

THE VISION
of the Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Board
FOR NITMILUK NATIONAL PARK

The Jawoyn owners of the Park and the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory will work together in a spirit of cooperation in accordance with the following tenets:

- Jawoyn culture is an ancient and dynamic living culture that will be valued and fostered.**
- The Park's ecological processes, its biodiversity and the values and character of its landscape must be conserved.**
- Visitors to the Park should have broad opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the Park's natural and cultural heritage.**
- The benefits and successes of joint management should be widely promoted and joint management processes subject to continuous improvement.**

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Description of the Park

Located on the southwest edge of Arnhem Land, 30 kilometres from the township of Katherine, Nitmiluk National Park encompasses some 2,900 square kilometres of vast landscapes possessing a rich natural and cultural history.

The Katherine River has its source high on the Arnhem Land Plateau over 100 kilometres northeast of the Park. About 120 million years ago the river began eroding through the Plateau near its edge to form what is now the centrepiece of the Park, a 13 kilometre long gorge system. With 100 metre high red sandstone cliffs that rise vertically from the river's sides along much of its length, the Gorge is an awe-inspiring natural wonder.

Nitmiluk is a major tourist destination, attracting over 250,000 visitors annually who walk, canoe or enjoy it from tour boats or scenic flights. The Gorge system and adjacent habitats represent a valuable conservation resource. In addition, it is a cultural treasure, created by ancestral beings in a time Jawoyn people call *Burr*. The many art sites through Nitmiluk are testimony to past generations of Jawoyn and to *Burr*.

Leliyn is the Jawoyn name of the place in the west of the Park where the Edith River cascades from the plateau. Leliyn attracts over 85,000 visitors annually, with camping, swimming and bushwalking opportunities in a scenically striking setting.

But the Park is much more than Nitmiluk and Leliyn which comprise relatively small areas. Large areas of the Park remain wilderness, possessing an ancient character defined by vast sandstone and lateritic plateau, broken uplands, wooded valleys, escarpment and gorges. Visitors seeking adventure can explore more remote parts of the Park using a system of walking tracks that includes the 66 kilometre Jatbula Trail between Nitmiluk and Leliyn.



Figure 1: Nitmiluk's magnificent second Gorge.

The Park's Landscape and Vegetation

The biodiversity of the Park is a reflection of its diverse vegetation and landscapes. Twenty separate vegetation units have been described for the Park and these occur within five discrete landscapes that are described below. These landscapes have been well known by the Jawoyn for thousands of years and the plants and animals that live here continue to be used for a great range of traditional purposes.

Sandstone Plateau Scrub

This is an area of greatly dissected sandstone with a complex of chasms and gorges. Massive expanses of undulating sandstone pavement divide one chasm from the next. Conditions on the top are extremely harsh and plants grow in coarse sand and leaf litter with almost no soil. Temperatures are extreme, especially during the build up to the wet season (October – November). Water is always at a premium. Even during the wet season, drainage is very rapid and moisture is only available to plants for a short time. Plants are adapted to aridity, often with reduced, scale-like leaves such as the wiry grasses of the genus *Triodia*, commonly known as spinifex. Sparse medium sized trees cope in areas where soil depth permits. Scarlet Gum (*Eucalyptus phoenicea*), the source of fine didgeridoos and Variable-barked Bloodwood (*Corymbia dichromophloia*) are common. Many of the hardier shrubs such as *Acacia*, *Grevillea* and *Boronia* abound here. The wet season months see a profusion of flowering amongst the many species.

Open Woodlands

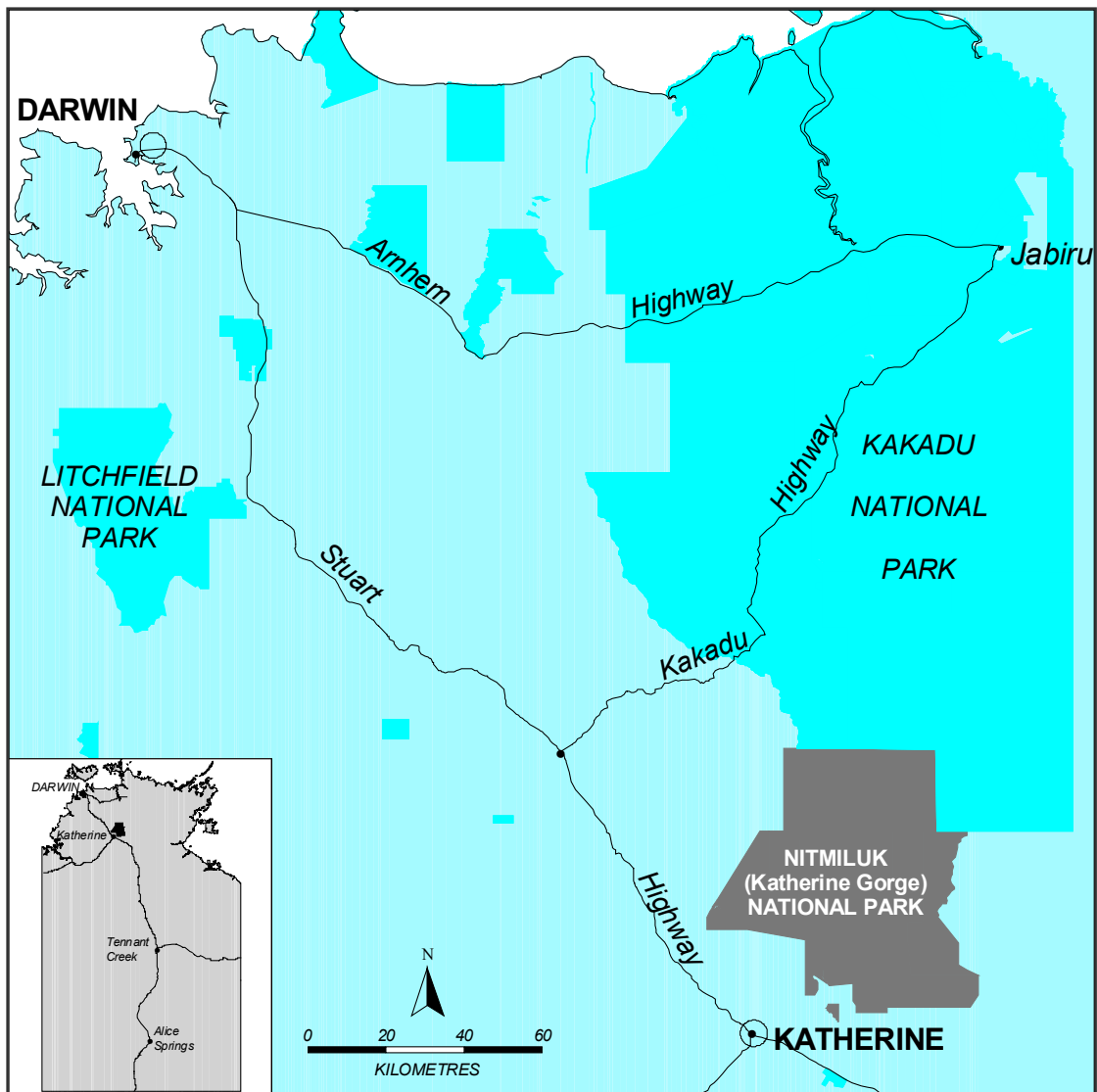
Viewed from the air this landscape which covers much of the lowlands of the Top End, is a seemingly limitless expanse, only interrupted here and there by freshwater streams. Although appearing monotonous to the casual observer, these areas are botanically very rich. As with most Australian woodlands, Eucalypts dominate with Bloodwoods (*Corymbia foelscheana*, *C. bleeseri* and *C. porrecta*) the most common. The Ironwood (*Erythrophleum chlorostachys*), whose timber has many versatile traditional uses also is common. The woodland is very open with few shrubs and annual tall grasses such as spear grass (*Sorghum spp.*) filling the void between trees. Smaller trees such as the native plums (*Terminalia ferdinandiana*) and *Buchanania obovata*, whose fruits are prized bush tucker, are scattered throughout, while the Salmon Gum (*E. tintinnans*) provides some colour contrast. These woodlands are distinctly deciduous during the late dry season months.

