



Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park

Joint Management Plan

February 2016



Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory



Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park Joint Management Plan
Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory
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Executive Summary

The Park and its values

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park protects spectacular examples of Aboriginal rock art in central Australia, and is found right on the doorstep of Alice Springs. From Heavitree Gap, stretching 15 kilometres east, the Park presents a quintessential central Australian landscape, where visitors can walk along the large river beds and be surrounded by glowing red, ancient rock formations contrasting against iridescent blue skies.

The Park consists of three overlapping sacred sites representing the caterpillar creation story, one of the most significant Aboriginal creation stories for the Alice Springs area. The rock art found in both Emily and Jessie Gaps depicts this caterpillar creation story. The *ayepe arenye* caterpillar is one of three important caterpillar species and it is from here that the Park's name 'Yeperenye' is derived and from which stories are shared. Through the sharing of these stories, visitors have an opportunity to connect with Aboriginal people and their culture.

Purpose of the Park

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park will continue to be managed for its cultural, ecological and scenic values. Special importance will be placed on protecting the exceptional rock art found within Emily and Jessie Gaps. These sites are of immense importance to the Arrernte Traditional Owners and provide visitors with opportunities to learn about the cultural landscape of the region. The Park provides an opportunity for locals and visitors alike to enjoy the low-key natural and scenic setting so close to Alice Springs. The Joint Management Partners also recognise the potential social and economic benefits of commercial tourism.

The Park protects the habitat of two species of land snail found nowhere else, and a suite of plants valued by Arrernte Traditional Owners for their food and medicinal properties.

Setting the management direction

This is the first Joint Management Plan for Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park. The joint management partners are the Traditional Owners of the land and the Parks and Wildlife Commission, representing the Northern Territory Government. Through joint management, the partners will develop a strong partnership that serves the interests of the Traditional Owners, the Park and the wider community.

As set out in the management directions in this Plan, the joint management partners will work together to:

- provide a safe and enjoyable low-key experience for visitors that will enhance their appreciation of the Park's cultural significance;
- protect the rock art and manage the critical habitat for the land snail and the vegetation of cultural significance; and
- engage the broader community in the Park's management.

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Vision for the Park: Joint management partners working together with the community to ensure the Park's values are enjoyed by visitors, maintained for Traditional Owners and protected for future generations.

1. The Values of the Park and its Purpose

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park is an ideal destination for visitors and locals looking for recreational and cultural attractions within close proximity to Alice Springs and is an ideal short stop for visitors *en route* to other Parks within the East MacDonnell Range.

The Park forms a natural boundary for the southern suburbs of Alice Springs. Starting at Heavitree Gap, the Park extends over fifteen kilometres east along the Heavitree Range, incorporating the significant cultural sites of Ntaripe, Anthwerrke and Atherrke, commonly known as Heavitree, Emily and Jessie Gaps respectively. The Park provides the natural setting and tranquil scenery that visitors to the MacDonnell Ranges highly regard.

While a relatively small Park of approximately 1 200 hectares, Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park has significant **cultural heritage values**. The Park protects an integral part of the Central Arrernte peoples' caterpillar creation story, from which the name of the Park is derived. Yeperenye (also spelled ayepe-arenye) is one of three types of caterpillars associated with these creation stories. Yeperenye continues to be a vital part of the Central Arrernte traditional law and culture.

The walls of the gaps are decorated with impressive rock art, intimately associated with the caterpillar storylines. These **rock art paintings** are among the most spectacular examples of accessible Aboriginal rock art in central Australia and are of major anthropological value. The rock art is spiritually significant for the Arrernte people and the stories associated with it are sacred. The rock art provides visitors with an excellent opportunity to connect with Aboriginal culture in close proximity to Alice Springs.

While its contribution to biodiversity conservation is relatively minor, the Park's natural and scenic setting is of considerable value to visitors. It contains a suite of plants, including several large figs, valued by Arrernte Traditional Owners for food and other cultural uses and provides critical habitat for two land snail species found only in the Park.

1.2 The Plan

This is the first Joint Management Plan for Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park. It was prepared in accordance with the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (TPWC Act)*, the Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park Lease and two Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) registered with the National Native Title Tribunal pursuant to the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*.

This plan sets objectives and directions for the management and development of the Park over the life of this plan. It provides the primary framework against which management performance will be measured and will remain in effect until amended or replaced by a new plan.

1.3 Reservation status

The Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park has a complex history of reservation dating back to its original declaration as a reserve (Emily and Jessie Gaps Scenic Reserve) in 1965 under the National Parks and Gardens Ordinance 1959 (NT).

In 1978, the Reserve was declared as a Park under section 12 of the TPWC Act and in 1979 the Park's name was changed to Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park. In 2002, the area known as the Heavitree Range extension (formerly Lot 9238, Town of Alice Springs) was also declared to be a Park under the TPWC Act.

