

February 2015

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK DRAFT WALKING STRATEGY

prepared for Parks Australia



inspiring place



Background Report

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prepared for Parks Australia

A SUMMARY REPORT HAS ALSO BEEN PREPARED
FOR THE KAKADU NATIONAL PARK WALKING STRATEGY



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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Kakadu National Park is *part of “a living cultural landscape...”* - one of a 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 land that is now known as Kakadu National Park (see Map 1.1) is a ‘peopled’ landscape, with living stories and customs, where land and people are connected by deep tradition.

Kakadu National Park encompasses a rich biological diversity, including mangrove-fringed tidal flats, vast floodplains, woodlands and the sandstone country, or ‘stone country’ of the Arnhem land escarpment and its outliers. Kakadu is a beautiful and moving landscape. 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.

Traditional Aboriginal use and cultural values exist along-side contemporary activities and social values, including ‘recreation’, ‘education’, ‘tourism’, ‘science’, ‘adventure’, and the desire to be immersed in a ‘wild’ landscape. Walking opportunities in the Park, range from gentle short walks to art sites, moderate difficulty walks to plunge pools, to strenuous and largely unmarked day and overnight bushwalks. At present, 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 escarpment.



Map 1.1 Kakadu National Park Location

Bushwalking in Kakadu raises both issues and opportunities and there remains some tension about how this should be managed.

Traditional owners have expressed a willingness to allow visitors to continue walking on their country on approved routes as long as a range of issues are effectively managed. They have serious concerns about the safety, risks, inappropriate visitation of cultural sites and the management of bushwalking on the escarpment. Bushwalkers and tourism operators have sought improved management systems to allow better access for bushwalking experiences. Parks Australia is responsible for the management of the park including managing bushwalking and any associated infrastructure. The tension is about how best to resolve the expectations and interests of all stakeholders with respect and due regard being given to operational and financial realities.

Whilst significant effort has gone into the planning and management of walking in the Park, these efforts have not resulted in a common vision or consistent framework. Walking continues to be managed in a fragmented way throughout the Park. As a consequence there are a number of issues affecting access, management and walking experiences which need to be addressed if the Park is to fully develop its potential to become a leading walking destination within Australia. The difficulties involved in meeting management requirements and expectations has been recognised by the Kakadu Board of Management, in the current Management Plan and formed the basis for this project.

Inspiring Place were engaged by the Director of National Parks in 2011 to work with traditional owners, Kakadu National Park staff, and other stakeholders, to develop a walking strategy for the Park. Striking the right balance between tourism and recreation, and a respect for Aboriginal responsibility, use and culture is essential if the values and integrity of the Park are to be maintained. The *Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy* provides a 'tool' to aid in the achievement of this balance, and the creation of 'world class' walking opportunities.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE WALKING STRATEGY

The *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. These opportunities range from the short walks and day walks that are accessed by the majority of visitors, to the overnight walks that cater for more experienced bushwalkers and guided tours.

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with the traditional owners, park staff, bushwalkers and industry stakeholders, and provides the basis for having an agreed framework for walking in Kakadu. It merges pragmatic on-ground management actions, with policy and strategic vision – a way forward to improve the quality and profile of all walking opportunities in Kakadu.

The objectives of the Strategy were to:

support the aspirations and respond to the concerns of the traditional owners and other Bininj/Munguuy;

improve the delivery of walking opportunities within the Park;

identify a diverse range of new walking opportunities to cater for a range of visitor needs and experiences;

identify opportunities for the development of an iconic walking experience within the Park;

review and revise the previous Management Strategy for Bushwalking;

outline the implementation process for a walking track grading system consistent with the Australian Walking Track Grading System;

identify a suite of management tools that address issues such as traditional owner concerns and constraints, access, protection of cultural sites, research, monitoring, permit system, visitor safety, minimal impact walking, waste management and ongoing management of tracks; and

identify an operational plan for recurrent maintenance and capital expenditure.

1.3 APPROACH

The project was undertaken in 10 stages over a 3.5 year period starting in mid 2011. The project timeline was extended to allow for additional consultations with Traditional Owners, 'sorry business' and fitting within the broader consultation program of other major projects being undertaken within the Park. A summary of the tasks undertaken for each stage is provided in Table 1.1.

PROJECT STAGE	KEY TASKS (Summary Only)	Status
Stage 1 - Project Start-up	Prepare a draft Work Program and Consultation Program outlining detailed project timeline and key outputs for the stages	Completed
Stage 2 - Project Briefing and Initial Site Visit	Site visit to Kakadu National Park to undertake initial project briefing with the Kakadu Walking Strategy Steering Committee (KWSSC), meetings with Parks Australia and to commence site visits of existing walks	Completed
Stage 3 - Background Research	Review of relevant reports, policies and other documentation, including tourism, recreation, and visitation trend data relevant to Kakadu National Park. Analysis of existing inventory of tracks.	Completed
Stage 4 - Site Investigations and Consultations	Commence extensive program of consultation with traditional owners, ranger staff, Parks Australia, tourism industry and other key stakeholders. Site visits to existing walking tracks. Initial workshops with traditional owners and a follow-up workshop to present and discuss the results of the initial workshop and meetings.	Completed
Stage 5 - Strategic Assessment & Interim Scoping Report	Preparation of a brief Interim Scoping Report that provided a summary of the key findings from work undertaken in Stages 1-4.	Completed
Stage 6 - Review of the Interim Scoping Report	The report was presented to the KWSSC for review and discussion. Further consultation with traditional owners and other stakeholders was also undertaken.	Completed
Stage 7 - Draft Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy	Preparation of the Draft Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy for review. It included a briefing with the Kakadu Board of Management and a meeting with the KWSSC to discuss the draft report and to make any changes necessary to allow for public review and comment. It was recommended that another round of consultation with traditional owners be undertaken. The draft Strategy was presented and reviewed with the KWSSC and the KNP Board of Management prior to release for public comment. <i>(There were considerable time delays due to sorry business, the timing of other important traditional owner consultations and resourcing issues.)</i>	Completed
Stage 8 - Public Review of the Draft Strategy	Review of public submissions and comment on the draft Strategy following public exhibition and website promotion.	February – March 2015
Stage 9 - Revision of the Strategy	Meeting with KNPWS Steering Committee to review public comment on draft Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy	April - May 2015
Stage 10 - Final Strategy Plan	Presentation of the final Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy to the Kakadu Board of Management	June 2015

