1.257
			Less: Direct and indirect taxes paid by Nguiu residents and institutions	0.866
			Net Subsidies to Nguiu	2.569
			Final Domestic Sales	2.108
			Export Income	0.392
			Total	5.069
			Less: Institutional imports <sup>2</sup>	2.192
			Less: Depreciation net of Council loss <sup>1</sup>	0.240
Disposable Income	2.637	100.0	Disposable Income	2.637

<sup>1</sup> The large deficit experienced by the Council is not included here because it was not recovered from the Nguiu community

<sup>2</sup> Imports of petrol and alcohol are stated net of sales taxes in this table since those taxes are included as "indirect taxes" above. Direct imports by individuals are not included in this figure.

Per capita income for the Australian population generally is about three times that of the Tiwi shown above. The difference between the two figures is likely to exaggerate the differences in the real standards of living for a number of reasons:

- Housing costs in Nguiu are well below those in the rest of Australia and the difference is likely to be much greater than that which could be justified by differences in the quality of housing.
- The frequent use of Council and communally owned vehicles for transport around Nguiu means that transport costs for individuals are low by comparison with elsewhere in Australia.
- Tiwi attitudes are such that the minimum socially acceptable levels of expenditure on dress, furniture and children's entertainment are much lower than for the rest of the Australian community.
- Health and other services are provided on a non-contributory basis at Nguiu whereas this is not always so elsewhere in Australia.

The 'sources' column reveals the fact that net subsidies to Nguiu (\$2.6 million), the value of local production (\$2.5 million) and imports from the mainland (\$2.2 million) were of the same magnitude. This means that Nguiu is highly dependent on support from the rest of the Australian community and that Nguiu is a very open economy, i.e. a large proportion of goods and services consumed in Nguiu is imported from the mainland.

The substantial import bill implies that, since Darwin is an entrepot, it enjoys trade from Nguiu to a value almost as great as net subsidies to Nguiu. If European wages paid to employees at Nguiu (of \$0.6 million) are added to imports it can be seen that the NT European community experiences direct and indirect benefits (trade plus European wages) greater than the net subsidies to Nguiu. Most of the multiplier impact of government spending in Nguiu takes place elsewhere, however. This result probably applies generally to Aboriginal communities and indicates the very substantial dependence of the Darwin economy on the servicing of these communities. Clearly, any reduction in support for such communities will detrimentally affect Darwin enterprises. Support for these communities represents a redistribution from southerners to NT residents generally rather than a simple redistribution from Europeans to Aborigines in the NT.

Table 17 is the Production Account for Nguiu. It shows the nature of expenditure and incomes derived from production and has been constructed according to the usual social accounting conventions. The main differences between tables 16 and 17 are these:

- (i) Wages in the former table are shown after deducting income tax. In the latter table they are shown before deducting the tax. DSS payments are not included in table 17.
- (ii) Imports in the former table are stated net of sales taxes on petrol and alcohol. This is not so in the latter table.
- (iii) 'Final Domestic Sales' in table 16 is equal to 'Final Consumption' in table 17 less the free goods provided by the government and mission.
- (iv) 'Direct Mission...etc' in table 16 is equal to item A (a) in Table 17 plus DSS payments of \$0.941 m.
- (v) 'Government Subsidies...' in table 16 is equal to 'Gross Investment' plus 'indirect subsidies' in table 17.



Some comments can be made about the structure of Nguiu from table 17. Firstly, the proportion of expenditure used for investment is higher than for Australia overall and this, of course, is desirable. Three investment projects are not included in these calculations, being the new store, extensions to the beer club and the new water tank - and if they had been included the Nguiu investment rate would have been even higher. However, much of the investment is in 'government projects' or housing or in consumption capital and relatively little of it in increasing the productivity of labour. Some education and health expenditure, of course, should be considered investment for that purpose. Further, it can be seen that imports are much greater than exports. There are, of course, no mechanisms which keep those related, as there are for an economy overall.

