



A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES WHEN MOVING TO REMOTE LOCALITIES

Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist Parks and Wildlife employees and their families when moving to a Ranger station in a remote locality.

Each Park is unique and has a variety of services in either close proximity, or they can be some distance away in the nearest established town or community.

It is hoped that this guide will give some idea of what services are available in a particular location and what might be expected upon arrival with regard to schooling, health, shopping, and communications. It also incorporates what the employee and family are entitled to by way of allowances, fares etc.

It is not always easy to cope with the isolation and demands upon a family, however there are support and community groups which can be tapped into and this information has also been included.

Updated March 2006

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SECTION 1

DESCRIPTION OF LOCALITY

LIMMEN NATIONAL PARK (PROPOSED) (NATHAN RIVER)

For a Fact Sheet, including locality map, please go to:

<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/find/limmen.html>

and download Fact Sheet.

DESCRIPTION OF PARK

Location: The proposed Limmen National Park (Nathan River) is situated on the eastern coast of the Northern Territory, 475km south east of Katherine and 187km north west of Borroloola. Due to the sandy nature of the tracks and the numerous creek crossings, access is currently by 4WD only. Although not yet a gazetted Park, there is an established Ranger Station and Ranger housing at the Nathan River Homestead.

Natural Features: The proposed park is very isolated. Much of the area is rugged with spectacular, weathered sandstone formations and intervening alluvial valleys. The tidal rivers that flow into the Gulf of Carpentaria are excellent for fishing. The erosion of the sandstone escarpment has led to the formation of numerous, large sandstone spires and rounded domes sometimes called "lost cities". Several of the more accessible sites have been identified as suitable for public visitation in the future.

Access: The proposed park can be accessed from Katherine by leaving the Stuart Highway about 10 kilometres south of the town of Mataranka and following the gravel road south of Roper Bar. Alternatively, access is via the Carpentaria Highway near Borroloola and along a gravel road for 150 kilometres.

These gravel roads are generally in good condition, however can be closed periodically from December to April. This depends on the length and severity of the Wet season. A mail run by small aircraft is made weekly, unless the airstrip is closed due to the Wet season. The airstrip was upgraded in 2001 and is now operational nearly all year round.

Distances: Nathan River Ranger Station to Borroloola 187 km (154 km gravel and 33 km bitumen along Carpentaria Highway).

Nathan River Ranger Station to Katherine 475 km (240 km gravel and 235 km bitumen).

Climate: The Gulf region is in a transition zone between the wet tropics and the drier arid zone. Average rainfall is about 800 mm and falls mainly between December and April.

Dry season temperatures are generally cool with minimum's reaching 5°C. In the build-up to the Wet season from September onwards, conditions can be very hot with temperatures reaching + 40°C. The humidity at this time of the year is also high.

Dangers/Precautions: Nathan River can be isolated for several weeks and it is advisable to have good stocks of food, medicines and other essentials. Saltwater crocodiles are abundant in this area and swimming is not advisable. Venomous and non-venomous snakes and common species of spiders are also found here. Normal precautions should be taken.

MANAGEMENT OF PARK

Parks and Wildlife employs three staff to manage the area. Visitor facilities cannot be developed under the existing management agreement and park boundaries are yet to be determined. Visitation is of an ad hoc nature with annual visitation at 5,000 per annum, but increasing annually. The vast majority of tourists visit the area between May and August.

RANGER STATION AND HOUSING

The proposed park has its office located in the old Nathan River Homestead and a visitor centre, within the same structure, is planned for the future. There is a workshop and storage area in a large shed across from the Homestead. In that building are also 3 bedrooms and a toilet/shower/laundry area and kitchen. This may be used as visitor officers quarters, contractor or volunteer accommodation. Staff housing is located nearby.

There are 2 x 3 bedroom houses and 2 x 2 bedroom demountables located at the Ranger Station. The demountables are designed in a "L" shape and as such are about 1 metre apart. The tenants share a common washing machine located on the verandah and a 6m x 4m storage shed. A description of each residence and a list of furniture is attached.

