

# Northern Territory **PARKS** 2022-52 **MASTERPLAN**

What do you want from  
your Territory Parks and  
Reserves?

Consultation Paper

Department of  
ENVIRONMENT, PARKS AND WATER SECURITY



# FOREWORD

**The Northern Territory Parks Masterplan 2022-52 will provide a clear vision for the future of the Territory's parks and reserves over the next 30 years.**

**Conserving the Territory's natural landscapes and cultural values for future generations is an essential component of planning for the future. The plan will map out ways to enhance visitor enjoyment and community engagement, as well as activating business and economic opportunities.**

Our parks and reserves are a major destination for visitors to experience the best of the Territory's natural and cultural heritage. They are also highly valued places for Territorians to relax and enjoy.

We need to balance the role of parks in supporting tourism, maintaining the great outdoor lifestyle of Territory residents, supporting Aboriginal economic development and protecting biodiversity. A long term vision is important to ensure our parks endure for future generations so that they too can be inspired by the nature and culture of our parks.

We want to hear from you about how the Northern Territory Government can meet Territory aspirations for our much loved Territory Parks. We are deliberately not presenting you with a draft plan as our first step. Instead, we are asking the big questions about the future of parks and reserves and how we should manage them going forward. We will draft a Masterplan after we hear your views about the bigger picture. There will be an opportunity to comment again on the draft Masterplan later in 2022.

You are invited to read the consultation questions included in this paper and provide feedback on how the Northern Territory can develop and manage its parks and reserves into the future.



COVER IMAGE: *Aerial of Nitmiluk*. Photo by Natalie Sum, Tourism NT

PAGE IMAGE: *Finke 2-mile, West MacDonnell*. Photo by Barry Allen Skipsey 2017



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# INTRODUCTION

## The Northern Territory's parks and reserves are vital to the Territory's future.

Parks and reserves contribute to the conservation of our unique environment and play an important role in the protection of biodiversity. Well-managed parks and reserves will provide sustained social and economic benefits into the future.

Parks and reserves have been set aside over time, with some parks created prior to self-government in the Northern Territory. There has been little change in the footprint of the parks and reserves in the Northern Territory. There has not been a long term plan or statement that provides certainty regarding the future of the Northern Territory Government (NTG) managed parks and reserves for many years.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission is the body established by the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission Act 1980 for the purposes of protecting and managing parks and reserves. Park ownership may sit with Aboriginal Traditional Owners, the Conservation Land Corporation of the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory Land Corporation or the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (Crown Land).

The Parks and Wildlife Commission has a long history in the Territory and is recognised as an important part of the regional landscape, providing for community and visitor safety, a trusted face of government in regional communities and an important resource in times of emergency.

A Parks Masterplan will provide long term certainty and purpose to park management, along with improved certainty for Traditional Owners, Territorians and potential investors.



IMAGE: Munbililla

The Territory Economic Reconstruction's final report (TERC report) recognises our parks as the backbone of the tourism industry, and a key component for the Territory's economic comeback. TERC recommended implementing a 10 year plan to further activate Territory parks. While the Masterplan must have a focus on economic objectives, it must also consider and set a clear direction for social, environmental and cultural outcomes.

In developing a Parks Masterplan we seek genuine engagement with Territorians and key stakeholders. We want to hear what the community want from their parks and reserves.

### The Masterplan will:

- Set clear objectives for managing natural and cultural values in our parks.
- Provide a clear vision for how visitor enjoyment and community and business engagement can be further developed.
- Provide a clear direction for developing and managing recreation values and opportunities for the Territory's most visited parks for the next 30 years, and priorities for capital works and maintenance programs.
- Identify opportunities for:
  - targeted activities and projects that will accelerate advancement of Aboriginal Territorian's economic aspirations;
  - new or enhanced experiences for visitors and the private sector;
  - consolidation (and potential rationalisation) of the entire estate that best represents public benefit;
  - accelerating biodiversity conservation investment partnerships with the private sector and philanthropic investors; and
  - maximising liveability, health and wellbeing outcomes from urban and peri-urban parks, reserves and conservation areas.

# BACKGROUND

## Territory parks

The Northern Territory's 85 national parks and reserves (see Appendices 1 and 2) are important to the Territory's environment, culture, society and future. They play an important role in the conservation of the Territory's biodiversity and are integral to the cultural identity and way of life for many Aboriginal people. Our parks are also a major economic pillar for the Territory, forming the heart of its tourism industry.

Visitation to the Northern Territory's parks (including Uluru Kata-Tjuta and Kakadu National Parks which are managed by Parks Australia) is estimated to support \$1.2 billion in direct value to the economy and an estimated 2,597 direct jobs and 1,963 indirect jobs. Whilst all parks in the Northern Territory contribute to this result, this Master Planning process will only focus on the parks and reserves under the jurisdiction of the Northern Territory Government.

The Territory's parks and reserves offer a unique blend of natural and cultural experiences and the majority of people visit for these core experiences. Over time, the needs and expectations of residents and visitors have changed from simple and self-sufficient activities to a broader range of active pursuits, immersive experiences, events and accommodation options.

## Marine parks

There are two Northern Territory Government marine parks in the Northern Territory: Cobourg Peninsula Marine Park and Limmen Bight Marine Park. Marine parks are considered to provide an essential contribution to the protection of sea country and coastal values in the Northern Territory.

The management of Cobourg Peninsula Marine Park is well established, however Limmen Bight is relatively recently gazetted and the plan of management was released last year (2020). Further work is ongoing into the mapping and describing of values in the Limmen Bight marine park.



IMAGE: Aerial view of the Limmen National Park.  
Photo by Jess Caldwell and Luke Riddle, Tourism NT

## The Parks and Wildlife Commission

The Parks and Wildlife Commission is dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural values of parks and reserves, while providing high-quality nature-based tourism and recreation for visitors.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission and the Conservation Land Corporation are established by the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission Act 1980. The Conservation Land Corporation is charged with acquiring, holding and disposing of land and is often the owner of parks and reserves, and the Parks and Wildlife Commission has responsibility for the care and management of land.

NT parks and reserves are managed in accordance with the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976 (TPWCA), Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation By-Laws 1984, Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Regulations 2001 (NT) and the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission Act 1980.

### The role and functions of the Commission set out in the legislation are:

- a. to promote the conservation and protection of the natural environment of the Territory:
  - by managing or participating in the management of:
    - i. parks, reserves and sanctuaries established under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976 or any other Act of the Territory or the Commonwealth; and
    - ii. other land by agreement with the owners or occupiers of that land; and
  - by the promotion, and the enforcement where necessary, of the protection, conservation and sustainable use of wildlife, whether on such parks, reserves or sanctuaries or elsewhere in the Territory;
- b. the management, for a purpose approved by the Minister, of other lands;
- c. and such other functions as are conferred on it by or under Parks Act or any other Act.