Wages, salaries and supplements are stated before deducting income tax, as is the convention, but pensions and family allowances are not included because they do not arise from production activities. Profits are a much smaller proportion of income in Nguiu than for Australia generally.

The Production Account has limited use in the context of a discussion of an Aboriginal community even though it has been used as a centrepiece in another study of an Aboriginal community (M.L. Treadgold: The Economy of the Torres Strait Area: A Social Accounting Study [ANU, 1974]). Some problems are encountered when such a production account is used. Firstly, Government and Mission expenditures are non-repayable transfers to the community. It could be argued, for instance, that these constitute gifts-in-kind and ought not to be included because they are similar to DSS transfers. They do, it is conceded, entail production in the community. Second, the Government and Mission expenditures (and some others) are 'imposed' on the community and do not reflect local attitudes through markets or through local political processes. Third, total Tiwi incomes cannot be obtained directly from the Account. DSS incomes must be added to 'wages, salaries and supplements' and income taxes must be subtracted. Finally, the sources of Tiwi incomes, including net subsidies, are hidden.

Table 18

Institutional Imports and Exports by Type, 1980-81

Export Income	%	Imports	%
Goods	46.9	Freight	6.0
Contract work for Government Depts.	36.2	Petrol, fuel and oil	16.6
Commissions	4.6	Insurance, assurance	3.0
Interest and other	12.3	Accounting, auditing, consulting	7.0
		Goods, materials, tools, stores	65.4
		Others, including travel	2.0
	<u>100.0</u>		<u>100.0</u>
	(\$0.392m)		(\$2.272m)

Table 18 shows the nature of imports and exports. Trade in goods dominates imports. Freight costs are less important in Nguiu than for more remote communities. Most of the exports of goods are by the art and craft enterprises. The Council successfully bid for contracts to undertake construction and maintenance in Nguiu, financed by government, and this provided significant exports. The 'commissions' are those earned by the Ullintjinni Association for their post office, Air North office and bank agency.

Table 19  
Institutional Data for 1980-81

	(a) Mission & Govt. spending, operating grants, Subsidies & DSS receipts %	(b) Post tax Tiwi wages and DSS Incomes %	(c) (b) + net profits from activities %	(d) Tiwi workforce employed %	(e) Export income by institution %	(f) Institutional imports by Institutions %
<b>A. Infrastructure</b>						
<u>Institutions</u>						
Mission	1.0	-	-	3.0	-	-
Schools	25.0	10.5	10.3	21.4	-	1.0
Hospital	9.2	4.9	4.8	7.5	-	2.8
Council	22.3	17.2	16.8 <sup>1</sup>	22.4	36.7	17.6
Tiwi Land Council	-	0.3	0.3	0.5	6.6	-
Housing Assocn	8.8	1.4	3.4	8.9	6.9	2.3
Police	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.0	-	0.1
<b>A. Subtotal</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>64.7</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>23.8</b>
<b>B. Enterprises</b>						
<u>Bima Wear</u>						
Tiwi Design	1.3	3.4	3.4	7.5	21.9	1.9
Tiwi Pottery	0.5	0.5	0.2	3.0	5.7	1.0
Tiwi Pima	0.9	1.0	0.9	2.0	5.2	0.2
Tiwi Pima	0.7	1.3	1.3	4.5	8.5	0.1
<b>B. Subtotal</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>C. Beer Club</b>	-	0.9	5.3	1.5	2.1	9.9
<b>D. Ullintjinni Assocn</b>						
<u>Store</u>						
Bakery	-	2.7	-	5.5	0.3	38.8
Fish Trading	-	0.7	-	2.0	-	1.6
Garage	0.2	0.1	-	2.5	-	0.6
Garden, Poultry	-	1.0	-	1.0	-	6.5
Restaurant	1.7	1.5	-	0.5	-	1.4
Admin. Central	-	2.1	-	3.0	-	12.4
Admin. Central	-	1.6	-	2.5	6.1	1.8
<b>D. Subtotal</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>5.5<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>63.1</b>
<b>Pensions and Family Allowances</b>						
	27.4	47.9	46.8	-	-	-
<b>E. GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Value Totals</b>	<b>(\$3.435m)</b>	<b>(\$1.967m)</b>	<b>(\$2.007m)</b>	<b>(N = 201)</b>	<b>(\$0.392m)</b>	<b>(\$2.272m)</b>

<sup>1</sup>The large deficit experienced by the Council was not included here because the deficit was not recovered from the Nguiu community.

