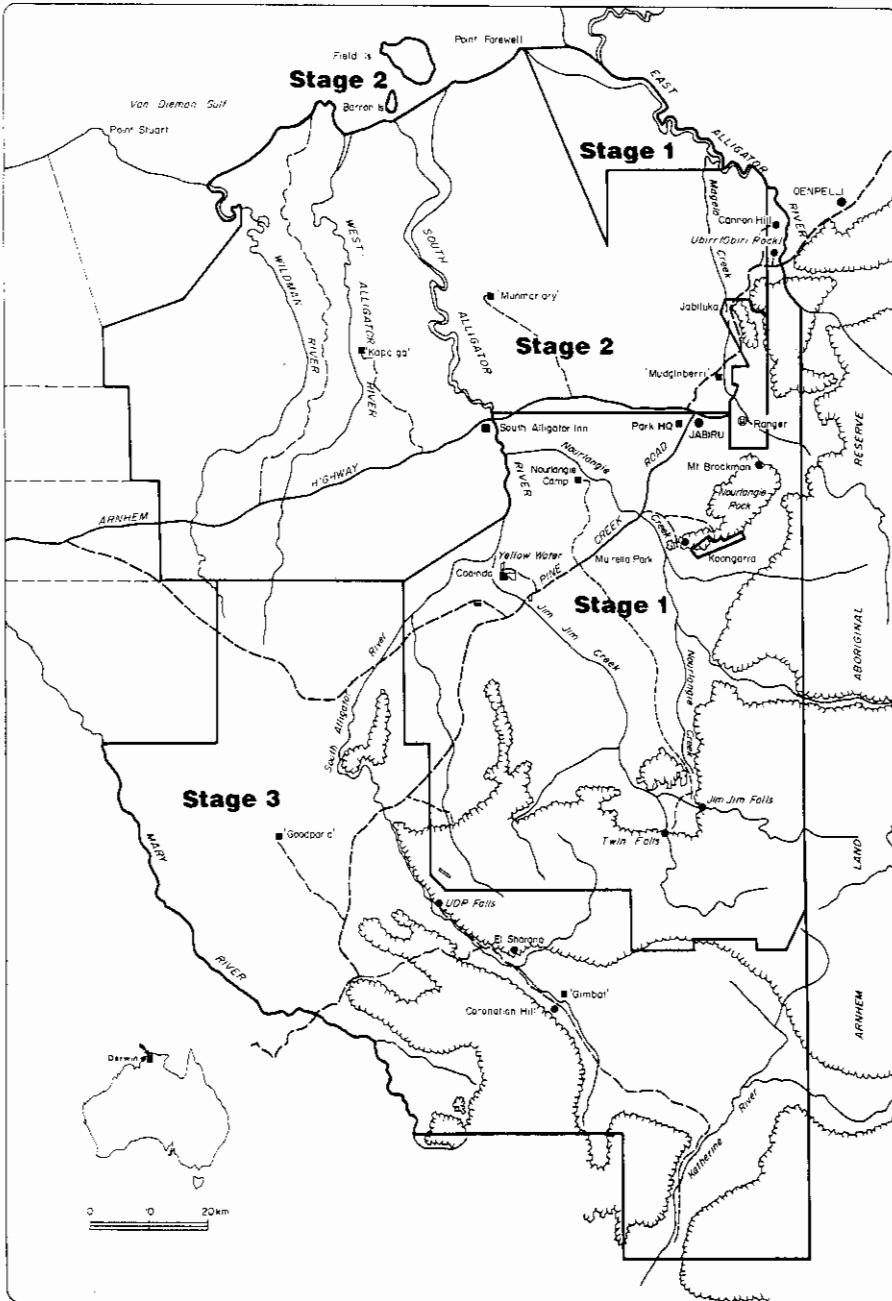


THE POTENTIAL OF THE KAKADU NATIONAL PARK REGION

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Kakadu National Park Region
 Map courtesy Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE POTENTIAL OF THE KAKADU NATIONAL PARK REGION

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT, RECREATION AND THE ARTS

NOVEMBER 1988

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The Committee acknowledges the assistance of the Secretariat in carrying out this inquiry.