Open Forest

Usually on high level ridges with deep sandy soil, the trees here grow taller and closer together. Eucalypts again dominate, Darwin Woollybutt (*Eucalyptus miniata*) and Darwin Stringybark (*E. tetrodonta*) being the most common. Low swampy areas in this forest are almost devoid of Eucalypts and the Fern-leafed Grevillea (*Grevillea pteridifolia*), Swamp Banksia (*Banksia dentata*), whose flower spikes are used for carrying fire and Green Paperbark (*Melaleuca viridiflora*) are the dominant species.

Sandstone Monsoon Rainforest

This community generally exists as small pockets associated with permanent water, usually in gorges where sandstone plateau streams discharge into the lowlands. Canopy species such as *Syzygium*, *Terminalia*, *Alstonia* and *Mellicope* provide almost complete shade for the numerous ferns and showy flowering shrubs such as *Melastoma malabathricum*. These pockets are considered relic communities from an era when most of Northern Australia was covered with rainforest and are of high conservation interest.



Map 1. The Location of Nitmiluk National Park.

Riverine

The sandstone plateau streams discharge onto the lowland plains through watercourses such as the Katherine River and Seventeen Mile Creek. These become swollen and flooded during the wet season, slowing to a gentle flow by August each year. The vegetation here is composed mainly of Paperbark trees (*Melaleuca spp.*) and River Pandanus (*Pandanus aquaticus*). Dispersed amongst

them are Freshwater Mangrove or Itchy Grub Tree (*Barringtonia acutangula*), Native Apple Trees (*Syzygium spp.*), Leichhardt Trees (*Nauclea orientalis*) and Northern Swamp Box (*Lophostemon grandiflorus*). Fishnet Vine (*Flagellaria indica*) and the introduced passionfruit (*Passiflora foetida*) cover trees, in some places almost completely.

Fauna

The fauna of the Park has considerable conservation value. The total number of species recorded to date is comparable with other Parks in the Top End. More importantly the Park encompasses habitat for a number of species that are rare or of limited distribution such as the Hooded Parrot, Gouldian Finch, White-throated Grasswren, Sandstone Antechinus and the Kakadu Dunnart.

For Park visitors interested in wildlife the Park has broad appeal, for many species, particularly many of the 192 different birds, are easily seen. These include colourful species such as the Red-collared Lorikeet, Red-winged Parrot, Northern Rosella and Blue-winged Kookaburra and less common species such as the Red Goshawk and Peregrine Falcon. In the Gorge, colonies of flying foxes are commonly seen as are Freshwater Crocodiles, turtles and water monitors. Bushwalkers are almost certain to encounter Agile Wallabies, Antilopine Wallaroos and Euros and the occasional Dingo.

1.2 History of the Park's Establishment

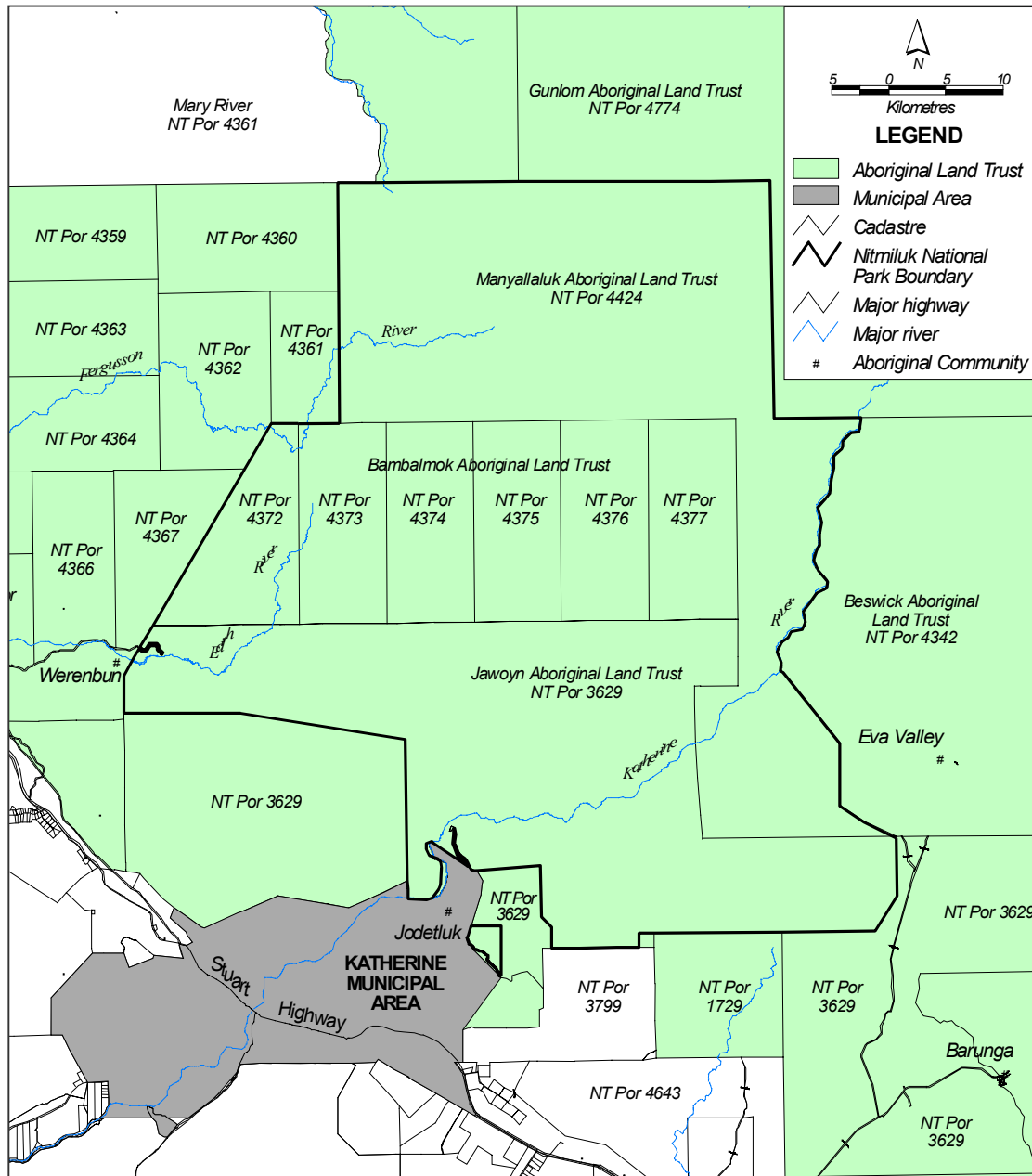
Before its establishment as a National Park the area was part of Maud Creek and Eva Valley pastoral leases. Both Leliyn and Nitmiluk were popular recreational destinations for many years before the onset of commercial tourism and the initial reservation of these areas in the early 1960s.

The original Katherine Gorge National Park of 227 km² was proclaimed in 1962 and Edith Falls National Park of 1.6 km² soon after, in 1964. The two areas were eventually amalgamated into one much larger Park of 1804 km² in 1977.

In 1978 Jawoyn people lodged a claim under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* over lands including Katherine Gorge National Park. Hearing of the land claim commenced in 1982 and certain lands, including the southern section of the Park, were recommended for grant in 1987. Following their successful land claim, the Jawoyn traditional owners met with the Northern Land Council and the Northern Territory Government to negotiate means whereby that part of the land recommended for grant and previously vested as a National Park, could remain a Park.

The former Park (comprising NT Portion 3629) was vested in the Jawoyn Aboriginal Land Trust pursuant to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* on 10 September 1989. On the same day the Jawoyn Aboriginal Land Trust leased this land to the Conservation Land Corporation, a land holding body established under the *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act*, for use as a National Park in accordance with the *Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Act*. See section 1.5.

