



West MacDonnell (Tyurretye) National Park

Draft Joint Management Plan August 2009



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MAKING A SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT PLAN

Submissions may be made on-line at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nretas/consult/>. Every submission is important but those that give reasons for concern with supporting information and constructive suggestions are most useful.

Please include your name, contact details and area of interest. Be clear what parts of the draft Plan you disagree with, as well as what you especially support. Refer to sections and page numbers.

The draft plan is available for public comment for a six week period.

In keeping with the Act, the joint management partners will consider all public comment and amend the draft as appropriate. The completed draft Joint Management Plan will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Parks and Wildlife and will come into effect after seven sitting days of the Assembly.



Mt Sonder. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

West MacDonnell Ranges National Park
Joint Management Plan

Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory,
Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport,
PO Box 1120,
ALICE SPRINGS, NT, 0871.

This document is available at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nretas/consult/>.

Cover: West MacDonnell Ranges. Photo: Tourism NT.

Published by the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport

ISBN

FOREWORD

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The West MacDonnell National Park is without doubt, one of the Territory's most important tourist destinations, a keystone of Australia's Red Centre National Landscape and we hope a future World Heritage site. The Park makes a vital contribution to the Alice Springs regional and Territory economy.



The Park's conservation values are rated internationally. Its geology and spectacular landscapes, which fascinate and inspire so many visitors, are also a factor behind the area's biological diversity. The Park's habitats support a fantastic array of species. They park may in the future play a role in the reintroduction of threatened species.

Moreover this National Park, as recognised by this Joint Management Plan, is a part of the traditional lands of the Arrernte people. The Plan reinforces Traditional Owners' connection to country under both Territory and traditional law. It identifies meaningful ways for them to be involved in the Park's management. The cooperative development of this Plan is evidence of the positive relationships developing between the partners in the early days of this new relationship.

The Park's core values will continue to be protected, and where possible enhanced. Through joint management, this Plan paves the way for continued high levels of visitor enjoyment including new opportunities to understanding the land from the perspective of its traditional Aboriginal owners. Land management also will combine the experience and skills of both joint management partners.

I am confident the public will share in the vision of the joint management partners and welcome the Park's future as outlined in this Plan.

I congratulate the Park's Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service for their work to complete this joint plan. I also thank the Central Land Council for their contribution in helping bring this Plan to completion.

Mr Karl Hampton MLA
Minister for Parks and Wildlife

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

This is the first management plan for the West MacDonnell National Park. It has been prepared by three planning teams with representatives of the 16 Traditional Owner estate groups of the Park, Central Land Council staff and Parks staff, with input from tourism industry representatives, business operators, nearby land managers and the community.

In 2005, amendments to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* required new management plans to be developed for jointly managed parks scheduled within the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act*. Section 25 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* lists the objectives and principles of joint management and the contents that must be included in this plan.

Planning for the joint management of the Park began with a series of large meetings of Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife staff, facilitated by the Central Land Council (CLC) in 2006. Well over 160 Traditional Owners and many rangers, scientists and tourism operators have helped put this plan together. Through over twenty participatory planning meetings and hundreds of hours of discussion the planning team drafted this Joint Management Plan.



Members at one of many meetings of Joint Management Planning Teams preparing the Joint Management Plan for the West MacDonnell National Park (2007). Teams consisted of Traditional Owners, Parks and Wildlife and Central Land Council staff. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

WEST MACDONNELL NATIONAL PARK

The vision statement represents our aspirations for the Park and provides broad direction for its management. It is a vision for all people who care about the Park's future.

OUR SHARED VISION FOR THE PARK

Our vision for Tyurretye/West MacDonnells is that all countries, peoples and dreamings stay strong, respected, healthy and connected.

OUR SHARED APPROACH

- **Together we all share responsibility for Tyurretye's past, its wellbeing today and its future.**
- **We recognise, respect and will help each other.**

OUR SHARED PURPOSE

- **To protect and conserve Tyurretye's outstanding natural and cultural values as identified by Traditional Owners, the community and the Parks and Wildlife Service.**
- **To share the responsibilities and benefits associated with the Park.**
- **To sustain a major tourism icon of national and international significance.**
- **For Tyurretye to be a source of pride and inspiration to the local community and contribute to the local economy.**
- **To provide visitors with a range of experiences so that people may deeply understand the Park while enjoying its attractions.**

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SUMMARY OF THIS PLAN

The West MacDonnell National Park is located in the arid zone of the Northern Territory. It is the largest national park in Central Australia. It is situated upon Tyurretye, the homelands of many Central Arrernte, Western Arrernte and Luritja Traditional Owners. The main function of the Park is to protect and conserve its outstanding natural, cultural and visitor values. Many of these values are recognised as having national and international significance.

Tyurretye is a living cultural landscape. For Traditional Owners, it is the result of the actions of ancestral beings who still reside in or travel through the most important areas of the Park. This country is sacred and linked with Traditional Owner religion and law. The continuation of cultural practices and enduring connection to Tyurretye is highly significant. The Park protects many sites with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage values.

Biologically the Park encompasses a significant proportion of the MacDonnell Ranges bioregion and is the largest and most important conservation area in Central Australia. It protects important geological features and shelters threatened plants and animals, many of which have limited distributions or are not found elsewhere.

The West MacDonnell National Park is one of the premier tourist experiences in Central Australia. The Park presents genuine opportunities to experience Australia's Red Centre. It offers a wide range of experiences, catering for both those who seek to appreciate its iconic features in comfort, and those who seek to 'get off the beaten track'.

A major focus of this Plan is the development of governance arrangements between the joint management partners - the Aboriginal Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service. Responsibility for decision making will be shared by the partners, guided by this Plan and by jointly developed policies and guidelines. Strategic operational planning, review and monitoring will ensure the partnership is equitable and effective and delivers outcomes for the benefit of the Park, Traditional Owners and the wider community.

For the life of this Plan, major management directions for the West MacDonnell National Park are:

Managing visitor experiences

- Developing the Park into a world class nature and culture-based experience of the Red Centre National Landscape, with highly desirable activities such as walking the Larapinta Trail;
- Nomination for World Heritage listing;

Managing country

- Conservation of the park's outstanding biodiversity through improved understanding and strategic management of threats posed by wildfire, weeds and feral animals;
- Continued management of the Aboriginal cultural values in accordance with the direction of Traditional Owners;
- Continued management of shared heritage values;
- Monitoring and evaluation of management effectiveness with regard to the park's most important values;

Governance and Park operations

- Developing an equitable partnership and participation of Traditional Owners in the park's management;
- Social and economic opportunities for Traditional Owners, their families and local industry;
- Effective use of available resources through good planning;
- Effective engagement with neighbours and stakeholders to better manage fire, weeds, feral animals and other pressures;
- Effective management and assessment of permitted activities such as research and commercial operations.

The Joint Management partners and the community are presented with numerous opportunities and challenges. It is anticipated that joint management of the Park will strengthen Aboriginal cultural traditions and provide opportunities for economic development, and also provide a means by which non-Aboriginal people can be inspired by and understand the country's importance to Aboriginal people. Greater visitor numbers present both an opportunity to underpin local development and a challenge to sustaining the pristine natural experiences which make the Park special. The partners also face weeds, feral animals, wildfires and soil erosion, which remain threats to the Park's natural values. It is hoped joint management of the West MacDonnell National Park will provide a tangible opportunity to reconcile the past and share responsibility for the country's wellbeing and its future.

1. INTRODUCTION

The West MacDonnell National Park is one of Australia's finest national parks. The main function of the Park is to protect and conserve its outstanding natural and cultural values. The Park is also a major tourism icon, with strong local, national and growing international identification, particularly in relation to the gorges and increasingly, the Larapinta Trail. It provides visitors with a range of recreational opportunities, catering for appropriate commercial developments and focused visitor use so that people may develop a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of the area while enjoying its attractions.

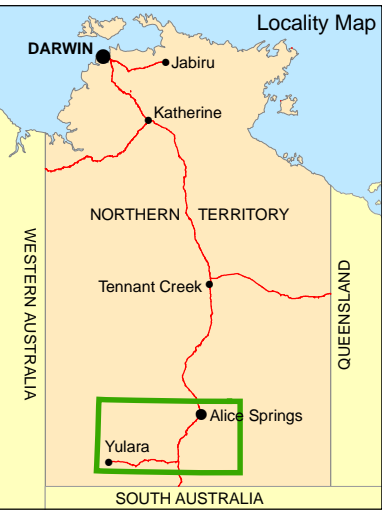
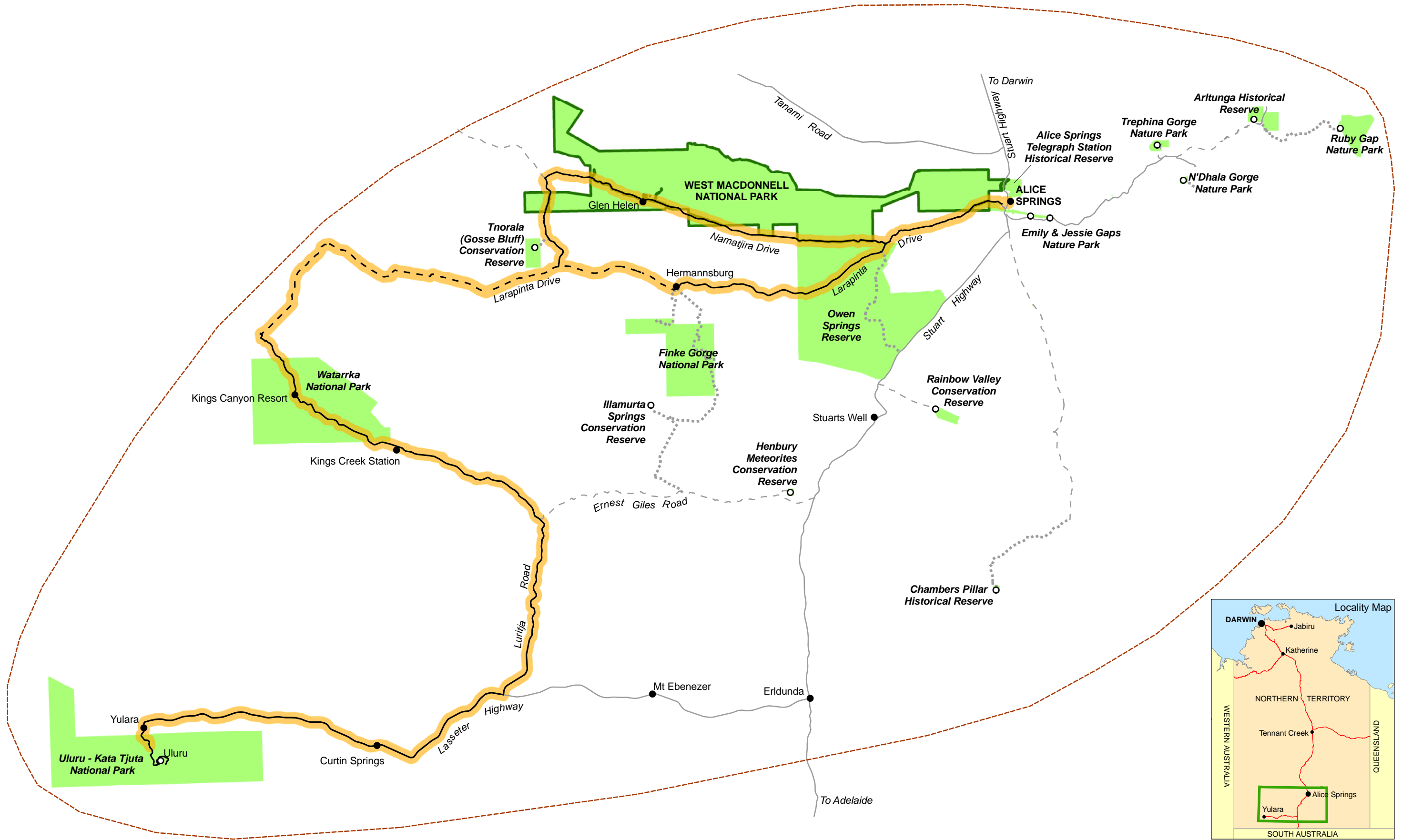
The West MacDonnell National Park covers a large part of country that is called Tyurretye by Aboriginal Traditional Owners and includes portions of the Chewings, Heavitree and MacDonnell Ranges. It extends approximately 175 kilometres westwards from the Alice Springs Town boundary to Mt Zeil (see Map 1).

The Park is situated on Aboriginal freehold land held by the Tyurretye Aboriginal Land Trust in accordance with the Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*. The Park covers an area of 2 528 square kilometres and shares its northern boundary with several pastoral leases - Bond Springs, Hamilton Downs, Narwietooma and Glen Helen. The Park shares its southern boundary with the Aboriginal land trusts of Iwupataka, Roulpmaulpma, Rodna, Ltalaltuma and Haasts Bluff. The nearest settlements include Alice Springs and Hermannsburg (see Map 2).

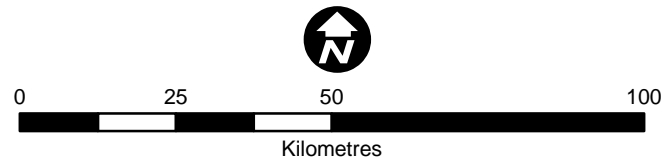
To the Traditional Owners, this country is sacred and of special significance. Not only is it rich in natural resources, such as permanent waters and flora and fauna, but it is also significant in Aboriginal religion and law.



Redbank Gorge. Photo Tourism NT



West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 1. Location Map

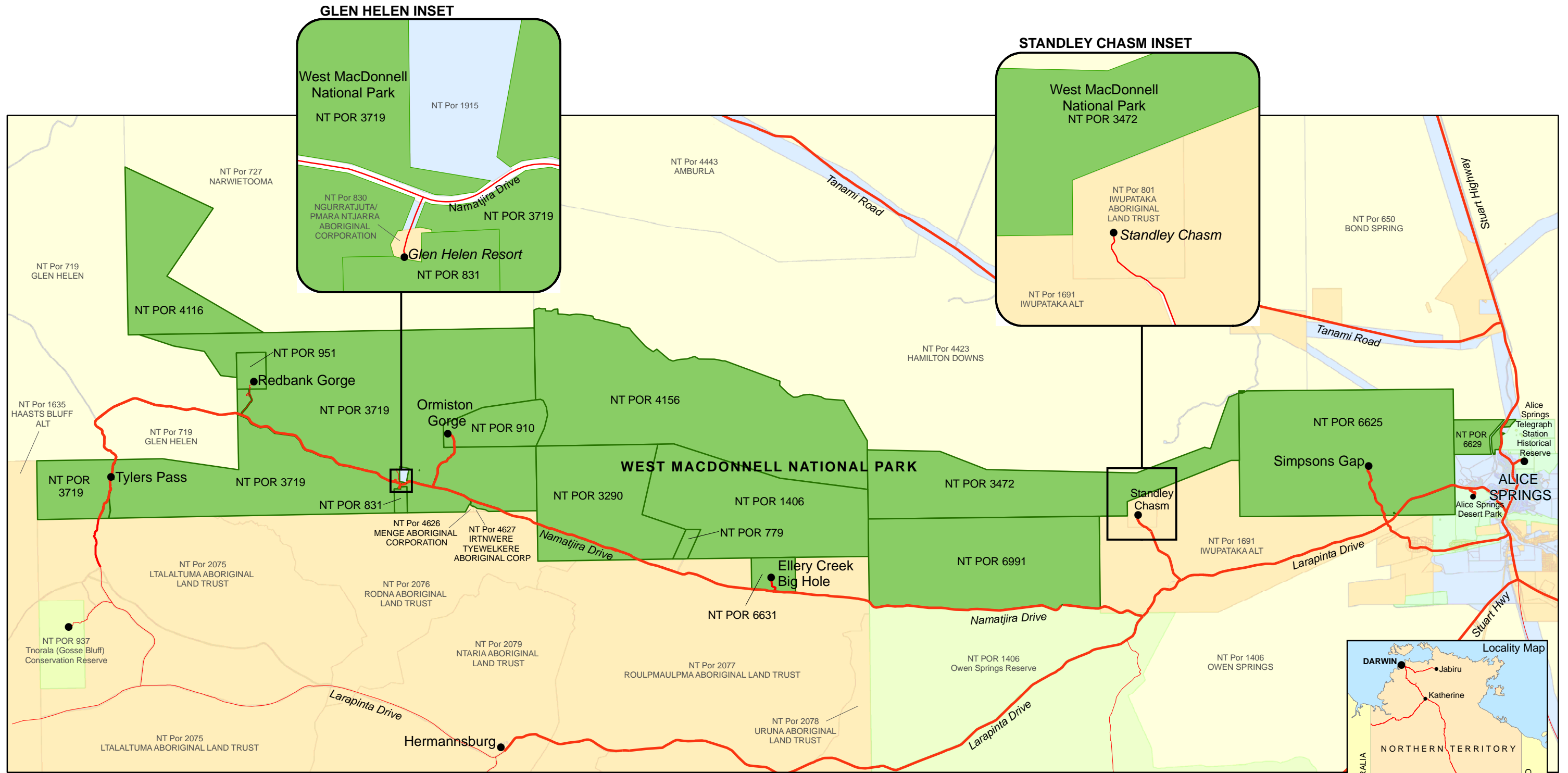


- On Park Locality
- Off Park Locality
- Sealed Road
- - - Unsealed Road
- 4WD Track
- Red Centre Way
- Australia's Red Centre National Landscape
- West MacDonnell National Park
- Park/Reserve

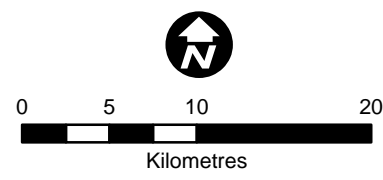


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Cadastral, Topographic and Road Centreline data obtained from Information Services Section, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Northern Territory Government.



West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 2. Land Tenure Map

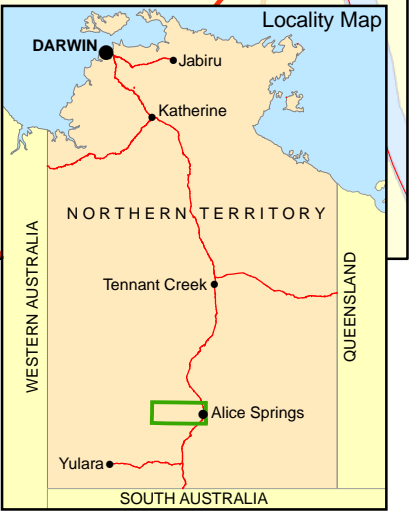


- Locality
- Major Road
- Minor Road
- West MacDonnell National Park
- Other Parks/Reserves
- Aboriginal Land
- Pastoral Land
- Other Land



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VALUES OF THE PARK

The primary role of the West MacDonnell National Park is to protect and conserve Tyurretye's outstanding values as identified by Traditional Owners, the community and the Parks and Wildlife Service. Active joint management should be directed to the most significant values of the Park. To achieve this, these values need to be clearly defined to align Park management and operations. This section briefly summaries the key natural, cultural and visitor values of the Park and defines levels of significance. More comprehensive and detailed descriptions can be found in Section 3, Managing the Park's Values.

A world class tourist attraction

- **The Red Centre experience** – The West MacDonnell National Park is a world class tourist experience and is recognized as one of the Nation's premier parks. Approximately 128 000 people visited the Park in 2008. It is internationally renowned for providing an authentic outback bush experience that epitomises Australia's Red Centre. The Park is part of a continuum of experiences recognised as a "National Landscape". The Park presents many iconic features enjoyed by most visitors, while retaining large areas offering space, solitude and a sense of remoteness for more self-reliant visitors.
- **Nature based recreation values** – The Park presents spectacular natural vistas that can be enjoyed by passing travellers and adventurers alike. Numerous waterholes, sheltered gorges and shady tree lined creeks intersect the Park providing places of respite and refreshment for travellers. The Park also accommodates a wide diversity of interests and experiences that range from remote long distance hiking on the Larapinta Trail to wheel-chair friendly nature walks, from passive sight-seeing to bush 4WD camping and also the potential for comfortable up-scale accommodation.
- **Community values** – The Park's social and economic contribution to the Territory is invaluable. The Park is an important driver of the regional economy and is an important source of pride and inspiration to locals and Traditional Owners.

A living cultural landscape

- **Connection to country** – The West MacDonnell National Park covers a large part of country called Tyurretye and remains a living cultural landscape. To the Traditional Owners of the Park their country is sacred, and central to their religion and law. Land ownership and joint management of the Park will contribute to strengthening Traditional Owners' cultural traditions which have held the country together since creation time. It also provides an important means by which non-Indigenous people can develop an

appreciation of the landscape and its stories by having Traditional Owners tell these stories in their own voice and in their own way. In doing so the park provides opportunities for building understanding, re-connection and reconciliation.

- **Aboriginal use and knowledge** – Traditional Owners continue to look after their country. The continuation of Aboriginal cultural practices and their enduring connection is of great importance. Senior Traditional Owners hold accumulated knowledge spanning thousands of years and provide an essential link to the cultural landscape. They are custodians for knowledge that will continue to inform and inspire future generations.
- **Sacred sites, art sites and historical values** – The West MacDonnell National Park abounds with sacred sites, culturally significant areas, art and archaeological sites. The Park also includes sites associated with the early contact period between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, early exploration, pastoralism and the tourism pioneers.

An internationally significant conservation area

- **Landscape values** – The spectacular natural landscapes of the West MacDonnell National Park present outstanding universal aesthetic values. The Park protects numerous sites of international and national significance with rocks that span the known geological evolution of the Alice Springs region. The major geo-heritage values relate to the evidence of earth history, mountain building, and erosion which are displayed in the rocks and landforms.
- **Surface and groundwater values** – The cultural and environmental integrity of the headwaters of the Finke River system is conserved by the West MacDonnell National Park. River flows are episodic but the headwaters support permanent waterholes and are among the most isolated, permanent freshwater habitats in Australia. The Chewings Ranges also support a number of permanent flowing springs. These springs are significant in that they support distinctive relict flora and fauna that have persisted for thousands of years.
- **Biodiversity values** – The West MacDonnell National Park ensures that its bioregion is one of the best protected in Northern Territory. The MacDonnell Ranges are recognised as one Australia's top 12 centres of plant species richness. It is home to a large range of threatened plant species; 31 are of national significance, 55 of Northern Territory significance, 18 significant within the Southern NT and 25 of bioregional significance on the basis of being either relict or having disjunct or limited distributions. The Park also supports a rich and varied assemblage of animals including at least 83 species of reptiles, 152 species of birds, 28 species of native mammals, 7 species of frogs and 9

species of fish. The West MacDonnells remain a stronghold for a significant number of threatened and near threatened animal species.



Visitors enjoying the West MacDonnell National Park. Photo: Tourism NT.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This Plan has been written for the public to learn about the Park, its values and management. It is also for the joint management partners, to guide and support them jointly managing the Park.

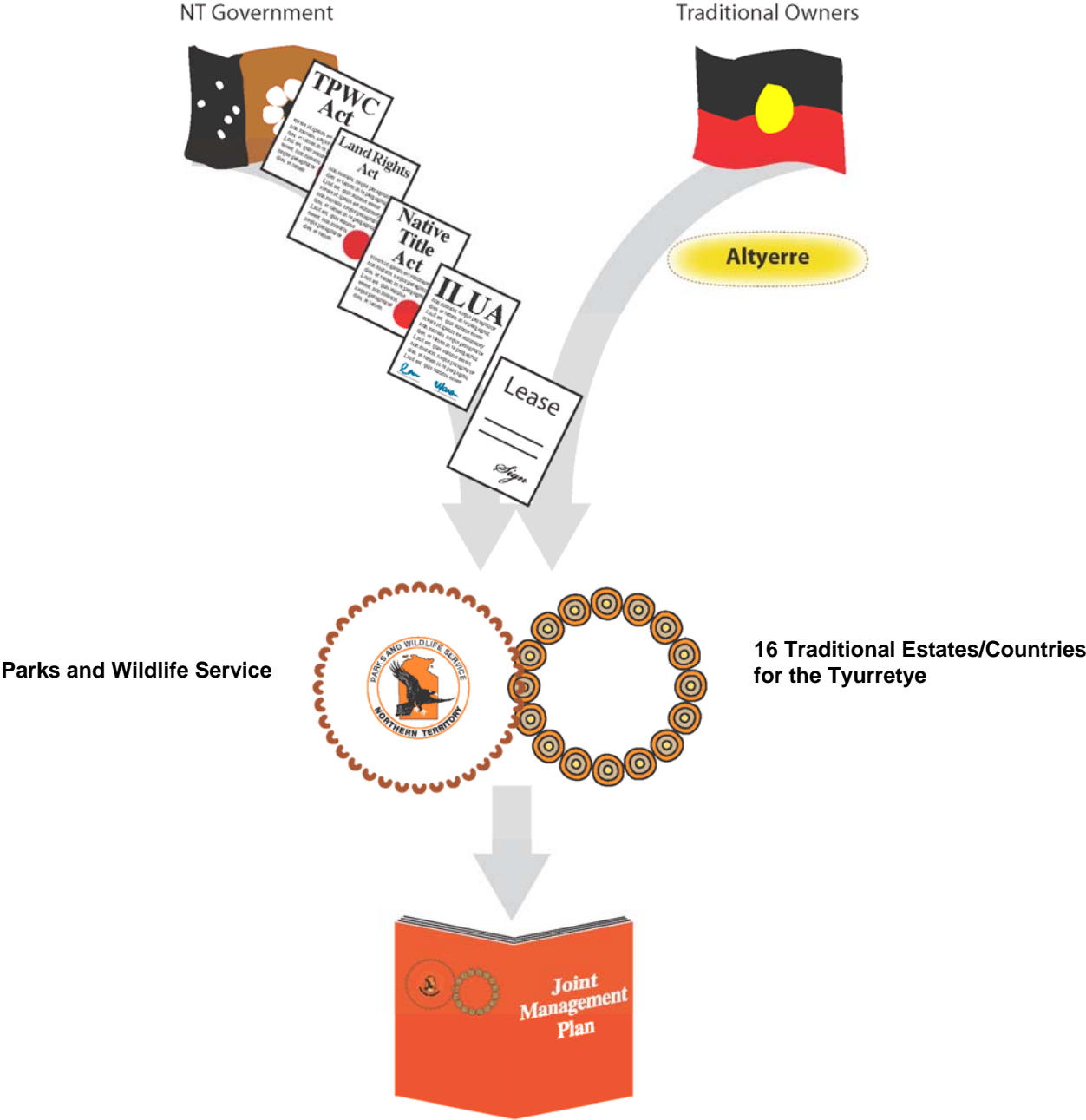
This Plan sets a common vision and purpose for everyone involved in managing the Park. It sets long term management goals against which the partners measure progress. This plan presents both general and specific management directions with respect to the Park's purpose and management issues. It also outlines measures that will ensure future development of the Park is appropriate.

This Plan explains how the joint management partners will work together to look after the West MacDonnell National Park. It provides direction for operational planning and day-to-day programs. It provides for the ongoing conservation of the Park's significant natural and cultural values and continued public use and enjoyment. It shows how public interests in the park will be best served while recognising the significance of the area to the Traditional Owners.

This is the first Management Plan for the West MacDonnell National Park. It will be reviewed after five years and remain in effect until amended or replaced by a new plan. A Park Lease Agreement provides further background to joint management arrangements and should be read in conjunction with this Plan (see Appendix 5).

The land subject to this Joint Management Plan includes the following land portions that will be held by the Tyurretye Land Trust on behalf of Traditional Owners; NT Portion 6625, NT Portion 3472, NT Portion 6991, NT Portion 3472, NT Portion 1406, NT Portion 6631, NT Portion 4156, NT Portion 3290, NT Portion 910, NT Portion 3719, NT Portion 831, NT Portion 951, NT Portion 4116.

Figure 1. Joint Management - The Partnership



JOINT MANAGEMENT

Joint management is about Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service working together in an equitable partnership to manage the Park. It is about the partners sharing their knowledge, values and interests, along with the values and interests of the wider community, to jointly make decisions in relation to all aspects of the Park's management.

In 2005 the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (TPWCA)* was amended to provide for joint management of twenty seven parks and reserves that were subject to the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act* of 2003. The "Framework Act" provided for the settlement of land and/or native title claims over these areas and created the framework for their joint management. The West MacDonnell National Park is one of the parks subject to these joint management arrangements.

In the case of the West MacDonnell National Park, title will be held by the Tyurretye Land Trust on behalf of the Park's Traditional Owners leased back to the Northern Territory for 99 years. The terms of joint management for the Park have authority in law under the *TPWCA*, the Park Lease and an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) registered under the *Native Title Act*. Selected parts of the Act are given in Appendix 4. A copy of the Lease is given in Appendix 5. This Plan complies with these legal instruments.

The *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, defines the Joint Management partners as the Park's Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service (on behalf of the Northern Territory Government) (see Figure 1). Section 25AB of the Act states:

The objective of joint management of a park or reserve is to jointly establish an equitable partnership to manage and maintain the park or reserve as part of a comprehensive and representative system of parks and reserves in the Territory and for the following purposes:

- (a) Benefiting both the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and the wider community;*
- (b) Protecting biological diversity;*
- (c) Serving visitor and community needs for education and enjoyment.*

The Act also establishes the requirements of joint management plans and the role of the Land Councils in assisting joint management by representing and protecting the interests of the Traditional Owners in relation to a park or reserve's management.

The Traditional Owners

Under Aboriginal Law the Traditional Owners of the West MacDonnell National Park, belong to sixteen countries or estates. From west to east the traditional estates are; Merina, Urlatherrke, Pmekerterenye, Imperlkngge, Parerrule, Yaperlpe, Lthalaltweme, Kwartetweme, Alkwerteneme, Uthipeth, Irleyekwarte, Urepentye, Kaperte Urrperle, Iwepatheke, Urengetyerrpe and Mparntwe (see Map 3). These countries are part of a large area called Tyurretye, the name for the West MacDonnell Ranges. Except for Merina, which is for Luritja people, Tyurretye is Arrernte country.

Generally, Arrernte Traditional Owners belong to land through father's father (arrange) and mother's father (tyemeye). The people affiliated with a country through their father's father, are called (a)pmerekwerteye. Those belonging to a country through their mother's father, are called kwertengerle. Arrernte society recognises (a)pmerekwerteye and (senior) kwertengerle as the core of the landholding group who hold rights and responsibilities for a particular country. They hold it in partnership and their roles are complementary and reciprocal. However people with connections to country through their father's mother (perle) and mother's mother (ipmenhe) can also be called kwertengerle. Although kwertengerle who acquire rights and responsibilities in this way have incontestable connections to country, they are not as strong as rights derived through arrange and tyemeye, and only in certain circumstances can they make decisions about country. Knowledge, leadership, conception sites and long term residence are factors that can enhance the status of these kwertengerle. Luritja people of Merina also belong to land through their grandfathers (tjamu) and grandmothers (kami). The context of the use of these terms provides an indication of whether the grandparents are maternal or paternal. Luritja people refer to land owners as ngurraritja. Ngurraritja means 'owner of the land' as well as 'spirit of the land'.

The country of a landholding group, in Arrernte called (a)pmere¹ generally comprises a set of significant sites or areas which are associated with one or more dreamings. On Tyurretye, sites or areas on the outskirts of an estate are often taken care of by a number of people. Handover points or borders between countries should not be imagined as clear lines because groups share interests in many different places. Borders are more accurately described as 'boundary areas' which can be up to a few kilometres wide. Areas where countries overlap or intersect may be of religious significance to neighbouring groups. For example, the impressive mountain region of Mt Zeil is an area where countries overlap. In this region, the landholding groups Urlatherrke and Imperlkngge share, among other things, responsibility for the caterpillar dreaming which begins its travels to Alice Springs from the top of the mountain.

The countries on the National Park are also associated with one of four patricouples (father and children pairs) which are each composed of two subsections: Ngale-Mpetyane, Peltharre-Kngwarreye, Kemarre-Pwerrerle and Pengarte-Penangke. Thus, on Tyurretye, each country is

¹ and ngurra in Luritja

associated with a particular patricouple and identified with predominant dreaming tracks, sites and particular families.

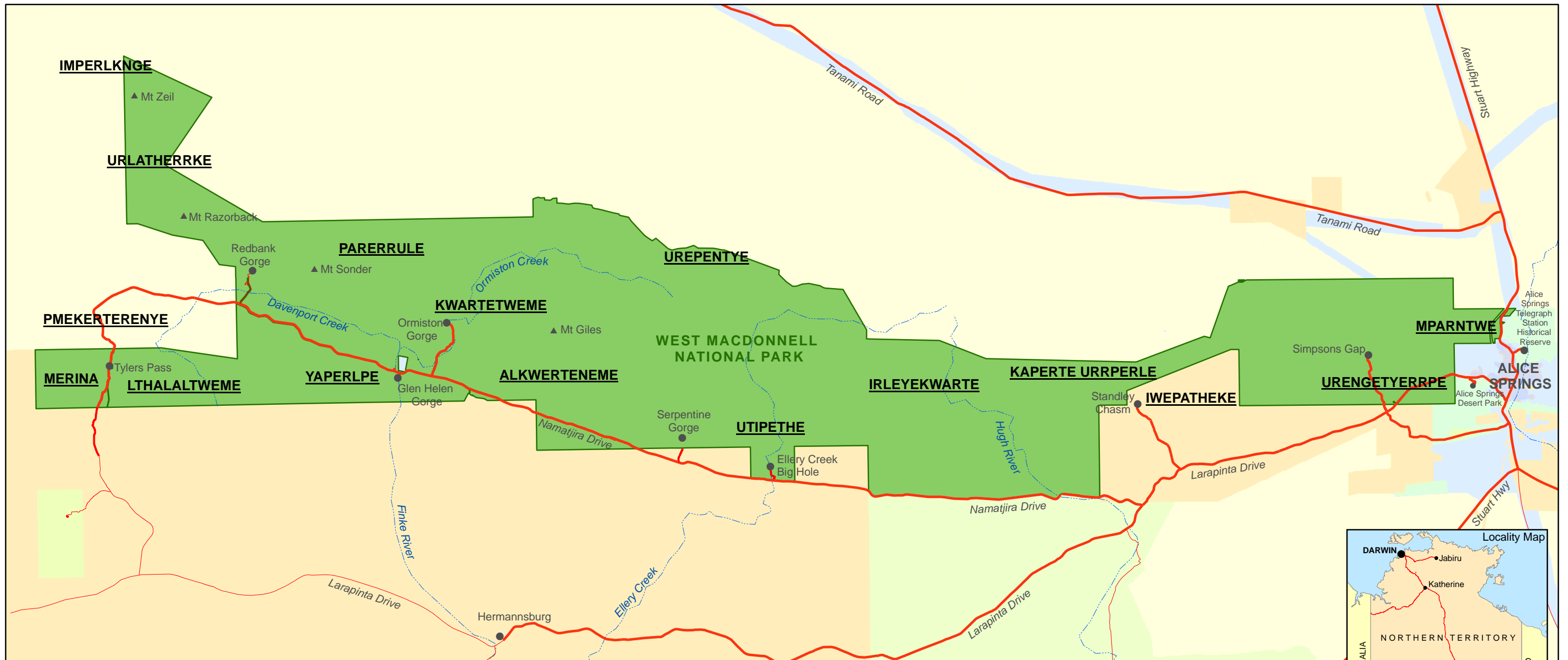
In a country owned by more than one family, areas or clusters of sites affiliated to particular dreaming tracks within that country may be more closely associated with one or other of the families. In this context, countries may split into smaller country units or sub-countries, although the members of a landholding group as a whole would together regard themselves as belonging principally to a large tract of country.

The Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service

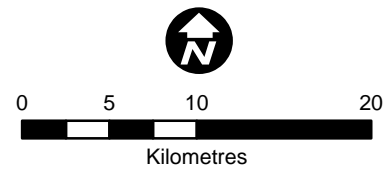
The Parks and Wildlife Service is a division of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport. It is a field-based organisation with approximately 120 park rangers supported by scientific, planning, management and administration staff. The Service is dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural values of parks while providing high-quality nature-based tourism and recreation opportunities for visitors. The Service is committed to engaging the public and working in the interests of the community.

The Territory's park system includes 87 parks and reserves covering nearly 4.7 million hectares. Parks provide a vital contribution to biodiversity conservation and the social and economic well-being of the Territory. The Service has entered an exciting new era and joint management arrangements now apply in Territory law to a third of the parks estate. The Service is building on valuable lessons learned from joint management at Garig, Nitmiluk and Tnorala (Gosse Bluff). It is responding with new ways of thinking, training and other programs to develop rangers' capacities to be effective joint managers.

The Parks and Wildlife Service is committed to seeing that joint management partnerships grow and become truly equitable and that Traditional Owners benefit culturally, socially and economically from joint management. This draft Joint Management Plan has been developed by the joint management partners in a very positive spirit. Like the Traditional Owners of the Park, the Parks and Wildlife Service is optimistic about the future.



