

19 August 2010

Hon Gerry McCarthy
Minister for Lands and Planning
GPO Box 3148
Darwin
NT 0801

Dear Sir

RE: KULALUK LEASE SITES

At the Darwin Consent Authority hearing into the Kulaluk rezoning applications on July 22nd last I raised the subject of Aboriginal sites on the Kulaluk lease. James Gaykamungu of the Bagot Community also submitted further details about the origins of one of the sites. I have urged the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority to record James' story urgently. I believe that AAPA already has a file on the Kulaluk sites from their research when David Ritchie was the Director.

In 1982 David Ritchie wrote to the Gwalwa Daraniki Association, notifying the association of significant Aboriginal sites on the Kulaluk special purpose lease. In his letter, Ritchie noted that an area behind the Bagot Community lease is an important Gunabibi ceremony site according to an Arnhem Land leader and politician, since deceased. Despite Ritchie's concern, the site has never been registered as a sacred site and it is not know what was recorded about the circumstances that led to such an important ceremony being held in the Darwin area.

At the hearing, Mr James Gaykamungu related how the Gunabibi ceremony came to be held on the site in what was then part of the old Bagot Reserve. Mr Gaykamungu's evidence revealed that the site is part of the untold Aboriginal history of Darwin, and as such a site of great historical importance. This perspective further exposed the research of the developers and the supposed cultural authority of the leaseholders who claimed that there were no cultural impediments to rezoning the Kulaluk land for residential and light industry.

The Hollingsworth Consultants' report, 'Kulaluk Lease Land Development Study' (1985) 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 also recall in the 1980s, ASSA 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 sites with AAPA as soon as possible. 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.

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 believe that ASSA and AAPA supported the research of David Cooper and Krimhilde Henderson between 1983-5 with the aim of preserving the Kulaluk land. The results of that research, including Henderson's two reports ('Land Use Field Study of the Kulaluk Area' and 'History of the Kulaluk Lease') are held by AAPA as a valuable resource. In addition, 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. 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 have urged AAPA and/or the Heritage Commission to register the Kulaluk lease in its entirety. I also urge you as Minister to ensure that the Kulaluk land is saved in its entirety to preserve the land's heritage value for the whole Darwin community.

Yours sincerely,

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