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Research Officers:	Elizabeth Mountain Mary-Louise Willheim
Steno-Secretaries:	June Fallick Maria Lloyd Judith Silver

Environment, Recreation and the Arts Committee:

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PREFACE

On 9 October 1985, the Senate resolved that the following matter be referred to the Standing Committee on National Resources:

The potential of Kakadu National Park region with particular reference to:

- (a) the nature of the resources available for exploitation; and
- (b) the impact of utilisation of these resources, particularly mining and tourism.

Following a reorganisation of the Senate Committees on 22 September 1987, the inquiry was referred to the Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts.

During the course of the inquiry, the National Resources Committee received submissions from 69 individuals and organisations (see Appendix 1) and held 11 days of public hearings (see Appendix 2).

In addition, the National Resources Committee undertook seven inspections;

4-6 June 1985	Kakadu National Park
19-21 May 1986	Kakadu National Park region, including Coronation Hill, and Rum Jungle
9 September 1986	Coal Mining Rehabilitation in the Hunter Valley, NSW
10 September 1986	Sand mining Rehabilitation in the Myall Lakes area north of Newcastle, NSW
30 October 1986	CSIRO Kapalga Research Station, Kakadu National Park
10 February 1987	Wilsons Promontory National Park, Victoria
9 March 1987	Coronation Hill

The National Resources Committee completed taking evidence in June 1987 and began preparation of a draft report. After the new Parliament met in September 1987, there was a re-organisation of the Senate Committees and, with the National Resources Committee no longer in existence, the inquiry on the potential of the Kakadu National Park region was referred to the newly formed

Environment, Recreation and the Arts Committee. This Committee took over the evidence, submissions and the draft report prepared by the former National Resources Committee. In addition the Environment, Recreation and the Arts Committee held briefings with a number of organisations in Darwin on 1 February and undertook an inspection of the Kakadu National Park on 2 and 3 February 1988. Two submissions and a number of supplementary submissions were received by the Committee.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
AFANT	Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory
ANPWS	Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service
ARRI	Alligator Rivers Research Institute
BMR	Bureau of Mineral Resources
BTEC	Bovine Tuberculosis and Brucellosis Eradication and Control
CHJV	Coronation Hill Joint Venture
COZAC	Conservation Zone Advisory Committee
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
ERA	Energy Resources of Australia
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
JTDA	Jabiru Town Development Authority
NT	Northern Territory
NTFIC	Northern Territory Fishing Industry Council
OSS	Office of the Supervising Scientist
RP	Retention Pond
RRZ	Restricted Release Zone
RUEI	Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER TWO

Paragraph 42

The Committee recommends that ANPWS:

- (i) continues to enforce strictly the regulations concerning restriction of access to Aboriginal living areas and sites of significance;
- (ii) uses all the means at its disposal to explain to visitors why these regulations are necessary; and
- (iii) ensures that measures to upgrade tourist facilities in the Park do not in any way jeopardise the privacy of the Aboriginal inhabitants.

Paragraph 43

The Committee recommends that ANPWS works in association with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, the Darwin Tourist Promotion Association, tourist operators and other interested bodies, including the appropriate Aboriginal groups, to ensure that tourist information, including travel commentaries, does not portray misleading or inaccurate information about Aborigines and their role in the region.

Paragraph 44

The Committee recommends that:

- (i) ANPWS introduce a permit system for tour operators in the Park and that the issue of permits be subject to the conditions that the information provided by the operator be accurate and responsible and that the activities of the operators be consistent with what is appropriate for a World Heritage area; and
- (ii) ANPWS introduce an accreditation scheme for persons providing interpretation and information services to tourists in the Park

Paragraph 45

The Committee recommends that ANPWS, in conjunction with its regular visitor surveys and in consultation with the local Aboriginal communities, should assess the level of interest in an Aboriginal cultural centre within the Park and, depending on the response, prepare a proposal for the development of such a centre.

Paragraph 47

The Committee recommends that all the decision making bodies involved with policy development for the Park or with the Park's management should have Aboriginal representatives. (This matter is more fully considered in Chapter 7 on consultation mechanisms)

Paragraph 51

The Committee recommends that:

- (i) archaeological and art sites within the Park should not be opened to the public until adequate facilities and staff have been provided; and
- (ii) ANPWS should continue to monitor the impact of visitors at all art and archaeological sites that are open to the public.

