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# KAKADU NATIONAL PARK DRAFT WALKING STRATEGY SUMMARY

Prepared for Parks Australia

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This is a Summary Report. The Background Report provides detailed information about the project and its findings, and rationale for the recommendations made.

## 1. Why prepare a walking strategy?

Kakadu National Park is part of “a living cultural landscape...” - one of few places on Earth where Aboriginal cultural ties to the land remain strong after more than 50,000 years, and where traditional owners continue to actively care for their land.

The significance and richness of Kakadu's natural and cultural values are recognised internationally - the Park being only one of twenty nine World Heritage Areas listed for both its natural and cultural values. Kakadu is also Australia's largest terrestrial national park, covering close to 20,000 square kilometres.

Traditional owners have a profound respect for their country and the safety of those that visit. Country can have powerful spiritual value, including sacred, burial and art sites. There is a complex land tenure system, with distinct clans having responsibility, social relationships and obligations for country.

Kakadu's reputation as a walking destination is strengthening, with walking opportunities in the Park ranging from gentle short walks to art sites, moderate difficulty walks to plunge pools, to strenuous and largely unmarked day and overnight bushwalks through the rugged 'stone country'. There are more than 40 formed short-day walks throughout the Park available to visitors. The majority of overnight bushwalking takes places on 200km of unmarked routes on the Arnhem Land escarpment.

Whilst significant effort over the years has gone into the planning and management of walking in the Park, these efforts have not resulted in a common vision or management framework. Walking continues to be managed in an ad hoc way, with inconsistencies evident in the design and quality of infrastructure, promotional effort, interpretation and management systems. These inconsistencies need to be addressed if Kakadu is to develop its potential to become among the leading destinations for walking in Australia.

The draft Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy provides the basis for a consistent and sustainable approach to the planning, development, management and promotion of walking opportunities within the Park. Like the Kakadu National Park Management Plan, the Walking Strategy is a joint management document, based on extensive consultation with traditional owners and other Bininj/Munguuy of Kakadu.



Yellow Waters Boardwalk, Yellow Waters Region

## 2. How has the walking strategy been prepared?

The Walking Strategy is based on extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders; traditional owners and other Bininj/Mungguy, Parks staff, tourism industry representatives, and bushwalkers. The project has been managed through a steering committee, with representatives from all of these stakeholder groups.

A number of policy and planning documents have guided and informed the project – these include the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan* (currently under review), *Shared Vision for Tourism in Kakadu National Park*, *Kakadu National Park Tourism Master Plan* and the *Angarre Gen: A Strategy for Cultural Heritage Management in Kakadu National Park*, 2011.

Research regarding the visitor market indicates that:

- there are a number of global trends that will continue to affect visitors to Australia e.g. increasing affluence of developing countries, impact of low cost airlines, decline in domestic tourism, climate change, ageing population
- Kakadu National Park is a key travel motivator for attracting visitors to the Top End
- over half of the total visitors to Kakadu occurs in the dry season during the four months of May – August
- there has been a continuing decline in both interstate and international visitor numbers to Kakadu
- Kakadu National Park remains as having the highest proportion of indigenous tourism visitor nights of any area in Australia but there has been a noticeable decline in visitors seeking indigenous tourism experiences in Australia in recent years
- the core domestic target market for the Top End – the Spirited Traveller – has interest in doing day walks and bushwalks as part of their visitor experience
- walks are also a valuable trigger for the key international Experience Seeker market

In addition to consultation and research, the consultants walked all of the short-day walks available in the Park, and visited major attractions to gain a first hand understanding of the environment, and visitor facilities and services.



Chalk map indicating the location of short walks, Mary River Region traditional owner consultation.

### 3. Who is walking in Kakadu National Park?

Visitors who undertake walks in Kakadu can be categorised into three broad types:

- day walkers doing short walks (less than 2 hours), half day walks (2-4 hours) and full day walks, including both independent walkers and those on guided tours
- independent bushwalkers doing overnight bushwalks on approved routes
- commercially guided bushwalkers doing overnight bushwalks on approved routes, with a guide

Most visitors to the Park undertake at least one short-day walk as a means of accessing attractions, including art sites, and experiencing the landscape.

Overnight bushwalkers require a permit, and must walk only on an 'approved route'. The average trip length of bushwalking trips has been between 4-5 nights, however this average varies greatly between different walk destinations in the Park. It also varies depending on the experience and type of bushwalker undertaking these trips. The number of permits issued and the number of bushwalkers undertaking overnight walks has been steady over the last 5 years (permits range between 180-220 per year and bushwalker numbers range between 1000-1250 each year).

Kakadu National Park is one of the Top End's iconic attractions, and features on the itineraries of many of the tour companies operating in the region. Whilst walking is incorporated into most tours in the Park, it is generally limited to very short and easy walks to access the main visitor attractions of Ubirr, Nourlangie, Jim Jim and Twin Falls. One tourism operator has been conducting extended overnight bushwalks in the Park for the last 30+ years. Several tourism operators also offer day bushwalks, with overnight stays at public or private camping sites.

Whilst overnight bushwalking is a significant segment of the walker market in the Park, short-day walks are by far the most popular types of walks undertaken by visitors.



*Sandstone outcrops, East Alligator Region*

#### 4. What are the main issues?

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A range of issues were identified through research, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation, including:

- constraints affecting accessibility to walking destinations within the Park, such as weather conditions, climate change, and the seasonal, operational and cultural closures of roads, walking tracks and routes
- the need to understand and respect the range of views and interests of different stakeholders about walking within the Park, including traditional owners, park management and park users (walkers, visitors, tourism and business operators)
- the short-falls of current management systems to effectively manage the various types of walking, and minimise impacts on natural and cultural values
- varying quality of, and lack of consistency in the development, management, marketing and promotion of walking experiences in the Park
- resource constraints to develop, manage and maintain walks

#### 5. Vision and guiding principles

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A draft vision statement and guiding principles has been prepared, and sets a new direction for the development, management and promotion of walking opportunities in Kakadu. The vision statement recognises the importance of respect; for the views of traditional owners; for country and culture. The vision expresses a desire to deliver a diversity of sustainable, and quality walking experiences, that will raise the profile of the Park as a potential leading walking destination in Australia.

