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# Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve

**Joint Management Plan** October 2011

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that the following document contains sensitive cultural information about an Aboriginal Men's sacred site.

Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve Joint Management Plan

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Environment, The Arts and Sport

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### **Acknowledgements**

This plan was prepared by Parks and Wildlife and Traditional Owners with assistance from the Central Land Council. Planning for formal joint management began with a series of meetings between Traditional Owners, Parks and Wildlife staff and Central Land Council staff in 2007.

## Executive Summary

Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve is a very small reserve, located about 40 kilometres east of Alice Springs in the East MacDonnell Ranges. The Reserve's primary value is that it supports an Eastern Arrernte men's sacred site. The site remains an important part of the Arrernte's living cultural landscape across the district. Cultural information about the site is tightly restricted to senior male Traditional Owners. The Reserve is jointly managed between Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife.

The main objectives of the Reserve are to protect the sacred site, meet the needs of Traditional Owners to maintain their connection to country and build effective governance which empowers Traditional Owners and successfully manages the Reserve.

To Traditional Owners Corroboree Rock poses spiritual danger to Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men. Accordingly access to the site, as well as information and images need to be carefully managed. Traditional Owners seek to ensure that visitors remain on marked tracks and do not climb the rock.

The Reserve provides limited recreation opportunities for visitors beyond district orientation, and cultural and nature appreciation. The Reserve does not provide any contribution to biodiversity conservation. It will have a very low level of management input and service from park operations. Opportunities do however exist for greater collaboration with adjacent landowners.

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# Vision for the Reserve

## “Working together as one”

Both partners will work together to manage the Reserve with respect and acknowledgment of each others' responsibilities. A strong partnership will mean the sacred site is looked after properly for current and future generations.

## 1. Introduction

Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve is a significant sacred site for Eastern Arrernte people located 42 kilometres east of Alice Springs and covers an area of 7.28 hectares. It features a strikingly shaped dolomite outcrop, in the midst of the East MacDonnell Ranges. It provides a small roadside stop adjacent to the northern side of the sealed Ross Highway (Map 1). Access is via the Ross Highway and approximately 15,000 visitors use the Reserve every year.

In 1962 the Reserve (NT Portion 758) was initially proclaimed Reserve No. 1078 for scenic purposes under Section 103 of the Crown Lands Ordinance and placed under care, control and management of NT Reserves board in 1963. In 1978 the Reserve was declared under section 12 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* (TPWC Act) in Northern Territory and held by the Conservation Land Corporation. The Reserve is surrounded by the Undoolya Pastoral Station (Perpetual Pastoral Lease 771).

In 2003, Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve was included in Schedule 1 of the *Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act*, allowing the Northern Territory and Traditional Owners to enter into formal joint management of the Reserve. In 2009 title was transferred to Pwanye No 2 Aboriginal Land Trust to be held in trust for the Traditional Owners and was leased to the Northern Territory for a term of 99 years.

The site is listed with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) as a "Recorded Site". Traditional Aboriginal custodians have requested that information recorded about the site continue to remain private and not be made publicly available.

### 1.1 Purpose

#### 1.1.1 Values of the Reserve

The key value for the Reserve is:

- **An Eastern Arrernte men's Sacred Site** - The site is a strikingly shaped dolomite rock outcrop and remains an important part of the Arrernte living cultural landscape.

#### 1.1.2 Purpose of the Reserve

Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve (Map 2) is a place of reverence and will be managed to promote its sacred importance. The priorities are to:

- Protect the Aboriginal sacred site; and
- Meet the needs of Traditional Owners to maintain their connection to country and be involved in management and on ground operations.

### **1.1.3 Purpose of the Plan**

This Plan gives direction to the day-to-day management of the Reserve. It also provides the primary source against which management performance will be measured. Management success will be defined by performance measures developed by the Joint Management Partners (see Appendix 1).

This joint management plan supersedes the 1994 Plan of Management. It will remain in effect until amended or replaced by a new plan. Further responsibilities regarding the joint management of the Reserve are set out in the Reserve Lease.

This Plan is closely linked to other joint management plans of the East MacDonnells district including Trepkina Gorge Nature Park, N'Dhala Nature Park, Ruby Gap Nature Park and Arltunga Historical Reserve, and should be considered with them.

Similar Joint Management Plans are concurrently being prepared for N'Dhala Gorge Nature Park and Trepkina Gorge Nature Park in the East MacDonnells district. These plans have been developed separately for practical and cultural reasons, including restrictions associated with Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve and N'Dhala Gorge Nature Park. However, the joint management plans of the district will operate under the East MacDonnell Joint Management Committee.

This joint management plan was prepared in accordance with, and complies with, the TPWC Act, the Reserve Lease and an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) registered with the National Native Title Tribunal pursuant to the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*. The Plan has force in law under the TPWC Act.

The land subject to this Joint Management Plan is NT Portion 758 held by the Pwanye No 2 Aboriginal Land Trust on behalf of Traditional Owners.

## **1.2 Joint Management**

Joint Management is about Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service working together, exchanging their knowledge and expertise, solving problems and sharing decisions. Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve is Aboriginal land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) 1976 (Cth) (ALRA)*. Traditional Owners have agreed to lease the land back to the Northern Territory for 99 years and work together to manage the Reserve. The terms of joint management for the Reserve have authority in law under the TPWC Act, the Reserve Lease and an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) registered under the *Native Title Act*. This Plan complies with all of these legal instruments.

Under section 25AA of the TPWC Act the joint management partners for Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve are the Territory and the Traditional Owners of the Reserve. The Territory will generally carry out its joint management obligations through the Parks and Wildlife Service. For the purposes of this Joint Management Plan, references to the Parks and Wildlife Service as a Joint Management Partner should be read as including a reference to the Territory.

### **1.2.1 Traditional Owners**

Pwanye is the Eastern Arrernte name for the long hill south of the Ross Highway stretching east from the Numery Road turnoff to N'Dhala Gorge; it is also the name traditional owners use to refer to themselves as being part of their country. Neighbouring 'countries' or 'estates' are Antulye to the west, Uytetye to the south, Ulpmer to the north, Uleralkwe to the east.

Ancestral tracks and song lines traverse these estates, linking Aboriginal people in the region and sometimes, right across the country. Arrernte kin relations, known as anpernirrentye or 'skin names,' allow individuals to be placed in a social framework which guides every person's behaviour to others within that system. Anpernirrentye also incorporates a system of descent and inheritance, where children inherit a skin name in line with their father's anyenhenge (father / child skin names).

People descended from a paternal grandfather and his brothers are referred to as Apmereke-artweye. They are the recognised holders of an estate or country with the right to make decisions affecting the use of that country; the responsibility of looking after that country; and the accountability to the land itself and the spirits of their ancestors still present in the landscape. Traditionally, failure to comply with these responsibilities could result in sickness or death, so that when a person becomes sick, it is often attributed to neglecting their country.

Apmereke-artweye are assisted in their role as owners by their kwertengerle – people who hold a different connection to the same country, often through their mother's father or mother's brother. Kwertengerle can become the holders of knowledge with significant ritual responsibilities and are considered essential partners for discussing any issues affecting that country. Together the Apmereke-artweye and Kwertengerle care for the land, exercising complementary roles and responsibilities. Anthropologists will often refer to this group as the estate group.

