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GRAHAM A. YAPP*

# Wilderness in Kakadu National Park: Aboriginal and Other Interests

## ABSTRACT

*Kakadu National Park, in Australia's Northern Territory, is a relatively large and remote park with outstanding importance for nature conservation and for the preservation of aboriginal heritage and traditions. To many people, the park is a typical wilderness—vast, remote and relatively inaccessible. Although its landscapes do have wilderness characteristics and values, a strict interpretation of "wilderness" is not generally applicable to Kakadu because it has been affected by several kinds of human activity.*

*First, the area of the park has been continuously occupied and managed by aboriginals for at least 40,000 years. Second, other impacts have been superimposed upon the aboriginal landscapes in recent times. Third, residents, neighbors and visitors have a wide variety of interests in the land enclosed by the existing and proposed boundaries of Kakadu. In addition to the growing population of aboriginals, permanent and temporary accommodations are provided for park staff, scientists and tourists. Workers at mines enclosed by the park live within it in the town of Jabiru. The enclaves that provide for mineral and tourist interests inevitably impinge upon park management and wilderness values.*

*Despite the long and varied history of human intervention, substantial areas of this very large park have retained the characteristic of wilderness. Management policies implemented following the establishment of the park have reduced the extent to which the environment is modified by human activity, fire and the buffalo.*

*About half the current area of the park is held in unalienable freehold title under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976.*[1] *This land is leased to the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service by the traditional aboriginal owners to be managed as a national park for all Australians. Under the lease, various obligations are placed on the director to safeguard aboriginal interests.*

*Aboriginal involvement ensures that their perspectives on all values of Kakadu National Park, including its value as wilderness, are continuously considered in ongoing management and development.*

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1. Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, No. 191 (1976).

*Despite the fact that their priorities are not necessarily the same as those of other Australians, aboriginal experience has proven to have considerable application to park management and the protection of wilderness values.*