Paragraph 54

The Committee recommends that ANPWS should continue the program of weed control in all areas of the Park and that if additional resources become necessary for this program they should be provided as a matter of priority.

Paragraph 67

The Committee recommends that ANPWS should, as a matter of urgency, carry out a study of the fish populations of the Park with a view to determining the impact on them of recreational fishing. If in order to complete the study it is necessary to close areas of the Park to fishing, this should be done.

Paragraph 85

The Committee recommends that, as a matter of urgency, ANPWS introduce a series of charges for entry into Kakadu National Park and for the use of facilities such as camping grounds. The fees levied should be related to the provision, improvement and maintenance of services and facilities in the Park. The introduction of fees should be associated with an advance booking system that can be used to ration access to the most popular areas of the Park in a fair and equitable manner.

Paragraph 91

The Committee recommends that ANPWS take steps to co-ordinate a detailed long-range tourist strategy for the Park which, inter alia, covers expected visitor numbers, the growth in visitor numbers at particular destinations within the Park, the maximum visitor carrying capacity of different areas and the optimum pattern of tourist infrastructure. The development of the strategy should allow for full public consideration and the strategy should be an important element in the subsequent development of the Park plan of management.

CHAPTER THREE

Paragraph 83

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Supervising Scientist should continue to monitor the biological effects of all water releases from Retention Pond 4 at the Ranger Uranium Mine.

Paragraph 88

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Supervising Scientist should continue to give a high priority to work directed towards assessing the effects of the spray irrigation technique being used by Ranger Uranium Mine to dispose of excess water.

Paragraph 90

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Supervising Scientist should identify all possible causes of leakage from the Ranger Uranium Mine tailings dam and should monitor the level and any effects of the leakage taking place.

Paragraph 92

The Committee recommends that at the completion of mining at Ranger, and unless any more secure alternative is found, all tailings be replaced into the pit and properly secured.

Paragraph 95

The Committee recommends that the resources made available for the study of the environmental impact of the Ranger Uranium Mine should, as a minimum, be maintained at current levels.

Paragraph 96

The Committee recommends that Section 31 of the Environmental Protection (Alligator Rivers Region) Act 1978 be amended as a matter of priority so that the Supervising Scientist is no longer prevented from making available information on the environmental impact of the Ranger Uranium Mine collected by his Office.

Paragraph 108

The Committee recommends that a full and detailed plan for rehabilitation should be required before any mining operations are allowed at Coronation Hill and that payments should be required on an annual basis into a trust fund to be used for the rehabilitation work. ANPWS and the Office of the Supervising Scientist should be fully involved in the preparation and approval of the rehabilitation plan. Similar arrangements should be in place for any further mining or exploration activity in the Conservation Zone.

Paragraph 109

The Committee recommends that in examining the Environmental Impact Assessment being prepared by the Coronation Hill Joint Venture in relation to the proposed mine at Coronation Hill the Government should pay special attention to all factors which might cause discharge of contaminated water from the mine site, either during or after the operational life of the mine.

Paragraph 113

The Committee recommends that in order to reduce to the minimum possible the environmental impact of exploration activity in the Conservation Zone, strict environmental guidelines and safeguards, developed in conjunction with ANPWS and the Office of the Supervising Scientist, should be strictly enforced.

Paragraph 114

The Committee recommends:

- (i) that any proposal for mining activity in the Conservation Zone should be examined very carefully, and that approval should not be given if the proposal has the potential to cause environmental damage within the catchment area of the South Alligator River which might result in damage to areas of the Park; and
- (ii) that any infrastructure permitted for exploration or mining activity should be planned in consultation with ANPWS and in such a way as to facilitate the later use of the area as a national park.

Paragraph 133

The Committee recommends:

- (i) that applications for exploration or mining leases within the Conservation Zone be considered only when the applicants are able to demonstrate that full consultation has taken place with Aborigines having land claims in the area concerned, that the views of the Aborigines have been taken into account and that appropriate arrangements for compensation of the Aborigines have been negotiated; and
- (ii) that the Joint Venture should be required, to make provision for royalty payments, even if the Coronation Hill project proceeds before a land claim is finalised.