Table 1.1. Summary of Project Stages and Tasks.

1.4 INTERPRETATION

The wording in the report is consistent with the interpretation of terminology outlined in Section 2.3 of the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007-2014*. In addition to the terms described in the Management Plan, the following are used within this report:

Approved bushwalking route means those routes where a permit is required to be issued for bushwalking in Kakadu National Park.

Australian Standards for Waking Tracks means the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1-2001), and the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Infrastructure Design (AS 2156.2–2001).

Australian Walking Track Grading System means the Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System¹.

Bushwalking means a walk undertaken by self-reliant walkers or walking with the assistance of tour operator guides and includes walks for more than 3 hours and walks involving camping or staying overnight.

Bushwalking Permit System means the system used by Parks for assessing approval, refusal or modification of applications to bushwalk on routes within the Park. The permit system is associated with a set of conditions used to manage bushwalking.

Goals means the statements of desired outcomes to achieve the vision.

Interpretation means purposeful strategic communication for visitors about places, stories and experiences within the National Park.

Kakadu Bushwalks means those overnight walks that may have the potential to be promoted to the visitor market as the best bushwalking experiences within the Park, subject to traditional owners and Parks Australia approval. A permit will still be required to be issued for use of these walks.

'Must-do' walks are the short to day walks that have been selected with the potential for being upgraded, managed and promoted as priority walk visitor experiences within the Park.

¹ Walking Tracks Grading and Improvement Project, Victorian Government (2010) *Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System*, Victoria.

PLB means personal locator beacon carried by walkers to aid communication in serious emergency situations that are or could become life threatening.

Route means an unmarked or trackless location where people are able to bushwalk with an approved permit in the National Park, and using navigational skills. Routes are not formally constructed tracks (e.g. there is no hardened track surface, drainage, signage and track markers, or other infrastructure associated with constructed tracks).

Satellite Phone means a type of mobile phone, which can be carried on a person, and connects to satellites instead of land-based service towers or sites. Satellite phones provide a means of communication in locations where land-based service is not available (as is the case throughout much of Kakadu National Park).

Short Walk means walks with a duration of less than a full day, and encompasses the following categories referred to in the Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy:

less than 2 hours;

2-4 hours (half day); and

more than four hours (day walk).

Strategies means the plan of action to achieve the goals.

Sustainable means environmentally, socially, culturally, and economically sustainable. Resources and funding must be sufficient to ensure ongoing management, repairs and maintenance can be undertaken. The walks should be an exemplar of environmental and cultural heritage 'best practice', and have the potential to provide long-term, ongoing benefits to the community.

Track means an approved and formalised walking route, which is of an appropriate standard (e.g. including level of construction and associated infrastructure) for the intended track category under the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks. The term 'Track' is generally associated with short-day walks in Kakadu National Park.

Trackhead means the start or entry to a walking track, or network of tracks, where a sign provides detailed information for visitors about the track experience, condition and risks.

Vision means the statement that describes the desired future for sustainably managing walking experiences within Kakadu National Park.

Walk means a track that is developed and promoted for visitor use and includes all the short walks, half day walks and day walks within the National Park.

1.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Inspiring Place would like to thank members of the Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy Steering Committee staff for overseeing the project and willingness to assist and share knowledge throughout the project.

The representatives on the Steering Committee were:

Traditional owners

Jeffery Lee Djok Clan, Jim Jim Ranger
Jimmy Morimowa, Bunitj Clan
Judy Alderson, Murrumburr Clan
Ben Tyler, Murrumburr Clan (replacing Judy Alderson)
Quentin Pamkal, Bolmo Clan
Nakodjok, Manilikarr Clan
Ryan Barruwei, Wurrkbarbar Clan
Joshua Hunter, Wurrkbarbar Clan
Victor Cooper, Minitja Clan and Bininj/Munguuy Commercial Tour Operator
Mr Cubillo Mirrar, Gundjeimhi Representative

Kakadu Park Staff

Sarah Kerin, Park Manager and Chair
Sarah Pizzey/Yatu Widders/Louise Oliver as Acting TVS Managers (2011-2012)
Tracey Diddams, TVS Manager (2012-2013)
Kathy Wilson, District Supervisor Jim Jim
Ollie Schiebe, Chief Ranger HQ District
Alan Harbour, A/Chief Ranger Mary River District
Andrew Davies, Operations Manager
Steve Winderlich, NCP Manager
Zig Madycki, Ranger Mary River District
James Overall, Tourism Services Officer (2011-2012)
Penny Scarpellino, Tourism Services Officer (2012-)