West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 3. Traditional Owners Map



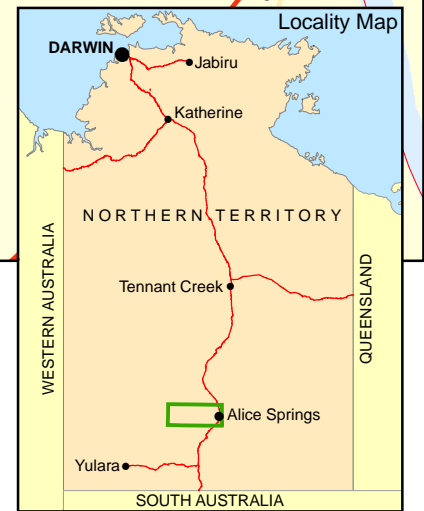
- Locality
- ▲ Mountain
- Major Road
- Minor Road
- Major Drainage
- West MacDonnell National Park
- Other Parks/Reserves
- Aboriginal Land
- Pastoral Land
- Other Land

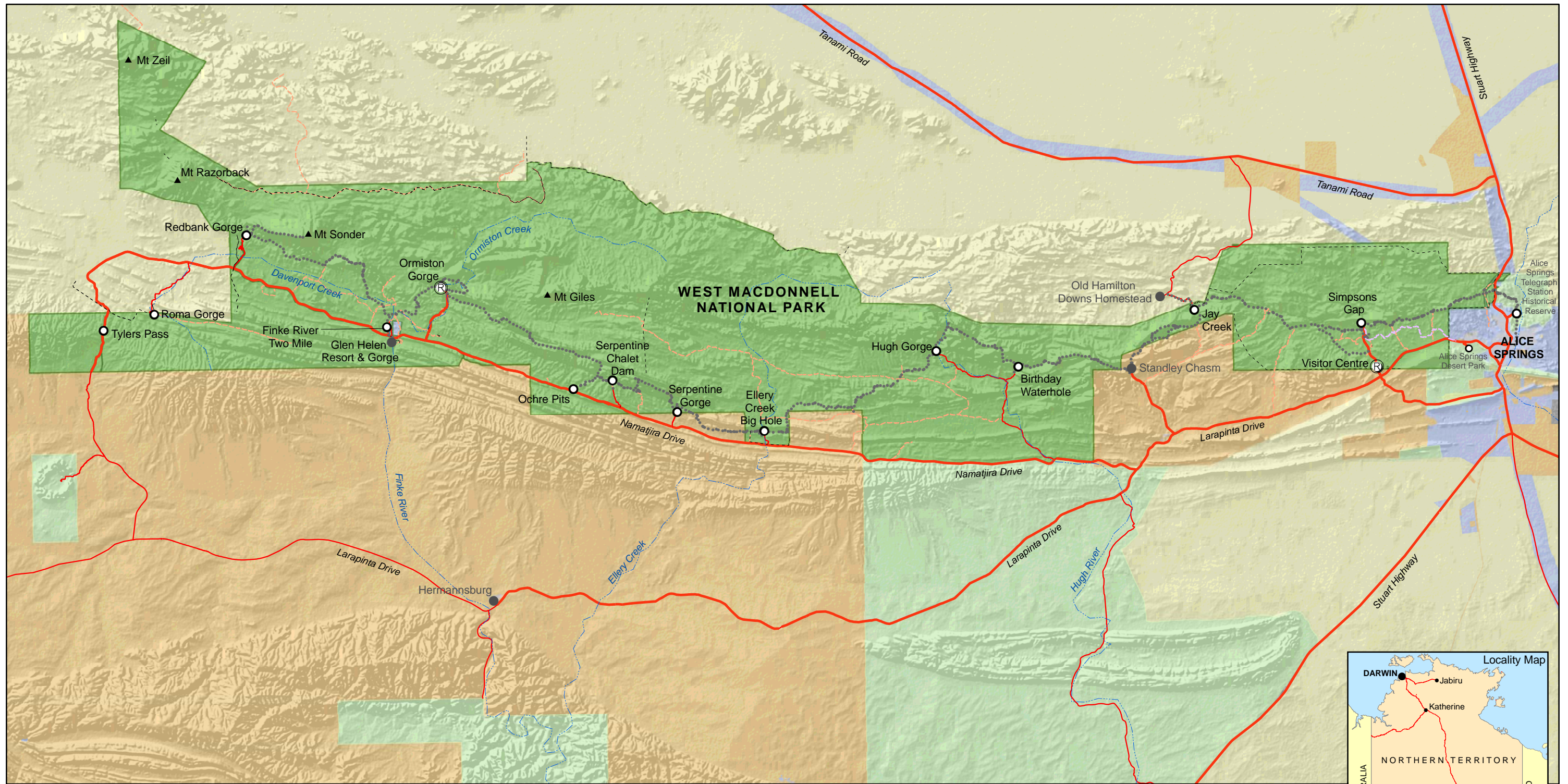


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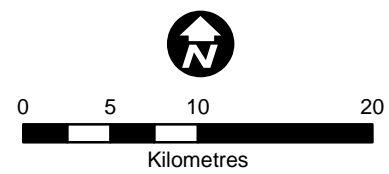
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West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 4. Park Map



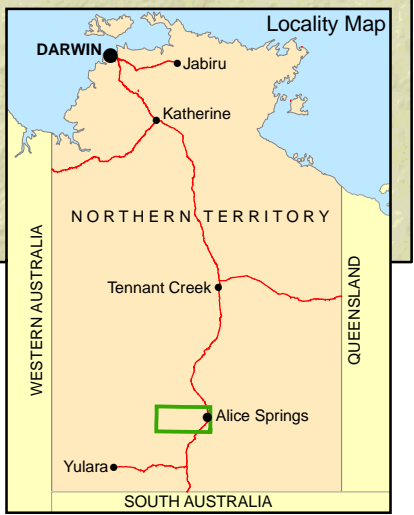
- | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| ○ | Locality (On Park) | — | Major Road | ■ | West MacDonnell National Park |
| ● | Locality (Off Park) | — | Minor Road | ■ | Other Parks/Reserves |
| Ⓡ | Ranger Station | - - - - | Management Track | ■ | Aboriginal Land |
| ▲ | Mountain | ⋯⋯⋯ | Walking Track | ■ | Pastoral Land |
| — | Major Drainage | - - - - | Simpsons Bike Path | ■ | Other Land |
| | | - - - - | Fenceline | | |



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2. PARK GOVERNANCE

Joint management is about Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service working together, solving problems, sharing decisions and exchanging knowledge and expertise. The preparation of this Plan by the partners marks a positive beginning to the joint management of the West MacDonnell National Park (see Map 4). The Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service also know that this represents a long term partnership that will keep growing and improving through commitment and with the development of new skills for effective good governance.

For the purposes of this Plan *governance* means how the partners organise themselves to work towards their vision. It includes all aspects of communication, partnership, planning and decision-making. This section of the Plan sets out a framework for the Park's governance. In doing so it marks a solid start, but in itself this will not guarantee effective governance. By monitoring joint management, the partners will be able to make changes when necessary and continue to improve and build strong governance over time.

This section also addresses the business of managing resources to support the implementation of directions identified in this Plan. Important operational activities include employment and training, enterprise development, administration of permits and commercial operations, and stakeholder engagement. Checking progress and the satisfaction of the partners against the aims of this Plan is integral to effective joint management. Monitoring and evaluation of joint management is therefore addressed in this section.

Principles for good park governance – our guiding beliefs

Joint management governance for Tyurretye will be guided by the following principles:

- Trust, respect and good communication underpin a strong partnership.
- Sharing decision-making, responsibility and participation underlie joint management.
- Indigenous decision-making processes should always be respected.
- Management priorities should be guided by the Park's key values.
- Decision making should be informed, accountable, efficient, effective and outcome oriented.
- Risk, uncertainty and irreversibility should be dealt with cautiously.
- Actions benefiting a few should not compromise the needs of others, whether affecting this generation or the next.
- Progress is dependant on competent, well trained Parks staff and Traditional Owners.
- Participation, training and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people should remain a priority.
- Public and stakeholder support and engagement is crucial.
- Commercial enterprises can make the Park more enjoyable, provide extra services and facilities, and importantly, economic security for Traditional Owners.

- Joint management should be monitored and evaluated so that its processes continuously adapt and improve.
- Statutory responsibilities and obligations remain primary management considerations.



Flowers blooming in the Park. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

2.1 PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

West MacDonnell National Park has been leased by the Territory Government as a national park to be managed in partnership for the benefit of Traditional Owners and the wider community. Under this arrangement the partners are accountable to each other and to the wider community for planning and decision making.

This section of the Plan sets out a framework for the Park's governance and decision making. The framework outlined in this part of the Plan shows the agreed approach to planning and decision making based on the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Consistent with section 25AE of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* this section of the Plan includes processes for:

- resolving disputes
- dealing with proposals not in the plan
- addressing stakeholder interests

Respecting Aboriginal decision making - To speak for and to make decisions about one's country is a feature of Aboriginal law. Traditional Owners cannot make decisions about other people's country. Under traditional law, the landholding groups consult each other in relation to both internal and external issues affecting the countries on Tyurretye. The usual protocol among the Traditional Owners is to consult and ask the appropriate senior people of a landholding group about any issues arising on, or in relation to, their country. It is a matter of etiquette, even when the matter at hand is trivial, to ask and consult core members of a landholding group. The core members of a country are the senior male and female (a)pmerekwerteye and kwertengerle or ngurraritja who should be consulted. These senior men and women have the authority and the knowledge to make decisions on behalf of their group. Depending on the seriousness of the issue, decision-making can be informal and easily dealt with or require other people, in particular kwertengerle, to be involved, to ensure that the right decision is made. When talking publicly about country Arrernte and Luritja people will always request the presence of other people with traditional ties to land.

A partnership approach - Joint management provides opportunities to make better management decisions based on a combination of indigenous principles and western approaches to land management. A positive working relationship based on mutual understanding and respect is essential for joint management and decision making.

Working in a cross-cultural environment requires mutual trust and respect as well as clear communication at all levels. A shared understanding of country, culture and indigenous decision making principles are fundamental to making good joint management decisions.

The partners recognise the need for relevant training to build effective governance. Traditional Owners are willing to teach rangers and visitors cross-cultural skills, language and Aboriginal land management techniques. Rangers are prepared to share their knowledge of planning, budgeting, organisational structures and resource management with Traditional Owners.

Respecting differences and a commitment to understanding each others views will make for a strong relationship and provide the basis for effective joint management and governance of the Park.

Clear roles and responsibilities - Clear roles and responsibilities are essential for joint management to ensure the values of the Park are protected, visitors continue to have a safe and enjoyable experience, stakeholders are informed and involved in decision making, and proposals are considered in a consistent and efficient manner (see Figure 2).

Both partners have responsibilities for the management of the Park in accordance with traditional and Northern Territory law. It is important that Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife equitably share responsibility for making decisions about the Park. To ensure effective decision making, regular review of policies and guidelines is a priority.

Management Committee(s) - To reflect the interests of sixteen Traditional Owner estate groups and to ensure governance is administered equitably, the partners have agreed to start the joint management process with three Management Committees. The Parks and Wildlife Service has also expressed a long term interest for a single executive body for the entire Park. In the absence of a single executive body for the Park, it will be essential that the three Management Committees have a mechanism for hearing and understanding the issues of concern to each group, and develop consistent approaches to key issues that exist across the entire Park.

The partners recognise the Management Committee(s) as the principal strategic decision making bodies for the Park. The Management Committee(s) are composed of Traditional Owner's representatives from the Western, Central and Eastern portions of the Park, and senior Parks staff. The Committee(s) will be responsible to the Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Traditional Owners are integral to the direction and management of the Park. Particular country and skin groups have responsibilities for decision making, ownership and caretaking. Traditional Owners also have responsibilities for managing their knowledge and passing it on to the right people, looking after the land and its resources, maintaining sacred sites and keeping

the country alive. Traditional Owner committee members would also be responsible for passing on information to other Traditional Owners and relaying their feedback.

The **Parks and Wildlife Service** is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Park under the direction of the Management Committee(s). Parks and Wildlife is required to finance and resource the Park's ongoing management including administrative functions, staffing, infrastructure and services. Park and Wildlife are also required to keep Traditional Owners informed about management activities and issues.

The **Central Land Council** (CLC) has an important role in assisting joint management. The *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* defines the CLC's role as representing and protecting the interests of the Traditional Owners in relation to the Park's management. Specifically they are to represent and support Traditional Owners' interests, undertake consultations, assist with monitoring joint management processes, and facilitate the resolution of differences between Traditional Owners, if needed.

All joint management decisions will be consistent with Territory and Commonwealth legislation, and with Territory Government and Department policy and guidelines (see Appendix 3).

Community engagement and participation - The West MacDonnell National Park is leased as a public asset and the Management Committee(s) of the Park is accountable to the wider community. It is important that others with interests in the Park's management have a role in decision making. The size and shape of the Park reinforces the need for collaboration with neighbours and other stakeholders to ensure conservation efforts are not isolated from the broader landscape. Traditional Owners and park's staff acknowledge that joint management is new to the Park and it may take time to build effective relationships with neighbours and stakeholders.

Working with stakeholders and neighbours for mutual benefit expands the positive influence of the Park beyond its immediate boundary. In terms of visitor experiences, it is essential that the Park is presented as part of the Red Centre visitor experience. Forums such as the 'Desert Guides' network provides an example, where commercial tour guides and rangers share information and work collaboratively to best serve visitors across the region. Another example is the *Hermannsburg / Western Arrernte Tourism Plan* which encourages the expansion of visitor experiences to country adjacent to the West MacDonnell National Park.

Continuous learning and improvement - The partners recognise the need to commit to continuous learning and improvement. This process involves tracking progress against plans, evaluating results and purposefully modifying management to reflect new knowledge and insights. It also involves monitoring to measure efficiencies, improved effectiveness and progress toward long term goals. Feedback from other stakeholders and independent external assessment are other essential ingredients.

For a protected area the size and significance of the West MacDonnells, park management requires a long-term perspective, a dynamic understanding of its natural systems and some consistency in approach. However, these requirements are challenged by staff turnover, unpredictable resourcing and differing opinions about the needs of the Park's natural systems and what entails 'best practice'. Consistent with proposed frameworks for management effectiveness and NT wide reviews, the Park would benefit from a 'State of the Park' review carried out every 5 years. Such a document would systematically harness new information and learning for managing the Park. It should clearly identify mechanisms to address operational short falls, changes to management practices and links with neighbouring landholders for mutually beneficial outcomes. The successive reports could provide an invaluable reference for future managers. The 'State of the Park' reporting would also directly inform the preparation and implementation of 5 year strategic plans.

To complement their knowledge and skills base, the partners are keen to engage with, and learn from, scientists, other Aboriginal people and local people skilled in land management. Where knowledge is imparted by the partners, they request acknowledgement and return of the information to them for future learning and application.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Management decisions made effectively and efficiently in keeping with the vision for the Park.
- Partners satisfied with joint management processes and achievements
- An equitable partnership is maintained
- Effective participation by strong and confident Traditional Owners
- An engaged and supportive community.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

2.1 Supporting and building the partnership – The CLC will represent and support Traditional Owners' interests, facilitating consultations and (if needed) conflict resolution. The Partners and CLC recognise that joint management will be a process of continuous learning and growth. Special support and training will be provided to the partners in all aspects of governance, with attention given to needs identified by the monitoring and evaluation program.

2.2 Management Committee(s) – Over the next 10 years the partners will work towards a single decision making body for the Park. In the interim, three representative Management Committees will direct operational management of the West McDonnell National Park. These committees will

represent the interests of the sixteen Traditional Owner estate groups across Tyurretye, and the Parks and Wildlife Service. As a priority, the partners will formally define and document all aspects of their roles, as well as the rules and processes to effectively govern the park.

The Management Committees will meet at least once a year. They will consist of:

- Traditional Owners representing estate groups associated with the Eastern, Central and Western portions of Tyurretye;
- at least two Senior Parks Officers; and
- other persons invited by the partners to provide advice on particular issues or to represent community interests (for example, tourism).

2.3 Making decisions – The principle decision making body for the Park is the Management Committee(s). Decisions will be made by consensus, rather than majority vote. The roles and decision-making responsibilities of the Management Committee(s) are summarised in Table 1.



Glen Helen Gorge. Photo: Tourism NT.

Table 1 - Guide to Decision Making

		Role	Decisions to be made
<p>Management Committee(s)</p> <p>Representatives from Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a link between each of the partners and the wider community. - Provide strategic management direction and advice to park operations. - Set policy and procedure and endorse annual Park budgets - Consult with community, industry and Government stakeholders. - Consider and endorse development proposals. - Consider and endorse other proposals not specified in this plan. - Monitor and review management performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and approve all local Park management strategies and operational programs year to year, such as visitor management, community education and interpretation, repairs and maintenance, biodiversity, fire, weeds and feral animal activities. • Monitor and approve local Park policy/guidelines and decision making criteria to endorse or issue permits, contracts, licences and development proposals. • Evaluate management performance. • Consider and endorse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new developments or changes to infrastructure, access, business operations, commercial activities, living areas, mining - subleasing or licensing portions of the Park for specific purposes, including public infrastructure - proposals for living areas and extensions to the area of the Park. • Establish advisory or working groups to address specific tasks. 	
<p>Parks Operations</p> <p>Parks staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accountable for day to day management of the park. - Responsible for implementing operational programs, policy and procedure as approved by management committees. - Maximise on-ground participation of Traditional Owners in management of the Park. - Report progress to the management committee(s). - Monitor management effectiveness and adjust management according to new information, improved procedures, new technology and new threats or issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement management strategies according to approved operational programs. • Undertake day-to-day park management operations such as patrols, maintenance, compliance, community relations and search and rescue. • Issue permits according to approved processes. • Issue minor new works contracts, such as those for maintaining, replacing, repairing or improving existing infrastructure. • Employ staff, build capacity and employ Traditional Owners for park operations. 	

The role of the Management Committee(s) is to provide direction and policy. The Management Committee(s) will not have a direct role in day-to-day operations.

2.4 Expert advisory groups and working groups – Working groups of Traditional Owners, Parks staff, CLC officers and specialists may be formed to support the Management Committee(s).

Examples include:

- Larapinta Trail Advisory Committee
- Fire Task Group
- preparing public education and interpretative material for visitors
- preparing guidelines to assess commercial film and photography permit applications and research permit applications
- reviewing criteria for assessing development proposals
- progressing indigenous employment and training
- increasing revenue and resources

2.5 Participation of Traditional Owners – As a priority the partners will support innovative approaches to capacity building, training, employment and career development so that local Aboriginal people may be involved at all levels of park management. Opportunities will be programmed into all park management strategies and programs. Progressive targets will be determined and evaluated by the Management Committee(s). Programs will be modified to ensure participation of Traditional Owners is maximised (See 2.2.2).

2.6 Information exchange – Traditional Owners will be kept informed about management activities and issues. Traditional Owner committee members will be responsible for passing on information to other Traditional Owners. Through processes such as “Joint Management Forums” opportunities will also be provided for Traditional Owners to exchange ideas and knowledge with other Aboriginal people engaged in joint management elsewhere.

2.7 Monitoring and evaluation – The joint management partners will monitor management performance to ensure that learning and improvement continues. A monitoring and evaluation program will be developed as a high priority and will inform actions to develop effective governance. Performance will be measured annually using indicators relating to:

- the satisfaction of the joint management partners.
- the effectiveness of the joint management partnership (including decision-making processes, participation and communication).
- the implementation of annually agreed priorities.
- progress towards longer-term aims stated in this Plan relating to key park values associated with culture, country and visitors.
- appropriate budget allocation.

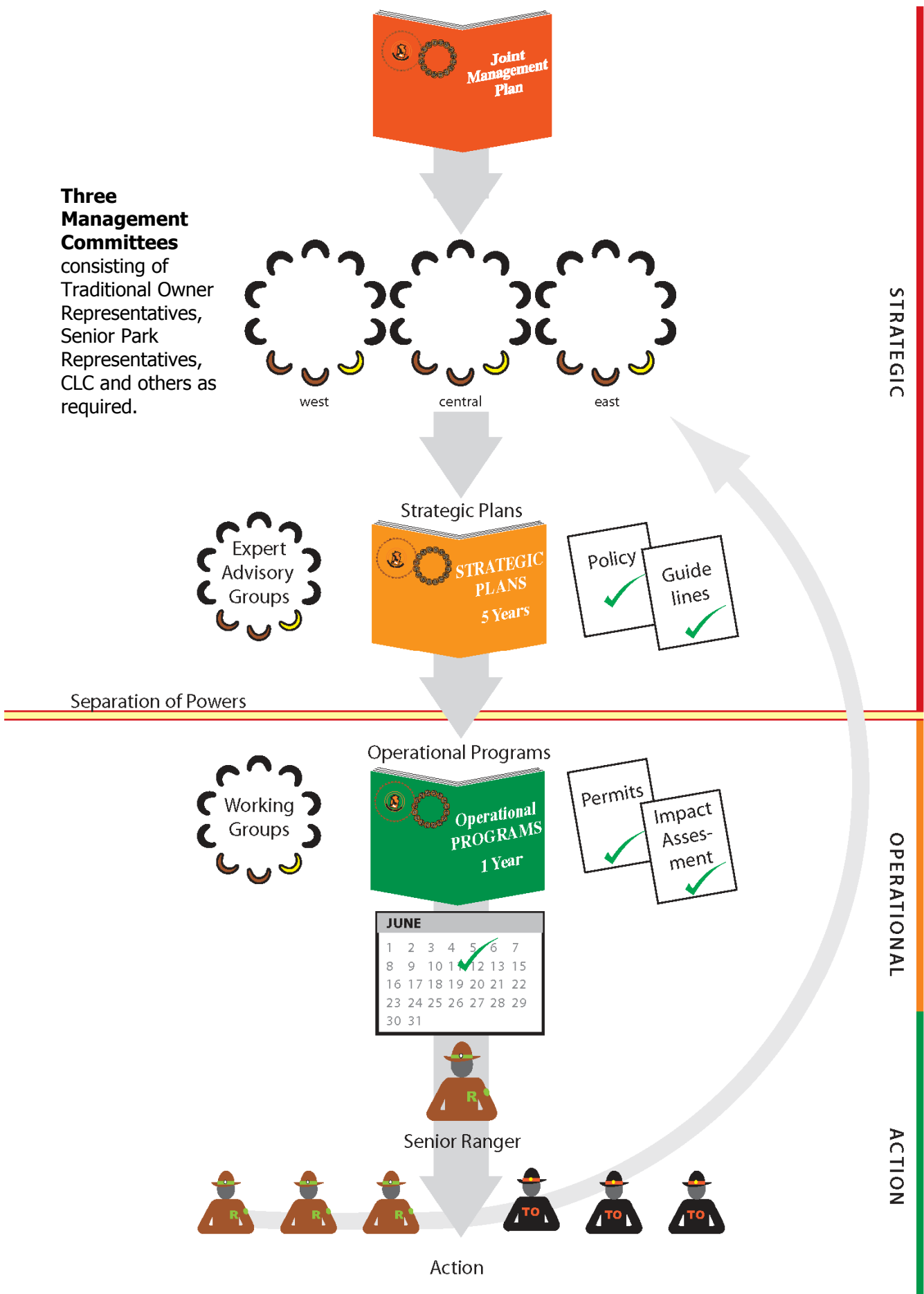
2.8 State of the Park Review – The status of the Park’s key values, knowledge in relation to them and the efficacy of management activity will be comprehensively assessed every 5 years. Where possible this review will be consistent with NT Government frameworks such as State of the Environment Reporting.

2.9 Resolving disputes – The partners will aim to resolve disputes through open discussion and communication, involving the CLC as required or requested by the Traditional Owners. However, should a dispute arise between the partners which cannot be resolved, in accordance with the Lease, the partners will jointly appoint an independent mediator to facilitate a mutually acceptable decision.

2.10 Community engagement and participation – The partners will build partnerships and linkages with neighbouring landholders, non-Government organisations and the local community to improve conservation and nature-based experiences both on- and off-park. The partners will work with neighbours and local community groups to address mutual interests. Such groups will be invited to work strategically with the partners on conservation and tourism planning, to resolve common issues and develop opportunities, including those that are linked to the Park but lie outside the boundary.

2.11 Dealing with proposals not in the plan – Any proposal not addressed in the plan will be initially considered by the partners through the Management Committees. Any matter that may affect the interests of Traditional Owners will require the consent of affected Traditional Owners. Any environment or heritage matters should be assessed in accordance with the *TPWCA*, *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) (ALRA)*, *Environmental Assessment Act*, *Heritage Act* or the *EPBC* through the appropriate agencies.

Figure 2. Park Management and Operations – Roles and Responsibilities



2.2. BUSINESS OPERATIONS

This part of the Plan deals with park operations, activities and administrative processes that ensure the aims of this plan are met and directions implemented efficiently and effectively. Important operational activities include employment and training, enterprise development, administration of permits and commercial operations, and stakeholder engagement.

Consistent with section 25AE of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* this section of the Plan also specifies processes for:

- managing sites of cultural significance;
- visitor management procedures and stakeholder interests;
- approving the siting of works and facilities;
- developing relevant training and employment strategies;
- dealing with commercial and infrastructure development;
- approving research proposals;
- expansion of the Park;
- dealing with proposals not in the Plan; and
- applications for mining and petroleum exploration.

2.2.1 Effective operations

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

Successful joint management is about looking after the West MacDonnell National Park in a way that meets the aspirations of both partners on the ground. If the partnership is working well, outcomes will include healthy country as well as opportunities for employment and training for Traditional Owners in a diverse range of fields both directly and indirectly associated with the Park. Meaningful participation of Traditional Owners in all aspects of park operations will be essential for an equitable partnership and good joint management.

Operations planning – Tyurretye is a large and significant Park and should be managed and resourced to the highest standards. Currently almost all funding to manage the Park is provided by the Territory Government from funding appropriated to manage the Territory's parks estate. Major works and funded works programs are subject to Territory-wide government priorities.

Effective management of the West MacDonnell National Park needs to be systematic. Park and agency wide priorities, performance indicators, monitoring, evaluation and reporting need to be integrated into a management cycle. All management strategies and programs 'on-the-ground' should be developed to achieve long term aims. Priority performance indicators should be identified and monitored to assess progress and management effectiveness. Every five years

the results from monitoring should be collated, evaluated and presented through a 'state of the park' type review. Currently a management effectiveness framework is being developed for the entire Territory parks estate. The framework aims to improve management and allocate resources based on Territory-wide priorities. Ideally, reporting at the park level would align, and contribute to, evaluating progress on agency wide priorities and performance indicators.

On-ground work in the Park is directed by a hierarchy of strategies and operational programs which are developed to achieve the long term aims defined in this plan. The Management Committee(s) remain responsible for the formulation of long term strategies and overseeing operational programs to direct work implemented by rangers, Traditional Owners, contractors and volunteers. The Management Committee(s) role will be to match priorities and new information with available staff and budgets to best achieve the park's long term aims and vision.

Staffing – The West MacDonnell National Park is administered as part of the Parks and Wildlife Service Western District operations, based at both Ormiston Gorge and at Simpsons Gap. West MacDonnell National Park staff may also be required to support the operations of other parks and reserves elsewhere in the region.

The Parks and Wildlife Service maintains a professional ranger work force. Ideally, personal work plans of rangers match individual effort with park priorities. Staff participate in performance appraisal and career guidance programs in order to align individual efforts with work programs, monitor satisfaction and identify individual training needs. Staff development and retention is a Parks service priority. All staff are required to abide by the NT Public Sector Principles and Code of Conduct. Traditional Owners have expressed a strong desire to see family members employed as rangers, specialists and support staff. The partners will need to consider creative ways to ensure more Traditional Owners are employed on the Park.

Research, survey and monitoring – Effective management is very much about review and continuous improvement. Good planning and operational decisions need good information about the Park's values, visitor use, environmental trends and the effectiveness of management actions. Research, survey and monitoring programs should have a clear objective and be integrated with operational programs and implementation. Research or surveys undertaken by external organisations require permits issued under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws. Park-based guidelines for permits will be negotiated by the partners.

Compliance and Legislation – Visitors occasionally commit offences against the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act or By-laws. The most common by-law offences in the West MacDonnell National Park include illegal camping, collection of firewood, littering, graffiti, off-road driving, the use of firearms and dogs being taken into prohibited areas. More serious wildlife offences are also committed. The frequency and range of offences may increase with increasing numbers of visitors.

A higher level of compliance is achieved through visitor education that builds a sense of personal responsibility. In most cases visitors abide with by-laws once aware of what they are and why they have been implemented. There will, however, always be a need for rangers to monitor visitor behavior and enforce laws and regulations.

Conservation Officers are appointed under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* and exercise the powers and functions conferred on them by the Act. Conservation Officers conduct monitoring and enforcement operations while on routine patrols or during specific, targeted programs. Conservation Officers are required to have completed the appropriate standards of training. Park staff not appointed as Conservation Officers cannot exercise these powers but can encourage compliance with legislation through education to raise public awareness of appropriate behaviour.



Sunset view from Brinkley's Bluff. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- The directions of this Plan achieved with efficient and effective use of resources.
- Park staff who understand and manage the country with confidence and competence.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

2.12 Management strategies and operational programs – Through annual meetings of the Management Committee(s) the partners will prepare integrated park management strategies and operational programs. Traditional Owners, Parks staff, contractors and volunteers will implement operational programs as directed. Operational management will pay particular regard to:

- this Joint Management Plan;
- directions from the Management Committee(s);
- Territory and regional priorities, available resources and cost-benefit analysis of proposals;
- Traditional Owner participation in on-ground programs;
- listening and responding to Traditional Owners concerns;
- synergies between on-park programs and collaboration with neighbours beyond the Park boundary;
- encouraging and supporting local business;
- assessing and minimising risk; and
- centralised reporting against key agency priorities and performance indicators.

2.13 Day-to-day management – The Parks and Wildlife Service will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Park under the direction of the Area Manager.

- **Management performance monitoring** – This will be developed and implemented as a high priority.
- **Financing** – Parks and Wildlife will finance and resource the Park's ongoing management including administrative functions, staff, infrastructure and services taking into account the funding available to the Service and the priorities determined across the NT. Opportunities to supplement the funding of park operations and programs should be closely examined and could include fees for sub-leases, commercial agreements, permit fees etc. External funds may be sought to address specific projects, such as culturally-focused projects that are primarily of interest to Traditional Owners.
- **Professional development** – Professional standards and staff competencies will be accorded high priority. Staff will be supported by ongoing training in all aspects of park management with special emphasis on cross-cultural training, joint

management governance and locally acquired knowledge. Indigenous staff will be provided with mentoring and peer support. Career development programs will be prepared for Indigenous employees.

- **Research, survey and monitoring** – Research, survey and monitoring will address priority issues, be directed by management strategies and specified within operational programs. The partners will seek the best available knowledge to improve management. Approaches will include listening to old people, documenting observations, actively researching, monitoring, and seeking specialist advice and community input.

2.14 Compliance – Selected park staff will be trained and qualified as Conservation Officers under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* and will endeavour to effectively enforce and administer the requirements of the Act, and its By-laws and Regulations as appropriate.

2.2.2 Aboriginal employment, training and business

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

Traditional Owner interests – Employment and training is an essential part of Joint Management. Traditional Owners of Tyurretye want employment and training for their families. Many see joint management as a way to assist in building sustainable livelihoods. Traditional Owners see schooling, training and work as essential for the next generation. Many Traditional Owners want their children to be employed and trained on the job as well as receiving appropriate training. They acknowledge that ongoing support will be required, and that they have a responsibility to support their young people.

Traditional Owners look forward to new opportunities for working on country and applying their skills and knowledge. During planning meetings, Traditional Owners identified a range of employment opportunities. These included working as rangers in the Park and as community rangers, tour guiding, running family businesses and supervising volunteers during approved activities on the Park.

Territory Interests – The *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, the Park Lease and the Indigenous Land Use Agreements require the partners to develop processes to foster Aboriginal jobs and enterprises in this Management Plan. The partners believe that these initiatives will also help to deliver on the broader government policies aimed at 'Closing the Gap' on Indigenous disadvantage.

While park-specific training and employment helps Traditional Owners acquire land-management skills it is important to recognise that the broader employment aspirations of Traditional Owners and their families cannot be met by joint management alone. Consequently, employment and training programs developed by the partners will need to involve external groups and organisations. The partners recognise that developing career pathways for young Indigenous people can be best addressed by tapping into existing agencies and structures, and linking jobs to those with the capacity to perform them. There is also scope for the partners to work with local Aboriginal organisations so people can build their capacity and skills relevant to the Park, including, but not limited to, track maintenance, fencing and construction, land management and visitor management.

Direct employment – The Parks and Wildlife Service intend to increase recruitment and retention of Aboriginal people in the agency and to deliberately foster career progression for Aboriginal employees. Although the number of full-time ranger positions in the organisation is relatively small, interested and committed local Aboriginal people will be actively encouraged to apply when positions become vacant and preference will be given to these applicants. Aboriginal ranger traineeships will continue at a regional level as a means of increasing

opportunities for young people to become rangers. Ongoing review of recruitment processes will ensure that employment opportunities are accessible to Traditional Owners.

Flexible employment – The Parks and Wildlife Service offers flexible or periodic casual employment to Traditional Owners, their families and local Aboriginal people. Flexible employment provides work experience and skills exchange, builds positive working relationships between rangers and Traditional Owners and can pave the way for employment of Aboriginal people in permanent ranger positions and in other enterprises.

Contract work – While most maintenance on the Park is carried out by rangers, contractors are increasingly used to carry out on-ground work. Contract work on the Park includes cleaning campgrounds, sign and facility repairs and maintenance, walking track construction and maintenance, and fencing. Traditional Owners are keen to be involved in contract work. Under the lease the Traditional Owners will be given preference for contract work where they can demonstrate competitiveness in the public arena. Where capacity is lacking, the partners will work with local Aboriginal people to build confidence, provide exposure, knowledge and opportunities to gain experience. To be contract ready Indigenous operations need capacity, resources, skills and equipment. Over time it is anticipated that local Indigenous businesses will become competitive in the open market.

Enterprise – Joint Management of the West MacDonnells will provide new enterprise opportunities, particularly in Aboriginal tourism. It is anticipated that during the life of this plan Indigenous tourism enterprises and industry partnerships will develop on adjacent Aboriginal land, in nearby communities or within the Park.

Cultural tourism – The West MacDonnells attracts many tourists, providing an excellent opportunity for Traditional Owners to present their living culture, from a personal perspective, to visitors from all over Australia and the world. Indigenous tourism ventures are emerging within the region. Joint management and liaison with the tourism industry can help develop business opportunities such as cultural tours.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Traditional Owners meaningfully employed through Aboriginal employment and training programs; by 2020 fifty percent of park staff are Indigenous and local Indigenous contractors are competitive in the open market.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

2.15 Work experience, training and employment – The partners will commit to building capacity, employment and career development opportunities for Traditional Owners.

- **Indigenous Training and Employment Strategy** - This strategy will be prepared at an agency level to maximise Aboriginal employment and include progressive targets for specific employment of traditional landowners across the park estate. This strategy will inform local programs to increase the employment of Aboriginal people on the park.
- **Indigenous employment opportunities in Parks and Wildlife** – Parks and Wildlife will continue to provide opportunities for work experience, training, casual work and direct employment of Aboriginal people. Strategies will be put in place to facilitate the uptake of higher level positions including rangers, managers, technical, administrative and professional specialist positions.
- **Partnerships with community-based Indigenous rangers and special interest groups** – Local Indigenous community-based rangers, community volunteers, and sponsored training and employment programs will be encouraged and, where possible, invited to assist with Park management.
- **Partnerships and Agreements with Aboriginal Employment networks** - The partners will build relationships with agencies that share common goals, and have the motivation and capacity to employ Aboriginal people.
- **Opportunities for the young** – The Parks and Wildlife Service will invest in programs to build the interest and capacity of Aboriginal school-aged children; school-based apprentices, work experience, scholarships and other approaches will be explored.

2.16 Enterprise – The private sector and Traditional Owners will be encouraged to take up commercial opportunities associated with the Park.

- **Contract services** – The Parks and Wildlife Service will encourage private sector participation. Initiatives to build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations to fulfil works and services contracts will be encouraged. Preference will be given to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal organisations as contractors, providing they are competitive in the open market. If other contractors are used, those providing training and employment to local Aboriginal people will also be preferred.
- **Tourism** – The partners will liaise with the tourism industry through established forums and organisations. Sustainable commercial cultural and nature based tourism will be fostered. Traditional Owners will be encouraged to take up commercial tourism opportunities including camp fire talks, cultural tours or other viable enterprises. Appropriate support will be provided to Traditional Owners. Agencies such as the CLC and Tourism NT will assist with developing ideas and identifying other service providers able to assist with developing business plans, enhancing skills and identifying funding sources.
- **Cultural advice** – Traditional Owners will be paid for specialist cultural advice and supervision consistent with the Parks and Wildlife Indigenous Fee for Service Policy.



Fish Hole in Ellery Creek. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

2.2.3 Regulated activities

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

Permits – All commercial operations, tours, commercial film and photography, public events, public gatherings, research, special access and aircraft activities are regulated within the Park and require a permit under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws*. The partners recognise that, when well managed, most of these activities help visitors to experience, enjoy and learn about the Park in a sustainable manner. Permits state the rules and conditions which permit holders must abide by to ensure that their activities do not negatively affect the values of the Park, Traditional Owner or community interests. These permits cover:

- all commercial operations;
- commercial tours;
- commercial film and photography;
- research;
- public events;
- camping outside designated campgrounds;
- public gatherings;
- special access; and
- landing aircraft.

Permit approval – An effective permit processing system is needed to assess permit applications submitted to park operations each year. The Management Committee(s) will define local policy and guidelines for assessing permit applications. When developing permit policy and guidelines, the partners will need to have regard to timeliness of processing, the interests of Traditional Owners, the community, industry stakeholders and existing Parks and Wildlife Service policy. Such guidelines should also explicitly state when proposed activity will, and will not, require consultation with Traditional Owners.

Some permits may require specific conditions and paid supervision by Traditional Owners or Parks staff. Currently, pending development of agreed guidelines and procedures, the CLC consults with Traditional Owners in relation to permit applications that request any access or activity that would not normally be allowed to visitors.

The Park Lease Agreement provides for preference to be given to Aboriginal people or Indigenous companies and organizations when issuing permits or commercial concessions subject to any law in force in the Northern Territory.

Tour operator permits – Tour companies visiting any Northern Territory park or reserve require a permit under the Tour Operator Permit System. The Traditional Owners and the Parks and

Wildlife Service want information presented by tour operators to be accurate and appropriate, particularly relating to cultural information. The Tour Operator Permit System and the industry-run Tour Operator accreditation scheme provide a means for the partners to better liaise with tour operators, to monitor the activities and impacts of tour groups, and provide good information.

Research permits and guidelines – All external research requires a permit issued under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws. Research or surveys undertaken by external organisations that help to better understand and manage the Park and the broader environment should be encouraged. Traditional Owners have a great deal of knowledge of the Park that can benefit research outcomes. It is important that they be in a leading position regarding research, be consulted and invited to participate and, wherever possible, employed. Research and survey projects must protect the intellectual property rights of Traditional Owners. To ensure research is undertaken for mutual benefit, research permit guidelines and procedures will be established by the partners as a priority. The Management Committee(s) may revise permit approval guidelines and procedures as appropriate.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- The partners, the community and proponents satisfied with the policies and processes regulating activities and development assessments.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

2.17 Permit Policy and Guidelines – These will be prepared as a high priority consistent with the interests of Traditional Owners, industry needs and Parks and Wildlife Service policy. In the absence of guidelines, the CLC will consult with Traditional Owners over permit applications and advise Parks and Wildlife when appropriate. The Management Committee(s) can also revise permit approval guidelines and conditions as needed.

2.18 Standard permit applications – The Area Manager can approve permit applications that involve an approved activity or commercial concessions which comply with the agreed conditions, require no special access, are of a nature or type already endorsed by the Management Committee(s), and are within approved policy or guidelines.

2.19 Non- standard permit applications – The Management Committee(s) may be convened to provide direction to park operations if a permit application involves special access or activities. Proposals that are culturally sensitive, large or complex, or part of a major commercial project may require the informed consent all affected Traditional Owner estate groups.

2.20 Other permit considerations:

- **Routine commercial tours** – Permits for tour businesses making normal use of the Park will continue to be issued through the Tour Operator Permit System. Information from this system will be used for the better management of the Park, including improved communication with operators.
- **Special events** – Proposals for special events or training exercises within the Conservation Zone may be agreed if the impact is limited to minimal disturbance with foot access only and applicants are self reliant. Special Protection Zones will not be accessible for special events or training exercises.
- **Notification** – The Parks and Wildlife Service will inform the CLC of every Commercial Film and Photography permit application. The Traditional Owners will be notified by the CLC when promotional activities, commercial filming or photography permits are granted.
- **News and current affairs** – Capture of images of the Park for news and current affairs reporting will not require a commercial filming and photography permit.

2.21 Research permits - External research will be encouraged especially where resulting knowledge will improve management of the Park and of the natural and cultural values of the Territory. Research proposals will be developed in conjunction with parks staff and Traditional Owners. Wherever possible Traditional Owners will participate and be employed in research, survey and monitoring projects. Plain English summaries of research reports will be provided to Traditional Owners by the researchers.



The West MacDonnells an essential part of the Red Centre National Landscape.

Photo: Tourism NT.

2.2.4 Development proposals

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

Protecting the environment – The *Environment Assessment Act* establishes a framework for environmental assessment of potential or anticipated environmental impacts of development. The Park currently supports many nationally threatened and migratory species protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act) and *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*. World Heritage properties and national heritage places are also recognised as a matter of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act. The Northern Territory Government and the Australian Government have a bilateral agreement on how to manage proposals that require formal environmental assessment under both the Northern Territory and Australian Government legislation.

Protecting sacred sites – Protection for places of cultural significance to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory is afforded under overlapping legislation. The Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (N.T.)* (ALRA) gives legal recognition to areas which that Act terms 'sacred sites', defined as: "a site that is sacred to Aboriginals or is otherwise of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, and includes any land that, under a law of the Northern Territory, is declared to be sacred to Aboriginals or of significance according to Aboriginal tradition". The ALRA makes it an offence to enter or remain on land that is a sacred site. Complementary Northern Territory legislation, the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* (NTASSA) also provides protection for all sites that fall within the scope of this definition. This protection is generally provided in the form of an Authority Certificate from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) in response to land use proposals. It means that the Traditional Owners have an enforceable right to say what can and cannot happen on their sacred sites. Illegal entry to, works on, or use of, a sacred site is an offence.

