

Gwalwa Daraniki Association Kulaluk crab farm (2006) and Kulaluk prawn farm (1997)

Dr Chris Burns MLA says 15 tonnes of mud crabs a year will generate \$235,000 in the first three years

B Nagas says crab farm is 'Sustainable economic and social project'

'Who is to pay for these aquaculture failures in on Aboriginal land?' asks Bill Day\

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, NORTHERN TERRITORY NEWS, DARWIN

Don't come raw prawn

IN the 1980s, developers, in a deal with the Kulaluk management, proposed to excavate the Ludmilla Creek mangroves for a canal housing estate.

That mad scheme was stopped by public reaction. The message got through that mangroves have value for Aboriginal people.

But developers don't give up that easily.

Now they have proposed something called "aquaculture ponds" for the old rice fields to the west of Dick Ward Dve between Totem Rd and Fitzer Dve.

I can smell a dead mullet or two. Don't tell me that people who see bush and wetlands as wasteland are really interested in breeding fish. Don't come the raw prawn.

For "aquaculture ponds" read "excavations for canal housing of the future". Whatever happened to environmental impact statements?

Bill Day, University of WA

December 21, 1996

Time to wake up, Darwin

THE disastrous aquaculture projects on the Kulaluk lease would be farcical under any name, if it were not for the environmental damage being done.

Ten years ago, five huge ponds were excavated on the tidal flats beside Ludmilla Creek for a prawn farm.

When the project predictably failed, instead of the ponds being rehabilitated as required, a federal government shared responsibility agreement provided \$450,000 for their conversion to a crab farm, with Aboriginal participation through the Community Development Employment Projects scheme.

A 2005 media release endorsed by Minister Dr Chris Burns, said 15 tonnes of mud crabs a year would generate around \$235,000 in the first three years.

Now that the crab farm has failed, where is the accountability? Who is responsible for the taxpayers' money that has been washed down the creek? As an alternative, a report worthy of the vision of the founders of the Kulaluk lease has been prepared for the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation setting out a plan for the future management and preservation of the priceless 301ha of urban bushland on the Kulaluk lease. Wake up Darwin and appreciate this unique opportunity before it is too late!

Bill Day, Maylands, WA 23 7-08

Signs of ruined life

THE residents of Ludmilla are right to protest against the destruction along Namarluk Dve in the name of "mosquito eradication".

For over a decade these unscientific misusers of heavy machinery have been wreaking havoc in the Kulaluk special purpose lease without being accountable for their actions.

The results have been salt water intrusion, massive erosion and disruption of walking trails by deep drains.

Signs have now been erected describing the work as "mosquito breeding control and rehabilitation of disturbed land. A combined project by the Darwin City Council, Greening Australia and Territory Health Services".

The only "greening" obvious to replace the destruction of nature trees is the wholesale spread of coffee bush seeds throughout Aboriginal land.

June 26, 1997 Bill Day Casuarina

Marina idea 'nonsense'

LAST October the EPA held a symposium on Environmental Impact Assessment.

Guest speaker Dr Angus Morrison-Saunders told us that the benefit of good laws and procedures for assessing the likely environmental impacts of new proposals is often hidden.

According to him, this value goes unseen, because the very existence of adequate laws and processes discourages "nonsense proposals" from presenting for assessment.

So how does this expert's theory reconcile with the proposed Arafura Marina? For Gwelo's plan to decapitate East Point and destroy the mangroves of Ludmilla Creek to make a canal estate is a nonsense proposal if ever I saw one.

The NT is growing, but to ensure that ours is healthy, planned growth we must strengthen our capacity for habitat protection.

Justin Tutty, Tiwi

Fact is now fiction

IN reference to Bill Day's letter (Northern Territory News July 19 1997), it would appear Mr Day has replaced fact with fiction once again.

Six months ago he claimed that an aquaculture project planned for a site on Kulaluk land was in fact a canal housing development.

Wrong. Now he claims that mangroves are to be dug up to provide access. Mr Day should be aware that the access road through Kulaluk has been in existence for many years and no addition or alterations are planned or suggested.

If he had bothered to ask he would be aware of this. I would suggest he spend less time condemning Aboriginal and Islander people trying to pursue sustainable economic and social progress and more time doing something useful himself.

Now, if Mr Day has a problem with Aboriginal development for community benefit he should say so and leave out all the nonsense.

In future, deal with the facts, don't create fiction.

26-07-97 R Nagas, Darwin

No place for prawns

WHILE it may be too late to stop the digging of prawn breeding ponds on the Kulaluk special purpose lease, it is not too late to stop the bulldozing of access roads through the mangroves. Gradually the lease is being alienated from its intended purpose of community use. Aborigines who fish, crab and live in the area will be affected by the large ponds and access roads.

The rationale for digging up the tidal flats seems to be that



this is a wasteland. In fact, the saltpan comes to life after each spring tide as tiny crabs and creatures scurry about in the wet mud. Wading birds feed as the tide comes in, bringing larger fish and crabs to feed in the submerged mud.

Using urban land for prawn breeding ponds is a waste of resources and is bound to fail.

19-07-1997 Bill Day Casuarina

Where will it end?

IT IS good to see magpie geese returning to the old rice fields, the wetlands to the west of Dick Ward Dve between Totem Rd and Fitzer Dve.

Sadly most of the reeds have been killed by salt water rushing up the "mosquito eradication" drains. Most of the freshwater reeds have been replaced by grey mud dotted with mangroves.

Further back, the huge excavations continue for the financial, engineering and environmental disaster known as the "prawn ponds". Original plans claim the work would be done in two months. Eight months later they are still digging.

B Nagas (Northern Territory News 26/7/97) promised there would be no new access roads into the ponds. So far two roads have been bulldozed through the forest.

Where will it end and who is going to pay?

16-12-1997 Bill Day Ludmilla

Bulldozing disaster

WHEN bulldozers moved onto the mud flats of Kulaluk, down from Totem Rd, I predicted the proposed aquaculture scheme would be an environmental, financial and engineering disaster.

The people who fought hard for the land had a vision when they made it a condition of the lease "that no living native tree be destroyed".

If these people were alive they would be sad to see what is being done to their country.

After almost 12 months, the excavations are bogged down and money is going down the drain. I can only conclude that the purpose is to send the landowners into debt so that the banks and businesses can take over.

When this happens, the land will be alienated from Aboriginal people forever.

13-03-98 Bill Day Mt Hawthorn, WA

Who is to pay for 'aquaculture' failure?

IN MAY 1997, bulldozers began excavating huge ponds for an "aquaculture" development in the Ludmilla Creek system on the Kulaluk Aboriginal lease.

Until 1964, the land from Ludmilla Creek to Totem Rd was a part of Bagot Aboriginal Reserve.

In 1979, 301ha of this coastal land was returned for "Aboriginal community use". The area has a potentially

unique value as a recreational and education space.

The mangroves are widely used by Aboriginal people from Bagot Community and elsewhere in Darwin to gather bush tucker.

In response to my complaints when the prawn ponds began, the Kulaluk management claimed it was to provide income and jobs for the Kulaluk community. Roads, powerlines and pro-

cessing sheds were constructed in the tidal regions under the flight path of the international airport although it was obvious to many the project was an environmental, economic and engineering disaster.

Within three years the huge and expensive scheme has failed, as I predicted. The devastated site is now abandoned and the infrastructure removed, apart from power-

lines leading nowhere. According to the planning approval, which should never have been given, if the lease is no longer used for aquaculture the land must be restored. Who is going to pay for the restoration, and whose money has been flushed down the creek on this foolish scheme?

13-08-01 Bill Day Fannie Bay