There are a number of other factors that play a significant role in assuming positions of authority or seniority within a group related to an estate, principally residence and knowledge of country, aknganeme (conception or 'borning' place), gender and involvement in ritual activity. Personality and level of interest are also relevant factors for the exercise of authority over an estate. These factors are often played out in the secret/sacred arena of traditional ceremony. The recognition of seniority from the broader group is important to consider in the context of joint management.

Traditional Law is transmitted through the dreaming stories of the totemic ancestors, or the Altyerre. Layers of meaning encoded into the stories and songs are gradually revealed at various stages throughout a person's life. Sacred objects, songs, designs and dramatic acts have been left behind by the spirit ancestors to transmit this knowledge. Young children are taught the 'open' or public versions of these stories, and may attend certain stages of some ceremonies. Some men will eventually become akngerrtye (senior men) - a status that is recognised by other members of the group and not one that a person can independently assume. Ceremony is traditionally the arena in which decision-making occurs. These ceremonies are usually held between October and March.

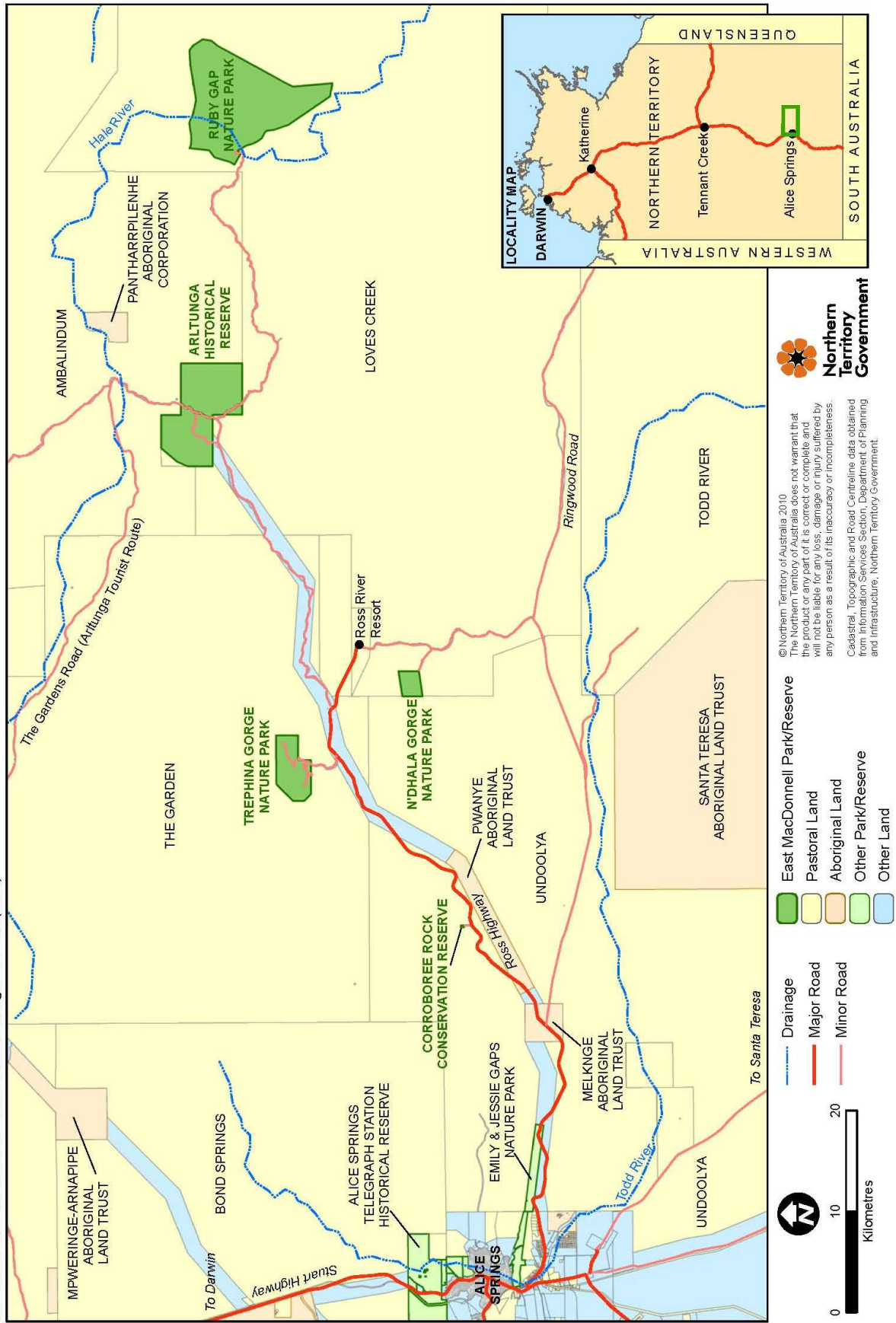
Corroboree Rock is an important men's sacred site and senior men remain responsible for the site and must be involved in any decisions or actions undertaken in the Reserve.

### **1.2.2 The Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service**

The Parks and Wildlife Service is dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural values of parks and reserves, while providing high-quality nature-based tourism and recreation opportunities for visitors. The Service is committed to engaging the public and working with the interests of the community. The Parks and Wildlife Service is committed to seeing that the joint management partnership grows and becomes truly equitable and that Traditional Owners benefit culturally, socially and economically from joint management.

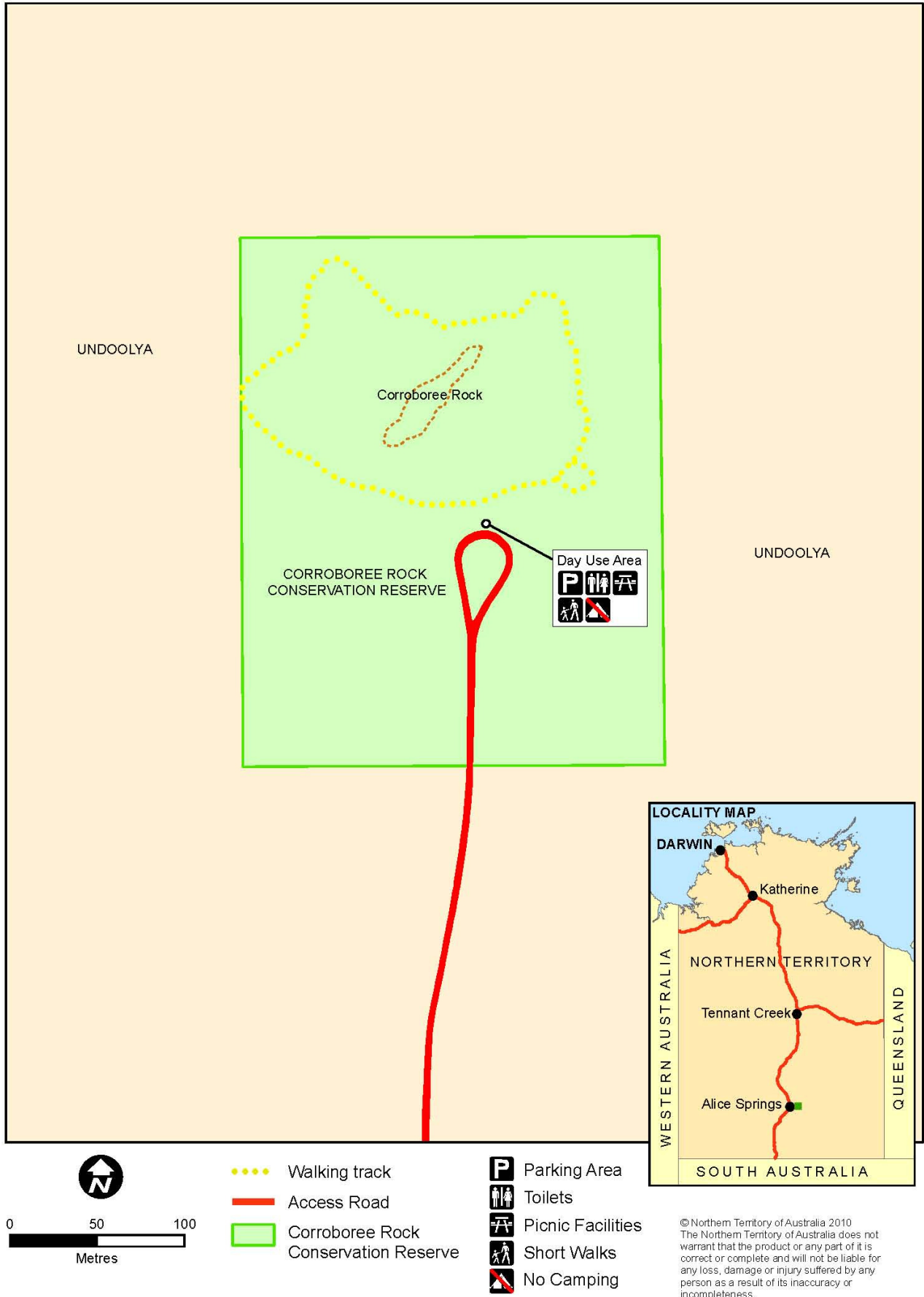
This Plan has been developed by the joint management partners in a positive spirit. Like the Traditional Owners of the Reserve, the Parks and Wildlife Service is optimistic about the future.