Successful joint management will ensure that sacred sites are protected in accordance with Traditional Owners' wishes. Under the ALRA the CLC has a specific function to "assist Aboriginals in the taking of measures likely to assist in the protection of sacred sites" and under its established procedures will carry out this role in facilitating joint management.

Protecting heritage sites – The *Heritage Conservation Act* provides protection for two categories of site. It provides for the protection and conservation of prescribed archaeological places and objects. These areas are not necessarily sacred sites. They can include art sites, artefact scatters, quarries and scarred trees. For any work, including conservation works, on prescribed archaeological places and objects, consent is required from the NT departments responsible for environment and heritage protection. The Act also provides for the protection and conservation of declared heritage places and objects, which may include buildings, ruins, and old yards, as well as natural places such as geological features, fossils and habitats.

Importantly, sacred objects are not afforded protection under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*, but through the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

Planning Act – The *Planning Act* regulates land development, including clearing. The Act provides a framework of controls for sustainable land use and development. Any building or vegetation clearing work, apart from a few exemptions, requires approval.

Infrastructure development – Due to the significance of the Park, any proposal or new works requires a process to ensure the Park’s values are protected and enhanced. Under joint management any proposal would be presented to the partners through the Management Committee(s) for their consideration in the first instance. Where development proposals, leases or activities may cause environmental, heritage or cultural impacts, the proponent will be required to demonstrate that the proposal will comply with all relevant legislation. Advice should also be sought from NT departments responsible for environment, heritage, natural resource management, and the CLC. If deemed appropriate, the proponent may be required to conduct a thorough risk assessment process to determine whether a development or activity is likely to significantly affect sacred sites, threatened species, ecological communities, natural resources or the long term interests of the community.

The types of developments that are likely to occur include:

- West MacDonnell Visitor Centre and gateway to the Red Centre National Landscape;
- refining visitor information and orientation nodes;
- re-designing and upgrading existing facilities;
- upgrading visitor access to accommodate high volume traffic;
- exploring new accommodation options;
- new fences and improved vehicle access;
- commercial camping and exclusive use sites; and
- new walking tracks, bike paths or other visitor infrastructure

Proposals to establish commercial accommodation within, or adjacent to, the Park are likely to arise during the life of this Plan. Such developments may present significant opportunities for business partnerships involving Aboriginal landowners and result in benefits for visitors, local economies and expanded park services.

With the endorsement of the Management Committee(s) and consent of all affected Traditional Owners, the Park Lease and this Plan provide for the partners to enter into benefit-sharing arrangements for commercial accommodation within the Park. In considering any such proposal the partners should consider:

- environmental and cultural impacts;
- the purposes of the Park and potential benefits to the Park, Traditional Owners and the wider community;
- alternate options off-Park and lost benefits for the park if proposal not approved;

- preference for Traditional Owners, partnerships or Aboriginal owned commercial enterprises;
- public appreciation and enjoyment of the park is enhanced;
- whenever possible, all constructions will be removable with minimal impact and any significant natural disturbance must be rehabilitated at cost to the proponent;
- developments that are sustainable and environmental best practice should be encouraged and supported in any development proposal.

Industry partnerships / commercial operations – If commercial accommodation is developed within the Park, the partners will arrange through lease or operational agreements, the conditions under which the enterprise operates. Private investors may want long term security of tenure to realise their return on investment before they will consider significant investment in infrastructure on parks. The partners can consider long term leases (or sub-leases) if necessary.

Licence or sub-lease – Where a secure form of land tenure is needed for the occupation or specific use of an area, a licence or sub-lease may be issued. Any licence or sub-lease must be consistent with the provisions set under the Lease Agreement and conditions prepared by the partners. With the approval of the partners and affected Traditional Owners, this Plan also provides for the Northern Territory Government, as the lessee, the right to sub-lease or license portions of the Park for the purposes of public infrastructure. The partners may determine special conditions, rent or fee for any sublessee or licence, and the length of any lease or licence in consultation with affected Traditional Owners.

Proposals for expansion of the Park – The Park is bounded by Aboriginal lands and pastoral lands (see Map 2). At a future time the partners may consider extending the boundaries of the Park for conservation or cultural benefit. There are no immediate proposals to expand the area of the Park; however there are opportunities for building cooperative arrangements with nearby landholders for the purposes of complementary land management.

Mining – In 2001 the Minister for Parks and Wildlife declared mining would be excluded from the Park. The transfer of the Park to Aboriginal ownership under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* removes the original Reserve from the Occupation and Ministerial declaration. However, as the Park is Aboriginal Freehold Land, traditional owners have the right to refuse mining on their land. The Traditional Owners feel strongly that mining is not consistent with the scenic, cultural and environmental values of the Park.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- The partners, the community and proponents satisfied with the policies and processes regulating activities and development.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

2.22 New proposals and impact assessment – The potential impacts of all proposed activities and developments will be considered and assessed commensurate with the scale of potential impact, consistent with *the Environment Assessment Act, Heritage Conservation Act, Planning Act* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Any development proposals supported by the partners involving disturbance of new ground will be referred to NT departments responsible for environment and heritage protection.

2.23 Impact assessment guidelines and procedures – In collaboration with NT departments responsible for environment and heritage protection, the partners will establish guidelines to help proponents evaluate their proposals and assist members of the public or interest groups who wish to comment on proposals.

Pending development of agreed guidelines and procedures the CLC will consult with Traditional Owners in relation to development proposals. Until guidelines are available, either the Territory Minister for the Environment or Commonwealth Minister for the Environment will determine requirements under the *Environment Assessment Act* or *EPBC Act* respectively with support from the NT departments responsible for environment and heritage protection.

2.24 Sacred sites clearances – The CLC will have sacred site clearance responsibility for all proposed works on the Park. However the partners may agree from time to time that a proponent may require an AAPA Authority Certificate under the NTASSA.

2.25 Other heritage clearances – Clearance will also be sought under the *Heritage Conservation Act* for works on places and objects protected under that legislation. Advice will also be sought from the NT departments responsible for environment and heritage protection prior to any work involving land disturbance. Any proposals for works on prescribed archaeological places / objects or declared heritage places / objects will require appropriate consent under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

2.26 Commercial accommodation development – Any proposal will be considered by the partners through the relevant Management Committee(s) and require informed consent of

affected Traditional Owners. To provide long-term security for the developer, the partners can consider long term leases (or sub-leases), and specific operational arrangements and conditions under which the enterprise will operate.

2.27 Benefit-sharing agreements – With approval of affected Traditional Owners, consistent with the Lease and appropriate assessment processes, this Plan provides for the partners to enter into benefit-sharing arrangements for commercial operations and developments within the Park.

2.28 Infrastructure – With approval of affected Traditional Owners, consistent with the Lease and appropriate assessment processes, this Plan provides the Northern Territory Government with the right to sub-lease or license portions of the Park for specific purposes, including public infrastructure.

2.29 Extending the Park – Any proposals to extend the Park by inclusion of adjoining land will be considered by the partners through the Management Committee(s) and will require informed consent of affected Traditional Owners in accordance with the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*.

2.30 Mining and exploration – The Northern Territory Government, supported by the Traditional Owners will seek to re-declare a mining reserve (Reserve from Occupation) over the Park.

2.2.5 Community relationships and engagement

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

The West MacDonnell National Park is not an island. Most of the natural and cultural values associated with the Park are interrelated with the wider region. Similarly the successful management of the Park depends on the goodwill and commitment of a wide range of individuals and organizations, both private and public, to resource and protect the values of the Park. It is important for the partners to foster positive relationships with the community.

The West MacDonnell National Park is owned by the Tyurretye Aboriginal Land Trust. It shares common boundaries with several Aboriginal Land Trusts including Ltalaltuma, Rodna, Haasts Bluff, Roulmoulpma and Iwupataka (Jay Creek). The Park also shares boundaries with several pastoral leases, being Bond Springs, Hamilton Downs, Narwietooma and Glen Helen. The eastern boundary adjoins the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve and the Alice Springs town boundary. Two Aboriginal Living Areas have been incorporated into the Park. A number of small excisions for telecommunication and other purposes also exist. The Glen Helen Resort and Standley Chasm are two commercial operations closely associated with the Park

Nearly all conservation issues affecting the Park do not stop at the Park boundary. The Park will benefit from including neighbours in land management programs. Partnerships with research institutions can also add significant value to our understanding of the landscape and ongoing adaptive management.

Tourism operators working throughout the West MacDonnells are valued “eyes and ears” across the Park. They present an important interface between tourists and the Park and are responsible for the welfare of a good proportion of visitors. They have a financial interest in fostering appropriate behaviour, compliance, public safety and presenting the values of the Park, including promotion of the benefits of Joint Management. Their combined efforts contribute to growing a sustainable and viable tourism industry, of which Traditional Owners could become significant members.

Communication between tour operators, the tourism industry and the partners is important to ensure safe and enjoyable experiences for visitors. Regular meetings occur between Tourism NT, Tourism Central Australia, the transport sector and tour operators. Initiatives for information exchange include the Parks and Wildlife accredited Tour Guide Training program, that will become operational during the term of this Plan, and Tourism NT Desert Guides, aimed at increasing the knowledge base of Central Australian tour guides through contact with rangers and Traditional Owners.

For many years ranger guided activities have been conducted on the Park during high visitation periods. These have included guided walks and presentations at Simpsons Gap, Ormiston Gorge and Glen Helen Gorge. Total annual attendance at these programs in recent years has exceeded 1500 people per year. The Junior Ranger environmental education program has been well received and expanded to include schools at Alice Springs (such as Yipirinya School), Wallace Rockhole, Papunya, Haasts Bluff, M'Bunghara, Town Bore, Ipolera and Ntaria Schools.

The Park is enjoyed by a wide variety of user groups and is an important part of the local community. Many special interest groups enjoy the Park including bush walking and running clubs, mountain bikers, climbers clubs, field naturalists, school and religious groups. It is important that these groups are given opportunities to voice their interests and provide feedback about the Park.

An increasing number of visitors have an environmental and social conscience and travel to engage in activities of special interest such as community projects and habitat conservation. They want to learn through active involvement and transforming experiences. The partners will actively encourage such activities. There is also the potential to provide projects and programs that would support 'voluntourism' allowing both locals and visitors to become involved in programs within the Park; including, but not limited to, flora and fauna surveys, monitoring and controlling weeds.

OUR AIMS - WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Positive contributions to regional development through tourism, community development and enhanced economic and social outcomes.
- Positive contributions to regional conservation through strong practical partnerships.
- Enhanced management outcomes through effective relations with neighbours.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

2.31 Community involvement – The partners will work with anyone who has an interest in the Park and through whose engagement may protect or enhance the Park's values. The partners will approach other stakeholders regarding matters of mutual interest in conservation and tourism; they will also resolve issues and develop opportunities, including those that are linked to the Park but lie outside the boundary. The partners will keep the community and stakeholders informed about significant issues and proposed developments.

2.32 Local community education – Whenever possible, Parks and Wildlife community education and interpretation programs will include local Aboriginal communities, with a focus on young people.

2.33 Volunteers – The partners will actively encourage the community to become involved in programs within the Park; including education, interpretation, monitoring and park maintenance tasks. Volunteer programs will be encouraged and will not compete with Traditional Owners' work opportunities.

2.34 Land management liaison – The Management Committee(s) and the CLC will liaise with Traditional Owners, pastoralists and others from neighbouring lands on matters of mutual interest.

2.35 Tourism liaison – The partners will be proactive in working with the tourism industry through established forums and organisations such as Tourism Central Australia and Tourism NT to ensure that development of tourism is rational, appropriate to, and in harmony with the Park, its values, market demand and commercial viability.



*Tourism operators contributing to the West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan in 2008.
Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.*

2.3. ZONING

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

The *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* provides for Joint Management Plans to identify management zones in, and management regimes for, the Park.

The Park is managed for multiple purposes, including nature conservation, protection of cultural values and provision for a range of visitor experiences. Different areas of the Park however, will be managed differently, usually with greater emphasis on one of these purposes. A zoning plan is a general summary of the purpose and focus of management for all areas of the Park based on the specific values of those areas and their level of visitor access and facility development. Regardless of zoning, visitors require a permit for research, off-track bush walking, commercial filming and photography, aircraft landing and commercial enterprises operating on Park including tour operators and concessions (See 2.2.3).

The Park zoning scheme addresses the challenge of accommodating greater visitor numbers, while accommodating others who seek solitude and the quintessential “bush-experiences” of Australia’s Red Centre.

Three management zones are identified for the West MacDonnell National Park:

- **Visitor Zone** – areas that retain the un-spoilt views and natural character of the Park while accommodating high-volume tourism experiences.
- **Conservation Zone** – areas that provide for sustained natural ecological processes while providing for low-level access for visitors seeking space, solitude and a sense of remoteness.
- **Special Protection Zone** – providing for the protection of areas or sites of exceptional conservation cultural or heritage significance.

The Zoning Scheme for the Park is shown in Map 5. The primary purpose of each zone and associated management strategy is outlined in Table 2. The zoning plan indicates management intent at the time of this Plan’s preparation. It is not intended to be a basis for regulation of access or development and may be changed during the term of this Plan to provide for improved protection of values and/or enhancement of visitor opportunities.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- The Parks values protected while providing for public enjoyment, education and recreation.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

2.36 Zoning – The Park will be managed in accordance with the zoning scheme outlined in Table 1 and shown in Map 5.

2.37 Development – All management, services and development activity will be carried out with regard to maintaining the Park’s natural character, cultural values and visitor experiences.

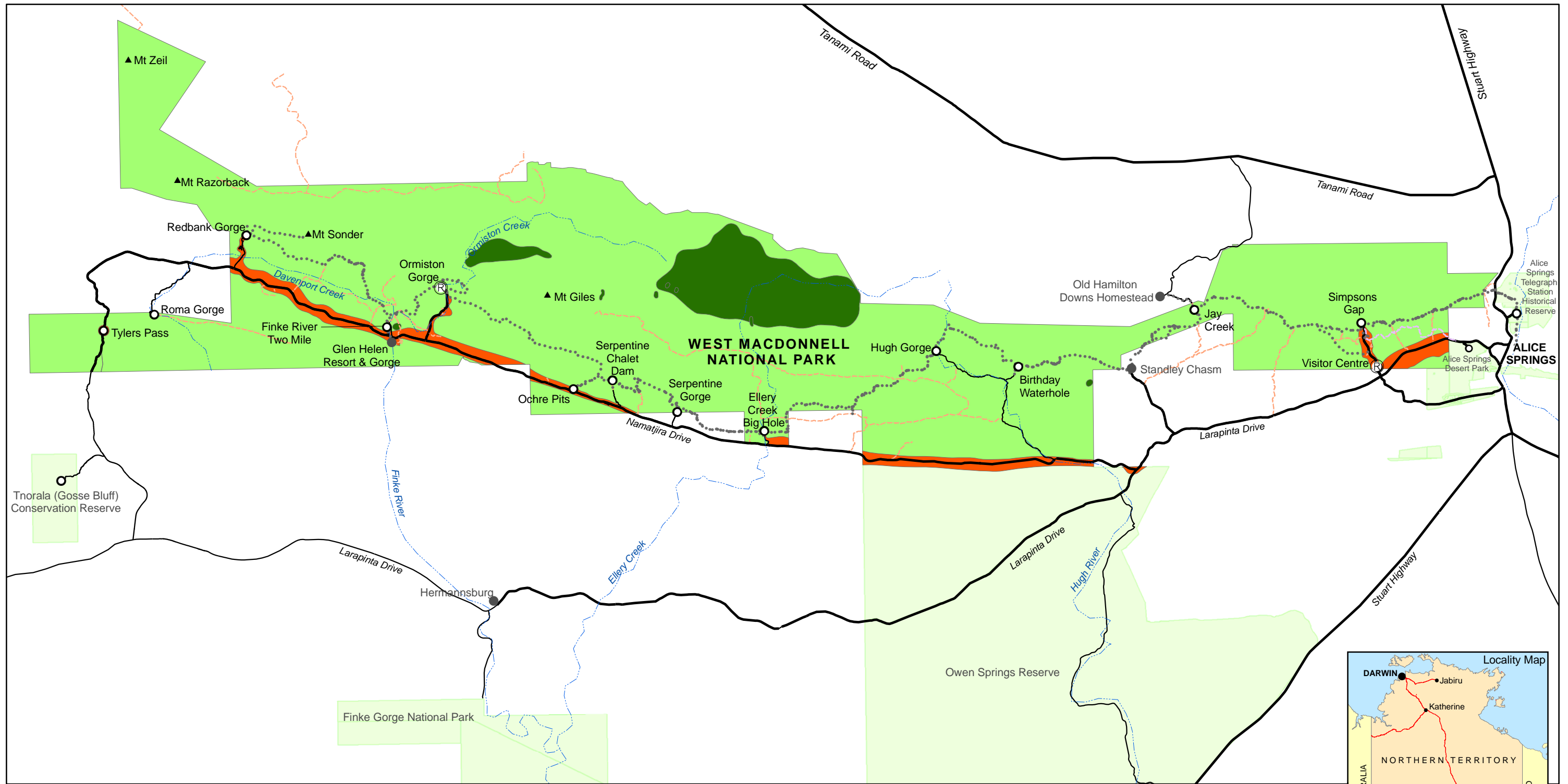
2.38 Approvals – All new development will be subject to appropriate environmental, heritage and sacred site assessment processes and consideration by the Management Committee(s). Major proposals within the Park will be subject to public comment and approval by Traditional Owners and the Minister.

2.39 Human impacts – Vehicle and walking access will be monitored in priority areas. Such activities may be controlled for necessary site rehabilitation if shown to be having an impact on surrounding environments.

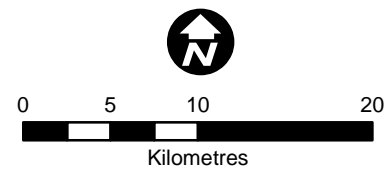
2.40 Special Protection Zone – To protect natural or cultural values of the Park, additional areas may be added or extended as Special Protection Zones during the term of this Plan as determined by the partners through the Management Committee(s).

Table 2. West MacDonnell National Park - Park Management Zones

	Visitor Zone	Conservation Zone	Special Protection Zone
Purpose	Designate areas that retain the unspoilt vistas and natural appearance of the Park while accommodating high-volume tourism experiences.	Designate areas that provide for sustaining natural ecological processes while providing for personal nature/culturally-based experiences requiring space, solitude and a sense of remoteness.	Designate areas that protect sites of exceptional conservation or cultural significance which are potentially affected by human disturbance.
Park Operational Priorities	<p>Visitor safety and collective enjoyment. These areas will accommodate high level- visitor use. Park management will provide a higher level presence where necessary.</p> <p>Park management programs such as fire, weed and feral animal control will generally prioritise public safety, infrastructure protection and aesthetics. Park interpretation will cater for larger audiences.</p>	<p>Visitor safety and intimate natural / cultural experiences. Sustaining natural ecological processes. These areas will accommodate medium to low-level visitor use, often more self-reliant users. Park management will generally provide for a lower level of presence.</p> <p>Park management programs such as fire, weed and feral animal control will also consider the maintenance of natural ecological processes at a broad landscape scale. Park interpretation will seek to be unobtrusive and low-key</p>	<p>Minimising disturbance, maintaining ecosystem health and promoting resilience to threatening processes.</p> <p>Park management programs such as fire, weed and feral animal control will prioritise recommendations from conservation management strategies, expert advice and senior Traditional Owners. Where possible management will provide low level management intervention.</p>
Access	<p>Free public access for normal activities. Booking arrangements may be introduced to manage specific activities (such as camp sites) if user numbers exceed capacity.</p> <p>Generally high level access standards for conventional vehicles and 'hardened' walking tracks. Mobility-impaired access will be provided at several key locations.</p> <p>In some locations the public will be excluded to allow for essential services, workshops and private living areas for Parks staff</p>	<p>Free public access for normal activities. Permits or bookings may be introduced to manage specific activities (such as camp sites, sections of walking trail and rock climbing) where park values or visitor experiences are being affected.</p> <p>Access generally by 4WD vehicles on designated tracks. Walking trails can range from marked and/or constructed walking tracks to unmarked trails.</p> <p>Off-road vehicle and helicopter access for Park management and emergency use only. Helicopter over-flight is allowed and will be managed through the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-Laws if necessary.</p>	<p>To protect significant natural or cultural sites access will be regulated by permit. In the case of sites of cultural significance, access will be with the informed consent from Traditional Owners.</p> <p>In some circumstances the location of a Special Protection Zone will not be publicly available to protect the integrity of a site.</p>
Activity	<p>Standard recreational activities such as sightseeing, picnicking, short walks, bushwalking, photography, camping, nature and cultural appreciation and relaxation will be encouraged. The presence of many other users is an expected part of the Park experience.</p> <p>Visitors are only permitted to camp at designated sites. Open fires are permitted in designated fire-pits only. Private generators not permitted.</p>	<p>Within this zone more active and recreational pursuits such as bushwalking, bush camping and Larapinta Trail treks will be encouraged. The presence of large numbers of other users erodes the 'intimate' nature of the Park experience.</p> <p>Visitors are encouraged to camp at designated sites. Campfires and private generators are prohibited along the Larapinta Trail. Campfires are however permitted in designated areas within this zone and private generators may be permitted in designated areas and during specified times.</p>	<p>Activities which modify the integrity of these areas will not be permitted.</p> <p>Additional Special Protection Zones may be designated or extended during the life of this Plan with the approval of the Management Committee(s).</p>
Facilities	Services may include high level services catering for high visitor numbers. All facilities should minimise visual and environmental impacts on the broader landscape, including: sealed roads, parking and picnic facilities, toilets, walkways and viewing platforms, shade shelters, visitor information and interpretive walks and commercial access under terms of concession permit. Staff housing and workshops are also located in this zone.	Medium to low level services for medium to low visitor numbers. All services and facilities should be discrete and in character with maintaining remote intimate outback experiences. All facilities should pay special attention to minimising visual and environmental impacts.	No visitor services or facilities.
Development	Any construction and developments should protect the unspoilt vistas and natural appearance of the Park landscape.	Any construction and developments (including access routes) should protect the sense of solitude and perception of remoteness enjoyed by other visitors to this zone.	Any construction and developments should be avoided.



West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 5. Park Zoning Map



- Zoning Scheme**
- VISITOR
 - CONSERVATION
 - SPECIAL PROTECTION

- Locality (On Park)
- Locality (Off Park)
- R Ranger Station
- Mountain
- Major Drainage

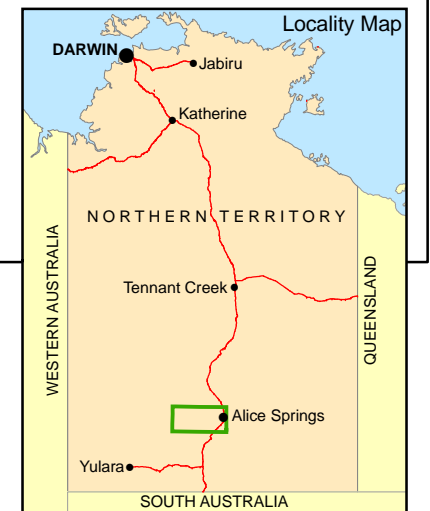
- Major Road
- Minor Road
- Management Track
- Walking Track
- Simpsons Bike Path
- Other Parks/Reserves



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Cadastral, Topographic and Road Centreline data obtained from Information Services Section, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Northern Territory Government.

1:250 000 Topographic source data courtesy Geoscience Australia, Canberra. Copyright © Commonwealth of Australia, Geoscience Australia www.ga.gov.au



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3. MANAGING THE PARK'S VALUES

3.1 MANAGING COUNTRY

The West MacDonnell National Park is the largest and most significant conservation area in Central Australia. It has an exceptional diversity of natural and cultural values including values of national and international significance. Rugged gorges and mountains of the park shelter an outstanding collection of endemic, relict and threatened plants and animals.

The Traditional Owners of the West MacDonnell National Park are responsible for Tyurretye country and take care of it. Under traditional law they are required to protect their land from physical and spiritual harm. It requires people to respect the land and its spirits, the guardians of the land. This means that the landscape may not be interfered with or damaged, as this disturbs the dreamings and spirits that dwell on or in the land. When disturbed these supernatural entities may harm the living people. Thus, the land has to be protected to protect all people from harm.

Park rangers share with Traditional Owners a deep respect for the land and seek to look after it for future generations. Joint management of the Park provides an opportunity to reconcile the past and share responsibility for the country's wellbeing and its future.

Consistent with section 25AE of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* this section of the plan includes processes for:

- managing sites of cultural significance;
- establishing community living areas; and
- providing for hunting and Aboriginal use.

Principles for managing country – our guiding beliefs

The joint management partners of the West Mac Donnell Ranges National Park recognise:

- The country is alive and the health of the country and the health of people are inseparable.
- The Park is connected to the country around it.
- Managing country means managing natural and cultural values together.
- The country needs continual maintenance to stay healthy.
- Being on country and working together will help keep the country healthy.
- Management of Indigenous sites and knowledge should be lead by Traditional Owners.
- Fire is a natural part of the landscape and needs to be carefully managed.
- Threats such as weeds, feral animals, large wildfires and man-made erosion make the country 'sick'.
- Fixing problems, planning and actions need to be worked out with stakeholders.
- Good management decisions are based on good knowledge and understanding

- Monitoring and evaluation inform continuous improvement.
- We don't know everything and we are still learning.



*Looking after country, controlled burning in the West MacDonnell National Park.
Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.*

3.1.1 Cultural values

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

Connection to country – In the dreaming, *tnengkarre*², the mythical ancestors created the physical and cultural landscape and inscribed on it an enduring legal, religious and social order—a charter for life and of the Law. The West MacDonnell National Park covers a large part of country that is called Tyurretye. The Arrernte people belonging to Tyurretye sometimes call themselves Tyurretyerentye, meaning 'belonging to Tyurretye'. Tyurretye is a living cultural landscape. It is the result of the actions of ancestral beings defined by totemic sites. Traditional Owners remain connected to the ancestors who still reside in the most important totemic sites across the Park.

To the Traditional Owners of the West MacDonnell National Park their country is sacred and is of major significance in Aboriginal religion and law. Many dreaming stories and traditions are connected to Tyurretye. To reflect and promote their continuing living connection with the country, Traditional Owners seek to re-name the West MacDonnell National Park to recognise the country's original name, Tyurretye.

Aboriginal use – For Traditional Owners, looking after the country involves visiting and watching the country, moving appropriately on it, and protecting it from damage, as well as transmitting the knowledge about the land and places on it, including how to use its resources in culturally appropriate ways. Under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, Traditional Owners have the right to hunt wildlife and gather bush foods and medicines. Traditional Owners of the West MacDonnell National Park visit, camp, travel and teach regularly on the Park; they take care of this land according to their traditions, which have their origin in the dreaming. They also hunt game and collect bush foods, medicines and wood. The continuation of Aboriginal cultural practices in the Park is of great importance to the Traditional Owners.

Residence – Community living areas in, or in close proximity to, the West MacDonnell National Park, are an integral part of both the continuation of Aboriginal cultural practices in, and the natural and cultural resource management of, the Park and surrounding country. Through the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*, Traditional Owners have achieved legal ownership of much of the land south of the Park boundary. Many Traditional Owners of the Park also reside in its immediate vicinity on Tyurretye country.

Bushfoods – Traditional Owners have a great knowledge about bush foods including where and when to find them, and how to use them. To supplement store-bought meat supplies and to fulfil customary obligations to their kin, Traditional Owners hunt a range of game such as kangaroo, euro, wallaby and perentie, and catch fish. Traditional Owners also gather seasonal

² called *tnengkarre* in Western Arrernte, *altyerre* in Central Arrernte and *tjukurrpa* in Luritja

bush foods such as alperranteye (bush-tomato), kuparte (bush-plum) and mpeltyarte/twakeye (bush-orange). Western Arrernte women hunt and gather bushtucker like tyape (witchetty grubs), akeye (bush currant) and larletye (Conkerberry). After fire and rains ngkwerlpe (wild tobacco) is common in the ranges and highly sought after. Bush medicines are also collected and the knowledge of them is passed on to younger people. Ochre deposits at Ulpekngerre (the Ochre Pits) are used by Traditional Owners. The coloured ochre is used for ceremonies and medical purposes, and white ochre is predominantly used for mourning.

Ceremony – Restricted ceremonies connected to this area are held annually and ensure the passing of important knowledge to the next generation. Occasionally other restricted ceremonies are held on important sites of the West MacDonnell National Park.

Teaching – Traditional Owners take their children, nieces and nephews and grandchildren to places in the National Park to teach them bush skills and knowledge about the plants and animals found there; children also learn where to go, and how to behave, on the country of their ancestors, and about the stories connected to Tyurretye. The Yipirinya School (an Aboriginal primary and secondary School in Alice Springs) takes their students, in the company of senior Western Arrernte and Luritja people, to the West MacDonnell National Park regularly on excursions and school camps to teach them about their country.

Aboriginal knowledge – The area's Traditional Owners have substantial knowledge about the Park's natural and cultural values. The inclusion of, and focus on, Traditional Owners' knowledge and perspectives will bring changes to the way the Park is managed. The Traditional Owners provide an essential link to the core of the West MacDonnells cultural landscape. Senior Traditional Owners hold accumulated knowledge spanning thousands of years. They are custodians for knowledge that will continue to inform and inspire future generations.

Indigenous peoples' rights to their heritage are encapsulated in their Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP). It includes all knowledge, objects and sites, the nature or use of which has been transmitted from generation to generation. Due to the responsibilities and complexities associated with Aboriginal knowledge, it is important that Traditional Owners are always in the leading role whenever decisions are made regarding the protection and presentation of their cultural heritage. The partners seek to ensure Traditional Owners are always recognised as the intellectual property owners of their knowledge, and retain the right to control who can use their knowledge and how it is used.

While Traditional Owners are protective of their knowledge, they are keen to share some knowledge with visitors through interpretive programs, particularly about bush tucker and personal histories. The recording, storage and use of cultural information will be consistent with the directions from Traditional Owners through the Management Committee(s), and with policy established for this purpose.

The need to transfer knowledge and practices from old to young people is one of the most important issues identified by Traditional Owners. They also want to incorporate Indigenous ecological knowledge, skills and experiences into operational programs for the Park and ensure it is applied appropriately and in the right context.

There is great scope to encourage Traditional Owners to interpret the significance of the Park to staff, commercial operators and visitors. Together, the partners can promote understanding and respect for the traditions, languages, cultures, customs and skills of Traditional Owners. Traditional Owners should also play a leading role in the application for World Heritage listing.

Very little published information, relating directly to the West MacDonnell National Park, is available on culturally significant natural resources, their values and associated management requirements. However, relevant cultural information held in the Strehlow Research Centre archive could assist Traditional Owners in caring for their country and developing culturally appropriate interpretive and educational material for visitors to the Park.

The cultural landscape of the Park is rich in dreamings. While there are many aspects of Arrernte traditions that may be considered “public” knowledge, there is much that is restricted to either men or women. Some of the dreaming tracks that have aspects that can be shared ‘publicly’ are listed in the Appendix 1.

Sacred sites – The West MacDonnells abound with sacred sites and culturally significant areas. Sacred sites are central to Traditional Owners’ identity and continuing connection with the land. They are integral to their spirituality, cultural knowledge and maintenance of the country. Some sites have been formally recognised by the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, which identifies 12 registered and 36 recorded sacred sites within the Park. Many other significant sites remain unrecorded. Many of the popularly visited sites in the park today were not openly accessible to Aboriginal people in pre-settlement times. In the course of joint management Traditional Owners may wish to regulate visitor access to some culturally important areas. Where necessary, stakeholder consultation will be arranged.

There are culturally restricted areas across the park. There are several sites that will benefit from protection through Park zoning. Guidelines will be developed with Traditional Owners responsible for these places to ensure they are properly protected. To avoid damage to sacred sites all works or developments on Tyurretye will require sacred site clearances and consultation with the relevant Traditional Owners through the CLC.

Archaeological places and objects (including art sites and artefacts) – It is important to Traditional Owners that rock art and archaeological materials in the Park are also protected. The *Heritage Conservation Act* gives specific protection to prescribed Aboriginal Archaeological Places and Objects in the Northern Territory. Heritage clearances must be sought under this Act for any works, including conservation, to prescribed archaeological sites in the Park.

Roma Gorge and the surrounding gorges form an archaeologically significant area within the Park making up one of the largest and most complex engraving sites in Central Australia. A number of studies have been undertaken emphasising the importance of the area to Traditional Owners, the national significance of the rock art, and providing recommendations for managing visitors to the area.

Art sites provide an excellent opportunity to explain the cultural ties to the country. However, in some sites, visitors can cause impacts, such as the erosion resulting when people unknowingly walk over rock engravings. There is a need to ensure visitors are educated to understand the implications of interfering with these sites. Wasp, Fairy Martin nests and fire can also cause significant impacts. Other than those for art sites, no comprehensive surveys or evaluation of the Park's Aboriginal sites and resources have yet been undertaken.

The Strehlow Research Centre is actively engaged in the repatriation of sacred ceremonial objects to the Traditional Owners of Tyurretye, as well as the repatriation of cultural material including family trees, still images, film and audio recordings of songs and stories.

Historical sites – The West MacDonnells include very important sites where defining historical events occurred, such as those in the years of early contact between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in Central Australia.

The early exploration of the area by explorers such as John McDouall Stuart, Charles Winnecke, Ernest Giles and Richard Warburton represented the beginning of contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures in the region. The original route of the Overland Telegraph Line crossed the far eastern corner of the Park. The area's pastoral history began in the early 1870s, with the establishment of the Undoolya and Owen Springs pastoral leases. Pastoralism represented the colonial frontier, which challenged both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Ruins of the original Glen Helen homestead, established around 1878 and abandoned about 1887, are found at Ormiston Creek. This homestead was one of the first homesteads built in central Australia and is listed on the NT Heritage Register as a declared heritage place.

Other extant evidence within the Park, of the pastoral era, include the wooden stock yard remains at Giles Yard Springs (Pioneer Creek) and the sheep yards and stone hut ruins north of Bowmans Gap. At the junction of Davenport and Redbank Creeks are the timber remains of a well. Other buildings, bores, fences and yards are scattered across the Park. A lone grave is also present in the centre of the Alice Valley near Ellery Creek. This is the grave of Jim Cummings who died and was buried there in 1911. Serpentine Dam and Chalet are also regionally significant historical sites, tangible evidence of the region's pioneering tourism industry.

There remains scope to expand the documentation and assessment of heritage sites. Traditional Owners and many locals retain detailed historical knowledge of the region's past. Historical sites, including those important to Traditional Owners and the local community, should be properly documented, assessed and conserved in accordance with the principles and processes of the Burra Charter. The assessment of significance, and any conservation management plans, should consider the importance of the site(s) to Traditional Owners.

Fire, human interference and soil erosion are the main threat to historic sites within the Park. Damage by stock, human interference, encroaching vegetation and termite damage are examples of other threatening processes. The partners are required to consult with NT Heritage Officers and seek cultural heritage clearance for any proposed works at these sites.



Roma Gorge petroglyphs. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

OUR AIMS - WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Wide appreciation of the Parks value as a living cultural landscape.
- Protection of Aboriginal sites and Aboriginal people's intellectual cultural property.
- Aboriginal knowledge and traditions passed on to younger generations.
- Aboriginal knowledge and skills incorporated into management of the park.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.1 The name of the Park – As a priority, the Traditional Owners will seek to change the name of the Park to incorporate the region's Aboriginal name *Tyurretye*.

3.2 Culturally sensitive areas – The Parks and Wildlife Service will uphold restrictions and guidelines for sacred sites or culturally sensitive areas of the Park as directed by Traditional Owners, and ensure adequate consultation and communication with affected stakeholders. Culturally sensitive places may be designated as Special Protection Zones by approval of the Management Committee(s).

3.3 Aboriginal cultural business – The Parks and Wildlife Service will respect Traditional Owners' advice regarding their customary obligations including ceremonial activity, their need to access country, and maintaining traditions, and will acknowledge that men's and women's sites require different management considerations. If public access will be affected by ceremonial activity, adequate public notice will be given.

3.4 Establishing new community living areas - Any proposal to create community living areas on the Park will be considered by the partners through the Management Committee(s) and will require informed consent of affected Traditional Owners in accordance with the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* and policy agreed between the CLC and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

3.5 Aboriginal hunting and gathering –The *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* supports Traditional Owners' use of the Park's resources. The partners will promote sustainable use. The Management Committee(s) will develop policy as necessary to ensure hunting and gathering is consistent with visitor safety and the park values.

3.6 Indigenous cultural and intellectual property – Traditional Owners will retain ownership and control of their cultural and intellectual property consistent with policy and guidelines agreed between the CLC and the Parks and Wildlife Service.

3.7 Sacred site clearances – The CLC will have sacred site clearance responsibility for all proposed work on the Park. However the joint management partners may agree from time to time that a proponent may require an Authority Certificate under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*, issued by the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

3.8 Cultural heritage clearances – Any works will be cleared under the *Northern Territory Heritage Conservation Act*. Sacred site clearances through the CLC will also be sought for works to any archaeological sites on the Park.

3.9 Cultural heritage management – The joint management partners will develop a cultural heritage management program and guidelines for the Park. Parks and Wildlife Service resources will support Traditional Owners' specific cultural interests and aspirations directly when they can be incorporated into existing management activities, without the need for additional resources. The partners and the CLC will work together to identify other resources if required. The cultural heritage program will provide for:

- **A “Back to Country” program** – This will allow the partners to spend time on country together, facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills between Traditional Owners, and to the younger generation and rangers, as appropriate. The program will be supported by CLC.
- **Recording Indigenous knowledge** – An ongoing process of learning and documentation of Indigenous Knowledge and oral histories will be arranged through the Management Committee(s). Traditional Owners will be involved to ensure knowledge is applied appropriately and in the right context. The outcomes of the program will contribute to improving both Park operations programs and public interpretation.
- **Cross-cultural training** – Park-specific cultural training will be arranged for rangers through Traditional Owners.
- **Archaeological and historic site assessment** – Sites will be properly documented, assessed and conserved in accordance with the principles and processes of the *Burra Charter*. This process, and any conservation management plans, will consider significance to Traditional Owners. NT Heritage Officers will be consulted regarding any proposed works at these sites. Known sites will be progressively mapped and added to the Parks and Wildlife Service Historic Sites Register consistent with Parks and Wildlife Cultural Heritage Management and ICIP Policies. Where appropriate, places or objects can be nominated to the NT Heritage Register and declared under the *NT Heritage Conservation Act*.

- **Archaeological and historic site conservation** – Advice will be sought from NT Heritage Officers regarding the most appropriate protection and conservation works. Ideally, conservation works will only occur in accordance with a Conservation Plan. Cummings' grave will remain *in situ* and be maintained to ensure that decay is kept to a minimum. Training in cultural site management, including rock art preservation techniques, will be offered to the partners.

3.1.2 Landscape values

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

The spectacular natural landscapes of the Park present outstanding universal aesthetic values. The extensive mountain vistas of the West MacDonnells are magnificently captured in watercolour by Albert Namatjira. The natural vistas enjoyed by travellers remain relatively free from visual intrusion. The shapes of the ranges, the detailed character of the eroded surfaces and the dramatic colours of the rock surfaces are all unique aesthetic elements which underpin the majesty of the Park.

Diversity of landforms – The MacDonnell Ranges are a complex of almost parallel, rugged metamorphic and sedimentary ridges and valleys which dominate the Central Australian landscape. The mountain ranges, gorges, watercourses, waterholes and valleys. The varied landscapes and the habitats are the basis of the diverse values of the Park.

The West MacDonnell Ranges are dominated by the quartzitic Chewings and Heavitree Ranges which rise some 200 to 700 metres above the intervening valleys, affecting the local climate. Mt Zeil, at 1531 metres, is the highest point in Australia west of the Great Dividing Range. The Ranges are part of a wider drainage network connected as far south as the Simpson Desert and Lake Eyre. Due to the arid climate and unpredictable rainfalls, creek and river flows are episodic. The major rivers have carved gorges through the Ranges and across the valleys.

