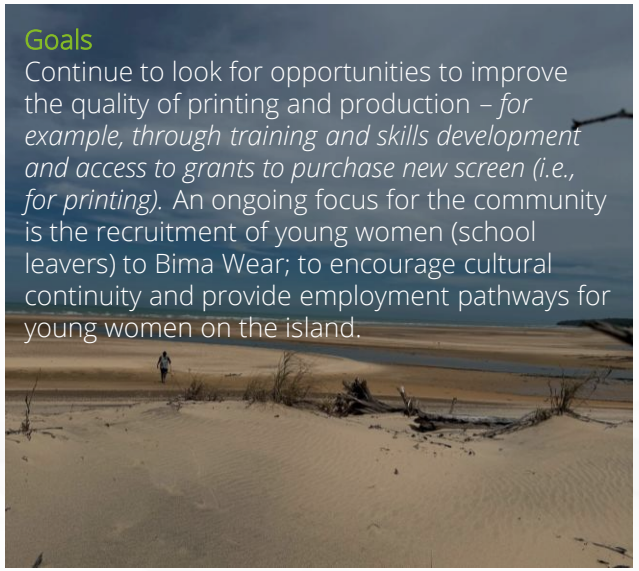
Case Study: Bima Wear

The Tiwi women in Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island, with the assistance of Sister Eucharia, created a women-led creative enterprise in 1969 – *Bima Wear*. The women proudly design, print and produce garments, homewares and cultural fabric prints. The everyday, occasional and ceremonial garments produced by Bima Wear celebrates the distinct language, traditional symbols, structures, family and environmental representations that are central to Tiwi culture. Bima Wear holds a significant cultural and social role in the Tiwi community and produces custom made coffin covers for funerals, ceremonial nagas for men, ceremonial skirts and tops for women, and outfits for religious and sporting events.

The organisation has grown to become a well-regarded and valuable Tiwi art centre, serving to help preserve cultural continuity and provide local Tiwi employment. Bima Wear creates a safe space for Indigenous Tiwi women of all ages and clans to share knowledge and skills between generations, and support mentorship.

Over the years, Bima Wear has created strong relationships with the neighbouring communities and art centres on the island and in Darwin. The Bima Wear team showcase their work and connect with other Indigenous communities at local events and festivals such as the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair.





Pictured: Wurrumiyanga Beach, Bathurst Island, NT.

1969 – Bima Wear formed. *With assistance from Sister Eucharia and the Catholic church.*

1978 – Bima Wear is incorporated. Purpose-built workshop is built.

2019 – Bima Wear celebrates 50th anniversary at the Northern Territory Government House.

Launches online shop

Bima Wear received the Special Recognition Award for their contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander textiles and fashion.

2020 – Over 2020 and 2021, the Bima Wear workshop closed temporarily for repairs and upgrades.

2021 – Successful application for $60,000 tourism grant through the Northern Territory government, to refit shop and install new landmark mural.

2023 – Joined the CED Program

Funding secured to enable recruitment of full-time manager.

2024 – Grant applications lodged to support further upgrades to workshops and develop new long-term strategic plan.

Secured funding from the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS) program to deliver skills development and training programs.

Bima Wear attends and facilitates an exhibit at Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair 2024, for the first time. *This has continued for both 2025 and 2026.*

2025 – School leavers begin attending Bima Wear for work experience

2026 – Started planning (with a tour company) for tour groups to visit Bima. *The first tour group was facilitated in 2026.*

Secured major grant of $1.4 million from Department of Social Services to support community-led solutions to economic development, including refurbishment of Bima Wear facilities, and establishing accommodation and a cultural hub.

The future for Bima Wear

Bima Wear aspires to improve the quality of their printing, such that Tiwi culture through art can be acknowledged on a national scale.

In the future, Bima Wear will look for opportunities in other retail areas, such as upholstery materials for architectural or construction projects.

Community impact: Bima Wear

Bima Wear **has created an organisation and space that serves local community** by enabling access to cultural art and garment, as well as providing employment and training opportunities for Tiwi women on the island.

In 2024, Bima Wear completed the **Shop Fitout and Mural project** which proudly showcase Tiwi designs on a mural outside of the Bima Wear workshop.

Older women, including founding members of Bima Wear, have been able to pass down cultural knowledge, skills and mentorship to the younger generation through work experience programs.









"[Bima started] sitting under a tree and making leather work.. all these decades later we are still here."

"I like my job at Bima. My favourite part is helping the other women – the teamwork. I like sewing and helping the older ladies."

"It is amazing to have Clare [CEDM] with someone who totally knows and understands. Not just understands Bima, but other communities and the broader knowledge of context."

"Last year we made more money at the Darwin Art Fair than we had in previous years. It was a great to be able to say 'Bima is Back!'."

- Bima Wear