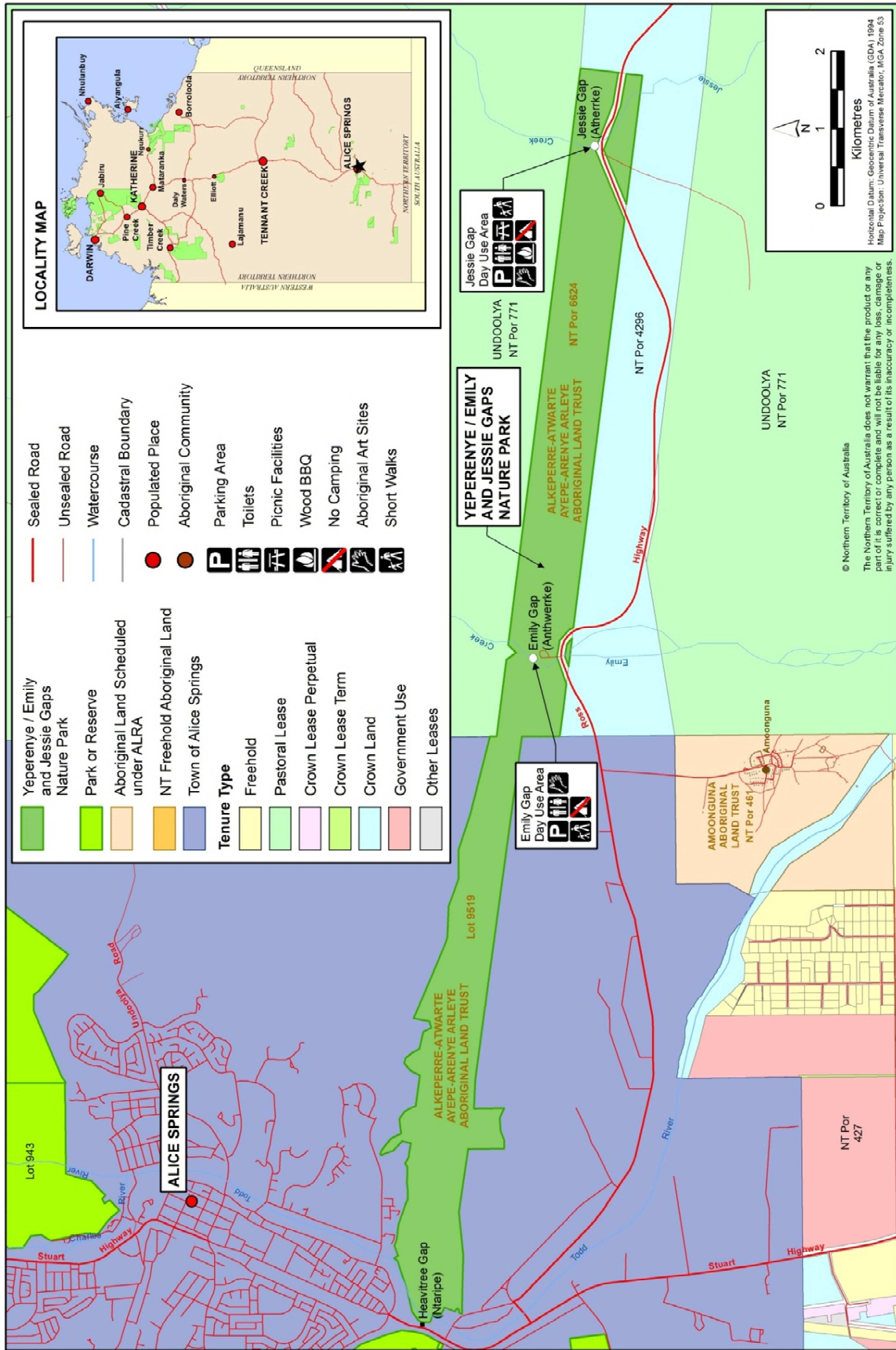
In 2004, the Park (including the Heavitree Range extension) was included in Schedule 1 of the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act (NT)* for the purposes of facilitating the transfer of the land title to an Aboriginal Land Trust on behalf of the Traditional Owners. The Park was then resurveyed into four portions; NT Portion 6624, Lot 9519, Lot 9520 and 9521 Town of Alice Springs.

NT Portion 6624 and Lot 9519 were scheduled under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (ALRA)* for the grant of title to the Alkeperre-atwarte Ayepe-arenye Arleye Aboriginal Land Trust. To facilitate the title transfer, on 18 November 2009, all areas previously declared as part of the Park were revoked and redeclared under s24(2) of the TPWC Act to cover NT Portion 6624 and Lots 9519, 9520 and 9521 (Town of Alice Springs).

On 25 November 2009, those parts of the Park comprising NT Portion 6624 and Lot 9519 were granted to Alkeperre-atwarte Ayepe-arenye Arleye Aboriginal Land Trust and were then leased to the Northern Territory for 99 years, to be managed jointly as a Nature Park. Lots 9520 and 9521 form part of the Park (subject to this joint management plan) but were not included as part of the ALRA grant. The Lots remain Vacant Crown Land and electricity supply easements in favour of the Power and Water Corporation exist over these areas.

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park was named under section 12(2) of the TPWC Act on the 3 October 2014. Yeperenye, pronounced YEP-AREN-YA, is the traditional name for the area and acknowledges the traditional owners ongoing cultural connection with the place. Upon widespread and common use of the name, the reserve will become known as Yeperenye Nature Park.

Map 1 Location of Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park





Joint management is about working together to achieve shared goals and aspirations, including richer visitor experiences, protecting natural and cultural values and creating opportunities for Traditional Owners.

2. Joint Management

Joint management provides opportunities to make better management decisions through a shared responsibility. Joint management partners agree to recognise and value Aboriginal culture, knowledge and decision making, and to utilise the combined land management skills and expertise of both joint management partners. This in turn provides opportunities for visitor experiences, land management and for Traditional Owners. The success of joint management relies on a meaningful partnership between Parks and Wildlife Commission staff and the Traditional Owners. The success will be measured against the achievements of the objectives in this Plan and the satisfaction of the community and the joint management partners.

2.1 Joint management partners

The joint management partners for Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park are the Northern Territory of Australia (Territory) and the Traditional Aboriginal Owners (Traditional Owners) of the Park. The Territory is represented by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory, which carries out the Territory's joint management obligations. For the purposes of this Joint Management Plan, references to the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory as a joint management partner should be read as including a reference to the Territory.

The Central Land Council (CLC) has an important role in assisting with joint management of the Park. Under the TPWC Act the CLC's role includes representing and protecting the interests of the Traditional Owners in relation to the Park's management.

2.1.1 Traditional Owners

The Traditional Owners of the Park identify themselves as Central Arrernte people and belonging to the land through a system of laws and customs that has governed their ideas and practices from time immemorial.