<sup>2</sup>Percentages for individual Ullintjinni organizations were not provided because the Administrative Centre provides services for all of the Association's organizations and costs were not allocated accordingly.

Table 19 shows the relative importance of institutions in terms of their absorption of government and mission funds, generators of Tiwi incomes, employment, exports and imports. The infrastructure institutions dominate in terms of most of these indices. They absorb most of the government's contribution to the economy, they generate most Tiwi wages, employ most Tiwi workers and generate most of the export income. The enterprises are relatively unimportant as generators of Tiwi incomes and employment but are very important exporters. The low dependence of the other servicing institutions on subsidies is partly because they operate as monopolists or near-monopolists in the provision of their goods and services and can adjust their prices to cover their costs.

Table 20

Disposal of Personal Income, 1980-81

	a. % of total income	b. % of Tiwi income
A. <u>Charges and Purchases in Nguiu</u>		
Rent (Mission & Housing Association)	2.7	3.6
Council Charges (water, electricity)	0.3	0.3
Store purchases (food & clothes)	44.5	58.8
Fast food (restaurant)	17.0	22.5
Fish purchases	0.2	0.2
Clothes (direct sales by Bima Wear)	0.1	0.3
Tiwi Design and Art Purchases	-	0.1
Beer	14.5	19.1
Private vehicle and boat expenses	1.7	2.2
Private air travel <sup>1</sup>	0.8	1.0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
A. Total expenditures in Nguiu	81.8	108.1
B. <u>Residual Items</u>		
Savings, Direct imports from mainland	18.2	
	<hr/>	
Total	100.0	

<sup>1</sup> This expenditure constitutes an import

Table 21

Motor Vehicles of Non-European Ownership

	Toyotas Landcruisers Utilities or Station Wagons	Cars & Station Wagons	Tractors Trucks & Earth Working Equipment	Motor Cycles	Boats and Barges
<u>Infrastructure</u>					
Mission	3	-	-	-	1
Mission Carpentry	1	-	-	-	-
Council	9	-	15	-	2
Hospital	1	-	-	-	-
Housing Association	2	-	3	-	-
Police	1	-	-	-	-
<u>Enterprises</u>					
Bima Wear	-	1	-	-	-
Tiwi Design	1	-	-	-	-
Tiwi Pottery	1	-	-	-	-
Tiwi Pima	-	-	-	-	-
Nguiu Club	-	-	2	-	-
<u>Ullintjinni Association</u>	8	-	-	-	-
<u>Other</u>					
Private (Tiwi)	8	1	-	3	12
Outstations	2	-	-	-	-
<u>Summary</u>					
Infrastructure	17	-	18	-	3
Enterprises	2	1	-	-	-
Ullintjinni Assocn	8	-	-	-	-
Other	10	1	2	3	12
GRAND TOTALS	37	2	20	3	15



Table 20 shows the ways in which Tiwi and European incomes were disposed of in 1980-81. Items in Category A were obtained from income and sales figures for the institutions. There was no way of allocating those expenditures to Tiwi and Europeans precisely. For that reason the percentages have been shown in terms of total (Tiwi and European) incomes and Tiwi incomes alone. Tiwis and Europeans participate in these expenditures in differing degrees. Europeans purchase most of their clothes, alcohol and much of their food from Darwin directly or by mail order. That means that Tiwi expenditures on food, clothing and beer are close to those shown in column (b). By far most of the personal imports and almost all of the savings are undertaken by Europeans.