## INTRODUCTION

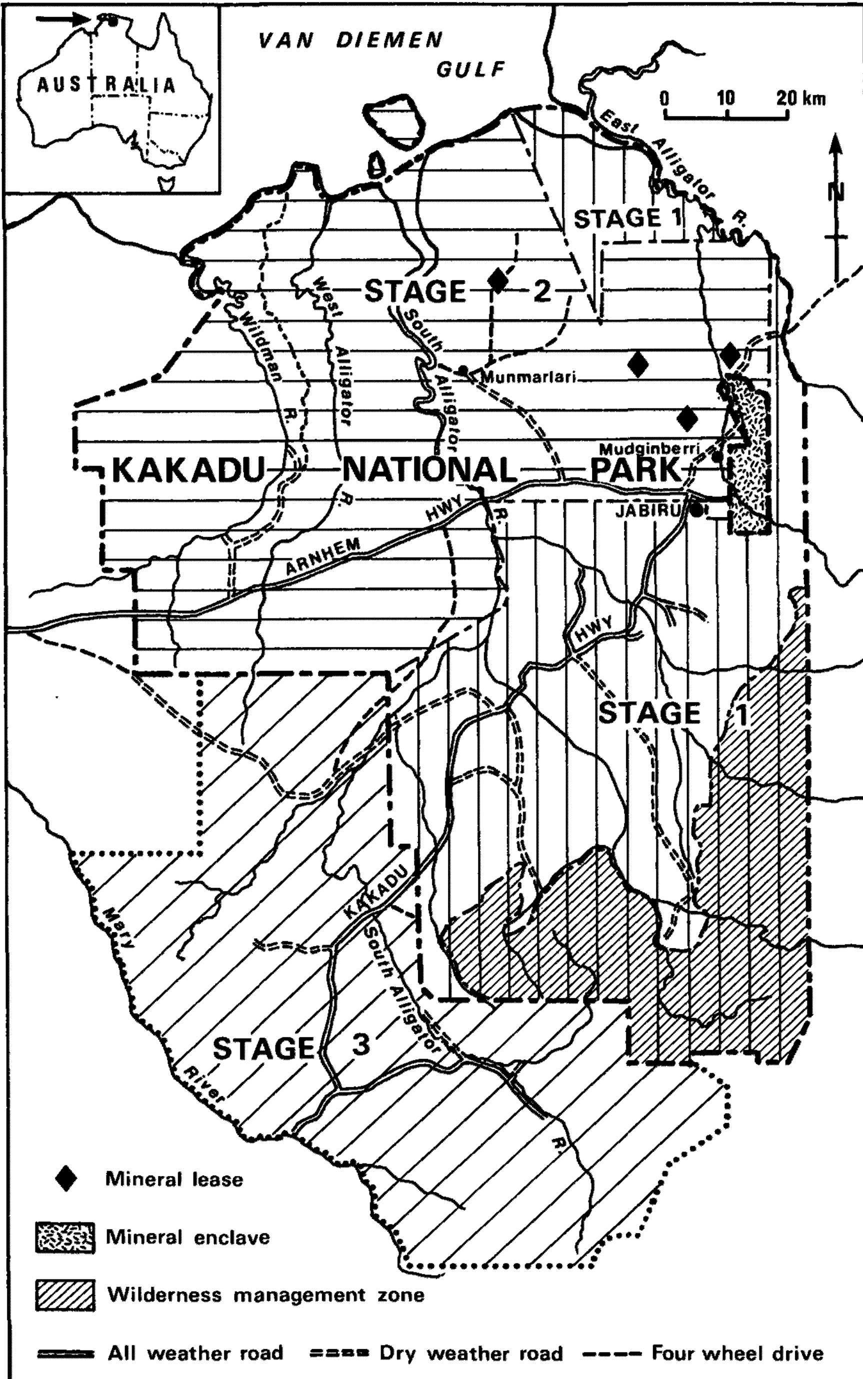
Kakadu National Park has won international recognition because of its outstanding importance for nature conservation and for the preservation of aboriginal heritage and traditions. The wetlands of Kakadu, especially important as waterfowl habitat, are listed as Wetlands of International Importance. In 1981, the first stage of the park, an area of 6,144 square kilometers, was inscribed on the prestigious World Heritage List. The inscription of additional areas has been foreshadowed. The park has great symbolic significance as a special environment that is uniquely Australian, and is now an important destination for both domestic and international tourism.

### Aboriginal Land Rights

About one-half of the currently dedicated area of the park is held in freehold title under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.[2] This land formed the basis for the proclamation of Stage 1 of the park in 1979. Two objectives were thereby achieved. Statutory protection under the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975*[3] serves the national interest in conservation of natural and cultural heritage. The granting of freehold to traditional owners, although contested, reflected the majority desire for action to meet the aspirations of aboriginal Australians. However, Rigsby has observed that Australian land rights legislation does not truly recognize aboriginal prior title; rather it allows them to acquire (or be granted) Australian freehold and leasehold title to land under specified conditions.[4]

The land is leased by the Kakadu Aboriginal Land Trust to the Director of National Parks and Wildlife. The agreement specifies that the land is leased for purposes of a national park for the use, enjoyment and benefit of all Australians. Fox suggests that few traditional owners had a clear perception of the national park concept, but embraced it because they hoped that it would protect them and their land as "a further buffer against the uncertainties of mining and tourism."[5] For many, the gaining of land

2. *Id.*
3. National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, No. 12 (1975).
4. Rigsby, *Aboriginal People, Land Rights and Wilderness on Cape York Peninsula*, 92 PROC. RL. SOC. QUEENSL. 1, 5 (1981).
5. Fox, *Kakadu Is Aboriginal Land*, 12 AMBIO 161, 163 (1983).