The vision statement is:

*“Kakadu National Park is an outstanding cultural landscape and spiritual home of Bininj/Munggyu peoples. The Park is a place of exceptional natural beauty and biological diversity. Walking experiences will be managed with respect for Bininj/Munggyu values and cultural responsibilities for country, and in a way that responds to the World Heritage Area status of the Park”.*

The guiding principles to achieve this vision are:

**Respect** – walking experiences will be based on an understanding and respect for Indigenous values and cultural traditions.

**Sustainability** – walking experiences will be ‘sustainable’. Sustainable means environmentally, socially, culturally and economically viable. Resources and funding must be sufficient to ensure ongoing management, repairs and maintenance can be undertaken. Walking experiences should be exemplars of environmental and cultural ‘best practice’, and have the potential to provide long-term, ongoing benefits to traditional owners and other stakeholders.

**Quality Experience** – walking experiences will be managed to ensure users have the opportunity to attain a safe, memorable and lasting experience, and connect with country and culture.

**Capacity to Manage** – management and on-going maintenance of walking experiences will respond to the practical capacity of the land manager and traditional owners. This means co-operation and partnerships between traditional owners, government, the tourism industry and other stakeholders will be fostered to strengthen walking experiences.

**Delivers Benefits** – the development of walking experiences will provide a catalyst for other benefits, including improved environmental management, indigenous enterprises, local employment opportunities, strengthening nature-based tourism and improvements to the community's quality of life.

Four central goals have been identified in the Walking Strategy, which seek to realise the intent of the vision and guiding principles:

**Goal 1:** Improve planning and management systems for walking experiences.

**Goal 2:** Enhance the walking experiences.

**Goal 3:** Identify new walking opportunities, including those that have the potential to become outstanding walking experiences.

**Goal 4:** Deliver potential enterprise opportunities and benefits.

## 6. Overnight bushwalking in Kakadu National Park

The escarpment country in the east and south of the Park - the western edge of the Arnhem Land Plateau, in conjunction with the sandstone outliers of Mount Brockman and Nourlangie, attract the vast majority of bushwalking activity within the Park.

A network of 'approved bushwalking routes' has been in place since 1996, forming part of the previous bushwalking strategy for the Park. The 1996 strategy included a range of recommendations for the management of overnight walking, including a permit system associated with the approved route network. Whilst the recommendations within the 1996 strategy went some way to formalise what was previously unregulated bushwalking access, it is recognised to have significant limitations - particularly in relation to the network of approved routes (including limited input from traditional owners), the current permit system, and associated management controls, and social context.

Traditional owners have expressed unease about bushwalking in the Park for many years. Concerns centre around the independent, and exploratory nature of bushwalking, and the difficulties around compliance and enforcement, and a very real concern and cultural responsibility for the safety of walkers whilst on country.

The draft Strategy provides a framework to ensure that overnight bushwalking can continue to occur in the Park, in a sustainable and culturally appropriate way. The draft Strategy is based on extensive consultation - particularly with traditional owners. A process to revise the approved bushwalking route network has been initiated, including the rationalisation and realignment of routes, based on cultural and environmental sensitivities. This will be a continuing process, requiring further input from traditional owners, and on-ground investigations.

The draft Strategy incorporates detailed recommended actions relating to the future planning, management and promotion of overnight bushwalking. For example, Strategy 5: Improve Bushwalking Management Systems incorporates eight actions, including:

- adopting and implementing the draft Kakadu National Park Walking Policy;
- further clarifying the approved bushwalking route network;

- developing a new online bushwalking permit system for the proposed 'Kakadu Bushwalks', including the trial of a bushwalking permit fee structure;
- implementing new permit conditions that better reflect traditional owner concerns and the new management framework outlined in the Strategy; and
- continuing to provide access to approved routes other than the proposed 'Kakadu Bushwalks'.

Implementing the new management system for bushwalking will be an ongoing process - some recommended actions may take years to implement. In the meantime, opportunities for bushwalking in the Park will continue to be provided in a way that is consistent with the draft Strategy, and wishes of the traditional owners.

The Kakadu Board of Management advised that continued access to overnight bushwalking opportunities in the Park will be influenced by the conduct and impact of bushwalkers, and that closure of routes will be considered in the event that compliance with conditions set out in the draft Strategy and/or permits/licences are not demonstrated.



Wetlands from Ubirr, East Alligator Region

## 7. What needs to be done over the next 10 years?

The following table presents a 10 Year Action Plan with a summary of the proposed strategies and actions for each of the four goals (refer to background report for more detail).

The 10 Year Action Plan is considered to be a working tool and it is recognised that the implementation process will be influenced by the opportunities to secure funding, the commitment to adopting the policy framework, the level of support for the recommended actions, level of commitment by key stakeholders, changing visitor trends and the willingness to invest resources into developing the walk opportunities.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES	
STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
1. Develop a walking policy for Kakadu National Park.	1. Finalise and implement the draft Kakadu National Park Walking Policy.
2. Adopt a Consistent Approach to the Construction and Classification of Walking Tracks.	1. Adopt and implement the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks.
	2. Adopt and implement the Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System.
	3. Liaise with other land management agencies to broaden and share knowledge about walking track design and construction.
3. Adopt a Consistent Approach to Walking Track Signage.	1. Adopt and implement the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Classification and Signage.
	2. Continue preparation of the Kakadu Signage Project including walking tracks.
	3. Install consistent trackhead signage at the start of the 'must do' short-day walks.
	4. Implement a standardised track marking system for short-day walks.
4. Improve Access for Visitors with Mobility Difficulties.	5. Install standardised regulatory signage, as required under the EPBC Act Regulations, for short-day walks.
	1. Ensure that all 'easy access' tracks/track sections are constructed to a Class 1 standard under the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks.
	2. Increase the number of easy access (Class 1) walks in the Park.
	3. In the shorter-term, improve easy access to Ubirr, Nourlangie, and Yellow Waters as a priority.



