

8th July 2013.

SUBMISSION RE: WOOMERA PROHIBITED AREA ROAD CLOSURES 2013/2014.

Ilkurlka Roadhouse is an Aboriginal owned and managed enterprise that provides an essential service for travellers traversing the Anne Beadell Highway from Coober Pedy in SA to Laverton in WA. This remote and isolated Desert road traverses some 1,320 kilometres across two states through very sparsely populated terrain. Ilkurlka is the only fuel and service stop on this strip, and provides essential backup for travellers through Camping, Fuel, Food supplies, as well as a communication link for breakdowns and subsequent rescues. We also provide urgent medical assistance through the use of a Royal Flying Doctor medical chest with a direct line to doctors at the Kalgoorlie base and we maintain an all-weather airstrip for evacuations. Our tourist rates peak through the months between March and October and overall numbers enjoying this iconic journey have steadily increased since Ilkurlka was established by the Spinifex People in 2003. During the summer month's visitor numbers drop significantly due to the possibility of prolonged periods of extreme heat. As a remote service centre with significant infrastructure that must be maintained despite a pronounced seasonal client flow, our business has struggled to achieve viability. Each year since establishment steady progress has been made as intending outback tourists have been able to rely on fuel and services being procured at Ilkurlka.

Past road closures on the Anne Beadell have occurred although not once have we been formally notified of these closures in advance. Frustratingly it has only been through conversations with travellers' that we have learnt of these impending closures. Whilst realising that these tests are of importance to the Defence Corp, we feel that this lack of communication with a significant stakeholder has shown a significant lack of regard to the consequences and considerations of those directly affected.

During previous closures, visitor numbers have dropped dramatically, and it has been found that people intending to travel the road outside these dates become hesitant about travelling due to the fear of possible and interruptive closures. Poor communication from the Defence Corps and uncertainty about actual dates and requirements has exacerbated this situation. Typically, intending tourists choose to travel elsewhere within remote zones that are not compromised by random factors that may dramatically affect their planning and access. It has only been through our increased efforts to convince tourists that road closures are only for a set time, and that the journey

via the Beadell highway remains a worthwhile and wonderful experience that the impact of these closures on tourist numbers has been managed.

As possibly the most remote Roadhouse in Australia, we are required to transport everything ourselves out to Ilkurlka. This includes all fuel, goods and infrastructure items as no transport company is prepared to deliver out here. Our closest regional town and service centre is Kalgoorlie, some 885 kilometres southwest over poor quality and at times impassable dirt roads.

Ilkurlka is owned by and serves as an essential service centre for to the Spinifex People of Tjuntjuntjara, and also services communities to the north such as Wingelina, Blackstone, Kalka, Pipalyatjara, and Warakurna. Members of these remote communities rely on Ilkurlka as a fuel, service and supply stop when travelling North South on the Aboriginal Business Road. If travelling north to south on this road Ilkurlka is the only service centre within 500 Kms.

Should these proposed closures of the Anne Beadell Highway go ahead as currently planned, the essential service provided by Ilkurlka Roadhouse will perhaps no longer be viable, and will be forced to close down. Great efforts over many years were made to achieve the Spinifex Native Title Determination formalised in the year 2000, and the subsequent establishment of Ilkurlka in the central zone of Spinifex Country. Whilst the business has struggled to become viable the development at Ilkurlka remains the most substantial and potentially beneficial initiative of the Spinifex People since winning control over traditional lands. Closure of Ilkurlka would be a catastrophic and backward step for an important and innovative desert community. It would also be a major loss for anybody hoping to undertake the challenging but very rewarding journey along the Anne Beadell.

Closure of Ilkurlka would also affect many other services including the RFDS, Chart air, and other State and non-state service and merchandise providers with an interest in the Great Victoria Desert. Due to the Cultural and Historic aspect of the Spinifex people, the history of the Anne Beadell Highway and the importance of Ilkurlka as the only regional service centre, we would ask that the proposed road closures occur during our 'off' season, and be that they be minimised, better defined, and much better communicated. Failing that, to enable our future to remain unchanged, we would seek financial and material assistance to withstand the negative impacts of road closures during peak tourist times.

We would be happy to elaborate on our circumstances and/or the impact of road closures on our operations at Ilkurlka if the opportunity arises. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information.

Graham Noble

Roadhouse Manager

Ilkurlka Roadhouse.

Ilkurlka Aboriginal Corporation,

8/7/13