

01 -03-2010

RE: Proposed rezoning of areas on the Kulaluk Lease

The *Kulaluk Lease Area Land Development Study* (Holingsworth Consultants 1985) sets a trend for future studies to view the Kulaluk lease as *terra nullius*, unused and unoccupied by indigenous people.ⁱ In contrast, a 1983 study by Krimhilde Henderson documents varied and frequent use of the Kulaluk land by Darwin Aboriginal people.ⁱⁱ I submit copies of these contrasting reports with this letter as supporting evidence in the following objection to the rezoning of Part of Lot 5182 and Part of Lot 8630 on Dickward Drive.

Firstly, Henderson's study recorded how Aboriginal people used the Kulaluk lease over a four week period in 1983. Henderson also commented on management problems such as weeds, fires and rehabilitation. Henderson (1983:15) concluded:

The Aboriginal people of Darwin have a long historical association with the Kulaluk area. People from Bagot Reserve have been coming to Ludmilla Creek since the establishment of the compound in 1938, and no doubt Aborigines around Darwin used the area long before this.

Today it remains an important recreation area primarily for people staying at Bagot and Kulaluk, but also for many other town residents. The dietary input of foods obtained in the Ludmilla Creek area provides a welcome change from store-bought food and is for some people nutritionally significant.

Apart from the obvious economic benefits of being able to supplement family diets with the variety of protein sources found at Kulaluk, the psychological benefits of shared family activity and the relief of the social stress by being able to go the creek and become involved in relaxing, absorbing and familiar activities are equally significant.

As someone with a long association with the lease, including living on the land for over six years (see Day 1994, 2008)ⁱⁱⁱ, I can confirm Henderson's survey documenting Aboriginal use of the lease, even though since 1983 access to the land has been restricted by fencing, signage and excavations for the failed prawn farm and crab farm. To allow light industrial development along Dickward Drive would further restrict access by Aboriginal people and inhibit plans to encourage community use of the land (see Day 2008).

The Hollingsworth study ignores Henderson's research although doubts are raised about using an Aboriginal town lease for commercial development because of the 'unfair advantage' it would give the Gwalwa Daraniki Association in the commercial sector. Secondly, the Hollingsworth study expressed a concern that commercial use of the Kulaluk lease might lead to a demand for additional Aboriginal living areas in Darwin. The study discusses these issues under the heading, 'Socio-Political Ramifications' (p.40). The section continues:

During the course of the investigations undertaken as part of this study, several comments were raised against the concept of commercial development of leased Aboriginal land. One comment related to a perceived unfair economic advantage such development would have over competitors if it was developed for industrial uses. This advantage would arise because there would be no land cost component in the establishment of an appropriate rental for any such development. Such a cost component would undoubtedly be included in the rentals charged by the nearby industrial developments.

One other aspect which has been commented upon is the precedent that could be set by allowing commercial development of this leasehold land. Concern was expressed by an officer of the Department of Lands that if this development was to proceed [on the Kulaluk lease], then the Department could expect to receive applications for commercial development from other Aboriginal communities on other lands leased for community or living purposes throughout the Territory. This was seen as being undesirable as it may, in turn, create a demand for further living areas.

I submit that the issues highlighted in the two contrasting reports and discussed briefly in this letter will apply to the rezoning proposals for part of Lot 5182 and part of Lot 8630 on the Kulaluk lease.

Dr William B Day

Consulting Anthropologist



Above: A branch of Ludmilla Creek on the Kulaluk lease at low tide.

-
- ⁱ Gwalwa Daraniki Association Inc 1995 *Our future at Kulaluk and Minmarama Park: Facts about the threats to our social and economic development.*
- Gwalwa Daraniki Association Inc and Vysrose Pty Ltd 1997 *Kulaluk Development Proposal: development brief for the development Part Lot 5182, Bagot Road Town of Darwin.*
- Hewitt, Sharon 2006 *Our vision to economic independence and employment and educational opportunities for our community: an evaluation of Gwalwa Daraniki Enterprises Mud Crab Farm Employment Program.* Gwalwa Daraniki Association Inc, Darwin.
- ⁱⁱ Henderson, K 1983 *Land Use Field Study of the Kulaluk Area.* ASSPA, Darwin
- ⁱⁱⁱ Day, Bill 1994 *Bunji: a story of the Gwalwa Daraniki Movement,* Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Day, B 2008 *Recommendations for a Wilderness, Heritage and Education park: last opportunity to be true to the vision of its founders? A report for the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Darwin..*