Arrernte peoples' interests in land derive from the Altyerre (the creation time) and are articulated through the stories and song lines of the ancestors as they interacted with the land. These ancestors' travels, actions and encounters have been handed down through the generations. The details in these stories guide how Aboriginal people live their lives and how they relate to each other and their land.

For the Alice Springs area, some of the most significant creative ancestors were caterpillars who travelled from many directions and converged on Anthwerrke (Emily Gap) which is the *apmere akwetethe* (everlasting home) of the caterpillar ancestors.

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park is primarily regarded as belonging to the Antulye estate group, but responsibilities are shared with the Mpartnwe estate group for the caterpillar creation stories north of the Range, as they interact with the caterpillar creation stories south of the Range.

Not all Arrernte people are Traditional Owners of the Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park. In Arrernte, '*apmere*' is the term used to refer to where a person is originally from, as well as to refer to a person's camp or home; the suffix – *arenye* following a place name also denotes belonging to that place, for example *Mparntwarenye*, meaning 'belonging to *Mparntwe*'. Membership to a particular landholding group (often referred to as 'estates') is primarily through descent. Individuals may be identified as *apmereke-artweye* ("bosses" in relation to a particular place – *ampere*, this status is usually inherited through that person's father and father's father. The term *kwertengerle* ("managers") similarly denotes inherited connection to country, but through matrification (a person's mother's father, mother's mother or father's mother) and with different responsibilities. Responsibility for country is shared in the partnership between *apmereke-artweye* and *kwertengerle*. However, there are other ways by which individuals can be incorporated within landholding groups that are not descent based, namely: birthplace/conception site connections; particular creation story connections; long term residence and others. The degree to which such "secondary" rights and interests are realised depends on negotiation with members of the landholding group (*apmereke-artweye* and *kwertengerle*). Recognition by other members of the group is a key factor determining inclusion with the group. This is reflected in Olney J's Determination of Native Title in "*Hayes v Northern Territory (1999) FCA 1248*":

1. Native title exists in relation to the land and waters more particularly described in the Schedule hereto (the determination area, including the Heavitree Range Extension).
2. The persons who hold the common or group rights comprising the native title (the common law holders) are those Aboriginals who are descended from the original Arrernte inhabitants of the *Mpartnwe*, *Antulye* and *Irlpme* estates who are recognised by the respective *apmereke-artweye* and *kwertengerle* of those estates under the traditional laws acknowledged and the traditional customs observed by them as having communal, group or individual rights and interests in relation to such estates.

Here Artepe Aboriginal Corporation is the Prescribed Body Corporate (established in 2002) currently acting as trustee for the native title holders of Alice Springs; it is this organisation that is party to the Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the Northern Territory and the CLC for the joint management of the Heavitree Range Extension (Lot 9519).

These descriptions are technical legal distinctions that derive from the two different types of land tenure recognised within one joint management plan. Having made that distinction, the term 'Traditional Owners' will be used herein to include both traditional Aboriginal owners and native title holders.

Traditional Owners welcome the opportunity to work together with the Parks and Wildlife Commission as partners jointly managing Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park into the future.

2.1.2 The Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory

The Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory is dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural values of parks and reserves, while providing high-quality nature-based tourism and recreation opportunities for visitors. The Parks and Wildlife Commission is committed to engaging the public and working with the interests of the community. Parks and Wildlife Commission is committed to seeing that the joint management partnership grows, becomes truly equitable and has benefits for the wider community.

2.2 Planning and decision making

Making sure that joint management partners have a clear structure and process for making decisions is essential for good joint management. The joint management partners have organised themselves and put rules in place to realise their shared vision.

The joint management partners acknowledge that their partnership is new and that it will take time to build a strong working relationship. They recognise the need for institutional support and capacity building to develop effective governance. Subsequently the partners agree that having a flexible approach to decision making is important, and consider the following principles for working together to be vital:

- Both partners are responsible for making joint management work and need to be committed to that objective.
- A mutual understanding of, and respect for, country, law, culture and Indigenous decision-making principles are fundamental to good joint management.
- Good decisions can only be made when both partners have a clear process and guidelines, good information and enough time to consider decisions properly.
- Listening to each other and communicating honestly are essential.

Clear **roles and responsibilities** are essential for joint management and each of the partners have responsibilities for looking after the Park in accordance with traditional Aboriginal laws and laws applicable in the Northern Territory.

The **joint management partners** are together accountable for the management of the Park, and to monitor and review this management against the objectives and management directions in this plan. It is the responsibility of the joint management partners to consider other proposals not specified in this plan.

Parks and Wildlife Commission is responsible for the implementation of the day-to-day management of the Park as outlined in this plan and is required to finance and resource the Park's ongoing management. Parks and Wildlife Commission will report progress annually to the joint management partners, and will liaise with stakeholders and neighbours. Parks and Wildlife Commission is responsible for monitoring management effectiveness and for adjusting management according to new information improved procedures, new technology and new threats or issues.

Traditional Owners are responsible to the land, law and culture. They retain special responsibilities for decision making and oversee cultural protocols for sacred sites. They are responsible for country and managing and transferring traditional knowledge. Some individuals have specific responsibilities and must be involved in matters which affect sacred sites.

The **Central Land Council** has a statutory responsibility for consulting with and protecting the interests of Traditional Owners of the Park and to assist with monitoring joint management processes.

2.3 Indigenous training, employment and enterprise development

One of the aims of joint management is to identify and promote opportunities for employment and business for Aboriginal people. Traditional Owners emphasise how important training and employment is for their families and acknowledge their responsibility to support young people. In doing so, they have identified numerous opportunities for greater involvement in park management. These include but are not limited to the flexible employment program, contracting work, guided tours, and tourism business ventures.