Geological heritage – The Park protects numerous sites of international and national significance with rocks that span the known geological evolution of the Alice Springs region. The West MacDonnell National Park comprises extensive exposure of the two major geological elements of this part of Central Australia - the basement terrain of the Arunta Province spanning from about 1750 MYA to 1150 MYA, and the overlying Amadeus Basin which spans from about 1000 MYA to about 350 MYA. The Arunta Province includes metamorphic rocks and granites which have undergone complex deformation during several widespread orogenic events. The sedimentary rocks of the Amadeus Basin remain largely unmetamorphosed but have been changed by a major deformation event which also affected the Arunta Province.

The major geo-heritage values relate to evidence of the Earth's climatic history, and that of mountain building and erosion in a desert, which are all displayed in the rocks and landforms. Of particular significance are the records of a large intracratonic orogenic event preserved in the structures in the mountain ranges and the transverse valleys. The Park also preserves the interplay of past climate weathering regimes, landscape inheritance and landscape rejuvenation.

There is an important fossil locality near Ellery Creek, within the Bitter Springs Limestone formation, consisting of stromatolites and other fossils. Often this site is covered by sand, but at other times it is exposed. Also in the vicinity is an almost complete sequence of the sediments deposited in the northern Amadeus Basin between 850 MYA and 310MYA; this is exposed along the banks of the Ellery Creek.

The general scale of the geological features of the Park means that little or no direct input is required in their management. However, there are great opportunities for visitor interpretation of the geo-heritage value right across the park. The stromatolites and fossil formations in the vicinity of Ellery Creek may require some protection and monitoring.

Soils – Soils provide critical ecosystem services which underpin natural and cultural values of the Park, and those in the Ranges are generally stable lithosols associated with steep hills and mountains; they are shallow, stony or gravelly and have variable profile development. Alluvial soils are found in the major drainage systems such as those of the Finke and Hugh Rivers and Ellery Creek. Some areas of the Park are highly susceptible to erosion, particularly where the land has been denuded of vegetation. Areas that receive high levels of foot and vehicle traffic on unconsolidated soils are also susceptible. At many of the popular waterholes, heavy tourist traffic and uncontrolled grazing by cattle and horses often result in erosion of the banks, contributing to increased sedimentation. In numerous areas the Park has inherited erosion problems from prior land-use. Areas of existing erosion should be addressed as soon as possible, as remediation costs and environmental degradation increase exponentially with time. Careful planning and design considerations are required when planning new facilities to avoid erosion problems. Locked gates also control erosion by regulating vehicle access to management vehicle tracks. Rehabilitation measures may be required at disturbed sites such as old gravel scrapes, borrow pits, previously grazed areas and areas receiving high levels of foot and vehicle traffic. Areas requiring rehabilitation may need to be closed to the public and appropriate signs displayed. Unclean machinery and soils sourced outside the Park for road works, tracks, trails and erosion control have the potential to be significant vectors for spreading weeds and soil pathogens across the Park.

OUR AIMS - WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- The Park's natural scenery, landforms and geological heritage protected and valued by the whole community.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.10 Scenery – Protection of the Park's natural character will be afforded the highest priority. Every practicable effort will be made to protect the naturalness of the landscape and its unique character. Any development or modification will be carefully assessed, sited and designed to be in harmony with the natural environment and significant sites, so as not to detract from the Park's outstanding landscape and scenic values. Consistent with the Zoning Scheme (see Map 5.), fire management, weed control measures, soil erosion works and all other management activities will consider impacts on visitor scenic values.

3.11 Geological heritage – The Park's unique geological-heritage values will be featured in Interpretation and Community Education planning and programs. To protect the stromatolites and the fossil outcrops in the vicinity of Ellery Creek, they will not be promoted to the public.

3.12 Soil conservation – All recreational and operational activities will aim to minimise disturbance to the Park's soils. All developments will be sited to avoid soil erosion by taking specialist advice, using the most appropriate soil conservation techniques and ensuring developments are constructed to minimise soil disturbance.

- No soil or gravel will be removed or disturbed except in accordance with the conditions of a permit and subject to the approval of the joint management partners.
- Erosion control measures and river bank stabilisation works will be employed wherever necessary. Methods will be as environmentally benign as possible and may include visitor access controls, re-vegetation measures such as direct seeding, and other erosion control works. Only locally sourced native plant species will be used in rehabilitation.
- Driving off designated tracks for research, hunting or gathering will be discouraged. A program to identify, prioritise and progressively rehabilitate degraded sites will be undertaken with specialist advice. Problem areas will be managed and remedial action taken as appropriate.
- To reduce the spread of weeds from areas of high concentration to less affected areas, soil sourced outside the Park for road works, tracks, trails and erosion control works will not be transferred beyond the Visitor Zone. Where possible, soil and gravel for vehicle tracks, trails and maintenance in the Conservation Zone will use locally sourced materials.

- Areas significantly affected by soil erosion, sedimentation or human-induced changes in surface water drainage should be mapped, rehabilitated and their condition monitored.



West MacDonnell Ranges. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

3.1.3 Surface and groundwater values

Permanent and semi-permanent watercourses and waterholes, and groundwater provide critical ecosystem services which underpin natural, cultural and recreational values well beyond the boundaries of the Park. Waterholes in the park, especially permanent waters in the gorges, were invaluable to Traditional Owners in the past, and continue to retain cultural significance. Today many gorges are popular tourist sites within the Park. The gorges are cool “oases” in the landscape of arid ranges and sand plains. Visitor activities that concentrate on the gorges and their waterholes include swimming, bush walking, nature study and scenic appreciation. The Park also protects the upper catchment of Roe Creek, which directly recharges the aquifers that provide the public water supply for Alice Springs.

Major watercourses and long-term waterholes – The West MacDonnell National Park is dissected by several major watercourses which form the headwaters of the Finke River system. These include Davenport Creek, Ormiston Creek, Ellery Creek and Jay Creek, all of which run into the Finke River. These watercourses and their small tributaries are most often dry, sandy and rocky, but after heavy rains they flow and replenish the Park’s many waterholes, gorges and aquifers.

The waterholes in the Park provide critical watering points for birds and other wildlife, habitat for relict aquatic animals and plants and a refuge for Finke River fishes. The Finke River Headwater Gorges System is listed on the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA). Further assessment suggests the description should be modified to recognize both the permanent and long-term waterholes of the Finke River System, and the Chewings Range permanent springs. Although no wetlands within the Park are currently listed as Ramsar sites, both the permanent and long-term waterholes of the Finke River system and permanent springs of the Chewings Range meet criteria for listing as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

Waterholes in the West MacDonnell Ranges are among the most isolated, permanent freshwater habitats in Australia. River flows are episodic but the headwaters of the Finke River support eight permanent waterhole systems, along with various smaller permanent or long-term waterholes. These include Redbank, Ormiston and Serpentine Gorges, Ellery Creek Big Hole, Fish Hole, Hugh Gorge, Standley Chasm and Glen Helen Gorge. These water bodies provide an important drought refuge for many species, particularly fish and aquatic plants. They support 9 species of fish, 3 of which are endemic to the Finke River System (Finke River hardyhead - *Craterocephalus centralis*, Finke mogurnda - *Mogurnda larapintae*, and Finke goby - *Chlamydogobius japalpa*). Because of their restricted distribution, these species are vulnerable to significant changes that may occur in the catchment. Unlike elsewhere in Australia, there are no exotic fish found in the catchment.

Chewings Ranges permanent springs – The Chewings Ranges support a number of permanent flowing springs. These are significant in that they support distinctive relict flora and fauna that have persisted for thousands of years. The springs depend exclusively on permanently discharging groundwater and range from small patches to larger patches on saturated soils covering up to half a hectare, plus streams and rockholes. These areas are associated with relictual ferns and mosses, saturated soils, clear water with low salinities, the absence of fish and the presence of aquatic macroinvertebrates including the water penny (*Sclerocyphon fuscus*). Although these permanent springs may be of interest to visitors, their fragile nature requires that selected areas be designated part of the Special Protection Zone, with access by scientific permit or for traditional purposes only.

Threatening processes – Water resources within the park are both relatively resilient and currently in good condition. However, some sites have been affected historically by introduced animals and weeds. Fortunately, comparisons with the 1894 Horn expedition collections and observations suggest the aquatic communities in Central Australia have remained relatively unchanged by European settlement. The challenge is to ensure such aquatic communities, and the values attributed to them, are managed to survive future demands. Priority wetland areas need to be identified and prioritised for management. The remoteness and integrity of some sites, provide the scope to establish benchmark sites to monitor wetland condition.

Key pressures on aquatic habitats in the Park include disturbed vegetation cover, bank side trampling, soil erosion and sedimentation; human-influenced changes to surface water drainage, and nutrient enrichment by large herbivores, causing excessive algal growth and eutrophication in water bodies, are also of concern. Cattle and horses can introduce weed species, including Couch Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*). These species have dramatically increased the intensity and occurrence of fire, particularly along the creeks and alluvial soils. Recreational use can negatively affect waterholes, especially if the use continues to increase. Potential impacts include trampling riparian vegetation, and the introduction of sunscreen, soap and insect repellent into the water. In visitor areas, the leaching of effluent or sewage from pit toilets or sewage systems into watercourses can result in eutrophication and health risks.

Additional potential threats to water resources of the Park include lowered water tables and reduced groundwater flow, changes to water quantity and quality in relict streams, the translocation of species such as yabbies (*Cherax destructor*), and the introduction of exotic aquatic species like mosquito fish (*Gambusia affinis*) or the swordtail (*Xiphophorus helleri*). The introduction of additional weed species such as Mexican poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*) and Bathurst burr (*Xanthium spinosum*) have been recognised, but they have little impact and prefer open disturbed areas of creek channels and banks.

Fishing is not encouraged as it may deplete the relatively small fish populations. Fishing is restricted under Park by-laws at major recreational waterholes (Glen Helen Gorge, Ormiston

Gorge and Ellery Creek Big Hole). Signs have been erected advising visitors of fishing restrictions. Fishing by Traditional Owners using customary methods is supported. Park Managers will work with the Traditional Owners to educate people on the long-term risks associated with the use of drag nets or gill nets.

Key priorities for park operations will include erecting and maintaining fencing and removing cattle, horses and camels from waterholes and watercourses of the Park. Reducing sedimentation and minimising changes to surface water drainage should also be addressed. These concerns require good collaboration with neighbours who share catchments and common interests. Human impacts on delicate saturated soils, and the introduction of weeds to sites associated with the Chewings Ranges permanent springs can be minimised by regulating access. Where feasible, weed management should target discrete sites appropriate for control. Visitor impacts to most waterholes across the Park can be minimised through comprehensive site planning, good design and appropriate infrastructure. Where there are competing interests for water supply, ecosystem needs will be prioritised over development needs within the Park. Interpretation and public education should encourage visitors to enjoy the natural and cultural values of the Park's water in responsible and sustainable ways.

OUR AIMS - WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Healthy watercourses and waterholes, as determined by monitoring standards.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.13 Catchment collaborations – The partners will take a holistic view of the Park's catchments. Where possible they will be managed in an integrated and collaborative way, involving neighbours if necessary. Wherever possible, workable partnerships will be established with neighbours, specialist agencies and community groups to assist with the assessment, planning, management and research of the Park's catchments.

3.14 Water quality - Maintaining water quality in the Park's waterholes and other surface waters will remain a priority. To this end:

- Visitors will be discouraged from using insect repellents and detergents in the Park's waterholes through appropriate education and interpretation programs. Swimming may be prohibited in waterholes having significant biological value and deemed to be under threat.
- Only non-residual, biodegradable herbicides will be used along creek-lines.
- New toilets, sewage systems and sites for waste disposal within the Park will require environmental clearances. In all instances, seepage and

contamination of ground waters and surrounding watercourses will be avoided. Where possible, the most environmentally appropriate systems of effluent treatment available will be installed.

- Identify and address areas of accelerated soil erosion that are transporting major sediment loads to waterholes and affecting water quality.

3.15 Water supply – Where there are competing interests for water supply within the Park, such as those between new developments and ecosystem needs, ecosystem needs will take priority.

3.16 Pressures on waterholes – Environmental pressures on the waterholes and watercourses will be managed in an integrated and coordinated manner through 5 year management strategies, annual programs and workable agreements with neighbours. Efforts will be made to ensure cattle and other feral animals are excluded or removed from the vicinity of waterholes as part of a program to remove them from the Park. The impact of weeds in, and adjacent to, the watercourses and waterholes will be assessed and action taken to reduce any impacts where feasible. Efforts will be made to ensure sedimentation of waterholes and watercourses is minimised.

3.17 Waterhole and watercourse monitoring – Banks of waterholes and high visitor use areas will be monitored by ranger staff for erosion on a regular basis. Sections of bank can be closed for rehabilitation should excessive damage occur. Watercourses and waterholes will be monitored for weeds. Preferably in partnership with specialist and community groups, priority wetland refuge areas will be identified, and active monitoring undertaken. Comparative benchmarking of wetland condition will be considered.

3.18 Fishing – Fishing will be prohibited in the Park. Traditional rights to use the Park's resources will be respected. Use will be consistent with Aboriginal hunting and gathering policy as determined by the partners.

3.1.4 Biodiversity values

The West MacDonnell National Park lies within the MacDonnell Ranges bioregion; one of 85 bioregions nationally identified. The Greater MacDonnell Ranges is recognised as an area of international conservation significance. It is one of the best protected bioregions in the Northern Territory.

The Park contributes significantly to the National Reserve System. It protects almost half of the reserved area within the bioregion. It protects the highest proportion of vegetation types and vertebrate fauna and supports a particularly high number of relict plant species, including several that are endemic to the bioregion. Another important value of the Park is the significant number of threatened animal species. The Park sustains populations of 20 species of threatened animals and, within the Northern Territory, is second only in this regard to Kakadu National Park. Fourteen mammal species recorded at the time of European contact are believed to be extinct (38% of the total) while several others have a threatened status. Since the area became a park, two species thought to be lost have been rediscovered - the Long-tailed Dunnart, *Sminthopsis longicaudata* and the Central Rock-rat *Zyomys pendunculatus*.

Diverse vegetation – The flora of the West MacDonnell National Park is particularly species-rich, with approximately 700 native species recorded in 23 vegetation communities. The MacDonnell Ranges is recognised as one Australia's top 12 centres of plant species richness.

Vegetation patterns are sensitive to topography, geology, and soils, and reflect the fire history of the area. Common vegetation types within the park are:

- *Grasslands and shrublands* – A large proportion of the Park consists of spinifex-dominated grasslands and open shrublands (dominated by *Triodia brizoides* and *T. longiceps*). Non-spinifex shrublands, dominated by *Acacia aneura* (Mulga) or *A. kempeana* (Witchetty Bush), also cover large areas of the Park.
- *Woodlands or open woodland* – On flatter terrain where the soils are deeper and more fertile, woodlands or open woodland vegetation predominates, with overstorey species such as *Acacia estrophiolata* (Ironwood) and *A. victoriae*, with a variety of shrubs beneath, particularly *Senna artemisioides*. On low rocky hills, open woodlands of *Acacia aneura* (Mulga) and *A. kempeana* (Witchetty Bush) over perennial grassland are more common. Confined to the elevated hills and steep quartzite cliffs, fire-sensitive *Acacia macdonnellensis* (Hill Mulga) occurs with other heath-like mallees, including *Corymbia eremaea* (Mallee Bloodwood) and *Eucalyptus gillenii* (Mallee Red Gum). This vegetation community is known for harbouring threatened species.
- *Riverine areas* – *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (River Red Gum) dominates the upper storey of vegetation along major watercourses within the park.

- *Heaths* – Restricted heath-like communities are also found on the exposed rounded summits of the quartzite mountains, with a relatively dense cover of the stunted mallees *Corymbia eremaea* (Mallee Bloodwood), *Eucalyptus sessilis* (Finke River Mallee), *E. gillenii* (Mallee Red Gum), *E. minniritchie* (Round-leaved Mallee) as well as *Acacia macdonnellensis* (Hill Mulga) and *Callitris glaucophylla* (Cypress Pine).
- *Other significant vegetation communities* – The Park also conserves several plant communities limited to highly localised areas or that are poorly reserved. These restricted vegetation communities are particularly important for the conservation of many endemic, disjunct, relict or threatened species of the Park.

Endemic, disjunct and relict plant species – For many thousands of years the MacDonnell Ranges acted as a refuge allowing various plant species to persist in an otherwise hostile landscape. Thirty-two plant species have one or more isolated populations in the West MacDonnell National Park separated from other populations located in wetter climates beyond the arid zone; these have been classified as relicts. In a report entitled 'Refugia for Biological Diversity in Arid and Semi-Arid Australia' (Morton et al, 1995) the West MacDonnells is classed as an extremely significant refugium, and receives the highest score for the whole of arid and semi-arid Australia.

The relict species include sedges and rushes such as *Carex fascicularis* and *Juncus continuus* and a suite of 10 ferns including *Adiantum capillus-veneris* and *Christella dentata*. The West MacDonnell National Park populations of these species occur in sheltered habitats, some of which are associated with groundwater discharge, where moisture persists for longer than in the surrounding landscape. Some of these populations represent remnants of the more widespread distribution they had during past periods when the climate was wetter.

A disproportionately large number of plant species (32) occurring in the Park exhibit disjunct continental distribution patterns and have the northern, southern, eastern or western edges of their distribution in the Park. Other species such as the iconic *Macrozamia macdonnellii* (MacDonnell Ranges Cycad) and *Actinotus schwarzii* (Desert Flannel-flower) exhibit a different disjunction type again, with their nearest relatives nearly a thousand kilometres distant.

In addition to the high number of disjunct plant taxa, the West MacDonnell National Park also stands out from the surrounding arid zone landscape in the number of endemic species. Twelve plant species are endemic to the West MacDonnell National Park. This adds further weight to the view that the MacDonnell Ranges region has been isolated irregularly for long periods of time allowing a suite of unique species to evolve.

Threatened plant species – The West MacDonnell National Park is home to a large number of plant species of high conservation significance, including threatened species. Of the

approximately 700 species of native plants recorded within the West MacDonnell National Park, 31 are of national significance, 55 of Northern Territory significance, 18 significant within the southern NT and 25 of bioregional significance on the basis of being either relict, or having disjunct or limited distributions. The following species of plants are considered to have the national status of “vulnerable” in the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC)* schedules.

- *Actinotus schwarzii* (Flannel Flower) Relict, Endemic
- *Macrozamia macdonnellii* (MacDonnell Ranges Cycad) Relict, Endemic
- *Minuria tridens*
- *Olearia macdonnellensis* (a daisy) Endemic
- *Ricinocarpos gloria-medii* (Glory of the Centre) Endemic
- *Wrixonia schultzei* Endemic

Individual species recovery plans have been prepared for *Macrozamia macdonnellii* and *Ricinocarpos gloria-medii*, and a multispecies recovery plan prepared for *Actinotus schwarzii*, *Minuria tridens* and *Olearia macdonnellensis*.

Sites of national botanical significance – There are five sites either wholly or partly in the Park which have been identified as sites of national botanical significance (White et al, 2000 *Plant Species and Sites of Botanical Significance in the Southern Bioregions of the Northern Territory*). They are:

1. Mount Zeil (WMNP is 48% of the site) – many significant plants and three plant taxa of Australian significance;
2. Chewings Range (WMNP is 51% of the site) – four plant species of national significance, one endemic to the site, and many disjunct populations of plant taxa. Has 23 taxa of Australian significance. The Chewings Range Permanent Springs are also listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (Environment Australia, 2001);
3. Glen Helen (WMNP is 94% of the site) – site has two active mound spring complexes and 8 taxa of Australian significance;
4. Simpsons Gap (WMNP is 78% of site) – site has 430 plant taxa and 4 taxa of Australian significance;
5. Ilparpa (WMNP is 12% of site) – nearly 500 vascular plants recorded for the site, with 3 taxa of Australian significance.

Significant vegetation communities of the NT arid zone There are several vegetation communities occurring in the Park that are very localised and significant within arid NT:

- *Sheltered freshwater spring and seepage communities* – These communities occur in rocky sheltered environments such as gorges and gaps where freshwater springs or seepage create areas of permanent free water or soil moisture. These communities, which are most common in the Chewings Range, harbour a number of outstanding examples of relict species, notably ferns and mosses. Weed infestation, disturbance and wildfires are key threats to these plant communities.

- *Mound spring communities* – The saline mound spring community only occurs in two small areas of less than 0.01km². The first area is located east of the Ormiston Rd and the second is located north northeast of Glen Helen Lodge. The plant species assemblage in this community is unique with significant plants comprise 50 percent of the total species present. Nine species within this community occur nowhere else in the region. An indicator species for this community is the disjunct Sea Rush *Juncus kraussii* ssp. *australiensis*. The community is particularly fragile and subject to trampling and damage to the soil crust. Both sites have been damaged by grazing stock in the past. Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*), Couch Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and Mossman River Grass (*Cenchrus echinatus*) threaten these communities. The fragile nature of the community has led to the Ormiston location being designated part of the Special Protection Zone, with public access by permit only. Any proposed management activities on the adjacent Abattoir block need to be undertaken in collaboration with the land holder.
- *High mountain-peak communities* – These heath-like communities are present on the exposed rounded summits of the higher peaks in the Park. In the west of the Park, the peaks of Mt Sonder, Ormiston Gorge and Mt Giles show particular richness in some more significant species. These communities usually include relatively dense covers of the stunted mallees *Corymbia eremaea*, *Eucalyptus sessilis*, *E. gillenii* and *E. minniritchie*, as well as Hill Mulga (*Acacia macdonnellensis*) and Cypress Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*). Important species associated with these communities can include *Wrixonia schultzei*, *Leucopogon sonderensis* and *Hakea grammatophylla*, and *Baeckea polystemonea* in the east of the Park. Although these communities contain fire sensitive species, their restricted position on the summits of ranges would suggest a strong history of fire in the region. These highly rocky sites probably offer some protection to fire sensitive species, which may periodically expand into more fire-prone habitats between fire events.

The Park is also significant for the conservation of several plant communities due to their poor reservation status elsewhere in the NT. These include:

- *Clay-plains and swamps* – Vegetation communities occurring on heavy clay soils are rare in the MacDonnell Ranges bioregion, and poorly reserved generally within arid NT. A localised patch of vegetation on heavy soil east of the Hugh River supports some 20 species that are not recorded elsewhere in the Park. The clay plain is dominated by *Eragrostis setifolia* (Neverfail) and to a lesser extent by *Astrebla pectinata* (Mitchell Grass). The site also contains distinct Gilgai wetlands and associated wetland plant species including *Chenopodium auricomum* (Queensland Bluebush) and *Muehlenbeckia florulenta* (Lignum). Invasion of the site by *Cenchrus ciliaris* (Buffel Grass) and *Cynodon dactylon* (Couch Grass) remains a threat.
- *White patch communities* – These cover small areas of the landscape right across the Park. Although small, these patches contain restricted species and significantly add to the diversity of the landscape. These areas are often associated with breakaway areas,

pallid zones and laterite capping. The communities which occur on these white patches are often dominated by chenopods or have a high number of chenopod species present. Species typically associated with this community include *Ptilotus whitei*, *Cratystylis centralis*, *Olearia macdonnellensis* and *Atriplex vesicaria*. While fuel loads are naturally low within these sites, wildfire remains a threat and controlled burns in areas surrounding these communities would be appropriate to ensure their protection.

Faunal Diversity – The West MacDonnell Ranges has long been known to support a relatively rich and varied fauna. The first scientific survey of the area's fauna was undertaken by the Horn Scientific Expedition of 1894. A summary of the native fauna of the West MacDonnell Ranges is provided below:

- **Fish:** Nine species of fish are known to occur in the Park. Although this number is low from an Australian perspective, regionally it is significant. One species, the Finke River Hardyhead (*Craterocephalus centralis*), is only known from the Finke River system. Permanent waterholes play a vital role in ensuring the survival of the Park's fish populations. They provide the breeding grounds and habitat for fish species and, during times of flood, fish are able to migrate to, and colonise, other areas.
- **Reptiles and Amphibians:** There have been 83 species of reptiles and 7 species of frogs recorded in the Park. The region is one of the richest in the arid zone for herpetofauna. Several species have not been recorded or collected in the area for many years. It is possible that some of these species have become extinct in the area.
- **Birds:** There have been 152 bird species recorded in the area. Major creek systems and tall shrublands support the richest avifauna.
- **Mammals:** Today the area is known to contain 19 terrestrial species and 9 bat species. At least 42 native mammals (31 terrestrial and 11 bat species) are known to have once inhabited the West MacDonnell Ranges.

Threatened and near-threatened native animal species – An important value of the Park is the significant number of threatened and near-threatened animal species that occur within the Park. Significantly over 30% of native mammal species in the region have become extinct within the past 100 years. A list of significant threatened fauna in the MacDonnell Ranges Bioregion indicates the following nationally significant fauna species as occurring in the Park:

Central Rock-rat *Zyomys pendunculatus* Endangered;
Finke Goby *Chalmydogobius japaipa* Vulnerable;
Black-footed Wallaby, MacDonnell Ranges race *Petrogale lateralis* Vulnerable;
Princess Parrot *Polytelis alexandrae* Vulnerable; and
Desert Sand Skipper *Croitana aestivalis* Endangered.

Species recovery plans have been prepared (or are in preparation) for the Central Rock-rat, Black-footed Rock Wallaby and Desert Sand Skipper.

Stronghold for several native animals – In addition to being strongholds for threatened species such as the Black-footed Rock Wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*), Long-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis longicaudata*) and Central Rock-rat (*Zyzomys pendunculatas*), the Park is a regional stronghold for the Central Australian form of the Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) and the Finke River Hardyhead (*Craterocephalus centralis*). Although not listed as vulnerable or endangered, the Finke River Hardyhead is endemic to the Finke River system. Permanent waterholes in the Park are probably the source for repopulation of this fish downstream after dry periods. It is currently unaffected by exotic species.

The Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) is one of the few medium-sized mammals remaining in the arid zone. During the Horn Expedition of 1894, the Common Brushtail Possum was regarded as being “*very widely distributed, occurring everywhere amongst the eucalypts which border the river-beds*”. However, in the arid zone it is now vulnerable and its decline appears to be continuing. Current research on the possum is restricted to ad hoc recording of presence from collections of possum faecal pellets and observations of possum tree scratchings.

Scientific Values – The West MacDonnell National Park has long been used for a wide variety of scientific research. Several factors contribute to the Park being an excellent candidate for long-term field studies on the impact of climate change on vegetation. There are a significant number of species that have relictual populations within the park or have populations within the park that are at the edge of their continental distributional range that would be suitable to monitor. The Park is located in a region that can receive both winter and summer rains and the flora includes short-lived species that germinate specifically with winter or summer rains. Similarly, the high level of endemism and limited geographical ranges of some of the invertebrate fauna makes the Park an ideal location to monitor the impact of threatening processes, including climate change and landscape function. The partners encourage and support research. Research undertaken within the park will be required to be consistent with policy and permit conditions under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

OUR AIMS - WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- No loss of threatened species or nominated plant communities
- Effective collaboration with neighbours producing conservation outcomes for the Park, and if possible shared regional outcomes.
- Ecosystem function is maintained or improved across the broader landscape.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.19 Biodiversity Conservation - Protection of the Park's biodiversity will be given a high priority. Significant habitats will be protected by maintaining broader ecological processes at a landscape-level scale, principally through fire and feral animal management programs. Weed management programs (and prescribed burning in certain circumstances) will be generally applied at site-level scale, targeting significant sites for best effect.

3.20 Expanding the area for conservation benefit – Where appropriate, conservation management links will be encouraged between Park and off-Park lands at a regional scale, through collaboration with nearby landholders for the purposes of complementary land management; such lands include pastoral leases, Indigenous Protected Areas, Bush Heritage properties and Land for Wildlife.

3.21 Research Program – Research will focus on key knowledge gaps that limit confident and effective management. The outcomes of relevant research and improved understanding of species, habitats, Aboriginal use and natural processes will be incorporated into the 'State of the Park' reviews and park management programs. Research, by scientists from both the NT Government and external agencies, will be encouraged.

Priorities for research may include:

- Document baseline assessments of the biodiversity and cultural values.
- Develop ecosystem condition indicators and benchmarks to indicate ecosystem health and function to measure park management effectiveness and underpin the monitoring program.
- Identify spatial extent of the vegetation units, habitats of priority species and communities of conservation significance to inform strategies, operational programs and assessment of development proposal.
- Improve knowledge about how to manage Buffel Grass influenced communities for the best biodiversity outcomes.

- Improve knowledge about the responses of key threatened species and communities to fire.
- Assess the degree of invasion of Buffel Grass into habitats of priority species and communities of conservation significance.
- Identify and maintain benchmark habitats free of Buffel Grass
- Map the extent of fire-sensitive and fire tolerant vegetation communities,
- Determine habitat responses to fire and identify appropriate fire regimes
- Develop fire management techniques for Buffel Grass dominated areas.
- Improve understanding of invertebrate fauna in the Park and role in the monitoring of environmental change.
- Improve understanding of the ecology, and responses to management actions, of the Central Rock-rat, Common Brushtail Possum and the MacDonnell Ranges Cycad.
- Map soil erosion risk and improve understanding of soil erosion and changes in landscape function.



Cycads in the MacDonnell Ranges. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

3.1.5 Managing Threatening Processes

The rugged and inaccessible areas in the northernmost sector of the West MacDonnell National Park, such as the Chewings Ranges, remain in excellent condition and are an important contributor to the integrity of the Park's values. Threatening processes come from large wildfires, weeds, feral animals and soil erosion. These pressures can significantly alter the distribution and abundance of plant species, increase erosion and can contribute to the decline of native fauna species.

Despite its significant size and contribution to the national reserve system, the Park is long and thin with a large boundary to area ratio. The resilience of the Park could be improved by working with neighbours for common conservation outcomes or extending the boundary of the Park to take in adjoining land with high natural and cultural values; this would also create more manageable boundaries.

Managing information – A comprehensive understanding of the natural systems and processes in the landscape is essential to effectively manage the West MacDonnell National Park. High staff turnover reinforces the need for good record keeping. Few rangers stay long enough to observe the land over several years to understand how the country responds to change. To build and retain local knowledge between successive generations, field observations should be systematically recorded, particularly responses to management treatments. Despite the West MacDonnell's significant conservation values, the Park has no long-term biodiversity or landscape condition monitoring framework to evaluate success. Conservation monitoring programs need to be established to measure the effectiveness of operational strategies and programs. The findings of key monitoring programs need to be evaluated.

Many biophysical aspects of the Park have been mapped including vegetation, soils, landforms, slope and aspect. The Park's Geographical Information System (GIS) centralises this information, along with drainage, soil erosion, tracks, fence-lines, fauna observations, watering points and fire history. This information can help park staff make decisions about how to most effectively place effort to address fire, weeds, feral animal and erosion issues. The combination of biophysical mapping with a GIS is a very powerful office-based analytical tool. However, its value will be enhanced by building a shared understanding of the country between Traditional Owners and operational and technical staff, and through programs that integrate scientific spatial data with on-ground observations and Aboriginal ecological knowledge.

Managing introduced plants (weeds) – Introduced plants pose a threat to the integrity of the Park's natural values, with the potential to alter, or even displace, native plant species, communities and animal populations. Fifty seven introduced plant species (weeds) have been recorded for the West MacDonnell National Park.

Fortunately, no Weeds of National Significance occur within the Park; however, twenty-seven weeds recorded in the Park are declared as Category A or B under the *Weeds Management Act 2001*.

Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is recognised as the most significant threat to biodiversity values in the Park due to its capacity to change fire regimes by increasing the intensity and frequency of fire. Buffel Grass has been recorded in the majority of habitat types and is spreading. The highest concentrations occur along watercourses and in areas frequented by visitors, cattle and horses. It responds well to periods of higher rainfall, as dramatically shown in its contribution to the regionally widespread wildfires of 2001-02. In the last twenty years it has spread rapidly, despite the considerable resources expended on its control. Control methods employ chemical application and burning (e.g. burn then spray or spray, burn, spray). Couch grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) is also a significant threat within the Park. Couch grass has altered long-term fuel loads in most rivers and many swamps.

As widespread control is not possible for managing Buffel and Couch Grass, effective weed management needs to focus on important areas. Prioritisation requires that threats to the Park to be evaluated against the feasibility of control. Variables for consideration include biodiversity hot spots, plant diversity, levels of infestation, site accessibility and susceptibility to infestation. Successful weed programs have site specific goals which are achievable and sustainable. When implemented, they require continuous, long-term effort, supported by clearly outlined objectives that will be followed by future managers. Good collaboration with neighbours is also essential. Restricted habitats of conservation significance remain a high priority within the park. Complete removal of Buffel Grass or Couch Grass in discrete areas such as mound springs, permanent springs of the Chewings Range and rock art sites can yield long-term benefits. Biophysical mapping information can also be applied to predict the density of Buffel Grass and its potential impact on biodiversity. Control effort can be recorded, including changes to Buffel Grass density and distribution, to gauge the effectiveness of effort. This data becomes increasingly important over time, allowing the development of progressively more refined control programs.

Managing introduced animals (ferals) – Introduced animals continue to affect the Park's aesthetic values, biodiversity and ecosystems. The major introduced animals recorded in the Park include cattle, horses, camels, cats, foxes, rabbits and introduced European bees. A recent run of dry years has increased grazing pressure from horses or cattle on the Park causing localised impacts on biodiversity and visitor values, particularly in areas associated with permanent and semi-permanent waterholes.

Cattle, horses and camels have the greatest potential to cause extensive and severe environmental impact. These animals can seriously alter and degrade native vegetation, pollute water resources, disturb fragile soils causing erosion, and directly introduce weeds. Cattle, camels and horses threaten the safety of visitors and staff. They also significantly detract from

visitor impressions of the Park and its management. Over many years cattle and horses were removed from the West MacDonnells as smaller land parcels were amalgamated into a single park. Camels have recently emerged as a significant threat. Cattle, horses and camels enter the Park from adjoining lands where no common boundary fence exists, and through breached boundary fences, which often occur after flood events. Rangers observe that camels and horses tend to open up the fences and cattle follow through the gaps. Currently pressures are greatest in the proximity of Jay Creek (horses and cattle) and at the western park boundary (cattle and camels).

Enforceable legislation and practical agreements with neighbouring landholders, along with adequate resources to implement ongoing control programs, are vital to successfully manage the threats posed by large grazing herbivores.

It has been estimated that feral cats have caused the extinction of 30% of mammal species in the West MacDonnells. Predation by feral cats is likely to still be a key threatening process for many native animals within the Park. The impact of predation on native animals in the Park can also be influenced by development or activities on or near the Park. Such activities include building new fence-lines and tracks (which facilitates the movement of predators), new bores (providing access to water), rubbish dumps (increased scavenging opportunities) and dingo/wild dog control (increasing cat densities). There is no broad-scale means of control yet developed for feral cats that would not affect dingoes. Rabbits have been abundant in the past but are now restricted in distribution, and numbers do not pose a significant threat to biodiversity. This may change as resistance to Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease becomes more widespread. European bees are common around water and efforts are made to reduce their numbers in visitor areas.

Effective long-term control of introduced animals requires a strategic and collaborative approach with neighbours. Exclusion and removal of large grazing animals can have the most impact. Providing access and fences are maintained, boundary and exclusion fencing provides some protection. Sections of the western, north and southern park boundary fences require improved access and immediate maintenance. Boundary and exclusion fences, particularly in the southern section of the Park, are required to protect waterholes and springs of conservation significance. Reducing grazing pressure on the Park's boundary fences can also contribute to managing feral animal impacts on the Park. With the support of neighbouring landholders, pressure on the Park's fences can be significantly reduced through aerial culling of large feral herbivores. A buffer zone surrounding the Park could be mutually determined with the involvement of neighbouring landholders. Feral animal data should also be combined with biophysical data and interpreted with the Park's GIS to assist understanding of the nature of feral animal impacts and support decision-making to reduce these impacts on the Park's natural values.

Dingoes (*Canis lupus dingo*) are native animals common in the Park, and their numbers can become concentrated at artificial food sources such as waste disposal sites. Problems have

occurred in the past with dingo hybrids in the Ormiston-Glen Helen area. In accordance with the *Management Program for the Dingo in the Northern Territory of Australia (2006-2011)*, their numbers have been controlled from time to time.

Domestic dogs and cats can hunt, scare and kill native animals as well as cause a nuisance to other Park users. For these reasons they are not allowed within the Park without a permit; such permits are issued only in special circumstances.

Managing fire – Fire has long been part of the Central Australian environment and has played a major part in shaping the region's vegetation communities. The sheltered gorges, dissected terrain, low grazing intensity in past years and long history of Aboriginal burning practices have enabled many fire sensitive habitats to persist. Changed fire regimes, and increased intensity of wildfires, often fuelled by invasive exotic plants, are damaging fire-sensitive communities and the ecosystems of the broader region.

Much of the biota tolerates some fires, but several sensitive vegetation communities are thought to be threatened. Buffel Grass has altered long-term fuel loads in some environments, particularly on alluvial flats and near rivers. Couch Grass has altered long-term fuel loads in most rivers. Approximately 50% of the Park was burnt in the extreme fire events of 2001-2002. However, large areas remain susceptible to wildfire.

When properly managed fire is a powerful tool to help maintain and enhance the Park's biodiversity. The partners value the same approach for fire management on the Park, recognising that patch burning and strategic fire-breaks can enhance and protect biodiversity and reduce the incidence of damaging wildfires.

Typically, in past years, much less burning was done each year than was desired or needed. There also remains scope for better documentation of fire history and more formalised fire monitoring. Effective long-term fire management will be enhanced by setting clear goals and priorities consistent with other management programs, and by burning at every appropriate opportunity. Good links between data collation, assessment, fire planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are essential. To competently and confidently use fire in the landscape, new rangers need to respond to improved knowledge and be supported by experienced rangers, scientists and GIS staff through mentoring, training and adequate resourcing.

Long term management goals focus on avoiding large catastrophic wildfires, as occurred in 2002, to protect the fire-sensitive communities and the broader ecosystem values of the region. Fire planning requires a focus on large strategic breaks, patch burning and prescribed burns in fire-tolerant vegetation such as Spinifex dominated communities. To minimise the likelihood of a wildfire, nominal operational goals could include burning a minimum of 5% of Spinifex dominated communities each year, while ensuring no more than 10% of nominated fire-

sensitive vegetation communities are burnt by 2020. A general by-product of good fire management will be greater diversity of vegetation types at different stages of recovery from fire.



A Ranger managing a controlled burn in the West MacDonnell National Park. Photo: Parks and Wildlife Service.

OUR AIMS - WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Improved knowledge, confidence and competence in managing the landscape and threatening processes.
- Wildfire, weeds, feral animals and soil erosion reduced to low level threats in high value habitats.
- No further spread of Buffel Grass within identified significant habitats and these areas free of Buffel Grass by 2020.
- The West MacDonnells National Park is stock free.
- Zero risk of large-scale catastrophic wildfires.
- The status of fire-sensitive vegetation communities is stable or increasing.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.22 Management strategies (5 yr) and annual operational programs (1 yr) - All fire, weed, feral animal and erosion management will be directed through management strategies prepared every 5 years specifying long-term priorities, well considered principles, nominal management regimes and a framework for adaptive management. Aligned with the long-term aims set by the Management Plan, strategies will set 5-year targets and provide direction for annual operation programs. Annual operational programs need only to be brief documents specifying the inputs and outputs to meet targets described in the strategies. Annual programs will take due consideration of available resources and priorities at a regional and Territory level. All operational management strategies will:

- take an integrated approach with a focus on conservation of the Park's key values;
- set clear 5-10 year targets for defined areas of the Park with a focus on the long-term aims (10-20 years) of this Plan;
- be prepared with Traditional Owners and endorsed by the Management Committee(s);
- be integrated and aligned for best effect through management strategies and operational programs (fire, weed, feral, erosion, cultural heritage, Aboriginal employment and training, interpretation, Larapinta Trail and species recovery);
- be underpinned by an understanding of:
 - the broader natural structure and ecological processes in the landscape (using the best available scientific advice and local knowledge);
 - the relative strength and weaknesses of interacting elements (such as species ecology/life cycle/behavior, response to disturbance, locations, timing, rainfall, seasons, collateral impacts, methods/techniques, follow-up requirements, cost/benefits of actions);
- define maintenance regimes, indicators, monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes;
- incorporate the participation of local Aboriginal people as well as cooperation and collaboration with neighbours; and

- define required staff competencies and safety standards.