The first Plan of Management also accommodated the inclusion of NT Portions 4372 – 4377 (formerly SPL 587), now vested in the Bambalmok Aboriginal Land Corporation. This portion of the Park was officially added to the Park under lease in September 1994. A further round of land tenure negotiations between the Jawoyn Association, the Northern Territory Government, the Northern Land Council, the Commonwealth



Map 2. Neighbouring Land Tenure.

government and the mining company Zapopan N.L. was concluded in January 1993. The resulting Mt Todd Agreement has led to the addition to the Park of NT Portion 4424 vested in the Manyallaluk Aboriginal Land Trust. This extension to the Park is known as the Eva Valley Extension.

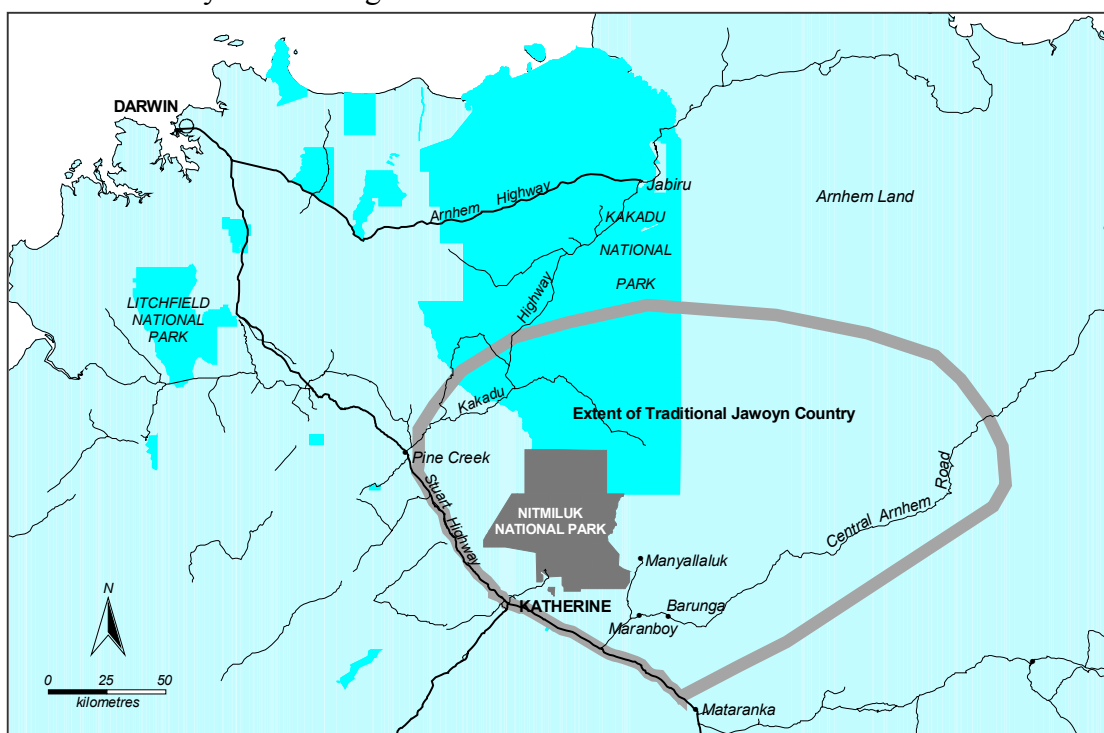
1.3 Regional Context

As the main tourist destination within the Katherine region, Nitmiluk National Park is a primary regional economic resource. During 2000/2001, almost 30 percent of surveyed visitors to the Northern Territory stated they had, or intended to visit the Park. Direct expenditure from tourism in the Katherine region has been calculated at over \$50m from 178,000 visitor nights (NTTC).

The Park is one part of a larger area of land for which the Jawoyn people hold freehold title. This includes parts of western Arnhem Land, Manyallaluk, Barnjarn and parts of the World Heritage Kakadu National Park, which adjoins Nitmiluk along Nitmiluk's northern boundary. It is the intent of the Nitmiluk National Park's owners that the Park is managed and developed to complement Kakadu's international standing by realising the Park's full potential in the conservation and presentation of its natural and cultural heritage and in offering appropriate recreation uses.

Within the Top End, Nitmiluk, Litchfield and Kakadu National Parks are all international tourism destinations in their own right. While some opportunities offered in Nitmiluk are similar to these other Parks, the experience of Nitmiluk Gorge itself is unique. In addition, the system of marked walking tracks throughout the Park, especially the 66 kilometre Jatbula Trail presents opportunities not generally available in Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks.

In the biogeographic context the Park lies within the Pine Creek - Arnhem Bioregion. A biogeographic region (bioregion) is an area of land containing a recognisable similarity in terms of its pattern of land forms, geology, vegetation types and fauna species. The Pine Creek - Arnhem Bioregion contains high conservation values for its high floristic and faunal diversity. This bioregion is well reserved in Kakadu National Park.



Map 3. Approximate extent of traditional Jawoyn lands.

1.4 The Park's Values

The values of the Park are the attributes that give the Park worth and are the basis for the Park's reservation. These values are subject to consistent management consideration throughout this Plan and are summarised below.

Aboriginal Cultural Values

The Aboriginal cultural values of Park are of the highest importance. The whole Park may be interpreted as a cultural landscape. For the Jawoyn people their land is invested with spiritual significance and is an integral part of their cultural identity. Their affiliation with the land involves a complex of traditional rights, benefits, obligations and responsibilities. Their land continues to provide food and other material resources. The Park is and always will be a place where *Burr* (creation) will be maintained through ceremony.

The Park contains many places of spiritual significance. Some of these are also archaeological sites bearing testimony to a long history of Aboriginal occupation. Art sites are one type of cultural asset that represent an important interpretive medium for Park visitors. A number of significant art sites may be seen in highly visited parts of the Gorge. See section 4.7 for further detail.

Scientific Values

The Park's scientific values are of considerable significance. The diversity of the Park's vegetation communities and fauna populations are a reflection of the variety of its landforms and habitats. The total of these elements is the Park's biodiversity which is of intrinsic conservation value. The opportunity for continued study toward better understanding of the relationships between landscape and ecology is a significant scientific value.

In addition to Nitmiluk Gorge, many minor gorges occur throughout the Park. Many of these contain monsoon rainforest communities that include relatively rare and ecologically important plant species and support important bat and bird populations.

Many plant species of scientific interest are known from the Park, including *Ophioglossum gramineum*, *Boronia tolerans*, *Dimeria chloridiformis* and *Calytrix surdiviperana*. For further detail on native vegetation see section 5.5.

Fauna species of high conservation interest include Hooded Parrot, *Psephotus dissimilis*, (jikirritj), Gouldian Finch, *Erythrura gouldiae* and the White-throated Grasswren, *Amytornis woodwardii*. Section 5.7 examines management for native fauna.

Tourism / Recreation Values

The tourism and recreation values of the Park are outstanding. It is an international tourism destination in its own right and receives a similar number of visitors to Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks. As such the Park is economically important in the region.

The Park offers a wide range of recreational experiences. Commercially run boat tours of the Nitmiluk Gorge provide the means for many visitors to enjoy its spectacular sights by

safe and comfortable means with minimal environmental impact. Bushwalks from one hour to five days are available. Camping opportunities range from comfortable commercial camping with full amenities at Nitmiluk, to lower key camping at Leliyn, to back-pack camping on extended walks. Swimming is a popular activity, particularly at Leliyn. A delightful way for many to experience Nitmiluk is by canoe. Opportunities for canoeing extend to the upper reaches of the Gorge system where canoe-based camping is possible in beautiful surrounds away from crowds of visitors.

Educational and Interpretation Values

The Park's value for education and interpretation is considerable. Its geology and landscape, wildlife and cultural history are of great interest to visitors. Nitmiluk is especially important in providing opportunities for people to learn about and experience Aboriginal culture. The Nitmiluk Visitor Centre which opened in 1997 includes high quality interpretive facilities aimed at enhancing visitor enjoyment of the Park by fostering an understanding and appreciation of the Park's values.