Finally, table 21 gives a register of motor vehicles owned by Tiwi people and institutions. With any such list there are problems in deciding whether a vehicle has been abandoned as being beyond repair. A vehicle, for instance, may be left in a non-usable state for months but be eventually repaired when its owner has the resources to do so. The table includes only those vehicles that were usable or needing only minor repairs in January 1982. Given that community-owned vehicles are sometimes used for private purposes and that most activities are concentrated in Nguiu, the table indicates that adequate transport was available for Nguiu residents.

#### Employment

Employment in the various institutions is shown in table 22. The table also shows the distribution of skill and reveals that there is a high level of clerical and trade skills amongst Tiwi people. There is, however, a dearth of entrepreneurial skill amongst the Tiwi. Some ninety per cent of all managerial positions are held by Europeans. The two Tiwi managers, one for the store and the other for the bank, are under the European manager of the Ullintjinni Association although they operate with considerable independence. The Tiwi manager of the Post Office and Air Agency is not included as a manager in the table because of the minor managerial skill required for that position.

In the context of an Aboriginal community, an 'entrepreneur' has two main functions: the first is the management of factors of production, and the second the finding of new markets and the developing of new products and processes. Entrepreneurial risk-taking is generally the function of the government agency which makes grants or underwrites loans for projects. Management of the factors of production is adequately performed by Europeans at Nguiu, although there are some 'managers' who dislike that task. This is common in Aboriginal communities amongst craft advisers or heads of manufacturing activities such as housing. Such managers are often appointed because of their technical skills even though the lack of technical skills in a community may not be a serious problem. The real problem is that of making effective use of the factors of production - especially, but not only, labour. Thus more appointees with managerial skills, rather than technical skills, are needed in Aboriginal communities.

The tasks of finding new markets and developing new products and processes are performed on only a part-time basis at Nguiu. Advice on overall development issues is provided by consultants in Darwin but there is nobody with the prime responsibility for developing new markets, products and processes. The recent appointment of the craft adviser for Tiwi Design, Tiwi Pottery and Tiwi Pima Art was made with these functions in mind, and this appointment is to be applauded. There is a need for a 'marketing person' to be appointed for the whole community. Such a person would need to spend time in the markets (south) developing a fashion sense and contacts, and would need an ability to correctly judge marketing strategies. The appointee could perform these functions for all of the activities at Nguiu with export potential and could be financed by a levy placed on most activities - including the Council.

Table 22  
Employment by Skill Distribution

	Managers and Craft Advisors		Office Staff		Professionals, "Qualified" Tradesmen & Women		Semi-Trained		Apprentices		Unskilled and Semi-Skilled		Totals		Tiwi Employment by Sex	
	E	T	E	T	E	T	E	T	E	T	E	T	E	T	M	F
<b>A. Infrastructure Institutions</b>																
Mission	1		1	4							6	5	6	3	3	
Schools: F/T	2		1	21	2	1	22				7	24	32	14	18	
P/T			1				10						11	4	7	
Hospital Council	1	1	1	3			11		6		3	4	15	4	11	
T.L.C.	1	1	2	5							37	7	45	41	4	
Housing Association	2		1		2	4		2	3		11	4	18	14	4	
Police								2						2		
<b>A. Subtotal</b>	7	-	1	6	35	6	1	45	-	9	-	64	44	130	82	48
<b>B. Enterprises</b>																
Bima Wear	2			11			3				1	2	15	1	14	
Tiwi Design	1			6								1	6	6		
Tiwi Pottery	1			3			1					1	4	4		
Tiwi Pima	1			9								1	9	4	5	
<b>B. Subtotal</b>	5	-	-	-	-	29	-	4	-	-	-	1	5	34	15	19
<b>C. Beer Club</b>	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	2	3	3	-
<b>D. Ullintjinni Association</b>																
Store	1										10		11	2	9	
Bakery	1										4	1	4	4		
Fish Trading	1										5	1	5	5		
Garage	1				1	2						2	2	2		
Garden, Poultry										1	1	1	1	1		
Restaurant	1										6	1	6	3	3	
Admin. Centre	1	1	1	4							2	2	5	3	2	
<b>D. Subtotal</b>	5	2	1	4	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	26	8	34	20	14
<b>E. GRAND TOTAL</b>	18	2	2	10	36	37	1	49	-	9	2	94	59	201	120	81
<b>% of Skill Group by Race</b>	90	10	16	84	49	51	2	98	-	100	2	98	23	77	-	-

