

Research topic:

The Tiwi Story of the Mapurlarri Prawn Farm Development

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I was selected by Ron to be part of the prawn farm work. He chose me because we are the directors of our clan and can give direct feedback about what is happening with our prawn farm.

We are elected trustees, and we can give feedback to other clan members when we have quarterly clan group meetings. We can put it to the agenda at the quarterly meeting, the whole clan group comes. Also have meetings with OTL, and meetings with Tiwi Resources.

For the prawn farm the clan wants to know what is going on, and want to know what is happening in Wurankuwu. Our responsibilities are within the boundary of our Portaminni homeland.

The Prawn farm was specifically for us, Portaminni Clan Group. But when we start the business it is going to benefit other Tiwi people if they are going to come and work for the prawn farm. It will be for the benefit of Tiwi people that want to join and work, not just our clan group. We are doing this to create more jobs.

On our board, there are two people from each last name – two Portaminni, two Pilakui, two Poantimilui, two Tipungwuti – so eight of us. All board members are working with CSIRO, but mainly me and Ron. But it is Ron's project, and he came up with the idea. He put the prawn project under his Dad's name to honour his Dad. It will probably be up and running in the next two years.

The costings were an important part of the decision. As well as how they were going to transport all the equipment. Big trucks might damage the roads, especially in the wet, so they are going to bring in the equipment in the dry.

Leave a legacy for younger generations to carry on in the future

Its important to think about younger generations to keep country strong and to live in our homeland. To keep jobs running and keep the community running. And to be the next leaders.

Its important to be back in homelands to connect with country. We are trying to make sure it doesn't take years for us to finally go back home to country, and that we have a stable community. Having the prawn farm there will help a lot. It will be going every year, and will benefit community with fresh produce.

If the prawn farm makes a lot of money, this will feed back into the community and help with fixing the roads, and doing maintenance every year. It will be not just in the dry that we go back to the farm and start it over, but we can work all year round in our homeland.

Sharing knowledge – both ways working and collaborating

This project is about knowing scientific way and knowing our Tiwi knowledge and how we put these together.

We have been looking together where the good soil is, and how we can work in our Tiwi way choosing the place for the farm. We had to make sure we didn't put the location where the sacred sites are.

The first site, near barge landing, didn't have any soil. Even though it was at the beach, there were no trees. The other site we chose had lots of good soil, and it was in the right place.

We chose a place right in the bush, where you have to drive in, because that is the best place to put the Prawn Farm. We need to be near clay, because of the worms that live in it which will be food for the prawns. So, we decided to put it in the location where there was more clay and less tall trees.

We made these decisions at our meetings, with the other clan members and the other clan groups. Portaminni corporation directors were the decision makers and the others asked questions about the project, and helped us to go in the right direction.

No pollution on Tiwi Country

We want no rubbish in the community, especially at the Prawn farm site when it is built. How to put the pipes through from the sea and through to the farm area. We needed to make sure we didn't go through the freshwater area because it might affect the tanks where the prawns are growing. They need salt water flowing in and out, and no contamination from fresh water, because that might kill the prawns.

We need to make sure that any of the by-products or rubbish from the Prawn Farm are taken back to the dump.

It's important for us not to have pollution, so we have fresh food from the sea that is not contaminated. Needs to be healthy for ourselves, and for the other animals in the sea and the bush.

This is important for the Tiwi development project, that it doesn't cause damage to wildlife. We have been looking at the plantation, and learning from what they are doing and having an idea of what is going to happen in the next few years for their rotation, because the first rotation didn't succeed.

In the prawn farm, the carbon will stay underwater and not escape into the atmosphere. In the future we might look more to this and carbon credits.

Be a good role model

I have chosen to step forward for the prawn farm work, and tried not to be shy anymore. To be the voice, that is showing good examples to younger generations to follow in our footsteps and be the next leaders and voices for Portaminni and Tiwi in general.

Photos:



Fig. 1-3 Wurankuwu homeland and Prawn farm site

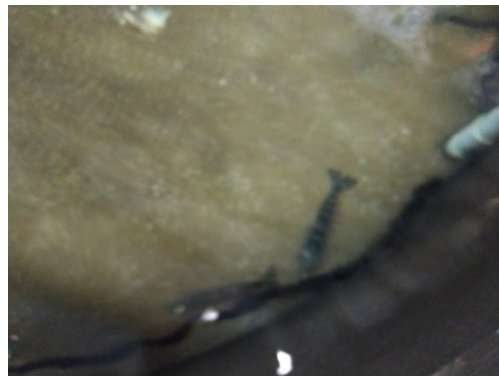


Fig. 4 - 7 Visiting the CSIRO prawn farm demonstration site, Cairns, 2024