3.23 Staff expertise – Building competence, confidence and retaining staff expertise on the Park to manage fire, weeds feral animals and soils will be a high priority. Mentoring and training in practical and ecological aspects of operation programs will be important part of staff development. Where appropriate guidelines, manuals and training materials will be prepared, or obtained from appropriate external sources, to define 'good practice'.

3.24 Biodiversity partnerships – The partners will build long term strategic partnerships with Territory and interstate universities, government departments, NGOs, industry, and community groups to assist with land management programs.

3.25 Good record keeping – In addition to formal monitoring programs and field observations of the Park's natural systems and processes, a simple framework will be set up to record seasonal observations and natural responses to management actions. General observations should be discussed between park operations, Traditional Owners and the Management Committee(s) to assess their significance and potentially warrant further action.

3.26 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and biophysical data – Biophysical data will continue to be centralised and integrated through the Park's GIS, to support conservation strategies and operational programs and to monitor change. Effort will be made to build a common understanding of the country with Traditional Owners, using GIS tools to maintain the currency and integrity of the information.

3.27 Monitoring and evaluation program for biodiversity – The status of the Park's key biodiversity values, and the threats to them, will be monitored as a means of gauging management effectiveness and fostering adaptive, progressive management. Effort will be made to identify suitable indicators of the Park's environmental health and management effectiveness. Partnerships with experts and community involvement in monitoring and evaluation will be encouraged.

3.28 Regulated access – Visitor access may be regulated or restricted to protect public safety, promote site rehabilitation or protect significant habitat or sacred sites.

3.29 Weed management – The partners will seek to reduce the impact of weeds on the Park's values. Weed operations will be carried out in accordance with conservation management strategies and annual operational programs. They will focus on minimising the impact of Buffel Grass on identified significant habitats and eradicating Weeds of National Significance. Regular survey and monitoring for the presence of Buffel Grass will be undertaken in priority areas. Buffel Grass will be controlled in different areas according to the priority assessments. Access may be regulated to minimise weed infestation of significant habitats.

- **Early detection and eradication of new weeds** – The risk posed by new weed species outbreaks will be assessed as soon as possible following detection. Operators undertaking

roadside slashing and grading will be encouraged to use clean machinery, which will be checked before work commences.

- **Operational protocols** – For selected sites within the Park, weed protocols may be prepared covering operational practices, access, use of locked-gates, signage, track sprayings and vehicle spot checks.
- **Soil movement** – To reduce the spread of weeds from areas of high concentration to less affected areas, where possible soil and gravel for vehicle tracks, trails and maintenance in the Conservation Zone will use locally sourced materials.

3.30 Feral animal management – In collaboration with neighbouring landholders, the partners will seek to reduce the impact of introduced animals on the Park's values principally by excluding and removing large grazing animals (cattle, horses, donkeys and camels). Feral animals will be managed in accordance with conservation management strategies and annual operational programs.

- **Strategic fencing** – The entry of large grazing animals will be restricted through boundary and exclusion fencing.
- **Feral animal control** – Horses, cattle, donkeys, cats and dogs will be removed from the Park in accordance with the *Pest Animal Strategy for the Northern Territory* (in prep), *Management Program for the Dingo in the Northern Territory of Australia (2006-2011)*, and any other guidelines or policies developed by the Territory or by Park's staff with Traditional Owners.
- **Buffer zone** – Park's staff will work with neighbouring landholders to encourage the development of a buffer zone around the Park where feral animal management takes place.
- **Aerial control** – When funds allow, park staff will maintain aerial culling in the remote inaccessible areas of the Park, and any buffer area determined with neighbouring landholders.
- **Fence maintenance** – Boundary and exclusion fences will be regularly patrolled and maintained. To ensure access, track maintenance will be required and potentially new access routes determined. The appropriate development assessment processes will be carried out where new access routes are considered.
- **Ground control** – Ground control of feral animals may be carried out, in accordance with an approved Feral Animal Management Plan and using Standard Operating Procedures where this is the most practical, economical or expedient means of controlling a problem.

3.31 Pets – Park operations will enforce the Parks and Wildlife Service Pets in Parks Policy and relevant Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-Laws. Pets can only be brought into the park with an approved permit issued by Parks and Wildlife.

3.32 Fire management – The management of fire will be given high priority. Fire will be managed in accordance with conservation management strategies and annual operational programs. The partners will seek to protect and maintain the health of the country through a combination of patch burning and strategic fire breaks.

- **Prescribed burns** – In most years, the majority of the areas deliberately burnt will be located in fire-tolerant vegetation, particularly Spinifex-dominated communities.
- **Strategic firebreaks** – Networks of strategic firebreaks will be created or reinforced through

interconnection with natural fire-breaks or other fire breaks. Other fire breaks will be burnt to protect fire-sensitive vegetation and infrastructure.

- **Patch burning** – Low intensity scattered patch burning of ground fuels will be implemented in appropriate vegetation communities.
- **Infrastructure** – Mechanical, chemical and fire control of fuel loads around infrastructure in priority visitor nodes will also be undertaken.
- **Opportunistic burning** – When flushes of annual fuels occur, more burning may be required in non-Spinifex vegetation types.
- **Fire sensitive habitats** – Fire sensitive habitats will be mapped. Environmental burns to maintain biodiversity will be planned annually using biophysical data. Burns will be conducted over the cooler months or after rain.
- **Wildfire control** – Wildfires will be reported to Bushfires NT and action taken to control their spread whenever possible. Assistance will be given to neighbouring landholders to control wildfires that may threaten the Park, and, on request, to reduce fuel loads. Graders and other heavy machinery will be used for wildfire suppression purposes only in extremely threatening circumstances to protect life, assets or key habitats, and will utilise existing tracks as much as possible.
- **Controlled burning ‘off-Park’** – On request, consideration will be given to assisting neighbouring landholders to burn areas outside the Park to reduce fuel loads and minimise the risk of wildfire incursions into the Park. Assistance may also be given to neighbouring landholders or Bushfires NT to control wildfires threatening the Park.
- **Fire history recording and fire monitoring** – Emphasis will be placed on systematically recording fires, maintaining the fire history of the park and formalising a fire monitoring program.
- **Regional fire plans** – Parks and Wildlife will work with Bushfires NT and neighbours to develop regional plans that maximise the potential to reduce the impact of large scale wildfires.

3.33 Camp fires – In the Visitor Zone, open fires are permitted in designated fire-pits only. Campfires are also permitted in designated areas within the Conservation Zone. Campfires are prohibited along the Larapinta Trail. Self reliant walkers on extended overnight walks will be encouraged to use fuel stoves. The impact of campfires throughout the Park will be monitored and may be prohibited in certain sites if necessary.

3.34 Firewood – To protect the sparse vegetation of the park while minimising the spread of weeds, firewood may only be collected from designated fire collection areas within the Park.

3.35 Fire restrictions – Restrictions on the lighting of fires may be applied in times of high to extreme fire risk, as determined by the Senior Fire Control Officer.

3.2. MANAGING VISITOR EXPERIENCES

The West MacDonnell National Park is renowned for some of the finest natural and cultural based tourism experiences in the Northern Territory. A sense of remoteness and lack of human disturbance across the Park landscape are unique assets that are valued, especially by domestic and international visitors who live in large urban areas.

This section addresses how the Park will be managed to ensure the growing number of visitors enjoy rewarding experiences consistent with Park values. It focuses on visitors and their experiences. Park visitors include locals, tour operators, and domestic and international travellers.

Local tourism operators contribute significantly to visitors' experience of the Parks and rely on the Park for core elements of tour products. The operators consulted during the preparation of this Plan reinforced the importance of maintaining the unique experiences that provide visitors with a sense they are in a wild, rugged and remote landscape, rich in cultural meaning. They felt that increased visitation should be managed to retain the Park's unique character. Operators highlighted the need for expanding Aboriginal cultural experiences and for providing interactive learning opportunities covering all aspects of the Park.

The Park's varied terrain provides ample opportunities to picnic, camp, swim, and bushwalk right across the Park. The Park includes areas popular for rock climbing and abseiling, while sites close to Alice Springs provide opportunities to cycle, jog, or picnic. Further opportunities exist for four-wheel driving and bush-camping adventures, especially along the Hugh River corridor. While the activities listed here are popular for local, domestic and international visitors, there remains great potential to extend this range through face to face cultural tourism experiences, digital interpretation and 'voluntourism' initiatives. The joint management partners encourage visitors to have a safe journey across Tyurretye.

Consistent with section 25AE of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* this section of the plan includes processes for:

- Visitor management procedures and stakeholder interests
- Dealing with commercial and infrastructure development

Principles for Managing Visitor Experiences – Our Guiding Beliefs

The joint management partners of Tyurretye recognise:

- Visitor safety is paramount.
- The changing needs, wants and perceptions of visitors underpin all initiatives.
- A broad range of visitor experiences can occur in the Park without impact on its key park values, through careful planning, design, site planning and management.

- Well designed services protect and enhance the Park's values and facilitate positive visitor experiences.
- Positive experiences produce satisfied tourists and locals.
- Visitors who feel connected to the Park build a sense of responsibility and stewardship.
- Tourism provides significant economic opportunities to the local and wider community through enterprise development, jobs and training, provision of infrastructure, visitor services and promotion.
- Visitor satisfaction, numbers and activities need to be monitored to guide management planning and inform enterprise development opportunities for Traditional Owners.



Glen Helen. Photo: Tourism NT.

3.2.1 The Red Centre Experience

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

The West MacDonnell National Park is one of Central Australia's premier tourism experiences. Its spectacular landscape includes rugged mountain ranges, deep gorges and waterholes bathed in a vibrant spectrum of desert hues. Its proximity to the town of Alice Springs, Watarrka and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks make it accessible to a wide array of visitors. The Park presents a world class experience and requires management at the highest standards.

Experiencing Australia's Red Centre

The West MacDonnell National Park is part of Australia's Red Centre National Landscape which includes internationally iconic national parks such as the Finke Gorge, Watarrka and Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Parks. Australia's Red Centre National Landscape is marketed nationally and internationally as the "quintessential" outback experience where visitors can discover "the relationship of people with land". It promotes "the best of the best" of Australia's natural and cultural assets to the world. The inclusion of the West MacDonnell National Park in this promotional program is expected to increase its national and international profile.

Park visitor numbers are expected to grow substantially with the progressive sealing of the Red Centre Way which links Watarrka National Park with the West MacDonnell National Park. It is expected that sealing the Red Centre Way will increase two-wheel self drive tourists, trailers, camper vans, motor homes and coaches.

In 2005 the Northern Territory Government commenced the long process toward World Heritage listing for the West MacDonnell National Park. One of the first steps toward that goal was accomplished in 2007 when the Park was nominated for assessment by the Australian Heritage Council for National Heritage Listing for its outstanding geological phenomena, rich biodiversity and its continuation as a living cultural landscape. Expert advice suggests the case for World Heritage listing could potentially be strengthened by including other areas with related attributes. These include Watarrka and Finke Gorge National Parks and a number of other areas east of the Park. With respect to the area's cultural values, it is important that the Traditional Owners play a leading role in the development of a formal nomination.

Engaging with a living cultural landscape

Visitors to the Territory seek authentic, interactive experiences with local Aboriginal people. Park visitors want to learn about local peoples' lives, history and heritage, and observe their art and painting. These informal conversations and exchanges can foster appreciation of the living cultural landscape of Tyurretye and encourage visitors to enjoy the Park with greater respect.

Traditional Owners would like visitors to know the Park is Aboriginal land and jointly managed. Traditional Owners of the West MacDonnell National Park maintain strong connections to

country through language, culture, stories and ecological knowledge. Many live in close proximity to the Park, providing viable opportunities for visitors to connect with some of the oldest living cultures on earth.

The success of regional tourism has inspired some Traditional Owners to begin planning for the opportunities joint management will provide. Local people want the opportunity to develop their own tour operations and share their stories with visitors through insightful cultural information delivered via digital interpretation, on signage and with bush tucker tours and other cultural activities such as art and crafts.

A strategic, regional approach is required for Indigenous tourism product development. The local tourism industry has expressed a strong interest in “a closer working relationship with Indigenous communities”. NT departments responsible for tourism, employment, training and enterprise development, as well as the CLC, provide support to Traditional Owners seeking to develop tourism enterprises. It is hoped that joint management will provide a catalyst to improve networks and strengthen the capacity to build small enterprises. Initial projects may consist of joint ventures with existing tour companies.

Interactive learning and transforming experiences

The presentation, interpretation and education offered within the West MacDonnell National Park should enrich a visitor's total experience of Central Australia. The Park is rich in biodiversity and is a place where spirits, songs and stories continue to bind the land to its Traditional Owners. A visitor to the Park can simultaneously “walk through” a Namatjira painting and be dwarfed by 800 million year old mountain ranges while hearing songs recreating the totemic landscape. Although the region has a turbulent history, the Park represents a place of re-connection and reconciliation. Interpretation is a process by which visitors see, learn and experience, and are inspired firsthand.

The NT Government *Tourism Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012* identified four central themes for the region - outback, nature, culture and conservation. All interpretation within the Park should be planned, and logically consistent to best present the Park's unique assets. The partners will continue to work to develop clear interpretive themes and objectives across the Park.

Interpretation should not just be about entertaining facts. Well developed interpretation can create meaning and memories for visitors that allow them to think more deeply about the Park and what makes it special. Emphasis needs to be placed on providing opportunities for genuine engagement between the visitor and the Park which hopefully builds a sense of personal responsibility and active stewardship within the individual.

Visitors should be able to choose their level of participation, which may range from active to passive, from entertainment to places for reflection. Importantly, planning also needs to match any communication media, service or facility with the target audiences and their needs, interests

and expectations. The outcomes achieved through interpretation, education and engagement should also be measurable, cost effective and regularly reviewed. Monitoring and evaluation of the interpretation is essential.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Visitors feeling welcome, safe, inspired and highly satisfied.
- An improved visitor experience of the Park offering a wider range of opportunities including enhanced cultural interpretation.
- The West MacDonnell Visitors Centre project completed.
- National and World Heritage listing for the Park.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.36 Showcase the Park – Key features across the Park will be showcased through thoughtful planning and design to establish a complementary suite of experiences consistent with the vision, significance and values of the Park.

3.37 Appropriate promotion – The partners will work with Tourism NT, Tourism Central Australia and other agencies to ensure the Park is marketed and promoted accurately and appropriately, consistent with the values and character of the Park and in a way acceptable to Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife.

3.38 World Heritage – Traditional Owners will be consulted and encouraged to take a leading role in the nomination, interpretation and progression of the Park as a World Heritage Area.

3.39 The Red Centre National Landscape – Interpretation and presentation of the Park will accord with the principles and plans associated with the Red Centre National Landscape.

- **West MacDonnells Visitors Centre** – will be developed at the eastern entrance of the West MacDonnell National Park providing an introduction to the Park and Red Centre National Landscape. The partners will discuss re-developing areas such as Tylers Pass Lookout as the western entrance to the Park.
- **Website** – a significant web based platform will be developed to share the natural and cultural values of the Park in an electronic format.
- **Information bays** established in visitor nodes or associated with features of interest

3.40 Interpretation and community education planning – The partners will develop strategies to coordinate and direct all Park interpretation and community education. The strategies and programs will be prepared with Traditional Owners, with any Indigenous community consultation endorsed by the Management Committee(s). Traditional Owners will ensure that all Aboriginal cultural information shared with visitors is accurate and appropriate, and encourages respect and understanding of the natural and cultural landscape.

Strategies and programs will identify long term aims, priority target audiences, experiences sought, intended outcomes, indicators, and processes for evaluation and improvement. Interpretation should progress the vision and purpose of the Park, enhance visitor experiences and stakeholder relationships, protect sites and values, and educate visitors to minimise risk. Both partners and community experts will be involved in planning and delivering interpretative and educational experiences where possible. Strategic planning for interpretation and community education should also consider:

- **Community engagement** – Community events and programs are important and will continue to build the profile of the Park. The partners will also encourage the formation of community groups and volunteers who enjoy and care for the Park.
- **Synergies** – The partners will seek to complement other regional interpretation programs associated with specialist tourism products and experiences such as the Red Centre National Landscape, heritage drives, walking and trekking operations, tour guide training programs, regional 4WD circuits, ‘voluntourism’, local schools and adult education.
- **Consistent presentation and branding** – Colours, textures, graphics and labelling on signage and printed material used across the Park should be consistent with the presentation and branding developed for the Red Centre National Landscape. Interpretive guidelines and styles will be developed and adopted as soon as possible to ensure a uniform, high quality standard of presentation across the region.
- **Innovative media** – Creative uses of technology will be employed when appropriate and practicable, and where they will be cost effective in enhancing visitor understanding or experience.
- **Cultural interpretation** – Existing visitor information, including signs, fact sheets and websites will be reviewed and improved, ensuring Aboriginal people, place names and language are represented accurately and appropriately.
- **Staff induction** – Clear guidelines for all staff will be prepared to share understanding of the expectations and standards to publicly represent the Park.
- **Tour operator and tour guide support** – Material will be provided to tour operators, enabling them to provide accurate and appropriate information about the Park’s significance and its natural and cultural values. Ideally this will leave a lasting impression on visitors that Tyurretye is a cultural landscape. All information provided will be approved by both partners. Direct Traditional Owner-operator training opportunities will also be explored.

3.2.2 Nature Based Recreational Experiences

BACKGROUND – WHAT IS OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING?

The rugged terrain and scenic grandeur of the West MacDonnell National Park, together with its location within the Red Centre National Landscape, provides visitors with a wide spectrum of recreational opportunities. Recreation and ‘use’ of the Park is encouraged as it allows people to connect with the country while enjoying its attractions.

Sightseeing, picnic areas and walking opportunities

Sightseeing – Scenic driving is possibly the most popular activity associated with the West MacDonnell National Park. Simply driving across the Park presents a wonderful journey and unforgettable experience for many visitors. Extensive vistas across the Park can be seen from Tylers Pass and the Point Howard and Neil Hargraves Lookouts on Namatjira Drive; the Mt Sonder Lookout; the lookout at Serpentine Gorge, the Ghost Gum viewing area at Ormiston Gorge and from many parts of the Larapinta Trail and other walking tracks throughout the Park. The majority of visitors to the Park undertake day trips from Alice Springs. Picnic facilities such as platform tables, shade shelters and barbeques are provided at the majority of the major visitor nodes. Extended shelters and tables are provided at Ormiston Gorge, Ellery Creek Big Hole and Redbank Gorge to cater for coach tours and large groups.

Bushwalking – Bushwalking is a highly significant activity in the Park (see Map 6.). During the cooler months it has been suggested that almost ninety percent of all visitors undertake walks. Even during the hotter months two thirds of visitors indicated that walking was one of their major activities. Bushwalking within this Park offers visitors opportunities to appreciate natural and cultural features of the country first hand. Walkers are encouraged to remain on marked tracks to minimise erosion and protect the natural and cultural values of the area.

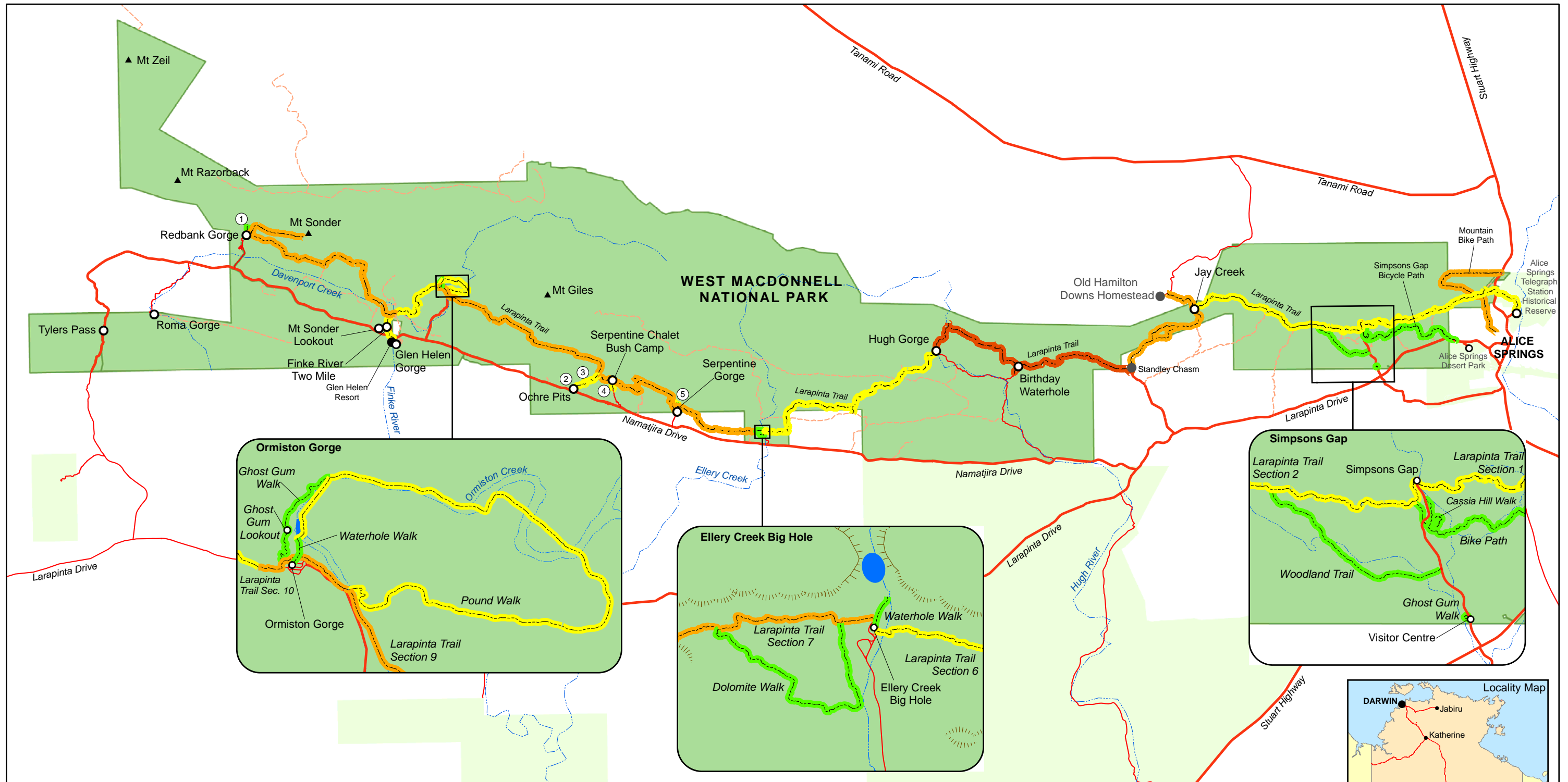
There is a great diversity of walking tracks offered within the Park. Walks range from rough, long and challenging walks to short and easy walks designed to accommodate wheel-chair access. Remote self reliant off-track walking is also permitted. Table 3 details the walks and bike trails offered in the Park. Walking tracks provide a means of directing visitors to places of interest and yet avoiding sacred sites and areas sensitive to excessive visitor traffic. The tracks are designed, constructed and maintained to avoid environmental degradation, including soil compaction, erosion and impacts on vegetation. Some older tracks require repairs, realignment or substantial upgrade to address issues of degradation and erosion. Visitor safety is also a prime consideration in the siting, design and construction of all walking tracks. The Park's interpretive program provides safety information relating to walking tracks. The West MacDonnell Emergency Response Procedure Manual includes consideration of the safety of visitors undertaking long walks. Some walking tracks require significant maintenance to protect

walker safety. Any new walking tracks should involve careful planning and alignment to reduce the issues of ongoing maintenance and avoid impacts on sites of cultural, heritage or biological value. Track standards need to be defined for walking trails offered within the Park, and a process of monitoring and evaluation needs to be considered by the partners to prioritise repairs and maintenance program.

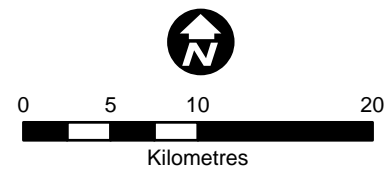
Table 3. West MacDonnell National Park - Walking Tracks and Bike Trails

Track Section	Length km	Track Standard (AS 21156.1-2001)	Grade	Standards of Service	Experience
Simpsons Gap					
Ghost Gum Walk	0.5	Class 2	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Well-formed track constructed to high standard.	Loop walk back to visitor centre.
Cassia Hill Walk	1.5	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Well-formed track constructed to high standard.	Loop walk to car park.
Woodland Trail	17	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for well prepared and moderately fit people who walk regularly. Well-formed track constructed to moderate standard.	Loop walk to Bond Gap. Utilises part of Larapinta Trail Sect 2 and shortcut back to Road.
Simpsons Gap Walk	0.2	Class 1	Easy	Suitable for all visitors and mobility impaired. Wide well-formed track constructed to disabled standard.	Access to Simpsons Gap, viewing of Gap and Rock Wallabies.
Simpsons Gap Bike Trail	17	Class 1	Easy	Suitable for families, cycle tours and personal fitness and recreation. Sealed Cycle Path	Cycle trail linking Alice Springs with Simpsons Gap.
Mountain Bike Trail	21	-	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced mountain bikers with a high level of fitness. Mountain Bike Trail	Purpose built mountain bike route and service track.
Ellery Creek Big Hole					
Waterhole Walk	0.3	Class 1	Easy	Suitable for all visitors and mobility impaired. Wide well-formed track constructed to disabled standard.	Access to swimming hole and viewing.
Dolomite Walk	3	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Well-formed track constructed to moderate standard.	Short loop walk. Links with Larapinta Trail Section 7.
Serpentine Gorge					
Waterhole Walk	1.3	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Well-formed track constructed to high standard.	Return walk partly on vehicle track.
Lookout Walk	0.3	Class 4	Medium	Suitable for people who walk regularly. A narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Return walk to overlook the Gorge and surrounds.
Serpentine Chalet					
Chalet Dam Walk	1.7	Class 4	Medium	Suitable for people who walk regularly. A natural river-bed route or narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Return walk to Chalet Dam. Passes through Larapinta Trail Section 7 camp.
Ochre Pits					
Ochre Pits Walk	0.3	Class 1	Easy	Suitable for all visitors and mobility impaired. Wide well-formed track constructed to disabled standard.	Sealed interpreted return walk to river banks of multi coloured ochre.
Arrernte Bush Walk	4	Class 3	Medium	Suitable for people who walk regularly. A narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Formed walk to link with Larapinta Trail Sections 8 and 9.

Track Section	Length km	Track Standard (AS 21156.1-2001)	Grade	Standards of Service	Experience
Ormiston Gorge					
Waterhole Walk	0.2	Class 1	Easy	Suitable for all visitors and mobility impaired. Wide well-formed track constructed to disabled standard.	Short return walk to main waterhole.
Ghost Gum Lookout Walk	1.2	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Well-formed track constructed to high standard.	Loop walk for views of Gorge and Ormiston Pound.
Pound Walk	7	Class 4	Medium	Suitable for people who walk regularly. A narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Loop walk to Pound and through Gorge.
Mt Giles	32	Class 6	Very Hard	Suitable for people with a high level of fitness, navigation and remote area walking experience. A rugged track, marked or unmarked route with frequent steep and long climbs and descents.	Pound Walk track then unmarked track. Overnight walk.
Bowmans Gap Walk	4	Class 6	Very Hard	Suitable for people with a high level of fitness, navigation and remote area walking experience. A rugged track, marked or unmarked route with frequent steep and long climbs and descents.	Pound Walk then unmarked track.
Glen Helen Gorge					
Waterhole Walk	0.2	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Marked natural river-bed route. Where possible well-formed track constructed to a high standard.	Short return walk to Gorge waterhole following the Finke riverbed.
Redbank Gorge					
Waterhole Walk	1	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Marked natural river-bed route. Where possible well-formed track constructed to a high standard.	Short return walk along riverbed.
Lookout Walk	0.5	Class 3	Easy	Suitable for most people who walk occasionally. Well-formed track constructed to moderate to high standard.	Short return walk from car park
Family Walk	2.3	Class 4	Medium	Suitable for most people who walk regularly. Well-formed track constructed to a moderate to high standard.	Short return walk along Larapinta Trail section 12 to saddle
Mount Sonder Walk	15.8	Class 4	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rough and narrow track with some steep and/or long climbs and descents.	Return walk / climb to summit along Larapinta Trail section 12
Roma Gorge					
Gorge Walk	0.2	Class 4	Easy	Suitable for people who walk occasionally. A natural river-bed route or narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Short return walk from car park to Gorge along riverbed.
Mt Zeil					
Summit Walk	25	Class 6	Very Hard	Suitable for people with a high level of fitness, navigation and remote area walking experience. A rugged track, marked or unmarked route with frequent steep and long climbs and descents.	Return walk / climb to summit.



West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 6. Walking Tracks Map



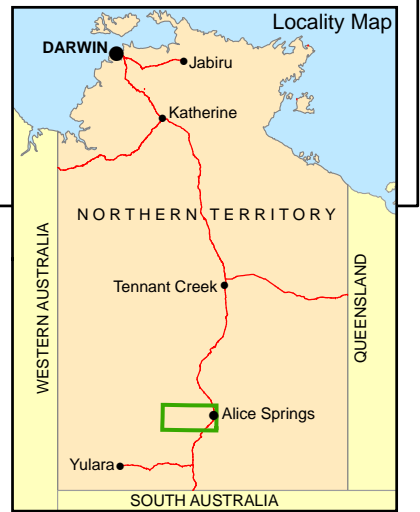
- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| ○ Locality (On Park) | — Major Road | Track Grade |
| ● Locality (Off Park) | — Minor Road | — Easy |
| ▲ Mountain | - - - Management Track | - - - Medium |
| — Major Drainage | ■ West MacDonnell National Park | - - - Hard |
| | ■ Other Parks/Reserves | - - - Very Hard |

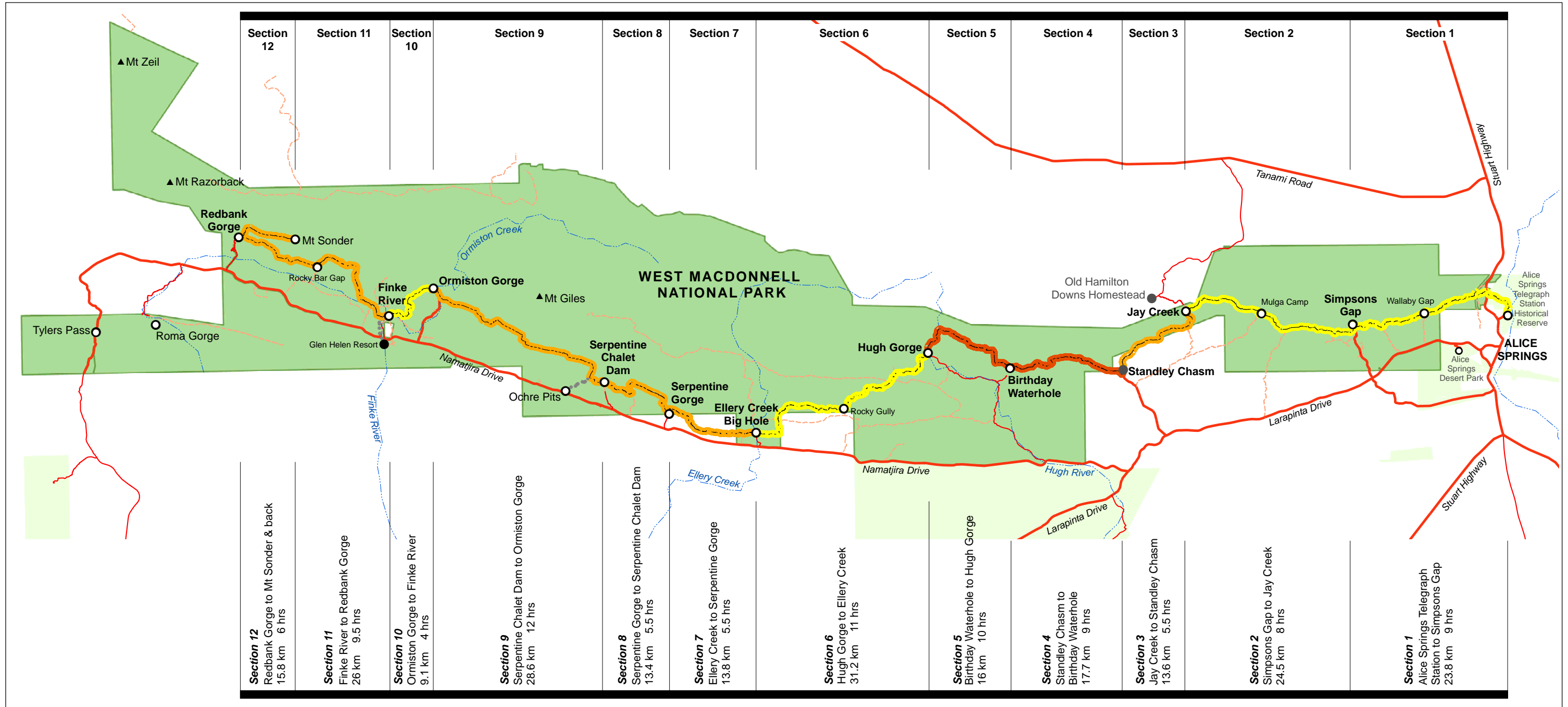
- Track Section**
- ① Gorge Walk
 - ② Ochre Pits Walk
 - ③ Arrente Bush Walk
 - ④ Chalet Dam Walk
 - ⑤ Waterhole Walk Lookout Walk

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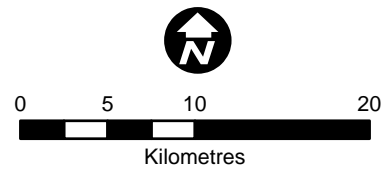
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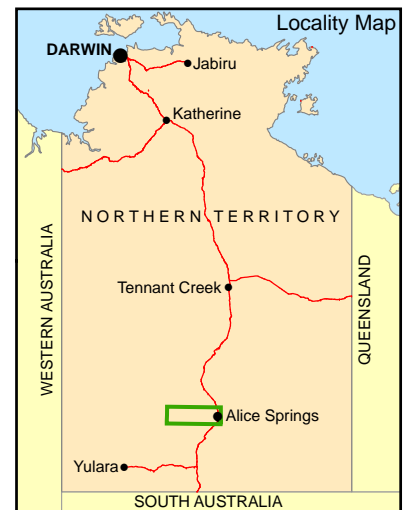
West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 7. Larapinta Trail Map



- Locality (On Park)
 - Locality (Off Park)
 - ▲ Mountain
 - Major Drainage
 - Connecting Track
 - Major Road
 - Minor Road
 - - - Management Track
 - West MacDonnell National Park
 - Other Parks/Reserves
- Track Grades
- Easy
 - Medium
 - Hard
 - Very Hard

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Larapinta Trail – The Larapinta Trail extends over 223 kilometres along the backbone of the West MacDonnell Ranges. It provides distinctive, high quality walking experiences and opportunities for a range of walkers. The track is divided into 12 sections, each a 1-2 day walk providing for both day and overnight walks as well as extended bush walking experiences within the West MacDonnell National Park (see Map 7, Appendix 6).

The 2005 Management Strategy for the Larapinta Trail sets out the vision for this iconic walk as, 'renowned world-wide as an easily accessible and well maintained track which provides an appreciation of the remoteness, grandeur and cultural significance of the West MacDonnell Ranges through a variety of walking experiences'. With support and promotion by tourism operators and Tourism NT, the Larapinta Trail is indeed becoming an internationally renowned long distance walking trail.

The Trail encompasses some of the key attractions of the Ranges including Simpsons Gap, Ellery Creek Big Hole, Ormiston Gorge and Glen Helen. The Trail also links in with other walking tracks within the West MacDonnell National Park, allowing side trips to explore more of what the Park has to offer. Beginning at Alice Springs Telegraph Station the Trail passes through many gaps and sheltered gorges, climbs steeply over the rugged ranges, and provides numerous stunning views and opportunities to admire the spectacular landscape. The Trail ends at Mt Sonder – the highest point of the Trail. After 14 years of planning and construction, the Larapinta Trail was completed in 2002. Construction was undertaken using a number of different groups including the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Correctional Services, Arrernte Council and Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Centre. As the reputation of the trail began to grow and attract an increasing number of walkers, a Larapinta Trail Management Strategy was developed in 2005, in consultation with stakeholders and the public. The Strategy identified the vision, guiding principles, key objectives and strategies to guide the development of the Trail.

Management Issues – The unique visitor experiences offered by the Larapinta Trail need to be sustained. The condition of the trail in several sections is degraded. Visitor numbers are expected to increase, particularly on the western sections of the Trail. Increasing numbers of walkers could contribute to further deterioration. Other issues include fire, flood, feral horses, cattle, and high weed growth and soil erosion following rains; all have an impact on the trail, the visitor experience and, potentially, obscure the route resulting in lost walkers. Monitoring of Trail condition and walker satisfaction is important. An ongoing repairs and maintenance program will be necessary to address identified priorities.

The unique remote walking experience can be degraded by walkers sharing facilities with day visitors and car-campers at major visitor nodes. Wherever practicable, walkers experiencing

the Larapinta Trail should be separated from day visitors and campers through good planning and site design.

Walker safety is a prime consideration. Underestimating arid zone conditions and poor preparation can have fatal consequences. The partners will continue to emphasise good quality information to ensure potential walkers and tour operators are well informed. Their survival relies on careful planning, having the right supplies and good levels of fitness.

The reputation of the Trail means that it is generally used by more experienced walkers. There is an opportunity to expand the presentation of the Trail to promote a diversity of walking experiences for the spirited traveller. There is scope to increase promotion of the Trail to attract one day walkers (who are primarily catered for on sections 1, 10, 12 as well as on linked walks off the Larapinta Trail), and short walk comfort-seekers who are looking for two to five day trips in relative safety and with comfortable facilities (on sections 1- 3, 10 -12). Other opportunities could be expanded if commercial lodge type accommodation catering for walkers was provided within or adjacent to the Park.

The Larapinta Trail is designed as a walking track only. Mountain bikes are not permitted on any section as they would diminish the 'remote walking experience'. The Trail is narrow, with many blind corners, steep ascents and descents and having bikes on such a track would affect the safety of walkers. Erosion control devices on the Trail are not designed to handle the impact of mountain bikes and would lead to rapid deterioration of the Trail surface.

Standards – The track standard has been designed to be primarily suitable for walkers prepared to carry reasonable loads and able to camp out. Several sections of the Trail are constructed to Class 3 standard. These sections are well defined throughout with a cleared and levelled surface of just under one metre wide. Grades are moderate in places, but generally less than 1 in 4. Rough steps, cross drains, rock-bars and other minor works are constructed, where required, to limit erosion and make the Trail easily passable. The remaining sections of the Trail, through rougher or more difficult country, are constructed to the slightly lower Class 4 standard. These sections appear as well-used footpads and have more difficult stretches. Some rock scrambling may be required on these sections. The Trail is nevertheless clearly defined and passable throughout. These more difficult sections of the Trail are intended for people well prepared and experienced. The Larapinta Trail will provide walking experiences to meet the needs of the following types of visitors:

- **day walkers** – walkers seeking a one day walk; primarily catered for on sections 1, 10 and 12 as well as on linked walks off the Larapinta Trail;
- **short walk comfort-seekers** – two to five day trips in relative safety and with comfortable facilities (on sections 1- 3, 10 -12);

- **remote adventurers** – walks from 2 days upwards (some groups spend three weeks walking the whole track) involving challenge, and a degree of risk and discomfort.