Northern Land Council

Kathy Bannister, NLC Parks Officer

Other Representatives

Geoffrey Kyle, Mirrar, Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation
Scott Russell, Tourism Top End
David Reid, Bushwalking Australia
Russell Willis, Willis Walkabouts
Yasmin Barnes and/or Andy Peart and/or Marj King from the Darwin Bushwalking Club

Vicky Shilvock, Tourism NT (2011-2012)
Claire George, Tourism NT

We would particularly like to thank the following people for their invaluable support, knowledge, and guidance provided by Vicky Shilvock, Kathy Bannister, Sarah Kerin, Tracey Diddams and James Overall during the project. Kathy Bannister was invaluable as the organiser of the extensive consultation program involving contact, travel arrangements and community meetings held with traditional owners in the early stages of the project.

We record our appreciation to the many traditional owners and clan members who were generous enough to share knowledge of country, express concerns, and exchange ideas with us.

We would also like to acknowledge the important contribution made by other stakeholders, including the Darwin Bushwalking Club, Bushwalking Australia and tourism industry operators.

A list of those people or organisations that were consulted during the preparation of the Walking Strategy is shown in Attachment 1.

SECTION 2

CONTEXT

2.1 WALKING IN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

The natural and cultural values of Kakadu National Park are well documented in various publications including the Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007-2014, A Shared Vision for Tourism in Kakadu National Park, the Kakadu National Park Tourism Master Plan and the Angarre Gen - A Strategy for Cultural Heritage Management in Kakadu National Park 2011.

These documents provide a brief overview of the significance of the Park, including:

- one of the few places on Earth where Aboriginal ties to the land remain strong after 50,000 years – Kakadu is a living cultural landscape;

- one of only twenty-nine World Heritage Areas listed for both its natural and cultural values;

- a rich biological diversity, covering a range of ecosystems; and

- a range of contemporary social values, including recreation (e.g. bushwalking), education, tourism, science, adventure, and 'wildness', that exist alongside Aboriginal values.

Bushwalking is a relatively new activity in terms of the cultural history of the Park, dating back to the early 1970's, when local Darwin adventurers began exploring the area that is now Kakadu National Park. The Darwin Bushwalking Club was formed in 1974 with the founding members being some of these early adventurers. At this time, bushwalking access was facilitated by a network of unsealed mining, mineral exploration and survey tracks – the Stuart Highway being the only sealed road in the Top End at the time.

Prior to the declaration of the Park in 1979 (Stage 1), part of what is now encompassed by Kakadu National Park was known as the Alligator Rivers Wildlife Sanctuary, managed by the Northern Territory Department of the Interior². The Darwin Bushwalking Club, and the small number of independent

² Palmer, L.R. (2001) *Kakadu as an Aboriginal Place: Tourism and the Construction of Kakadu National Park*, University of Tasmania, page 195.

walkers from interstate, were given permission to walk in the Sanctuary by the Department, and essentially had unrestricted access to the sandstone escarpment country. There were no formal bushwalking tracks or 'marked' routes in the area at this time, and topographic map coverage was poor. Walkers relied on local knowledge, navigational skills, and a sense of adventure.

The escarpment country in the east and south of the Park, and forming the western edge of the Arnhem Land Plateau, in conjunction with the sandstone outliers of Mount Brockman and Nourlangie, continue to attract the vast majority of bushwalking activity. Much of the escarpment country (or 'Stone Country'), particularly in the south-east of the Park ('Sickness Country') is highly significant to traditional owners. Many sacred sites including burial, art, and artefact sites occur in the escarpment country. Traditional owners have expressed unease about bushwalking in the Park. Concerns centre around the independent, and exploratory nature of bushwalking (e.g. the possibility of walkers viewing and photographing sites that are considered culturally inappropriate – even dangerous), and a very real concern for the safety of walkers whilst on country.

Some physical damage to cultural sites and artefacts has occurred over the years, including the removal or relocation of objects. More recently, the ability to accurately record and communicate the location of sites via GPS and the internet, has contributed to concerns about the integrity of sacred sites. A number of bushwalking routes, are known to traverse through, or within close proximity to sacred sites.

The management of bushwalking has evolved since the inception of the Park, including a shift towards a more formalised system of multi-day bushwalking routes. A bushwalking strategy was prepared in 1996³, which has been the primary tool of management for walking since that time. The 1996 Strategy includes:

- a system of 'approved' routes for multi-day bushwalking;
- a permit system (including limits on bushwalker numbers) for multi-day bushwalking; and
- discussion and recommendations on a range of issues including monitoring, education and safety, commercial operations.

³ Clark, C (1996) *A Management Strategy for Bushwalking for the Plan of Management of Kakadu National Park*, Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

Commercial multi-day bushwalking has occurred in the Park since 1984, when Willis's Walkabouts ran their first trip. A number of other commercial tourism operators have since incorporated walking into their programs – primarily short-day walks to art sites or plunge pools.

The Darwin Bushwalking Club remains active in the Park, with members making up a significant proportion of annual bushwalking permit holders. The number of interstate and international bushwalkers undertaking multi-day bushwalks in the Kakadu has increased over the decades since the 1970s, as access, services and facilities, and information have improved.

The dry Season (May-September) is the most popular time of the year for bushwalking, when climatic conditions are more comfortable, and routes and tracks are accessible. School holidays and long weekends are particularly popular. Some tracks and routes can be at capacity during these times.