AUSTRALIA
VAN DIEMEN
GULF
0 10 20 km
N
East Alligator R.
STAGE 1
STAGE 2
West Alligator
Wildman R.
South Alligator
Munmarlari
Mudginberri
KAKADU NATIONAL PARK
JABIRU
ARNHEM HWY
R.
HWY
STAGE 1
KAKADU
South Alligator
STAGE 3
Mary River
R.
Mineral lease
Mineral enclave
Wilderness management zone
All weather road
Dry weather road
Four wheel drive

rights meant the opportunity to reoccupy tribal lands from which they had been displaced. The national park increased their confidence that sacred sites would be protected and that, where so desired, traditional ways could be practiced free from intrusion.

The lease places the director under various obligations to safeguard aboriginal interests. The primary mechanism for this is close involvement of traditional owners in management planning and operations. The Northern Land Council, a wider association of aboriginal interests, represents the Trust and traditional land owners in many matters relating to management of the park. Other avenues for liaison and advice operate with the Gagudju Association—a formal association of traditional owners—and with individual owners and aboriginal residents of the park. Some aboriginals are employed as cultural advisers, others as rangers or temporary workers.

There was some criticism of the extent and methods of aboriginal involvement in the preparation of the first plan of management for the park. Coombs considered that initial concert between aboriginals and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (ANPWS) had been threatened, and aboriginals' fears raised, by pressures for mining and tourism and by the failure, up to that time, to present a draft plan of management for examination by experts acting for the traditional owners.[6]

The second five-year Plan of Management is now in operation. It clearly demonstrates that ANPWS has maintained its recognition of aboriginal interests and concerns, especially through employment and informal day-to-day consultation, and has been moving to overcome the earlier criticism of the lack of formal involvement in planning and management. However, there is continuing powerful interest in the mineral potential of Kakadu, including the planned Stage 3 extension, and aboriginal fears of the pressure of tourism can only have been intensified by the growth in visitation. Current expectation is that Kakadu will receive 200,000 visitors (750,000 visitor days) in 1987.

## THE WILDERNESS STATUS OF KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

The question that arises is: to what extent can Kakadu National Park be perceived and managed as wilderness given the complex and delicate balance between aboriginal rights and aspirations, and other interests in the park? Those other interests arise from the great diversity of perceptions and the wide range of economic, conservation, recreation and scientific values that the park affords for the Australian nation as a whole.

6. Coombs, *Impact of Uranium Mining on the Social Environment of the Aborigines in the Alligator Rivers Region*, in SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICES: THE IMPACT OF URANIUM MINING IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY 122, 129-31 (S. Harris ed., Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies Monograph No. 3, 1981) (Austl. National Univ., Canberra).

Over much of its area, Kakadu National Park satisfies conventional criteria for wilderness designation such as size, remoteness and naturalness. The park is large and well removed from large urban settlements. The declared area, Stages 1 and 2 of the park, encompasses 13,073 square kilometers, and the area proposed to be added as Stage 3 covers a further 6,726 square kilometers. At its closest point the park is 120 kilometers from Darwin (population 73,000) and is about as close to Djakarta and Singapore as it is to the concentrated populations of the southern states of Australia. Although the park encloses active uranium leases and a township with 1200 residents, much of its area is inaccessible by road. There are extensive areas capable of providing visitors with "solitude and the particular sensations associated with being in a spacious primitive area where survival depends on what you carry with you and can do for yourself."[7]

"Naturalness" is a more difficult criterion to satisfy because plant and animal communities have been modified, both accidentally and deliberately and to varying degrees. Aboriginals have occupied the land for about 40,000 years. European occupancy and impact has been confined to the past 100 years, although contact with the aboriginal people has occurred since the early 17th century and probably over a longer period in the case of people from southeast Asia. The major agents for modification of the park's biota have been aboriginal use of fire, the introduction of grazing economies, and the depredations of feral animals—in particular the water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*) and pig (*Sus scrofa*). The park also has feral cattle, horses, cats and dogs.