Historic Values

The Park's historic values are of local interest only. The area was traversed by John MacDouall Stuart in 1864 and George McLaughlin in 1870. Some evidence of these travels has been discovered on the Park. Other European historic sites such as the Comoye Yards and the remains of a World War II alien internment camp are of local historic interest. See section 5.10.

1.5 Management Structure

The Jawoyn Aboriginal owners and the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory (the Commission) have been partners in the management of Nitmiluk National Park since 10 September, 1989.

As shown in Map 2, the Park is vested in three Aboriginal Land Trusts; the Jawoyn Aboriginal Land Trust, the Bambalmok Aboriginal Corporation and the Manyalluluk Aboriginal Land Trust. These areas are leased to the Conservation Land Corporation (CLC) for the purpose of a National Park for 99 years. The CLC is a body corporate established under the *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act* whose function is to hold property in accordance with this Act.

The principles, rights and responsibilities with respect to the management and use of the Park are enshrined in the *Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Act*. This Act expressly:

- secures the rights of the Jawoyn Aboriginal traditional owners to occupy and use the land,
- declares the land a National Park to be managed for the benefit and enjoyment of all people,
- affirms the intent to foster and encourage the participation of Aboriginal traditional owners in the management of the National Park,

Traditionally the Jawoyn people were responsible for the management of some 43 000 square kilometres of land stretching roughly south east and north from the town now known as Katherine. Since its formation in 1985 the Jawoyn Association has represented Jawoyn people in social, cultural, economic and political arenas and ensured that all Jawoyn clans have been consulted and involved in the management of the Park.

As a schedule to the Act, the Memorandum of Lease details the conditions, rights and responsibilities of the parties between whom the lease is agreed. The Memorandum of Lease reinforces management of the Park in accordance with the Act and the Plan of Management. It also states requirements in regard to provision for Aboriginal interests in the Park including consultation, training, employment and commercial enterprise.

As many sections of the Act bear influence on the Plan of Management, the Act and the associated Memorandum of Lease are reproduced in their entirety in Appendices 10 and 11. For a diagrammatic representation of the management arrangements in relation to the Park see Figure 1.

1.6 The Park's Progress since Joint Management

The first ten years of joint management of the Park has been highly successful and has laid a strong foundation for the Park's future. Jawoyn traditional owners, together with Parks and Wildlife staff, while acknowledging significant advancement believe much more can be achieved in the ensuing ten years. This plan of management seeks to build on the first ten years during which time, both Jawoyn people and Parks and Wildlife staff have learnt a great deal about joint management. This new plan, required under both the *Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Act* and the park's Memorandum of Lease outlines the next phase of joint management, with particular regard to areas of training and employment of Aboriginal people, promotion of Aboriginal culture, consultation with, and the involvement of the Aboriginal traditional owners in the management of the Park.

In general, under Jawoyn ownership and through the cooperative management arrangements in place, strong progress has been made in conservation management and opportunities for visitors have been enhanced while at the same time, the interests of the Aboriginal owners have continued to be fostered. Some key achievements are summarised below:

Management and Development Planning

- The first Plan of Management was enacted in February 1993. Its development was the product of intensive work and cooperation between the joint managers and many objectives established in this first plan have been achieved.
- Major site development plans for the intensive use areas at both Nitmiluk and Leliyn have been prepared, adopted by the Nitmiluk Board and implemented.

Aboriginal Enterprise, Employment and Training

- Many Aboriginal trainees have worked for varying periods of time on the Park as rangers and in other positions. Some of these have been graduates from Commonwealth sponsored training schemes.
- Employment of Aboriginal rangers on the Park is steadily increasing with currently over half of available ranger positions filled by Aboriginal people.
- The Nitmiluk Board has developed and adopted a policy granting Aboriginal enterprises preferred access to Park maintenance and development contracts.
- Ranger training camps conducted on the Park have yielded excellent results in cross-cultural exchange and two-way learning and have added to natural resource databases.
- Nitmiluk Tours is a joint venture enterprise that has been established between the Jawoyn Association and Travel North Pty Ltd, a Katherine-based tour company. They have successfully managed the Nitmiluk launch tours, canoe hire, campground, tour desk and kiosk / restaurant.
- The campground and kiosk concession operating at Leliyn has been transferred to an Aboriginal enterprise.

Cross-Cultural Development

- A senior member of Parks and Wildlife Commission staff completed a one year placement with the Jawoyn Association.
- Cross-Cultural Development training has been conducted for all staff at the Park.

Cultural Resource Management

- A three-year program to record Jawoyn art sites and sites of significance in identified high priority areas and to carry out conservation work as necessary, have been completed.
- Jawoyn history and traditional stories have been recorded through an oral history project involving senior Jawoyn people.
- Jawoyn ethnobiology (Jawoyn language names for plants and animals and traditional uses) has been recorded and published in a popular booklet available for sale at the Park and tourist outlets in the Katherine area.

Natural Resource Management, Research and Monitoring

- The Nitmiluk Board has adopted a strategic approach to the management of fire, feral animals and weeds with five year strategies developed for each of these programs. Progress toward the achievement of program objectives is reviewed annually and progress so far has been considerable. There has been a measurable reduction in the

negative impacts of fire, feral animals and target weed species in priority areas of the Park.

- Geographic Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) technology is now in regular use on the Park for a number of biodiversity conservation programs and activities.
- The impact of feral animals on the Park has been much reduced through strategic fencing of the Park's southern and eastern boundaries and direct control measures.
- An enhanced understanding of the effects of management imposed fire regimes on flora and fauna is the goal of a long-term monitoring project involving vegetation monitoring sites. This is coupled with the use of satellite imagery to develop accurate fire history maps of the Park and better understanding of traditional Jawoyn fire management on neighbouring lands.
- Environmental and fauna monitoring projects include:
 - Crocodile population monitoring in the Gorge.
 - The status of and impacts on monsoon rainforest communities.
 - The impact of boating activities on riverbank stability in some sections of the Gorge system.
 - Monitoring of cypress pine, *Callitris intratropica* communities.
 - Monitoring of Gouldian Finch populations and habitat.
 - Species records development through chance observations and informal surveys conducted.

Visitor Management

- The implementation of the Gurriluk Masterplan involved extensive redevelopment of the intensive use area near the entrance of the Gorge. This work has brought the area's presentation to international standard with the Nitmiluk Visitor Centre as the focus of the redesign. Overlooking the Katherine River at the entrance to Nitmiluk, the Centre presents orientation and interpretive displays, focusing on the Park's natural and Jawoyn heritage. Other facilities at the Centre include tour-booking, restaurant and souvenir shop.
- Redevelopment of facilities at Leliyn through implementation of the Leliyn Masterplan has improved access, amenity standards and visitor experience of this popular recreation area.
- Visitor safety, particularly in the remote parts of the Park is aided by the administration of a best practice registration system, complemented by a total of eight emergency call devices. An emergency response plan for the Park has been adopted by the Nitmiluk Board and is reviewed annually.
- An enhanced visitor monitoring program involves the acquisition of visitor demographics and satisfaction data which is used in ongoing management planning. Improved visitor counting techniques has produced more reliable data and understanding of trends in visitor use.

The January 1998 Flood

- In January 1998 most visitor facilities and infrastructure in the intensive use areas at both Nitmiluk and Leliyn suffered extensive damage from flooding when the Katherine and Edith Rivers reached their highest levels recorded for the century. Despite the fact that many Park staff suffered personal loss and hardship as a result of the flood, the enthusiasm and cooperation of all concerned meant that visitor facilities and services were almost fully operational within one month of the event.

2.0 THE PARK AND THE JAWOYN PEOPLE

2.1 Jawoyn History

For thousands of years prior to European occupation Jawoyn moved freely about their country hunting, gathering and performing ceremonies on their land including what is now Nitmiluk National Park.