Contractors from Katherine carry out maintenance and minor repair works.

Electricity: Power is generated on park by diesel gensets that are serviced by Rangers. Fluctuations do occur, and surge-protecting units are supplied to protect sensitive electrical equipment. Generators run 24 hours a day.

Water: The main source of water is gravity fed from a good quality spring. Discoloration of the water does occur in the Wet season and you may wish to buy or boil drinking water during this period. A 5,000 litre rainwater tank is situated at the Homestead, each demountable has a 10,000 litre rainwater tank.

Communications: In 2002 the phone system was replaced with a satellite service. While improving reliability and data links, fine tuning the system is ongoing. The office has telephone, facsimile and e-mail services. Demountables, houses and the Homestead, all have phone lines connected, which are billed directly to the subscriber by Telstra. The houses and demountables are set up for satellite television, (Imparja).

SHOPPING

Nathan River is extremely isolated when it comes to shopping. It is wise to carry a considerable stock of food items as the airstrip and roads can be closed for several weeks. Bush orders and accounts are generally carried out with Woolworths in Katherine. A coolroom is provided at the Ranger Station and it is advisable that bulk orders be placed before the Wet season and stored in the coolroom. Alternatively, existing staff choose to grow some of their own requirements on the park.

Postal services are weekly by air.

Banking and other such activities can be done on trips to Borroloola (Commonwealth/Westpac), or Katherine.

HEALTH

The nearest medical clinic is at Borroloola that has a staff of four and also a private GP. The Royal Flying Doctor Service will land at Nathan River airstrip in the event of an emergency and a Pastoral First Aid Kit is also supplied at the Park Office for minor emergencies.

SCHOOLING

Children are usually enrolled in School of the Air at Katherine.

Unless children are enrolled in boarding schools and live away from home, parents are responsible for tutoring children, marking work and general supervision of school activities.

PETS

As per the Commission's Pets in Parks Policy.

RECREATION

Recreation opportunities are limited at Nathan River. However, fishing, bird watching, bushwalking, camping, four wheel driving and photographic opportunities exist. Nature based opportunities are abundant and would suit persons interested in painting and art/craft. During the Wet season the nearby creeks flow and provide some of the most picturesque places available.

OTHER

The proposed park is in a developmental stage from a pastoral station and as such is still being developed as a tourist area. It is extremely isolated and has limited services available. Intending employees and their families need to be mindful of this aspect.

There are no employment opportunities for spouses.

HOUSING DETAILS

HOMESTEAD

The Office/Visitor Centre is a 2 bedroom house which has been renovated in 1999. This was the existing pastoral homestead and as such is extremely old. Circa late 1950's

HOUSES 1 & 2

Both houses were built 2003-04. They are three bedroom, airconditioned, on stumps with carport and one side full verandah. Each are equipped with;

Furniture: Gas Stove
Curtains
3 seater couch/futon
2 x 1 seater lounge chair/futon
Built-in 'robes
1 x Queen-size bed
2 x single beds or 1x bunk set
1 x fridge/freezer
1 x chest freezer
1 x washing machine
Dining room suite (6 seater)
2 x RAC
2 x split-system AC

DEMOUNTABLE 1 - 2 bedroom ATCO transportable

Furniture: Gas stove
Curtains
2 seater couch
1 chest of drawers with mirror
Upright fridge
Upright freezer
3 Air-conditioners
1 digital decoder (4 channels plus music)
1 UPS
1 Bookshelf

DEMOUNTABLE 2 - 2 bedroom ATCO transportable

Furniture: Gas Stove
Curtains
1 chest of drawers with mirror
1 Chest Freezer
1 fridge/freezer
3 Air-conditioners
1 digital decoder (4 channels plus music)
1 UPS
2 bookshelves
1 table, 3 chairs

The demountables share a common washing machine located outside on the verandah and a 6m x 4m storage shed. Both demountables share a large solar hot water service.



