

Recommendations for a Kulaluk Wilderness, Heritage and Education Park

A last opportunity to be true to the vision of its founders



Above: Len Stewart fishing with a cast net in Ludmilla Creek at low tide, 1997. Photo: Bill Day.

A report for the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal

Corporation

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Aerial photograph of Kulaluk lease in 1984.

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Map of Darwin area showing Kulaluk lease and green corridor

Aerial photograph of Kulaluk lease

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Lease ideals lost in dust

AFTER a long struggle in the 1970s, Aboriginal people in Darwin were successful in saving for future generations 301ha of coastal land from Ludmilla Creek to Coconut Grove, known as the Kulaluk special-purpose lease.

Since the hand-over in 1978, the leaseholders have been offered many proposals, including a canal housing estate around Ludmilla Creek, a transient camp in Fitzer Drive, a Disneyland-type development between Bagot Rd and Dick Ward Drive and a 5ha "prawn farm".

I have described similar madcap proposals in my book, *Bunji: a story of the Gwalwa Daraniki Movement*.

Thank god for the airport flightpath that has prevented planning approval of many of these schemes.

For some unfathomable reason, Darwin has never appreciated this unique and varied urban environment.

The struggle to preserve the ideals of the founders has depended on a few lonely but persistent voices.

The latest monstrosity to be inflicted upon even the most apathetic passerby has been the earth stockpile on the seaward side of Dick Ward Drive. Only the broadest of interpretation could describe this mountain of rubble as being for "Aboriginal community use", as required by the original lease.

The lease is too valuable as a social, environmental and cultural asset to be exploited for the short-term financial

gain of a few Kulaluk residents — not to mention the hazards of vehicles and dust to Minmarama residents.

Surely such a visible act of irresponsibility will now arouse the Aboriginal community and the general public of Darwin to act.

Dr Bill Day, Howard Springs

About the author

Dr Bill Day has a Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Western Australia. His 2001 thesis for the Department of Anthropology was titled, '*Fringe dwellers in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia: Cultural continuities or a culture of resistance?*' His previous publication was the book *Bunji: a story of the Gwalwa Daraniki Movement* published by Aboriginal Studies Press in 1994.

Dr Day has resided in Darwin for a total of 18 years, including a year of field work living at Fish Camp on the Kulaluk lease and six years in huts he built from bush materials beside Kulaluk Beach, accessed from Totem Road. He lived at his beach camp continuously between June 1979 and June 1985 during which time he experienced six wet seasons and two cyclones (Max and Gretel) without electricity or running water (see Appendices 9.6 and 9.7).

From 1971 to 1984 he published the Aboriginal rights newsletter *Bunji* that documented the campaign for land rights in Darwin, centred on the Larrakia claim to Kulaluk. Bill has since opposed many of the developments for the Kulaluk lease proposed by the Gwalwa Daraniki Association, claiming that the plans are not in keeping with the vision of the founders or have proceeded without sufficient research. He has voluntarily prepared this report for the Larrakia Nation, believing that the coming years could be the last opportunity to save a unique urban wilderness gifted to the City of Darwin through the actions of a small group of determined and visionary Aboriginal fringe dwellers. The proposed urban parkland would be a worthy memorial to them.

Addendum

From 'HISTORY OF THE KULALUK LEASE'

By Krimhilde Henderson (1984). Extract from Page 27

In October [1974] a 'proposed land usage plan' for the whole [Kulaluk] area being claimed was received from Bill Day.¹ Darwin DAA told Central Office [in Canberra]: 'This includes large areas to be retained for public access as fauna and flora sanctuaries... We believe this proposal is imaginative and is an attempt to make the area at least partly into one of Aboriginal cultural significance. The fauna and flora sanctuary proposals may of course attract interest and support from environmentalists.' (T. C. Lovegrove to J. P. M. Long, 25 October 1974)

¹ Note: This plan was requested before the lease could be considered by town planners.