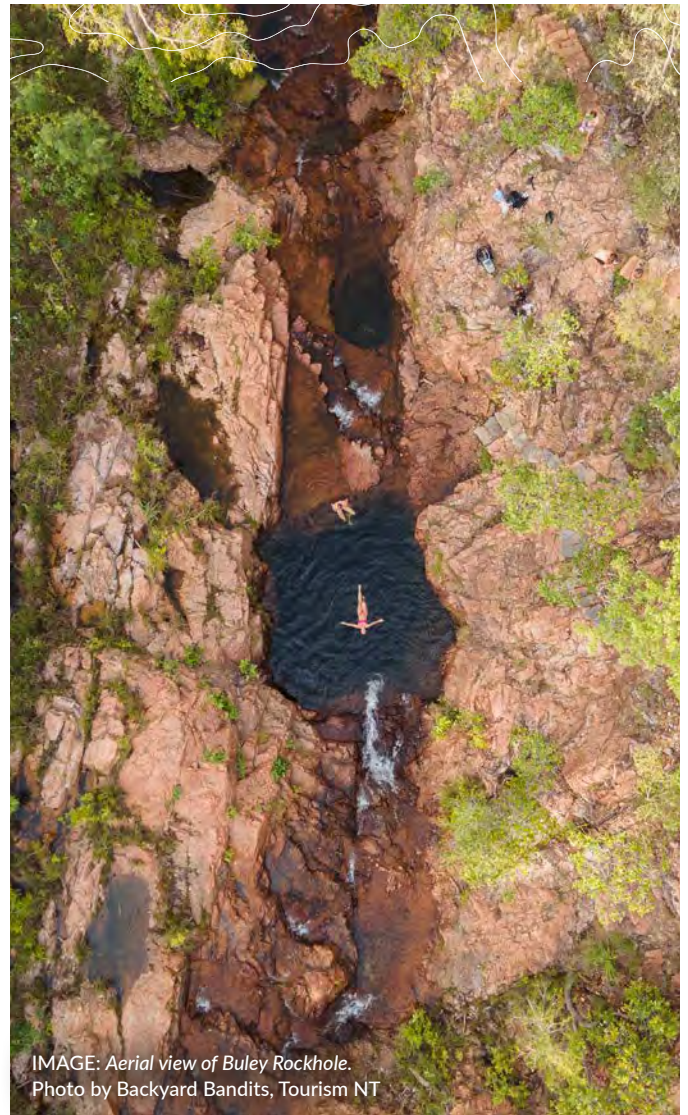


IMAGE: Aerial view of Buley Rockhole.  
Photo by Backyard Bandits, Tourism NT

The Parks and Wildlife Commission work together with Traditional Owners to achieve shared goals and aspirations. The terms of Joint Management are set by various pieces of legislation, depending on the tenure arrangements for a particular park and are also guided by lease agreements, Indigenous Land Use Agreement and Joint Management Plans. Land Councils play an important role in assisting with joint management of parks and reserves and they also have a role defined in the TPWCA of representing and protecting the interests of Traditional Owners in relation to park and reserve management. Land managed under Joint Management arrangements is managed in accordance with the TPWCA unless separate legislation has been enacted such as is the case for Nitmiluk National Park (Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Act 1989) and Garig Gunak Barlu (Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land, Sanctuary and Marine Park Act 1981).

## Resource allocation

Funding for the management of Territory parks and reserves is primarily provided by the Northern Territory Government with a small percentage of the overall operating budget coming from self-generated revenue.

To manage the parks and reserves as valued public assets, available resources must be used to deliver the best possible public value.

In the NT, the effectiveness of park management depends, broadly speaking, on investing available resources in what are prioritised as the most important assets. To this end each park is assessed against two major themes:

- the park's contribution to biodiversity conservation; and
- the park's contribution to recreation and tourism, or visitor values.

The majority of the financial resources available to manage the park estate are spent on employing and supporting Park Rangers with salaries, housing and the infrastructure necessary to support their presence on park such as vehicles and equipment. Allocations for managing fire, weeds, feral animals and conservation programs consume the remainder of available resources.

Funding to repair and maintain infrastructure and build new facilities is also provided by the Northern Territory Government but is now provided for in the budget allocations for the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics following a decision to centralise building, maintenance and repair programs across the Territory.

Contribution by private operators to the ongoing maintenance of park assets is generally minimal.



IMAGE: Tropical forest, Florence Falls.  
Photo by Nicholas Kavo, Tourism Australia

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

There are a range of themes relevant to the development of a comprehensive Parks Masterplan. Key strategic direction is required for the management and development of NTG managed parks and reserves and once the strategic direction is established, a living 30 year Plan can be developed.

The remainder of this document provides information on the themes requiring strategic direction and asks a number of questions to prompt your thoughts and ideas on how the NTG can best articulate and realise an agreed vision for the park's estate.



IMAGE: Exploring Ellery Creek Big Hole.  
Photo by Jesse Lindemann, Tourism NT

**These themes and questions are intended to get you thinking, not prevent you from telling us about any other issue that you feel we need to be considering for the future management of parks and reserves.**

**Please feel free to submit on any matter related to the next 30 years of managing our parks and reserves.**

### The themes include:

- **The future of joint management** – what happens at the end of existing leases and what role do Traditional Owners and the Northern Territory Government see for themselves in the future of iconic Joint Managed parks such as Nitmiluk, Tjoritja and Watarrka?
- **Park development and utility infrastructure** – which Territory parks require additional servicing, development and planning to provide the opportunity for investment? Alternatively, which parks are well serviced and investment ready?
- **Park expansion** – are there opportunities to provide new visitor experiences, benefit Traditional Owners, improve biodiversity conservation, strengthen heritage protection or maximise public benefit by declaring new parks or reserves?
- **Park consolidation** – what parks and reserves fail to add value to the Territory? Could certain parks be turned over to other purposes or be better managed as reserves by other organisations?
- **Real projects** – which are the most important projects for a 10 year program for promoting, and sourcing investment in well identified, Traditional Owner approved projects on Territory parks?
- **Recreational futures** – what is the future for recreation and how can Territory parks maximise their contribution to health and wellbeing and promote the livability of the Northern Territory. How do we connect the whole Territory community with these public assets?
- **Biodiversity values** – what are the key natural values in the Territory parks and reserves and how will we manage them over the next thirty years to ensure we protect them for future generations. In particular, as development progresses and climate changes in the Territory, how will we maintain a balanced and comprehensive park estate?
- **Living cultural values and heritage** – how do we ensure that key cultural values are identified and managed with the agreement and involvement of custodians?
- **Aboriginal economic development** – how do we grow to a future where Aboriginal businesses are a thriving part of the Territory parks landscape?
- **Balancing commercialisation and revenue** – How will we balance the promotion and provision of commercial opportunities on Territory parks and also protect the revenue base to ensure that Territory parks are well managed and sustainably funded?
- **Partnerships** – where are the partnership opportunities that will leverage public benefits for Traditional Owners, park users, the tourism industry, conservation and the Territory Government?



IMAGE: Hiking Larapinta Trail

# KEY THEMES

## Joint management in partnership with Traditional Owners

Many of the key iconic Territory locations and recreational assets are on Aboriginal Land that has been leased back to the NTG under joint management arrangements. When you visit Kings Canyon (Watarrka NP), take a tour down Nitmiluk Gorge or a swim at Leliyn (Nitmiluk NP), trek the Larapinta trail or swim at Ormiston Gorge (Tjoritja NP), visit Victoria Settlement (Garig Gunak Barlu NP), drive for days from Timber Creek to Kalkarindji or launch your boat on the Victoria River (Judburra NP), you are doing so on the basis of the joint management arrangements that have provided for public access.

Joint management in the Northern Territory was first entered into for the Cobourg Peninsular Sanctuary in the early 1980's. This was the first formalised joint management arrangement in Australia, despite the claim often being made that Kakadu was the first joint managed park.

### The main aims and principles of joint management in the Northern Territory are:

- empowerment of Traditional Owners and equity in decisions about their land;
- improvement in cultural experiences for park visitors and a contribution to meeting demand for more cultural tourism experiences;
- improvement in conservation management through the combination of traditional and western scientific knowledge; and
- development of employment and economic opportunities for Traditional Owners.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission has a genuine commitment to 'both ways' management of parks and reserves and a belief that both traditional and western knowledge and practices are required to successfully manage our estate to a high standard. Furthermore, there is a real desire to increase the levels of employment for local Aboriginal people working on their own country so that there is a ready source of knowledgeable, skilled expertise close to hand for the management of parks and reserves.

Expectations about Aboriginal Australian's quality of life, health and education outcomes, treaty making, land rights and native title are changing and it is important that our relationships and frameworks for working with Traditional Owners keeps pace with this.

While there is sporadic debate regarding the 'failures' of joint management arrangements, there are many positives of joint management that also need to be noted, such as:

- the provision of lease rental and revenue sharing with Traditional Owners;
- training and development in governance for Traditional Owners;
- long term relationship building, better understanding of cultural values within the park service; and
- a shared approach to managing biodiversity that incorporates traditional understanding of natural systems.

Thirty-three of our Territory parks and reserves are jointly managed with Traditional Owners (see Table 1). Additionally, one informal joint management arrangement exists at Tjuwaliyn (Douglas) Hot Springs Park (where formal joint management arrangements are currently under negotiation) (see Table 2).