Flexible project based employment, has been and will continue to be provided to Aboriginal people. It provides many benefits including work experience, skills exchange and accredited training, and helps build positive working relationships between Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife Commission. The Alice Springs Telegraph Station hosts ranger, trainee and apprenticeship positions and Traditional Owners are encouraged to apply for any such positions.

Just as Traditional Owners emphasise the importance of training and employment for their families, they recognise the limited opportunities that this Park presents for employment. For that reason, joint management partners will, where possible, explore opportunities for employment for Traditional Owners across the wider district.

Objectives of Joint Management

- An equitable partnership with effective governance that makes well-informed management decisions; and
- An involved community that supports joint management.

Management Directions

2.1 Joint management committee: A committee comprising Parks and Wildlife Commission, Traditional Owner and Native Title representatives is accountable for the management of the Park. The committee will monitor and review the objectives and management directions in this Plan to assist the partners meet their obligations set out in the Park Lease, the ILUA and the TPWC Act. The committee may delegate responsibilities and activities to working groups. This structure will remain flexible and will be reviewed at annual planning meetings.

2.2 Annual planning meetings: The committee will meet at least once a year on country. The meetings will be open to all Traditional Owners to attend. Before the meeting commences, Traditional Owners will decide if the right people are present to make decisions and who, from a pool of proxies, will stand in for absent members. Decisions will be made by consensus. The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- Share information between Parks and Wildlife Commission and the Traditional Owners;
- Review park operations and any working group activity;
- Plan works for the following year and identify employment opportunities;
- Develop, review and provide advice regarding policies and procedures;
- Review permit applications;
- Review progress against management directions in this plan; and

- Review community concerns (if any) and the satisfaction of the partners with joint management processes.

2.3 Special meetings: Additional meetings of the joint management committee may be arranged from time to time. Management issues that require urgent attention may be referred by Parks and Wildlife Commission to CLC for consultation with the committee or the wider Traditional Owner group.

2.4 Working groups: Working groups may be formed to undertake planning or projects as delegated by the committee. The composition of groups will depend on the matters being addressed and may include Traditional Owners, NT Government staff, and external experts or stakeholders as appropriate.

2.5 Information exchange: Parks and Wildlife Commission will maintain regular formal and informal contact and engagement with Traditional Owners throughout the year. Parks and Wildlife Commission will provide relevant information to the joint management committee in good time to enable informed decisions to be made. The committee members will fairly represent and regularly communicate with the broader Traditional Owner groups on park management matters. Here Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, the community and stakeholders will be kept informed about significant issues and proposed developments.

2.6 Resourcing and routine operations: Parks and Wildlife Commission will finance and resource the Park's ongoing management including administrative functions, staff, infrastructure and services taking into account the funding available to the Commission and the priorities determined across the NT. Parks and Wildlife Commission will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Park as outlined in this plan and may be required to make decisions related to these operations without consultation with the joint management partners. These may include, for example, servicing facilities, visitor monitoring and emergency response.

2.7 Supporting and building an effective partnership: Priorities for training and capacity building will be identified by the joint management partners, giving consideration to governance and cross-cultural competencies.

2.8 Indigenous training, employment and enterprise development: Training and employment opportunities, including direct and flexible employment, contracts and enterprise will be actively pursued by the partners. Parks and Wildlife Commission will continue to provide opportunities for work experience, training, casual work and direct employment of Aboriginal people on the Park or at the district level where practicable.

Aboriginal training and employment will remain a standing item at Annual Planning Meetings.

- The partners may seek assistance from the private sector and agencies such as the CLC, Tourism NT and Tourism Central Australia to explore opportunities for enterprise development and cultural interpretation programs (such as commercial on-site guided tours).
- Preferences will be given to Traditional Owners of the Park participating in any commercial activities conducted under the lease subject to any law in force in the Territory. Contractors providing training and employment to local Aboriginal people will be preferred.



Sacred Sites are associated with caterpillar stories from the creation period (the *Altyerre*).

3. Providing for People on the Park

3.1 Visitors

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park is an ideal destination for visitors looking for recreational and cultural attractions within close proximity to Alice Springs. Although small in size, the Park receives an estimated 30,000 – 50,000 visitors each year. The Park provides a low-key bush experience and an opportunity to view some of the most visually impressive rock art in central Australia, making it an ideal short stop for visitors en route to other parks within the East MacDonnell Range.

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park is also frequented by local residents of Alice Springs. The local community enjoys the Park for short visits which may include picnicking, photography, bird watching, walking and cycling. Camping is not permitted.

3.1.1 Recreation activities

The joint management partners would like visitors and the local community to enjoy the Park, its natural surrounds and the recreational opportunities that it provides. The joint management partners also want to make visitors aware that the entire park is a sacred site and has significant cultural values to the Traditional Owners. The Traditional Owners ask visitors to respect Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park and to follow any guidelines provided by the joint management partners. The partners want visitors to enjoy the Park in a safe manner and understand the risks that any recreation activity may present.

Local day use

Day use activities, such as viewing the impressive rock art, cultural interpretation, nature appreciation and picnics are encouraged on the Park at both Emily and Jessie Gaps (Map 1). Picnic tables and chairs, interpretive signs, toilets and walking tracks are provided at both Emily and Jessie Gaps. Fire pits are provided at Jessie Gap.

Bushwalking

Access to the two key sites of visitor interest is via short walking tracks from the car parks into the Gaps to view the rock art. There are opportunities to significantly improve walking and bushwalking

options for visitors to the East MacDonnell Ranges by creating additional walking tracks.

Careful consultation and planning will be required to ensure any walking tracks do not impact on sacred sites. The following opportunities will be considered by joint management partners during the life of this plan:

- Public tracks on the north and south boundaries of the Park adjacent to residential housing. This will provide opportunities to enjoy the Park using authorised access routes and limiting the impact they may otherwise have on sacred sites with the current informal use. Such tracks may facilitate shared use, including bicycle / mountain bikes.
- Walking tracks linking the Gaps. In line with the Larapinta Trail in the West MacDonnell Ranges, a walking track of this kind would create an opportunity to link the East and West MacDonnell Ranges. Such a walk may require additional infrastructure including tracks, directional and interpretive signage.