Map 1. Location Map, Parks and Reserves of the East MacDonnell Ranges Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve Joint Management Plan (Draft)





Map 2. Park Map  
 Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve Joint Management Plan (Draft)



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## 2. Reserve Governance

Joint management is about Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service working together to achieve their shared goals and aspirations, exchanging knowledge and expertise solving problems together and sharing decisions. A mutual understanding of country, Law, culture and Indigenous decision-making principles are fundamental to making good joint management decisions. For the purpose of joint management, the term governance is defined as “the way the partners organise themselves and the rules they put in place to realise their shared vision.” It includes all aspects of partnership, communication, planning and decision-making.

Making sure that the joint management partners have a clear structure and process for making decisions is essential for good joint management. The partners are optimistic that this new way of learning and working together will improve management equity. Both partners acknowledge that it will take time and support to build capacity and a strong working relationship.

### Principles for effective governance

- Decision-making and accountability should be equally shared.
- Time spent together on country is important for developing mutual trust, respect and understanding between the partners.
- Indigenous decision-making processes must be respected.
- Management priorities will be guided by the Reserve’s key values.
- Planning and decision-making must incorporate risk identification and minimisation.
- Engagement and employment of Traditional Owners in management operations is central to joint management success.
- Resources are limited and must be used effectively.
- Joint management has to be checked to see that it is working well. It is important to keep improving.
- Public support for joint management is very important.

### 2.1 Planning and decision-making

#### 2.1.1 A partnership approach

Joint management provides exciting new opportunities to make better management decisions based on a combination of Indigenous and western approaches to land management. Successful joint management relies on meaningful engagement of Traditional Owners and will be measured against the achievement of the aims in this Plan and the satisfaction of the joint management partners.

Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve is an important sacred site. It is essential that senior men need to be involved in decisions involving this Reserve. The Central Land Council (CLC) will facilitate this process.

It is also important to acknowledge that Traditional Owners’ values and perceptions in relation to looking after country do not always line up with conventional management approaches. Respecting these differences will significantly assist the partnership and

provides the basis for effective joint management and governance of the Reserve.

### 2.1.2 Roles and responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities are essential for joint management and each of the partners have responsibilities for looking after the Reserve in accordance with traditional Aboriginal laws and laws applicable in the Northern Territory (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

- A **Joint Management Committee** is intended to be the principal governing body for parks and reserves of the East MacDonnells district, including N'Dhala Gorge and Trepina Gorge Nature Parks. The East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee's primary functions are to provide strategic direction to Park operations, determine local policy and procedures, and review progress against management directions in this plan. The Committee will be composed of representatives nominated by the main Traditional Owner families and senior Parks and Wildlife staff. It is hoped that centralising management between all reserves of the East MacDonnells to a single Joint Management Committee will increase management efficiency and effectiveness across the district.
- **Traditional Owners** are responsible to the land, law and culture. Senior men provide direction and management of the site. They retain special responsibilities for decision-making and oversee cultural protocols for the sacred site. They are responsible for managing traditional knowledge and passing it on to the right people, maintaining the sacred site and keeping the country alive.
- The **Parks and Wildlife Service** is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Reserve under the direction of the East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee. The Parks and Wildlife Service is required to finance and resource the Reserve's ongoing management including administrative functions, staffing, infrastructure and services in accordance with the Reserve Lease, Indigenous Land Use Agreement and any relevant laws. Parks and Wildlife employees are responsible to the Minister for Parks and Wildlife and the Northern Territory Government.
- The **Central Land Council** (CLC) has an important role in assisting joint management. The TPWC Act defines the CLC's role as representing and protecting the interests of the Traditional Owners in relation to the Reserve's management. Specifically they are to represent and support Traditional Owners' interests, undertake consultations, assist with monitoring joint management processes, and help resolve differences between Traditional Owners, if needed.

All joint management decisions will be consistent with any relevant laws in force in the Northern Territory, with the Reserve Lease and Indigenous Land Use Agreement, and with any relevant Northern Territory Government policies or guidelines.

### 2.1.3 Building effective governance and continuous improvement

Joint management provides opportunities to make better management decisions based on a combination of indigenous and western approaches. A positive working relationship based on mutual understanding and respect is essential for joint management to work.

Working in a cross-cultural environment requires clear communication at all levels. Respecting differences and a commitment to understanding each other's views will make for a strong relationship and provide the basis for effective joint management and governance.

The partners recognise the need for training to build effective governance across the district. Traditional Owners are willing to teach Rangers and visitors cross-cultural skills, language and their understanding of country. Rangers are prepared to share their

knowledge of planning, budgeting, organisational structures and resource management with Traditional Owners.

The partners are also committed to continuous learning and improvement. The process involves tracking progress against performance measures, evaluating results and purposely modifying management to reflect new knowledge and insights (see Appendix 1). It also involves monitoring to measure efficiencies, effectiveness and progress toward long-term aims.