Parks and Reserves with joint management under a lease agreement	Lease Expiry Date
Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve	22/06/2104
Arltunga Historical Reserve	11/06/2108
Barranyi (North Island) National Park	5/08/2090
Black Jungle / Lambells Lagoon Conservation Reserve	9/08/2104
Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve	11/06/2108
Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve	11/06/2108
Djukbinj National Park	16/04/2046
Dulcie Range National Park	21/02/2109
Finke Gorge National Park	6/06/2110
Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve	9/08/2104
Garig Gunak Barlu National Park (Cobourg Marine Park)	1/09/2080
Garig Gunak Barlu National Park (Gurig National Park)	1/09/2080
Giwining / Flora River Nature Park	14/11/2104
Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve	12/05/2109
Harrison Dam Conservation Reserve	14/11/2104
Iytwelepenty / Davenport Ranges National Park	27/10/2107
Judbarra/ Gregory National Park	12/05/2109
Karlu / Devil's Marbles Conservation Reserve	27/10/2107
Kuyunba Conservation Reserve	21/02/2109
Mac Clark (Acacia peuce) Conservation Reserve	4/10/2094
Mary River National Park	9/10/2106
Melacca Swamp Conservation Area	14/11/2104
Napwerte / Ewaninga Rock Carvings Conservation Reserve	11/06/2108
Native Gap Conservation Reserve	21/02/2109
N'dhala Gorge Nature Park	11/06/2108
Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park	9/09/2088
Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve	2/10/2104
Ruby Gap Nature Park	2/10/2104
Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National Park	17/07/2111
Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) Conservation Reserve	10/10/2089
Trephina Gorge Nature Park	11/06/2108
Watarrka National Park	12/09/2111
Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park	8/12/2108

Table 1. NT Parks and Reserves, Joint Management arrangements

Parks and Reserves with informal joint management arrangements	
Tjuwaliyn (Douglas) Hot Springs Park	No lease agreement

Table 2. NT Parks and Reserves - Informal Joint Management arrangements



IMAGE: Termite Mounds at Litchfield National Park. Photo by Ashley Dobson, Tourism NT

Joint management arrangements under Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) or other lease arrangements are due for review or will conclude over the next 25 to 83 years. Djukbinj National Park is the first of the joint management arrangements due to expire.

While many joint management arrangements will not expire in the life of this masterplan, the planning for the next step in joint management needs a long lead time. People need time to build a relationship with the idea of what might come next.

Options to be explored by Traditional Owners and the community regarding long term futures for joint management arrangements could include:

- Renegotiating joint management arrangements in some parks so that the park remains set aside as a park for public benefit purposes but is solely managed by its Traditional Owners either as a Territory park or reserve or as an Indigenous Protected Area.
- Renegotiating joint management arrangements to continue as a park for public benefit purposes, co-managed by its Traditional Owners and a government funded park service.
- Renegotiating the conditional grant of land to Traditional Owners so that the land is no longer required to be used for the purpose of a park or reserve set aside for public access or public benefit purposes.

There will be places where Traditional Owners want things to stay as they are with no need for any renegotiating and that is also to be considered.

There may be a different preference for what comes next for each park that is currently jointly managed and Traditional Owners will be instrumental in making those decisions.

Another important question is whether there are parks and reserves or other areas of land that are not currently jointly managed that could or should be. For example, as Native Title Determinations are made over parks and reserves, there may be an opportunity to enter into co-management arrangements with the Native Title Determinants of the area. Similarly, as Aboriginal Territorians buy land or are granted title to their land as a result of land claims, there may be an opportunity provided for the Traditional Owners to seek assistance in setting the area aside for public benefit, without alienating the title to the land.

The continuation of joint management arrangements past the original end date will be a necessity for Territory economic development and livability in the future. Alternatively the replacement of the visitor and recreational opportunities through different public access models will become a consideration.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Do our current joint management arrangements work and if not, why don't they?
- How can current joint management arrangements with Traditional Owners be strengthened to achieve meaningful benefits for local Aboriginal people, the community and country?
- What could or should happen with joint managed parks at the end of the current agreement periods?
- What do we need to do now and over the next 30 years to change joint management arrangements so that they are likely to be a desirable option for Traditional Owners at the end of the current lease period?

IMAGE: Nitmiluk Gorge

## Park development and utility infrastructure

A peculiarity of the Northern Territory is the lack of what is termed in this plan as utility infrastructure. This includes roads, power and water, communications connectivity and proximity to services such as emergency medical care.

Limited utility infrastructure heightens the degree of logistical difficulty in improving access to parks and providing new experiences on parks. The NTG in partnership with the Australian Government works hard on expanding utility infrastructure but in resource constrained circumstances, therefore any new utilities and roads will need to be prioritised.

There are some frequently expressed views about which existing roads could be upgraded to improve parks and reserve visitation for both tourism and recreational purposes such as sealing the Mereenie loop road in Central Australia, the Savannah Way connecting Borroloola to Mataranka via Limmen National Park and the Roper Highway, or improving the road to the Cobourg Peninsula.

There may be opportunities provided by new initiatives that will require the development of entirely new roads. For example, the proposed Spirit Hills extension of Keep River National Park has some of the most interesting and inspiring geological formations in the Northern Territory and provides excellent examples of eastern Kimberly ecosystems. It also extends to an amazing land and seascape where the Victoria River meets the sea. But the majority of the values in the area cannot be accessed unless by air or sea due to an absence of roads and tracks.

There are some major parks and reserves that have power and water infrastructure that makes them good choices for development of high intensity tourism developments. For example, Nitmiluk National Park is connected to mains power and also has a reasonable water resource and has been able to support the establishment of a resort. Munbililla (Tomato Island) in Limmen National Park could also be considered for development, noting mains power comes from the local community.

Water availability is a major limitation to developing tourism and recreational opportunities on parks and reserves. It is especially challenging in central Australia where difficulty is experienced in keeping a viable water supply to ranger bases and low key camping infrastructure present on the park. However, there are new and creative solutions to water resource limitations being designed all the time. Investment in innovative water solutions may become a priority for the private sector when considering opportunities on parks and reserves.

Any decisions regarding the extension of utilities to benefit the parks estate and tourism and recreation purposes have to be balanced with other utility challenges in the Northern Territory. It could be argued that this sort of work should wait until all communities in the Territory have adequate infrastructure to provide safe and sustainable lifestyles.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Do you think it is important to open up new areas of existing parks and reserves to tourism and recreation through the installation of major infrastructure like roads and power lines?
- Where are those places where a new road would open up significant tourism and recreation opportunities on parks and reserves?
- Are there places where infrastructure will be built for other development purposes that can be leveraged to benefit tourism and recreational purposes on the parks estate?
- Should we be trying to extend managed power and water utilities into parks to provide for more intensive tourism developments?
- Which are the parks and reserves that are well serviced and should be considered for intensive tourism investment?

## Park expansion

There are 85 Northern Territory Government managed parks and reserves across the Northern Territory and resourcing for the management of biodiversity and cultural values and maintenance of the visitor and management infrastructure is not infinite.

Caution has been applied to developing recent plans for new Territory managed parks without also addressing the constrained resources that can be applied to additional park management costs. This may not always be the case however, and a plan for where we would extend and expand the parks estate could be considered as revenue and resources grow to provide new areas for conservation, tourism and recreation purposes.

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) are areas of Indigenous community owned and managed lands protected in Australia. They contribute the largest component (44 per cent) of the land dedicated to the protection and conservation of natural and cultural values, covering more than 66 million hectares across Australia. It must be acknowledged that this is a viable alternative model for biodiversity conservation. Visitor and recreational use of IPAs is less well established.

Other new models for expanding the park estate are being considered and established in other jurisdictions around Australia. For example, Queensland has recently introduced the concept of privately owned and managed parks into its legislation. These privately owned parks are protected in perpetuity and may also open new tourism and recreational opportunities and uses.

In particular, gaps in visitation opportunity across the Territory can be identified and progressed over time. For example, a visitor to the Northern Territory has to drive for a long way from the Queensland border before they reach the first declared reserve at Karlu Karlu Conservation Reserve near Tennant Creek. New parks will also provide opportunities to spread visitor and recreation pressure away from high use areas for example Litchfield National Park, within the same region.

There are also gaps in the representation of ecosystem types found in the Northern Territory and opportunities to fill those gaps to ensure a comprehensive and representative park system can be identified. In particular the areas to the south and east of the Northern Territory are less well represented than those found in northern parts.

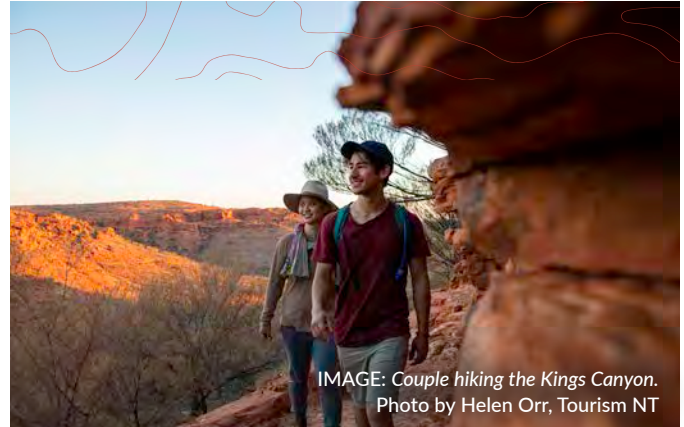


IMAGE: Couple hiking the Kings Canyon.  
Photo by Helen Orr, Tourism NT

New opportunities or requirements to protect areas for the purpose of preventing the extinction of a threatened species may arise as the conservation status of species change over time.

