

Kulaluk lease area from Totem Road to Ludmilla Creek has sites of historical and cultural significance – burial grounds – Pukamani site – Gunabibi site - old Bagot Reserve 1938 – 1965.

17 August 2010

Chief Executive Officer
Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
GPO Box 1890
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Sir

RE: KULALUK LEASE SITES

Thank you for attending the Darwin Consent Authority hearing into the Kulaluk rezoning applications on July 22nd last. I enclose a summary of the discussion about the Gunabibi site mentioned by David Ritchie in his letter to the Gwalwa Daraniki Association in 1982, written in his role as head of Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority (ASSA). In more recent times I was surprised to discover further details about the origins of this site and that it retains such significance amongst living people like James Gaykamungu of Bagot Community, elders in Arnhem Land and the Larrakia people. I urge AAPA to record James' story because he was uniquely involved in events never recorded, to my knowledge. Don White of Bagot Community is another man who knows more about the site.

You said that AAPA has a file on the Gunabibi site, so you may already have enough information to register the site. The Hollingsworth Consultants' report, 'Kulaluk Lease Land Development Study' (1985) (NAC Q 711.552 Hol, NT Library) includes a map that shows the Gunabibi site and another large site behind the old Retta Dixon Homes. The Hollingsworth map seem to coincide with the map in Henderson's 'Land Use Field Study of the Kulaluk Area' (1983), so I suspect the researchers both used information from AAPA, or the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority as it was then. I am also recall when David Cooper was working for ASSA in the 1980s he had maps with sites marked along Ludmilla Creek and another site in the bushland beside Fitzner Drive. I presume these sites were not registered because the land was Aboriginal land leased to the Gwalwa Daraniki Association and was thought to be in safe hands.

As the rezoning applications have shown, the land is not secure. In talks at Larrakia nation on July 30th, I urged the group of men known as the 'Larrakia Law Grounds Custodians' to register the Gunabibi site with AAPA as soon as possible, as the men are doing for the old initiation ground at Emery Point. I stressed that the matter is urgent; however, owing to the unfortunate upheaval at Larrakia Nation, the men may not have followed the matter up.

I do know that James Gaykamungu has begun his own research and interviews. He is very happy to share the information with anyone who can help save the areas. James was very offended when I told him about the remarks by Greg Constantine and Helen Secretary who gave their oral submissions after James had left the hearings room. You will remember that Greg and Helen discounted James' version of events and reasserted their opinion that there were no cultural impediments to developing the bush land between Harney Street and Dick Ward Drive. I still do not understand what Greg Constantine and the Larrakia Development Corporation have to do with the Kulaluk lease. I think Greg described themselves as 'partners' and Helen Secretary as 'a senior traditional owner'.

Rather than wait for someone to start the ball rolling and register the site, my request is that AAPA begin the necessary documentation to register the Gunabibi ceremony site and the Tiwi burial site, as well as any others that James Gaykamungu, Don White and anyone else may know about.

From my point of view, I would like to have the whole of the Kulaluk lease registered as a site of historical importance. This would include Ludmilla Creek, Fred Fogarty's old camp, my old camp, the concrete army observation post, the old Chinese wells, the old rice fields and dyke, many heritage trees, the burial grounds, tracks used for access, all the mangroves, fishing and shell fish gathering sites, middens, jungle fowl nests, old army rifle range, Mirage crash site, Fred Fogarty's tree plantings, possible archaeological sites (including pre-1970 rubbish dumps), bird breeding and roosting area, the salt pan (roosting site for migratory birds), and more (Note: the salt pan was excavated for aquaculture ponds in 1997 – with the failure of the aquaculture ventures, the permit states the environment must be restored).

Of course the whole Kulaluk lease area from Totem Road to Ludmilla Creek also has historical and cultural significance in having been the site of the old Bagot Reserve from 1938 – 1965. The final report of the Aboriginal Land Rights Commission in 1974 documents in nine pages the story of how the reserve was revoked in 1965. No one has really documented the activities that took place on the land in that period. According to the late Victor Williams there were at least 200 burials. Later, from 1971 to 1979 the land was the centre of the national land rights struggle, as recorded in the newsletter *Bunji* from 1971 -1985.

I am sure that ASSA and AAPA were working towards the same aim of preserving the Kulaluk land by their support of the research of David Cooper and Krimhilde Henderson between 1983-5. The

results of that research, including Henderson's two reports ('Land Use Field Study of the Kulaluk Area' and 'History of the Kulaluk Lease') would have been kept by AAPA to be a valuable resource. Also, Sam Wells's comprehensive history, 'Town camp or homeland? A history of the Kulaluk Aboriginal community' (1995) was sponsored by the Australian Heritage Commission with the intention of placing the Kulaluk land on the national heritage register. As you may have noticed, rather than having these three above mentioned and well-documented reports mouldering in the archives, I have made multiple copies at my own expense and distributed them to interested people.

I urge AAPA or the Heritage Commission to register the Kulaluk lease in its entirety with some urgency, but not, dare I say, with the present leaseholders as custodians! In my role as an anthropologist I will also work towards the same end, before valuable information is lost.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Day