**Table 1.** Decision-making framework.

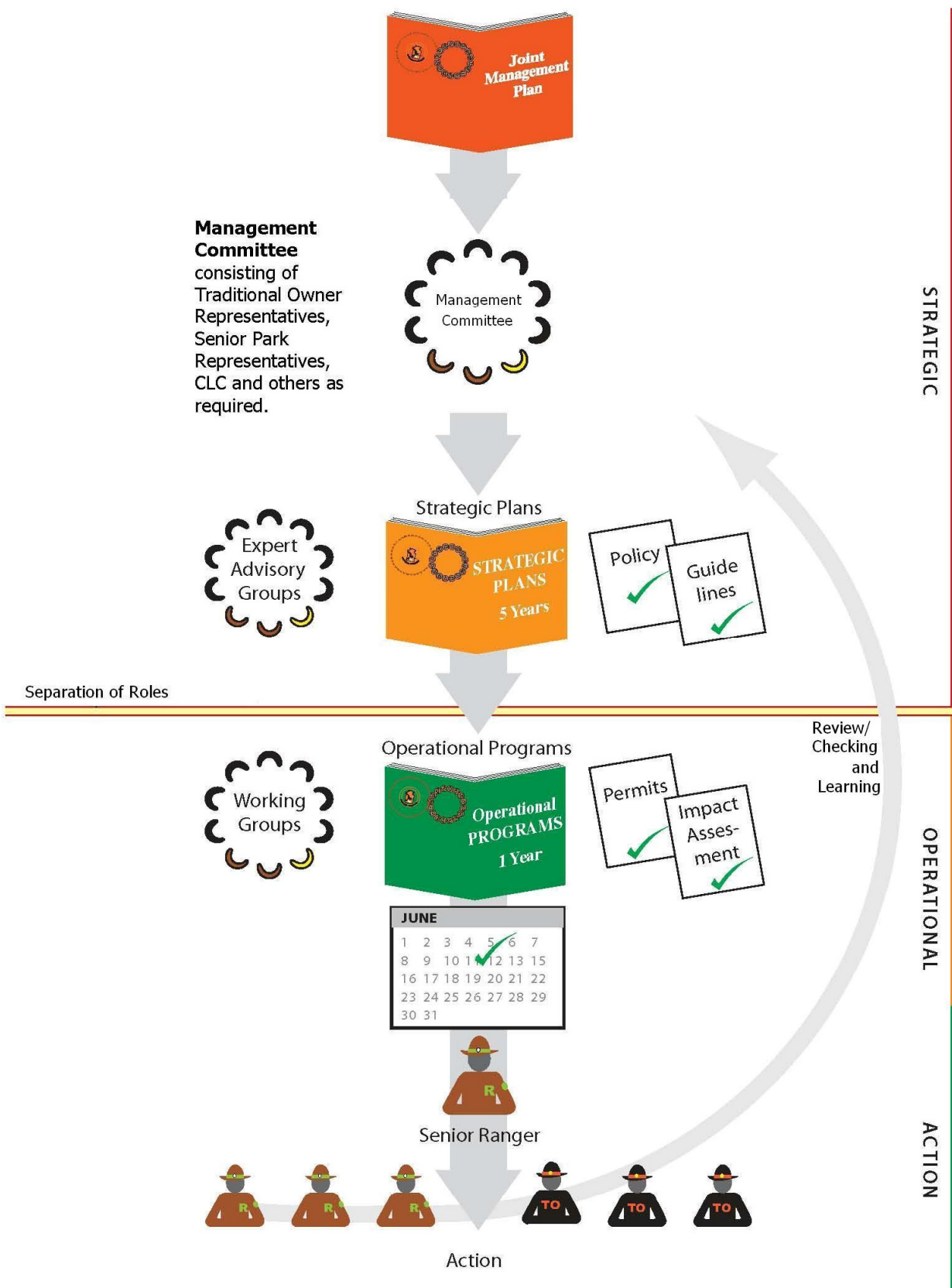
East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee Representatives from Traditional Owners and Senior Parks and Wildlife Staff	Park Operations Parks Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise executive authority and be accountable for the management of the Reserve.</li> <li>• Set strategic direction and park-specific policy and procedure for management programs and staff to implement.</li> <li>• Approve work programs and internal annual budgets.</li> <li>• Establish development direction and criteria to evaluate proposals.</li> <li>• Consult with senior men responsible for the sacred site.</li> <li>• Communicate with, and provide feedback from, the groups that members represent.</li> <li>• Provide a link with the key stakeholders and wider community for the East MacDonnell district.</li> <li>• Monitor and review management performance.</li> <li>• Consider other proposals not specified in this plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for day-to-day management of the Reserve.</li> <li>• Implement operational programs, policy and procedure as approved by the management committee.</li> <li>• Maximise on-ground participation of Traditional Owners in management of the Reserve.</li> <li>• Report progress to the management committee.</li> <li>• Liaise with stakeholders and neighbours.</li> <li>• Issue permits, contracts and licenses according to policy and procedures.</li> <li>• Monitor management effectiveness and adjust management according to new information, improved procedures, new technology and new threats or issues.</li> </ul>

### 2.1.4 Community engagement and participation

Good working relationships with landholders situated between the parks and reserves of the East MacDonnells should increase management effectiveness across the district. While senior men are obligated to keep the stories for site secret, they still want to promote the importance of the site and their culture.

There are no immediate proposals to expand the Reserve. The vision of a “greater park” linking the West MacDonnell National Park, Trepkina Gorge Nature Park and N'Dhala Gorge Nature Park has been investigated from time to time over the last three decades. Such a vision may become a reality in time through co-operative arrangements with neighbouring landholders such as Undoolya, The Garden and Loves Creek Stations.

**Figure 1. Park Management and Operations – Roles and Responsibilities**



## **Aim**

- Equitable management partnership with effective governance that makes well-informed decisions.

## **Management Directions**

**2.1 Joint Management Committee** – A single Joint Management Committee will oversee operational management of parks and reserves in the East MacDonnell district, including N’Dhala Gorge and Trepina Nature Parks. For matters that directly relate to Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve, the East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee must consult with senior men responsible for the site.

- **Role** - The role of the East MacDonnells Management Committee is to provide direction and policy. The Committee will not have a direct role in day-to-day operations. The Committee will represent the interests of Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife. As an initial priority, the partners will formally define and document all aspects of their roles, as well as the rules and processes to effectively govern the Reserve.
- **Meetings** - The East MacDonnells Management Committee will meet at least once a year.
- **Membership** – The Committee will consist of at least three Traditional Owners representing estate groups associated with nominated parks and reserves of the East MacDonnell district;
  - at least two Senior Government Officers;
  - at least one Land Council Officer, and
  - other persons invited by the partners to provide advice on particular issues or to represent community interests (for example the tourism industry).

**2.2 Making decisions** –Decisions will be made by consensus. The roles and decision-making responsibilities of the East MacDonnells Management Committee are summarised in Table 1.

**2.3 Expert advisory groups and working groups** – Working groups of Traditional Owners, Parks and Wildlife staff, CLC officers and specialists may be formed to support the Committee or address specific tasks, such as for fire management, interpretation or tourism.

**2.4 Supporting and building effective governance** - The partners and CLC recognise that joint management will be a process of continuous learning and improvement. In the future, governance arrangements may be refined to increase effectiveness.

- **Representation** - The CLC will represent and support Traditional Owners’ interests and facilitate consultations when required.
- **Governance training** – Governance training will be provided to the joint management partners to give them the tools and skills to work effectively in the partnership, with attention given to needs identified by the participatory monitoring and evaluation program.
- **Professional development** – Professional standards and staff competencies will be supported by ongoing training in all aspects of Reserve management with special emphasis on cross-cultural training involving Traditional Owners.
- **Information exchange** – A key role of committee members will be to bring to the Committee the collective expertise, interests and concerns of their group. Committee members will be responsible for passing on information to the wider Traditional Owner group, local community and key stakeholders. The CLC will provide support if required.