Tour operations – Approximately half of the walkers on the Larapinta Trail experience the Park with help from private tour operators. Several operations specialise in guided walking expeditions on the Larapinta Trail, and elsewhere in Central Australia. There are also commercial tour operators offering transfer and food drop services. Several commercial operators have approached the partners to construct private infrastructure along the Trail. Such developments could occur either on the Park, or on adjoining Aboriginal land. As a priority, the Parks and Wildlife Service needs to develop policy to guide this process on Park. The partners need to develop guidelines and assessment processes to consider any proposals that relate to the West MacDonnell National Park. To protect the unique experiences enjoyed by walkers, any development needs to be positioned off the Trail and not be visible to walkers. All sites would need to be able to be rehabilitated after use and would require long term lease arrangements approved by the partners.

Facilities – The trailhead of each section is accessible to vehicles, or requires only a short walk from a vehicle access point (some by high clearance 4WD only), so walkers can join or leave the Trail at any of the trailheads. Visitors can tailor their walking experience by choosing sections of interest that match the length of time they have available to spend on the Trail. Campsites, with some facilities, have been developed on the more frequently used sections of the Trail, and two multi-purpose camping shelters with toilet facilities have been erected at the Jay Creek and Finke River trailheads. Elsewhere, recommended campsites are identified, but no, or limited facilities, are provided, and walkers are encouraged to camp at these locations. Walkers are requested to carry portable cooking appliances as campfires are prohibited along the Trail. Water is supplied at every trailhead. However, adequate water supplies should be carried by walkers. Most water supplies are untreated and it is recommended that they be sterilised before consumption. No rubbish disposal facilities are provided, except at the start and end of some sections. It is therefore required that hikers follow the ‘carry in, carry out’ principle and take out all their rubbish. The Trail is signposted with direction markers, especially at major track junctions, crossing points, spur takeoffs and other possible points of confusion.

Maintenance – Maintenance of the Larapinta Trail requires a dedicated management program and includes ground surveying and assessment, matching priorities with the resources available, preparation of maintenance contracts and undertaking or supervising maintenance work. To maintain the Larapinta Trail to international standards requires specialist track maintenance skills. Specialist skills and capacity are being developed in local people and Aboriginal organisations so they can deliver track maintenance services for the

Larapinta and other trails. Training workshops with Traditional Owners, local contractors and trail maintenance specialists should be encouraged.

Risk and safety – Safety is promoted as the first priority when walking the Larapinta Trail. It is strongly advised that walking the Trail should only be attempted between April and October. Walkers on the Trail are encouraged to use the voluntary Overnight Walker Registration Scheme to register their intended route and return time. They are also urged to take responsibility for their own safety by notifying a reliable friend or family member of their location and walk plan. The use of satellite phones and personal locating beacons are encouraged. To assist rangers to determine a walker's location in an emergency it is recommended that walkers use the log books located at the trailheads.

Monitoring – A Larapinta Trail Advisory Committee will be formalised to provide technical advice and support for the partners. The Advisory Committee will be responsible for reviewing the Management Strategy for the Larapinta Trail. They will also be responsible for evaluating monitoring information, identifying issues and opportunities, developing draft guidelines and making recommendations to the partners for the best management of the Trail. Key priorities for monitoring will include estimating numbers of walkers and assessing behaviour and satisfaction. Other aspects to be monitored include information and interpretation, track and campsite standards and impacts, concession holder compliance, and environmental impacts on sensitive areas such as springs and streams located on, or near, the Trail.



Experiencing the grandeur of the West MacDonnell National Park. Photo: Tourism NT.

Table 4. West MacDonnell National Park – Larapinta Trail Sections

Track Section	Length Km	Track Standard (AS 21156.1-2001)		Standards of Service	Experience
Section 1 (Alice Springs Telegraph Station to Simpsons Gap)	23.8	Class 3	Medium	Suitable for people who walk regularly. A narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. Provides superb views over Alice Springs and the surrounding lowlands, as well as good bird watching opportunities
Section 2 (Simpsons Gap to Jay Creek)	24.5	Class 4	Medium	Suitable for people who walk regularly. A narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. Some of the highlights for this section include passing through the home of one of the few Brushtail Possum colonies in Central Australia.
Section 3 (Jay Creek to Standley Chasm)	13.6	Class 4	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rough and narrow track with some steep and/or long climbs and descents.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. This section is quite a challenging walk, through some of the steepest and most rugged country in the ranges. The low route is available to those with an average level of fitness.
Section 4 (Standley Chasm to Birthday Waterhole)	17.7	Class 4	Very Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rugged track or marked route with frequent steep and long climbs and descents.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. The Trail follows the high quartzite ridges of the Chewings Range to the summit of Brinkley Bluff where walkers are rewarded with breathtaking views in all directions. Steeply descending from the Bluff, the Trail enters Stuart's Pass, an upper branch of the Hugh River. It then follows this river valley to Birthday Waterhole.
Section 5 (Birthday Waterhole to Hugh Gorge)	16	Class 4	Very Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rugged track or marked route with frequent steep and long climbs and descents.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. This challenging section of the Trail passes through Spencer Gorge, negotiates the spine of Razorback Ridge and then travels down narrow Linear Valley to the junction with the Hugh River. The Trail follows natural watercourses and it may be necessary to negotiate pools of water within Hugh Gorge.
Section 6 (Hugh Gorge to Ellery Creek)	31.2	Class 4	Medium	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. This section traverses the Alice Valley from Hugh Gorge in the Chewings Range, to Ellery Creek Big Hole in the Heavitree Range. It is one of the longest sections of the Larapinta Trail.
Section 7 (Ellery Creek to Serpentine Gorge)	13.8	Class 4	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rough and narrow track with some steep and/or long climbs and descents.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. The first part of the Trail provides an opportunity to explain long geological history of the West MacDonnell Ranges. The abundance of birds, including the elusive Spinifex Bird, is another highlight.
Section 8 (Serpentine Gorge to Serpentine Chalet Dam)	13.4	Class 4	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rough and narrow track with some steep and/or long climbs and descents.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. It offers exhilarating views of the high quartzite ridgelines that typify the West MacDonnell Ranges, including Haasts Bluff and Mt Zeil.
Section 9 (Serpentine)	28.6	Class 4	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. This is one of the more

Track Section	Length Km	Track Standard (AS 21156.1-2001)		Standards of Service	Experience
Chalet Dam to Ormiston Gorge)				good level of fitness. A rough and narrow track with some steep and/or long climbs and descents.	difficult sections of the Trail taking you into the rugged heart of the range country. There is no reliable surface water along the way, so people contemplating this section must be prepared to carry a heavy pack with a considerable amount of drinking water.
Section 10 (Ormiston Gorge to Finke River)	9.9	Class 3	Medium	Suitable for experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A narrow track which may be rough in places, with some climbing and descending.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail, but can easily be walked in a day. This is one of the shorter sections of the Larapinta Trail. This section winds through rolling limestone hills at the headwaters of the Finke River, one of the world's oldest rivers.
Section 11 (Finke River to Redbank Gorge)	25.2	Class 4	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rough and narrow track with some steep and/or long climbs and descents.	Overnight section of the Larapinta Trail. The first part of the Trail meanders across low Spinifex-covered hills with the spectacular backdrop of Mt Sonder, then crosses the Davenport River and climbs to a hilltop lookout. It descends to shady, tranquil Rocky Bar Gap, at the foot of Mt Sonder, passes through this gap and travels along the southern flank of Mt Sonder to Redbank Creek.
Section 12 (Redbank Gorge to Mt Sonder and back)	15.8	Class 4	Hard	Suitable for well-prepared and experienced walkers with a good level of fitness. A rough and narrow track with some steep and/or long climbs and descents.	A return section of the Larapinta Trail. The arduous climb to the peak is well worth the effort and walkers will be rewarded with breathtaking views in all directions. Ranges, plains, valleys and salt lakes create magnificent vistas. This is a place to experience the grandeur of the Red Centre's National Landscape.

Camping and accommodation

Camping in the West MacDonnell National Park is a highlight for any visitor. It is one of the best ways to unwind and get close to nature in the Park. It is an integral part of the outback bush experience for many visitors. A diversity of camping opportunities helps to meet visitors' expectations while dispersing larger camping groups to regulated sites within the Park.

Bush camping – Bush camping requiring 4WD access is allowed at Finke Two-Mile, along the Hugh River and at Serpentine Chalet Bush camp.

Basic camping – Basic camping facilities are provided at Serpentine Chalet. Camping for Larapinta Trail users is permitted at most trailheads and at appropriately spaced sites along the Trail. Subject to successful negotiation of a suitable access route to Mt Zeil and a suitable climbing route to the summit, provision of basic camping facilities at the base will be investigated with landholders. More developed camping facilities are provided at Ellery Creek Big Hole, Redbank Gorge and Ormiston Gorge in the Visitor Zone. The campgrounds at Ellery

Creek Big Hole and Ormiston Gorge already have inadequate capacity, particularly during peak visitor periods from May to October. Pressure on these limited facilities will increase as traffic on the Red Centre Way increases. A school/community group camping area is located near Simpsons Gap and a group camping area at Ormiston Gorge.

There are a large number of frequently used informal camp sites. They are used by people seeking an isolated or peaceful experience, those wishing to avoid paying fees and those who have gone to the expense and trouble of becoming self sufficient. These sites are on old roads, at old gravel borrow pits, in the dry beds of small creeks and at the two roadside rest areas along Namatjira Drive, at Point Howard and Neil Hargrave lookout.

Commercial camping – Commercial camping is available outside the Park at Glen Helen Resort, Wallace Rockhole, Hamilton Downs Youth Camp and Hermannsburg. The campground at Glen Helen Resort is being further developed. As visitor numbers grow, additional or new accommodation options will need to be considered, either within the Park or on its boundary. There will be further opportunities for commercial tourism enterprises based at these sites.

Campfires – Campfires are an important part of the bushcamping experience for many people. However, campfires also deplete the natural store of timber necessary for nutrient cycling and wildlife habitats and the remains of campfires can be an eyesore and pollution hazard in some areas of the Park. To reduce these problems barbeques are provided at the Simpsons Gap, including the School Camp site, Wallaby Gap, Jay Creek Larapinta Trail camp sites, Ellery Creek Big Hole, the Ochre Pits picnic area, Ormiston Gorge, Finke River Larapinta Trail camp site and Redbank Woodland Campground and picnic areas. The potential exists for campfires to initiate wildfires. The potential for uncontrolled wildfires is greatest during times of high to extreme fire risk i.e. during the hot, dry summer months. It may be necessary to restrict or ban fire use in the Park at times of high to extreme fire risk.

Progressively, the Parks and Wildlife Service will review whether camp fires can continue to be used at some locations. Where the option for campfires remains, the emphasis will be on communal style fire pits, where campers are encouraged to share a single fire to make most efficient use of limited timber resources.

In these locations, the partners may investigate options to have wood supplied under contract for purchase by campers, and the use of privately collected wood will not be permitted.

Special activities

Cycling – Opportunities to use road and mountain bikes have been developed at the eastern end of the Park close to Alice Springs. The Simpsons Gap Bicycle Path meanders for 17 kilometres through woodland covered flats and low hills from Flynn's Grave (on Larapinta Drive) to Simpsons Gap. The 2.5 metre wide path is sealed and has interpretive signs, distance

markers, drinking water, low-key picnic stops and rest areas. The Bicycle Path is multiple-use, catering for pedestrians, joggers and walkers as well as cyclists. Cost of maintenance and periodic resealing is high but has ensured that user satisfaction and safety are not compromised.

Darken Drive leading to Simpsons Gap is also used extensively by recreational cyclists and by Alice Springs based clubs to stage events. Permits are issued for the staging of such events, and traffic management and competitor safety is a primary consideration.

Cycle tourism is likely to increase as the sealing of the Red Centre Way progresses. This may pose significant safety issues within the Park, particularly along the narrow sections of Namatjira Drive between the Larapinta Drive intersection near Jay Creek and the Finke River.

Mountain-biking – The 21 kilometre West MacDonnell Range Mountain Bike Track in the north-east of the Park follows pre-existing vehicle tracks. The track is a designated mountain bike trail, thus eliminating the potential for conflict with walkers. The Mountain Bike Track is graded as difficult and has recently been partially realigned, with extensive input from local club members. Entry and exit to the track is via Lovegrove Drive, Alice Springs. Parts of the Park have been used to stage competitive mountain bike events. These events have been managed under permit, with strict conditions applied. Options to complete a cycling loop to Alice Springs or other mountain bike trails may need to be identified.

Swimming – Swimming is one of the most popular recreational activities in the Park. Swimming is particularly appreciated by locals, as the Park supports some of the few permanent waterholes publicly available in the region. Visitor safety is an important matter for the partners, as several major incidents, including deaths, have occurred in the Park's waterholes. In some locations swimming may be discouraged for safety and environmental reasons. Where necessary, these directions will be conveyed through signs and interpretation.

Climbing and abseiling – The Park offers high potential for both climbing and abseiling opportunities. Collaboration with the local climbers is needed to overcome potential environmental, cultural or safety issues. Consultation and sacred site assessment is also required with Traditional Owners for all climbing routes within the park.

To help ensure abseiling and rock climbing is sustainable, a NT wide policy is required, with locally determined guidelines developed in consultation with local stakeholders. There is the potential to cater for licensed and accredited Tour Operators in this field, at locations determined after consultation with the partners.

Aircraft activities – Commercial scenic helicopter flights and fixed wing flights over the Park have been operating from Glen Helen Resort and Alice Springs. To date the frequency of these flights has been low and they have not posed a problem for other Park users. As they are not

based on the Park and aircraft do not normally land in the Park, permits are not required for these operations. Flight paths and heights are currently subject only to Civil Aviation Safety Authority regulations.



Swimming at Ellery Big Hole. Photo: Tourism NT.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL WE ACHIEVE?

- Satisfied visitors enjoying the Park.
- The Larapinta Trail recognized as a world renowned bush walking experience.

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.41 Walking tracks – A range of walking experiences will be offered throughout the Park. In highly visited areas walking tracks will be hardened to improved access and reduce erosion.

- As a general guide the following track standards (AS 2156.1-2001) will apply to Park's zoning:
 - Visitor Zone: Class 1, Class 2, Class 3.
 - Conservation Zone: Class 4, Class 5, Class 6.
- All constructed walking tracks within the Park will be monitored and regularly evaluated to:
 - determine track condition and required maintenance;
 - identify additional walking track opportunities, and
 - assess the adequacy and condition of associated directional and interpretive signage.
- The Park's Visitor Monitoring Program will provide for gathering qualitative data on walkers' experiences, interests and satisfaction.

3.42 Larapinta Trail – The Larapinta Trail represents one of the most promoted experiences of the Park. Opportunities will be provided for people to experience the Larapinta Trail on day, overnight and short walks as well as by walking the entire track. These opportunities will cater for a range of experience, capability and comfort levels. The facilities, infrastructure and social characteristics of each experience will be clearly defined. If use on any section reaches unacceptable levels, a booking system may be introduced.

- **Larapinta Trail Management Strategy (5 yr) and annual operational programs (1 yr)** – Larapinta Trail management will be directed through the Larapinta Trail Management Strategy, which will be reviewed every 5 years specifying long-term priorities, principles, targets, key issues, status of the trail and management effectiveness. The Strategy should provide direction for annual operational programs. The strategy will:
 - set clear 5-10 year targets with a focus on the long-term aims (10-20 years) of this Plan;
 - be prepared with Traditional Owners and endorsed by Management Committee(s);

- incorporate input from technical advisors and commercial tour operators;
 - be integrated and aligned for best effect with other Park operations;
 - be based on an understanding of the changing needs, wants and perceptions of walkers; and
 - define standards of service for each section of the Trail, including facilities, tracks, camp grounds and water provision.
 - define maintenance regimes, indicators, monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes;
 - involve local Aboriginal people and invite cooperation and collaboration with the tourism industry and neighbours; and
 - define required staff competencies and safety standards.
- **Advisory Committee** – A committee consisting of park staff (with relevant practical skills), Traditional Owners, tourism industry operators and relevant NT departments will be formalised to advise the partners on managing the Larapinta Trail. The committee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Larapinta Trail Management Strategy and Annual Operational Programs.
- **Information** – Comprehensive pre-planning information for walkers will be made available online including route orientation, detailed maps, information about vehicle access, camping and drinking water, as well as safety and emergency information. Major trailheads at the start and end of each section provide safety and precautionary information, and an overview of the adjoining sections of Trail. As the Trail grows in popularity, other information sources will be developed, including detailed guide books and other web sites.
- **Trail monitoring** – All sections of the Trail will be assessed regularly, including:
 - Trail and campsite conditions and maintenance needs;
 - visitor numbers and satisfaction;
 - environmental conditions; and
 - concession holder compliance.
- **Repairs and maintenance** – A dedicated program of walking track repairs and maintenance, will address ongoing priorities. Specialist track maintenance skills and capacity will be developed locally, with Local Aboriginal people and organisations being encouraged to develop skills and capacity to carry out track maintenance on the Larapinta and other trails.

3.43 Visitor safety – Use of the Overnight Walker Registration Scheme will be encouraged. Walkers will be strongly advised to walk in the cooler months between April and October. Drinking water supplies are established at the maximum interval of a two-day walk.

Interpretation and education programs will continue to emphasise individual responsibility for safety through good planning and preparation, and realistic assessment of personal capabilities.

3.44 Camping

- **Vehicle-based bush camping** – will be promoted at Finke Two-Mile, in the Hugh River bed between Namitjira Drive and Reedy Waterhole, at Birthday Waterhole, in Hugh Gorge, and at Serpentine Chalet Bush Camp area. If monitoring indicates unacceptable impacts on the environment or visitor experiences, management may regulate access or harden sites. Affected areas will be rehabilitated.
- **Ormiston Gorge campground** – Once a suitable alternative is fully developed, consideration will be given to closing the Ormiston Gorge campground so that area can better service a greater number of day-visitors.
- **Campfires** – Open campfires will be permitted in the Visitor Zone in fireplaces provided, or under permit issued in accordance with the TPWCA bylaws. Campfires will be prohibited along the Larapinta Trail. Open campfires will be permitted within the Conservation Zones in designated areas only. Campfires will not be permitted in any Special Protection Zone. The impact of campfires throughout the park will be monitored and may be prohibited in certain sites if necessary.
- **Fire restrictions** – Restrictions may be enforced on campfires or firewood collection in particular areas to prevent them from becoming severely degraded by overuse. Information may also be provided to visitors on the important role dead wood plays in the ecology of the desert environment.

3.45 Special Activities

- **Off-Track walking and camping** – Park management encourages ‘on-foot’ exploration of remote sections of the Park. However for safety reasons and to protect Park values, visitors will be required to obtain a camping permit to undertaking extended overnight walks in remote sections of the Park away from established tracks.
- **Cycling and walking tracks** – Bikes are not permitted on walking tracks within the Park unless specifically designated as joint walking / cycling paths. Mountain bikes are not permitted off-track within the Park.
- **Simpsons Gap Bike Path** – This Path will be maintained to a high standard.
- **West MacDonnell Mountain Bike Track** – Liaison will be maintained with the Alice Springs Mountain Bike Club regarding the route of the West MacDonnell Mountain Bike Track, its condition and use.

- **Rock climbing and abseiling** – Opportunities for developing designated climbing and abseiling sites will be investigated and discussed by the Management Committee(s). All rock climbing and abseiling sites will require sacred site clearances and be subject to environmental and safety monitoring. Rock climbing policy and guidelines will be developed by the partners.
- **Swimming** – Swimming and water based activities will be promoted unless prohibited by signs and other information on site. Provision of safety information and equipment may be considered where appropriate.



MacDonnell Ranges. Photo: Tourism NT.

3.2.3 Servicing visitor experiences

The tourism and recreation facilities offered in the West MacDonnells National Park should be developed to a high international standard. This can be achieved by understanding and identifying target markets, offering unique quality experiences, matching infrastructure with visitor needs, improving monitoring, and providing opportunities for Traditional Owners to present their cultures on their own terms.

The West MacDonnell National Park can accommodate a diversity of visitor interests and experiences that range from 4WD bush camping and remote long distance hiking to comfortable upmarket accommodation. With good planning, these interests can be accommodated while minimising conflicts between visitors with differing interests or expectations, and protecting the key values of the Park that underpin the visitor experience.

One of the greatest challenges facing the partners and the tourism industry will be to effectively manage the average visitor's expectation of enjoying the uncrowded beauty of an unspoiled natural environment while meeting the needs of increasing visitor numbers. It is critical the partners work closely with the tourism industry to develop opportunities and alternatives that enhance the recreation and tourism values of the Park and help to protect all park values.

Our Visitors

Tourism in the Northern Territory is closely linked to the natural and cultural attractions of its national parks. In 2008 approximately 128 000 people visited the West MacDonnell National Park. Based on recent estimates, about 326 000 tourists a year visit the broader Alice Springs region, and nearly 40% of these tourists visit the West MacDonnell National Park. Regional visits were almost equally split between international and domestic travellers, and an estimated \$277M in revenue was generated by these visitors, who spend an average of 5 nights in the region.

Importantly, the West MacDonnell National Park is also used by locals for nature-based activities such as camping, picnicking, bushwalking, swimming, cycling, education and scenic viewing. These local visits comprise an important component of Park usage. This means that there is not only a need to cater for domestic and international tourists, but also a need to maintain recreation opportunities valued by the local community.

Consumer trends indicate that future visitors will be seeking:

- special interest experiences (travelling for a particular purpose);
- interactive learning experiences (different cultures, personal enrichment);
- authentic experiences (where the experience matters more than the destination)
- physical or psychological challenges (particularly nature and culture)
- ecologically sustainable experiences

Such visitors are classified as both spirited travellers and as experience seekers. Both classes of visitors are increasingly internet savvy.

NT Tourism targets domestic and international markets that include:

- Youth travellers
- Working holiday makers
- Budget travellers
- Baby boomers
- Special interest travellers
- Self-drive travellers

Surveys carried out in 2009 suggest 78% of visitors to the Park were from interstate, 22% from overseas and 7% from the Northern Territory. The Australian domestic market and the international markets of the United Kingdom, Germany, United States and Japan are expected to continue as the primary sources of visitors to the Northern Territory in the immediate future. Tourism NT suggests that future growth could be enhanced by attracting independent “experiential” travellers, tourists with increased social and environmental awareness, and visitors who prefer frequent short-stay trips with a focus on high quality products and services.

Understanding tourism markets, as well as visitor preferences, needs, and expectations, is an important part of recreation and tourism planning for the Park, and will enable the partners to make better decisions on how to develop the recreation and tourism opportunities over the life of the Plan.

Estimated visitor numbers for the major visitor nodes within the Park from 2006-2008 are:

	2006	2007	2008
Simpsons Gap:	113 000	105 000	105 000
Ellery Creek:	58 000	72 000	73 000
Serpentine Gorge:	22 000	27 000	27 000
Serpentine Chalet:	2 800	4 000	4 000
Ochre Pits:	30 000	35 000	36 000
Ormiston Gorge:	79 000	79 000	71 000
Glen Helen Gorge:	97 000	97 000	105 000
Redbank Gorge:	9 000	12 000	13 000

These estimates include counts of people visiting multiple locations.

Surveys carried out in 2009 suggest 87% of people visited Simpsons Gap, 78% visited Standley Chasm, 76% visited Ormiston Gorge, 71% visited Glen Helen Gorge and 64% Ellery Creek Big Hole.

Tourism development

The local tourism industry has suggested to the partners that infrastructure development within the Park should be minimal and in character with the landscape, as well as sensitively designed and sited to retain the sense of isolation and remoteness essential to the experience of visitors to the Red Centre.

Measures to enhance the visitor experience and manage increasing visitor numbers may include;

- developing an over-arching Territory Parks Tourism and Recreation Plan;
- developing a Private Investment in Park Tourism Infrastructure policy;
- constructing a major new visitor centre at the Alice Springs Desert Park as a gateway to the region and the Red Centre National Landscape;
- refining visitor information and orientation nodes;
- incorporating greater emphasis on the Aboriginal values of the Park;
- offering a better targeted range of activities and services;
- further hardening of areas, designated for high volume traffic;
- retaining or expanding the range of 4WD access for sites designated for bush camping and locations offering a sense of solitude;
- re-designing and upgrading existing facilities;
- exploring new accommodation options, including encouraging private investment in both on park and off park options with a range of standards, cost and experience provided; and
- managing the number of visitors to specific sites within the Park.

Facilities, access and maintenance

The major access roads and visitor facilities have been sited to fit into the landscape as much as possible. Currently visual intrusions on the Park's scenic values are relatively minor within the Park. Well informed site planning is essential and should include input from Traditional Owners, visitor surveys, tourism industry and community stakeholders. Pressing planning issues that the partners need to address include re-designing and refreshing existing facilities or attracting private investment in new facilities at high volume visitor nodes. These facilities will need to cope with potentially growing numbers of visitors in two-wheel drive vehicles, trailers, caravans and larger coaches, and the changing needs and expectations of this market. At the same time there is a need to retain or expand 4WD-only access for sites designated for bush camping and locations offering a sense of remoteness and solitude. These opportunities could extend to land adjoining the Park.

Access – The appropriate level of access, use and development are determined by the Park Zoning Scheme. The Zoning Scheme for the Park (Section 2.3) reflects a diversity of visitor experiences and levels of use, reduces conflicts and diffuses visitor impact. The Visitor Zone concentrates most visitors to main nodes along the major access routes. Activities requiring

more basic facilities, a greater level of self-reliance and reduced contact with others are located within Conservation Zones.

Larapinta and Namatjira Drives serve as the principal access and scenic drive corridor through the Park and allow for access by coaches and conventional vehicles. Roads to the major visitor nodes are of varying standard to match a range of visitor experiences.

Public access to any staff housing or Aboriginal living areas within the Park is prohibited, except in accordance with the conditions of a permit or in the case of an emergency.

Roads and tracks – Public vehicle access within the Park is limited to designated public vehicle tracks. Four wheel drive tracks lead to a number of visitor nodes and points of interest. Two areas within the Park, Hugh River and the Finke River Two-Mile, have been designated for off-road driving within the river corridors, where long term environmental effects are minimal. All other internal four wheel drive trails are designated service roads.

Road and track closures – The partners aim to provide public access across the park, but road and track closures can occur. Consistent with risk management procedures, roads can be closed during flooding events. In these instances, the decision to restrict road access is the responsibility of the NT Police and departments responsible for planning and infrastructure. Closures may be necessary during wildfires and during management activities such as controlled burning and aerial control of feral animals. Road and track closures could also be required to protect environmental values of a site, during site rehabilitation, for cultural purposes or to protect infrastructure from actions such as re-occurring vandalism). Wherever possible, any road closures are well publicised in order to minimise impact on all stakeholders.

Special access – To ensure the safety of visitors and protection of the Park's values, special access is regulated within the Park and requires a permit under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-laws*. Special access covers a range of activities and users including remote area camping, public functions, landing aircraft, research, volunteers, tours and commercial interests.

Infrastructure maintenance – Maintaining facilities presents a consistent challenge particularly in remote areas of the Park. A systematic approach is required to address and prioritise 'wear and tear' and direct damage to park assets (such as fences, roads and bollards) from fires, floods, vandalism and 'souveniring'. Whenever practicable, expressions of interest will be sought from local private contractors. Traditional Owners have indicated they want to be employed in the construction and maintenance of Park infrastructure.

As visitor numbers rise, maintaining visitor facilities and services such as rubbish collection, cleaning and maintenance of campgrounds, picnic areas and ablution facilities, and increasingly, the supply of water to the Larapinta Trail, can comprise an increasing proportion of

ranger time and park resources. This necessitates constant re-assessment of programs and identification of the most efficient way of delivering services. Such visitor service work must be balanced with maintaining the natural and cultural values of the Park that the visitors come to enjoy.

Management facilities – Existing management facilities on the park include ranger offices, workshops, residences and a power generator at Ormiston Gorge. Solid waste from the eastern portion of the Park is disposed of at the Alice Springs Town Dump. Solid waste from the western portion is disposed of in a rubbish tip south east of Ormiston Gorge. Wherever possible, waste is recycled, and recycling bins are provided at Simpsons Gap and at Ormiston Gorge. Aluminium, scrap metal, glass and waste oil are sent to Alice Springs. Most garden and food waste is composted. Visitors are encouraged to take any rubbish out of the Park. The remainder of solid waste at the Ormiston rubbish tip is burnt and buried, causing potential environmental problems such as air pollution and attraction of dingoes and hybrid dogs. There is also an agreement with the Glen Helen Resort allowing them to dispose of waste at the same landfill location, in a pit that they are responsible for managing and maintaining. Resort management have been advised that they should investigate alternatives to this arrangement prior to the current pit reaching capacity, estimated to be 2012. Alternatives for landfill style waste disposal need to be investigated within the Park.

Visitor monitoring

Recreation and tourism planning needs to be underpinned by effective research on visitor use, expectations and satisfaction. Systematic monitoring of visitor numbers, interests, activities and satisfaction provide a basis for planning and designing facilities and delivering high quality visitor services including interpretation and education. Visitor monitoring that is linked to environmental monitoring will allow the partners to better understand the effects of visitor use on Park values and adjust their management over time.

Traffic counters have been maintained on the Park for many years along Larapinta Drive and at Simpsons Gap, Ormiston Gorge and Glen Helen as a way of systematically recording the numbers of people visiting the Park. Visitor surveys are also conducted periodically to assess in more detail visitor use and satisfaction as well as indicate changes in use. The most recent comprehensive survey was conducted in 2009. The two sets of information from both these visitor monitoring processes are combined to provide a picture of visitor use and satisfaction and to guide recreation and tourism planning and research.

The West MacDonnells National Park is now surveyed every three years as part of the Service's recently updated visitor monitoring standards.

Public safety and risk management

The partners have responsibility for maintaining the highest practicable standards of visitor safety. This includes both the prevention and management of harm or injury to visitors. All

visitor activity on the Park carries some risk of injury. The major safety concerns within the West MacDonnell National Park are:

- visitors becoming lost, injured or affected by heat, cold and/or dehydration while walking in the Park;
- rugged terrain, remote area injury and the risk of cliff-related accidents;
- accidents and injury while swimming;
- injury while using park infrastructure;
- vehicle and aircraft related accidents; and
- flood and fire.

The effective management of emergency incidents requires a plan of action, sufficient resources and trained, competent personnel. Regular safety audits of facilities can also help mitigate risks. When incidents occur in the Park, rangers often reach the site before other emergency response agencies. As a consequence, park staff often have important incident management roles. Overall the police are responsible for all emergency incidents. When police are involved, a Police officer will assume control as the Officer in Charge. If the police are not involved, the most senior park officer will have primary responsibility for any action and will be the Officer in Charge.

To help manage incidents, an Emergency Response Procedures Manual for the West District has been developed and is regularly updated. All staff must be familiar with these procedures and be prepared to implement them at any time. Each staff member, regardless of level, must be able to take control of an emergency situation in the absence of senior staff. Therefore staff must have the training required to carry out such roles.

Incidents in the Park often attract media attention. It is important that the media are provided with timely, accurate and consistent information through the department's media branch when incidents occur.

While the partners aim to provide facilities and information for safe use of the Park, visitors have responsibility to ensure their own safety. For example, they should use the Walker Registration Scheme, which is designed to reduce the risks associated with long-distance walking in remote areas of the Park. Tour operators and school groups must abide by the safety conditions specified on the permits they must have to operate in, or visit, the Park.

OUR AIMS – WHAT WILL BE ACHIEVED?

- Visitors feeling welcome, safe, inspired and highly satisfied.
- Well presented facilities and services.
- An effective and efficient visitor monitoring program.
- Risk management systems minimising danger and safety-related visitor incidents

MANAGEMENT DIRECTIONS – WHAT WE WILL DO?

3.46 Zoning – Visitor access, activities and facilities will be managed and developed according to this Plan's zoning scheme. See Map 5.

3.47 Tourism development policy – The partners will contribute to an over-arching Territory Parks, Tourism and Recreation Plan.

3.48 Tourism development – Tourism developments in the West MacDonnell National Park will be planned and designed to protect the natural, cultural and historical values, and the scenic and landscape character of the Park, and will be underpinned by strategic tourism research and systematic visitor monitoring. The approval, design and construction of developments will be subject to appropriate site clearances, environmental assessments and agreed site development planning. Partnerships with private industry for provision of infrastructure and visitor services will be encouraged.

Opportunities include, but are not restricted to:

- **West MacDonnells Visitor Centre development** – The partners will ensure that both Park values and visitor interests alike are well served by appropriate design and provision of information.
- **Alternative camp sites and accommodation** – Options will be considered for commercial tourism developments, within and adjacent to the Park, including along the Larapinta Trail.
- **Alternative Parks service accommodation options** – Within and adjacent to the Park, including the relocation of camping from Ormiston Gorge.
- **Park entrance upgrades** – Such renovations will reflect Australia's Red Centre National Landscape.
- **Cultural tours** – The partners will work with the tourism industry, CLC and local Aboriginal operators to develop local Indigenous tourism products. Cross-cultural 'voluntourism' opportunities will also be explored.

3.49 Access

- Private vehicles will be restricted to roads and designated public 4WD Tracks.
- Areas may be temporarily or permanently closed to the public for erosion control, rehabilitation, important ceremonies or safety reasons.

3.50 Facilities – The infrastructure, facilities and services supporting the West MacDonnell National Park will be presented and resourced to the highest standards offered across the Northern Territory parks estate.

- **Standards of service** – Levels of service across the Park will match visitor needs, Park zoning and the standards of service guidelines detailed in Section 3.2.4.
- **Facility Design** – All facilities associated with orientation, information, interpretation and shelters (including toilets) will be of a similar architectural style, and clearly branded as part of the Red Centre National Landscape.
- **Landscaping** – All landscaping requirements associated with car parks, wayside stops and associated walking trails, bollards and other traffic management facilities, rubbish receptacles (where provided), seating, and picnic and BBQ sites will be consistent with the Park Zoning scheme and standards of service guidelines, and designed to complement Red Centre National Landscape design principles.
- **Waste Disposal** – Alternatives to landfill style waste disposal will be investigated.

3.51 Visitor safety – The Park's facilities and visitor management practices will be subject to ongoing monitoring, maintenance and risk assessment.

- **Emergency Response Procedures Manual** – All staff must be familiar with the procedures and be trained and prepared to implement them at any time. The procedures will be regularly reviewed.
- **Identified risks** – Safety audits of all facilities will be undertaken on a regular basis. Any identified risks will be rectified on a priority basis and considered in site planning.
- **Visitor safety and fire prevention** – These issues will be promoted through good site planning and design, park interpretation programs, public education, publications, world wide web pages, tour operators, and, where necessary, through signs.
- **Tour operators** – Such operators will be encouraged to report incidents and near misses.
- **Media** – Appropriate, timely and accurate information about incidents will be provided to the media as soon as possible.
- **Swimming** – Swimming and water based activities will be promoted unless prohibited by signs and other information on site. Provision of safety information and equipment may be considered where appropriate.
- **Water quality** – Water quality at major visitor nodes will be monitored on a regular basis according to standards applied by the appropriate NT Government authority. Waterholes may be closed to visitors if water quality becomes a public health hazard.

3.2.4 Visitor nodes – standards of service

The Park provides a diversity of experiences through visitor nodes (see Map 8). Visitor needs range from those requiring high levels of service to remote bush experiences requiring only basic levels of service.

This section provides a guide to match park services with visitor needs and experiences across the Park. It is important that all services are presented in the right place at the right level across the Park. In some sites there is inadequate infrastructure to meet increasing visitor demands, while facilities in other locations, although adequate, are no longer in line with visitor needs or expectations. Some sites may be over-resourced and potentially lower a visitor's desired experience.

The level and type of facilities supplied also needs to take account of the staff's capacity to service these facilities. The opportunity to attract contractors to service visitor infrastructure is limited by the distance to nearby communities and service centres.

All future developments and infrastructure should aim to be low maintenance with practical and environmental considerations being paramount. They should also be done with a view to attracting commercial operators, or providing commercial opportunities for Traditional Owners where interest exists. Private investment should also be encouraged, providing it is in accordance with Northern Territory Government and agency policy.

(1) Simpsons Gap - Simpsons Gap is a scenic, rocky gap and waterhole in the Chewings Range only 20 minutes drive from Alice Springs. Simpsons Gap is the first major visitor node within the West MacDonnell Ranges encountered by visitors heading west from Alice Springs. It receives many locals as well as tourists, and plays an important role in providing information and orientation for the entire Park.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A major node and orientation site, providing high standard access, facilities and information for large numbers of visitors.			
Visitor Experience	Typical visitors: Tourists and park visitors seek comfort and convenience in a popular iconic site.	Intensity of use: High. Approximately 100,000 visitors per annum. Many stay in the main visitor area for less than two hours. It is also a venue for many special events such as weddings and corporate functions.	Zoning: Visitor Zone Catering for high visitor numbers and mass tourist experiences.	Levels of service: Very high level of service.
Access Standards	Vehicle access: High standard sealed road.	Tracks and paths: Highly accessible and high standard tracks.	Disabled access: Barrier free access to key features and facilities of the main visitor node, where feasible.	Car Parking: Designated car and bus parking.
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Directional signs on arterial roads. Detailed site information supported on the Website. Comprehensive site orientation and information consistent with Red Centre National Landscape principles.		Interpretation and Education: A comprehensive range of interpretation and education geared to large numbers of visitors, with diverse needs and usage patterns. A key venue for community education programs.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include sightseeing, picnicking, short walks, photography, nature and cultural appreciation and relaxation. The presence of many other users is an expected part of the Park experience.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Seating, Tables, Chairs and Shelters Provided. Potable Water: Some water provision possible but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Flushing toilets. Wash basins provided.	BBQs and Fireplaces: Gas or electric BBQs. Food Services: Compatible with Kiosk/ Café/ Restaurant Camping: School campground available for community events. Larapinta Trail camp site for trail walkers only.		
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated on site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Staff on site full time.	Litter Management: Take rubbish home policy to be promoted. Open Space Management: Weed slashing for infrastructure safety (fire), visitor access, open space and aesthetic appeal if necessary. Management Facilities: Ranger office, residences, bore and a workshop are located within the Visitor Zone.		
Background – Issues & Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The main car park does not provide an attractive introduction to the experience of visiting Simpsons Gap. The area and design of the car park must cater for a number of buses at one time as well as cars and other vehicles. - Interpretative and orientation information located in the Entry Station is quite dated. There is considerable scope to upgrade this area in line with the West MacDonnell's Visitor Centre; similar updates required at the entrance to the Gap Walk and along the walking tracks and Bike Path. - During the peak season there is a high demand for use of the school campground facilities and Larapinta Trail walkers' campsite. - Larapinta Trail walker experiences can be degraded by sharing facilities with day-visitors. There remains scope for the partners to explore alternative campground sites and possibly commercial partnership arrangements. - Alternatives for commercial Larapinta Trail operators are required in the vicinity. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Simpsons Gap area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Car Park -Consideration will be given to reconfiguring the car park to suit vehicle demand (coach spaces and parking for towing vehicles) and to ensure the visual landscape values are enhanced. - Wheelchair Nature Path - Consideration will be given to accommodating wheel-chair standard access to portions of the Simpsons Gap Bike Path to provide nature/cultural based experiences for users with mobility issues. - Community Education - Simpsons Gap will provide a focal point for community education programs for the Alice Springs community. The current school camp site requires planning for upgrade and expansion to meet growing demand. - Interpretation - review and upgrade interpretation in line with Red Centre National Landscape themes, orientation and West MacDonnell's Visitor Centre. - Community Engagement – Explore ideas and opportunities to engage with the local community through the promotion of appropriate community events. 			