The abundance of resources at specific localities at different times of the year defined seasonal or shorter-term rounds of movement for Jawoyn within and through their lands. For example, in the immediate Katherine area, certain localities along the river north of the township were traditionally favoured as dry-season camps (as they are today) while, during the wet, people were able to move around high, broken tableland which runs from Katherine towards Leliyn (Edith Falls) and over towards Yulawem (Seventeen Mile Creek). In parts of this higher country Jawoyn hunted gowarrang (echidna), na-gorlk (wallabies) and other small game which inhabited this area in abundance.

John McDouall Stuart's expedition in 1862 provided favourable reports on the pastoral potential of country north of the Roper River. This report led to the annexation of the Northern Territory in 1863 by South Australia. This period in Jawoyn history was characterised by violence and dispossession of their lands at the hands of pastoral developers, who by 1883 had taken up 478 000 square miles of the Northern Territory.

The Eastern and African Cold Storage Co. Ltd. for example, is known to have engaged in systematic hunting out of 'wild' Aborigines who had not come in to pastoral properties. The effect of such practices was a reduction in the Aboriginal population to an extent which cannot be readily calculated along with increasing sedentarisation of those remaining. Older Jawoyn today speak of the terror and the need, at the time, to move to 'safe', more populated places, away from some cattle stations where they feared for their lives. It is an understatement to say that the establishment of major pastoral properties in Katherine-Pine Creek region had far reaching effects on Jawoyn demography and lifestyle.

Gold was discovered at Pine Creek in 1871 and by August 1872 there were about 40 miners in the gold field. Thus it was both pastoralism and mining that began to have a vast effect on Jawoyn lives as their traditional lands rapidly became populated by strangers and their waterholes fouled by cattle.

Tin was found at a locality which was named Maranboy, at the headwaters of the present Maranboy and Beswick Creeks and by 1915 a government battery was operating there. The Maranboy tin field is significant in the Aboriginal history of the region and resulted in large encampments of Aborigines of the southern Arnhem Land area around the tin field for lengths of time unprecedented in pre-contact history. Some of the oldest Jawoyn now living saw Europeans for the first time at Maranboy. Reports of the mining encampment spread among Jawoyn and other Aboriginal groups along with accounts of commodities which could be obtained and served as inducements to remain and work there. It is clear also that Aborigines moved into Maranboy to avoid being killed on the pastoral properties. A six acre Aboriginal reserve was declared at Maranboy in 1923.

“Traditional life”, the socio-economic basis of Jawoyn existence, had been a full time occupation for Jawoyn prior to pastoral and mining invasion of their lands. The steady undermining of ‘traditional lifestyle’ gathered pace with the construction of the Pine Creek to Katherine railway line in 1926 and the granting of leases on the Katherine River for agricultural development. These areas had been dry season camping areas favoured by the Jawoyn. There are many sites of significance above the township of Katherine including a number of ceremonial localities, former burial sites and areas of spiritual significance. The taking up of agricultural leases on the Katherine River was one factor which altered both dry and wet season movements by Jawoyn in the area. The Jawoyn were no longer able to use certain riverine localities as before and campsites slightly further back from the river, often on the fringes of European development, came into use. The apparent earlier seasonality of occupation was also altered, as Jawoyn remained for longer periods in European employ and within range of European commodities. Many Jawoyn worked in peanut and other farming enterprises in the Katherine area.

Occupation in pastoral, agricultural and mining work largely determined the residential patterns of today’s middle-aged and older Jawoyn throughout much of their lives. The Yeuralba mineral field located on the former Eva Valley Station has had little mention in official mining histories. This field however, was worked for tungsten, tin and copper from 1924 to 1952. A Patrol Report by W.E. Harney in 1943 indicated that there were at least 50 Aborigines working and residing on Yeuralba field.

World War II had a major impact on Jawoyn. From August 1942 Aborigines were officially prohibited from remaining north of Edith River. The same administrative order made provision for the establishment of Aboriginal compounds at localities near Mataranka and Katherine. ‘Native Control Camps’ were also established at this time and one such ‘control camp’ was formed at Maranboy. This meant that Aborigines from different areas were brought into unprecedented prolonged contact with each other resulting in significant cultural exchange and the forging of long term relationships.

Native Affairs Branch surveillance of the ‘Native Control Camps’ was intensified during the war years, particularly at mining locations such as Maranboy. Various aspects of the relations between miners and Aborigines were deemed unsatisfactory and it was recommended that all Aboriginal women be transferred from Maranboy to the farm of Joe Israelson, seven miles from Maranboy at the head of the Roper Creek. After the transfer of women to the ‘Joe’s Garden’ compound in May 1943, Aboriginal male workers also left the tin fields.

Army control camps were abandoned in 1946 and the inhabitants were moved to a number of camps, which were then later abandoned for reasons such as poor drinking water. Many Jawoyn continued to move around for ceremonies and Native Affairs officers were often frustrated by the elusiveness of the people they were trying to control.

In 1951 Aborigines were moved to a new welfare settlement at Bamyili (now Barunga). Rigid discipline was maintained at locations such as this in an attempt to make Aboriginal people live like Europeans; the government policy of the day was known as ‘assimilation’. In Katherine, Jawoyn people continued to camp at sites associated with places of employment such as the Government Research Station, butchery and cordial factory (among others).

In 1962, Katherine Gorge was proclaimed a National Park. The constant presence of visitors, both townspeople and tourists even before this time, had forced Jawoyn to distance themselves from the Gorge. The Bolung (Rainbow Serpent) had been disturbed, food sources had been depleted and the Jawoyn were generally wary of associating with non-Aborigines.

A combination of the granting of Award wages in 1968 for Aboriginal people employed in the pastoral industry and the introduction of new technologies such as helicopter mustering and road transport set in train a decline in Aboriginal employment on the cattle stations. By the early 1970's, a larger, more mixed and transient Aboriginal population had become evident in Katherine, Pine Creek and Bamyili.

In 1974 the Kalano Association was established as an Aboriginal resource centre and began to address security of tenure for Aborigines in Katherine, along with housing, transport and health issues. Until this time no land had been properly secured for town camps and old camping areas had been slowly but surely lost as Katherine expanded and Aboriginal people became more marginalised. Today, Jawoyn live in town camps at Jodetluk, a camp on the Gorge Road close to the entrance to the Park, at Rockhole on the Katherine River west of town and at the Mayali-Brumby camp next to the Stuart Highway north of the Katherine River Bridge. Many other Jawoyn are to be found scattered throughout Katherine Township. A large number of Jawoyn also live at Barunga and Beswick which were scheduled as Aboriginal Land under provisions in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*.

Although a mobile life-style for Jawoyn had been replaced by a more sedentary one involving occasional longer bush trips, there remained and remains today a continuing use of country from established camps and settlements. Jawoyn continue to frequent areas around Barunga, Manyallaluk, Beswick, along the King River, in the southern and eastern portions of Nitmiluk National Park, north of the Katherine River, north of Pine Creek, Werenbun Community, Gimbat Homestead and the southern portion of Kakadu National Park.

Jawoyn frequently hunt and fish on their lands in areas both inside and outside the Park. During visits to their country, bush tucker, fish, turtles, goanna and wallaby is a regular part of the diet. Temporary camping places throughout Jawoyn territory, along the King River, upper Maud Creek, in Manyallaluk and in the high tableland north of Katherine running toward Edith Falls attest to an unbroken and undaunted tradition of knowledge and use of country, however much altered by European contact.

Jawoyn people today may wear European clothes, they may drive cars and hunt with guns but they continue to respect Jawoyn tribal law in the tradition of their ancestors.

2.2 Jawoyn Law

All Jawoyn people, by definition, have a socially prescribed responsibility to 'look after' their land and sites within it. While there are seven clans, Jawoyn unite and manage their lands as one entity.

The kinds of responsibilities shared by Jawoyn people toward their land may vary by place. Some responsibilities are toward Jawoyn country in general rather than toward particular sites. This is the way in which Jawoyn people regard, for example, ceremonies. Regular performance of ceremonies is regarded as part of the process of maintaining the country. To all senior Jawoyn people is ascribed an obligation to educate other Jawoyn concerning many aspects of their country. Knowledge of this kind is highly valued: one of the greatest compliments one Jawoyn can pay another is that one knows the country 'right through'. To impart this knowledge is to transmit the essence of Jawoynness itself.