There are also landscape and ecosystem changes that are likely to occur from climate change, and existing parks may no longer provide suitable habitat for some species in the future. Flexibility to adjust our park estate might be one way that we can mitigate the impact of climate change on species and ecosystems.

There are also opportunities to better configure some reserves where they may be small or an impractical shape. If the decision is made to retain them in the estate, efforts can be made to expand them to improve cost efficiencies and management effectiveness.

On the other hand, Territorians might think we have enough parks and reserves and prefer that there is no further land in the Northern Territory set aside from other productive uses. Setting aside an area for a park or reserve is a long term decision and after the novelty of a new park or reserve has faded, the area still requires management and maintenance.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Do you think opportunities for new parks and reserves should be identified or is there already enough land set aside from production in the Territory?
- Should we prioritise new parks for recreation purposes, tourism purposes or filling the gaps in species and ecosystem conservation? Is there a way for all to be achieved?
- Do you think the concept of privately owned national parks should be explored?

## Park consolidation

Our existing park estate is a legacy of incremental steps in creating parks. This masterplan presents an opportunity to re-think the Territory parks estate to better serve the Territory now and into the future.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission has the care and control of many parcels of land, some of them very small that have almost no biodiversity conservation, recreational or cultural values. Other areas do have value to the public but there may be organisations that are better placed to operate assets that are entirely recreational.

One example is the Buffalo Creek boat ramp on the outskirts of Darwin. The Buffalo Creek boat ramp has very high visitor value and everyone agrees it needs to stay. However it is not Parks and Wildlife Commission land and could be managed by either the landholder, local government or another government agency in line with the management of other boat ramps across Darwin.

A central Australian example is that of the many tiny heritage places that are found on the Stuart Highway that are used as rest areas or informal camping areas by travelers on the Stuart Highway. These areas could be managed by another Northern Territory Government agency or the shire council responsible for the area, as their management does not really fit with the functions of the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

There may be other parks and reserves that are of more substantial size where visitation is very low, biodiversity values are limited and there is little opportunity for public benefit from the land. These areas of land still require active land management such as fire and weed management, diluting the resources of the Parks and Wildlife Commission. This land may be usefully considered for more productive purposes, if no longer a park or reserve.



IMAGE: Cutta Cutta Caves

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Would you support rationalisation of our Territory parks or should we try to retain everything we have?
- Are there areas that you think should not be a park or reserve?
- Do you think the Parks and Wildlife Commission rangers should be managing assets that are for non-park related recreation purposes?
- Are there any parks and reserves where other productive uses could be more valuable to the Territory?

## Real projects – 10 year Activation Plan

An important part of the Parks and Reserves Masterplan is a 10 year Activation Plan that consists of real projects that will be prioritised for development to support recovery and growth of the tourism sector and its contribution to the Northern Territory economy.

It is also important that these priorities drive real advancement in economic development for Aboriginal Territorians and improve the economic return to Aboriginal landowners from joint management arrangements.

A set of priorities for the tourism sector have been developed by the NTG in the Destination Management Planning process and the Drive Strategy. There are several priorities for parks and reserves in each of these plans (see Tables 3 and 4).



Location	Project Opportunities
Alice Springs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop new and support the upgrade of cultural and heritage tourism experiences</li> <li>Develop new products that further enhance tourism experiences between and including the Telegraph Station, NAAG and CBD</li> <li>Expand mountain biking experiences and services</li> </ul>
Finke Gorge National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a walking trail linking Ntaria/ Hermannsburg to the Finke Gorge National Park</li> </ul>
Tjoritja /West MacDonnell Ranges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a hub for world class adventure experiences set within the MacDonnell Ranges</li> <li>Finalise the Red Centre Adventure Ride</li> </ul>
Karlu Karlu / Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the overnight facilities at Karlu Karlu / Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve in consultation with the Traditional Owners</li> </ul>
Nitmiluk National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop multi-day high-end walking options (guided and FIT) for Jatbula trail</li> <li>Night time experiences in Nitmiluk National Park</li> <li>Implement Leliyn (Edith Falls) master plan developments</li> </ul>
Limmen National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop additional infrastructure</li> <li>Enhance access to additional natural attractions in the Park</li> </ul>
Mataranka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Eley master plan developments</li> </ul>
Keep River National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance access to Keep River NP natural attractions (e.g. Bungle Bungle like formation)</li> </ul>
Timber Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a fishing tour operator</li> </ul>
Victoria River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a river cruise near Victoria River Roadhouse</li> </ul>
Watarrka National Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a multi-day hike in Watarrka National Park</li> <li>Improve existing accommodation and establish new accommodation offerings</li> <li>Expand and enhance visitor amenities in Watarrka</li> <li>Expand the Aboriginal cultural experiences surrounding Watarrka</li> </ul>

Table 3. List of Park and Reserves project priorities per region, identified through the NTG Destination Management Planning process and the Drive Strategy

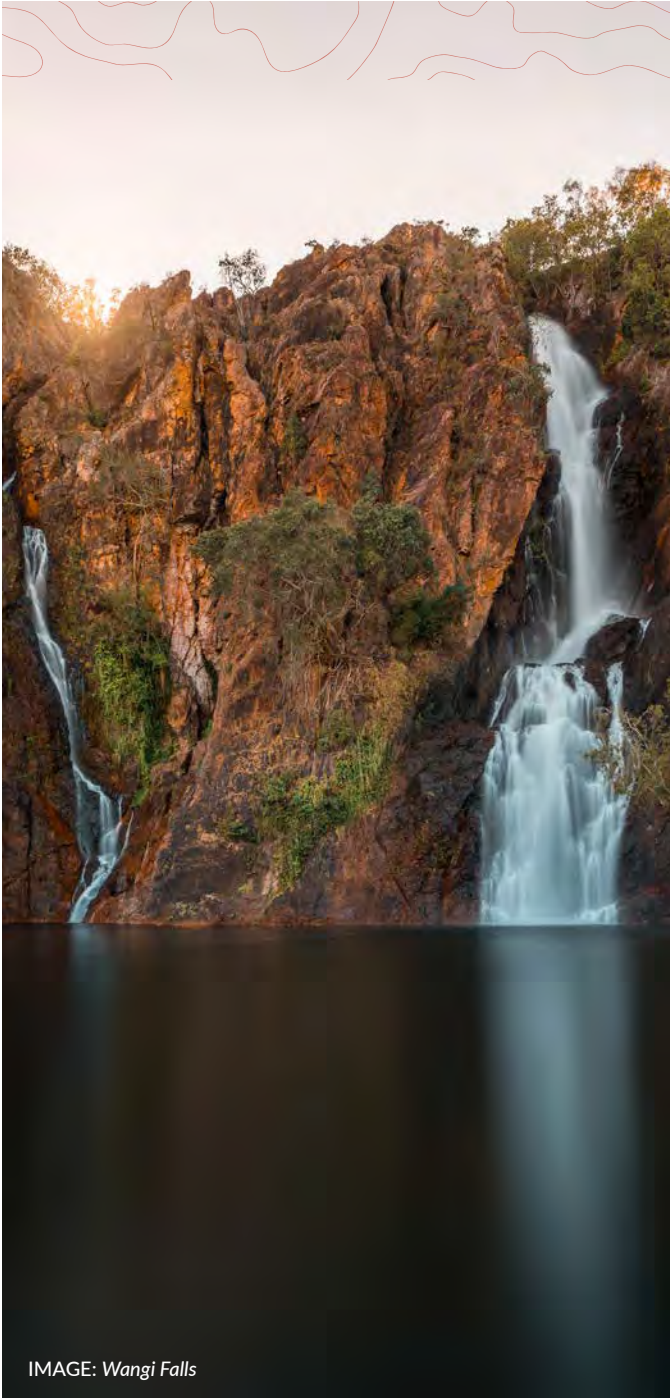


IMAGE: Wangi Falls

These priorities reflect the requirements for development of the tourism industry and may not reflect the priorities of Traditional Owners and Territorians who use parks for other reasons. Darwin urban parks are clearly an important location for recreation for many Territorians, and Alice Springs and Katherine residents also value their nearby recreation opportunities. Parks that provide for camping, fishing, 4WD, mountain biking and walking opportunities within a few hours' drive of Darwin, Katherine or Alice Springs are likely to be of most importance for livability in the Northern Territory.

There is increasing pressure on existing swimming holes and day use areas across the Northern Territory. In the Top End, swimming locations are limited by the requirement to manage waterholes for saltwater crocodile risk and any further expansion of swimming opportunities will require an analysis of possible locations and very intensive management to keep swimmers safe. New swimming opportunities in central Australia are obviously limited by the availability of water. This is important as anecdotally, people prefer to visit locations where they can swim and seek respite from the heat.