Park operations will be responsible for effectively communicating information about Reserve management programs to the East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee.

- **Continuous learning and improvement** – A monitoring and evaluation program will be developed and will inform actions to develop effective governance. Performance will be measured annually using indicators (see Appendix 1) relating to:
  - The satisfaction of the partners;
  - The effectiveness of the partnership (including decision-making processes, participation and communication); and
  - The implementation of this Plan
- **Dispute resolution** – The partners will aim to resolve disputes through open discussion and communication, involving the CLC as required or requested by the Traditional Owners. However, should a dispute arise between the partners that cannot be resolved, the parties will follow the dispute resolution processes set out in the Reserve Lease.

## 2.2 Business Operations

### 2.2.1 Effective operations

Park operations are currently carried out by Park Rangers based at Trepkina Gorge Nature Park with regular patrols to the Park. It is hoped that day-to-day management will be carried out by both Rangers and Traditional Owners in the future. At present almost all funding to manage the Reserve is provided by the Northern Territory Government from funding appropriated to manage the Northern Territory's Parks estate. Major works and ongoing programs are subject to Territory-wide government priorities.

On-ground work in parks and reserves across the East MacDonnells is directed by a hierarchy of strategies and operational programs that are developed to achieve the long-term aims included in this and related Plans. The East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee will be responsible for endorsing long-term strategies and overseeing operational programs implemented by Rangers, Traditional Owners, contractors and volunteers. The Committee's role will be to match priorities and new information with available staff and budgets to best achieve the Reserve's long-term aims and vision.

### 2.2.2 Indigenous training, employment and enterprise development

Joint management will promote opportunities for employment and business for Traditional Owners across the East MacDonnell district. Traditional Owners emphasise how important training and employment is for their families and acknowledge their responsibility to support young people.

Since the establishment of new joint management arrangements in the East MacDonnells, Traditional Owners have participated in paid management programs on a flexible basis. Such flexible, project-based employment provides many benefits including work experience, skills exchange and accredited training, and helps build positive working relationships between Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife staff. Where necessary, it helps Traditional Owners become work-ready and local Aboriginal organisations, including community ranger groups, contract-ready.

Traditional Owners are keen to be involved in contract work. Preference will be given to Traditional Owners of the Reserve to participate in any commercial activities approved under the lease, subject to any law in force in the Northern Territory. Where capacity is

lacking, the partners will work with local Aboriginal people to build confidence, provide exposure, knowledge and opportunities to gain experience.

Access by Aboriginal Rangers, contractors and trainees to the sacred site should be carefully managed under the direction of senior men.

### **2.2.3 Regulated activities**

**Permits** – All commercial operations, tours, commercial film and photography, public events, public gatherings, interfere with or take wildlife, and special access are regulated within the Reserve and require a permit under the TPWC By-laws. Permit holders must abide by the conditions on each permit so that the values of the Reserve are not negatively affected.

**Permit approval** – An effective permit processing system is needed to assess permit applications submitted to Parks and Wildlife. The East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee will establish local policy and guidelines for park operations to issue permits, subject to the provisions of the TPWC Act and TPWC By-laws. The partners will need to have regard to timeliness of processing, the interests of Traditional Owners, the community, industry stakeholders and existing Parks and Wildlife policy. Such guidelines should also explicitly state when a proposed activity will, and will not, require consultation with Traditional Owners. The rights, obligations and conditions of permit holders are usually specified in the permit and will be consistent with conditions determined by the partners. Some permits may require paid supervision by Traditional Owners or Parks and Wildlife staff. The CLC will consult with Traditional Owners on permit applications that request any access or activity that would not normally be allowed to visitors until any necessary agreed guidelines and procedures are developed.

**Tour operator permits** – Tour companies visiting any Northern Territory park or reserve require a permit issued under the TPWC By-laws. Most tour operator permits are addressed through the Tour Operator Permit System. If special provisions are needed a separate permit is required, with the operators rights, obligations and conditions usually detailed in the permit. Traditional Owners and Parks and Wildlife want information presented by tour operators to be accurate and appropriate, particularly for cultural information.

**Promotion, commercial film and photography** - Corroboree Rock is a restricted men's sacred site. Images or representations of Corroboree Rock should not be publicly presented. Senior men have requested that commercial film and photography of the site should not be approved.

**Research** - Any wildlife research proposals should be developed in conjunction with Parks and Wildlife staff and Traditional Owners and be consistent with Reserve policies and guidelines including ICIP (see Management Direction 4.1). Also wildlife research requires a permit to interfere with, take or keep wildlife.

**Development proposals** – All development proposals need to be reviewed against guidelines and conditions prepared by the partners. Where development proposals, leases or activities may cause environmental, heritage or cultural impacts, the proponent will be required to demonstrate that the proposal complies with all relevant legislation. The proposal will also require the informed consent of Traditional Owners.

**Benefit sharing agreements** - With the consideration of the East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee and consent of all affected Traditional Owners, the Reserve Lease and this Plan allow the partners to enter into benefit-sharing arrangements with commercial partners.

**Licence or sub-lease** – In certain circumstances, including where a secure form of land tenure is needed, a licence or sub-lease may be entered into. Any licence or sublease



entered into by the Northern Territory in respect of the Reserve must be consistent with the terms of the Reserve Lease and must have the prior written consent of the Pwanye No 2 Aboriginal Land Trust on behalf of the Traditional Owners.

**Protecting sacred sites** – Protection for places of cultural significance to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory is afforded under overlapping legislation. The *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth) (ALRA) gives legal recognition to areas which that Act terms 'sacred sites', defined as: "a site that is sacred to Aboriginals or is otherwise of significance according to Aboriginal tradition, and includes any land that, under a law of the Northern Territory, is declared to be sacred to Aboriginals or of significance according to Aboriginal tradition". The *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* (NTASSA) also provides protection for sites that fall within the scope of the ALRA definition of sacred site. Both the ALRA and NTASSA make it an offence to enter or remain on land that is a sacred site. It is also an offence under the NTASSA to carry out work on, use or desecrate a sacred site. Further, the NTASSA provides protection for sacred sites by requiring a person who proposes to use or conduct work on land to apply for an Authority Certificate. An Authority Certificate will only be issued if the use of or work on the land can proceed without there being a substantive risk of damage to or interference with a sacred site on or in the vicinity of the land or if an agreement is reached between the applicant and the custodians of the sacred site. Subject to the terms of the NTASSA, this protection enables custodians of the sacred site to say who can enter the site and what can happen in or on the site.

Successful joint management will assist to ensure Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve is protected in accordance with the wishes of the traditional owners. Pursuant to the ALRA, the Central Land Council has a specific function to assist Aboriginals in the taking of measures likely to assist in the protection of sacred sites within the Reserve.

**Protecting heritage sites** - The *Heritage Conservation Act* provides protection for two categories of places and objects. Firstly, it provides for the protection of prescribed archaeological places and objects,' which include, among other things; places containing rock paintings or carvings, prehistoric or proto-historic occupation places; places containing human remains or burial artefacts; art sites, cultural objects and wood carvings. Under the *Heritage Conservation Act* consent of the Minister is required before work is carried out on or in relation to an archaeological place or object. Further, the *Heritage Conservation Act* also provides for the protection and conservation of declared heritage places and objects.