In general, these education responsibilities are carried out in a quite informal way. Talk about 'country' is a frequent form of casual conversation and young people are exposed to large volumes of it in the course of their everyday lives.

Doings of Dreamtime figures are not only the subject of specialised 'religious' training but are part of everyday ordinary talk about places.

It is through Jawoyn Law the Jawoyn have, since the coming of white people, been able to keep alive their traditions and care for their country. This Law was given to Jawoyn in the time called 'Burr' (Dreamtime). The Jawoyn describe their law as follows:

"This Law was given to us in the time often called Dreaming or Dreamtime. It was during this time that the world was made and the rules for proper behaviour were laid down."

During this period, beings in the form of humans, animals and plants brought the landscape to life by 'putting themselves' in the country. They travelled the land, above and below the ground, giving names to places (refer to Map 5) and specifying dangerous areas and sites to avoid. They gave the country its language and in doing so designated which people would belong to it. In travelling on to neighbouring countries they established relationships across language group boundaries with sometimes faraway people. We tell of these travels in stories and songs, some of which are public and others, which are used in secret ceremonies.

It was in the Dreamtime that Bula came from saltwater country of the north. With his two wives, the Ngalenjelenje, he hunted across the land and in doing so transformed the landscape through his actions. Bula finally went under the ground at a number of locations north of Katherine in an area known to us as 'Sickness Country'. It is called this because the area is very dangerous and should not be disturbed for fear that earthquakes and fire will destroy the world. We regard Bula as the most important figure in our dreaming.

Many places in our country were named by Nabilil, a dragon-like figure who came from the west near Wadeye (Port Keats). He travelled carrying water and firesticks in a dilly bag under his arm. He passed through Garrakla (the limestone formations either side of the Stuart Highway north of Katherine) and then on to Wurliwurlinyjang (a mosquito dreaming place near the site of Kalano and the Katherine Council offices).

He was travelling through country that was very dry and he passed through the blue tongue lizard dreaming places at Yerreljirriyn and Wun-garri all the birds tried to catch him to get the water he carried. Lumbuk, the pigeon, Wakwak the crow and Garrkayn the brown hawk, all tried but failed as Nabilil was too clever for them.

He then came and camped at the entrance to the Katherine Gorge where he heard the song of the cicada (Nitmi in Jawoyn language) and called this place Nitmiluk. After travelling up the Gorge, Nabilil finally came to a camp on Snowdrop Creek called Biritjimbulk. Here Walarrk, the cave bat, hid himself in leaves so Nabilil couldn't see him. Walarrk killed Nabilil with a stone tipped spear. When that happened all the water came out, filling the streams and the Katherine River, where it flows to this day. The birds, happy now that they could drink, also discovered Nabilil's firesticks growing along the water edge so they could also make fire to cook with.

Other figures from the Dreaming also travelled across the landscape, leaving a record of their exploits. Principal among those was Nagorrko, a very tall spiritual being who came from the saltwater in the north and walked along the upper Fergusson River and through what is today called Eva Valley, to the east of Nitmiluk.

Nagorrko taught Jawoyn much about proper behaviour and correct marriage relationships. It was through Nagorrko that people belong to either Yirritja or Dua groups – called moieties by non-Aboriginal writers. Both Dua and Yirritja people are each subdivided into four subsections, with a male and female version of each. Nagorrko also gave us the Law about mowurrwurr, or clan groups and showed us what foods different mowurrwurr could or could not eat.

Other dreaming figures travelled across our country, notably Gupu the kangaroo. Gupu also came from the north and then went east into Arnhem Land and south-east to Roper River, from where we believe he travelled down to Uluru and into South Australia. The names we use for places often come from the activities of beings from the Dreaming, many of whom are regarded as having been human beings. Many places such as this can be seen in the Nitmiluk National Park.

For example, Barraya, the kookaburra emerged at Barraya, in what is today known as the second Gorge. Upstream from the Gorge, Barrakbarrak female and male ducks collided with two cliffs at a notable spur on the river and submerged on either side, leaving their name. The series of hills along the road close up to the Gorge is named after Bemang, the frilled-neck lizard, who came from Rembarrnga tribal country and then travelled up towards Pine Creek. At Wun-gurri, the divided river represents Gurri, the blue tongue lizard.

Most of these Dreaming places are not dangerous, but some may have to be approached with care, or not approached at all. Some areas can only be visited by initiated men only. There are also dangerous women's sites that must be avoided except by those allowed access under ceremonial law.

Our people do not fish in the pools where Bolung sits. When fishing close to these pools, we can take only a small portion of the fish caught and throw back the rest in order to appease Bolung for the fish taken. Drinking water must not be taken from these deep pools, but rather from shallow associated pools. Pregnant women and new initiates may not swim in the Katherine River for fear of disturbing Bolung.

Unlike other Jawoyn Dreamings which may be addressed for assistance in hunting and foraging such as Barraya, the kookaburra, Bolung must not be spoken to and must be left undisturbed. Jawoyn Law also indicates the proper way to look after country. At Wun-

gurri, Jawoyn people are obliged to clear the site of debris and purify it by burning 'ironwood' leaves (*Erythrophleum chlorostachys*, 'marukal'). At Jurrangluk, a small monolith representing the head of the Jurrang (taipan) must be rubbed with sweat from armpits. Care must be taken to call the name of Jurrang and to touch it gently otherwise a plague of taipans may result.

2.3 Nitmiluk National Park and the Jawoyn Today

Burr, the Dreaming, is as significant today to Jawoyn people as it always has been. It encompasses all aspects of life. It is the land (its gorges, its trees, its rocks and its rivers) and it is the people and all living creatures. It is the past, the present and the future.

The Jawoyn social and legal responsibility under ceremonial law to 'look after' their land, its resources and the sites of significance within it continues. Under the *Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Act* the rights of traditional Aboriginal owners of the Park are and will continue to be maintained.

2.3.1 Membership of the Jawoyn Association

Before the arrival of non-Aboriginal people, membership of Jawoyn clans (mowurrwurr) was determined by traditional socio-territorial laws, such as patrilineal determination of clan membership and participation in Jawoyn society through ritual and ceremonial obligations with other Jawoyn people in traditional lands. Membership also included those who simply lived on the land, hunted, foraged and cared for the country.

The colonisation of traditional lands brought with it significant changes to the way in which Jawoyn people could connect with their land. Jawoyn people were excluded from their territories and often dispersed from their homelands. Today people with Jawoyn affiliations are scattered all over Australia.

With the recognition of Jawoyn rights of ownership, the Jawoyn people can today continue to reassert their traditional relationships with their land. Under the system of joint management the Jawoyn people recognise the need to adopt non-Aboriginal ways to help convey their views and aspirations to others. In order to do this the Jawoyn people established the Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation which aims at allowing the Jawoyn people to control their future by moving towards self determination and economic independence.

The Association is bound by a constitution which defines the internal structuring and objectives of the Jawoyn people. The following excerpt from the Constitution outlines eligibility for membership of the Jawoyn Association.

"Ordinary membership, is determined as follows:

- Membership of the Association shall be open to all adult Aboriginals who have a recognised genealogical affiliation with the Jawoyn;
- Membership of the Association shall consist of Foundation Members and ordinary Members. All persons other than Foundation Members shall be ordinary Members. Unless specifically stated otherwise in these Rules the word members includes both ordinary Members and Foundation Members.

