

A 7000t shipment to China on September 11, 2004, marked the beginning of a 200,000t per annum forestry export program for Melville Island and the opening of the first stage of the development of Port Melville.

Port development enables NT forestry project



THE TIWI FORESTRY PROJECT is a partnership between Sylvatech Limited and the Tiwi Land Council that has developed a sustainable forest products industry on Melville Island, the largest of the Tiwi Islands, 60km north of Darwin.

Since its inception in 1997, the partnership has combined indigenous land ownership and employment with industry capital, research, knowledge, skills and management, to develop a major forestry project, which is rapidly expanding in both size and resources.

Currently encompassing the establishment and management of around 10,000ha of tropical *Acacia mangium* and pine plantations, the project will grow to a planned scale of 35,000ha over the next four to five years.

High-grade woodchips

At this stage, the fully-integrated project will support the ongoing production and export of high-grade woodchips.

Volumes will begin at 200,000t after the first *Acacia mangium* harvest in 2009, and rise to a sustainable level of one million tonnes a year from 2013.

The project is also now starting a significant five-year sawlog export-marketing program, initially to China, Indonesia and Vietnam, which will generate millions of dollars in annual revenue. The September 11 shipment contained the first sawlog cargo.

Exporting will be facilitated by the further development of Port Melville, for which funding has just been announced by Senator Amanda Vanstone. \$3.08 million will be released immediately from the NT Aboriginal Benefit Account (ABA) to pay for the completed first stage of the project after an independent engineering review and \$1.21 million will be released for the second stage when it is satisfactorily completed.

Port Melville is owned by the Tiwi Land Council, and is being developed and operated by Pensyl, a joint venture between Sylvatech and the Pentarch Group. Senator Vanstone also gave approval under the NT Land Rights Act for the Tiwi Land Council to enter into a 30-year lease with the port operators.

Responsible regime

The project has been developed and is managed in accordance with the most responsible and rigorous environmental regimes. These include 50-year approval from the Australian government under the Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Act, approval from the Northern Territory government under both environment and planning requirements, and the completion of an EIS before approval.

Environment Australia supports the project, and manages it under an ongoing strategic management plan, which incorporates conditions of approval and an independent audit process.

■ THIS PAGE – (TOP TO BOTTOM) –

1) THE LOG BARGE AND ITS 7000T PAYLOAD DEPARTS FOR CHINA 2) DIGNITARIES ON HAND WERE CYRIL KALIPPA, PETER RYAN, SENATOR VANSTONE, CURRENT TIWI LAND COUNCIL CHAIRMAN FREDERICK MUNGATOPI, AND FORMER CHAIRMAN MATTHEW WONAMEIRRI IN FRONT OF A LOADED LOG BARGE 3) LOG BARGE

■ NEXT PAGE – (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) –

1) PORT MELVILLE WHARF WITH LOG BARGE BEING LOADED 2) PORT MELVILLE AERIAL DURING CONSTRUCTION 3) DIESEL PILING HAMMER COMPLETES FINAL STAGE OF SHEET PILE DRIVING IN DOLPHIN CONSTRUCTION 4) COMPLETED STAGE 1 OF PORT CONSTRUCTION WITH 24M FRONT AND BREASTING DOLPHINS



The project is expected to deliver significant social and economic benefits to the Tiwi people, including the opportunity to participate in sustainable full time employment.

The Tiwi Apprentice program, managed by the Tiwi Islands training and Employment Board (TITEB), has already trained 25 Tiwis, and more than 100 full time positions should become available during 2004 eventually growing to 300.

Employment pilot

In order to prepare Tiwi people to take skilled, permanent positions, the Tiwi and Sylvatech Management Advisory Committee (TASMAC) is undertaking a job-focused initiative, the Tiwi Forestry Employment Pilot.

As a valuable long-term income-producing asset, the port will make a significant contribution towards the Tiwi goal of a secure economic future.

A large component of the completed first

stage of the port is constructed of sheet pile. LX12, LX16, LX25, LX20, LX25 and LX32 was supplied by Steelcom p/l and an on-site facility was established to weld 12 and 16m piles to achieve the required 18m lengths. This facility was also used for grit blasting and epoxy painting the piles in the splash zone.

The land backed section piles were driven 6 to 7m into the seabed. A land-based crane pitched the piles and they were then partially driven with a barge-mounted pile rig with a drop hammer in leaders. This was usually to a penetration of about 4m.

Rock layers

A Kobe K15 diesel hammer, mounted on flying leaders, did the final driving. Generally the first 1 to 2m of driving was soft apart from a hard crust of rock gibbers of varying size lying on the surface.

Then variable rock layers up to 500mm thick were encountered but generally the last 1.5 to 2m was fairly hard driving with up to and above 200 blows a metre required.

The tie back system was a combination of conventional deadmen with wire rope ties, cement stabilised fill and extensive use of Tensar anchored to the sheet piles.

The construction of the four, square, sheet pile dolphins, was achieved using a barge-mounted crane and the K15 diesel hammer. Similar driving results to the land backed section were encountered.

The project was recently named winner of the Northern Territory medium business award in the 2004 Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in community business partnerships. □

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