GOAL 1: IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES	
STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
4. Improve access for visitors with mobility difficulties (cont.)	4. Incorporate information about easy access tracks/track sections in walking related publications, on the Park website, and on trackhead signage.
	5. Consider how access to popular visitor attractions can be improved for people with other impairments (e.g. vision).
5. Improve bushwalking management systems.	1. Further clarify and endorse the approved bushwalking route network in consultation with traditional owners and Park staff.
	2. Further refine and implement a new bushwalking permit system for the 'Kakadu bushwalks' and day walks requiring a permit.
	3. Undertake trials and monitoring on selected bushwalking route/s to determine sustainable walker numbers.
	4. Consider developing a custom online platform for the new bushwalking permit system for Kakadu Bushwalks.
	5. Initiate the process required under the EPBC Act to allow for the introduction of fees for an overnight bushwalking permit.
	6. Develop and trial a bushwalking permit fee structure, applicable to the promoted Kakadu bushwalks and other approved bushwalking routes.
	7. Implement a set of new permit conditions, to reflect the proposed management improvements recommended in this Strategy.
	8. Update/modify the existing permit system to cater for the permits likely to be requested for the other approved bushwalking routes.
6. Improve visitor education, safety and compliance systems.	1. Develop and implement a walker code of conduct based on the international Leave No Trace Principles.
	2. Develop and trial an online bushwalker induction program associated with the permit application.
	3. Develop and implement a commercial operator and guide induction program, including recovery costs.
	4. Incorporate educational messages into online, printed material, and signage - in particular the walker code of conduct.
	5. Continue the seasonal ranger program, with an aim to increase Indigenous guided activities.
	6. Revise the bushwalking permit system and associated conditions.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES		
STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	
6. Improve visitor education, safety and compliance systems (cont.)	7. Trial a walker self-registration system at trackheads for extended day walks.	
	8. Require all overnight bushwalking parties to carry a personal locator beacon (PLB) and/or satellite phone, as a condition of the bushwalking permit.	
	9. Investigate options for a new de-registration process associated with the bushwalking permit.	
	10. Establish a mechanism to provide for the closure of tracks and routes for safety, cultural or management reasons.	
	11. Trial a track ranger program during the peak bushwalking season on popular bushwalking routes.	
	12. Continue to implement the compliance and enforcement actions set out in Section 8.2 of the <i>Kakadu National Park Management Plan</i> .	
	7. Develop and implement a monitoring and research program.	1. Review existing visitation monitoring mechanisms.
		2. Undertake regular on-ground environmental and cultural assessments of all short-day walks, and Kakadu Bushwalks.
3. Review the methodology for capturing both qualitative and quantitative walking data.		
4. Continue to work in partnership with Tourism NT and other tourism organisations.		
8. Maintenance, resources and funding.	1. Implement the track monitoring recommendations described in Section 8 of the Draft Strategy and in the draft Kakadu National Park Walking Policy.	
	2. Implement a monthly program of track maintenance tasks in the dry season for the 'must do' short-day walks, and integrate into district operational plans.	
	3. Consider opportunities to rationalise monthly track maintenance and monitoring resource requirements, by combining maintenance and monitoring tasks with seasonal ranger responsibilities.	

**GOAL 1: IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES**

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
8. Maintenance, resources and funding (cont.)	4. Implement an annual maintenance and significant works program for short-day walks and Kakadu Bushwalks.
	5. Ensure upgrades to existing tracks, and construction of new tracks, is to a high standard.
	6. Ensure that track planning, development and maintenance tasks are incorporated into the annual Park budget.
	7. Investigate opportunities to increase revenue from walking experiences.
9. Build supportive partnerships.	8. Work with external organisations to access project funding for walking experiences.
	1. Continue to work with traditional owners to strengthen walking opportunities in the Park.
	2. Consider the establishment of a working group to focus specifically on the development and management of walking opportunities in the Park.
	3. Establish a 'Friends of Kakadu Group', to assist staff and traditional owners with the on-ground maintenance of tracks and routes, and provide a means of accessing external funding for track-related projects.
	4. Strengthen relationships with the Darwin Bushwalking Club and tourism operators to gain assistance with monitoring of bushwalking routes.
	5. Strengthen relationships with other Parks and land management agencies to share knowledge and skills relating to walking infrastructure and experiences.

**GOAL 2: ENHANCE WALKING EXPERIENCES**

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
1. Upgrade the 'must do' walking experiences.	1. Differentiate the short-day walking experiences in the Park, using the criteria and subsequent selection of 'must do' short-day walks provided. 2. Upgrade the 'must do' short-day walks as a priority.
2. Elevate Kakadu's Best Bushwalks.	1. Undertake cultural heritage assessments in the Mt Brockman area beyond the Gubara Pools day walk to help determine the cultural significance prior to any further decision-making about bushwalking in the area. 2. Undertake an assessment process to determine the feasibility of the Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls route (shorter circuit) to become the first 'Kakadu Bushwalk'.