- The Council of Elders will decide:
 1.
 - i.) Which of the existing members is to be recognised as a Foundation Member;
 - ii.) Which of any new applicants who seeks recognition as a Foundation Member on application is to be recognised as a Foundation Member;
 2. Whether a member or applicant for membership has a recognised genealogical affiliation with the Jawoyn;
 3. Whether a member or applicant for membership is a member of a Jawoyn clan;
 4. Whether a member has maintained acknowledged, substantial social connectedness to Jawoyn people and land through ceremonial, kinship, clan and other obligations and knowledge;
 5. To which regional grouping if any a member belongs;
- Notwithstanding anything contained in this rule, once a person has been recognised by the Council of Elders as a Foundation Member that status cannot be revoked on the basis that since recognition that member has failed to maintain the social connectedness referred to in sub-rule 4 above.
- A register of members shall be kept by the Public Officer which shall list those members who have been recognised by the Council of Elders as Foundation Members and the date upon which such recognition was bestowed.”

2.3.2 Foundation Members and Council of Elders

Foundation Members are those that satisfy any of the following criteria:

- recognition by the Northern Land Council as a traditional Aboriginal owner of Jawoyn land;
- recognition by the Council of Elders as a member of a Jawoyn clan (see sub-rule 4) including recognised traditional adoption;
- having genealogical affiliation with Jawoyn (including those removed from kin or country under government policies of assimilation).

Council of Elders membership is comprised of the leaders of Jawoyn clans and other senior ceremonial leaders who may be elected to the Council by members of the Association. The Council of Elders has regard to the following principles:

- eligibility for membership will be determined using traditional Jawoyn Aboriginal law, which is primarily based on patrilineal descent;
- the Council of Elders has absolute discretion in determining whether a person is a recognised member of a Jawoyn clan; and
- understanding that protracted illness, employment and/or education which forces discontinuities to social connectedness shall not constitute non-recognition as a member.

With the return of their land and the establishment of joint management with the Parks and Wildlife Commission, Jawoyn now have a sense of security not only for the future of Nitmiluk’s cultural significance and values, but also for their own and their children’s future through employment, training and enterprise opportunities.

The Park also represents an opportunity for the Jawoyn to proudly present their living culture and Park management ability to visitors from all over Australia and the world.

For the Jawoyn traditional Aboriginal owners joint management of their land as Nitmiluk National Park is a task that they approach with dignity, responsibility and pride as in the tradition of their ancestors.

3.0 PARK ZONING SCHEME

More than 250,000 visitors per year currently visit Nitmiluk, seeking a range of activities and experiences. Most stay a relatively short time and see only the lower sections of the Gorge. About 100,000 visitors currently see Nitmiluk from tour boats or launches each year. Commercial tours of this type satisfy the needs of many visitors but others seek a less crowded experience, solitude and closeness to nature. To provide for a range of experiences and minimise the potential for conflict between different visitor groups is a major challenge for Park management.

While providing for visitor use, management must also consider the Park's cultural and natural values. Visitor use is potentially incompatible with these other objectives. Uncontrolled visitor activity can exceed acceptable levels of environmental impact. Similarly, visitor use of areas vested with Jawoyn cultural significance or valued especially for traditional uses, may not be appropriate.

Zoning is a management planning tool that provides a basis for managing activities within defined zones so that human activities do not conflict with each other and are compatible with the need to protect and conserve natural and cultural values. Zoning guides development and management within zones by stating a purpose for each zone, defining appropriate activities and describing its character in terms of levels of use, access and appropriate facilities.

Six management zones are defined for the Park:

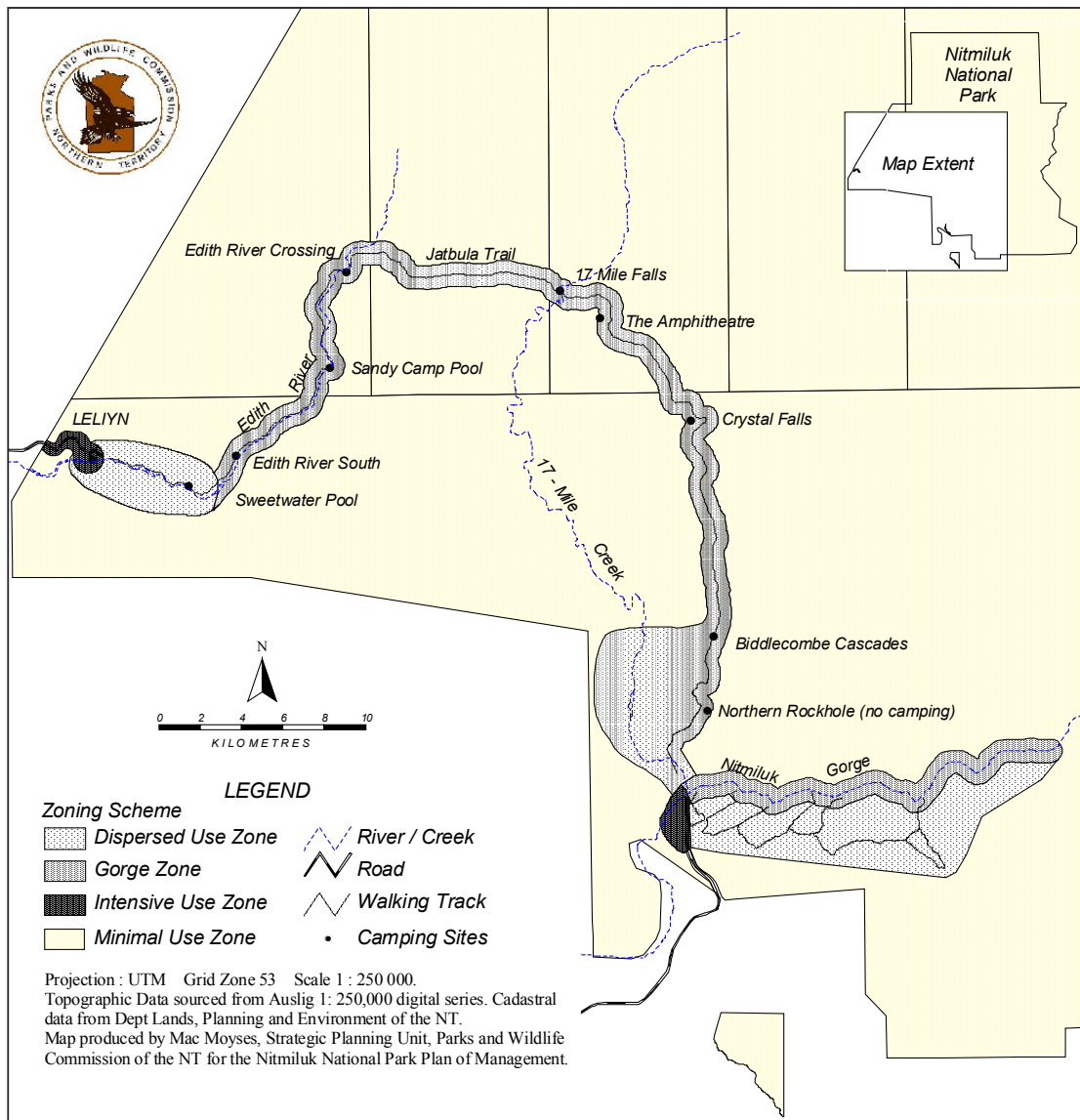
- Intensive Use
- Gorge Zone
- Dispersed Use Zone
- Minimal Use Zone
- Special Protection Areas
- Service Zone

The zoning scheme is shown in Map 4. A description of each zone is given below and a summary presented in Table 1. Management issues identified are considered in further detail in subsequent sections of this Plan.

This zoning scheme accommodates the rights and interests of the Park's Jawoyn owners in accordance with this Plan (see Section 4), the *Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Act* and the Lease. These include rights of traditional use, the establishment of living areas and related access for traditional owners, and the development of commercial enterprises including tourist accommodation and tours.

Traditional owners may undertake traditional activities, including hunting, within any zone. The Jawoyn are agreed however, to not hunt or forage where visitor safety or enjoyment of the Park could be compromised. Similarly, the Nitmiluk Board may approve the establishment of living areas or tourism developments in any part of the Park. In considering such proposals the Board will have regard to the character and purpose of the relevant zone and Park overall, as well as the need to minimise impact on existing visitor experiences and the Park environment.