## Fire and Wilderness Status

The issue here is whether the deliberate use of fire affects wilderness status. Aboriginals used fire for several purposes, in particular to maintain habitat for game and as an aid in hunting. It was also used for protection of special areas such as rainforest, for clearing of campsites, identification of territory, and to advise other groups of their presence. At some places of spiritual and cultural significance, fire was used in accordance with ritual practice. Other areas of special religious or totemic significance were never deliberately burnt (or hunted) and thereby served as sanctuaries or refuges for native plants and animals.

The native fire management regime broke down as European colonization progressed. This upset the balance between deliberate burning at selected times and uncontrolled wildfires. These high intensity fires inevitably affected the structure and distribution of vegetation that had developed over the thousands of years of burning by aboriginals.

7. AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, WILDERNESS SERVICE: PROTECTING AN ESSENTIAL FREEDOM 3 (Viewpoint Series No. 8, 1975) (Melbourne).

Aboriginals living in the park continue the selective use of fire, mainly early in the dry season, for management of hunting and the general appearance of their lands. Fire is also used as a deliberate "tool" in park management. Aboriginal knowledge is used and, broadly speaking, the fire management policy aims to reproduce (if not re-establish) their original burning regime. Without controlled burning there would be a dramatic increase in wildfires and very great changes to vegetation and wildlife. The propriety of deliberate use of fire to serve management objectives and to preserve existing landscapes is often questioned in other parts of Australia. No change of fire management policy to shift Kakadu National Park more positively towards satisfaction of the wilderness criterion of "naturalness" can be considered at all likely.

## European Occupance and Wilderness Status

### Grazing

The early cattle grazing industry, for which leases were granted over the whole of the "top end" including Kakadu in the 1880s, collapsed as a result of poor economics and disease. The pastoral industry revived on leases on the western boundary of the park and in the area proposed for Stage 3. The industry was heavily dependent on the utilization of feral buffalo, including animals from the area now included in Kakadu. Buffalo camps and the operations of buffalo hunters have made more of an imprint on the area than cattle operations.

### Mining

Until recently, there had been only isolated and minor mineral extraction within the park. The discovery of large commercial deposits of uranium, and continued mineral exploration has meant that mining now has fundamental importance to the status and operation of the park. The development of major uranium mines within enclaves in the park is clearly inconsistent with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) criteria for national parks and with the concept of wilderness. Management policy is to ensure that mining operations do not adversely affect the adjoining park lands, but support for mining has led to expanded and improved roading and the construction of the Jabiru township within the park. These developments also clearly conflict with wilderness objectives.

### Other European Impacts

Commercial fishing and hunting, especially of crocodiles, have been important activities within the park. Crocodiles are now protected from exploitation, and commercial fishing is to be phased out by 1990. Rec-

reational fishing will remain a major activity within most of the floodplain area, but about 40 percent of the park has been closed to all fishing.

### Feral Animals and Wilderness Status

Apart from fire, the overall effects of which may be claimed to be advantageous, the most widespread agent of change in the landscape of Kakadu is the water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*). Introduced into the Northern Territory from 1820 on as a source of meat and to serve as draught animals, the buffalo were released and spread throughout the north when settlements were abandoned. The buffalo form small, territorial herds. In 1979 a Board of Inquiry estimated that there were between 150,000 and 200,000 beasts in the Northern Territory. As many as 30,000 were present in the park. Following a program of eradication, current numbers are in the order of 15,000.[8] The feeding, puddling and wallowing behavior of buffalo has caused extensive and serious damage to the floodplain environment. The effects include breakdown of natural levees and incursion of saline water into freshwater lagoons and channels that are habitat for important plant and wildlife communities, including many plants that are significant in the diet of aboriginals; acceleration of drying of the floodplain leading to increased erosion and fire damage; aiding the spread of exotic weeds and diseases such as tuberculosis; and serious effects on both the aesthetic amenity and recreational capacity of many water bodies. Elsewhere, buffalo have caused serious physical damage to aboriginal rock paintings and archaeological sites.