Houses 1 and 2 – front



Houses 1 and 2 - rear



2 bedroom demountables



Visitor's accommodation



Old Homestead



Workshop

SECTION 2
ALLOWANCES

ALLOWANCES

Please refer to the **Public Sector Employment and Management Act**, Determinations, Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, for full details of each Determination. . www.nt.gov.au/ocpe/public_sector/bylaws/

A remote location is defined as a town, place, community or locality, outside the environs of Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, where access to health, education, social, financial, emergency, communication and professional support services are limited. The correlation of these factors, including the costs of goods and services, shall be considered when determining categories of remoteness.

An employee stationed at a remote locality may be entitled, subject to eligibility, to:

Official Travel

Travelling allowance is payable if an employee is required to travel away from their headquarters overnight. This allowance covers payment for accommodation, meals and incidentals.

Rental Rebate

The Director may approve a rental rebate to an eligible employee stationed in a remote locality. The rebate applies to an employee who rents accommodation from the Commission and shall not apply to accommodation occupied under any other circumstances. The portion of rental rebate is expressed as a percentage of rental paid and is specific to each locality.

Fares Out of Isolated Localities (FOILS)

Parks and Wildlife employees who are stationed in a designated remote locality for longer than three calendar months, will accrue a 'Fares Out' entitlement for themselves and any recognised dependents. Depending upon the location, employees may be entitled to two or three FOILS per 12 months.

Fares Out Leave

An employee may be entitled to a maximum of two days fares out leave consecutive with a weekend, public holiday or rostered days off duty. Employees who, because of their terms and conditions of service, are not required to attend for duty during school vacations are expected to utilise fares out during those periods and are not eligible for the grant of fares out leave in respect of such absences

Where an employee requires additional leave to enable use of a fares out entitlement (to coincide with airline schedules etc) any such leave may be taken as recreation leave or, in respect of short periods of leave, as leave without pay, and any application of this nature is to be treated in accordance with the relevant leave provisions.

FOILS and fares out leave entitlements do not accrue, and if not utilised, the entitlements lapse.

Freight on Perishables

An allowance for freight of perishable items such as meat, poultry, seafood, fresh milk, dairy foods, vegetables, fruit, bread and frozen foods is available to employees in remote localities.

A maximum weekly limit applies and the allowance is paid on production of receipts detailing items purchased and freight costs incurred.

Employees in a locality that has a regular road and/or air service operating are not eligible for this allowance.

Special Study leave Program

Employees can accrue credit points towards fully paid study leave at an approved institution for an approved course of study. Credit points are awarded for years of service in a remote locality. Points range from one to five depending upon how remote the locality is. Approval of Study Leave is at the discretion of the Director.

Family Travel Assistance Scheme

If an employee is selected to participate in a professional development or training program in an urban area, the Director may approve payment of travel costs for the immediate family to accompany the employee. Payment is restricted to the actual cost of travel by the mode of transport, which would normally be used to attend the course. All other costs incurred in respect of the family, such as accommodation and meals, are the employee's responsibility. Any payment under the Scheme can only be approved once in any calendar year.

Household Insurance Scheme

In some instances, employees may be reimbursed a proportion of the cost of their household contents insurance premium, if it is proved that a higher cost has been incurred in the insurance premium, than had the employee been stationed in an urban centre.

Northern Territory Allowance

This is a taxable allowance payable to an employee if they have recognised dependants (to partly compensate for the higher living costs in isolated areas).

Camping Allowance

Where an employee, in the course of employment, is required to camp out overnight using makeshift accommodation such as a swag or tent, the Chief Executive Officer may approve payment of a camping allowance at a daily rate, to compensate for the physical discomfort of camping and for reasonable provisioning. Camping Allowance under this By-law is not payable during any period of leave whether paid or unpaid, except sick leave while remaining in a camping situation.

SECTION 3

SUPPORT GROUPS

SECTION 3 SUPPORT GROUPS

Support for remote families is obviously limited by distance. There are however, a number of groups and organisations, which can provide information and assistance. Various government agencies can, and do assist. Listed below are some contacts, which you may find helpful.

NT Employee Assistance Service (EAS) Freecall 1800 193 123

For the personal and professional well being of all staff, this confidential service is accessible to all employees **and their immediate families**. This service is available whether the issue affects work performance or not.

