

In her book, "Saltwater People: the waves of memory," Nonie Sharp (2002:41) writes: "Today the Larrakia cling to generations-old traditions, to the narratives of the creator figures who swam or walked the paths that came to define their territories and themselves." Nonie Sharp continues: "Their 1970 claim to a section of waterfront known as Kulaluk in the Darwin suburbs may well be the first claim to sea country made along the tropical coast of Australia." In his report, Judge Dick Ward included half of Ludmilla Creek and all the coastal mangroves in the Kulaluk land claim. The Lands Branch wanted the Kulaluk boundary only to go to the high tide mark, but Judge Ward wrote: "The Lands Branch came to realise the importance to the Aboriginal people of the mangrove swamp and conceded that this was a special case" (1975:13). As Nonie Sharp says, this was a great precedent for land claims. What can we say today when the leaseholders try to sell the mangroves to developers? How can Larrakia say they have a special connection to the land or sea if coastal mangroves are destroyed on land won by the elders in 1979?