Short walks in Kakadu are mainly associated with the opening up of art sites, such as Ubirr and Nourlangie, and other attractions that came about with the formalisation of the Park. The time it took to drive to the Kakadu area, and the limited facilities and amenities available in the area prior to the establishment of the Park, meant that tourism and recreation visitation was very limited. Today, short-day walking opportunities are available in the Park all year round, although seasonally restricted, particularly in the wet season due to access difficulties, flash flooding, crocodile risk, and cultural closures.

Short-day walks are undertaken by the majority of visitors to the Park, and are therefore, highly significant visitor experiences – connecting people to culture and landscape. The demand for, and use of short-day walks far outweighs that for overnight bushwalks, indicating that the improvement of these walking experiences should continue to be a priority for the Park in the shorter-term.

2.2 POLICY AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

This section provides a brief summary of the policy and management framework of Kakadu National Park as it relates to walking.

JOINT MANAGEMENT

Kakadu National Park is Aboriginal Land. The Park encompasses three Land Trusts (Gunlom, Jabiluka and Kakadu), and three pending Land Claims (Ngombur, Alligator Rivers Area 3, Kakadu Region), but is jointly managed with traditional owners as one contiguous protected area. The land under Trust is leased to the Australian Government by the traditional owners, for the purposes of a national park.

The Park is jointly managed by the Aboriginal traditional owners (Bininj/Munguuy), and the Director of National Parks (Parks Australia). Joint management combines statutory and non-statutory obligations, and responds to, and encompasses the following elements:

the provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* and the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT1978)*, including the requirement for a Board of Management and the preparation and implementation of a Management Plan;

the lease agreements between the Aboriginal Land Trusts and the Director; and

day-to-day relationships between Bininj/Munguuy, Park staff, and the Kakadu Board of Management.

The EPBC Act delegates the function of administration, Park management, and protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage to the Director, and the function of preparing a management plan to the Board of Management. Day-to-day management decisions are made by Park staff.

The Northern Land Council acts as an intermediary between Bininj/Munguuy and the Director, and is an 'agent' for the traditional owners, helping to protect and communicate their wishes regarding use and management of country.

POLICY AND STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

A number of documents, both statutory and non-statutory, influence the planning and management of walking in the Park. A summary of these main documents is provided in Attachment, and includes:

Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007-2014;

A Shared Vision for Tourism in Kakadu National Park;

Kakadu National Park Tourism Master Plan;

A Management Strategy for Bushwalking for the Plan of Management of Kakadu National Park;

Angarre Gen – A strategy for cultural heritage management in Kakadu National Park 2011; and

Sickness Country (Buladjang) Access Protocols.

2.3 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING WALKS

2.3.1 Inventory of Existing Day Based Walks

The park offers a variety of developed walking opportunities of varying length in a diversity of landscapes, including monsoon forests, woodlands, wetlands, rivers and escarpment country. Existing tracks allow visitors to access a range of natural and cultural attractions, including art and other cultural sites, internationally significant wetlands and waterfalls, and are central to the visitor experience of the Park. Short-day walks are the primary means for visitors to experience the diverse landscapes within the Park and discover and connect with country and culture. This is particularly true for short stay visitors, currently making up the bulk of the visitor market.

An inventory of existing walks has been prepared as part of the current project. The inventory is provided in Table 2.1, and is based on a review of a range of existing information sources⁴ and site visits. The inventory comprises the following data for each walk:

the management district;

the tourism precinct as identified in Kakadu National Park Tourism Master Plan 2009-2014;

⁴ These sources have included stakeholder consultation and review of past reports, existing brochures, commercial walk books and website search for information.

name;

length (return distance in km's);

type (e.g. time required to complete the walk); and

classification under the *Australian Standards Walking Track Grading System 2009*.

The main findings from the inventory are:

there are currently 44 formal walking tracks within Kakadu National Park that are identified, promoted and marketed to visitors;

these walking tracks are located within the following management districts: Head Quarters (13), Mary River (11), Jim Jim (9), East Alligator (7) and South Alligator (4);

the walks are spread across all seven of the tourism precincts, with the majority within the Nourlangie and Mary River precincts;

21 (48%) of the walks have a distance of under 2kms return; 16 walks (36%) are between 2-5kms in length return, and 7 walks (16%) are longer than 5kms in length return;

7 walks (16%) are classified as Grade 1; 13 walks (30%) are Grade 2; 9 walks (20%) are Grade 3; 7 walks (16%) are Grade 4, and 8 walks (18%) are Grade 5; and

21 of the walks (48%) are considered to be 'easy'; 8 walks (18%) are 'moderate'; 7 walks (16%) are 'hard', and 8 walks (18%) are 'challenging'.

Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km) Return	Walk Type	Track Category
South Alligator	South Alligator	Ayal Walk	?	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	South Alligator	Gun-garre Walk	3.6	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	South Alligator	Mamukala Bird Hide Walk	~0.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 1
	South Alligator	Mamukala Circuit	3	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
Head Quarter	Jabiru	Bowali Walking and Cycling Track	4	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	Jabiru	Illigadjarr Billabong Walk	3.8	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	Nourlangie	Anbangbang Billabong Walk	2.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	Nourlangie	Barrk Walk	12	Day	Grade 4
	Nourlangie	Bubba Wetland Walk	3.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	Nourlangie	Gubara Pools Walk	6	Half-day	Grade 3
	Nourlangie	Mirrai Lookout	3.6	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Nourlangie	Nawurlandja Lookout	1.2	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Nourlangie	Nanguluwur Art Site Walk	3.6	2hr-half day	Grade 2
	Nourlangie	Nourlangie Main Gallery and Shelter Loop	1.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
Nourlangie	Gunwarddehwardde Lookout	~1.5-2	< 2 hrs	Grade 3	
East Alligator	East Alligator	Bardedjilidji Walk	2.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	East Alligator	Sandstone and River Walk	6.5	2hr - half-day	Grade 2
	East Alligator	Manngarre Rainforest Walk	1.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	East Alligator	Ubirr Loop	1	< 2 hrs	Grade 1-2
	East Alligator	Ubirr Lookout	0.25	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	East Alligator	Merl Campground-Border Store Walk	1.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 1
	East Alligator	Merl Campground-Cahills Crossing Walk	1.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 1
Jim Jim	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Barrk Marlam Walk	6	Half-day	Grade 4
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Jim Jim Falls Walk	2	< 2 hrs	Grade 4
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Budjmi Lookout	1	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Twin Falls Walk	1.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Twin Falls Plateau Walk	6	Half-day	Grade 4
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Mardugal Billabong Walk	1	< 2 hrs	Grade 2

Table 2.1 Inventory of Short-Day Walks

Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km) Return	Walk Type	Track Category
Jim Jim (cont)	Mary River	Maguk Plunge Pool Walk	2	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Yellow Water	Yellow Water Boardwalk	0.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 1
	Yellow Water	Yellow Water Walk (seasonally submerged trail between Yellow Waters and Gagudju Lodge)	2.6	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	Yellow Water	Gun-gardun Woodland Walk	2	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
Mary River	Mary River	Bukbukluk Lookout	0.4	< 2 hrs	Grade 2
	Mary River	Gungural Lookout	3	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Mary River	Gungural River Walk	1	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Mary River	Gunlom Lookout	2	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Mary River	Gunlom Plunge Pool	0.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 1
	Mary River	Murrill Billabong Walk	2.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 2/3
	Mary River	Boulder Creek Loop	2	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Mary River	Motor Car Falls Walk	7.5	Half-day	Grade 3
	Mary River	Kurrundie Falls Walk	11	Day	Grade 4
	Mary River	Yurmikmik Lookout	5	Half-day	Grade 3
	Mary River	Ikoymarrwa Top Walk (not accessible to commercial operators)	<0.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 3
	Mary River	Ikoymarrwa Bottom Walk (access by permit only for commercial tour operators)	<0.5	< 2 hrs	Grade 3

Table 2.1 Inventory of Short-Day Walks (cont).

2.3.2 Overnight Bushwalks

CURRENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Since the preparation of the Bushwalking Strategy in 1996, there has been a network of 'approved bushwalking routes' and a requirement for all bushwalkers and commercial tourism operators to obtain a permit for overnight walks within the Park. Most of the extended 'approved bushwalking routes' are located on the escarpment or outliers, and include:

Mount Brockman Massif;

Maguk;

Dinner Creek;

Freezing Gorge;

Graveside Gorge;

Jim Jim Creek;

Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) Creek;

Twin Falls;

Jim Jim Falls;

Twin Falls to Jim Jim Falls; and

Yurmikmik (e.g. Motor Car Creek).

Permits for extended walks are required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000* and through application of the park permit guidelines. The permit system includes limits on the numbers of groups and party size allowed per route.

The current permit system involves downloading an application form from the Park website, and forwarding the completed form with the intended route marked on a topographic map to the permit officer. Permit processing can take up to 14 days or longer. The 'approved bushwalking route' network is not publically available for bushwalkers to view. Extended bushwalking is not currently promoted in the Park, due to cultural and management sensitivities and a resulting Park policy. Applicants rely on word-of-mouth information, advertising by commercial operators, and other non-Park sources found on the internet or in printed media to determine their route.

The current 'approved bushwalking route' network is largely based on routes identified by and previously used by Willis's Walkabouts⁵ and members of the Darwin Bushwalking Club. They do not necessarily represent the best experiences on offer in the Park, or have the approval of current traditional owners.

The extent of consultation undertaken with traditional owners as part of the 1996 Strategy regarding the approved bushwalking route network remains uncertain. Since the 1996 Strategy, there has been further discussion, site investigations, and information available about cultural heritage values, bringing into question the appropriateness of some of the 'approved bushwalking routes'.

As a result, it was recognised that the current project must centre around extensive consultation with traditional owners, to understand and document their views, ideas and issues regarding visitors walking on country, and in particular the appropriateness of the current 'approved bushwalking route' network.

This consultation has involved two – three community meetings with community representatives from relevant clans – the first meeting was to discuss and record responses to the above aspects and the second meeting was used to present these views back for further discussion and agreement. In some cases, additional follow-up meetings and/or site visits with traditional owners and Parks staff were arranged to assist with the ideas and issues discussed at the meetings. For example a site walk was conducted at Ubirr loop and rock art walk and helicopter reconnaissance trips were arranged for the Jim Jim, Twin Falls and Mt Brockman areas to assess the 'approved bushwalking routes'. Following the preparation of the draft Walking Strategy, further consultation was undertaken with some traditional owner groups.

Consultation was also conducted with a range of stakeholders such as tourism operators, bushwalkers and Parks staff who had considerable experience and knowledge of the bushwalking areas.