EAS provides free confidential counselling on:

- work related issues
- relationship and family issues
- anxiety and depression
- vocational issues
- interpersonal conflict
- alcohol and other drugs
- grief
- stress management
- emotional difficulties

Darwin	8941 1752
Alice Springs	8953 4225
Katherine	8971 2764
Toll Free	1800 193 123

Isolated Children's Parents Association

www.icpa.com.au

Contact: Liz Bird, Indiana Station
PO Box 8045,
ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871
Phone: (08) 8956 9779
E-mail: bird@assoa.nt.edu.au

ICPA was formed during the rural depression in 1971 when the education of many isolated children was under threat. Parents around Bourke, NSW formed the Association, seeking equality to access education for geographically isolated children.

The Association grew from there to represent all children who live with their families in rural and remote areas of Australia. Some of these locations are cattle stations, farms, rural centres, road houses, conservation reserves and mining sites. Anywhere where isolated children do not have daily access to an appropriate primary or high school.

The aims of ICPA are:

- to promote awareness and understanding of the problems and needs of geographically isolated students;
- gain access to appropriate schooling or specialist services;
- to ensure continuance of residential facilities that provide boarding places for students from rural and remote areas; and
- to make sure that there is always a living away from home allowance for isolated children who must live away from home in order to receive or continue their education.

ICPA has also been instrumental in helping to start such organisations as **Volunteer Isolated Student's Education (VISE)**, which now runs independently. VISE provides volunteers who give their time to give parents a much needed break from the demands of teaching their own children. These volunteers are generally retired teachers who want to do something to help isolated children. Check out their website www.vise.org.au or contact

the Recruitment and Publicity Officer
Phone: (03) 9369 6709
Fax: (03) 8307 8270

ICPA also started a **Home Tutor Register (HTR)** which it still runs today. . HTR helps families select a home tutor to teach their children. The HTR handles all of the advertising and screening of prospective home tutors. Resumes are then sent out on request to families in need of a home tutor (formerly known as a governess). For further information, see the ICPA website www.icpa.com.au

The Coordinator of the HTR is Deidre White
PMB 22
ALICE SPRINGS NT 0872
Phone: (08) 8956 8451

Thanks to ICPA, we now have Allowances for Isolated Children and NT Allowances which all help isolated children receive an education.

ICPA closely monitors:

- the Remote Air Service Subsidy (RASS) Scheme (an air mail delivery to those isolated families who need their mail delivered in this manner) plus other modes of mail delivery to isolated families;
- communication issues that affect isolated families (telecommunications or postal etc) especially with the change in the privatisation of Telstra; and
- the Countries Area Program (CAP) funding. This funding helps small schools to provide activities that they would not normally be able to provide.

School completion rates are of great concern to ICPA. Isolated children have a completion rate of 55% compared to the urban average of 65%. This is why ICPA is fighting so hard for various allowances, specialist services, mobile play groups and better communication for the bush. ICPA continues to lobby Government (State and Federal) and various departments for better services and access to education for all isolated children. Politicians and others need to be reminded that the geographically isolated children are entitled to help when accessing an education.

Allowances

Evidence is often required to support any application, however applicants living in remote areas may have their original documents photocopied and endorsed by an official of the local Court, police station or other government office. The photocopies must be signed and dated by the official viewing the original document.

AIC (Allowance for Isolated Children)

There are four types of AIC which are paid direct to the applicant or his / her agent (eg the board provider or the student):

1. Boarding for families with students who must board away from home to study.
2. Distance Education for families with students who are enrolled in an approved distance education course.
3. Second Home for families that maintain a second home to allow their children to attend school daily.
4. Pensioner Education for families with students on a Disability Support Pension Supplement or Parenting Payment (single) and studying at a primary or equivalent ungraded level.

If the student is 16 years or older, they may be eligible for Youth Allowance, which is means tested.

If the student is an Australian Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander undertaking primary school studies and 14 years or over, or secondary school, they can claim ABSTUDY instead of AIC.

Application must be made before 31 December for a full year course. Forms received after this date will not be accepted.