(E = European, T = Tiwi, M = Male, F = Female)

There are very few Aboriginal people performing entrepreneurial functions in Aboriginal communities generally and some reasons can be suggested for this. Not all of these reasons, however, apply to Nguiu. Good entrepreneurship is essentially a function of personality. Business training can give a person a range of skills which will aid entrepreneurship, but it will not give a person the required temperament and personality and the proportion of any population that has the required entrepreneurial personality is usually small. Furthermore few Aborigines have formal business training which would allow them to develop their entrepreneurship talents.

Some cultures are more likely to spawn successful entrepreneurs (the US and Chinese cultures, for instance) than others. In these societies, the person who takes the risks, is successful and becomes wealthy gains high status. In some other societies such a person may be regarded as a near-criminal. In Aboriginal societies the situation is complex and varied but the following pattern seems common. Entrepreneurs who engage in business for themselves (fence contracting, mustering, etc) and attempt to retain most of the benefits for themselves have low status. Indeed, they may become ostracised from the community for being 'too European', especially if they are not active in ceremonies. Entrepreneurs who capture resources for the community and themselves, generally from government agencies, enjoy high status. This is enhanced if they are active in ceremonies. A man who is a principal land owner or a leader in ceremonies or a good traditional artist, however, is likely to enjoy the highest status and will often speak with derision of entrepreneurs of the kinds just mentioned. This ranking results in many upwardly mobile people channelling their energies into only limited entrepreneurial activities.

Much potential entrepreneurial skill has been diverted into Aboriginal-European politics. There are many political bodies which require Aboriginal representatives and often a person who would have otherwise performed entrepreneurial functions in his community finds his time monopolised by considerations and meetings of a political nature. Sometimes these functions are entrepreneurial, however, because some political bodies can be used to capture resources for a community.

Aboriginal society is a 'non-market' society, by comparison with many others. That is, the areas where impersonal exchange takes place are minor and much exchange has strong cultural and social restraints. This makes it very difficult for an Aboriginal manager to hire and fire labour or to allocate other resources on a productivity basis. The survival of an enterprise often requires these practices, however, since they are adopted by competitors or insisted upon by government funding agencies. Consequently, communities often rely on European managers to perform those difficult but necessary employment and other resource allocation practices because the community acknowledges that the survival of their enterprises depends upon them conforming in this way.

Table 23

Turnover in Managerial Staff

Organization	Turnover of Managers and Craft Advisers before January 1982
Council: Town Clerk	Four managers in the previous five years
Housing Association	Three managers in the previous two years
Bima Wear	One manager in the previous thirteen years
Tiwi Designs	Six craft advisers in the previous thirteen years
Tiwi Pottery	Six craft advisers in the previous nine years
Tiwi Pima	Three craft advisers in the previous nine years
Ullintjinni Assocn	Two managers in the previous twenty months
Fish Trading	Four managers in the previous five years
Restaurant	Three managers in the previous two years

Table 23 reveals that there is a very high turnover of lay European managerial personnel at Nguiu, although religious personnel are much more stable in employment. This high turnover is also common in other Aboriginal communities and some reasons, not all of which are applicable to Nguiu, can be suggested for it:

- Often the appointees are inappropriate because of their youth and their interests in touring exotic places.
- Lack of experience in working with Aboriginal people can create a crisis in their feelings of achievement at work. They may especially resent being judged as if they were working with European labour.
- They often complain that the employment agent in Darwin or elsewhere inadequately specified the job and conditions.
- Communities often restrict the entry of married or de facto partners and this can create an extra burden for the employee, and may lead to involvement with local men or women.
- Bi-lingual or poor schooling facilities may lead couples to leave the communities once their children are eight or so years of age.
- Some appointees cannot cope with a situation in which they are in a racial and cultural minority.