Traditional Owners of joint managed parks have their own views about where short to medium term investment (over the next 10 years) should be directed on their parks. Some Traditional Owners have ideas and strategies to grow their own business opportunities from investment in infrastructure. Benefits to Aboriginal Traditional Owners and businesses are clearly identified as a priority for the Northern Territory Government.

A prioritised list of projects for parks and reserves can provide for ongoing investment in detailed co-design and negotiation of projects with stakeholders and Traditional Owners on Joint Managed parks. This will assist to ensure there is a portfolio of investment ready projects which can be opportunistically delivered as capital funds become available.

Not all investment must be undertaken by government and an important part of identifying priority projects includes identifying opportunities for private investment on the park estate. The 10 year Activation Plan will also include an indication of where the Northern Territory Government is likely to seek private investment interest in establishing infrastructure.

#### Turbo charging projects on NT Parks and Reserves

\$17.3m for new swimming spots, 4WD tracks in Litchfield National Park

\$9.9m to improve experience at The Gardens

\$5.5m to continue work with Jawoyn Traditional Owners in Nitmiluk National Park

\$12m to continue to work on new adventure cycling tracks in the Red Centre

\$5m to work with joint management partners to develop experiences in Central Australia

Table 4. List of Turbo charging projects on NT Park and Reserves

There has been community concern in many countries about private investment in infrastructure on national parks and reserves. These concerns are generally related to the allocation of exclusivity over a public asset and the possibility that the standards of protection offered to the park may be degraded. A principle of private investment into the projects in the 10 year Activation Plan will include the requirement for provision of access to be maintained for the free and independent traveller. Similarly, environmental protection standards for private investors will not be relaxed in the interest of encouraging investment and will be guided by the conservation principles of the park legislation and joint management arrangements.

### Currently our parks have:



975 km's of public access 4wd tracks



628 km's of walking tracks of which 318 km's are considered short walks and 310 km's are multiday walking trails



26 ranger stations



134 campgrounds



110 day use areas



143 toilets

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Do you agree with the list of tourism focused projects proposed for parks and reserves?
- Do you have a particular project you think is a priority for recreation purposes?
- Do you prefer to visit places that have swimming as an option?
- Do you have a favourite site on a park that you think needs significant refreshment or rework?
- Should private sector investment be encouraged on Territory parks and reserves?



IMAGE: *Starry Sky at Glen Helen at Night.*  
Photo by Matt Cherubino, Tourism NT



## Recreational futures

Leading on from the discussion of key projects that are part of the 10 year Activation Plan is the identification of possible future recreation activities on parks and reserves and the contribution they make to livability and the support that parks and reserves provide to health and wellbeing outcomes.

The role of parks and reserves in supporting health and wellbeing is well documented but has been recently illustrated by the experiences of communities everywhere during the Covid-19 global pandemic. When communities were progressively locked down and many freedoms were removed, maintaining access to open air environments for exercise and nature based recreation was a very high priority. In the Northern Territory, parks and reserves were one of the first areas to reopen on the basis that people needed places to go. Parks close to major urban centres experienced very high visitation.

There has been a very strong focus on expansion of mountain bike opportunities on parks and reserves right across Australia over the last 10-15 years and this trend is no different in the Northern Territory. There have also been reported trends toward shorter walks for recreation purposes, with longer walks becoming less popular. This trend in favouring shorter walks may be reversing at the moment with people returning to long treks in the Northern Territory as trekking overseas is not currently an option.

Hunting and fishing are also very popular recreational activities partly reliant on Territory parks and reserves. Hunting in particular is becoming resource constrained and there has been vocal calls for new hunting reserves to be established. Fishing is reliant, in many cases, not on the park itself, but access to the water, boat ramps and the camping and day use infrastructure provided by the park.

There are possibilities for linking the provision of recreation opportunities on parks and reserves more formally with health and wellbeing targets and outcomes. Other states, most notably Victoria (Healthy Parks Healthy People program), have strong links between parks and health and wellbeing, including funding parks against health and wellbeing targets. Other ideas that are being pursued are whether it is appropriate to prescribe visits to national parks as part of a health care plan.



IMAGE: Bitter Springs.

A plan for recreation on parks and reserves needs to ensure that there is equity applied to access for all. Continual improvement in accessibility of recreation opportunity for people with disabilities must remain a priority. The Parks and Wildlife Commission currently takes the opportunity to upgrade facilities for improved accessibility for people with disabilities as infrastructure is built or refreshed. However, there could be a targeted program of prioritising refreshment of infrastructure based on accessibility for people with a disability.

The question of accessibility for a broader sector of Territorians also needs to be considered. Much of the Territory estate can only be accessed by those who have the resources that allows them to own and drive a 4WD in remote circumstances or own and drive a boat. Further planning is required to provide more 2WD access and more activities in parks and reserves for people who don't own a boat or fish.

Similarly, most day-use areas, BBQ's and campgrounds within the park estate were designed in the 1980s for a western nuclear family. The Territory's demography and cultural makeup has changed significantly and continues to change. 'New' park users have different preferences and should have an equal opportunity to enjoy parks and reserves.

Many cultural groups living in the Territory would enjoy larger communal cooking areas for their extended family to enjoy a meal together in a natural setting.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- The Northern Territory has long been a drawcard for 4WDers, boating and fishing. Is it time to make efforts such that other recreational uses become more available?
- If new hunting reserves can be established, should they be on the park estate and managed by the Parks and Wildlife Commission?
- Are there enough short walks on parks and reserves?
- Should park and reserve management be linked with health and wellbeing outcomes?
- How do we connect the whole Territory community with public assets?
- Should we be prioritising refreshment of infrastructure for people with a disability as a priority rather than including improved access in those places that we have already prioritised for other reasons?

## Biodiversity values

The Territory's parks estate is large and diverse, ranging from coastal, tropical savannah, escarpments and waterfalls in the north through to red sands, mountain ranges and gorges in the arid region of central Australia. Our Parks represent and protect an extraordinary range of biodiversity values across the Territory.

The Northern Territory has not been subject to the extensive clearing and habitat modification found in much of the rest of Australia. The large areas of Aboriginal land, particularly Indigenous Protected Areas also contribute to the relatively intact nature of the Territory landscape. In general, our parks and reserves are not isolated islands in a sea of highly modified landscapes. Nevertheless, Territory parks and reserves are an important asset for biodiversity conservation, where management can be focused on reducing threats such as weeds, feral animals and poor fire regimes.

We divide our parks into three main regions that group general climatic and landscape patterns - Top End, Gulf Savannah and Central Australia.



### Top End parks

Top End parks and reserves are dominated by woodland and open forest with small pockets of grassland and monsoon forest, extensive mangrove-lined coasts, wetlands, rivers and floodplains. This landscape has been shaped by fire and its strong annual wet and dry seasons. While coastal reserves and marine park support beaches and coral reefs.



### Gulf Savannah parks

South of the Top End, the transition from tropical to semi-arid is marked by vast plains with spectacular sandstone features. Parks in the Gulf Savannah region encompass vast open woodlands and sheer escarpments. In the Gulf of Carpentaria the estate includes examples of mangroves and extensive sea-grass beds. Further to the south, the habitat changes to semi-arid savannah with Mitchell Grass, which remains largely unrepresented in the parks estate.



### Central Australia parks

Central Australian parks and reserves are characterised by rugged ranges, gorges, woodlands, desert, rivers, rock-holes, spinifex grasslands and sand country. The climate varies greatly during the year, with temperatures reaching above 40°C in summer, down to below 0°C in winter. Rainfall varies from year to year, with 'extreme' rainfall events between long dry periods. This diversity of habitats and weather extremes makes management complex and highly responsive to the conditions of a given year.