**GOAL 2: ENHANCE WALKING EXPERIENCES**

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
2. Elevate Kakadu's Best Bushwalks (cont.)	3. Progressively undertake ground-truthing of the other potential Kakadu Bushwalks and identified approved bushwalking routes.
3. Improve visitor information.	1. Upgrade the official government Kakadu National Park website to feature short-day walking experiences more strongly.
	2. Produce a dedicated short walks brochure that promotes and markets the diversity and quality of walk experiences in the Park (short, half and day walks), and communicates safety messages.
	3. Limit the printing of individual Park Notes to service only the most popular short walks such as the rock art walks, and half-full day walks where more detailed track notes and mapping would be beneficial.
	4. Improve the level of information available about bushwalking opportunities in the Park (e.g. online and printed including a walking 'app' and downloadable park notes through QR codes)
	5. Clarify the appropriate corridor width for approved bushwalking routes (this may need to be done on a case-by-case basis), and incorporate into the bushwalking permit conditions.
	6. Support the updating of the 1:50,000 topographic maps of the main bushwalking areas, where required.
4. Upgrade access to walking opportunities.	1. Consider the options to improve access to, and the experience of, the stone country (e.g. to the Jim Jim and Twin Falls area) in the wet season. 2. Consider the potential for 'heli-walking' during the wet season to allow drop-off and pick-up of walkers along with approved food-drops for extended walks.
5. Prepare a thematic interpretation plan for Kakadu National Park.	1. Prepare a thematic interpretation strategy to guide visitor communication for the whole of Kakadu National Park, with specific guidance for the interpretation of the 'must do' short-day walks, and Kakadu Bushwalks.
6. Develop a marketing strategy for Kakadu walking experiences.	1. Continue to support the inclusion of Kakadu National Park as part of Australia's Timeless North National Landscape, aimed at the international experience seeker market. 2. Prepare a marketing strategy for Kakadu's walking experiences with a primary focus on the proposed 'must do' short – day walks and the selected Kakadu Bushwalks for the Park.

**GOAL 2: ENHANCE WALKING EXPERIENCES**

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
6. Develop a marketing strategy for Kakadu walk experiences (cont.)	3. Identify a range of promotional tools to assist with the marketing of Kakadu's walking experiences to target audiences.

**GOAL 3: IDENTIFY NEW WALKING OPPORTUNITIES**

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
1. Investigate the new short-day walking opportunities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that new short walk opportunities are investigated in accordance with process set out in the <i>Kakadu National Park Management Plan</i>, and the draft <i>Kakadu National Park Walking Policy</i>.</li> <li>2. As a first priority, undertake an initial investigation into the feasibility of developing the proposed new short walk identified in the Mary River District.</li> <li>3. Assess the feasibility of constructing a short walk to a look-out above the Garnamarr campground.</li> <li>4. As part of the Jim Jim Falls - Twin Falls Precinct Plan, consider the feasibility of constructing a new track in the Jim Jim Falls area, originating from Garnamarr, and facilitating shoulder season access into the area.</li> </ol>
2. Planning for an iconic bushwalking experience.	1. At the request of the Kakadu Board of Management conduct further investigations in collaboration with Nitmiluk National Park into the potential development of an iconic bushwalk between Nitmiluk and Kakadu.

**GOAL 4: DELIVER POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS
1. Investigate opportunities for traditional owner enterprises associated with walking experiences.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support new opportunities for Bininj/Munguuy involvement in the development and operation of walking-based businesses within the Park.</li> <li>2. Support training programs for indigenous guides and the development of a pool of skilled guides to assist with delivery of walking experiences within the Park.</li> <li>3. Ensure that Bininj/Munguuy are involved in the monitoring and management of visitor impacts, that may be associated with walking experiences.</li> <li>4. Continue to implement recommendations from the review of the management prescriptions governing tourism operators within the <i>Kakadu National Park Management Plan</i>.</li> <li>5. Consider ongoing mechanisms for improving training and customer service skills.</li> </ol>



Barrk Walk, Nourlangie area.

## 8. What are the twelve most important start-up actions?

The twelve most important start-up actions to be implemented over the next two years are:

NO.	RECOMMENDED START-UP ACTIONS
1.	Finalise and implement the draft Kakadu National Park Walking Policy.
2.	Adopt and implement the <i>Australian Standards for Walking Tracks, Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System and the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks: Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1-2001)</i> .
3.	Differentiate the short-day walking experiences in the Park, using the criteria and subsequent selection of 'must do' short-day walks provided.
4.	Further refine and implement a new bushwalking permit system for the 'Kakadu Bushwalks' and day walks requiring a permit, and associated conditions. This includes implementation of the new 5 year licence system for commercial tourism operators starting in April 2014.
5.	Undertake an assessment process to determine the feasibility of the Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls route (shorter circuit) to become the first 'Kakadu Bushwalk'.
6.	Continue to work with traditional owners to strengthen walking opportunities in the Park, including further clarifying the location of appropriate routes, the amount and type of infrastructure on tracks and routes, and the development of unique walking experiences showcasing Kakadu country and culture.
7.	Continue to prepare the Kakadu Signage Project including a signage strategy specifically for walking tracks within the Park - trackhead and information signage, on-track directional signage and markers, regulatory and interpretive signage.
8.	Continue to implement an annual maintenance and significant works program for short-day walks and Kakadu Bushwalks.
9.	Prepare a thematic interpretation strategy to guide visitor communication for the whole of Kakadu National Park, with specific guidance for the interpretation of the 'must do' short-day walks, and Kakadu Bushwalks.
10.	Improve the level of information available about bushwalking opportunities in the Park (e.g. online and printed).
11.	Develop and implement a walker code of conduct, based on the international Leave No Trace principles, with particular focus on 'caring for country', and communicating respect for country and culture.
12.	Undertake a cultural heritage assessment in the Mount Brockman area beyond the Gubara Pools day walk, to determine the cultural significance prior to any further decision-making about bushwalking in the area.

The recommended actions listed within the 10 Year Action Plan will all impact on the planning, development and management of walks within the Districts. The following pages provide a brief summary of some of the more specific aspects in relation to the individual walks and bushwalking routes within each of the Districts.



Guided tour, Twin Falls Gorge, Jim Jim and Twin Falls Gorge Region.

## 9. South Alligator District

### Overview

The South Alligator District provides a number of short-day walks that are accessed off the Arnhem Highway. These are the first walking opportunities that visitors encounter on entering the Park from the west. Accessibility of the walks is subject to seasonal closure, with rising water in the floodplains and consequent safety risks (e.g. crocodiles), and restricted vehicle access. Interpretation of the South Alligator environs and the rich birdlife is a feature of the Mamukala Bird Hide. Indigenous guided walks are also offered in the area from time to time.