Swimming

Swimming is allowed at both Emily and Jessie Gaps, but not encouraged or promoted. Water is rarely present for very long and is either too fast flowing for swimming or in small, shallow pools unsuitable for swimming.

Rock climbing and abseiling

Rock climbing and abseiling has been occurring informally on the Park for decades. The joint management planning process has provided Traditional Owners, Parks and Wildlife Commission and user groups an opportunity to carefully consider the safety, cultural and environmental concerns about rock climbing in the Park. The partners are united in their wish for visitors to enjoy the Park, while maintaining safety and limiting any damage to the Park's natural and cultural values.

Rock climbing and abseiling are allowed to occur on Park, within designated areas. The joint management partners would like visitors to consider that the Park is a sacred site and holds cultural significance. For these reasons, rock climbing will be prohibited inside the Heavitree, Emily and Jessie Gaps, and on the entire north face of the range.

Rock climbing and abseiling are risky activities. The quartzite and sandstone rock is fragile and susceptible to erosion and breaking off. Climbers will be advised to take care whilst climbing and accessing the routes so as to avoid damaging the fragile and sacred environment.

The joint management partners will make visitors aware of rock climbing restrictions, risks and management precautions through appropriate signs and communications to users. The joint management partners will consider making formal agreements with known user groups.

The joint management partners give no warranties regarding the safety of the area and any climbers or abseilers undertaking these activities will do so entirely at their sole risk (in all respects). The joint management partners will not be responsible for the maintenance of any identified climbing walls, nor for any descriptions of climbing routes identified in any books, magazines or on the internet.

Managing anti-social behaviour

Alcohol-based anti-social behaviour has been a problem on the Park from time to time, especially at Emily Gap. Commonwealth legislation prohibits alcohol within the Park. Should this prohibition be lifted at any time the Territory Government will, in accordance with the lease, have regard to the views of the joint management partners before exercising any powers over alcohol consumption on the Park.

3.1.2 Information and interpretation

Interpretation enhances visitor enjoyment and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the Park. Traditional Owners have been involved with the interpretation of the Park for many years before formal joint management and want to continue to interpret the cultural and spiritual significance of the Park to Parks and Wildlife Commission staff, tour operators and visitors through appropriate media. Together the partners will promote an understanding and respect for the traditions, languages, cultures, customs and skills of Traditional Owners.

Traditional Owners maintain strong cultural associations with the rock art. They request that photographs are not taken of the rock art in respect for their cultural beliefs. Further, Traditional Owners request that signs inform visitors that Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men should not view the rock art.

3.2 Aboriginal use

Traditional Owners regularly visit Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park to look after their country, to teach their children cultural and ecological knowledge related to the site, to gather bush tucker or for quiet time. Restricted ceremonies are sometimes held on important sites within the Park. The Central Arrernte people continue to maintain a strong connection to their country through intimate knowledge of their land and upholding cultural laws associated with it.

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park has three overlapping registered sacred sites centred around the Gaps themselves. Each of the sites is related to caterpillar creation stories, the Altyerre. For the Alice Springs area, the most significant creative ancestors were caterpillars who travelled from many directions and converged on Anthwerrke (Emily Gap). There are three types of caterpillars associated with the creation stories north and south of the Range. Ayepe-arenye (a green and brightly striped caterpillar that feeds on Tar Vine); Utnerrengatye (a brightly coloured caterpillar that feeds on Emu bush); and Ntyarlke (a large green elephant grub that also feeds on Tar Vine). Irlperenye (Green Beetle, sometimes called 'stink beetle') interacts with these caterpillars at Ntaripe (Heavitree Gap) and a number of sacred sites south of the Range. Arleye (Emu) is the principal creation story associated with Jessie Gap and in particular, the large white sand dune just outside the eastern boundary of the Park.

The Traditional Owners have substantial knowledge of the Park's natural and cultural values and their inclusion and perspectives have and will continue to bring changes in the way the Park is managed. The need to transfer knowledge and practices from old to young people is important to Traditional Owners.

Traditional Owners are keen to share their knowledge with park staff, tour operators and visitors. Together the partners can promote an understanding and respect for the traditions, languages, cultures, customs and skills of Traditional Owners. To reflect and promote their continuing living connection with the country, the Traditional Owners seek to re-name the Park, Yeperenye, to recognise one of the significant caterpillar creation stories associated with the range.

3.3 Neighbours

Neighbours to the Park include suburban residential housing, rural lots, commercial tourist accommodation and public open spaces. The rural neighbours include expansive cattle stations. Matters of mutual concern include fencing, boundary access, control of stock and feral animals, weed control, fire management and to some extent, visitor access and safety. Working with neighbours, local community and key stakeholders for mutual benefit both manages risk and expands the positive influence of the Park beyond its immediate boundary.

Residential development areas include Mt Johns Valley and Undoolya. With development already underway, Mt Johns Valley will contain low and medium density housing. Undoolya is unlikely to be developed in the life of this Plan. With no buffer between the northern park boundary and the existing and future housing developments, this increasing urban development is a concern for joint management partners. Of particular concern is the unauthorised use and development from existing residential housing directly onto Park land, including the extension of residential rear fences and other infrastructure. Such encroachment is restricting effective fire management activities, and increasing the potential impact on cultural sites within the Park.

Opportunities for shared use tracks on both the north and south of the range at the western end may assist in formalising any access to the Park by neighbouring residents (more detail described in 3.1.1). Joint management partners will give consideration to this and consult with residential neighbours in relation to Park access and boundary management.

