



30<sup>th</sup> July 2022

## **Garma Speech – Tony Wurramarrba**

- “Good Morning. My name is Tony Wurramarrba.”
- “I am a Warnindilyakwa Man from the Groote Archipelago, not far from here, and I have served as Chairman of the Anindilyakwa Land Council for almost 20 years now.”
- “I acknowledge that we are meeting today on Yolgnu Country, and I pay my respects to the Traditional Owners of these lands and seas.”
- “I want to begin by explaining a few things to you; a few reasons of how we got here today.”
- “My People have lived on the Groote Archipelago, nearby our Yolgnu family, for thousands of years since the Sea rose and gave us our Land. Our Ancestral Beings who created our home are the Swordfish, Hammerhead and the Morning Star.”





- “We are Saltwater People. For us, our country is not just the Land – but also the Sea as far as the eye can see. As my father used to say – ‘The Sea is our Supermarket.’”
- “We traded from that Sea Country with our Makassar neighbours from the North and into China. We did that for a thousand years. Our people even travelled with them including my Great Grandfather, who didn’t even have a passport !”
- “We lived life on our terms, spoke our own language and practiced our culture until Balanda (white man) first arrived with the Church Missionary Society over 100 years ago, and then with GEMCO in the 1960s.”
- “Since that time, we have seen our health decline, our culture challenged, our children fail to be properly educated or locked up, and decisions made about our Land and Seas by outsiders for their own benefit. We had no power.”





- “But today, I stand before you and I’m telling you that those days are over. We are taking back control of our lives, on our own terms, with our own ideas.”
- “In 2018, I signed a historic Groote Archipelago Local Decision Making Agreement with former NT Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, where he agreed for us to take control of Housing, Education, Economic Development, Health, Law and Justice, and Local Government.”
- “Under Local Decision Making, we are:
  1. managing all community housing across the Groote Archipelago through our own nationally accredited housing corporation;
  2. building a new independent boarding school on Bickerton Island and establishing a bi-lingual curriculum across all Groote schools to ensure our kids learn to stand in both worlds;





3. establishing our own manganese mine on Winchelsea Island for the benefit of all TOs;
4. undertaking a major 300 hectare development which will create commercial opportunities for Local Clans including a timber mill, car servicing, aquaculture, renewable energy, housing and tourism;
5. creating a local health body to advise NT Health on better health outcomes for my people;
6. constructing an Alternative to Custody facility and establishing a Community Justice Group to divert young offenders away from the prison system;
7. establishing our own Shire to create more local jobs and provide better services.





- “I have always said to my People that mining royalties won’t last forever, and when they come to an end in 8-10 years’ time, we need a plan.”
- “At the heart of that plan is Local Decision Making.”
- “Local Decision Making creates better outcomes for my people – I know this; I have seen it with my own eyes!”
- “We are now in control and this is the new way of doing business for my People.”
- “But we need more Leaders from both Governments and the Private Sector to stand with us and support our Local Decision Making so together we can build a better future for our children and grandchildren.”
- “I want to thank you for listening today and I hope you enjoy the Garma Festival this year.”
- “Thank you.”