### Improvements to Existing Short-Day Walks

WALK NAME	RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS
Ayal Walk	Undertake an assessment (e.g. visitor numbers, maintenance/re-establishment requirements etc) to determine whether this track can be sustainably managed, and whether the resource input can be justified in relation to use. Upgrade signage and access information if the track is considered viable to maintain.
Gun-garre Walk	Improve the directional signage to the start of the walk with a trackhead sign to indicate that it can be accessed from either end of the circuit - the shorter option may appeal to visitors with time restrictions. Consider an extension to the pontoon to a higher elevation to improve accessibility for longer in the year. Install standardised track markers where required.
Mamukala Bird Hide Walk	Update thematic interpretation. Continue to enhance the seasonal ranger and indigenous guide program, including interactive activities, talks and guided walks. Potential to further enhance the bird hide experience with the creation of more intimate spaces for individuals to experience the wetland away from large groups. Ensure track surface is clear of debris and suitable for assisted wheelchair access.
Mamukala Circuit	Investigate the potential to shorten the circuit, and construct a second small and intimate bird hide/viewing platform as a point of interest, and to provide safe access to the edge of the wetland. Continue regular basic maintenance.

### The 'Must Do' Walks and 'Kakadu Bushwalk' Opportunities

The Mamukala Bird Hide Walk is considered to be one of the 'must do' walks to be upgraded, promoted and marketed within the Park. There are currently no 'approved bushwalking routes' or recommended Kakadu Bushwalks within the District.



Water lilies, Mamukala Wetland, South Alligator Region.

## 10. East Alligator District

### Overview

Ubirr is recognised as one of the major visitor attractions within the Park. Images of people viewing the floodplain country, the escarpment of Arnhem Land and the rock art is integral to selling the Kakadu National Park experience. In addition to Ubirr, there are also a number of other short-day walks that provide good connections between East Alligator River environs, the floodplains, sandstone outcrops, the Border Store and camping areas. Accessibility is subject to seasonal closure in the wet season due to rising water levels affecting vehicle access on Oenpelli Road where it crosses Magela Creek, and at Cahills Crossing.

### Improvements to Existing Short-Day Walks

WALK NAME	RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS
Bardedjilidji Walk	Install trackhead signage including information about the Sandstone and River Walk. Improve directional signage at track intersections and install standardised track markers where required. Consider interpretation (e.g. of rock art and other features). Investigate the need to install crocodile barriers along river section of track.
Sandstone and River Walk	Upgrade signage, particularly at track junctions. Consider interpretation.
Manngarre Rainforest Walk	Install detailed trackhead signage at the start of the track, clarifying the three circuits, and access protocol (e.g. the third circuit is to be accessed by women only). This message needs to be reinforced at the start of the women-only circuit.
Ubirr Loop	A number of opportunities for improving the Ubirr walk were identified through a joint site visit with traditional owners, Parks staff, Tourism NT and the consultant team. Investigate options to develop the existing track into a circuit to improve visitor circulation, decrease congestion and improve the visitor experience. Improve easy access (e.g. assisted wheelchair - Grade 1) track conditions to the first section of the track (e.g. first gallery). Install detailed trackhead signage, incorporating warnings about the steep section of track to the lookout, and the extent of the Grade 1 access. Consider circuit option and the relocation of some barriers to improve viewing access in some locations. Improve basic directional signage at track intersections/junctions. Upgrade interpretation, including enhancing the seasonal ranger program, and opportunities for Aboriginal guided walks and activities. Communicate cultural protocols (e.g. no alcohol, and that visitors must be down from the lookout shortly after sunset).

Ubirr Lookout	Investigate methods for improving ease of access and safety to the lookout (e.g. rock steps, hand rail) and standardised track markers. Any track works or infrastructure should be sensitive to environmental and cultural conditions (e.g. make use of local materials, not be visually intrusive, and respond to traditional owner concerns regarding damage to rock surfaces and disturbance to country).
Merl Campground-Border Store Walk	Install basic trackhead signage near the Border Store and in the campground at the other end of the track. Install directional signage at track junctions and road crossings.
Merl Campground-Cahills Crossing Walk	Install trackhead signage at Cahills Crossing, incorporating basic information about the tracks to the campground, as well as the other walks in the East Alligator area.

### The 'Must Do Walks' and the 'Kakadu Bushwalks' Opportunities

The Ubirr Loop, Ubirr Lookout and Bardedjilidji walks are considered to be 'must do' short walks to be upgraded, promoted and marketed. There are currently no 'approved bushwalking routes' or recommended Kakadu bushwalks within the District. Consultation with traditional owners indicated priority to upgrade and manage short-day walks, rather than developing new short or overnight walks.



Sandstone outcrop, East Alligator Region.

## 11. Headquarters District

### Overview

Headquarters District includes the area surrounding the Jabiru township, Mount Brockman and Nourlangie areas. Like Ubirr, the Nourlangie area is one of the major visitor attractions within the Park, being one of the most accessible places to see a concentration of rock art. Nourlangie is also one of the few areas where all season access is possible, including to some of the premier short-day walks within the Park. Mount Brockman is the most popular bushwalking area, based on number of permit applications within the Park.