Objectives for Providing for People on the Park

- Visitors are provided with opportunities to enjoy the Park in a safe and natural environment;
- Traditional owners are able to fulfil their cultural responsibilities; and
- Benefits to neighbours and the wider community are maximised.

Management Directions

3.1 Recreation activities:

- Joint management partners will consider additional walking and shared use tracks in the Park.
- Rock climbing and abseiling may occur on the south face of the range. Rock climbing will be strictly prohibited in Heavitree, Emily or Jessie Gaps and on the north face of the range. It is illegal to install any permanent anchors into the rock faces. Climbers will climb or abseil in the Park at their own risk. Formal agreements or indemnities may be sought from known user groups. Signs will be erected advising visitors that rock climbing is prohibited within the Gaps. Signs will be erected in the day use areas warning of the risks of rock climbing and abseiling. The signs will provide appropriate messages regarding risk and safety. The Parks and Wildlife Commission policy for rock climbing will guide local management actions.
- The joint management partners will apply available measures (which may include after-hours patrols or regular staff presence in peak periods) to enforce alcohol prohibition.

3.2 Information and interpretation:

- Joint management partners will liaise with Tourism NT, Tourism Central Australia and other agencies to ensure promotion is consistent with the values of a sacred site. Joint management partners will ensure interpretive material provided is accurate and culturally appropriate.
- Signs should be installed advising visitors that Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men should not view the rock art.
- Visitor information will encourage the protection of the rock art and an understanding of the Park's cultural importance.

3.3 Aboriginal use:

- Traditional Owners may gather bush tucker or otherwise use the natural resources of the Park in a manner consistent with the effective management of the Park.
- CLC may support the Traditional Owners in recording oral histories and Indigenous knowledge to strengthen their responsibilities and traditions.
- Cultural knowledge will only be used with the prior consent of the Traditional Owners. Wherever possible, the partners will assist the Traditional Owners assert their intellectual property rights, consistent with the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) Policy.

3.4 Working with neighbours:

- Where necessary, the partners will work with neighbours and the Alice Springs Town Council to address concerns and mutual interests including but not exclusive to fire management, fencing, boundary access, unauthorised use or development, control of stock and feral animals, weed control, visitor access and safety.



.....present and future generations can continue to enjoy the **unique rock art and scenic values** while learning about its history and cultural values.

4. Managing the Park

Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park is primarily managed to protect the unique rock art found within Emily and Jessie Gaps, and to provide visitors with opportunities to learn about and appreciate the cultural heritage values related to this sacred site. This section relates to the management of the Park's cultural and natural resources.

Management programs will ensure:

- Visitor use areas are maintained to provide a low-key bush experience;
- The rock art is protected for the benefit of future generations; and
- The critical habitat of endemic land snails and the vegetation of cultural significance are appropriately managed.

4.1 Protecting park values and infrastructure

Rock art

The regionally significant rock art found at Emily and Jessie Gaps is a major drawcard for visitors to Central Australia. The protection of these art sites will ensure cultural prosperity and visitation by locals and tourists alike.

An extensive rock art report covering Emily, Jessie and Heavitree Gaps and a site condition survey of the rock art at Emily Gap (Gunn, R.G. 1999; Ross, J 1999) guide the protection and monitoring of these sites. Fire, human interference and natural weathering are the main threats to rock art.

While art sites provide excellent enlightenments of Aboriginal spiritual connections to the country, such exposure can put sites at risk of damage from touching, deliberately damaging or souveniring the art. The main rock art panels at both Emily and Jessie Gaps are protected by small fences which allow visitors good views of the art without accessing, touching or otherwise damaging the rock art.

Elsewhere there are no physical barriers. Given the location of the rock art inside the gaps, keeping the art sites free of flammable vegetation prevents possible damage from fire.

Natural Values

While Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park is not a high priority for biodiversity conservation due to its size, shape and location, it does contain vegetation of significance for cultural and ecological values.

Vegetation communities within and adjacent to the Park continue to provide bushfood and other cultural values to Traditional Owners. Some of these significant species include the native fig (*utyerrke*), supplejacks (*atnyere*), spearbush (*uyenpere*), bloodwoods (*arrkernke*) and river red gums (*apere*). The large fig trees (*utyerrke*) found in and near both Emily and Jessie Gaps also provide critical habitat for two endemic land snails, recognised as vulnerable in the Northern Territory (*TPWC Act*). As their names suggest *Semotrachia jessieana* is unique to Jessie Gap and *Semotrachia emilia* is unique to Emily Gap.

Recent work by Veronica Perrurle Dobson, an eastern Arrernte woman from Alice Springs, highlights how changing land use has affected the persistence of particular bushfoods or medicinal plants in and adjacent to the Park and, importantly, provides recommendations for management. Buffel and couch grass, fire and cattle are the main threats to these vegetation communities.

Priority for management will be the removal of couch and buffel grasses from the base of significant trees and plants to protect them from fire, to reduce fuel loads around other identified vegetation communities and sites; and to exclude cattle. The management of these culturally important vegetation communities provides opportunities for Indigenous Ecological Knowledge to be recorded, stored, shared, and importantly to inform management practices.

Access and facilities

Access to Emily and Jessie Gaps car parks are via short well maintained gravel roads immediately off the Ross Highway. Vehicle access is only on these roads and within the car park areas. Barriers ensure vehicles remain only inside designated areas. Access to areas outside the visitor area car parks by motorbikes and other vehicles, both on the north and south of the Park, are of concern to the joint management partners.

Walking tracks lead to the rock art sites and are signposted. Facilities at both visitor areas include picnic tables, toilet pits, short walking tracks and interpretive signs. Camping is not permitted. In keeping with a 'leave no trace' philosophy, bins are not provided at either visitor area.

Visitor use areas and facilities, including the toilets and picnic areas can be protected from wildfire by the removal of flammable vegetation. Weeds will be managed in visitor use areas. Vandalism of facilities and natural and cultural values is a problem from time to time. Such vandalism has included graffiti or other damage on trees, signs or picnic tables. Interpretive signs will discourage such activity, particularly on the significant rock art sites.

