

Who are the Gwalwa Daraniki Association? The Kulaluk lease was not granted under the *Land Rights Act 1976*

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The Editor
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Dear Sir

On November 7, 1971, Larrakia elders and their supporters raised their flag outside the NT Supreme Court in Mitchell Street and 'claimed back Darwin'. Today, a replica of the flag flies outside the offices of the Larrakia Nation on Dickward Drive. Following the flag raising, other Aboriginal groups camped around Darwin joined the campaign under the banner of 'Gwalwa Daraniki', which means 'our land' in the Larrakia language. The name was thought to be suitably inclusive and was subsequently used as the name of the incorporated association that received the title of the Kulaluk Special Purpose Lease in 1979. Well-documented reports of various investigations, submissions, correspondence and Cabinet minutes leading up to the hand over of the Kulaluk lease make clear that the original intention was to return the land as compensation for the bushland, mangroves and tidal flats that were unfairly revoked from the old Bagot Aboriginal Reserve, stretching from Ludmilla Creek to Totem Road. The Kulaluk lease was not granted under the *Land Rights Act 1976* because the Act does not apply in town areas. Ironically, the land was also excluded from the more recent Larrakia native title claim over Darwin. Plans which I submitted in the 1970s on behalf of the Gwalwa Daraniki Association emphasised the preservation of the natural environment for future generations of Darwin residents. Government correspondence of the time shows that this was the deciding factor in granting final approvals for the lease. However, apparently with the connivance of various NT governments and manipulative developers, the constitution of the GDA has been amended over the years to restrict membership of the association to a 'minimum of 5' who are 'residents of Kulaluk Community', a small group living in the shadows of high rise apartments in Coconut Grove at the site of Bobby Secretary's old camp. I suggest that the use of the term 'Traditional owners' in media reports describing those who manage the Kulaluk lease falsely legitimises the dealings of a select few who secretly approved the current marina proposals against the wishes of the majority of Aboriginal people with a genuine interest in the land.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Bill Day

Author of *Bunji: a story of the Gwalwa Daraniki Movement* (Aboriginal Studies Press 1994).