Public access within any of the zones may be restricted if it is shown to be having a deleterious effect on the natural or cultural values.



Map 4. Park Zoning Scheme – Note the greater area of the Park is Minimal Use Zone

Any development will be carried out with a minimum of interference to the natural environment and according to the requirements of the *Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Nitmiluk National Park Environmental Evaluation Policy*. This policy is included as Appendix 7.

3.1 Intensive Use Zone

The purpose of the Intensive Use Zone is to provide for high numbers of visitors in areas close to major attractions while minimising negative social and environmental impacts. There are presently two areas of intensive use located at the two main sealed road entrances to the Park, at Nitmiluk and Leliyn. These are the most highly developed areas in the Park and form the intensive use zone. Access to and throughout these zones is by conventional vehicles including tourist coaches. Pedestrian access includes sealed paths and wheelchair access to key sites.

Developments are to serve both day and overnight visitor use. Appropriate facilities include camping with full amenities as may be expected of a commercial campground or tourist park, including cabin accommodation. Other appropriate development includes sealed carparks, picnic areas, walking tracks to attractions and lookouts, toilets, shelters and interpretive and information facilities of the highest standard.

3.2 Gorge Zone

The Gorge system consists of one gorge of thirteen sections, each separated by rock bars that are exposed during low waters of the dry season. These sections are commonly known as the first Gorge, second Gorge and so on.

The purpose of this zone is to provide for watercraft access and medium to intensive levels of visitor use within the Gorge system. Facility development will be minimal and designed to retain the area's natural appeal, whilst ensuring safe visitor access and necessary environmental safeguards.

Access within the Gorge itself is possible only on water. Hence this zone provides a unique experience of the Park's primary feature. Permitted visitor activities in addition to boating and sightseeing include fishing, canoeing and swimming. Aboriginal rock art can be seen at a number of sites throughout the Gorge. Camping is permitted at designated sites in the fifth, sixth and ninth gorges for visitors who have canoed the river or walked via the Southern Walks system. Wood fires are not permitted. Although visitor use in this zone is frequently intensive, environmental impact is minimal. Toilets of an appropriate environmental design are provided at the fourth, fifth and sixth Gorges. Tour launches are also equipped with toilets.

While tour launches operating on a concession basis take large numbers of visitors as far as the fifth Gorge, most launch tours visit only the first three gorges. Similarly, while the entire gorge system can be visited by canoe few canoeists venture beyond the third Gorge. Private motorised watercraft are permitted in the first Gorge in the low season subject to various conditions. The number of watercraft permitted in the Gorge will be regulated within social and environmental carrying capacities.

Aircraft providing scenic air tours often fly over the Gorge and adjoining zones. These activities can intrude on the experience of other visitors and management aims to minimise their impact as far as possible. See section 6.4.9 for further detail.

3.3 Dispersed Use Zone

The purpose of this zone is to provide for walking access to a number of attractive destinations within the Park accessed via the Southern Walks track system and the Jatbula Trail. Activities within this zone include bushwalking, swimming and overnight camping. Camping is subject to the issue of permits, camping at designated sites only and practising minimal impact techniques, including waste removal. Basic toilets and fireplaces may be provided if seen as appropriate for environmental reasons.

Visitor use within this zone is moderate to low with emphasis on the opportunity to experience undeveloped areas of the Park without constant contact with other visitors. The level of facility development will continue to be basic, based on the need to protect the natural environment and modify the landscape as little as possible. All walking tracks are well marked with international standard track markers. Motorised access will be restricted to traditional owners and management vehicles only.

The extent of this zone in the southern part of the 17- Mile Valley accommodates the possible development of new walking tracks in this area during the term of this Plan's operation, subject to the Nitmiluk Board's approval. See section 6.4.8.

3.4 Minimal Use Zone

This zone covers the vast majority of the Park's area. Its purpose is to protect the Park's natural and cultural values. Canoeing on the Katherine River upstream of the Gorge and remote adventure bushwalking is currently subject to special approval by the Nitmiluk Board. There are no visitor facilities. Management vehicles access this zone for resource protection programs and for emergency response by four-wheel drive vehicle and helicopter. This zone is important for traditional Aboriginal use.

Jawoyn people at Manyallaluk have previously expressed interest in providing horse-riding tours in different areas of the Park. Such activities, if approved by the Nitmiluk Board would be subject to strict environmental safeguards.

3.5 Special Protection Areas

The purpose of this zone is to identify areas possessing locally important values to ensure their specific management attention. Special Protection Areas may be of any size. They may include Aboriginal art sites, habitats of rare or significant flora and fauna, or European historical sites. They may also include Aboriginal sites of significance and areas set aside for special purposes by traditional owners.

Special protection areas will be formally declared by the Nitmiluk Board, subject to their satisfying criteria of significance and identified threats to values. Public access to Special Protection Areas, if permitted, will be carefully managed. While there are no special protection areas declared by the Board as yet, it is expected that as a result of instructions from traditional owners and findings from research and monitoring programs, such areas will be declared during the term of this Plan.

3.6 Service Zone

The purpose of the service zone is to designate parts of the Park for management use only. Appropriate facilities include residences for Park and concession staff, offices, workshops, storage areas and communication infrastructure. Any development within this zone will be designed for minimal visual impact and environmental disturbance. The Park has two service areas at Nitmiluk and Leliyn, both adjoining the intensive use areas.

Table 1. Summary of Park Zoning Scheme

ZONE	Overall Purpose	Access	Visitor Activities	Facilities	Management Emphasis
Intensive Use	To provide for high levels of visitor use close to major attractions with major infrastructure and facilities. Concession permits and leases operative. Adverse social and environmental impacts will be minimised.	Sealed roads to cater for high traffic levels and conventional vehicles and tourist coaches. High standard pedestrian or walking access. Air traffic only helicopter concession for take-off and landing.	Orientation to the Park, interpretation, short interpretive walks, picnicking, camping and accommodation, swimming, photography	Visitor Centre and orientation / interpretation display shelters. Walking tracks, carparks, picnic areas, campgrounds, swimming and boating access.	Visitor information, control and monitoring. Weed control, especially weeds of amenity areas, fire management focus on protection of assets.
Gorge	To provide for water access, medium to high levels of visitor use within the Gorge system within social and environmental carrying capacities.	Motorised access up to and including 5 th Gorge. Private motorised boats in 1 st gorge only. Canoes and walking from Southern Walks. Air traffic not permitted.	Sightseeing, commercial tours, canoeing, swimming, (permit) camping, photography.	Tour launch facilities, toilets, directional and interpretive signs.	Monitoring launch tour operations and canoes, Visitor safety, protection of cultural sites, especially visited art sites and weed control.
Dispersed Use	To provide for defined access and low-key facilities in natural settings catering for more self-reliant visitor seeking experience of Park away from crowds.	Marked walking tracks. Vehicular access for management purposes only. Restricted air traffic on approved routes.	Bushwalking, swimming, camping, nature appreciation and photography.	Marked walking tracks, emergency call devices, signs, shelters, designated camping with basic facilities.	Visitor information and safety. Maintenance of walking tracks and campsites. Monitoring visitor impacts on soil and vegetation.
Minimal Use	To manage the vast majority of the Park for protection of natural and cultural values.	Four-wheel drive and helicopter for management purposes. Visitor access by permit only. Air traffic on approved routes.	Canoeing and remote adventure bushwalking by permit, photography.	Walking routes, signs, campsites with basic facilities.	Main focus on fire, feral animal and weed control programs. Monitoring sites of high cultural significance.
Special Protection	To provide special protection to sites / areas of exceptional cultural and natural value.	Visitor access subject to strict control.	Activities that threaten values of site / area not permitted.	Facilities appropriate to protect site, eg interpretive signs, barriers.	Intensive management of cultural and natural values as required.
Service	To provide for management infrastructure and facilities	Permitted for park and concession staff only.	Nil. Business contact only.	Management facilities only; offices, workshops, accommodation, utility maintenance facilities.	Maintenance of management facilities and services.