Damage caused by the rooting of feral pigs is significant on the margins of the floodplains and in rainforests. Feral cats, a major problem in conservation areas throughout Australia because of their depredation of native wildlife, are present in the park. Domesticated cats and/or dogs brought to the park by visitors, residents of Jabiru and, in some cases, by aboriginals are inconsistent with nature conservation and wilderness objectives. Cats are not permitted and there are specific regulations regarding dogs in the Plan of Management.

## IMAGES OF WILDERNESS

### The Romantic Image

It follows that there can be a number of viewpoints about the wilderness status of Kakadu National Park. It is clear that wilderness criteria will never be satisfied over the full area of the park. Kakadu nevertheless is often given the image of wilderness, even by those who know it well.

8. AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE: KAKADU NATIONAL PARK PLAN OF MANAGEMENT 52 (1986) (Canberra) [hereinafter ANPWS].

For example, a recent book by a park ranger encapsulates some of the romantic images of wilderness, referring to "great moody rivers (that) flow outwards from the plateau" and a country that "stuns the imagination—a jumble of chasms, gorges and ravines that should only happen in fantasy."[9]

The same book also reflects the common attitude that it is only the evidence, and in particular the residence, of one's own kind that is inconsistent with wilderness.

> This, then, is a rare and beautiful place. In some measure it is still a frontier, a wild tract of mangrove and mud, forest and flood plain, plateau and gorge; an unpeopled wilderness. . . .[10]

But the park is not "unpeopled." To the aboriginals it represents some 20 clan territories, "humanized landscapes . . . divided up into many named countries."[11] Only if the aboriginal people are to be continually regarded in a totally different way to "European" people, will the park satisfy the IUCN criterion that an area be not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation. Such a viewpoint ignores the fact that aboriginal lifestyles have changed, that they will now hunt from motorized boats and vehicles, with modern weapons, and for commercial as well as subsistence purposes.

The romantic image also supports the view that the aboriginal is the "original conservationist." This image holds that aboriginals lived in perfect harmony with the Australian landscape—in part because their survival depended upon intimate knowledge of what we call its "ecology," but primarily because of a depth of spiritual identification with the land which, it is held, the European is unable to understand or to experience. This view is well represented in both popular and academic writing. For example, Judith Wright—one of Australia's best known poets and conservationists—writes:

> For aborigines, every part of the country they occupied, every mark and feature, was numinous with meaning. The spirit ancestors had made the country itself, in their travels, and had fused each part of it with the "Dreamtime" . . . the unchangable Law by which the aborigines lived. . . . The gulf between the aboriginal way of seeing the landscape, and that of Europeans—most of whom . . . came to plunder rather than to stay—is clearly almost unbridgable.[12]

9. C. THIELE & F. WOERLE, RANGER'S TERRITORY 1, 3 (1987).
10. *Id.* at 6.
11. Rigsby, *supra* note 4, at 3.
12. Wright, *Landscape and Dreaming*, in AUSTRALIA: THE DAEDALUS SYMPOSIUM 29, 31 (S. Graubard ed. 1981).

Fundamental to the romantic image is the idea that the aborigines had no destructive impact on the land, taking only what was needed, unable by their very nature to contravene the most sophisticated principles of the modern conservation ethic.

For others, there is a contrasting perspective that aboriginals are no more aware of the fundamental concepts of conservation than anyone else, and just as prone to nonconservative action as any other. Strehlow notes, with reference to aboriginals in central Australia, that plant and animal food has been "wasted" in good years; that aboriginals may hunt and gather indiscriminately and in contravention of "conservationist" principles, as the occasion permits.[13] Both the romantic view and its opposite are overstatements based on simplistic appreciation of facts.