⁵ Russell Willis prepared a Brief History of Bushwalking in Kakadu and this was the basis for a submission to the Bushwalking Strategy in 1996. The submission indicated that there were several issues with these routes concerning safety (routes harder than they need to be) and that the routes did not include many walks that had been done in the past.

TRENDS IN PERMIT NUMBERS

A summary of Parks permit information for the financial years of 2007-08 to 2011-12 is provided in Table 2.2.

	Year 2007- 2008	Year 2008- 2009	Year 2009- 2010	Year 2010- 2011	Year 2011- 2012
Number of permits issued (groups)	197	183	198	185	219
Total number of walkers	1209	1025	1194	1105	1236
Average trip length of bushwalking parties (days) based on total numbers of days/number of permits	4.29	4.78	4.28	4.99	4.59

Table 2.2. Bushwalking Permits in KNP 2006-07 to 2010-11.

The overall number of permits issued has fluctuated over the last four years (e.g. 180-220 separate permits). The total number of walkers has slightly increased over the period. It should be noted that the total number of permits in the table above may be higher than the actual number, as some groups have been known to apply for more than one permit in the event that they do not get their first route choice.

The average trip length undertaken by overnight bushwalkers is in the range of 4.3-5.0 days for the past 5 years. These figures are likely to be skewed by the changing numbers of larger groups – both commercial and bushwalking club trips, involving stays longer than two weeks.

A review of the commercial operator permits issued for ‘approved bushwalking routes’ in Kakadu National Park indicated that there have been between 3-13 permit requests issued in recent years.

Parks staff indicated that a significant number of the bushwalking permits issued are for people residing within the Northern Territory.

2.4 VISITOR MARKET AND TRENDS

This section provides an overview of the global trends affecting the visitor market (Section 2.4.1), the visitor market profile for Kakadu (Section 2.4.2), and a generalised profile of walkers (Section 2.4.3).

Tourism is a significant industry sector for the Northern Territory, generating ~18,000 jobs, and representing ~16.3% of total employment in the Territory. This is significantly higher than the national average of 8.3%.

2.4.1 Big Picture Visitor Trends

The last decade has provided many challenges for the Australian tourism industry. Tourism's share of Australia's GDP fell from 3.4% in 2000-01 to 2.6% in 2008-09. Australian overnight visitor expenditure declined by around 5%, and internationally, Australia's share of international tourist arrivals declined from 0.7% to 0.6%. Over the same period, employment growth in the tourism industry was 7.9%, compared with the previous years 19%⁶.

Although Australia weathered the Global Financial Crisis better than other developed economies, the strong Australian dollar provides challenges for inbound tourism, allowing Australians to take their holidays overseas. This trend has been assisted by increased international air capacity and a number of new 'cut-price' airlines entering the Asian market. In addition to the impact of the strong Australian dollar, is the trend towards fewer Australians taking longer holidays, with higher numbers taking multiple short 'stress breaks' to balance busy work lives.

Domestic travel has declined over the past decade. This may be due to the changes in discretionary expenditure, such as purchase of in-home entertainment equipment, or the availability of cheap international flights and holiday packages. Tourism Research Australia expects this trend to continue. Outbound departures were forecast to grow by 15% in 2010. Over the longer-term, outbound travel is expected to rise on average by 4.5% each year between 2009 and 2020. At the same time, domestic travel is forecast to grow by only 0.3%.

The 'big picture' tourism trends and challenges that will influence and impact on visitation to Australia, the Top End and Kakadu National Park are set out in Attachment 2. These trends are based on a review of various information sources, including research papers from Tourism Industry Australia, Tourism Australia, and Tourism Research Australia. The trends include the:

⁶ Tourism Research Australia. 2010. State of the Tourism Industry 2010

increasing affluence in developing countries;

projected increases in international travel;

affordability of low cost airlines;

decline in domestic travel;

rising costs of oil (e.g. vulnerability of the tourism industry to oil price increases);

rise of environmental awareness and demand for sustainable tourism;

projected impacts of climate change;

impact of an ageing population;

increase of technology sophistication and personalisation;

and

increasing demand for authentic, personalised and experience-rich tourism.

2.4.2 Visitors to Kakadu National Park

KAKADU IS A KEY TRAVEL MOTIVATOR IN THE TOP END

Tourism Research Australia⁷ recently conducted a study into the visitor market to Darwin and their dispersal across the Top End. Kakadu and Litchfield National Parks were the primary drawcards for visitors to this region. Almost a third of all visitors indicated that Kakadu was a reason for visiting Darwin and the Top End region, and a strong trigger for experiential travellers (49% of those visiting Darwin).

Kakadu National Park was the key motivator in attracting 41% of the total visitors surveyed - 63% of these visitors were on an overnight trip. For those that visited Kakadu, the Park was a major motivator (75%) for coming to the Top End. Some 52% of these visitors used bus/coach tours; 38% used hired vehicles to access the Park. The main motivators for both interstate and international visitors undertaking overnight trips out of Darwin were: wanting to view wildlife, seeing the landscape, going swimming in a waterhole/waterfalls, people had recommended it, and to do something unique.

⁷ *Destination Visitor Survey – Dispersing Beyond Darwin: Summary of Results*, Tourism Research Australia 2011

The main reasons given by both interstate and international visitors for undertaking day trips out of Darwin were that people had recommended these trips, that they had already booked accommodation outside the Park, their lack of time and the expense of overnight tours.

Overall, the datum suggests that visitor satisfaction was high with 71% of the visitors indicating they were 'very satisfied' with their Kakadu National Park experience.