(2) Hugh River, Birthday Waterhole and Hugh Gorge - Old station tracks to scenic waterholes and the sandy riverbed of the Hugh River north of Namatjira Drive have long been used by locals and niche tour operators. These areas include Reedy Waterhole, Hugh Gorge, Birthday Waterhole and Stuart's Pass, and provide for dispersed 4WD based self-reliant bush camping. St Phillips College also runs Outdoor Education and Personal Development Camps in the area each year.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A four-wheel drive bush experience with very low visitor use, minimal information and facilities required only for environmental protection. An important area for local users.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Self-reliant, independent and experienced visitors who seek solitude and a sense of remoteness.	Intensity of Use: Low level Estimated <10,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Conservation Zone Catering for low to medium visitor numbers and personal outback experiences.	Levels of Service: Very Basic or Basic Levels of Service.
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: Low Standard Track. Designated 4WD Track.	Tracks & Paths: Rough unmarked tracks	Disabled Access: No facilities built or installed.	Car Parking: No defined car parking.
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Discrete/limited orientation.		Interpretation and Education: None.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged in this zone include more active and self-reliant recreational pursuits such as vehicle-based bush-camping, bushwalking, nature appreciation and other low impact uses. High visitor numbers would adversely impact the experience of others.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Shelters provided only at Larapinta trailheads. No seating or tables elsewhere. Potable Water: Drinking water provision possible at Larapinta trailheads for walkers only. Quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Generally no toilets. Possible limited number of non-flush toilets for environmental protection, particularly at Larapinta Trail camp sites.		BBQs and Fireplaces: Campfires are permitted within this zone and private generators permitted during daylight hours only. Campfires and private generators are prohibited along the Larapinta Trail. Food Services: None. Camping: Vehicle based bush-camping and Larapinta trail camping.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations. Staff Ranger Presence: Less than once per week.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: None. Management Facilities: None	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The river valley of the Hugh River is a relatively resilient environment; however, irresponsible bush-camping has the potential to disturb other users, spread weeds, cause erosion, damage vegetation, pollute important waterholes, spread litter and encourage dingoes and feral animals. Domestic pets, firearms and trail-bikes can disturb wildlife and other users. - High volumes of 4WD traffic and off-track driving can lead to significant soil loss. - Over the past few years regular users have appreciated the area becoming a National Park and behave accordingly. Unfortunately a small proportion of visitors continue to use this section of the park for off-track 4WD driving, trail-biking, shooting, running dogs, etc. - Extreme flooding events can remove any infrastructure established along the valley. - The camping experiences sought by Larapinta Trail walkers and vehicle-based campers are different particularly regarding campfires and generators. To minimize conflict, walkers and car campers could be provided separate camping areas. - Currently there is no visitor information collected on this node to guide planning and management. - The long established tracks in the area, particularly those out of the river bed, are in poor condition and currently receive no maintenance. Assessment by soil experts and planning of remedial work is required. This may include realignment in some areas. 			
Management Directions – What we will do??	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Hugh River, Birthday Waterhole and Hugh Gorge area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Larapinta Trail camping - Where possible services for Larapinta Trail walkers should be kept separate from vehicle-based visitors. The partners will consider re-directing vehicle based camping south of Hugh Gorge, while accommodating car drop-offs, but not car camping, near Larapinta Trail users north of the gorge. - Compliance - Community education focus on building a sense of personal responsibility and encourage 'leave no trace' camping practices. Ranger patrols will encourage appropriate behaviour and compliance with Park policies and legislation. 			

(3) Ellery Creek - The waterhole at Ellery Creek Big Hole is a major swimming and water-based recreation site. The scientific, educational and geological values of the area are of international significance. The visitor area provides a vehicle based campsite with 2WD access.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A major node providing high standards of access, facilities and information for relatively large numbers of visitors.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Tourists and park visitors seeking comfort and convenience in a popular iconic site.	Intensity of Use: High. >70,000 visitors per annum. Many stay in the main visitor area for less than two hours.	Zoning: Visitor Zone Catering for high visitor numbers and mass tourist experiences.	Levels of Service: Very High Level of Service
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: High Standard Unsealed Road.	Tracks and Paths: Highly accessible walking tracks.	Disabled Access: Barrier free access to the facilities and main waterhole	Car Parking: Designated car and bus parking
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Directional signs on arterial roads. Detailed site information supported on the Website. Comprehensive site orientation and information consistent with Red Centre National Landscape principles.		Interpretation and Education: Range of interpretation and education geared to visitor needs and usage patterns.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include sightseeing, swimming, picnicking, short walks, bushwalking, photography, vehicle based camping, walk-in camping, nature and cultural appreciation, and relaxation. The presence of many other users is an expected part of the Park experience.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Seating, Tables, Chairs and Shelters Provided. Potable Water: Some water provision possible but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Pit /sealed vault toilets for environmental protection. Wash basins provided.		BBQs and Fireplaces: Wood, gas or electric BBQs provided. Food Services: Compatible with Mobile Kiosk Camping: Vehicle based campground.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Emergency phone installed. Swimming safety equipment (to OHS standard) and signs installed on-site. Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations, on site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Frequent staff patrols.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: Weed slashing for infrastructure safety (fire) and visitor access if necessary. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ellery Big-hole is one of the few permanent waterholes publicly accessible from Alice Springs. Deaths and injuries have occurred at the site. Key concerns are drowning, shock associated with the cold water and injuries caused by diving/jumping on submerged rocks/debris. - During peak season, demand on the site is high in the car park, day-use area and campground. During this period the visitor experiences are diminished due to congestion. The toilets do not cope with peak periods. Upgrades in 2008 increased the number of additional parking and camping bays which better catered for the increasing number of towing vehicles. In the longer term it may be necessary to look for an alternate location for the campground and re-configure the existing campground to accommodate day-use visitors. - The entrance to Ellery Creek remains unsealed, heavily used and expensive to maintain to 2WD standards. - All infrastructure located in the river valley, including the road, needs to be placed (or replaced) to accommodate extreme flooding events. - In the campsite the maintenance of individual and communal wood-fire pits is time-consuming and expensive. - The camping experiences sought by vehicle-based campers and Larapinta Trail walkers are significantly different. - Currently there is no visitor information collected on this node to guide planning and management. - Larapinta Trail walker experiences can be diminished by sharing facilities and vehicle based campers. There remains scope for the partners to explore alternative campground sites and possibly commercial partnership arrangements. - Construction of a bore on adjoining Aboriginal land was funded by Parks and Wildlife. This bore is no longer operational but could be refurbished and form the basis of alternative camping facilities or other accommodation options. 			
Management Directions – What we will do??	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Ellery Creek area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Road Sealing - Consideration will be given to sealing the Ellery Creek entrance road. - Parking - Consideration will be given to reconfiguring the car park to suit vehicle demand (coach spaces and parking for towing vehicles). - Interpretation - Information shelter will be upgraded to complement Red Centre National Landscape themes, orientation and West MacDonnells Visitor Centre. - Campground - The partners will consider re-arranging campground facilities from individual wood fires to communal cooking areas. - Larapinta Trail camping - Where possible services for Larapinta Trail walkers should be kept separate from day visitors. The Larapinta camp site is for the exclusive use of Trail walkers. 			

(4). Serpentine Gorge - Serpentine Gorge is a waterhole with cultural and conservation significance that provides day-use recreational activities. The lack of park facilities and relatively low standard of road is a conscious management decision to ensure the high conservation value of the area is retained. It is also the trailhead for sections 7 and 8 of the Larapinta Trail and has a camp site for exclusive use of Larapinta Trail walkers.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	To protect natural and cultural values this will be a minor node providing low level unsealed (two-wheel drive) access, and facilities and information for relatively few visitors seeking an alternative to other more highly visited gorges in the Park. It will also serve as an access point and camp site for Larapinta Trail walkers			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Independent, experienced park visitors prepared to sacrifice comfort in order to avoid high use areas.	Intensity of Use: High. >26,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Conservation Zone catering for lower visitor numbers and remote intimate outback experiences.	Levels of Service: Basic Level of Service
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: Basic access unsealed 2WD road.	Tracks and Paths: Formed tracks.	Disabled Access: No facilities built or installed.	Car Parking: Defined car parking area.
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Site identification and limited orientation signs.		Interpretation and Education: Low-key interpretation for education and visitor enjoyment.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include sightseeing, picnicking, bushwalking, photography, nature and cultural appreciation and relaxation. Swimming is discouraged for safety and cultural reasons. The Serpentine Gorge car park is located approximately 1.3 kilometres from the Gorge itself. The presence of many other users reduces the Park experience.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Limited or no seating, tables, chairs and shelters. Potable Water: Some water provision for Larapinta Trail walkers but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Possible pit /sealed vault toilets for environmental protection.		BBQs and Fireplaces: None. Food Services: None. Camping: Larapinta Trail campsite dedicated for Larapinta Trail walkers only.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Less than once per week.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: None. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High visitation is not suitable for Serpentine Gorge due to the cultural and environmental sensitivities of the site. It is one of the most biologically significant areas of the park and is also a Sacred Site (No 5450-18). The waterhole usually restricts access to the Sacred Site and to a relict stream situated behind the waterhole. The area behind the waterhole is designated as a Special Protection Zone for conservation purposes. - Erosion is a problem on some sections of the old road / walking track. It is necessary to ensure that the unsealed road is maintained to a standard adequate for a 2WD vehicle. - Illegal camping in the parking area is regularly an issue. - The area immediately to the south of the car park is Aboriginal Freehold Land not currently part of the West MacDonnell National Park. Opportunity exists for the partners to discuss managing this area as part of the West MacDonnell National Park. This area also provides several excellent opportunities for the development of exclusive use camp sites on already disturbed sites. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Serpentine Gorge area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Rehabilitation - The partners will examine and implement means to rehabilitate the erosion on the old road past the car park, including the option of re-routing part of the walking track. - Access - The partners will discourage visitors to explore beyond the waterhole in Serpentine Gorge to protect the cultural and high conservation values of the area. 			

(5). Serpentine Chalet - The Serpentine Chalet area provides vehicle-based bush camping, interpretation of the tourism history of the Chalet, and access to walking tracks and the Larapinta Trail.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A minor node providing for dispersed, vehicle-based bush camping with basic facilities in defined sites; minimal information and (mainly) four-wheel drive access in close proximity to the Larapinta Trail. Limited provision for commercial tours.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Self-reliant, independent and experienced visitors who seek solitude and a sense of remoteness.	Intensity of Use: Low. Approximately 3,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Conservation Zone catering for lower visitor numbers and remote intimate outback experiences	Levels of Service: Basic Level of Service
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: Basic Access. Unsealed 2WD road.	Tracks and Paths: Rough unmarked tracks	Disabled Access: No facilities built or installed.	Car Parking: No defined car parking.
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Site identification and limited orientation signs or information centres.		Interpretation and Education: Possible low-key interpretation for education and visitor enjoyment, highlighting the early tourism venture in area.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include vehicle-based bush-camping, sightseeing, picnicking, bushwalking, photography, nature and cultural appreciation, and relaxation. Swimming in the dam is discouraged for public safety. Serpentine Chalet is a low-key site to allow dispersed visitor activities. Both 2WD and 4WD camping is offered. The presence of many other users reduces the Park experience.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: None. Potable Water: Some water provision for Larapinta Trail walkers at the campsite but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Possible pit /sealed vault toilets for environmental protection.		BBQs and Fireplaces: Fire-pits provided in the bush camping area. Campfires and private generators are prohibited along the Larapinta Trail. Food Services: None. Camping: Vehicle based bush-camping sites partially delineated for either 2WD or 4WD access. Separate camp for independent Larapinta Trail walkers.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations, on site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Less than once per week.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: None. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The campsites are subject to erosion and need ongoing management to maintain to a satisfactory standard. To assist with rehabilitation sites are periodically closed off and rested to allow them to regenerate. - Increasing demand by commercial tour operators provides pressure on the sites. Alternative sites for commercial operators could be explored to retain the character of the site. Provided they remaining in character with the site, such dedicated sites, with improved facilities, such as toilets and BBQs, could be considered by the partners. - Weed spraying around the Chalet ruins would help conserve what remains. - Access track is of poor standard and requires careful use of available resources to ensure access is sustainable. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Serpentine Chalet area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Bush Camping - The area should be retained as a low key bush camping site providing both 2WD and 4WD access. - Commercial Operators - Consideration will be given to new camping areas dedicated for commercial Larapinta Trail operators. - Interpretation - Additional interpretation will be considered as resources permit. - Site Rehabilitation - The condition of the camp sites will be monitored by rangers on patrol. Should they become degraded, sites may be closed to allow recovery. 			

(6). Ochre Pits - This is the only Aboriginal quarry for natural ochre within Central Australia available for public visitation and education. A sealed road to the Ochre Pits provides 2WD conventional access. Walking tracks also provide walker access to the Ochre Pits, the Heavitree Range and Larapinta Trail. The Ochre Pits remain an important cultural site for the western Arrernte. Traditional ochre collection still occurs, making this site a rare example of living history.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A major node providing high standard access, information and facilities for relatively high numbers of visitors. A key site for interpretation of local Aboriginal culture.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Tourists and park visitors seeking comfort and convenience in a popular iconic site.	Intensity of Use: High. >35,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Visitor Zone - catering for high visitor numbers and mass tourist experiences. All facilities should minimise visual and environmental impacts on the broader landscape.	Levels of Service: Very High Level of Service
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: High Standard Sealed Road.	Tracks and Paths: Highly accessible walking tracks.	Disabled Access: Barrier free access to the facilities and Ochre Pit viewing platform.	Car Parking: Designated car and bus parking
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Directional signs on arterial roads. Detailed site information on the website. Comprehensive site orientation and information consistent with Red Centre National Landscape principles.		Interpretation and Education: A range of interpretation and education geared to a large numbers of visitors, with diverse needs and usage patterns. A key venue for community education programs, especially of a cultural nature.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include cultural appreciation, sightseeing, picnicking, short walks and photography. The presence of many other users is an expected part of the Park experience. May also be used to access Larapinta Trail via the Arrernte Walk.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Seating, tables, chairs and shelters provided. Potable Water: Some water provision possible but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Sealed pit toilets. Wash basins provided.		BBQs and Fireplaces: Gas, wood or electric BBQs provided. Food Services: Compatible with Mobile Kiosk Camping: None	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations, on site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Frequent staff patrols.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: Slashing for infrastructure safety (fire) and visitor access if necessary. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current capacity of the facilities at the Ochre Pits is adequate to cater for the expected increase during the life of this Plan. - Traditional Owners still collect ochre for ceremonies from the site. - In the past, a limited number of interpretive walk and talk sessions with the Traditional Owners occurred at the Ochre Pits. These were popular and well received by visitors. The partners may consider re-introducing opportunities for face-to-face interpretation under the direction of Traditional Owners. - Traditional Owners have directed that the Pekerre waterhole near the Ochre Pits is a sacred site inhabited by a kwelape. For safety reasons the waterhole cannot be approached. No swimming. However photography from a distance is permitted. - ‘Souveniring’ ochre by visitors can quickly degrade the site. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Ochre Pits area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Interpretation - Information will be upgraded to complement Red Centre National Landscape themes and West MacDonnells Visitor Centre. - Community Education - The Ochre Pits will provide a focal point for cultural interpretation programs for visitors and the Alice Springs community; these include “Territory Parks Alive”, junior rangers, and special Traditional Owner presentations. - Aboriginal Use - Traditional activities may require the temporary closure of the Ochre Pits to visitors. - Compliance - Rangers will monitor the ochre during regular patrols. Should ‘souveniring’ or other damage become a problem, additional information regarding the values of the ochre and the penalties for damage may be provided. 			

(7). Ormiston Gorge - Ormiston Gorge is the major visitor node in the western portion of the West MacDonnell National Park, providing a range of recreational opportunities in one of the Park's most spectacular settings. The natural and scenic significance of Ormiston Gorge and Pound was formally recognised in 1980 when the Reserve was entered onto the Register of the National Estate as 'a major scenic attraction of the West MacDonnell Ranges'.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A major node and orientation site providing high standard access, information, and facilities and services for high numbers of visitors.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Tourists and park visitors seek comfort and convenience in a popular iconic site.	Intensity of Use: High. Approximately 75,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Visitor Zone catering for high visitor numbers and mass tourist experiences.	Levels of Service: Very High Level of Service
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: High Standard Sealed Road.	Tracks and Paths: Highly accessible and high standard tracks.	Disabled Access: Barrier free access to all facilities and the Ormiston Gorge waterhole.	Car Parking: Designated car and bus parking
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Directional signs on arterial roads. Detailed site information on the website. Comprehensive site orientation and information consistent with Red Centre National Landscape principles.		Interpretation and Education: A comprehensive range of interpretation and education geared to large numbers of visitors, with diverse needs and usage patterns. A key venue for community education programs.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include sightseeing, picnicking, bushwalking, swimming, photography, nature and cultural appreciation and relaxation. The presence of many other users is an expected part of the Park experience. There is a wide range of walking tracks available to visitors, from the short A Class, disabled standard, paved track to the waterhole, or the half day Pound Walk, to the full day or overnight walk to Bowmans Gap or the overnight Mt Giles unmarked walk. Ormiston Gorge is also the trailhead for Sections 9 and 10 of the Larapinta Trail, with a dedicated camping area provided.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Seating, Tables, Chairs and Shelters Provided. Potable Water: Some water provision possible but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Flushing septic toilets. Wash basins provided.		BBQs and Fireplaces: Gas or electric BBQs provided. Food Services: Compatible with Kiosk/ Café/ Restaurant Camping: School campground available for community events.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Standard swimming safety equipment and signs installed on-site. Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated on-site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Staff on site full time.		Litter Management: Take rubbish home policy to be promoted. Open Space Management: Slashing for infrastructure safety (fire), visitor access, open space and aesthetic appeal if necessary. Management Facilities: Ranger office, residences, power generation, bore and a workshop are located within the Visitor Zone.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ormiston gorge is heavily used throughout the year and is particularly busy during the peak season. The visitor area is developed to capacity and there is limited scope for further development due to restricted space. The cost of treating the water on-site also limits future development. Although it appears that the quantity of poorer quality water is adequate, the supply of high quality water is limited. The toilets do not cope during the peak periods. The overall appearance of the visitor area reflects incremental development over successive decades. - Ormiston Gorge Visitor Centre is an ideal orientation and information facility to provide an important central orientation and information facility. To do so, visitor information facilities at Ormiston Gorge also require upgrading in line with the Red Centre National Landscape. - A vehicle-based campground with an ablution block including showers is located in close proximity to the day use area. A group camping area also allows for tours, school groups and other organisations. However the camping facilities detract from day-use visitor experiences. To provide for a richer experience of the Gorge's spectacular scenery and cultural connections, it is recommended that camping be restricted, and eventually phased out when alternative camping sites are available; the current campground could then be redeveloped as a day-use facility. - There are issues with managing waste associated with the site, including the limited capacity of the dump, burning of rubbish, and attracting dingoes. Alternative locations for a dump outside the Park have been investigated with no success. Wherever possible, waste is recycled. Hybrid dogs have also been trapped and removed from the rubbish dump. - The area immediately north of Ormiston Pound and around Woolshed Yard Waterhole is strongly associated with initiation ceremonies and much of the mythology is restricted. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Ormiston Pound area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Visitor Area Planning – The partners will consider the site plans to best showcase Ormiston Pound, most effectively service visitors and overcome the development constraints of the site. - Ormiston Gorge Visitor Centre - Will provide a central orientation and information facility. Information will be upgraded to complement Red Centre National Landscape themes. - Waste - Alternatives to the burning of solid wastes will be investigated over time in accordance with the <i>Waste Management and Pollution Control Act</i>. - Power - Investigate options for alternative power supply for Ormiston to help reduce costs and the audible impact on visitors of diesel power generation. 			

(8). Glen Helen Gorge - An attractive Gorge and waterhole of Aboriginal and historical significance; adjacent to a commercial accommodation facility which provides a range of visitor services including meals.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	Glen Helen Resort is a major tourism hub. By association, the Gorge receives high numbers of visitors, but access and development within the Park is constrained by flood events associated with the riverine environment.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Tourists and park visitors seek comfort and convenience in a popular iconic site.	Intensity of Use: High. 95,000 visitors per annum to the adjacent resort	Zoning: Visitor Zone catering for high visitor numbers and mass tourist experiences	Levels of Service: High Level of Service
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: High Standard Sealed Road to adjacent Resort	Tracks and Paths: Low standard, subject to site constraints.	Disabled Access: Accessibility subject to site constraints.	Car Parking: Designated car and bus parking offered at Glen Helen Resort only
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Directional signs on arterial roads. Detailed site information on the Website. Comprehensive site orientation and information consistent with Red Centre National Landscape principles.		Interpretation and Education: A range of interpretation and education geared to large numbers of visitors, with diverse needs and usage patterns. A key venue for community education programs.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include sightseeing, picnicking, photography, nature and cultural appreciation and relaxation. The presence of many other users is an expected part of the Park experience. Ranger talks are provided during the peak season. Linking walk from Glen Helen Resort to Larapinta Trail, joining at Section 11			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Seating, tables, chairs and shelters subject to site constraints. Potable Water: Some water provision possible but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: subject to site constraints		BBQs and Fireplaces: subject to site constraints. Food Services: Compatible with mobile Kiosk Camping: Adjacent commercial accommodation provided.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated on site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Frequent staff patrols.		Litter Management: Rubbish and recycling bins provided at Glen Helen Resort. Take rubbish home policy elsewhere. Open Space Management: Weed slashing for infrastructure safety (fire), visitor access, and aesthetic appeal if necessary. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Glen Helen Resort provides an outback homestead-style experience as well as camping facilities, adjacent to this iconic feature of the Park. Development on the adjacent property has the potential to provide for higher visitor use, and is ideally located to act as a hub for extended visits to neighbouring attractions. Water quality and the size of the lease are major limiting factors. - A significant problem with placing facilities near the Gorge is the potential for flood damage. - The waterhole and high red cliff directly opposite the resort is a significant sacred site. Traditional Owners also identify the claypans north-east of Glen Helen Gorge as a sacred site to be avoided. They recommend the area be fenced-off from the public for their safety. - The Glen Helen Resort is owned by Ngurratjuta Aboriginal Corporation but leased to the current commercial operators. Ngurratjuta represents the Aboriginal people of the area, including the Traditional Owners of the West MacDonnell National Park. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Glen Helen area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Liaison - Continue constructive liaison with the managers of the Resort regarding developments at Glen Helen. - Flood Repairs - Ensure interpretive and orientation signage is well-maintained and quickly repaired or replaced after flooding damage. - Mt Sonder Lookout - Enhance signage to promote this as a stopping point and update the interpretation to reflect the locations significant contribution to the Red Centre National Landscape. 			

(9). Finke Two Mile Waterhole - A scenic waterhole on the ancient Finke River.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A four-wheel drive bush experience with minimal orientation information and facilities necessary only for aesthetic and environmental protection.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Independent, experienced park visitors who seek solitude and a sense of remoteness.	Intensity of Use: Low level Estimated <10,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Conservation Zone catering for lower visitor numbers and remote intimate outback experiences	Levels of Service: Very Basic Levels of Service.
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: Low Standard Track. Designated 4WD Track.	Tracks and Paths: Rough unmarked tracks.	Disabled Access: No facilities built or installed.	Car Parking: No defined car parking.
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Discrete/limited orientation.		Interpretation and Education: None.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged in this zone include more active and self-reliant recreational pursuits such as vehicle-based bush-camping, bushwalking, nature appreciation and other low impact uses. The presence of many other users reduces the Park experience.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: None. Potable Water: None Toilets: None.		BBQs and Fireplaces: None. Food Services: None Camping: Vehicle based bush-camping.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations. Staff Ranger Presence: Once a week.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: None. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The wide sandy river valley of the Finke River is a relatively resilient environment; however, irresponsible bush-camping and crowding have the potential to disturb other users, damage sensitive waterholes, spread weeds, cause erosion, damage vegetation, spread litter, disturb dingoes and encourage feral animals. - The waterhole habitats along Finke Two-Mile support important eco-system services. Pollution from sun screens, soaps, insect repellents and human wastes must be avoided. - High volumes of 4WD traffic and off-track driving can lead to significant soil loss on river banks. - Extreme flooding events can remove any infrastructure established along the river. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Two-Mile area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Bush Camping – Two-Mile Waterhole will remain a dedicated vehicle-based bush-camping area. - Compliance - Community education will focus on building a sense of personal responsibility and encourage 'leave no trace' camping practices. Ranger patrols will encourage appropriate behaviour and compliance with Park policies and legislation. 			

(10). Redbank Gorge - The waterhole and Redbank Gorge at the base of Mt Sonder provide the focus for basic camping and bushwalking experiences.

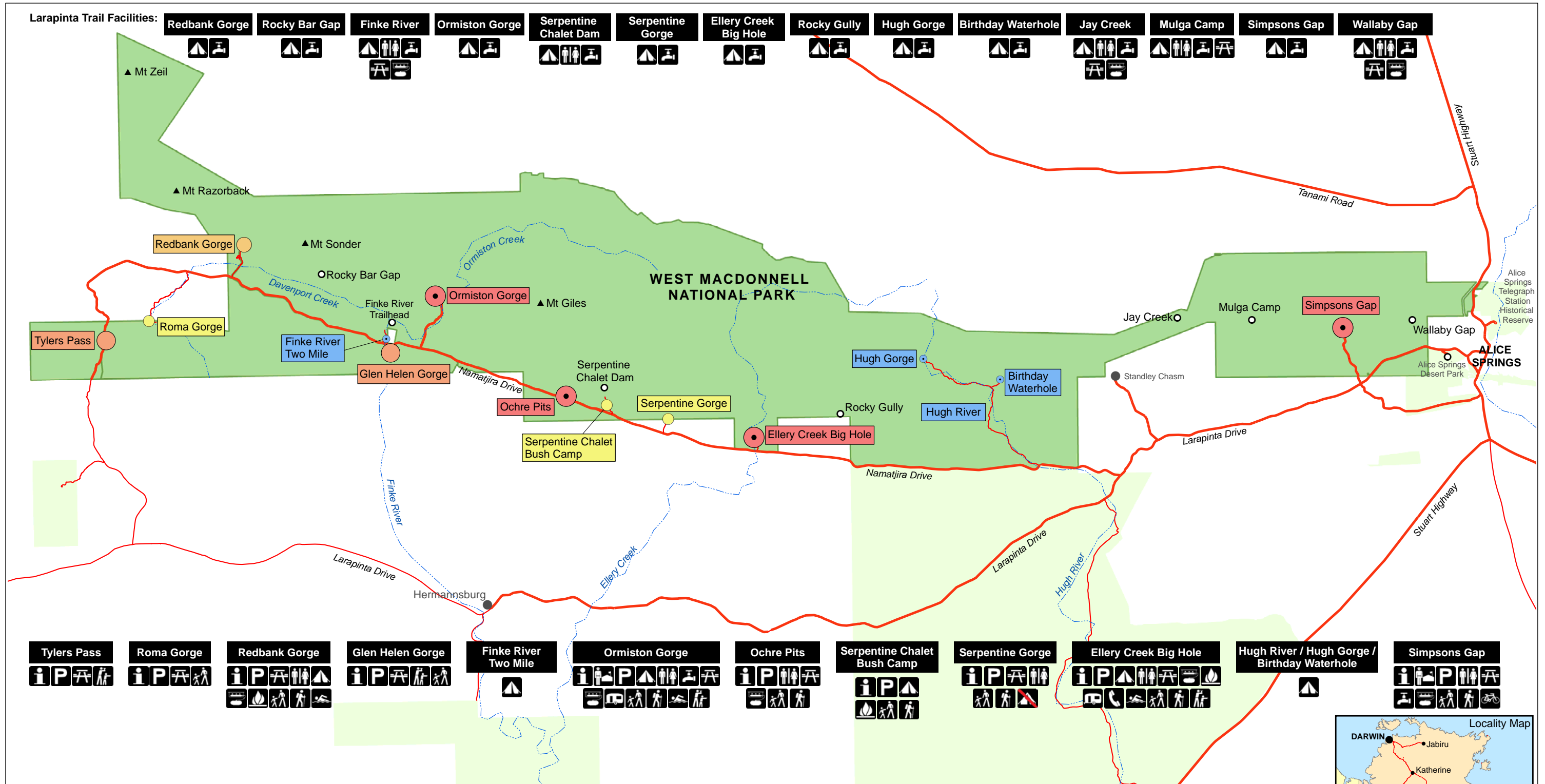
Purpose/ Level of Service:	Increasing numbers of visitors may warrant a significant upgrade to existing standards of access, facilities and services to that of a major node with a mid to high level of service			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Active and passive recreationalists seeking some facilities in a predominately natural and cultural setting.	Intensity of Use: Currently Low level approximately 12,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Visitor Zone catering for high visitor numbers and mass tourist experiences.	Levels of Service: Mid Levels of Service.
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: High Unsealed Road.	Tracks and Paths: Highly accessible and high standard tracks.	Disabled Access: Accessibility subject to site constraints. Facilities may be considered if cost effective.	Car Parking: Car parking with defined spaces. Bus parking possible.
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Directional signs on arterial roads. Site orientation and information consistent with Red Centre National Landscape principles.		Interpretation and Education: Information shelters and site interpretation for visitor enjoyment. Also trailhead information for Larapinta Trail walkers.	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged within this zone include sightseeing, dispersed camping in semi-formalised camp sites, included specific area for coach /commercial groups, picnicking, bushwalking, photography, nature and cultural appreciation and relaxation. The swim through Redbank Gorge is undertaken by limited numbers but is a unique central Australian experience. The presence of many other users is an expected part of the Park experience.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: Seating, Tables, Chairs and Shelters Provided. Potable Water: Some water provision possible but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Pit toilets. Hand washing provided if cost effective.		BBQs and Fireplaces: Wood or gas BBQs provided. Food Services: None Camping: Partially-serviced vehicle-based camping.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated on site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Once or twice a week.		Litter Management: Take rubbish home policy to be promoted. Open Space Management: Weed slashing for infrastructure safety (fire) and basic visitor access if necessary. Management Facilities: None	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<p>A significant increase in visitation expected as a result of the anticipated sealing of the Red Centre Way and promotion of Mt Sonder as a destination. Current facilities at the car park and day-use area will not cater for expected demand. Expansion of the carpark and the day-use area, including construction of shade shelter(s), seating and additional pit toilets will be required. Minor re design of the campgrounds would better cater to towing vehicles. The existing road to Redbank is unsealed, eroded and only marginally passable to 2WD vehicles. The limited availability of suitable material for ongoing road re-sheeting may make it more cost effective to plan for realignment, construction and sealing of access road.</p> <p>Site planning is required to rationalise facilities and layout and improve on-site management efficiency. Consideration should be given to replacing individual wood fires with communal fire pits using commercially supplied/purchased firewood.</p> <p>Further investigation of potential potable water in this area should be a high priority to support any future development.</p> <p>A formalised and hardened walking track between the day-use area and the gorge is desirable. Maintaining the track surface of the walk up Mt Sonder to minimum class 3 standard is desirable and will require ongoing financial commitment.</p>			
Management Directions - What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Red Bank Gorge area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Road Upgrade - The partners will seek to upgrade the main road for convenient 2WD access and overcome erosion issues. - Promotion –The partners will promote Redbank Gorge as a stopping and camping experience. - Visitor Area Planning – The partners will consider the site plans to most effectively increase capacity and functionality of the day-use area and campgrounds. - New Camping Facility - The partners will explore options for a new camping facility in the area to cater for the mid-range requirements of travellers along the Red Centre Way. Ideally, this could be a commercial partnership between Traditional Owners and a developer/operator. - Walking Tracks – Track upgrades will be considered for the Mt Sonder Walk as well as formalising the walking track to Redbank Gorge - Track Rehabilitation – The vehicle track to the creek will be rehabilitated. 			

(11). Roma Gorge - The rock art and artefacts in the Roma Gorge area are of national Aboriginal and archaeological significance, and the Gorge makes up one of the largest and most complex engraving sites in Central Australia. The area is extremely significant to Traditional Owners.

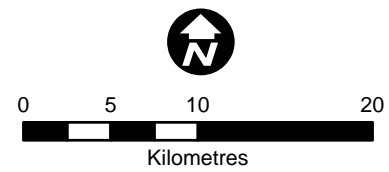
Purpose/ Level of Service:	An important Aboriginal cultural site and very minor node that should not be actively promoted to visitors. Four-wheel drive access only with minimal information and facilities based on site protection. A cultural tourism opportunity for Traditional Owners or licensed commercial tour operators with a fee payable.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Independent, experienced, special interest park visitors who are prepared to sacrifice comfort for a cultural experience.	Intensity of Use: Low level Estimated <2,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Conservation Zone catering for lower visitor numbers and remote intimate outback experiences	Levels of Service: Basic Levels of Service.
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: Low Standard Track. Designated 4WD Track.	Tracks and Paths: Rough unmarked tracks.	Disabled Access: No facilities built or installed.	Car Parking: No defined car parking.
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Discrete/limited orientation. No directional signs to site.		Interpretation and Education: Discrete/limited	
Features and Activities	Activities encouraged in this area should be consistent with self-reliant cultural appreciation. The presence of any substantial number of visitors reduces the overall experience.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats and Tables and Shelter: None. Potable Water: None Toilets: None.		BBQs and Fireplaces: None. Food Services: None Camping: None.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations. Staff Ranger Presence: Less than once a week.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: None. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitors can cause impacts as people can unknowingly walk over rock engravings. - Roma Gorge is on an important men’s sacred site. This Gorge, and those nearby, contain extensive engravings. The engravings and the Gorge are a Recorded Sacred Site (No 5350-5). A further Recorded Sacred Site (No 5350-15) exists over a nearby gorge. - The significance of the surrounding Range, particularly the gorges, will be diminished by uncontrolled public visitation. The current policy of not actively promoting access to Roma Gorge, and concentrating those visitors that do visit within the northern end of Roma Gorge will assist with conservation of the values of all the Gorges. - With an increase in visitor numbers access may need to be limited. The location is currently signposted along Namatjira Drive. Although 4WD visitor access is permitted to Roma Gorge, the surrounding gorges have not been opened in an effort to protect their cultural values. - Information on the location and access to the Gorge is provided on request. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zoning - Visitor management in the Roma Gorge area will follow the detailed zoning scheme shown in Map 5. - Cultural Interpretation - Traditional Owners will always be in the leading role whenever decisions are made regarding the protection and presentation of this site. - Promotion - Continue the current approach of not actively promoting access to Roma Gorge and concentrating those visitors that do visit within the northern end of the Gorge. - Visitation - As visitation increases, consideration will be given to limiting visitor access to tours with authorised guides only. - Facilities - Picnic facilities located at the site, and orientation signage, will be removed. 			

(12). Tylers Pass - The Tylers Pass lookout provides spectacular views over the western sector of the MacDonnell Ranges including the four highest peaks of Mt Zeil, Mt Razorback, Mt Sonder and Mt Giles, the Missionary Plains to Tnorala (Gosse Bluff), and the Krichauff / James Range.

Purpose/ Level of Service:	A short-stop gateway to the Park, and a lookout for relatively high numbers of visitors; has high standard access, orientation information and facilities.			
Visitor Experience	Typical Visitors: Tourists and park visitors seeking comfort and convenience in a popular iconic site.	Intensity of Use: High. Estimate >50,000 visitors per annum.	Zoning: Visitor Zone - catering for high visitor numbers and mass tourist experiences. All facilities should minimise visual and environmental impacts on the broader landscape.	Levels of Service: High Level of Service
Access Standards	Vehicle Access: High Standard Sealed Road	Tracks and Paths: Highly accessible and high standard tracks.	Disabled Access: Barrier free access to the facilities and viewing platform	Car Parking: Designated car and bus parking
Interpretation and Community Education Standards	Orientation: Directional signs on arterial roads. Offering comprehensive site orientation and information consistent with Red Centre National Landscape principles.		Interpretation and Education: Offering a range of interpretation and education geared to a large numbers of visitors, with diverse needs and usage patterns.	
Features and Activities	Tylers Pass lookout provides a unique experience to gaze out over much of the country and also provides orientation for the traveller. The view to Tnorala is spectacular. It is one of the only sites on the main visitor access routes through the MacDonnell Ranges where the road route leaves the valleys and provides an elevated scenic perspective. Most visitors spend a relatively short period at Tylers Pass.			
Visitor Facilities Standards	Seats, Tables and Shelter: Seating, tables, chairs and shelters provided. Potable Water: Some water provision possible but quality and supply not guaranteed. Toilets: Sealed/Pit toilets. Wash basins provided.		BBQs and Fireplaces: None. Food Services: None. Camping: None.	
Management Service Standards	Visitor Safety and Risk Mitigation: Significant hazards and hidden threats communicated at strategic locations, on site and in pre-visit information. Risk mitigation and on-site compliance to minimise exposure to hazards. Staff Ranger Presence: Frequent staff patrols.		Litter Management: No rubbish bins provided. Take rubbish home policy. Open Space Management: Slashing for infrastructure safety (fire) and visitor access if necessary. Management Facilities: None.	
Background – Issues and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The scenic quality of the natural vistas should be maintained without disturbance. - The Tylers Pass site needs a major re-design, including single lane access road, car park and interpretive shelter. Current facilities are inadequate to cater for the expected level of visitation that may occur with the sealing of the Red Centre Way. - The only shade is in the interpretive shelter. Additional shade would allow picnickers to leisurely enjoy the view while others take in the information provided. This site has been identified as a significant orientation site. Proposals for further development include the removal of the communication tower, restricted vehicle access, a car park at the base of the hill, a walking track, new interpretation infrastructure and upgraded facilities. - It is recommended that the communications tower at Tylers Pass be relocated to another site or removed. 			
Management Directions – What we will do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitor Area Planning – The partners will consider the site plans to enhance the visitor experience. Priorities include highlighting the landscape and reinforcing the experience, building purpose-designed interpretation and orientation structure to introduce the West MacDonnell National Park. - Interpretation of the Cultural landscape – Opportunities to interpret the cultural landscape from a Traditional Owner perspective will be considered by Traditional Owners. - Repeater Station – The partners will seek agreement from Telstra to relocate the communications tower from Tyler’s Pass. 			



West MacDonnell Joint Management Plan (DRAFT)
Map 8. Park Visitor Nodes Map

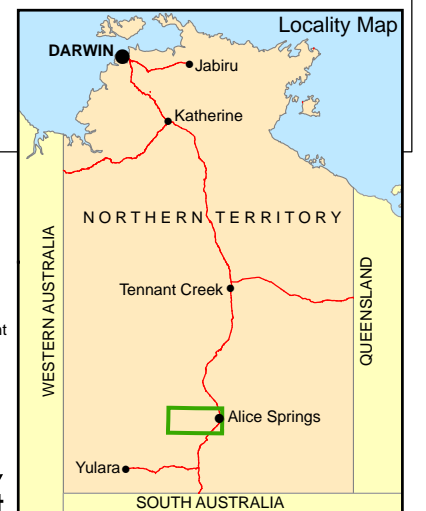


- Level of Service**
- Very High
 - High
 - Mid
 - Basic
 - Very Basic
- Localities**
- Locality (On Park)
 - Locality (Off Park)
- Other Symbols**
- Mountain
 - Major Drainage
 - Major Road
 - Minor Road
 - West MacDonnell National Park
 - Other Parks/Reserves
- Facilities**
- Information
 - Ranger Station
 - Parking Areas
 - Camping
 - Toilets
 - Drinking Water
 - Picnic Facilities
 - Gas BBQs
 - Wood BBQs
 - Caravan Access
 - Short Walk
 - Hiking Track
 - Swimming
 - Scenic Lookout
 - No Camping
 - Emergency Phone

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

A selection of Dreamings from the West MacDonnell National Park

Some of the dreaming tracks that have aspects that can be shared 'publicly' are outlined below.