Table 22 (above) also shows the distribution of Tiwi employment by sex. Tiwi women provide forty per cent of the workforce. Men and women are not, however, employed together on the same functions even when they are employed by the same institution. Various attempts have been made to employ men and women together but these have been unsuccessful.

The problem of controlling labour is reflected in the constant attempts that have been made by institutions to define jobs so that workers could be paid on piece rates. Such a reward system allows workers to work on days and at a rate they desire. Piece rate employment has been introduced in almost all areas in Nguiu where it is feasible.

#### Development Issues

Although little debate has taken place about the goals of development in communities such as Nguiu, most people would agree that efforts ought to be undertaken to

- reduce the dependence of the community on government (and other) grants and subsidies and to
- increase per capita incomes of Aboriginal people; some commentators also argue that this should be associated with increased employment.

This section is concerned with the problems and development strategies associated with achieving these goals. The discussion will begin with a statement of principles affecting development prospects and will be followed by a discussion of the possible roles for particular industries in the development of Nguiu.

An important feature of Aboriginal communities is that they have a high rate of growth of population. This makes the simultaneous achievement of the above goals difficult. A simple example will illustrate this point. Suppose that a community has a population growth rate of, say, two and a half per cent per annum, and that \$4 worth of capital is required to generate \$1 of income per annum, then the community would have to save a proportion

$$(4) \times (2.5) = 10\%$$

of its income in addition to any provisions for depreciation, simply in order to maintain per capita income at its existing level. If the community wished to achieve a modest growth in per capita income of, say, one per cent per annum, then the proportion of income saved would have to be

$$(4) \times (3.5) = 14\%$$

Such savings may be achieved internally by voluntary or compulsory action.

It is highly unlikely that voluntary savings by individuals would achieve this level even with greatly increased per capita incomes. Institutions in the community could, however, increase the savings rate compulsorily by making profits (suppressing wages and increasing prices for local customers) on internal trading and ploughing back those profits into plant and equipment. Some institutions already do this, of course. However, the fourteen per cent above refers to investment in additional plant and equipment, not just replacement, and it is doubtful that this savings rate could be achieved internally for political and economic reasons.

The political problem is that it is unlikely that the community would accept a policy which involved its enterprises making very high profits on internal trading unless the profits were used for consumption. There would be constant pressure for the profits to be distributed in cash or invested in consumption assets such as vehicles, clubs or housing. The economic problem is that a policy which greatly reduced wages would lead people to leave the community or simply not work, and a policy which led to prices being very high would be likely to result in people importing goods or, again, leaving the community. Thus, there are limits to the profits which can be made from internally traded goods.

(Beer clubs have greater profit potential than most enterprises because community councils can ban the import of alcohol and so make the beer club a monopolist.)

Thus the funds required for development must come from outside the community. If dependence on grants from the rest of the Australian community is to be avoided, a community must develop profitable 'exporting' enterprises. If an enterprise is to contribute significantly to the community's savings then it is necessary for it to conform to the community's comparative advantage and/or the community must have a degree of monopoly power in the supply of the product.

A degree of monopoly power is required if the enterprise is to achieve greater-than-normal profits in the long run. If a community is producing a good in which it has no long-term monopoly power, and if the enterprise is making substantial profits, then other communities, including European Australia, will begin to supply the product and will continue to expand the industry's output, depressing the prices and returns, until profits fall to a level just sufficient to justify continued production. In short, the entry of competitors reduces the supernormal profits to the normal. The only way this process can be avoided is by preventing entry. The (monopoly) power required to prevent entry can arise in many ways including product differentiation, control of essential inputs, government regulations, or the control of patents. Product differentiation is the act of making the consumer believe that the supplier's product is substantially different from others in the market. It can be achieved by the physical characteristics of the goods, through advertising, through making the product easily available, through the surroundings in which the sale takes place, or through continuity of supply.

