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## 4.1 Land tenure

The Tiwi Islands Project comprises ten granted Exploration Licences (EL23862, EL24328, EL24329, EL24330, EL24331, EL24332, EL24333, EL24334, EL24335, EL24336) registered in the name of Matilda Minerals Limited (Matilda). The Licences and Applications collectively cover an aggregate area of some 790 km<sup>2</sup>.

This Draft EIS relates to mining lease applications at Andranangoo Creek West (11.63 km<sup>2</sup>) (MLA 24510) and Lethbridge Bay West (9.11 km<sup>2</sup>) (MLA 24511) (Figure 1.2).

The traditional owners of the land in which the mineral leases occur are the Yimpinari Traditional Owners. This is one of eight Traditional Owner groups located on the Tiwi Islands. The Yimpinari Traditional Owners hold the largest area of land on both the islands (TLC 2004).

## 4.2 Land use

### 4.2.1 Residential

The current population of the Tiwi Islands is concentrated in the three main communities of Nguiu (Bathurst Island), Pirlangimpi (Melville Island) and Milikapiti (Melville Island). Wurankuwu is a smaller community on Bathurst Island (officially recognised as an outstation), and there are four other official outstations, all located on Melville Island. They are Paru (7 houses), Taracumbi (2 houses), Yimpinari (1 house) and Takamprimili (1 house). The overall area occupied by built up areas is 19.5 km<sup>2</sup> on Bathurst Island and 6.2 km<sup>2</sup> on Melville Island (TLC 2004).

### 4.2.2 Tourism

The Tiwi Islanders have been formally involved in the tourism industry for many years, and in 1995 established the Tiwi Tourism Authority. However because of the unpredictable nature of the tourism industry, it is not considered to be a core economic industry although it remains and is expected to remain an important sector for the Tiwi economy (TLC 2004).

The Tiwi Islands Community Trust, which is a commercial replica of the TLC, operates two tourism ventures on the Islands; Top End Sportfishing Safaries (operating out of Milikapiti) and Munupi Lodge (operating out of Pirlangimpi) (TLC pers. comm. 2005). There are also currently two residential Fishing Tour Operators on the Islands that offer 'catch and release' guided fishing trips, and feral pig and buffalo trophy hunting (TLC 2004).

The Tiwi Barge Service operates from Darwin leaving once a week on a Thursday. The Tiwi Ferry also operates from Darwin on a three day a week basis, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, returning on the

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same day. The Tiwi Art Network co-ordinates specialised art tours to allow tourists to experience the local art and craft of the islands (TLC 2004).

There have been plans to develop eco-tourism opportunities on the island in the form of an exclusive low-impact resort on Melville Island. This resort was intended to cater for eco-tourism and recreational fishing. The resort proposal has been put on hold indefinitely, however it is reported that local landowners are looking at new options to develop eco-friendly tourism (TLC 2004).

### 4.2.3 Forestry

Forestry on the Islands has a long history dating back to 1895, when interest turned to cutting and milling the native cypress *Callitris intratropica*, as an off-season activity to buffalo shooting. During this time three sawmills were established on Melville Island, between 1895 and 1916. It was not until 1921 that forestry was identified as a potential industry for the region, because of its specific productivity advantages over the mainland. These include better rainfall distribution, more favourable soil types, groundwater reserves and lower incidences of termite attack (TLC 2004).

In 1960 the Australian government established plantations of *Callitris spp.* and *Pinus caribaea* on the Tiwi Islands. Over the next decade Melville Island was chosen as the focus for future forestry development. In 1986 the Northern Territory Government terminated their involvement with forestry on the Islands (TLC 2000).

