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Submission to the Belém Mission to 1.5

To: The COP31, COP30 and COP29 Presidencies, Belém Mission to 1.5 (presidencies@unfccc.int)

Mirabou Energy is an Indigenous owned, controlled and operated energy company delivering energy transition projects in Indigenous communities in remote and very remote locations across the Torres Strait and Gulf Savannah region in Far North-West Queensland, Australia.

Since 2019 we have partnered with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC), the elected local government representing all 15 Torres Strait Island communities, to replace emission intensive centralised diesel generation with solar photovoltaics and community battery storage. We welcome this opportunity to contribute to the Belém Mission to 1.5, and offer the following reflections drawn directly from our experience delivering renewable energy in one of the world's most climate-exposed and institutionally isolated regions.

This submission focuses on the regional and local scale: the isolated, diesel-dependent electricity networks of small island and remote communities, using the Torres Strait as our primary case study.

1. Action areas and solutions with the highest impact potential

Priority solutions and innovations

The technology to decarbonise isolated networks already exists and is proven: distributed solar PV, community-scale battery storage and modern control systems can replace diesel generation in island and remote communities, cutting stationary electricity emissions by up to around 70% while improving reliability and disaster resilience. Our own project, the Torres Strait Renewable Energy Project (TSREP), is delivering exactly this across the pilot islands of Masig, Ugar and Erub, with a pathway to all 15 Torres Strait communities. The highest-impact opportunity is not further technology development, but structured, replicable deployment of what already works, paired with genuine community ownership of the resulting assets. The pilot phase is particularly important as it highlights the existing barriers to progress energy transition in remote and very remote locations.

Finance, technology, capacity-building and institutional opportunities

Blended finance structures that combine grant funding, government and Indigenous-specific debt facilities (in Australia, for example, Indigenous Business Australia), and commercial equity are essential to make isolated network projects bankable at the scale required. Institutionally, the opportunity is to formally recognise and resource community-owned and Indigenous-owned energy asset models – not only community consultation, but community and Traditional Owner control of the assets themselves – supported by dedicated capacity-building for the commercial, technical and governance skills this requires.

The most significant barriers

Barriers to the energy transition in isolated networks are not primarily technical. They are commercial, regulatory and policy. Commercially, small and dispersed customer bases mean isolated network projects rarely achieve standalone economics, and existing electricity market and network regulatory frameworks are built around large, interconnected grids rather than small, off-grid or islanded systems. Regulatory approval and compliance costs are frequently disproportionate to project scale, and there is no consistent, tailored regulatory pathway for community-owned or Indigenous-led isolated energy assets. Removing these commercial and regulatory barriers – not just continuing to prove the technology – is now the binding constraint on scaling the energy transition in remote and island communities.

From “what” and “so what” to “now what”

Much of the international conversation on climate and energy has, understandably, focused on establishing what is happening and so what it means: cataloguing impacts, quantifying emissions gaps, and building the case for action. That case is now well established, including for isolated and remote communities. What is needed from the Belém Mission to 1.5 is a shift in language and focus to “now what”: concrete, resourced, replicable pathways to implementation, with clear owners, timeframes and finance attached. We encourage the Mission’s 2026 work programme to prioritise this shift.

2. Strengthening international cooperation to enable implementation

First Nations and Indigenous participation, and the climate finance access gap

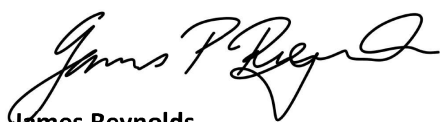
The Torres Strait Islands are experiencing climate impacts — sea-level rise, more frequent and intense cyclones, coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion — that are comparable in scale and urgency to those faced by Pacific Island states such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and Fiji. Torres Strait Islander communities are First Nations peoples with distinct governance structures, Native Title rights, and long-standing knowledge of Country and sea. Yet because the Torres Strait is part of a sovereign nation-state (Australia) rather than a sovereign nation in its own right, it is structurally excluded from the international climate finance mechanisms — the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, the Loss and Damage Fund and others — that are designed around access by Parties. The result is a sub-national Indigenous region facing Pacific-equivalent climate risk, without Pacific-equivalent access to the finance instruments built to respond to that risk. We encourage the Belém Mission to 1.5 to examine mechanisms — whether direct-access windows, intermediary accreditation, or dedicated sub-national and Indigenous finance facilities — that would allow regions like the Torres Strait to draw on international climate finance despite sitting inside, rather than alongside, a Party to the Convention.

The role of commercial entities

Commercial entities — particularly Indigenous-owned ones — have a significant role to play in closing this gap. Mirabou Energy’s experience in the Torres Strait shows what this looks like in practice: structuring and blending finance from grant, debt and equity sources into bankable projects; bringing the commercial, technical and project delivery capability that community councils and Traditional Owner bodies may not hold in-house; and doing so under community governance, through mechanisms such as joint project steering committees, Community Benefits Plans with local employment and procurement targets, and a pathway toward community-owned energy assets. Mirabou also works with a number of communities in the Gulf Savannah region of Queensland to explore exactly this kind of community-owned asset model. Commercial delivery capability, paired with Indigenous governance and ownership, is a practical and replicable vehicle for turning international climate finance and ambition into implementation on the ground — the “now what” this Mission is seeking. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute further to the Mission’s work throughout 2026, including through direct engagement with the Presidencies and the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform.

We thank the Presidencies for the opportunity to contribute to the Belém Mission to 1.5, and would welcome further engagement as this work progresses through 2026.

Yours sincerely,



James Reynolds
Chief Executive Officer
Mirabou Energy