### Improvements to Existing Short-Day Walks

WALK NAME	RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS
Bowail Walking and Cycling Track	Improve signage (e.g. directional, including at road crossings and track intersections for safety). Planned to become an interpretative walk with the Seasonal Ranger Program in the future.
Illigadjarr Billabong Walk	Install basic trackhead and directional signage. Consider interpretation of vegetation types and traditional use of specific plants.
Anbangbang Billabong Walk	Investigate the potential to make this track all-season accessible by upgrading the section of the existing 250m track accessed from the car park for Nawurlandja lookout. An elevated boardwalk above water levels and through the paper bark trees (~50m) would allow access to the spectacular views of Nourlangie Rock and Anbangbang Billabong. Develop and install basic trackhead signage. Consider interpretation (e.g. bird life, traditional stories associated with billabong).
Barrk Walk	Install detailed trackhead signage in place of existing signage (e.g. at the track junction near the Gunwarddehwarde Lookout). Create a shorter walk opportunity by developing a second lookout approximately a third of the way around the circuit on the large rock shelves, potentially incorporating thematic interpretation. Further improve track marking by removing excess markers (e.g. markers that are too cluttered). Install bi-directional track markers between the proposed new lookout and start of the track to facilitate a safe return walking experience (e.g. use orange arrows). Develop a detailed track map, including warnings about high temperatures, lack of water etc.
Bubba Wetland Walk	Develop and install basic trackhead signage.

Gubara Pools Walk	Consider relocating the start of the track to the first car park to avoid the need for visitors to drive through wet, muddy section (e.g. formalise parking area and block vehicular access to 4WD section). Install detailed trackhead signage at the start of the track. Investigate the need to install a small number of track markers in the rainforest section just before reaching the rock pools. Consider interpretation. Consult with traditional owners about managing unauthorised access north of the rock pools (this is a permit only area, and there are concerns about tour operators taking visitors to an art site in this area).
Mirrai Lookout	Replace existing signage with a basic trackhead sign alerting visitors to the rough and steep condition of the track. Consider pruning screening vegetation around lookout platform, improving the track alignment (e.g. following the natural contours), improving the standard of the track surface and upgrading interpretation in longer term.
Nawurlandja Lookout	Install basic trackhead signage (this lookout walk should be included on the detailed trackhead signage at the main Nourlangie car park). Install additional standardised bi-directional track markers. Remove confusing signage indicating location of lookout (inverted arrows are confusing, and visitors will naturally gravitate to the highest point). Install restricted access signage (EPBC Act signage) in the main lookout area, and a 'management vehicles only' sign at the left branch of the track at the base of Nawurlandja rock.
Nanguluwur Art Site Walk	Install basic trackhead signage, and standardised bi-directional track markers. Consider rehabilitation of the vehicle track or re-routing to create a stronger walking experience in the longer term.
Nourlangie Main Gallery and Shelter Circuit	Develop and install detailed trackhead signage near the main car park, incorporating information about all of the walks in the area. Upgrade interpretation, including enhancing the seasonal ranger program/Aboriginal guided activities. Consider improving easy access (e.g. assisted wheelchair - Class 1) track conditions to an interpretive node before the elevated boardwalk section of the track - the views of the escarpment are significant.
Gunwarddehwarde Lookout	Upgrade track surface to lookout - stabilise surface to minimise erosion and improve walking experience. Improve the lookout (e.g. seating, interpretation and improved basic trackhead for the Barrk walk).

### The 'Must Do Walks' and the 'Kakadu Bushwalks' Opportunities

The Anbangbang Billabong Walk, Nourlangie Main Gallery and Shelter Loop, Nawurlandja Lookout, Gubara Pools Walk and Barrk Walk are all considered to be 'must do' walks to be upgraded, promoted and marketed.

Mount Brockman (e.g. the Gubara route following the main valley) has been the most popular overnight bushwalking area over the past five years (2008-2012) based on number of permit applications. However, consultations with traditional owners indicated a range of issues with the current network of 'approved bushwalking routes' within the Mount Brockman area. These issues included the extent of the routes, impacts on sacred sites and areas of cultural significance, duplication of routes, and the lack of permit applications for many of the routes in recent years.

During the last round of consultation, traditional owners indicated that they do not want bushwalking to occur in the Mount Brockman area beyond the Gubara Pools day walk, until cultural heritage assessments are carried out and the cultural significance of sites can be properly determined. The assessments will help traditional owners determine whether other routes may be accessed for bushwalking in the future.



*View north from the Barrk Walk, Nourlangie area.*



## 12. Jim Jim District

### Overview

The Jim Jim District contains some of the best known and visited attractions within the Park – notably Jim Jim and Twin Falls on the edge of the Arnhem Land Escarpment, and Yellow Waters – part of the South Alligator River floodplain at Cooida. There are a range of short-day walks within the district that allow visitors to experience the diversity of the landscape, its vegetation and wildlife. The Arnhem Land Escarpment ('Stone Country'), including the country between Jim Jim and Twin Falls, provides outstanding bushwalking opportunities that attract local, national and international interest.

### Improvements to Existing Short-Day Walks

WALK NAMES	RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS
Barrk Marlam Walk	Install detailed trackhead signage in the Jim Jim car park, incorporating information about the difficult conditions along this track (e.g. steep sections, exposed conditions, and heat). Improve directional signage and track marking at the Jim Jim Falls/Barrk Marlam track junction. Upgrade track markers (e.g. use standardised bi-directional markers) along the length of the track, and remove bunting. Install standardised 'no access beyond this point without a permit' (EPBC Act) signage at a location to be determined with traditional owners (e.g. consideration is being given as to whether visitors will be permitted to cross the creek, and whether it is appropriate to construct a short section of track to a lookout point to allow visitors to safely view down the gorge - without encouraging visitors to scramble down to the lower platform). Investigate the potential for interpretation.
Jim Jim Falls Walk	Install detailed trackhead signage in the Jim Jim car park, including information about the challenging conditions along the Jim Jim Falls track (e.g. large boulders to scramble over, and slippery conditions). Improve track marking through the boulder field (e.g. emphasise the easiest route). Undertake a detailed design exercise for the proposed track upgrade to the viewing pool, to assess whether the track can be sustainably constructed and maintained (e.g. will need to be relatively robust to withstand the amount of water flowing through the gorge in the wet season, and does not compromise cultural values). Consider installing seasonal platform to allow viewing to Falls. Improve delineation of the Barrk Marlam track where it branches off the Jim Jim Falls Walk. Implement other improvements resulting from the Visitor Experience Plan being undertaken as part of the Australia's Timeless North and Experience Development Action Plan.