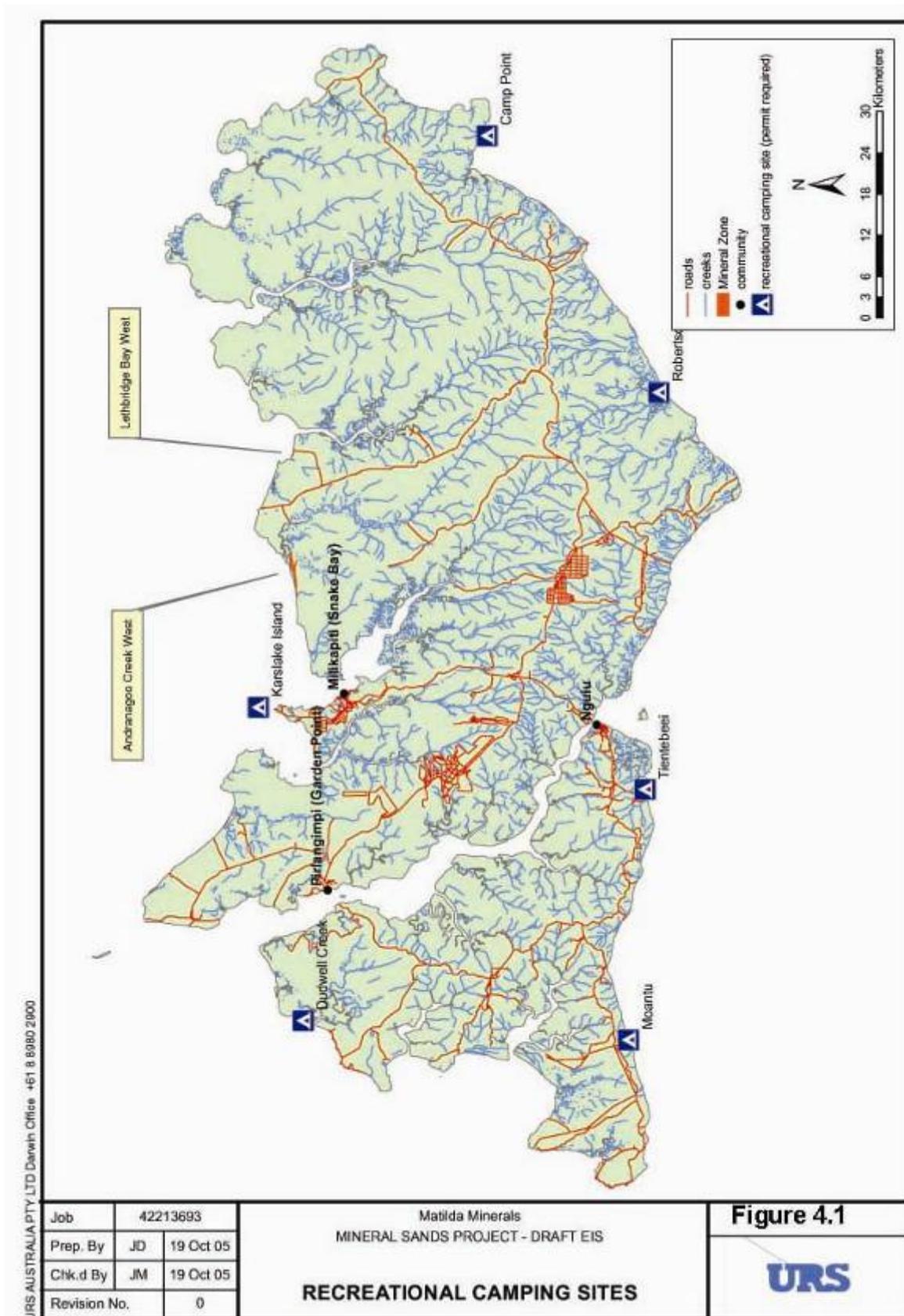
The Tiwi Land Council commenced discussions with Sylvatech Australia Pty Ltd (Sylvatech) in 1995 with a view to establishing large-scale plantation forestry on the Islands. In 1998 the Tiwi had executed options over land in favour of Sylvatech, of which almost 6,000 ha had been taken up by July 2003.

The current forestry project has a view of expanding to 30,000 ha of plantation (TLC 2000), which is less than 4% of the Island's land mass, and around 5% of the selected vegetation type. The forestry plantings mostly consist of *Acacia mangium* which is fast growing and used to service the woodchip market. Associated with plantation establishment is the harvest and export of historic *Pinus caribaea* plantings, and also native timber (TLC 2004).

### 4.2.4 Fishing/Aquaculture

High fish stocks and close proximity to the mainland has made the region a favourable destination for recreational fishing. Visitation to the area is increasing, especially as keen fishermen access larger vessels with greater ranges. The north coast of Melville Island has become a more viable option for those looking for a rewarding trip, and Port Hurd and the west coast of Bathurst Island have become regular destinations.

Recreational fishing is allowed around the waters of the Islands, and recreational fishermen can camp on the Islands at one of six camping spots (Figure 4.1), if they obtain a permit from the TLC through the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory (AFANT, pers. comm. 2005). As discussed



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above, there are also currently two fishing tour operators on the Islands that offer ‘catch and release’ guided fishing trips.

In regard to commercial fishing, the impact of commercial fishing on the region is currently poorly understood and confidentiality of data makes it difficult for Tiwi stakeholders to access information on the extent of use of the resource (TLC 2004).

Port Hurd is an important area for industry and Tiwi economic interests, as it contains the Marine Harvest barramundi sea cage facility. Marine Harvest, the largest aquaculture company in the world, commenced a \$6 million trial and constructed barramundi sea cages at Port Hurd off the west coast of Bathurst Island in 1999. By mid-2003, Marine Harvest were harvesting and marketing 20 t of farmed barramundi each week (TLC 2004).

#### **4.2.5 Hunting**

The introduced water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) occurs on Melville Island. Water buffalo are an important food source to Tiwi people, and are also valued for their contribution to tourism through trophy hunting, due to their confirmed disease-free status. On one occasion in the past water buffalo were mustered and shipped from the Island for live export. It is not anticipated that this will occur again in the foreseeable future (TLC pers. comm. 2005).

Feral pigs occur on Bathurst Island, and pig hunting is also undertaken by Tiwi people, including as part of tourist hunting expeditions.

#### **4.2.6 Other land uses**

Other opportunities exist for small-scale commercialisation of natural resources. Projects are not plentiful or large, and include crocodile and crocodile egg harvesting, mud crab farming, small-scale market gardens, buffalo management, pharmaceutical compounds in native plants, essential oil production, native bush fruits and bottled water production. Limited investigations have been undertaken within the commercial (wild catch) fishing industry; however it is an area where opportunities may be available for Tiwi enterprises in the future (TLC 2004).