- The tnwerrengatye (caterpillar) dreaming from Urlatherrke (Mt Zeil) moves along the ranges to Alice Springs and Anthwerrke (Emily Gap). The caterpillars from Urlatherrke are sometimes called tnwerrengatye or Yeperenye.
- The yerrampe (honey ant) dreaming comes from Papunya. It travels through Mbunghara and (A)lyape on the northern boundary of the West MacDonnell National Park where it splits into two groups. One group of honey ant ancestors continue their way in a north-easterly direction and the other group turn south into the headwaters of Ellery Creek. The dreaming travels down the Ellery Creek in the National Park, and further downstream.
- The irrpenge (fish) dreaming comes down from Napperby over Amburla to the headwaters of Ellery Creek on Tyurretye. It travels down the creek splitting in two. One group of ancestors travels through Rrwenkwe Twatye (Eight Mile Gap). The other group continues its journey down Ellery Creek joined by some additional water creatures, intaminte and iwengulpere (species of fish found in Tyurretye waters), as well as ltyarnme (freshwater crayfish).
- The irreyte (eagle) dreaming ancestors of Alkwerteneme (Serpentine Gorge area) fly around their surroundings to Serpentine Chalet and to the east to Antulye, landing on the peaks of the ranges to overlook their territory in search of game.
- The imurre (possum) dreaming is a prominent dreaming between Urlatherrke (Mt Zeil), Imperlknge (Mt Heuglin) and Tyler's Pass.
- There are a number of irleye (emu) dreamings travelling along the ranges. One of the current versions of an irleye dreaming, describes the emu ancestors as coming from Bond Springs through Jessie Gap and travelling west along and under the eastern and then the western MacDonnell Ranges passing through the Hugh River. At Ulpekngerre, the Ochre Pits, this irleye dreaming emerges from the ground and travels via Mt Giles to Kwartetweme, the Ormiston Pound. At Kwartetweme, the travelling irleye dreaming joins a local emu dreaming. From Kwartetweme only one irleye ancestor travels on to the west, past Kintore, into Western Australia.
- There are a number of renge (euro) dreamings travelling through the West MacDonnell National Park. One of these dreamings is closely associated to Kaperte Urrperle (Fish Hole Gap) because it originated there (places of ancestral origin are of special significance). The journeys of the renge dreaming ancestors take them from Kaperte Urrperle (Fish Hole Gap) westwards to Angkele (Standley Chasm), llyewarte (Mt Conway) as far as Yarretheke near Mt Zeil. The euro ancestors also depart to the east from Kaperte Urrperle and travel towards Alice Springs where they visited a white cave at the back of the Yipirinya School. The dreaming is said to have travelled as far as

Harts Range. However, the euro dreaming always returned to its origin at Kaperte Urrperle.

- The nthepe (dancing women) dreaming track, a major women's story in Central Australia, runs along the Western MacDonnell Ranges. The dreaming travels from west to east. It is generally said that the dancing ancestral women start their journey at Mt Liebig and travel east along the western MacDonnell Ranges to a place in Glen Helen Gorge called Kwartename [Kwarre-irtname], meaning girls dancing/standing, and from there they travel along the ranges to Alice Springs and on to Ross River and beyond. In Luritja this dreaming is called kunka tjuta (many women) tjukurrpa.
- The taye (moon) dreaming is of particular importance in the area between Rwetyepme (Mt Sonder), Ilpekerrerte and Yaperlpe (Glen Helen Gorge). From his main site the moon man travelled around his country, usually in pursuit of women, but he always returned to Ilpekerrerte, the main taye site. The moon man walked all over the area, sang many love songs, and made much love magic. There are many places and sites on the full moon's country associated with his deeds and wanderings. For example, the gum trees along a section of the Lhere Pirnte (Finke River) represent the moon man's footsteps. At Yaperlpe, the man met a snake which metamorphosed into the rock face opposite the old Glen Helen homestead (the current tourist lodge).
- The (a)tyunpe (perentie) dreaming is associated with Simpsons Gap and Roe Creek Gap.
- The wapiti (yam) dreaming comes from Luritja country and travels east through Merina, Kumbuli, Irreme and Kwartename (in Glen Helen Gorge) to Jay Creek on Arrernte country along the ranges.
- Arrwe (rock wallaby) dreaming travels from Redbank Gorge to Arrwele-irrpekale (Two-Mile waterhole in the Finke River) where it dives into the waterhole and travels underground to Alice Springs.

Appendix 2.

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Appendix 3.

Territory and Commonwealth legislation, with associated Territory Government and Department policy and guidelines

The following legislation and policy documents should be considered by the partners for the management of the West MacDonnell National Park:

<u>Northern Territory legislation</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, By-laws and Regulations • Weed Management Act • Bushfires Act and Regulations • Environmental Assessment Act • Waste Management and Pollution Control Act • Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Act • Pastoral Lands Act • Heritage Conservation Act • Fisheries Act • Planning Act • Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act
<u>Commonwealth legislation</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act • Native Title Act
<u>International conventions and treaties</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramsar, Wetlands of International Importance • JAMBA, Japan - Australia Migratory Bird Agreement • CAMBA, China - Australia Migratory Bird Agreement • International Convention on the protection of Biological Diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BONN, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (also known as CMS) • CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species • Burra Charter - the Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance
<u>Northern Territory Government policy</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing the Gap • A Working Future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Management – Framework Act • Indigenous Employment
<u>Park based agreements</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal law and traditional practices associated with Traditional Owners. • West MacDonnell National Park (Tyurretye) Joint Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lease of the Park to the NT Government. • Guide to decision making (Table A)

Appendix 4.

Extracts from Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act

Part iii – joint management of certain parks and reserves

Division 3 – Joint management partners, objective and principles

25AA. Joint management partners

(1) The joint management partners for a park or reserve are –

- (a) the Territory or a body nominated by the Territory as the representative of the Territory; and
- (b) the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve.

(2) The joint management partners are together responsible for the management of the park or reserve.

(3) The joint management partners must perform their functions under this Part in respect of a park or reserve in a manner that –

- (a) is consistent with any lease referred to in section 8(c) or 10(1)(f) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (b) is consistent with the joint management agreement referred to in section 8(d) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (c) is consistent with any indigenous land use agreement referred to in section 8(e) of the *Framework Act* entered into in respect of the park or reserve;
- (d) achieves the objective stated in section 25AB;
- (e) is in accordance with the principles stated in section 25AC; and
- (f) is in accordance with the joint management plan for the park or reserve.

25AB. Objective of joint management

The objective of joint management of a park or reserve is to jointly establish an equitable partnership to manage and maintain the park or reserve as part of a comprehensive and representative system of parks and reserves in the Territory and for the following purposes:

- (a) benefiting both the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and the wider community;
- (b) protecting biological diversity;
- (c) serving visitor and community needs for education and enjoyment.

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25AC. Principles of joint management

The objective is to be achieved by managing the park or reserve in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) recognising, valuing and incorporating Aboriginal culture, knowledge and decision making processes;
- (b) utilising the combined land management skills and expertise of both joint management partners;
- (c) recognising and addressing the need for institutional support and capacity building of the joint management partners;
- (d) recognising that community living areas in or in close proximity to parks and reserves are an integral part of the natural and cultural resource management of parks and reserves;
- (e) involving continuing statutory responsibilities and functions of the Minister with respect to parks and reserves;
- (f) managing parks and reserves may include cooperative management agreements for areas of land outside parks and reserves;
- (g) establishing a process for the consideration of applications for mining and petroleum

Division 6 – Role of Land Councils

25AN. Application of Division

This Division applies in relation to the parks and reserves specified in Schedules 2 and 3 to the Framework Act.

25AO. Functions of Land Councils in relation to parks and reserves

- (1) Pursuant to section 23(2) of ALRA, the following functions are conferred on a Land Council:
- (a) to ascertain and express the wishes and the opinion of Aboriginals living in its area as to the management of the parks and reserves in that area and as to appropriate legislation concerning those parks and reserves;
 - (b) to protect the interests of the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves;
 - (c) to consult with the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves about the use of those parks and reserves;
 - (d) to negotiate with persons desiring to obtain an estate or interest (including a licence) in any of those parks or reserves on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners of that park or reserve and any other Aboriginals interested in that park or reserve;
 - (e) to supervise, and provide administrative and other assistance to, the Park Land Trusts holding, or established to hold, park freehold title in parks and reserves in its area.

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(2) In carrying out its functions under subsection (1) in relation to a park or reserve in its area, a Land Council must have regard to the interests of, and must consult with, the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve and any other Aboriginals interested in the park or reserve and, in particular, must not take any action (including, but not limited to, the giving or withholding of consent in any matter in connection with the park freehold title held by a Park Land Trust) unless the Land Council is satisfied that –

- (a) the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve understand the nature and purpose of the proposed action and, as a group, consent to it; and
- (b) any Aboriginal community or group that may be affected by the proposed action has been consulted and has had adequate opportunity to express its view to the Land Council.

(3) In this section –

- “area”, in relation to a Land Council, has the same meaning as in ALRA;
- “park freehold title” has the same meaning as in the Framework Act;
- “Park Land Trust” has the same meaning as in the Framework Act.

Appendix 5.

Park Lease Agreement

THIS LEASE is made this day of 200

BETWEEN:

the **ABORIGINAL LAND TRUST** established pursuant to section 4(1) of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* ("the Land Rights Act") and named and described in Item 1 of the First Schedule ("the Land Trust")

AND:

the **NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA** care of the address described in Item 2 of the First Schedule ("the Territory")

AND:

the **NORTHERN/CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL** ("the Land Council")

(collectively "the Parties")

WHEREAS:

- A. The Land Trust is the registered proprietor of an estate in fee simple in ALL THAT piece or parcel of land as described in Item 3 of the First Schedule ("the Land").
- B. The Territory, the Northern Land Council, the Central Land Council and certain Aboriginal parties have agreed to jointly establish, manage and maintain a comprehensive and representative system of parks in the Northern Territory for the purposes of benefiting the relevant Aboriginals and the wider community and of protecting biodiversity.
- C. The Territory has amended the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* to provide for the management of the system of parks in accordance with principles of joint management which recognise, value and incorporate Aboriginal culture, knowledge and traditional decision making processes.
- D. The Territory has requested the Land Trust to grant to the Territory a Lease of that part of the Land as described in item 5 of the First Schedule ("the Park") to form part of that system of parks.
- E. The Land Trust has received written directions from the Land Council pursuant to subsection 19(3) of the *Land Rights Act*, those written directions having been given by the Land Council on its being satisfied that:
 - (a) the traditional Aboriginal owners of the Land understand the nature and purpose of this lease, and as a group, consent to it;
 - (b) the Aboriginal communities and groups which may be affected by this lease have been consulted and have had adequate opportunity to express their views to the Land Council; and
 - (c) terms and conditions of this lease are reasonable.
- F. The Land Trust has received the consent in writing of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
dated the day of 200 to the grant of this lease.

G. NOW THIS AGREEMENT WITNESSES:

That the Land Trust grants to the Territory a lease of that part of the Land described in item 5 of the First Schedule to this lease and shown and delineated on the plan at Annexure 1 to this lease ("the Park") commencing on the date specified in Item 9 of the First Schedule, for the term as specified in item 6 of the First Schedule ("the term") and for the rent specified in or determined in accordance with item 7 of the First Schedule which rent shall be paid by the Territory in accordance with the provisions of item 8 of the First Schedule, for the purpose of establishing, jointly managing and maintaining a park for the permitted uses specified in item 10 of the First Schedule and subject to and in accordance with the following encumbrances, reservations, provisions, obligations and conditions:

PART I – RESERVATIONS

Reservation of Right of Entry and Inspection

1. At all reasonable times the Land Trust, or any person authorised in writing by the land council may enter and inspect the Park and any improvements on the Park, subject to any reasonable constraints contained in the plan of management for reasons of safety, security, privacy or protection of the Park.

Reservation of Traditional Rights to Use and Occupy

2.
 - (a) An Aboriginal or group of Aboriginals is entitled to enter the Park and use or occupy the Park to the extent that that entry, occupation or use is in accordance with Aboriginal tradition governing the rights of that Aboriginal or group of Aboriginals with respect to that land, whether or not those rights are qualified as to place, time, circumstances, purpose, permission or any other factor;

- (b) without limiting the generality of clause 2(a) the Land Trust reserves in favour of the relevant Aboriginals the following rights:
 - (i) the right to use any area of the Park for hunting or food gathering;
 - (ii) the right to use any area of the Park for ceremonial and religious purposes; and
 - (iii) the right to reside within the Park at such locations as may be specified in the plan of management, together with rights of access and residence for their families, employees, staff, invitees and agents;
- (c) the Land Trust reserves the right to request the Territory to sublet any reasonable part of the Park to a relevant Aboriginal Association;
- (d) the Territory must not unreasonably refuse to grant a sublease to a relevant Aboriginal Association where it is in accordance with the Act, the *Land Rights Act* and the Plan of Management;
- (e) without in any way limiting the reservation in clause 2(a) and (b) of this lease, the traditional Aboriginal owners of the Park are permitted to use the Park in accordance with the Joint Management Agreement.
- (f) the exercise of the rights conferred by this clause are subject to the Plan of Management, which may expressly modify this reservation, but only to the extent necessary and reasonable for environmental or safety reasons, or to the extent necessary and reasonable for visitor use of the Park.

PART II – PROVISIONS

Definitions and Interpretation

3. (a) In this lease and in the recitals:
- “Aboriginal” means a person who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia;
 - “Aboriginal tradition” has the same meaning as in the *Land Rights Act*;
 - “Commission” means the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory established under the *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act*;
 - “Corporation” means the Conservation Land Corporation established under the *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act*;
 - “Joint Management Agreement” has the same meaning as in the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act*;
 - “Joint Management Partners” means the Territory and the traditional Aboriginal owners of the Park;
 - “Joint Management Schedule” means the second Schedule to this Lease;
 - “Land Council” means the Northern/Central Land Council, or if the boundaries of the Northern/Central Land Council are varied so as to exclude the park from its area, then the Land Council for the area of the Park established under the *Land Rights Act*;
 - “Land Rights Act” means the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* of the Commonwealth;
 - “person” includes a body corporate and any other entity recognised by law;
 - “Plan of Management” means the plan of management for the Park agreed by the Joint Management Partners in accordance with the Act as in force from time to time;
 - “Regional Joint Management Group” has the same meaning as in the Act;
 - “relevant Aboriginals” means Aboriginals entitled by Aboriginal tradition to the use or occupation of that area of land, whether or not the traditional entitlement is qualified as to place, time, circumstance, purpose or permission;
 - “relevant Aboriginal Association” means the xxxx ? Association and any other incorporated Aboriginal Association or group whose members are relevant Aboriginals;
 - “sacred site” has the same meaning as in the *Land Rights Act*;
 - “the Act” means the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*; and
 - “traditional Aboriginal owners” has the same meaning as in the *Land Rights Act*;
- (b) all provisions of this Lease shall so far as possible be construed so as not to be invalid, illegal or unenforceable in any respect, but if any provision on its true interpretation is illegal, invalid or unenforceable, that provision shall so far as possible be read down to such extent as may be necessary to ensure that it is not illegal, invalid or unenforceable and as may be reasonable in all the circumstances so as to give it a valid operation of a partial character. If any such provision or part of it cannot be so read down, such provision or part shall be deemed to be void and severable and the remaining provisions of this Lease shall not in any way be affected or impaired;
 - (c) (i) a right of the Commission in relation to the Park whether arising under this lease or a law may, subject to this lease, be exercised by the Territory;
 - (ii) the Territory must ensure that a duty of the Commission in relation to the Park whether arising under this lease or a law is carried out.

- (d) expressions that are used in this Lease and defined in the Act have the meaning given in that Act except where the expression is otherwise defined in this Lease;
- (e) a reference in this Lease to an Act or regulation includes any amendment to that Act or regulation for the time being in force and also to any Act or regulation passed in substitution therefore; and
- (f) the contents of the Joint Management Schedule have effect as terms of this Lease.

PART III – OBLIGATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Amendment of Act Constitutes Breach

4. (a) The Parties agree that:
- (i) the enactment of an act;
 - (ii) the making of any regulations or By-laws;
 - (iii) the coming into operation of a Plan of Management;
 - (iv) the making of or entry into an arrangement under section 91 of the Act; or
 - (v) the delegation of the Territory's powers and functions (whether under section 7 or 23 of the *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act* or otherwise),
- which is or are inconsistent with this lease and substantially detrimental to the interests of the Land Trust or relevant Aboriginals in relation to the Park shall be deemed to be a fundamental breach of this lease for which the Land Trust (subject to the provisions of this clause) may terminate the Lease. In addition, a transfer, assignment, subletting or parting with possession of the Park or any part of the Park by the Territory without the Land Trust's consent shall be deemed to be a fundamental breach of this lease for which the Land Trust (subject to the provisions of this clause) may terminate the lease;
- (b) at any time after the occurrence of an event referred to in clause 4(a) the Land Trust may serve a notice on the Territory specifying the alleged breach;
 - (c) within thirty (30) days after the service of a notice pursuant to clause 4(b), the parties will meet in Darwin/Alice Springs or such other place as they may agree to seek to agree whether there is a breach and if there is, to seek to agree on a remedy for the breach (remedy in this context may include an amendment to the terms of this lease);
 - (d) where a meeting referred to in clause 4(b) and any further meetings as are agreed to between the parties does not result in a cure or agreement that there is no breach, or where the Land Trust is ready, willing and able to meet but there is no meeting, the Land Trust may give notice of the breach to the Territory ("notice of intention to terminate");
 - (e) upon receipt of a notice of intention to terminate under Clause 4(d) the Territory will have eighteen months (18) to remedy the breach;
 - (f) if at the expiry of the notice period referred to in clause 4(e) the breach has not been remedied, the Land Trust may issue a termination notice which will take effect on the expiry of twenty-eight (28) days; and
 - (g) upon issue of a termination notice, the Land Trust, representatives of the Land Council and the Territory must meet within twenty eight (28) days to negotiate in good faith for the grant of a new lease.
 - (h) Clause 11 (resolution of disputes) does not apply in relation to disputes or matters covered by this clause.

Mutual Agreements and Declarations

5. The Parties mutually agree and declare that:
- (a) the Territory is authorised to and will declare the Park as a park under the Act;
 - (b) the Park shall be subject to administration, management and control in accordance with this lease, the Plan of Management that is, and by laws that are, from time to time in force in relation to the Park pursuant to the Act, and in accordance with the principles described in the Act and Schedule 2 as amended from time to time;
 - (c) the Territory, to the extent of its powers and functions shall use its best endeavours to ensure that the flora, fauna, cultural heritage and natural environment of the Park shall be preserved, managed and maintained according to the best comparable management practices established for national parks anywhere in the world;
 - (d) the Territory may, at any time during the term of the lease surrender any part of the Park which the Territory no longer requires for the purpose of this lease;
 - (e) the Parties may from time to time by agreement in writing add to, substitute for, cancel or vary any of the provisions of this lease;
 - (f) the Territory shall at least once every ten (10) years meet with the representatives of the Land Trust and the Land Council to review the provisions of this lease (other than the provisions concerning term and rent) and if the Land Trust and the Territory agree upon a variation to the lease, the Land Council will direct the Land Trust to execute any or all of the documents necessary or desirable to give full effect to the variation;

- (g) all improvements constructed on the Park for any of the purposes set out in Item 10 of the First Schedule shall not be Land Trust's fixtures, and the Territory shall be entitled to demolish or remove any such improvements at any time during the lease term, subject to the Joint Management Schedule;
- (h) if any native title exists in respect of the Park and the grant of this lease would validly affect it in some way, then the grant of this lease is, to the extent necessary to give effect to this lease, inconsistent with the native title, but it is intended that (without in any way affecting any of the Territory's rights during the term of the grant):
 - (i) the native title in the Park should nevertheless continue to exist and not be extinguished by the grant of this lease or the exercise of the rights granted hereunder;
 - (ii) the native title should never have effect upon or in relation to this lease or any act or right of the Territory;
 - (iii) the persons who are entitled in accordance with any traditional laws and customs, as applying from time to time, to possess the native title should continue to be native title holders;
 - (iv) if this lease or any act done under this lease ceases to have effect to any extent, the native title rights and interests should again have effect to that extent; and
 - (v) if the lease or its effects are wholly removed or otherwise wholly cease to operate, the native title rights and interests again have full effect,
- (i) the Parties will comply with their respective obligations as set out in Schedule 2 hereof; and
- (j) the grant of part of the Park as an Aboriginal community living area, under section 46(1A) of the Lands Acquisition Act, and in accordance with the Joint Management Agreement, is permitted.

Territory's Obligations

6. The Territory agrees:

- (a) to comply with and take all practicable steps to ensure compliance by all persons with the Act, regulations under the Act, this lease and the plan of management;
- (b) not to transfer, assign, sublet or part with the possession of the Park, or any part of the Park without the consent in writing of the Land Trust and then only in accordance with the Plan of Management;
- (c) to pay all rates and taxes which may at any time become due in respect of the Park;
- (d) to carry all of the risk as self-insurer in respect of any of the improvements in the Park which may be damaged or destroyed without the consent of the Land Trust, being improvements existing at the date of the commencement of this lease and such other improvements as may be made;
- (e) to carry all of the risk as self-insurer as occupier of the Park as regards any liability to any third person;
- (f) as far as is practicable, to repair any damage to the Park (other than improvements) being damage caused by the Territory or by its respective servants, agents or invitees except where the damage to the Park occurred with the consent of the Land Trust or of the Joint Management Partners;
- (g) to comply with all Acts, regulations and other laws otherwise applicable to the Park;
- (h) to have regard in the performance of its functions in relation to the Park, to such priorities in allocating financial and other resources as are provided in the Plan of Management or determined from time to time by the Joint Management Partners;
- (i) to promote and protect the interests of relevant Aboriginals as a group;
- (j) to respect and to promote the protection of sacred sites, cultural heritage and other areas and things of significance to relevant Aboriginals, and the enforcement of the provisions of the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*;
- (k) to encourage the maintenance of the Aboriginal tradition of relevant Aboriginals;
- (l) to take all practicable steps to promote Aboriginal involvement in the administration, management and control of the Park;
- (m) subject to the Plan of Management, to engage as many relevant Aboriginals as is practicable to provide services in and in relation to the Park, including but not limited to the utilisation of the traditional skills of Aboriginal individuals and groups in the management of the Park;
- (n) subject to the Plan of Management, to encourage Aboriginal business and commercial initiatives and enterprises within the Park;
- (o) subject to the Plan of Management, to permit an officer or officers of the Land Council to enter and move freely in the Park for the purpose of performing on behalf of the Land Council the statutory powers or functions of the Land Council;
- (p) to use its best endeavours to promote among visitors to, employees and commercial operators in the Park a knowledge and understanding of and respect for the traditions, languages, culture, customs and skills of relevant Aboriginals and to arrange for appropriate instruction in connection with such matters to be given, to the extent it is reasonably practicable, by Aboriginals engaged for the purpose; and
- (q) to consult and have regard to the views of the Joint Management Partners before exercising any powers over liquor distribution or consumption in the Park.

Land Trust's Obligations

7. (a) During the term of the lease the Land Trust:
- i. shall permit Territorians and visitors to the Territory to enter the Park without an entry permit;
 - ii. agrees that it will not charge the public a fee for entry to the Park; and
 - iii. agrees that the Plan of Management shall not make any provision for the Land Trust to charge such a fee or require such a permit.
- (b) If the Territory pays the rent and does not breach the lease, it may during the whole of the term, subject to the reservation in clause 2, quietly enjoy the Park without any interruption or disturbance from the Land Trust or any person claiming by, from, under or in trust for the Land Trust, subject to the provisions of the lease and the Land Trust's rights under it.

Territory's Indemnity

8. (a) The Territory shall indemnify the Land Trust, its servants, agents or invitees (to the extent that the Land Trust, and its servants, agents or invitees, is not or are not negligent) against all actions and claims whatsoever that may be brought, made or prosecuted against the Land Trust its servants, agents or invitees in respect of any action or claim arising out of any action or omission (whether negligent or otherwise) of the Territory, its servants, agents or invitees in or in relation to the Park; and
- (b) The indemnity will extend to the Land Council, its servants and agents to the extent of its statutory role in relation to the Land Trust.

Termination

9. (a) During its term the lease may be terminated in writing at any time with the agreement of the Land Trust, the Land Council and the Territory.
- (b) If the Territory continues to occupy the Park after the expiry of the term of this lease or any extension thereof with the consent of the Land Trust, the Territory shall be deemed to be a yearly tenant only on the same terms and conditions (other than any term of condition relating to extension or renewal of this lease) as are contained in this lease and either party may terminate such tenancy by one year's notice in writing to the other.

Parties to Negotiate Five (5) years Before Expiry

10. The Land Trust agrees to negotiate in good faith for the renewal or extension of the term of this lease not later than five (5) years before it expires, at the option of the Territory.

Resolution of Disputes

11. (a) Except where expressly provided otherwise, a party shall not start arbitration or court proceedings (except proceedings seeking interlocutory relief) in respect of a dispute concerning any clause of this lease (a 'Dispute') unless it has complied with this clause;
- (b) a party claiming that a Dispute has arisen shall notify the other party to the Dispute;
- (c) within ten (10) days after a notice is given under subclause (b) each party to the Dispute shall nominate in writing a representative authorised to settle the Dispute on its behalf;
- (d) the parties shall ensure that during the forty five (45) day period after a notice is given under subclause (b) (or longer period agreed between the parties), their representatives shall use their best endeavours, with the other representatives:
- (i) to resolve the Dispute; or
 - (ii) to agree on:
 - (A) process to resolve all or at least part of the Dispute without arbitration or court proceedings (for example, mediation, conciliation, executive appraisal or independent expert determination);
 - (B) the selection and payment of any third party to be engaged by the parties and the involvement of any dispute resolution organisation;
 - (C) any procedural rules;
 - (D) a timetable;
 - (E) any exchange or relevant information and documents; and
 - (F) the place, date and time where meetings will be held,
- (e) the role of any third party will be to assist in negotiating a resolution of the Dispute. A third party may not make a decision that is binding on a party unless that party's representative has so agreed in writing.
- (f) any information or documents disclosed by a representative under this clause:
- (i) must be kept confidential; and
 - (ii) may not be used except to attempt to settle the Dispute,
- (g) each party must bear its own costs of resolving a Dispute under this clause and the parties must bear equally the costs of any third party engaged;

- (h) after the forty-five (45) day period referred to in subclause (d) (or longer period agreed between the representatives), a party that has complied with subclauses (b) to (d) may terminate the dispute resolution process by giving notice to the other parties to the Dispute;
- (i) if a party to a Dispute does not comply with any provision of subclauses (a) to (d) the other party to the Dispute will not be bound by subclause (a) to (d).

Service of Notices, etc.

- 12 (a) Any notice, request, consent, approval or other communication (in this clause called a "communication") to be given under this lease shall be in writing addressed as follows:

If to the Land Trust:

Aboriginal Land Trust
 C/- Norther /Central Land Council
 33 Stuart Highway
 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870

Telephone: 08 89xxx xxx
 Facsimile: 08 89xxx xxx

If to the Territory:

Northern Territory of Australia
 C/- P.O. Box 496
 PALMERSTON NT 0831

Telephone: 08 89xxx xxx
 Facsimile: 08 89xxx xxx

If to the Land Council:

Northern/Central Land Council

Telephone: 08 89xxx xxx
 Facsimile: 08 89xxx xxx

- (b) each communication shall be delivered by hand, or mailed by pre-paid registered post, or sent by email or facsimile transmission, to the address of the party or body to which it is being given and shall be deemed to have been given:
 - (i) if received before 4.00 pm on a business day – when it is received; and
 - (ii) if received at any other time – on the business day next following the day of receipt;
- (c) where the Land Trust is to or may make any communication:
 - (i) the Land Council shall, for the purposes of considering the proposed communication, arrange such consultations with the traditional Aboriginal owners and other Aboriginals interested in the Park it considers appropriate in the circumstances; and
 - (i) such communication may only be made by the Land Council,
 and the Territory agrees that:
 - (iii) any communication which is to be or may be made by the Land Trust which is made by the Land Council shall be deemed to have been made by the Land Trust; and
 - (iv) it shall, in relation thereto, act as if the communication had been made by the Land Trust;
- (d) any act, matter or thing required or permitted to be done by the Land Trust under or otherwise in relation to this lease may be done by the Land Council on behalf of and in the name of the Land Trust and all rights and entitlements of the Land Trust under or concerning this lease (including the entitlement to receive payments from the Territory or to terminate this lease) shall be exercisable by the Land Council on behalf of and in the name of the Land Trust, including the service of notices and the commencement and defence of legal proceedings in relation to or concerning this lease; and, for the purposes of the foregoing and without limiting its generality, the Land Trust hereby irrevocably appoints the Land Council:
 - (i) to act on its behalf and in its name, and
 - (ii) as its agent for the purposes of applicable statutes.

13. **Calculation of Rental**

- (a) Notwithstanding any other provision in this lease, for the period from commencement of this lease until 30 June 2010, the rental shall be nil [with the exception of Parks listed in Schedule 5 of the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act* where the traditional owners of the Park are different from

those who are gaining the benefit of the ALRA grant for adjacent land – for those Parks the rental from the period from commencement of the lease until 30 June 2010 shall be the Australian Valuation Office valuation as annual current market rent for the lease, adjusted by CPI for each year];

- (b) prior to 1 July 2010, the parties shall engage (at the Territory's cost) the Australian Valuation Office to determine the annual current market rent for the lease to commence from 1 July 2010. The parties agree that the amount so determined shall not fall below the annual rental determined by the Australian Valuation Office in 2004 as specified in item 7 of Schedule 1;
- (c) for the balance of the term of the lease the rental shall be reviewed at the end of each ten (10) years after 1 July 2010. The rental shall be reviewed by the parties engaging (at the Territory's cost) the Australian Valuation Office to determine the annual current market rent for the lease for the following ten (10) year period. The parties agree that, as a result of a ten (10) yearly review by the Australian Valuation Office, the annual rental shall not fall below the annual rental determined by the Australian Valuation Office at the previous review;
- (d) in addition to the rental as determined above, the Territory shall pay to the Land Trust an amount equal to fifty per cent (50%) of all income received in respect of the Park, excluding any reasonable administrative charges.
- (e) For each year other than a year which the rental has been determined by the Australian Valuation Office, the annual rental for that year shall be the annual rental for the previous year, adjusted in accordance with the following formula:
$$AR = PR \times \frac{CPI(2)}{CPI(1)}$$
where:
AR is the annual rental for that year;
PR is the annual rental for the previous year;
CPI(2) is the Consumer Price Index (all groups) weighted average of the eight capital cities of Australia as published quarterly by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, being the last such index published before the date on which the calculation of annual rental is made; and
CPI(1) is the Consumer Price Index (all groups) weighted average of the eight capital cities of Australia as published quarterly by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as published for the quarter immediately preceding 1 July for the previous calendar year;
provided that, if AR is less than PR, then PR shall be the annual rental for the year;
- (g) If the name of the Australian Valuation Office is changed, then a reference in this agreement to the Australian Valuation Office means a reference to the office or person replacing the Australian Valuation Office;
- (h) If there is no person, officer, office or body having the powers or functions of the Australian Valuation Office, a reference in this agreement to the Australian Valuation Office shall mean such other person or office as agreed between the Parties that then exercises the powers and functions of the Australian Valuation Office as contemplated by this lease.

FIRST SCHEDULE

- ITEM 1** **Land Trust**
- ITEM 2** **Address of Territory**
- ITEM 3** **The Land**
- ITEM 4** **Encumbrances, liens and interests**
Nil, other than as described on the Certificate of Title
- ITEM 5** **The Park**
That part of the Land described as NT Portion _____ on Survey Plan _____
- ITEM 6** **Term**
Ninety nine (99) years
- ITEM 7** **Annual Rental**
[For immediate rent parks insert figure] and otherwise as calculated in accordance with clause 13 of this lease
- ITEM 8** **Manner of Payment of Rent**
yearly in advance
- ITEM 9** **Commencement Date**
The lease shall commence on **[insert date]**.
- ITEM 10** **Permitted Uses of Park**
Establishment, joint management, maintenance and use of the Park as a park:
- to serve visitor and community needs for education and enjoyment;
 - to protect biological diversity;
 - for the appropriate use and enjoyment by relevant Aboriginals according to Aboriginal tradition (including establishing and maintaining living areas, hunting and use of resources in accordance with the Plan of Management); and
 - ancillary and related uses.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF this Lease was executed by the parties on the date first hereinbefore written.

The **COMMON SEAL** of the _____)
ABORIGINAL LAND TRUST was hereunto)
affixed this _____ day of _____ 200)
by a duly authorised member of the staff of)
the Central Land Council pursuant to)
sub-section 4(4) of the *Aboriginal Land*)
Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 upon)
written authority of the xxxxxx Land)
Trust in the presence of:)

.....

IN WITNESS whereof the Common Seal of the)
NORTHERN/CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL was)
hereunto affixed this _____ day of _____ 200)
upon the **NORTHERN/CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL**)
being satisfied of the requirements contained in)
sub-section 19(4A) of the *Aboriginal Land Rights*)
(Northern Territory) Act 1976.)

The **NORTHERN/CENTRAL**)
LAND COUNCIL directs the _____)
Aboriginal Land Trust to enter into this Deed.)

GIVEN under the Common Seal of the NORTHERN)
LAND COUNCIL by authority of a resolution of the)
said Land Council in the presence of:)

SIGNED by)
for and on behalf of the **NORTHERN**)
TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA)
pursuant to a delegation under)
the *Contracts Act* in the presence of:)

.....

The **COMMON SEAL** of the
NORTHERN/CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL
was hereunto affixed in accordance with
a resolution of the Board of Directors
in the presence of:

)
)
)
)
)

.....
Chairman

.....
Executive Member

ABORIGINAL LAND TRUST

("the Land Trust")

AND:

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

("the Territory")

AND:

NORTHERN/CENTRAL LAND COUNCIL ("the Land
Council")

LEASE

Solicitor for the Northern Territory
45 Mitchell Street
DARWIN NT 0800

Telephone: (08) 8999 6543
Facsimile: (08) 8999 6316

Ref: COM2002-229 ASL:ASL

ALRA Lease

15 February 2005

SECOND SCHEDULE – JOINT MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE

(This is the Joint Management Schedule referred to in clause 3(a) and 5(i) of the ALRA Lease)

1. Definitions

In the Schedule, unless the contrary intention appears:

- (a) a term defined in the lease or ILUA (as appropriate) has the same meaning in this Schedule;
- (b) “animal” has the same meaning as in the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*;

2. Clause 2 - Functions of the Parks and Wildlife Service

- (a) The functions of the Parks and Wildlife Service will include day to day management, and facilitating the preparation of Plans of Management, in partnership with the traditional landowners; and
- (b) subject to the Plan of Management:
 - (i) issuing permits for the operation of concessions in parks, with the consent of relevant traditional owners
 - (ii) implementing the Parks Aboriginal Employment and Training Strategy;
 - (iii) employing park staff on advice from the Regional Joint Management Groups;
 - (iii) determining, in conjunction with the Regional Joint Management Groups, the allocation of funds within each park, apart from a set amount of money to be set aside to fund the operation of the Group.

3. Role of Land Councils

The role of the Land Councils with respect to joint management is to:

- (a) Identify traditional landowners for the purposes of developing Plans of Management ;
- (b) monitor & support joint management arrangements;
- (c) distribute income; and
- (d) assist traditional landowners to participate in the development of draft Plans of Management.
- (e) In carrying out these roles the Land Councils shall perform its functions in accordance with the provisions of section 23(1) (a) to (c) and section 77A of the Land Rights Act.

4. Training and Employment

The Lessee and the Lessor agree subject to decisions of the District Joint Management Committee:

- (a) to implement an Aboriginal training programme the broad objectives of which are agreed with the traditional owners or such agents or representatives as may be nominated by them, comprising training in skills relevant to the administration, planning, management and control of parks;
- (b) to employ persons in appropriate positions having regard to qualifications acquired in participation in the Aboriginal training programme;
- (c) to employ training officers wherever necessary, and to give due consideration in the employment of such officers to suitably qualified Aboriginal persons having regard to the objective of the parties to maximize Aboriginal employment;
- (d) to provide appropriate and reasonable resources (including staff, training facilities and accommodation) for Aboriginal trainees;
- (e) in the Aboriginal training programme and in the management of the park to emphasise social and cultural values and land management practices;
- (f) to take all practicable steps to make provision for traditional obligations in determining working hours and conditions;
- (g) to give preference to Aboriginal people, companies and organizations when issuing leases, licences, contracts, or making available casual or temporary employment subject to any law in force in the Northern Territory;
- (h) to develop an indigenous training and employment strategy that includes progressive targets for specific employment of traditional landowners across the conservation estate.

5. Staffing

- (a) the Lessee shall at all times use its best endeavours to maintain staff within the park at the level and designations of staff requirements provided for in the plan of management;
- (b) the Lessee agrees to consult with and have regard to the views of the District Joint Management Committee, or such agents or representatives of the traditional Aboriginal owners as may be nominated by the District Joint Management Committee, concerning the procedures for and the selection and appointment of any permanent staff where the duties and functions of such staff will involve substantial involvement with day to day administration, management or control of the park and in particular shall include a person nominated by the District Joint Management Committee on any selection panel appointed in relation to such appointments;

- (c) notwithstanding clause 10 employment of all persons having day to day responsibility in the administration and management of the park shall be subject to the approval of the District Joint Management Committee;
- (d) the Lessor agrees to ensure that from time to time (but no later than six (6) months after commencement of duties of any member of the park staff) each member of the park staff involved in administration, planning, management and control of the park attends a cross-cultural course the broad objectives of which are agreed with the Lessor.

6. **Disposal of Park Equipment**

- (a) subject to any lawful obligation imposed upon the Lessee by a Law of the Northern Territory, if at any time during the term hereof the Lessee decides to dispose of its interest in any property or equipment of the Lessee used in the operation of the park, the Lessee shall give to the Lessor for the benefit of the Lessor, the Land Council or its nominee, any relevant Aboriginal association and any other incorporated body the membership of which is limited to relevant Aboriginals or groups of relevant Aboriginals (in this clause referred to as the "permitted Aboriginal purchaser") the right of first refusal to purchase the property or equipment or any part of it subject to the following terms and conditions;
- (b) the Lessee shall give notice in writing to the Land Council of the Lessee's intention to dispose of any such property or equipment. The notice shall constitute an offer by the Lessee to sell any such property or equipment to a permitted Aboriginal purchaser for the purchase of the Lessee's interest therein, which consideration shall not impose any more onerous obligation or duty upon the permitted Aboriginal purchaser or require the permitted Aboriginal purchaser to pay any greater amount than the Lessee would impose upon or require from a purchaser other than a permitted Aboriginal purchaser;
- (c) within twenty eight (28) days after giving of the notice a permitted Aboriginal purchaser may give notice in writing to the Lessee of acceptance or rejection of the Lessee's offer to sell;
- (d) in the event of the giving of a notice of acceptance there shall be deemed to be a binding contract for sale by the Lessee and purchase by the permitted Aboriginal purchaser of the Lessee's interest in the said property or equipment for the consideration stated in the Lessee's notice;
- (e) the purchase price shall be paid within twenty eight (28) days from the date on which the notice of acceptance is given to the Lessee or within such other period or upon such terms as may be agreed between the parties to the contract for sale; and
- (f) in the event that a notice of acceptance is not given, the Lessee shall then be at liberty to sell the property or equipment by private contract to any other person for an amount not less than that specified in the notice in writing given pursuant to clause 15(a) or by public auction.