Under the *Heritage Conservation Regulations* a person who discovers an archaeological place or object must report the discovery and its location to the Director as soon as practicable after discovering it. In addition to this obligation, the Traditional Owners request that if any artefacts are uncovered they are not disturbed and are immediately reported to the senior men through the Central Land Council.

**Proposals for expansion of the Reserve** – There are no immediate proposals to expand the Reserve. The vision of a "greater park" linking the West MacDonnell National Park and parks and reserves of the East MacDonnell ranges has been investigated from time to time over several decades. There are opportunities to build links between protected areas of the East MacDonnells through cooperative arrangements with nearby landholders.

**Community living areas** in the district are an integral part of both the continuation of Aboriginal cultural practices in, and the natural and cultural resource management of the country. Traditional Owners have achieved legal ownership of small land parcels in proximity of the Reserve through the *Pastoral Land Act*.

**Mining** – The Reserve is small and any mining or extractive activities would adversely impact the sites cultural values. Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Cth) Traditional Owners have the right to control mining on Aboriginal Land.

Currently, Traditional Owners feel strongly that mining is not consistent with the values of the Reserve and are unlikely to approve it.

**Dealing with proposals not in the Plan** – Any proposal not addressed in the Plan will be initially considered by the partners through the East MacDonnell Joint Management Committee. Any matter that may affect the interests of Traditional Owners will require the consent of affected Traditional Owners via a consultation process conducted by the CLC.

#### **Aims**

- The Aims and Directions in this Plan achieved with resources used effectively on agreed priorities; and
- Traditional Owners benefiting economically through joint management.

#### **Management Directions**

**2.5 Management strategies and operational programs** –The partners will prepare and implement integrated management strategies and operational programs for parks and reserves of the East MacDonnells district, including N'Dhala Gorge and Trephina Gorge Nature Parks.

**2.6 Day-to-day management** – Parks and Wildlife will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Reserve.

- **Financing** – Parks and Wildlife will finance and resource the Reserve's ongoing management including administrative functions, staff, infrastructure and services taking into account the funding available to the Service and the priorities determined across the NT.

**2.7 Work experience, training and employment** – The partners will commit to building capacity, employment and career development opportunities for Traditional Owners of the East MacDonnells.

- **Indigenous Training and Employment Strategy** - This strategy will be prepared at an agency level to maximise Aboriginal employment. This strategy will inform initiatives to increase the employment of Aboriginal people in the district. Aboriginal employment will remain a standing item at East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee meetings.
- **Indigenous employment opportunities in Parks and Wildlife** –Parks and Wildlife will continue to provide opportunities for work experience, training, casual work and direct employment of Aboriginal people from the east MacDonnell district where possible. Steps will be put in place to facilitate the uptake of higher level positions including Rangers, managers, technical, administrative and professional specialist positions subject to any applicable laws or policies in force in the Territory.
- **Partnerships with community-based Indigenous Rangers and special interest groups** – Local Indigenous Community-based Rangers, community volunteers, and sponsored training and employment programs will be encouraged to assist with Reserve management.
- **Contract services** – Parks and Wildlife will encourage private sector participation. Initiatives to build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations to fulfil works and service contracts will be encouraged. Preference will be given to Traditional Owners of the Reserve participating in any commercial activities conducted under the lease subject to any law in force in the Territory. If other contractors are used, those providing training and employment to local Aboriginal people will be preferred.

**2.8 Tourism** – The partners will liaise with the tourism industry through established fora and organisations. Sustainable cultural and nature-based tourism will be fostered.

**2.9 Cultural advice** – Traditional Owners will be paid for specialist cultural advice and supervision consistent with the Parks and Wildlife Indigenous Fee for Service Policy.

### **2.10 Regulated Activities**

- **Permit Policy and Guidelines** – The East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee will establish local guidelines and conditions for the issue of permits, subject to the provisions of the TPWC Act and TPWC By-laws. These will consider the interests of Traditional Owners, industry needs and Parks and Wildlife policy. In the absence of guidelines, the CLC will consult with Traditional Owners over permit applications and advise Parks and Wildlife when appropriate.
- **Commercial Film and Photography** - Because of the high spiritual importance of the site the partners will not consent to any commercial publication or broadcasting of images or film of the sacred site. Cultural restrictions will be communicated through site interpretation and the Departmental website.
- **Standard permit applications** – Delegated Parks and Wildlife staff can approve permit applications that involve activities or commercial concessions which comply with agreed guidelines and conditions, require no special access, and are of a nature or type that has already been considered by the East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee.
- **Non-standard permit applications** – Consultation with senior men may be required to provide direction to Park operations if a permit application involves special access or activities not addressed by agreed guidelines or conditions. A permit holder's rights, obligations and conditions will be detailed in conditions or operational agreements attached to the permit.
- **Routine commercial tours** – Permits for tour businesses making normal use of the Reserve will continue to be issued through the Tour Operator Permit System.
- **Special events** – Because of the spiritual importance of the site the partners will not consent to proposals for special events within the Reserve.
- **Research** – Wildlife researchers require permits to interfere with, take or keep wildlife. Parks and Wildlife staff and Traditional Owners should be consulted in developing research proposals and proposals should be consistent with TPWC By-laws, Park policies and guidelines including ICIP (see Management Direction 4.1).

**2.11 Development proposals** – Any proposal will require informed consent of affected Traditional Owners, consistent with the Reserve Lease and appropriate assessment processes.

- **Impact assessment** - The potential impacts of all proposed activities and developments will be considered and assessed commensurate with the scale of potential impact.
- **Benefit-sharing agreements** – The partners may enter into benefit-sharing arrangements for commercial operations and developments within the Reserve.
- **Infrastructure sublease** – With approval of affected Traditional Owners, consistent with the Reserve Lease and appropriate assessment processes, this Plan provides the Territory Government the right to sub-lease or license portions of the Reserve for specific purposes, including public infrastructure.
- **Sacred sites clearances** –The Central Land Council will have sacred site clearance responsibility for all proposed work on the Reserve. However the joint management partners may agree from time to time that a proponent may require an Authority Certificate under the NTASSA, issued by the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

- **Heritage approvals** – Consent will be sought under the *Heritage Conservation Act* for works to prescribed Aboriginal Archaeological Places and Objects in the Reserve, historical sites and any significant development involving land disturbance. Sacred site clearances through the Central Land Council will also be sought for works to any archaeological sites within the Reserve.
  - **Cultural objects** - All archaeological materials are protected and must not be disturbed. A person who discovers an archaeological place or object must report the discovery to the NT Department responsible for environment and heritage. Traditional Owners also request that if any artefacts are immediately reported to the senior men through the Central Land Council.
- 2.12 Extending the Reserve** – Any proposals to extend the Reserve by inclusion of adjoining land will be considered by the partners through the East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee.
- 2.13 Establishing new community living areas** - Any proposal to create community living areas on the Reserve will be considered by the partners through the East MacDonnells Joint Management.
- 2.14 Mining and exploration** –Mining applications will be addressed through the ALRA. Fossicking will not be permitted.
- 2.15 Dealing with proposals not in the Plan** – Any proposal not addressed in the Plan will be initially considered by the partners through the East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee. Any matter that may affect the interests of Traditional Owners will require the consent of affected Traditional Owners via a consultation process conducted by the CLC.

## 3. Zoning

The Reserve is managed for multiple purposes and different areas of the Reserve will be managed differently. The zoning plan is a general summary of the purpose and focus of management for all areas of the Reserve, based on the specific values of those areas and their level of visitor access and facility development.