Objectives for Managing the Park

- Access and facilities are maintained to provide an enjoyable experience for visitors; and
- The rock art and vegetation of cultural and ecological significance are protected.

Management Directions

4.1 Park management program: The operational management priority will be the protection of assets and visitor facilities, the rock art and identified vegetation communities, including critical land snail habitat, by: incorporating Indigenous ecological knowledge and priorities into Park management through the active involvement of Traditional Owners in planning and implementation activities as appropriate.

- **Managing weeds** – Buffel and couch grass will be actively managed to reduce the fuel load around visitor use areas and facilities, identified vegetation communities and trees. Weeds and plants will be removed or minimised around the rock art and facilities to reduce any damage caused by wildfire. Mexican poppy will be actively removed at Jessie and Emily Gap, for visitor amenity purposes. Weeds will continue to be monitored during patrols.
- **Managing fire** – Fuel loads will be kept at a level that minimises the risk of fire damage to the rock art, identified vegetation communities and trees, and to visitor use areas. Strategic fire breaks will be maintained. Parks and Wildlife Commission will burn in response to flushes in annual fuel as required. At annual meetings, Traditional Owners will determine their involvement in any burning activities anticipated. Parks and Wildlife Commission will liaise with appropriate fire authorities and adjoining landowners for fire planning.
- **Managing feral animals** – Two existing strategic fences on the northern side of the gaps and the boundary fence on the southern boundary line will be maintained. Cattle will be removed as soon as possible following their detection on the Park. The impact posed by other introduced species will be monitored and managed accordingly.

4.2 Protecting the rock art: Management and monitoring of the rock art sites, as outlined in this plan, will be guided by the Burra Charter principles and processes, and based on the guidelines provided by Ross (1999) and advice provided by NT Heritage.

- Existing barriers and interpretive information around the rock art will be maintained.
- The rock art will be kept clear of flammable vegetation.
- The rock art will be monitored as per a rock art photographic monitoring program.
- Interpretive signs will be reviewed for appropriate information regarding the protection of rock art and sacred sites.
- Training, funding and partnerships may be sought for archaeological rock art protection, management assessment and any other research as agreed by the partners.

4.3 Cultural Heritage Management Plan: A cultural heritage management plan will be developed with Traditional Owners and consideration of advice provided by specialist groups such as Heritage Branch. The partners and Central Land Council will identify supporting resources as required. A cultural heritage management plan may give consideration to:

- The protection of the rock art.

- Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) – Cultural knowledge will only be used with the prior consent of the Traditional Owners. Wherever possible, the partners will assist the Traditional Owners assert their intellectual property rights, consistent with standard policies developed and agreed by the CLC and Parks and Wildlife Commission.
- Protecting vegetation of cultural significance: Traditional Owners may identify additional management requirements for vegetation of cultural significance, outside those identified within the Park management program. This may include labelling trees and shrubs of significance for the purposes of traditional ecological knowledge transfer.
- Recording of oral histories and Indigenous Knowledge.
- “Back to country” – With support from the Central Land Council the partners may spend time on country together, facilitating transmission of cultural knowledge and skills between Traditional Owner families, to the younger generation and to the rangers, as appropriate.

4.4 Access and Facilities:

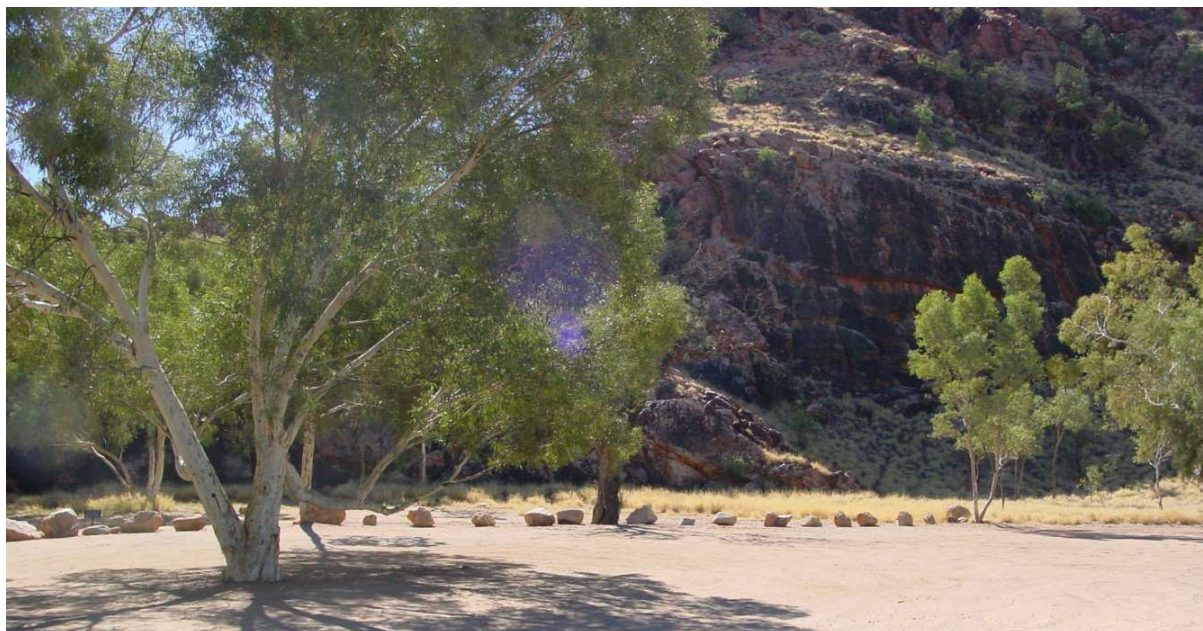
Any walking tracks and associated signs will be maintained for low impact recreational activity and to minimise erosion.