Paragraph 134

The Committee recommends that all companies seeking exploration or mining licences in the Conservation Zone be required to adopt employment policies which provide opportunities for Aborigines, especially those with traditional ties to the area.

Paragraph 146

The Committee recommends that a period of at least one month should be allowed for a review of information provided to the Sacred Sites Authority before it formalises any action following from the provision of such information.

Paragraph 147

The Committee recommends that all Companies seeking to undertake exploration or mining activity in the Conservation Zone should be made fully aware of the role and responsibilities of the Sacred Sites Authority and of the boundaries of sacred sites within the Zone.

CHAPTER FOUR

Paragraph 19

The Committee recommends that in monitoring the planning and future development of Jabiru, ANPWS, in consultation with the Jabiru Town Council and the Gagudju Association, should consider the effect of future development on Aborigines and ensure that there are no adverse consequences.

Paragraph 25

The Committee recommends that the Office of the Supervising Scientist should be given a clearly defined and on-going responsibility to monitor the environmental impacts of Jabiru on the Park ecosystems.

Paragraph 32

The Committee recommends that in future all proposed developments in Jabiru, and in other parts of Kakadu National Park, be subject to an environmental evaluation, as stipulated in the Park plan of management and required under certain circumstances by the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974.

Paragraph 37

The Committee recommends that no additional population centre should be developed in Stages 1 and 2 of Kakadu National Park and that any proposal for a tourist development in Stage 3 of the Park should be subject to a stringent environmental impact study. This should take into full account the potential sociological impacts and, in particular, the potential impact on Aborigines having interests in the area.

CHAPTER FIVE

Paragraph 22

The Committee recommends that the policy of phasing out commercial fishing in Kakadu National Park be implemented according to the timetable presented in the second Kakadu National Park Plan of Management.

Paragraph 23

The Committee recommends that commercial fishers displaced from the Park be offered compensation by the Commonwealth for their total removal from fishing activities in Northern Territory waters. The compensation should be at a level received by those who surrender entitlements under the present net buy-back scheme, together with a component relevant to the vessel and equipment involved.

Paragraph 27

The Committee recommends that the Kakadu National Park remain closed to commercial crabbing operations.

CHAPTER SIX

Paragraph 45

The Committee recommends:

- (i) that, as a matter of urgency, ANPWS work with the Gagudju Association to consider the feasibility of establishing a disease free herd of buffalo in a controlled area within the Park to meet Aboriginal needs for field killed meat. This recommendation should be read in conjunction with (ii). Should the proposal contained in (ii) proceed, it may be possible to put into place arrangements that will accommodate the matters referred to above; and
- (ii) that the proposal for a buffalo park adjacent to the boundaries of Stage 3 of Kakadu National Park be investigated and, subject to necessary environmental safeguards, that it be supported.

Paragraph 53

The Committee recommends that, with the exception of fishing, recreational hunting within the Park continue to be banned.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Paragraph 18

The Committee recommends that, as a matter of urgency, a Board be created to manage Kakadu National Park.

Paragraph 19

The Committee recommends that when a Board of Management is established for Kakadu National Park there be a review of administrative practices, and particularly of financial delegations, to ensure that the management of the Park can be accomplished in an efficient and effective manner

Paragraph 33

The Committee recommends that the Government:

- (i) urgently consider locating all operations of the OSS in the Northern Territory; and
- (ii) carefully examine increased responsibilities for the OSS and its strengthening as appropriate, to take account of the issues discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

Paragraph 35

The Committee recommends that when a Board of Management is established for Kakadu National Park, the Chairman of the Board should take up a position on the Co-ordinating Committee for the Alligator Rivers Region, in addition to that occupied by the Director of ANPWS.

Paragraph 41

The Committee recommends that a levy be placed on all exploration and mining activity in the Conservation Zone in order to maintain an overall cost-recovery similar to present levels for the costs associated with the additional responsibilities given to the Office of the Supervising Scientist as a result of the declaration of the Conservation Zone.

Paragraph 46

The Committee recommends that when a Board of Management is established for Kakadu National Park the terms of reference of the Conservation Zone Advisory Committee should be changed so that the Committee provides advice to the Board of Management.