### Aim

- Reserve values protected whilst providing for public access and enjoyment.

### Management Directions

**3.1 Zoning** – Management of the Reserve will be in accordance with the zoning scheme (Table 2, Map 3).

**3.2 Development** - Regardless of the designated zone all management and development will maintain the Reserve's natural character and conservation values. Any new development will be subject to approval of the partners and appropriate environmental, sacred site and cultural heritage protection legislation.

**3.3 Special Protection Zone** – To protect sites of exceptional conservation or cultural significance from threatening processes, special protection zones can be designated by the Committee in consultation with stakeholders.

**Table 2.** Zoning Scheme.

	<b>Visitor Zone</b>	<b>Special Protection Zone</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Concentrated visitor use whilst minimising negative impacts.	Protection of the sacred site.
<b>Management Focus</b>	Basic standard facilities and interpretation.	Protection of the sacred site.
<b>Visitor Access</b>	Basic standard access for conventional vehicles. Basic standard pedestrian access.	No camping. Visitor access controlled if necessary.
<b>Visitor Activity</b>	District orientation and basic interpretation, picnicking, walking, photography and nature appreciation.	Cultural appreciation.
<b>Facilities</b>	Parking area, walking track, picnic facilities, shade shelter, interpretive signs, toilet and emergency facilities if needed.	Facilities necessary to ensure protection of the site ie. fences, vehicle barriers, interpretation.

Map 3. Zoning Map  
Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve Joint Management Plan (Draft)



## 4. Managing Country

Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve is a small reserve (7.28 ha) that significantly contributes to the Arrernte's living cultural landscape. While the Reserve itself is an important sacred site its contribution to conservation in the context of the National Reserve System is negligible.

Joint management brings a new way of looking at managing country. Under customary law, Aboriginal people and land are seen as one, and country is defined by sites and dreamings. Senior men of Corroboree Rock have an obligation to maintain the integrity of the site.

Park Rangers respect Traditional Owners reverence for the site. Caring for country in a joint management context requires cross-cultural awareness to ensure that Corroboree Rock is looked after consistent with the site's spiritual importance.

### Principles for Managing Country

- Managing country means managing natural and cultural values together.
- Management should protect and enhance Reserve values.
- Management of Indigenous cultural knowledge is the responsibility of Traditional Owners.
- Adverse impacts of visitors, wildfire, weeds, feral animals and erosion should be minimised.

### 4.1 Cultural Heritage Values

**4.1.1 An Eastern Arrernte men's sacred site** – For Traditional Owners Corroboree Rock, or Alharrkentye, has always been known as a dangerous place visited only by senior men with special responsibilities. The site represents part of a broader complex landscape of spiritual significance. With the passing of time and the proximity of the Ross Highway, Traditional Owners now accept visitors to the site. They wish that visitors respect the site and acknowledge the importance of the area. The site is a recorded sacred site under the *Northern Territory Sacred Sites Act*. It is important to Traditional Owners that the rock is protected from carving, painting, graffiti or other disturbances. One of the highest priorities for Traditional Owners is to discourage visitors climbing through the “window” in the rock formation.

**Cultural Restrictions** - The site poses spiritual danger to Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men and senior men feel a strong responsibility to ensure observance of rules that keep forces in check. Visitors ignoring these concerns cause them alarm and distress.

**Aboriginal knowledge** - Traditional Owners hold accumulated knowledge spanning thousands of years that will continue to inform and inspire future generations. Recording cultural heritage, particularly oral stories is a priority for senior men.

The joint management partners acknowledge that cultural knowledge belongs to the Traditional Owners and will not use, or permit to be used, such knowledge without the prior consent of the Traditional Owners. Wherever possible, the partners will assist the

Traditional Owners assert their intellectual property rights.

## 4.2 Natural Heritage Values

**Geology** - The Reserve's landscape is dominated by the strikingly shaped dolomite outcrop of Corroboree Rock, which rises approximately 15 metres from the plain. The rugged East MacDonnell Ranges to the north, low ridges to the south and other rocky outcrops in the vicinity of the Reserve form a dramatic visual backdrop.

Corroboree Rock is an upstanding remnant of vertically bedded Bitter Springs Formation dolomite, which overlies the Heavitree Quartzite that forms the ridges of the MacDonnell Ranges.

**Soils** - The environment surrounding Corroboree Rock is fragile. The soils present a moderate water erosion risk and a low wind erosion risk. The surface readily pulverises under traffic and becomes susceptible to rilling or sheet erosion. Eroded areas are difficult to revegetate because the soils are shallow.

**Vegetation** – Whilst Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve lies within the internationally significant MacDonnell Bioregion its conservation value is negligible due to its small size. The vegetation in the Reserve is dominated by open Eucalyptus woodland of *E. socialis* (Red Mallee) and *E. opaca* (Bloodwood) with scattered *Acacia estrophiolata* (Ironwood) and a Spinifex (*Triodia* species) dominated understorey.

The local plants and animals are significant to the sacred site. Senior men request that vegetation of the site is protected from damage and firewood is not to be collected within the Reserve. The long-term fire management goal in the Reserve is protecting vegetation associated with the sacred site requiring fire break maintenance, occasional prescribed burns and weed spraying. It is important for senior men to be involved in fire planning, weed control and burning.

### Aims

- Traditional Owners satisfied with their involvement, fulfilment of their cultural responsibilities and protection of the sacred site.

### Management Directions

#### 4.1 District operational strategies (5 year) and annual operational programs (1 yr) –

Any fire, weed, feral animal and erosion work carried out on the Reserve will be directed through district operational strategies developed with Traditional Owners. They will include all parks of the East MacDonnells district and be prepared approximately every 5 years. Annual operational programs implement the strategies and need only be brief documents specifying the inputs and outputs needed to meet defined strategic targets.

The operational management priorities for Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve is maintain the cultural integrity and protection of the sacred site.

- **Oral histories and Indigenous knowledge** – is a high priority for senior men to record their knowledge to strengthen their responsibilities and continue their traditions.
- **Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)** – Cultural knowledge will not be used, or permitted to be used without the prior consent of the Traditional Owners. Wherever possible, the partners will assist the Traditional Owners assert their intellectual property rights, consistent with standard policies developed and agreed by the CLC and Parks and Wildlife.

**4.2 A culturally sensitive site** – Park operations will uphold restrictions and guidelines for sacred sites or culturally sensitive areas of the Reserve as directed by senior men or



the Central Land Council as their representative. Any management activity on or near the sacred sites will be planned and implemented with senior men.

- **Warning signs** - Warning signs will be presented at the entrance of the Reserve explaining the area is an important men's sacred site with significant cultural restrictions.

**4.3 Sacred site clearances** – see Management Direction 2.11

**4.4 Cultural heritage approval** – see Management Direction 2.11

**4.5 Cultural objects** - see Management Direction 2.11

**4.6 Fire management**- Fuel loads around the cultural site and visitor infrastructure susceptible to fire will be reduced and strategic fire breaks will be maintained within the Reserve.

**4.7 Soil conservation** — will aim to minimise disturbance to Reserve soils. Degraded areas in the Reserve will be identified and progressively rehabilitated using specialist advice.

- **Extraction** - soil, gravel or rocks will not be removed or disturbed except subject to the approval of the partners and as per the conditions of a Sacred Site Clearance, Heritage approval and a permit issued under the TPWC By-laws as necessary.