Many of the wildlife species and other values found in Territory parks and reserves are not found elsewhere in Australia and maintaining these natural values on parks is a key function of the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

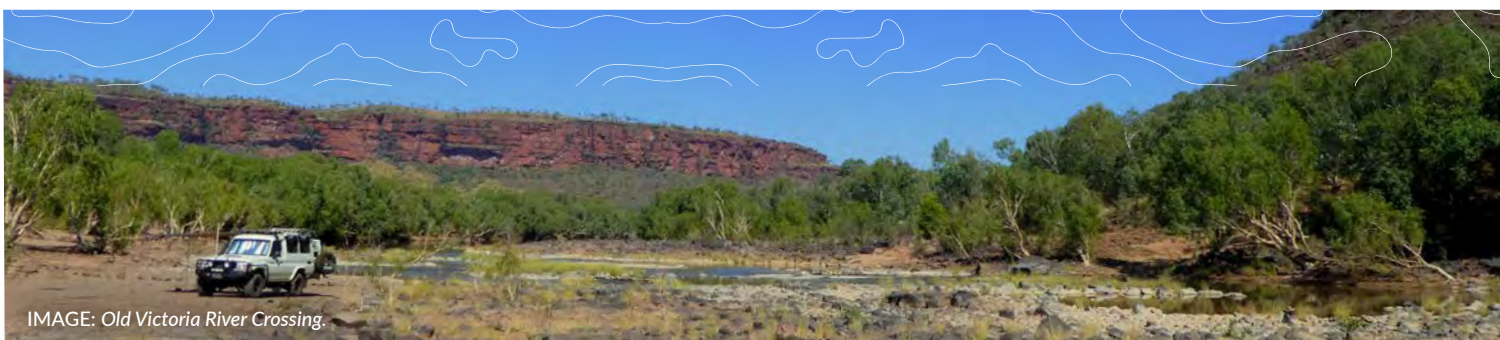


IMAGE: Old Victoria River Crossing.

**Management planning and the Management Effectiveness Framework are the two key tools that are used to map and plan the management of natural values on parks and reserves.**

These tools allow a detailed plan to be developed for a park that is tailored to the natural values that occur in that park and the threats to those values.

Most of the on-ground work to maintain biodiversity values in Territory parks consists of managing fire, weeds and feral animals. There are approximately 130 Rangers spread across large areas of land, and resources are prioritised to where highest biodiversity and visitor values occur. The Parks and Wildlife Commission is aware that there are fire and pest issues that remain unaddressed as resources are limited.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission intends to continue with a prioritised approach to managing pests and fires on parks and reserves. The potential increase in resourcing for parks flowing from recently announced revenue measures will provide an opportunity to improve the management of natural values to ensure the Northern Territory keeps its reputation for protecting world class natural landscapes.

Other initiatives that may be considered are a higher reliance on fee for service arrangements particularly with Aboriginal Land and Sea Ranger groups, closer collaboration with park neighbours including pastoral enterprises, an increase in volunteerism for park caretaking and maintenance and expansion of community programs such as the Gamba Army.

Climate change will have an effect on the natural values of Territory parks and reserves. We need to better understand the nature of these impacts and how they best can be managed. The Parks and Wildlife Commission needs to seek collaborative opportunities with the academic and not-for-profit sector to establishing strong connections into research and creative thinking about management of conservation in the context of climate change.



IMAGE: Casuarina Coastal Reserve

**The masterplan will establish key goals and standards for the management of natural values on parks and reserves.**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

- Are Territory parks and reserves still expected to be the cornerstone of our biodiversity conservation efforts or is this role now being filled by other types of land management?
- Where does the right balance lie in managing Territory parks and reserves for the protection of biodiversity, and developing them for recreation, tourism and other economic opportunities?
- What proportion of Parks and Wildlife Commission resources should be allocated to protecting natural values?
- What do you think the goals should be for the management of natural biodiversity values on parks and reserves?
- Are there particular issues with the way the Parks and Wildlife Commission currently manages biodiversity and the threats to biodiversity?
- How can the park and reserve system best adapt to the impacts of climate change?

## Living cultural values and heritage

The Northern Territory is in a fortunate position as many Aboriginal Territorians retain their knowledge, connection and responsibility for their country. Our parks are living cultural landscapes for Traditional Owners.

The continuation of Aboriginal cultural practices and maintenance of their enduring connection to country is vitally important for current and future generations of Traditional Owners. The need to transfer knowledge and practices from old to young people is one of the most important issues identified by Traditional Owners across the Territory.

In places, senior Traditional Owners are custodians for accumulated knowledge spanning thousands of years and they provide an essential link to these living cultural landscapes. Their knowledge provides an enduring anchor for traditional law, social organisation and identity. Due to the responsibilities and complexities associated with Aboriginal knowledge, it is important that Traditional Owners have a leading role whenever decisions are made regarding the protection of their country and presentation of their cultural heritage.

There is greater scope to work with Traditional Owners in some parks to interpret the significance of their country for commercial operators and visitors. This also provides an important means by which non-Aboriginal people can develop an understanding and appreciation of the landscape and its stories by having Traditional Owners tell these stories in their own voice and in their own way. Together, we aim to promote understanding and respect for the traditions, languages, cultures, customs and skills of Traditional Owners. In so doing, management and presentation of our parks can provide opportunities for building understanding within the visiting public of traditional cultures, Aboriginal Australian history and reconciliation.

One of the most immediate ways that the Northern Territory can acknowledge traditional connections to country is to integrate traditional names for places into the presentation and identification of the park estate.

Territory parks and reserves are rich with sacred sites, culturally significant areas, art sites, and archaeological, geological and heritage sites of national and international significance. Heritage values that require protection include sites associated with the early contact period between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, early exploration, pastoralism, WWII and the tourism pioneers. Examples include Arltunga goldmining remnants, Macassan sites, the Victoria Settlement, Cape Don Lighthouse, the three Telegraph Stations (Alice Springs, Barrow Creek and Tennant Creek) and the cement bunkers in Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

Key strategic issues regarding the management of cultural landscapes and heritage include familiar problems of how we prioritise allocation of resources across so many important and meaningful sites of significance. Furthermore, there is still a great deal to be learned about the values on parks and reserves and how we can best protect them and/or present them if it is appropriate to do so.

It is important not to overlook the fact that effective conservation of built heritage sites is costly and requires expert knowledge and skills. There will be a need to allow built infrastructure to 'decline gracefully' in places due to an inability to secure maintenance resources.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- What should the goal for the management of cultural values on parks and reserves be?
- How can we better protect our Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage sites in Territory parks and reserves?
- Are there things that we should be doing that we aren't?
- Would you like to see place names changed to culturally appropriate names in all of our parks?

## Aboriginal economic development

The Northern Territory has a strong focus on Aboriginal economic development and there are several key strategies that are seeking to move this agenda forward.

The 'Everyone Together' Aboriginal Affairs strategy has targets for increasing Aboriginal tourism ventures, increasing the economic development opportunities of Aboriginal resources and improving the proportion of contracts awarded to Aboriginal businesses and organisations and increasing the number of Aboriginal Territorians employed as rangers.

The Northern Territory Aboriginal Land and Sea Action Plan sets out actions for supporting economic development and employment on Aboriginal land including joint managed parks. The Northern Territory Aboriginal Tourism Strategy is all about developing and supporting Aboriginal Tourism businesses and opportunities.

The Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission also stressed the importance of Aboriginal economic development across multiple industries to support a sustainable future for the Territory.

There is capacity for Territory parks and reserves to contribute to Aboriginal economic development through the letting of contracts, fee for service arrangements and hospitality and tourism business opportunities. It is also important to note that there are other opportunities outside of Territory parks and reserves that can also provide advancement and contribute to this aspiration.

Improving the employment rate of Aboriginal Territorians by the Parks and Wildlife Commission is also an important initiative that will be continued over the next 30 years. Improving flexibility in recruitment and working arrangements is required and different models of park management can be trialed to find best fit model for different locations. This should not replace other core goals of Aboriginal economic development such as encouraging Aboriginal owned enterprises so that Aboriginal people are able to operate and work for Aboriginal businesses.

Other opportunities that provide for Aboriginal economic development on joint managed parks include the lease fees paid by the NTG, management of pest animals as saleable commodities and sale of carbon credits resulting from carbon farming. The share of an increasing revenue base across parks and reserves resulting from the recently approved fee regime for camping, walking and the Parks Pass will also provide improved economic return to Traditional Owners of joint managed parks and may present an opportunity to increase the numbers of Aboriginal rangers working on these and other parks.

Whilst the vision of Aboriginal businesses becoming a thriving part of the Territory parks landscape has been a goal for some time it has not been realised, except in a few notable locations such as Nitmiluk National Park. This masterplan must maintain the focus on real action to change the level of involvement and opportunity for Aboriginal businesses and enterprise.

The masterplan will provide clear guidance on the NTG policy to preference Aboriginal businesses, where appropriate, and to also favour non-Aboriginal businesses where they can prove that there is real flow on benefits in terms of economic outcome for Aboriginal Territorians.

The flow on effects of any infrastructure development to Aboriginal economic development also needs to be considered and priority placed on those projects where it can be shown that investment will have a short to medium term result.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Should the Masterplan be prescriptive in its recommendations for Aboriginal economic development?
- Should there be a list of particular projects defined that will have short to medium term impacts on Aboriginal economic development?
- How can we do things differently that will turn the aspiration for economic development in parks and reserves into a reality?