GENERAL DECLINE IN INDIGENOUS TOURISM VISITORS IN AUSTRALIA

Indigenous tourism experiences are one of the seven primary experiences that underpin Tourism Australia's global marketing activities. The Indigenous tourism segment represents about 13% of total international visitation to Australia, 20% of total international visitor nights, and 19% of total international tourism expenditure.

Tourism Research Australia⁸ has monitored Indigenous tourism visitation in Australia over the last five years. The data shows a steady pattern of decline in both the international and domestic overnight markets. For example, the number of international visitors participating in Indigenous tourism activities declined by 4.9% during 2006-2010. Similarly, the number of domestic overnight visitor trips incorporating an Indigenous tourism element also declined by 18.7% during 2006-2010.

Kakadu had the highest proportion of international Indigenous tourism visitor nights (83%) in a tourism region. In the Northern Territory, the Indigenous tourism activities have strongest appeal to visitors from Europe, North America and Africa/Middle East.

VISITOR TRENDS TO KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

In 1985 approximately 100,000 people visited Kakadu National Park. In the late 1980s visitor number increased rapidly and during the early 1990s visitor numbers averaged about 230,000 people per year. Currently about 170,000 people visit Kakadu each year. Visitor numbers are greatest during the dry season months of June to September and lowest during the wet season months⁹.

Tourism Research Australia's Overnight National Visitor Survey and International Visitor Surveys indicates that there has been a major decline in

⁸ *Snapshots2011: Indigenous Tourism Visitors in Australia*, Tourism Research Australia, Canberra.

⁹ <http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/kakadu/management/faq.html>

domestic overnight visitation since 2008 and a small decline in international overnight visitation.

Visitation data available for Kakadu is currently based on car counters, with a number of assumptions applied to arrive at an annual figure. Some tourism operators indicated concern about the reliability of this data, which reveals a strong decline in total visitation in recent years. The five-year trend for Kakadu National Park based on Parks Australia information (e.g. visitor passes), indicates a decline from around 200,000 in 2005 to 170,000 visitors in 2010¹⁰. Parks Australia estimate that there were 165,000 leisure visitors to Kakadu National Park in 2011-12, falling some 6% from 175,000 visitors in 2010-11¹¹. This decline was evident in all months, but highest between June to November.

Roy Morgan research¹² indicated that Kakadu was the second most preferred destination (3.7%) within the Northern Territory to visit within the next 2 years, second only to Darwin (4.4%)

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK VISITOR PROFILE

A visitor survey conducted in the Park during October 2012 indicated that:

60% were domestic visitors – 31% from Victoria and 28% from NSW;

40% were international visitors – 34% from Germany; 16% from France; 11% from the UK; and 9% from both Canada and Switzerland;

79% of the total visitors were independent travellers (e.g. not part of a commercial tour group);

the majority of the total visitors were travelling as an adult couple (49.4%); with friends and relatives (14.6%); or as a mid life family with children (14.6%);

this was the first trip to Kakadu National Park for the majority of respondents (85% domestic and 97% international);

the majority planned to stay for 2-3 nights (54% domestic and 60% international);

¹⁰ Source Kakadu /Nitmiluk Tourism Industry Forum – Simon George Research, Tourism NT October 2011

¹¹ Tourism NT Litchfield Kakadu Arnhem Regional Tourism Profile, June 2009-June 2012

¹² Roy Morgan Research 2011. Kakadu Regional Profile Report June 2011 data.

the majority of international respondents hired vehicles (30%), domestic visitors used their own 4WD (27%) or a hired 4WD (23%), and bus or coach travel accounted for 17% of domestic and 22% of international respondents;

30% of domestic and 40% of international respondents were in the 20-29 age group; 55% of domestic respondents within the 30-59 age group, compared to 43% of international respondents;

the six most popular sites visited or planned to be visited by domestic respondents were: the Bowali Visitor Centre, Nourlangie art site, Ubirr art site, Yellow Water Wetlands, Gunlom Plunge Pool, and Mamukala Wetlands;

the six sites visited or planned to be visited by international respondents were: the Bowali Visitor Centre, Nourlangie art site, Ubirr art site, Yellow Water Wetlands, East Alligator River and South Alligator River;

the majority of domestic respondents relied on the Bowali Visitor Centre and word of mouth (e.g. from friends and relatives) for information about Kakadu; international visitors made greater use of travel books, and the Darwin City Visitor Information Centre.

The Centre for Tourism and Leisure Management at the University of South Australia conducted a visitor survey of 209 adult visitors within Kakadu National Park in October 2010. The responses relating to walking are of particular relevance:

bushwalking (including short walks to art sites) was the highest activity being planned by domestic visitors and fourth highest for international visitors (after photography, rock art viewing and wildlife viewing);

the four walks visited or planned to be visited¹³ by domestic respondents were: top of Gunlom Falls, Anbangbang Billabong Walk, Nawurlandja Lookout Walk and Yurmikmik walks; and

¹³ It should be noted that some of the sites listed in the survey to be visited include locations which are part of a promoted walk e.g. Nourlangie art site, Ubirr art site. The response listed is for locations indicated specifically as walks.

the four walks visited or planned to be visited¹⁴ by international respondents were Nawurlandja Lookout Walk, top of Gunlom Falls, Anbangbang Billabong Walk, and Mirrai Lookout Walk.