Claim forms are available from any Centrelink office, or by calling 132 318.

Student Assistance Schemes

www.deet.nt.gov.au/education/students/student_assistance_schemes.shtml

Freecall 1800 019 157

After getting approval for AIC, you can apply for financial assistance under the NT Government Student Assistance Schemes. These Schemes are intended to help meet education expenses of students who are disadvantaged by distance or isolation. Schemes and allowances available are:

- NT Student Travel Scheme
- NT Mid-Term Travel Scheme
- NT Supplementary Boarding Allowance Scheme
- NT Education Allowances for Students with Disabilities – Travel and Boarding Schemes
- NT Conveyance Subsidy Scheme
- NT Correspondence Site Allowance
- NT Correspondence Site Allowance - Preschool
- NT Schools of the Air Student Functions Allowance
- NT Remote Area Travel Allowance Scheme
- NT Correspondence Material Delivery Assistance Scheme
- NT Isolated Students Education Allowance
- NT Tertiary Fares Reimbursement Scheme – within the NT
- NT Tertiary Fares Reimbursement Scheme - interstate

A booklet is available with detailed information in regard to all above NT Schemes and allowances, application forms can be obtained by calling **1800 019 157** free call.

Cut Off Dates

NT Student Assistance **Applications** – 30 September

NT Student Assistance **Claims payments** – 31 March

Northern Territory Families Website

www.families.nt.gov.au

This site is for Northern Territory families who are bringing up children. Here you can:

- read tips about parenting and living in families
- link to other useful websites
- provide feedback on how to make the site more useful.

The Office of Children and Families (OCF) sits within the Community Services Division of the Northern Territory Government Department of Health and Community Services.

If you have any queries about the OCF or its current work they can be contacted on (08) 8999 2779 or email via families@nt.gov.au.

Listed below are some of the **links** which can be accessed from the web site.

Beyond Blue

This national site talks about depression, recognising depression, understanding depression and treatments for depression.

Deadly Mob

dEadly mOb, based at the Gap Youth Centre in Alice Springs, connects young people to each other, to strong role models, mentors and the wider world online.

Early Childhood Connections (ecconnections)

Ecconnections is an Australian website containing more than 400 Australian and 370 International website links.

Employment, Education and Training

Northern Territory Government website with information on education, schools, apprenticeships, VET and employment incentive schemes, among others.

Housing information

Northern Territory Government housing website.

Isolated Children's Parents' Association

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Aust.) is a voluntary national parent body dedicated to ensuring that all geographically isolated students have access to an appropriate education.

Kids Health

Kids Health provides health information and links for children, young people and women. Includes *Kids Only* site for children 6 to 12 years.

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

Kids Helpline is a free, confidential and anonymous, 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 18.

Kidsafe NT 8985 1085

Kidsafe is a leading non-government, not-for-profit charitable organisation dedicated to preventing unintentional childhood injuries, death or disability associated with accidents in children under 15 years.

Lifeline's Just Look 131 114

Just look is a comprehensive online national database of low cost or free health and community services offered throughout Australia.

Mensline 1300 78 99 78

A telephone counselling, information and referral service for men available 24 hrs per day, 7 days per week.

NAPCAN

The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN). An independent Australian charity committed to stopping child abuse.

NT Health Direct 1800 186 026

A new telephone health advice and information line for Territorians and tourists available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Professional health advice 24/7.

Office of Youth Affairs

The Northern Territory Government Office of Youth Affairs provides policy for young people aged 12 to 25 years across government, and develops communication between young people, government and the wider community.

Parentline 1300 30 1300

Parentline is a confidential, professional telephone counselling service for parents and carers of children. Available 8 am to 10 pm, seven days a week, to parents in the Northern Territory and Queensland for the cost of a local call.

Payment for Families 131 021

Payment and service information available to families from Centrelink.

Playgroup Association 1800 171 882

The Northern Territory Play Group Association promotes playgroup participation for families with young children.

Postnatal Depression

Postnatal depression is a real illness and one from which women can recover given appropriate medical treatment, support and time. The *beyondblue* PND Program aims to research and prevent postnatal depression within Australia.