Budjmi Lookout	Install a basic trackhead sign at the start of the track (e.g. near the Jim Jim Creek crossing). Consider an interpretive installation at the lookout to provide an understanding about the scale and features of the landscape (e.g. Jim Jim and Twin Gorges, Arnhem Land Escarpment, plains and woodlands).
Twin Falls Walk	Install detailed trackhead signage in the Twin Falls car park, including warnings about the short section of boulder scrambling on the walk, and incorporating information about the Twin Falls Plateau Walk. Improve track marking (e.g. standardised bi-directional markers, particularly through the boulder field) and directional signage at track intersections/junctions.
Twin Falls Plateau Walk	Develop and install detailed trackhead signage in the Twin Falls car park, incorporating warnings about conditions on the escarpment. Improve track markers (e.g. standardised bi-directional markers), and basic directional signage (e.g. at the beginning of the track), and remove bunting. Install standardised 'no access beyond this point without a permit' signage at the end of the approved day walk track, and at other appropriate locations to alert visitors to stay on the marked track. Consider interpretation at the top of Twin Falls.
Mardugal Billabong Walk	Consider interpretation of the bushfoods growing along the track.
Yellow Water Boardwalk	Install detailed trackhead signage at the start of the boardwalk, incorporating information about the Yellow Waters Walk. Improve interpretation, including the seasonal ranger program and opportunities for Aboriginal guided walks and activities. Consider improving the experience for mobility impaired visitors (e.g. creating a wheelchair accessible node where the boardwalk begins, to provide a space for gathering and activities).
Yellow Water Walk (seasonally submerged trail between Yellow Waters and Gagudju Lodge)	Investigate the feasibility of extending the seasonality of this walk (e.g. installation of raised boardwalk along sections). Improve interpretation, and consider opportunities for regular Aboriginal guided walks and activities in conjunction with the Yellow Water Tours in the dry season (e.g. boat cruise and guided walk package).
Gun-gardun Woodland Walk	Relocate the start of the track to the existing car park and toilets within the campground (currently the track starts at an informal pull-over off the highway, and finishes in the campground). Install basic trackhead signage. Investigate shortening the circuit (e.g. half the current length) focusing on the stronger woodland 'meadow' section closer to the campground. Consider opportunities for interpretation, including building on the Aboriginal guided walks that take place along the track occasionally. Use standardised track markers where required, and remove painted poles. Remove and/or replace existing seating and signage.

### The 'Must Do Walks' and the 'Kakadu Bushwalks' Opportunities

#### Potential New Walks

The potential to construct a new walking track from Garnamarr into the Jim Jim Falls areas was raised during consultations with traditional owners and Parks staff. This proposal should be considered in the broader context of improving vehicular access as far as Garnamarr, and the potential of implementing a shuttle service from Garnamarr to the falls, and/or trackheads along the road. The potential to develop a very short walk (e.g. ~1km return) to a lookout above the Garnamarr campground was also identified as a possibility. This would add to the diversity of experiences on offer to campers. It was indicated that a cultural heritage survey would need to be carried out as part of the feasibility for this short walk, as a site of cultural significance is thought to be located in the area.

#### 'Must Do' Short Walks

The Yellow Waters Boardwalk, Twin Falls Walk, Jim Jim Falls Walk, Barrk Marlam Walk, and Twin Falls Plateau Walk are all considered to be 'must do' walks to be upgraded, promoted and marketed.

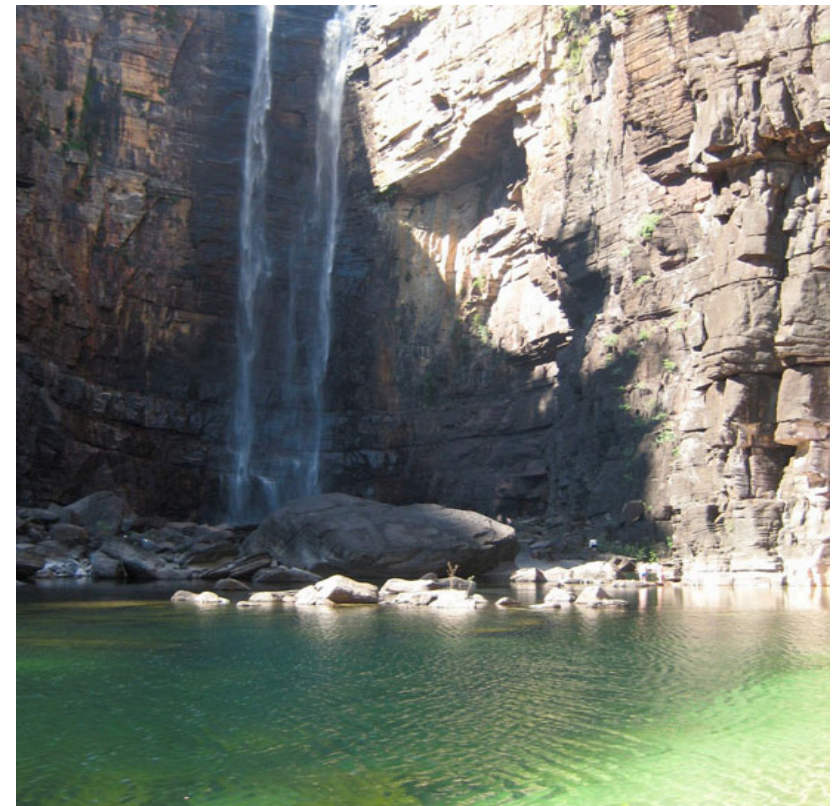
#### Approved Bushwalking Routes

Consultations with traditional owners and Parks staff indicated some issues with the current network of approved bushwalking routes on the escarpment. These issues included the impacts on sacred sites and areas of cultural significance, safety and risk management concerns, unnecessary duplication of some routes and low levels of requests for permits for many of the routes in recent years. The consultations led to initial ground-truthing of routes within the Jim Jim and Twin Falls areas, leading to some rationalisation and realignment of routes. Further consultations with traditional owners will be required to clarify the alignment of some of the other routes (e.g. routes that connect through to Bilkbilkmi, Maguk area and the Kooplin Track).