Free from European influence, the aboriginal indeed lived in such close dependence on the land that, with only fire and Stone Age tools, there was little capacity [even had there been a desire] to drastically modify the environment. Therefore even quite strict definitions of wilderness are able to encompass modifications that represent the long established management practices of such aboriginal occupance. However, there is some irony in the point that, because their life is no longer quite the same, continued aboriginal occupance of Kakadu may be inconsistent with these same criteria for wilderness. Although much of the aboriginal nature lore and wisdom remains, much has also been lost. It is clear that the aboriginal contribution is critical to conservation in Kakadu, but modern concepts of nature conservation also have a valid role. It is equally clear that there is no single, let alone correct, image of wilderness in Kakadu, and it is necessary to give proper consideration to the perceptions of conservationists, visitors, managers and aboriginals.

## The Conservationist's Image

Members of the "conservation movement" are included in those who are strongly antipathetic to the mineral prospecting and mining enclaves in the park. Without conservation or mineral prospecting there would neither be a township, nor the imperative it provided for construction of high-standard, all-weather roads within the park. The improvement of access has opened the way for expansion and diversification of tourism. "Conservationist" interest therefore is strongly focused on prevention of any expansion of exploration and mining, and on maintaining or, if necessary, restoring "wilderness" conditions in those parts of the park unaffected by mining and/or tourism.

The strength of the conservationist's voice for preservation of the re-

13. T. STREHLOW, ARANDA TRADITIONS 49 (1968) (Melbourne Univ. Press).

maining wilderness can be expected to increase, just as it has done elsewhere in Australia, as the risk of encroachment by tourists grows. Competition for resources appears to push conservationists towards a more "purist" wilderness ethic. Purists define wilderness by more extreme criteria, with a more intense and religious commitment to the wilderness ethic than "ordinary" wilderness users who, in turn, "have more restrictive and specific standards for recreational quality than do outdoor recreationists who find satisfaction outside the wilderness setting."[14]

Only time will tell how purists will adjust as indigent aboriginals exercise their rights within the park in ways that are at variance with the romantic image of unalloyed primitiveness. Pressed towards purism, the wilderness ethic will become ever more difficult to sustain in Kakadu. The more that a purist's satisfaction depends upon the wilderness being primitive, if not pristine, and the visit being free from encounter with others and the evidence of modern ways, the less that satisfaction will be obtainable. The purists then must either accept and press for increased managerial intervention, or turn their attention elsewhere. As yet there is little evidence that Australian purists are turning their attention from the scenic and astonishing landscapes such as Kakadu, Southwest Tasmania and the tropical rainforests, towards the vast expanse of sparse, austere and silent desert where "there is something which the mountains, no matter how grand and beautiful, lack; which the sea, no matter how shining and vast and old, does not have."[15] and from whence has come some of the most classic thought and writing about wilderness.

## The Visitor's Image

### Tourists

The tourist's view of Kakadu as wilderness is built up by impressions of remoteness and scale, the abundance of wildlife, and by the sense of adventure attached to being in a harsh land inhabited by potentially dangerous animals. This image is directly fostered by promotional material and indirectly, but with great power, by popular interpretations of Australia's north such as in the film "Crocodile Dundee." There can hardly be a more vivid demonstration of the fact that wilderness is an image rather than the coincidence of critical thresholds for a set of spatial, visual and biological conditions. The fact that some visitors do not consider themselves "in the wilderness" until they are removed at least some distance from the "trappings of civilization" does not alter the fact that many others, although confined to a schedule and protected from dis-

14. L. GRABER, WILDERNESS AS SACRED SPACE 16 (1976).
15. E. ABBEY, DESERT SOLITAIRE 273 (1968).

comfort, nevertheless consider they have seen real wilderness because they have seen Kakadu.