## 5. Managing Visitors

Corroboree Rock is a very small reserve in the East MacDonnells district. It represents an example of Northern Territory's rich and living cultural landscape. Most visitors enjoy the Reserve within an hour and it receives approximately 15,000 people each year. Considering the cultural significance of the site, visitor management should focus on maintaining the integrity and respectful presentation of the site.

### Principles for Managing Visitors

The joint management partners of Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve recognise:

- Positive experiences produce satisfied visitors, who may build a sense of connection and respect for the country.
- Well designed facilities help protect Reserve values and promote safe, enjoyable visitor experiences.

### 5.1 Engaging with the Arrernte's living cultural landscape

Corroboree Rock is a place of reverence and spiritual connection for Traditional Owners. In connection with other reserves there is an opportunity to promote awareness of the Eastern Arrernte's living cultural values across the district. However because of the nature and importance of Corroboree Rock all cultural information is restricted to senior men. Traditional Owners do want to share this important place with the wider community. They hope that by encouraging visitors to the site that non-Aboriginal people will gain a better appreciation of its importance and respect for its traditions.

The partners are keen to improve the presentation of the Reserve while carefully

managing information presented to the public. The partners hope that visitors will be left with a lasting impression of the importance of Corroboree Rock as a sacred site.

**Access** - A sealed road leads visitors from the Ross Highway to the Reserve. All vehicles should be restricted to sealed road and car park to avoid damage to the fragile environment at the site.

Traditional Owners strongly discourage Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men from entering the Reserve. Warning signs will be clearly presented on the access road to warn Aboriginal visitors that Corroboree Rock is an important men's sacred site and dangerous for Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men. Senior men also request that visitors do not drink alcohol near the sacred site.

**Facilities** - Visitor facilities include an unsealed car park for about 15 vehicles, a pit toilet, picnic table, and an interpretive shelter. There is also a one kilometre walking track circling the base of the sacred site. Pressing visitor issues the partners face include:

- Preventing visitors climbing the rock face or climbing through a small 'window' in the formation;
- Graffiti scraped into the 'window' removed;
- Rehabilitating eroded areas at the base of the rock, informal walking pads and an old track leading to the "window" through the rock formation; and

The Reserve's facilities are basic but adequate for current visitation. Any upgraded facilities should be designed to only require low maintenance and protect the site from damage.

Traditional Owners would like to encourage visitors to stay on the walking track, not drink alcohol near the sacred site and help keep the site clean. The partners also recognise that camping is not consistent with the sacred site. Visitors seeking accommodation should be directed to local providers, such as Ross River Resort or other nearby Parks and Reserves.

**Interpretation** - Public knowledge helps promote appreciation and respect and reduces the risk of unintentional damage to significant areas. However, given the spiritual significance of the site senior men will not consent to any publication or broadcasting of images or film associated with the sacred site.

Interpretation within Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve should:

- promote the site as a place of spiritual importance and a living cultural site;
- provide orientation for other Parks and Reserves of the district; and
- only publicly present the name 'Corroboree Rock' and carefully manage information and images to ensure Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men do not read about or see images of the site.

**Safety** - All visitor activity on the Reserve carries some risk of injury. Rangers are trained in emergency response and first aid, and regularly patrol to monitor facilities and visitor behaviour. Facilities are maintained to the highest practicable standards for visitor safety. A district Emergency Response Plan, which is reviewed annually, provides Rangers with clear direction in an emergency.

#### **Aim**

- Appreciation of the Reserve's value as part of a living cultural landscape.

#### **Management Direction**

**5.1 Reserve presentation** - The joint management partners will actively seek the

assistance from Tourism NT, Tourism Central Australia and other agencies to ensure Corroboree Rock is promoted consistent with its values as a sacred site.

**5.2 Visitor Interpretation** – The Partners will develop an interpretation strategy and annual operational program for the East MacDonnell District. They will invest in a basic level of interpretation in the Reserve.

- **Visitor Information** – Orientation information introducing the wider East MacDonnell district may be considered.
- **Image restrictions** - To the best of their ability, the partners will manage information and images of Corroboree Rock to ensure Aboriginal women, children and uninitiated men do not read about or see images of the site. The partners will not consent to any publication or broadcasting of images or film of the sacred site.
- **Monitoring** - Information shared with the public will be monitored by senior men and through consultations with the CLC.

**5.3 Visitor access** - The road will be maintained to reduce the risk of erosion. All vehicle and foot traffic will be restricted to the formed road and walking path.

- **Warning Signs** – will be established at the Reserve entrance on the access road to warn visitors, including women, children and uninitiated men that Corroboree Rock is an important men's sacred site with significant cultural restrictions with penalties for infringement.
- **Closures** - The Reserve or areas within it may be temporarily closed to the public for fire, rehabilitation works and important ceremonies. These infrequent events will be appropriately publicised.
- **Pets** - Entry of pets will be consistent with existing Parks and Wildlife policy.

**5.4 Visitor Facilities** – Current facilities will be maintained to provide a basic standard of service to visitors, and subject to resources upgrades will be to a basic design standard..

- **Future development** – The East MacDonnells Joint Management Committee will annually endorse rolling five-year works plans and site development for parks and reserves for the district. Decisions will be made in accordance with structures and processes outlined in section 2.
- **Walking track** – The walking track may be maintained to a Class 4 standard (AS 2156.1-2001), depending on available resources. This standard enables visitors to walk in a slightly modified natural environment where interpretation and facilities are not common. Off-track exploration of the Reserve will be discouraged.
- **Camping and Campfires**- will not be permitted in the Reserve.
- **Rock climbing, abseiling and mountain-bike riding** – will not be permitted in the Reserve.
- **Rubbish** – Visitors will be encouraged to take their rubbish with them.
- **Alcohol** – Signs will be placed asking visitors not to drink alcohol within the Reserve.

**5.5 Visitor safety** – The Emergency Response Plan for parks and reserves of the district will be reviewed annually. Identified risks will be rectified on a priority basis and rangers will receive appropriate training. Tour operators will be encouraged to report incidents and safety issues to Park Operations.

## Appendix 1. Selected Performance Indicators

These performance indicators are an additional tool to assist the joint management partners to measure the success of joint management across parks and reserves of the East MacDonnell District. They are not the only measures of success and other measures may be developed over time. There is a reasonable expectation that they will be achieved, if not year by year, then over the longer term of this plan. When indicators are not achieved, the reasons need to be established and steps taken to improve outcomes.

Aims	Performance Indicators	Targets	Means
<b>Managing Country</b>			
Traditional Owners satisfied with the protection of cultural sites.	- Traditional Owner satisfaction.	High	Partner satisfaction monitoring (see Mgt. Dir. 2.4).
<b>Reserve Governance</b>			
Equitable partnership with effective governance.	- Joint Management Partners satisfied with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication and Engagement</li> <li>- Representation and Decision-making processes</li> <li>- Building capacity</li> </ul>	High	Partner satisfaction monitoring. Ongoing record-keeping, reporting and review.
The Aims and Directions in this Plan are achieved with resources used effectively on agreed priorities.	- Achievement of Aims and Management Directions in this plan - Implementation of strategies and annual operational programs	Outcomes realised % of priority actions completed	Partner satisfaction monitoring. Ongoing record-keeping, reporting and review.