

This submission takes our association into new areas so that we would be interested to hear the outcome.

Should the committee require any additional information or discuss any matter covered in the submission we would be pleased to provide the relevant information.

Your sincerely

George Griffin
President

Northern Territory Association of 4WD Clubs

David Murnane

President Toyota Landcruiser Club Darwin In

COMMENT ON REVIEW OF THE ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS (NT) ACT.

Four Wheel Drive Clubs have existed and travelled the length and breadth of The Northern Territory since the early 1970's.

During those early years members were free to visit all areas of the Territory.

With the introduction of the Land Rights movement and the subsequent introduction of the Land Rights Act has meant that many areas visited are now off limits to four wheel drive club members, not only from the Northern Territory but those club members from interstate who travel many thousands of kilometres to visit, view and enjoy the splendid natural beauty of our Northern Territory.

One could also question the benefits to many aboriginals as a result of the Land Rights Act.

As stated in the report the Tourism industry has benefited greatly by the introduction of the Land Rights Act but the majority of these rewards have gone to non-aboriginal people or organisations. Because 4 wheel drivers travel as individuals or in small numbers by choice they are discriminated against because we do not wish to travel in large groups that "the few" have arranged. We wish to learn as much as we can of aboriginal customs and traditions but do it on a more one to one basis than in the "packaged" form.

The vast majority of Australians would have no problems with the Land Rights Act if they could see the benefits flowing back to the traditional aboriginal owners but this does not happen. With monies raised and allocated being used to support large bureaucracy's and many people who in other countries would not be classed as traditional owners.

Four Wheel Drive Club members are in the main responsible people and have respect for traditional owners requests relating to sacred sites, but people resent when the "sacred site" issue is "wheeled out" to deny development or access to areas for no apparent reason.

CHAPTER 14. PERMITS AND ACCESS

The N.T. Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs was established to bring together local four wheel drive clubs in the Northern Territory and to provide representation and a louder voice on matters affecting club members. This is done in several ways, representatives attending National Four Wheel Drive Association meetings to express members view points and submissions to Government bodies/departments and reviews such as This Review of Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.

The Association at present is made up of three clubs, two in Darwin and one in Alice Springs.

Each club has their own aims but a common theme is " To organise Club tours and pay due respect to the ecology" .

Ecology is described in the Oxford dictionary as " Branch of biology dealing with living organisms" habits, modes of life and relations to their surroundings.

Many club members are long term Territorians born and raised here, with some members having been born on station properties.

With the introduction of the Land Right Act many of the places these members visited as children are now only accessible with a permit. We have at least one case where a member was born and grew up on a cattle property in the Alice Springs area but now because of the Land Rights Act he can only return to his place of birth if he has the necessary permit. I am sure that you would understand that at some stage in a persons life we all like to go back to where we were born and spent our early years. Nobody aboriginal or non aboriginal should be denied this right.

As a group of people with a common desire to visit the more isolated areas of the Northern Territory away from the packaged tourist locations we have an empathy with the aboriginal people and their desire to retain their land in their unspoilt state.

To reinforce that we must respect our environment the N.T. Four Wheel Drive Association has a training programme which incorporates sections on caring for the environment and then relies on peer group pressure and older experienced members to ensure that these guidelines are maintained.

Unfortunately many people driving four wheel drive vehicles today are not members of recognised clubs and do not have the benefit of this training or access to the knowledge and understanding of other members and consequently as in many walks of life the minority give the majority a bad name.

With the permit system that we have now it is sometimes necessary to have more than one permit to travel on historical tracks such as the Gunbarrel Highway or the Canning Stock Route. To obtain these permits can be costly, time consuming and frustrating. It is possible that a trip can be delayed because of tardiness in issuing a permit for one section of the trip.

The Association would like to see the permit system repealed completely and that people wishing to enter aboriginal land make contact with the aboriginal community controlling the said area and negotiate with the local community to obtain access. This would do away with the aggravation many people feel towards the permit system and the perceived special treatment given to aboriginals. We would have people talking on a one to one basis which we feel would give the non aboriginal members of the community a greater understanding of the aboriginal customs and way of life. This can only help the reconciliation process, take the politics out of it. This permission would be at no cost.

If members wish to visit an area on a Pastoral Lease or Freehold land permission first must be obtained from station management before going on to that area. The three types of land holding should all be treated equally and if this requires changes to the **TRESPASS ACT (N.T.)** " so be it" .

To maintain the sanctity of areas numbers of visitors to some areas must be limited so that people will have to be aware that permission must be obtained **before travelling**, not just turn up and expect to gain access. If legislation is to be enacted to change the Trespass Act (NT) giving authority to post notices or give directions to Regional Land Councils and or Community Government Councils then that is the organisation or body to issue the Permission to Visit. This would not impose any additional costs to those bodies as they are allocated funds for administration from other sources.

This method would still create problems with areas such as the Gunbarrel Highway or the Canning Stock route where several communities would be involved. We suggest that a register of Significant Historical Interest Areas be established to cover these two areas and others similar areas and that permission to travel be issued by the N.T. Parks and Wildlife Commission or their interstate counterpart.

This register could be established with the help of interested groups such as The National Four Wheel Drive Association and their State/Territory affiliates.

CHAPTER 13 SACRED SITES AND SACRED OBJECTS

After reading this chapter we feel that as responsible members of the community we are being penalised by The Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act.

The emphasis of this chapter is the trust by the Land Councils to enforce the Act to slow down, frustrate developers for financial gain. One hears from time to time of peoples efforts stopped just when a development is about to commence because it is on a Sacred Site.

We are not developers or out there for financial gain, we only wish to visit areas and enjoy our surroundings.

Because we are sitting back from the mainstream a little it is hard to understand why it is taking AAPA so long to identify and enter Sites in its Register. The legislation in one form or another came into effect on the 14th September 1979 and till 1995 had entered 1,100 Sites and still had records of a further 7000 Sacred Sites. A quick mathematical calculation based on averages shows that at this rate we will require in excess of 101 years to complete what is known today. One could assume that other Sites will be documented in the future.

For an organisation such as ours we would ask traditional owners for **PERMISSION TO ENTER** that if possible they could tell us areas that we were unable to visit on their land for which we would have respect.

People understand the aboriginal affinity with the land and would respect their wishes. We as white people would feel anger and resentment if somebody were to desecrate a family grave.

Nobody on this world can say that they own any particular area of land. All people inhabiting the earth should be called custodians (guardian, keeper) because we are here for but a short period of time in the overall context of the earths development although 70 or 80 years sometimes feels forever.

BUILDING ON LAND RIGHTS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

NORTHERN TERRITORY ASSOCIATION OF 4 WD CLUBS

REVIEW

The Northern Territory Association of 4 WD Clubs is an organisation representing 3 four wheel drive clubs in The Northern Territory.

These clubs have a combined membership between 180 and 200 members. The majority of members are family groups and are everyday people who have a desire to visit areas away from regular tourist attractions.

The association runs its training programmes and encourages members to take responsibility for their own actions. We are a non-profit organisation and survive through the actions of club members.

If this submission can help members visit areas other than those available, at present and with less "red tape" then we believe the inquiry will travel a few steps down the path of reconciliation.