#### Kakadu Bushwalks

The four-day route between Jim Jim Falls and Twin Falls has been identified, with initial

support of traditional owners, as the first route to be assessed and potentially trialled as a promoted 'Kakadu Bushwalk'.



*Jim Jim Falls and plunge pool.*

## 13 . Mary River District

### Overview

Gunlom Falls is one of the best known and visited attractions within the Park. A range of short-day walks providing visitors with the opportunity to enjoy lookouts, plunge pools and to experience the diversity of the landscape. The escarpment provides some of the best bushwalking experiences within the Park and attracts local, national and international interest.

### Improvements to Existing Short-Day Walks

WALK NAME	RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS
Maguk Plunge Pool Walk	Install basic trackhead signage, incorporating warning information about the potential for crocodiles and swimming risk. Improve ease and safety of the creek crossing below the plunge pool (e.g. small ford or footbridge installed only during the dry season). Install standardised 'no access beyond this point without a permit' signage at the junction with the informal track to the top of the falls. In the longer-term, undertake environmental, cultural and risk assessments to determine whether access to this area can be provided for sustainably in the future. Standardised 'no access beyond this point' signage should also be installed at the top of the falls to minimise visitors wandering around the wider area. Regular monitoring and compliance checks will be required.
Bukbukluk Lookout	Develop and install basic trackhead signage in the car park. Reinforce main circuit, and close and rehabilitate short-cut sections of track. Create a 'point of interest' at the current lookout through interpretation (e.g. European grazing history) and formalisation of the lookout area (e.g. seating, signage, art). Investigate the potential to upgrade this track to a wheel chair accessible standard. Consider upgrading the track (or a section of ) to a Grade 1 standard to provide for mobility impaired access, and improve the experience for elderly people and families with young children.
Gungural Lookout	Install trackhead signage in the car park/camping area, incorporating both walks. Install basic directional signage at track intersections/junctions, and standardised bi-directional track markers. Continue basic maintenance.
Gungural River Walk	See above for Gungural Lookout Walk. Install standardised track markers through the sandy riverbed section.
Kurrundie Falls	Long day walk and should only be promoted to walkers who are fit and self-reliant. Traditional Owners have requested closure of the informal track across the top of the escarpment between Motor Car falls and Kurrundie Falls and that the walk be based on a permit.

Gunlom Lookout	Install a new centralised trackhead to cater for both the lookout and the plunge pool walks (this may require some basic re-routing of the start of the tracks), as well as information and directions to Murrill Billabong Walk. Remove existing signage at the start of the tracks. Undertake detailed assessment of track works needed to improve the sustainability and safety of the steep Gunlom Lookout track, including the safety of visitors at the lookout as well as the feasibility of developing a circuit track to avoid congestion of visitors walking up and down on the narrow track. Install standardised 'no access beyond this point without a permit' signage to alert day visitors to remain on the marked track. Enhance interpretation at the lookout.
Gunlom Plunge Pool	See above re trackhead signage. Upgrade this short walk to cater for assisted wheelchair access. Investigate ways to create a robust and attractive viewing space at the edge of the plunge pool. Enhance interpretation including the seasonal ranger program and opportunities for Aboriginal activities.
Murrill Billabong Walk	Incorporate directions to the start of this track on the centralised Gunlom trackhead signage. Improve directional signage to allow visitors to more easily find the start of the walk from the main trackhead through the campground. Install basic trackhead signage at the start of the track, incorporating feral animal warnings (very prevalent in this area). Install standardised bi-directional track markers. Consider enhancing interpretation focused on bird life, including a small bird hide on the billabong.
Boulder Creek Loop	Install detailed trackhead signage incorporating all Yurmikmik walks, and locate in the main car park. Improve directional signage, particularly at track junctions, to clearly communicate which track leads to Boulder Creek, and which leads to Motor Car Falls. Remove existing directional signage as it is confusing and dated. Install standardised bi-directional track markers where required. Address track erosion issues. Consider opportunities for low-level interpretation and formalisation of a seating area at the creek. Indicate that this walk is most interesting in the wet season. Consider installing a toilet in the Yurmikmik car park to cater for the high visitation.
Motor Car Falls Walk	See above re trackhead signage. Improve directional signage at track junctions (e.g. at the Boulder Creek and Yurmikmik Lookout junctions). Install standardised bi-directional track markers through the short boulder field section just below the plunge pool. Consider the installation of interpretation and formalisation of a seating 'nodes' at the plunge pool to minimise trampling and vegetation disturbance.
Yurmikmik Lookout	See above re trackhead signage (main trackhead to be located in the Yurmikmik car park). Improve directional signage at the main track junction to this walk.

### The 'Must Do Walks' and the 'Kakadu Bushwalks' Opportunities

#### Potential New Short Walks

Consultation with traditional owners and Parks staff identified two potential new short walks for investigation; a possible walk along Moline Ikoymarrwa Creek, following the southern side of the creek in the shade, and passing historic cattle yards, and including the possibility of a shuttle service from Goymarr Interpretive Centre. The potential for a stone country short-day walk in the Mary River area was also raised.

#### 'Must Do' Short Walks

The Gunlom Plunge Pool, Gunlom Lookout, Maguk Plunge Pool and the Motor Car Falls are all considered to be 'must do' walks to be upgraded, promoted and marketed.

#### Kakadu Bushwalks

Traditional owners from the Mary River District area would like a route within this district to be assessed as a potential Kakadu Bushwalk. Possible routes between Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) and Gunlom were suggested, or a route between Gunlom-Maguk-Bilkbilkmi. The latter option requires consultation with the traditional owners of the Maguk-Bilkbilkmi country.



*Motor Car Falls and plunge pool, Mary River District.*

inspiring place



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