Facilities will be maintained to their low-key standard and any improvements or additions will reflect the Park’s natural character and cultural values.

Open fires will be permitted in designated fire pits only. Fire pits will not be provided at Emily Gap. To minimise the environmental impacts, firewood collection will not be permitted inside the Park. Fire restrictions will be enforced.

Rubbish bins will not be provided. Visitors will be encouraged to take their rubbish with them.

Parks and Wildlife Commission will uphold restrictions and guidelines for sacred sites or culturally sensitive areas of the Park as directed by Traditional Owners, including: Aboriginal women may not work inside the Gap; Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men should not view the rock art; and, only non-Aboriginal males may photograph the artwork for management purposes and are requested not to show the photographs to others. The photographs are not to be displayed in any form.



The **aims and directions** in this plan will be achieved with resources used effectively on agreed priorities.

5. Business Operations

Park operations are currently carried out by Park Rangers based at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve with regular patrols to Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park. At present, all funding to manage the Park is provided by the Northern Territory Government from funding appropriated to manage the Northern Territory's Parks estate. Major works and ongoing programs are subject to Territory-wide government priorities.

The Joint Management Partners recognise the potential social and economic benefits of commercial tourism within the Park. With the consent of affected Traditional Owners, the Lease and this Plan allow the partners to enter into benefit-sharing arrangements for commercial operations and developments within the Park.

Licences or sub-leases may be entered into where a secure form of land tenure is needed or for the long term security for commercial proponents. Any licence or sublease granted by the Northern Territory Government in respect of the Park must be consistent with the terms of the Park Lease and must have the prior written consent of the Alkeperre-atwarte Ayeye-arenye Arleye Aboriginal Land Trust on behalf of the Traditional Owners.

5.1 Development

Any development proposal will be considered by the joint management partners. Any proposal must be consistent with any applicable laws, the Park Lease, the ILUA and any relevant legislation.

The joint management partners agree that infrastructure and facilities should be in line with the character and existing natural setting of the Park. Traditional Owners have identified their interest in obtaining a sublease for use as an Aboriginal community living area on the Park as a means of being able to better engage in park management and cultural activities on the Park.

Protecting sacred sites – With three overlapping sacred sites registered with Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, the entire park area is protected under the NTASSA. The Anthwerrke (Emily

Gap) 5650-28 and Atherrke (Jessie Gap) 5750-2 registered sacred sites have boundaries that correlate with the Park boundary while the Nthwerrke Utnerrengatye 5650-50 sacred site extends east from, and including, Heavitree Gap, to overlap the Anthwerrke sacred site.

Protection for places that are of cultural significance in the Northern Territory is afforded under overlapping legislation. The *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth) gives legal recognition to areas which that Act terms “sacred sites” and defines 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 Act makes it an offence to enter or remain on land that is a sacred site. In the case of Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park in which the entire park area is a registered sacred site, the joint management partners are able to conduct routine management activities to the extent such activity does not damage or disturb sacred sites.

Complementary Northern Territory legislation, the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* (NTASS Act) 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 in response to land use proposals. It means that the traditional Aboriginal owners have an enforceable right to say who enters their sacred sites, and what cannot happen on their sacred sites. Illegal entry, works on or use of a sacred site is an offence under the NTASS Act.

Strong joint management will ensure that sacred sites are protected in accordance with Traditional Owners’ wishes. Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth) the Central Land Council 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 places - The *Heritage Act* provides protection for prescribed Aboriginal archaeological places and objects in the Northern Territory. Any works or disturbance to Heritage places will require consultation and approvals in accordance with the *Heritage Act*.

Expanding the Park – The Jessie Gap climbing dune is both a sacred site (emu fat) and geologically significant site. This dune is east of the park on NT portion 4296. Traditional Owners have expressed interest in an expansion of the Park to incorporate this (or some of this) portion of land into park management to ensure the protection of this cultural site and areas of natural value.

Mining – Given the size and, shape of the Park, mining and extractive activities have the potential to impact adversely on its natural and cultural values. Mining companies can apply to the Northern Territory Government for permission to explore for minerals within the Park however, the entire area is Reserved Land, under the *Mineral Titles Act*, and consent is required from the Minister responsible for mining exploration or extraction. Under the ALRA, Traditional Owners have various rights in relation to mining and any companies interested in mineral exploration on the Park must also ensure they comply with those requirements.

5.2 Regulated activities

The joint management partners have developed permit guidelines. Any permit applications that fall outside these guidelines will be considered by the joint management partners.

Objectives of Business Operations

The impact on park values from development and special activities are minimised.

Management Directions

5.1 The potential impacts of any proposed activity or development will be considered in line with the Commercial Tourism Development Policy and any legislation as appropriate.

5.2 The joint management partners will work together to see that sacred sites are properly protected, supported by the Central Land Council and Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority as required. The Central Land Council will have primary responsibility for consulting traditional owners for all proposed work on the Park.

5.3 Joint management partners may consider the development of an Aboriginal living area inside the Park, subject to a suitable location and available resources and that it is consistent with all legislation.

5.4 Joint management partners may consider the extension of the Park by inclusion of all or part of adjoining NT portion 4296.

5.5 Standard permit applications – Parks and Wildlife Commission can approve permit applications that involve activities or commercial concessions which comply with the agreed permit guidelines, require no special access, and/or are of a nature or type that has already been considered by the joint management partners.

5.6 Non-standard permit applications - Parks and Wildlife Commission will consult with CLC if a permit proposal requests special access or activity outside the permit guidelines may be in conflict with the wishes of Traditional Owners, or may be part of a major commercial project.

5.7 The joint management partners may request any unpermitted photographs and artwork in current use by commercial and tourism operators be withdrawn.

5.8 Joint management partners may review/amend the permit guidelines from time to time.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1. Selected References

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