This impression is actively fostered by both private and government tourist promotion, and is not confined to the 15 percent of tourists who visit the park in group tours. These visitors stay for shorter periods than others, and mainly (80 percent) use hotel accommodations.[16] The majority of non-tour visitors either camp or use caravans, but earlier distinctive differences in patterns of recreational activity appear to be diminishing. As the proportion of interstate and overseas visitors has increased, fishing and boating have been surpassed in importance by viewing of wildlife, landscape features and aboriginal art. The Plan of Management for the park positively indicates that limits will be placed on the informal, largely uncontrolled, camping practices that have been especially characteristic of four wheel drive access to popular spots for fishing and boating. Although camping in other than designated areas will be possible under a permit system, this is likely to reduce the sense of freedom which often is so important to the wilderness experience.

**Wilderness Recreationists**

It follows from the above that, in terms of "purist" attitudes to wilderness, most of the use of Kakadu has low status because it takes place in areas that have been modified and in which management is visible if not obtrusive. The clear alternative, as in most National Parks, is bush camping[17] away from popular destinations that require levels of management which are made visible by the imperative of protection of other values. In Kakadu, however, bushwalking involving overnight camping, even that using unformed tracks, remains a very minor activity. Most visitors do not, therefore, move any great distance from the main tourist attractions and/or the vehicles by which they gained access to the park. Nevertheless many of these visitors may claim that they have obtained a more elevated wilderness experience.

Most bushwalking in undeveloped parts of the park is undertaken in small groups, often as club activity.[18] Thus, although there is considerable potential for individuals to pursue solitary wilderness recreation and several suitable routes ranging from 3 to 14 days duration have been identified,[19] only limited use is being made of the highest level of experience

16. Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service Visitor Survey (unpublished data).

17. "The bush" is a general term for land outside the cities and the settled coastal zone. Bushwalking is roughly equivalent to "backpacking," but usually happens in forested or mountain areas, and often independent of trails. Bush camping is camping in unprepared sites.

18. ANPWS, *supra* note 5, at 139.

19. D. McLaughlin, Proposed Wilderness Walk Routes in Kakadu National Park—Their Enjoyment and Management (1985) (unpublished monograph, Darwin Institute of Technology).

available in Kakadu. This clearly reflects the pattern of wilderness recreation elsewhere in Australia, that is the very great importance of the social component, the sharing of activity in the wilderness and the experience obtained through this activity with others. The risk of accident can, of course, be a major deterrent to all but the most committed seeker of solitary experience. The terrain and climate of Kakadu are such that risk can be very high.

### The Manager's Image

Despite the long and varied history of human intervention, substantial areas of this park have retained the character of wilderness. Management policies implemented following establishment of the park have reduced the extent to which the environment is modified by human activity, fire and the buffalo. The current plan of management delineates zones with different intensities of use, and about 15 percent of the park is allocated to a Wilderness Management Zone.[20] A more formal declaration of parts of the park under the Wilderness Zone provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975*[21] is likely to be limited for the time being. Such designation has much greater implications than allocation under a statutory plan of management. Nevertheless the wilderness management zone provides interim protection pending the completion of studies and the final determination of boundaries from a sound database and understanding of the effects of different management strategies.

In defining management objectives, the current plan of management identifies the need to preserve the natural, cultural, scientific and scenic resources of the park while developing an aboriginal perspective for management. Aboriginal involvement ensures that their perspectives on all values of Kakadu National Park, including its value as wilderness, are continuously considered in ongoing management and development. For reasons outlined below, aboriginal perspectives may differ from the manager's concepts of wilderness, but their priorities are not necessarily incompatible with modern principles of park management with their emphasis on environmental conservation.

Park management in Australia is predominantly resource based. The urgency of protecting the environment from the pressure of popular tourism militates against the development of systematic needs based approaches to management. Both tourism and wilderness recreation are

20. Wilderness zone provisions are that no permanent facilities will be provided except those essential for protective purposes, vehicular access for rehabilitation, and the control of feral animals and weeds. Appropriate land uses are bushwalking and non-manipulative scientific research. Permits are required for limited bush camping.

21. *See supra* note 3, § 10.(5), (6).

widely regarded as disturbing to natural equilibrium, but research into the processes of disturbance is minor compared to studies of natural plant and animal life. In Kakadu, and especially in its wilderness, park managers have been presented with a rare opportunity to develop innovative management procedures to balance the complexity of interests in use of its resources with protection of its values.