Pregnancy Support 1300 139 313

Offers people the opportunity to freely discuss their concerns with a counsellor. The service is particularly sensitive to the needs of those facing an unplanned pregnancy.

Raising Children Network

A national parenting information website for parents and practitioners (site in progress).

Australian Government Regional Information Service

REGIONAL ENTRY POINT

The Regional Entry Point is one of the key services provided by the Australian Government Regional Information Service (AGRIS) - a service for people living in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

Freecall 1800 026 222

The aim of the freecall phone service is to provide a free and easy way in which to determine who is the right contact in the Australian Government for you and to assist in discovering programs and services that may be available. The free call number is available between 9am and 6pm EST. It is not a complaint line, but is there to help inform rural Australians. It can provide contract details for Australian Government Departments, as well as the programs that they administer.

www.regionalaustralia.gov.au

This web site provides information and links to many Australian Government programmes and services.

AGRIS also runs a number of other services as part of its program. These include community information stands located around Australia sponsored by community groups. These displays contain printed material from Australian Government Departments and Agencies, which is distributed free to the public. The Travelling Shopfront also attends rural events all over rural and remote Australia.

Australian Government Regional Information Directory

AGRIS also produces the Australian Government Regional Information Directory (AGRID). The 2005 AGRID provides Australians living in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia with over 650 Australian government programs, services and initiatives along with relevant contacts and web links so that people are aware of the broader range of programmes and services available to them.

To order a copy of the AGRID , phone the freecall number 1800 026 222 - or
Email agris@dotars.gov.au - or write to:

AGRIS
Department of Transport and Regional Services
GPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601

SECTION 4

POINTS TO PONDER

SECTION 4

POINTS TO PONDER

When moving to a remote locality it may be worth your while to consider checking a number of things before you leave. Things such as haircuts may be something you hadn't thought necessary, but a professional hairdresser may be hours away.

Listed below are some points to ponder.

- Have a medical check-up before you leave. Especially children for immunisations.
- You may need to ask your Doctor for a repeat of any prescriptions for medication, and a note if you intend buying in bulk e.g. contraceptives.
- Ensure you have adequate medicines for existing conditions – asthma, allergies, hayfever etc.
- Check the “use-by” date on existing medications.
- A dental check-up. A necessary evil, especially if children will be needing braces.
- It may be a good idea to do a First Aid Course before you leave and put together a comprehensive First Aid Kit.
- Arrange a Veterinary check on pets and ensure you have adequate medications, heartworm tablets, flea powder, food etc.
- Check what appliances are available at the accommodation you are moving to. The purchase of such articles as a bread maker will ensure you have fresh bread rather than frozen.
- Surge Protection Units are a good idea for sensitive equipment when moving to an area that has power generated on park.
- Does your family have any special dietary requirements, which may be hard to come by?
- Is there anyone in your family with sensitive skin that requires special sunscreen, lotions and moisturisers?
- Make sure you have adequate stocks of such things as sunscreen, insect repellent, sanitary needs, or any particular product you prefer which may not be so easy to get at the nearest retail outlet – or too expensive.
- Entertainment for yourself and the children might be hard to come by. Videos, magazine subscriptions, arts and crafts, toys, music. Film for the camera and batteries – digital camera, toys, torches etc.
- Supplies of stationery for schoolwork.
- Gardening supplies – you may be able to grow your own vegies.

FEEDBACK SHEET

REMOTE LOCALITIES GUIDE

If you could take a minute to complete the questions below, it would be useful in the development of the Remote Localities Guide.

1. Did you receive/access the guide before or after moving to the location?

Before

After

2. Did you find the information useful?

Yes

No

If no, what in particular, and why? _____

3. Would you like to see any other information included?

Yes

No

If yes, please comment: _____

4. Any other comments? _____

Name: _____

Locality: _____

Please print off page and return completed form to Secretariat, Parks and Wildlife,
Goyder Centre, Palmerston NT 0830, fax to 89323 849, or e-mail:
shelley.smith@nt.gov.au