IMAGE: Judbarra/Gregory National Park.

## Balancing commercialisation and revenue

Territory parks and reserves are an important part of the economic future of the Territory, particularly in their role of supporting the tourism industry. To date, the primary consideration in engaging in concessions, permits and development proposals has been the support and growth of the tourism sector on one hand, and increased expectations of efficiency for the Commission on the other hand.

Recent approval to implement a new revenue model for parks and reserves has given the Parks and Wildlife Commission a boost in its expectations of revenue resulting from the parks estate. The introduction of higher camping fees, multi-day walking fees and a parks pass will place the Commission in a position where it can improve the standard of management of our parks and reserves and also improve access to the estate.

Because the amount of revenue that can be expected from self-managed campsites, walking trails and the parks pass is now greater, careful consideration needs to be given to appropriate concessionaire fees for third parties who benefit from parks infrastructure. We must ensure that the return from the arrangement meets the revenue target that the Commission requires for the effective management of the estate.

Similarly, permits for commercial purposes regarding filming on the estate have been relatively low cost in the interests of supporting the Territory and Australian film industries. However it might be the appropriate time for higher rates to be charged for commercial film companies demanding exclusive access to a park or reserve for the purposes of filming a commercially targeted product.

Another important consideration is how we balance opportunity for access and the associated revenue for either the Parks and Wildlife Commission or a commercial operator, with the need to limit access to highly popular sites to preserve the site from being over-used. Jurisdictions across Australia and New Zealand are grappling with this issue and as yet there has been no easy solution. Another balancing requirement might occur when Traditional Owners wish to limit the number of people accessing a site. This may conflict with a business opportunity for an operator or a revenue opportunity for the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- Should Parks and Wildlife protect its own revenue to ensure the sustainable long term management of our parks and reserves?
- It is our view that Traditional Owner priorities on joint managed parks will take precedence over both park revenue and tourism industry expectations. Is this likely to cause problems?
- Should we charge commercial rates to commercial film companies wishing to secure exclusive use of a park or reserve for the purpose of filming?
- Should we consider limiting access to particular sites if they are being 'loved to death'?
- Are there places where access by private operators only is desirable?

## Partnerships

The Northern Territory protected areas are valuable assets that provide a foundation for nature-based tourism and make a significant contribution to the state's economy. Partnerships with private investors and industry stakeholders are needed to enhance the economic contribution of parks and also to improve the management of their natural and cultural values. This includes identifying partnership opportunities that will better sell the natural and cultural values of the Territory to the world, benefitting all park managers and tourism operators in the Territory.

A specific example of a tourism related partnership is occurring at Watarrka National Park. The NTG has committed to providing funding for base infrastructure to establish a new multiday walking trail, however the location of the trail and the add on tourism products will be delivered through a partnership between the Traditional Owners of the park, private tourism investors and the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

Partnerships that strengthen conservation outcomes are essential as the task of protecting threatened species and ecosystems, solving pest and weed problems and managing fire are far bigger than any one park or government agency. To get the best conservation gains it is vitally important to create and maintain a wide range of partnerships with joint management partners, park neighbours, community groups, tourism operators and investors, research and education institutions, government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs).

There is also a Government commitment to pursue appropriate private investment in infrastructure on the park estate, and it is critical to signal a willingness to partner to potential investors. This can only be achieved by creating a development and investment framework for Territory parks and reserves that encourages investment. Partnerships of this nature must showcase natural and/or cultural values to ensure an exceptional visitor experience and provide significant benefit to the protected area and improved outcomes for the local community.

### We believe partnerships will be vitally important to:

- establish sustainable commercial frameworks to facilitate private investment;
- increase confidence of nature-based tourism investors;
- increase the financial sustainability of parks and reserves;
- minimise visitor impacts;
- hold successful events in parks;
- support private investment on public land; and
- enhance the equity of access to public land.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- How can we encourage partners to get involved in managing parks and reserves?
- How can Government, industry and the community improve how we work together to achieve improved management of the park estate?
- Apart from creating a development and investment framework, are there other ways we can increase the confidence of nature-based tourism investors? What are these?
- Are you a potential partner? What aspects of park management would you be interested in getting involved in?

IMAGE: Sandy Creek Falls.  
Photo by Stephanie Lai, Tourism NT

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ASSIST US?

The Northern Territory parks and reserves are valuable assets for community appreciation, recreation and general wellbeing. They protect our natural and cultural heritage, they maintain habitats for species that are vital to our way of living and our primary industries, and they provide opportunities for science and learning and job creation through nature-based tourism.

This discussion paper opens a conversation about the future of our parks and how we can provide more opportunities for Territorians to work and play.

Please add your voice to the conversation by responding to this paper.

## WHAT WILL WE DO WITH YOUR SUBMISSION?

The Parks and Wildlife Commission will synthesise all the submissions it receives and use these to inform the broad strategic direction for Territory parks and reserves.

A draft Masterplan will be developed and published for community comment in March 2022.

This will be your chance to see the actual shape of the plan and give more detailed feedback on its goals and objectives.

A summary of submissions to this discussion paper will be included as an appendix to the draft Masterplan.

The final Plan is due to be completed by late-2022.

You can post or email a submission to us by 15 October 2021.

Send your written submission to:

parkplanning@nt.gov.au, or  
Parks Masterplan  
Parks and Wildlife Commission  
PO Box 496, Palmerston, NT, 0831

Or you can provide your submission online via the  
Have Your Say website: [haveyoursay.nt.gov.au/parksmasterplan](https://haveyoursay.nt.gov.au/parksmasterplan)

Thank you for your contribution.