Any significant monopoly power enjoyed by an Aboriginal community is likely to be based on the uniqueness of a site (which may be the product itself or provide inputs) owned by the community, either because of the resources contained on the site or because of its location. Minor degrees of monopoly power can be found in the communities, however. Bima Wear, Tiwi Design and Tiwi Pottery products are distinct from others in the market but the degree of differentiation does not allow these enterprises to charge prices much above those of other suppliers in the market. Similarly, Aboriginal artists have an informal patent system which confers on some artists the exclusive right in their community to paint certain symbols or carve certain objects. The market rewards artists differentially because of this system. A man who can paint crocodile designs, for instance, is likely to find it comparatively easy to sell his paintings by comparison with many other artists. However, this system is unlikely to confer on any community a substantial long-term advantage as adaption is likely to take place. Consumers of Aboriginal art, for instance, like designs which involve figures of humans or animals. Traditional Tiwi art has no such designs but the Tiwi have adapted and use such designs in their printing and pottery.

If an industry conforms to a community's comparative advantage then the community is producing the commodity as cheaply as any other supplier in the market. In general, this involves the community specialising in the production of goods or services which are intensive in resources that are cheap (sometimes abundant) in the community.

Nguiu, like all Aboriginal communities, is a high labour cost community. Low incomes and black faces have led many people to assume that labour costs are low and they have encouraged labour intensive activities. Labour costs are high for two reasons. Firstly, unemployment benefits set a level, much below which wages, for full-time employment, cannot fall. Unemployment benefits may, however, result in the minimum acceptable wage rates for occasional work being lower than otherwise and this may apply in some areas of craft production. Secondly, award wage rates are often paid or approximated but Aboriginal labour often has poorer application and attendance than European Australian labour.

Australian labour generally, of course, is costly, by comparison with labour in many other parts of the world. Most labour-intensive activities in Australia, apart from the production of goods and services that cannot be traded internationally, are supported by government tariffs, quotas or subsidies and hence are subject to the whims of politics. It is undesirable for Aboriginal enterprises to be similarly dependent.

The clothing industry, for instance, is subject to a very high rate of protection in the form of tariffs and quotas and there has been strong pressure in national politics for a reduction in this protection. The pressure has abated recently in response to high levels of unemployment but it is likely to be renewed once the unemployment rate falls. It seems that the low protection lobby will prevail eventually, and clothes-making will decline as a result of competition from imports. Clothes-making enterprises in Aboriginal communities will suffer along with comparable enterprises in the south unless they become specialised in particular products or markets.

In recent years governments have been prepared to invest substantial amounts of capital in communities and if this continues it could be said that these communities are capital abundant and should specialise in capital intensive production. While this may be so in some cases (e.g. tourist development) there are many cases where capital needs to be accompanied by labour working three regular shifts (for instance) in order to be efficient. Such activities would not, in general, be suitable for Aboriginal communities.

The Nguiu community is land abundant and there is an argument for encouraging production which uses that resource intensively. Tourism, based on the uniqueness of a site, and mining have good possibilities and these will be discussed later. Farming, forestry and grazing activities are similarly suitable.

Finally, Nguiu is a long way from southern markets but close to Darwin. This means that trade with southern markets will involve substantial transport costs, but trade with Darwin will incur lower transport costs than trade from many other remote communities in the Top End and so it is well placed to supply some goods to Darwin.

The principles outlined above may now be used to evaluate certain industries.

#### Tourism

If the tourist development of a site is to remain relatively immune from competition, the desirable features of the development must not be common elsewhere. Bathurst Island has features which are unique. It is close to Darwin, it is exotic, has good fishing places, and has well-established art and craft industries. Tourism can be very disruptive, of course, and the location of the development would need to be chosen carefully with clearly defined areas where tourists could and could not go. A development, for instance, could take place in the far north or west of the Island, subject to agreement by the land-owning clans. It could begin with a small number of dwelling units and be enlarged later as the community and the market allow.

Apart from yielding profits from the accommodation, the development could provide substantial employment in the maintenance of the accommodation, in providing vehicular and boat tours, in supplying food to the kitchen and in providing substantial stimulus to the art and craft industries.