**The Aboriginal's Image**

Given their long and close association with land so full of religious and cultural significance, aboriginal people have little reason to regard the park as wilderness. At its inception, there was not any pressure by the aboriginal people to have Kakadu declared as a wilderness park. Had this happened, the ANPWS may have been required, under its Act, to manage the park for objectives that could well have been inconsistent with those of the aborigines but without sufficient compensatory advantage—for example, the ability to proscribe access to accord with aboriginal religious and cultural objectives.

In fact, aboriginal support for declaration of the park was far from unanimous. Some, concerned about the possible loss of royalties from mining, were said to "want the mines, not a park."[22] Others were concerned about the impact of mining and the potential effects of the accumulation of great wealth. There was equal concern about tourism, although it is a common aboriginal belief that it is good for tourists to visit and learn from appropriate places.[23] The major objections to tourism are intrusion into aborigines' privacy, and tourists' ignorance or disrespect for sacred places.

Aborigines may also take a more critical view of developments in support of tourism than of other impacts on the landscape. Morgan noted that "many aboriginals view National Parks as far worse examples of environmental neglect than say adjacent pastoral leases, even if . . . run down," primarily because they consider that access and facilities constructed for the service of visitors downgrade areas judged to have special value for conservation.[24]

There are other indications of the variance between aboriginal and

22. Ollier, *Environmental Problems of the Mining Industry in Northern Australia*, in NORTHERN AUSTRALIA: THE ARENAS OF LIFE AND ECOSYSTEMS ON HALF A CONTINENT 233, 249 (D. Parkes ed. 1985).

23. *See, e.g.*, Snowdon & Alexander, *Tourism at Uluru*, in SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ABORIGINAL DEVELOPMENT ch. 2.14 (B. Foran & B. Walker eds., Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) Division of Wildlife and Rangelands Research Project Report No. 3, 1985) (CSIRO and Centre for Appropriate Technology, Alice Springs, Austrl.).

24. Morgan, Smyth & Butler, *Community Rangers: Aboriginal Involvement in Conservation*, in *id.* at ch. 2.7.

European perspectives on national parks and wilderness. In particular, the aboriginal view on exotic wildlife may be at variance with the views of managers and conservationists, especially in the case of an animal that is a valuable source of food. There is a potential for conflict with those who consider introduced plants and animals to be out of place in the wilderness, just as they regard people and the signs of their occupation as unacceptable.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Through a variety of arrangements, aboriginals are involved in the planning and management of Kakadu National Park, and their views are obtained in relation to any developments. Senior traditional owners are permanently employed as cultural advisors, other aboriginals are employed as Park Rangers, and special training courses in park management have been developed for young aboriginals. In Kakadu National Park, aboriginal experience has proven to have considerable application to park operations and the protection of wilderness values.

Concepts of wilderness vary widely between the various groups with interests in Kakadu National Park. The park has been a focus of intense national debate. Major issues have included uranium mining in general, and its practice in parks in particular; the Constitutional powers of the Australian Government with respect to States and Territories; and the question of Aboriginal Land Rights.

The latter was resolved in favor of the aboriginals with certain accommodations to the interests of the miners and the Australian and Northern Territory Governments. The basis of the agreement was grant of freehold title to land and its lease back to the Director of National Parks, to be administered in accord with aboriginal interests for the benefit and enjoyment of the Australian people. Although it is true that park interests and aboriginal interests do overlap, there are obvious areas where they do not. Other interests in the course of development in Kakadu are important and politically powerful, and there remains some risk that aboriginal interests will not be fully accommodated if they place serious limits on realization of the economic value of mining and tourism. Wilderness areas within the Kakadu National Park are not immune to these risks, or to the possibility of conflict between aboriginal values and lifestyles and the perceptions of wilderness "purists."