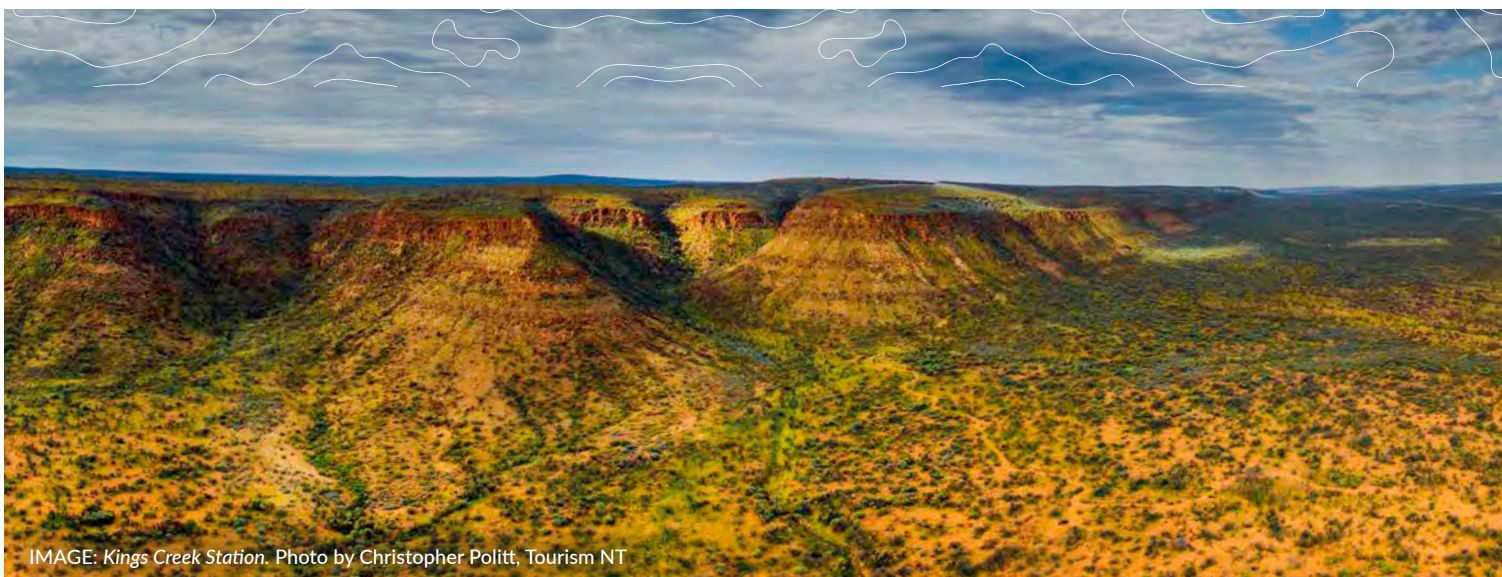
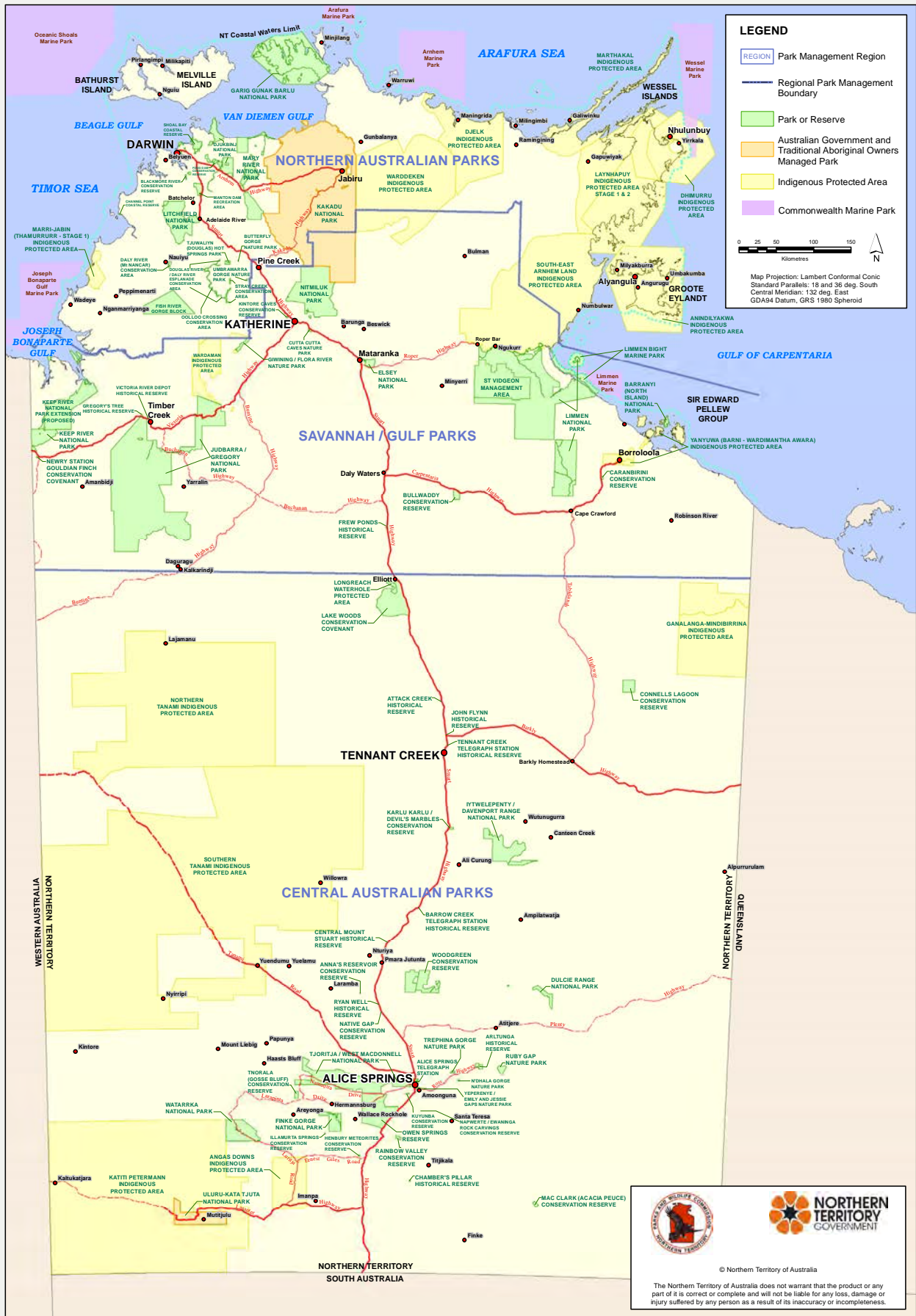


IMAGE: Kings Creek Station. Photo by Christopher Politt, Tourism NT

## Appendix 1: List of National Parks and Reserves, Northern Territory.

Region	NT Parks and Reserves	Joint Management	Area (Ha)			
Central Australia	Alice Springs Desert Park		1,306	Katherine	Limmen National Park (incl. mine area)	1,234,560
	Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve	✓	3,154		Victoria River Depot Historical Reserve	37
	Anna's Reservoir Conservation Reserve		85		Bullwaddy Conservation Reserve	11,300
	Arltunga Historical Reserve	✓	5,439		Caranbirini Conservation Reserve	1,200
	Attack Creek Historical Reserve		1		Eley National Park	13,924
	Barrow Creek Telegraph Station Historical Reserve		1		Giwining / Flora River Nature Park	✓ 7,824
	Central Mount Stuart Historical Reserve		1		Karlu Karlu / Devil's Marbles Conservation Reserve	✓ 1,775
	Chamber's Pillar Historical Reserve	✓	340		Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park	✓ 294,342
	Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve	✓	7		Northern Australia Parks	Adelaide River Foreshore Conservation Area
	Dulcie Range National Park	✓	18,780	Berry Springs Nature Park		253
	Finke Gorge National Park	✓	45,285	Black Jungle / Lambells Lagoon Conservation Reserve		✓ 4,951
	Heavitree Gap Police Station Historical Reserve		1	Blackmore River Conservation Reserve		547
	Henbury Meteorites Conservation Reserve		405	Buffalo Creek Management Area		222
	Illamurta Springs Conservation Reserve		129	Butterfly Gorge Nature Park		104
	Iytwelepenty / Davenport Ranges National Park	✓	127,816	Casuarina Coastal Reserve		1,360
	John Flynn Historical Reserve		1	Channel Point Coastal Reserve		250
	John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve		1	Charles Darwin National Park		1,350
	Kuyunba Conservation Reserve	✓	629	Daly River (Mt Nancar) Conservation Area		2,112
	Leaning Tree Lagoon Nature Park		132	Djukbinj National Park		✓ 55,351
	Mac Clark (Acacia peuce) Conservation Reserve	✓	3,042	Douglas River / Daly River Esplanade Conservation Area		3,975
	Napwerte / Ewanninga Rock Carvings Conservation Reserve	✓	6	Fish River Gorge Block		127,400
	Native Gap Conservation Reserve	✓	11	Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve		✓ 1,854
	N'Dhala Gorge Nature Park	✓	502	Garig Gunak Barlu National Park (Cobourg Marine Park)		✓ 229,000
	Owen Springs Reserve		157,417	Garig Gunak Barlu National Park		✓ 220,700
	Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve	✓	2,483	George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens		41
	Ruby Gap Nature Park	✓	9,257	Harrison Dam Conservation Reserve		✓ 3,284
	Ryan Well Historical Reserve		2	Holmes Jungle Nature Park		250
	Tennant Creek Telegraph Station Historical Reserve		14	Howard Springs Hunting Reserve		1,605
	Tjoritja / West MacDonnell National Park	✓	256,622	Howard Springs Nature Park	286	
	Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) Conservation Reserve	✓	4,759	Knuckey Lagoon Conservation Reserve	125	
	Trepkina Gorge Nature Park	✓	1,772	Litchfield National Park	146,063	
	Watarrka National Park	✓	105,200	Manton Dam Recreation Area	11,650	
	Woodgreen Conservation Reserve		92,665	Mary River National Park	✓ 120,452	
Yeperenye / Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park	✓	1,213	Melacca Swamp Conservation Area	✓ 2,315		
Gulf Savannah	Barranyi (North Island) National Park	✓	5,421	Ooloo Crossing Conservation Area	2	
	Connells Lagoon Conservation Reserve		25,890	Shoal Bay Coastal Reserve	12,300	
	Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Park		1,499	Stray Creek Conservation Area	4,398	
	Frew Ponds Overland Telegraph Line Memorial		10	Territory Wildlife Park	852	
	Gregory's Tree Historical Reserve	✓	2	Tjuwalyin (Douglas) Hot Springs Nature Park	3,038	
	Judbarra/ Gregory National Park	✓	1,300,084	Tree Point Conservation Area	950	
	Keep River National Park		277,967	Umbrawarra Gorge Nature Park	973	
	Kintore Caves Conservation Reserve		423	Windows on the Wetlands	18	
	Limmen Bight Marine Park		87,000			
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>85</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>5,060,007</b>

# Appendix 2: Map of National Parks and Reserves. Northern Territory.



# HAVE YOUR SAY

**Please send your written submission to:**

[parkplanning@nt.gov.au](mailto:parkplanning@nt.gov.au)

OR

**Parks Masterplan  
Parks and Wildlife Commission  
PO Box 496, Palmerston, NT, 0831**

OR

**Provide your submission online:**

[haveyoursay.nt.gov.au/parksmasterplan](http://haveyoursay.nt.gov.au/parksmasterplan)

**Submissions close  
15 October 2021**