#### Mining

If minable minerals are discovered on Bathurst Island then the possibility may exist for the community to negotiate substantial royalties. Mining appears to be unpopular; objections have been made on Aboriginal-religious grounds as well as on the ground that mining would lead to loss of control of parts of the Island to Europeans on a long term basis. However, there are advantages from earning substantial royalties and they can be illustrated by referring to the experience of the Gagudju Association. The Gagudju Association was established in September 1980 and is an organisation of clans who own the land affected by the Ranger Project. To date they have received only the up-front monies and annual rents. These funds have enabled the Gagudju to buy the Cooinda Motel and the Border Store (business and movable assets), establish a grading and earth moving business,

establish two schools, build houses and improve facilities at the outstations, acquire the mail run and maintain a fleet of fourteen vehicles for its members. It is about to establish a tourist business, a bank agency and employ its own doctor. The Association undertakes to provide employment for any member who wishes it. The Gagudju are especially fortunate, in financial terms, of course. Mining has, however, allowed the Gagudju to achieve a high level of independence. The Association can provide full employment for its members and it has taken over some activities previously carried out by government, with a notable increase in the morale of the people as a result. If the Nguju community were to develop tourism and/or allow mining, then advice from the Gagudju Association should be sought.

#### Art and Craft

Art and craft activities are labour intensive and, as already noted, Aboriginal communities have a comparative disadvantage in such activities. To illustrate this point it should be noted that the costs of production in Asia for such items as screen printed material (or batik), clothes-making, pottery and basket weaving are much lower than in Australia. These activities can exist in Australia only because of capital and operating subsidies, tariffs and product differentiation. The first three factors are beyond the community's control and the long-term expectations are that these forms of assistance will be decreased. The last is within the community's control and it could be substantially developed. Several different aspects of entrepreneurial activity could be fostered.

- Constant work is required on the marketing of the products with an attempt to establish them as prestige items.
- A constant search is needed for new markets.
- Development of new products, for example, the application of designs to new items, must take place.
- There must be prompt fulfilment of orders; promotional material should be developed more energetically and every opportunity taken to exhibit in shows.
- Attempts should be made to co-ordinate strategies of the various suppliers.

However, these industries are very competitive and the expectation is that long term profits will not be great. Traditional Aboriginal art work is substantially differentiated from non-Aboriginal art work but it is much less differentiated between Aboriginal suppliers. Thus, if a community finds one aspect of art work very profitable, then other communities are likely to imitate the former's production patterns. Other craft activities are in a weaker competitive position because they must compete with products from the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world.

#### Grazing, Horticulture, Forestry and Fishing

Beef cattle grazing could be successful on Bathurst Island. There are few cattle there at present and, providing the introduced cattle are disease-free, the community could establish a herd conforming with the requirements of the brucellosis and tuberculosis campaign with little cost in terms of fencing. If this was done quickly the island could make substantial short-term profits as a supplier of disease-free breeding stock for those stations subject to destocking orders. Cattle station work seems well suited to Aboriginal lifestyles and it could prove a satisfactory source of employment and income.



Aboriginal labour seems less suited to gardening, however. Many gardens have been established in Aboriginal communities and they go through cycles of being successful and then abandoned, often depending upon the availability and behaviour of a few key individuals. The garden at Nguiu is well established and well equipped and deserves constant attention.

Forestry has potential for further development since there are stands of timber suitable for building materials and there exist good market prospects for as long as Darwin's population continues to grow. Distance from southern markets, however, makes the development of markets in the south unlikely. What has been said about forestry also applies to fishing, although recent experience suggests that production problems can exist if it is attempted on a large scale initially.

While each of these industries may provide employment and income for the community, they are all very competitive and consequently long-term profits are likely to be modest.

### Conclusion

The simultaneous achievement of the goals of reducing dependence on aid and increasing per capita income will be difficult. In terms of general strategies, if Nguiu is to achieve these things it will have to develop activities which will yield substantial long-term profits. Like the Northern Territory generally, the best prospects for the moment lie in the areas of tourism and mining, if minerals are found. Other industries may have an important role in providing incomes and employment but they are unlikely to provide the substantial funds required for development in the long run.

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