DOMESTIC SPIRITED TRAVELLER MARKET

Discussions with Tourism NT provided an insight into the current destination profile for Kakadu and Arnhem land. The competitive advantage was considered to be Kakadu National Park, offering a cultural and nature-based experience unlike anywhere else in Australia. The Indigenous culture is an integral part of the destination's appeal. The three main 'positioning pillars' were Indigenous culture, nature, and nature-based adventure. Walking tracks were key experiences for the nature and nature-based adventure, however tracks also allow visitors to access rock art sites for the Indigenous culture experiences.

Past research¹⁵ into the interstate traveller markets indicates that Spirited Travellers are a critical visitor segment for the Northern Territory tourism industry as they:

- prefer interactive travel experiences to passive holidays;
- typically seek opportunities for personal growth and transformation;
- tend to crave physical or psychological challenges;
- generally spend more than \$1600 per trip;
- usually travel without kids, or with kids aged 8+; and
- are more likely to visit the Top End.

The Spirited Traveller market is made up of five individual market segments (refer to Attachment 4). It is expected that short walks (including half day and day walks) would appeal across all five of the identified market segments whilst the strength of appeal in overnight bushwalks would vary between market segments. Feedback from tourism operators suggested that guided bushwalks do have appeal to older age groups (e.g. 45-60+) walkers with some past experience in bushwalking, particularly the longer overnight bushwalks.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Northern Territory Tourist Commission 2004. Interstate Traveller Market Segmentation

Further market research¹⁶ indicates that:

the preference to visit Kakadu by domestic visitors was 3.7% in 2011;

the highest proportion of visitors to Kakadu are from Melbourne (23.6%) and Sydney (16.1%);

a significant percentage of domestic visitors were within older age groups – 38.1% were in the 50-64 age group, and 25.7% in the 65+;

85.5% of visitors to Kakadu agreed with the statement 'I prefer to holiday where I can see a natural setting'; 92.8% agreed with 'I like to take holidays within Australia'; and 80.6% agreed with 'I'd like to holiday where I can experience the local culture'; and

destinations which respondents had greater interest in visiting were the Kimberley Region, Cape York and other tropical Queensland, Broome, Shark Bay World Heritage Area/Monkey Mia, and the Barossa Valley.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE SEEKER MARKET

Tourism Australia has undertaken extensive research to identify the ideal visitor segment for Australia - the international Experience Seeker. The Experience Seeker describes a type of international visitor from a range of socio-demographic backgrounds, but with a common attitude to travel, personal development, and lifestyle. This segment is estimated to constitute 30-50% of all potential long haul outbound travellers from key international markets.

Experience Seekers are leaders within their peer groups. They are early adopters of technology, products and services. Their value as a visitor market extends to the influence they have on the holiday purchasing behaviour of others. Travel is an important part of their lifestyle and they commonly journey beyond major cities. They have higher than average household incomes, and are generally well-educated. Experience Seekers look for active engagement with local culture and places.

¹⁶ Roy Morgan Research, 2011, Kakadu Regional Profile Report, Sydney

The Experience Seeker has a number of key 'wants' to satisfy their travel experience, including:¹⁷

authentic personal experiences;

social interactions – making friends and developing personal relationships;

meeting and interacting with the locals;

experiencing something different from their normal day-to-day life;

understanding and learning about different lifestyles and cultures;

participating in the lifestyle, rather than observing it;

challenging themselves – physically, emotionally and mentally;

visiting authentic destinations that are not necessarily part of the traditional tourist route; and

exposure to unique and personally compelling experiences.

Kakadu is a place where Experience Seekers have the potential to connect with the cultural living landscape of the Top End of Australia through the delivery of engaging, inspiring and sustainable experiences.

2.4.3 Profile of Walkers

Walkers in Kakadu National Park can be categorised into three broad types:

'day walkers' doing short walks (< 2 hours), half day walks (2-4 hours), and full-day walks – includes independent and guided walkers;

independent 'bushwalkers' doing more remote, overnight walks; and

guided 'bushwalkers' doing more remote, overnight walks.

'Day walkers' encompass all age groups, have a varying range of experience and interests, and generally expect and need good quality infrastructure and

¹⁷ *ibid*

facilities (e.g. track conditions, signage, information, and support facilities). Day walkers are likely to expect to meet other people on the track.

Some recent market research¹⁸, undertaken for the Three Capes Track project in Tasmania provided a profile of the bushwalker market segment, based on a survey of over 500 walkers, indicating that independent bushwalking market:

- is predominately under 45 years;
- is made up of more men than women;
- is employed fulltime with above average incomes;
- are employed as 'professionals';
- have experience with a wide array of different length walks;
- place a premium (relative to commercial bushwalkers) on experiencing the wilderness, a sense of escape and solitude, and a sense of challenge;
- prefer 5-6 day length walks, but with some interest expressed in 3-4 day walks; and
- respond enthusiastically to additional opportunities for stimulation and challenge when bushwalking, such as sea kayaking.

Discussions with tourism operators and the Darwin Bushwalking Club indicated that some self-reliant bushwalkers in the Top End often undertake longer trips than 5-6 days.

The market research¹⁹ also indicated that commercially guided bushwalkers tended to:

- be predominately aged over 45 years;
- a high proportion of single people (including divorced/separated or widowed);
- retired or semi-retired from professional backgrounds;

¹⁸ This included the survey research undertaken by Instinct and Reason into the bushwalking market for the Three Capes Track Tasman National Park Feasibility Study 2007 undertaken for the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment.

¹⁹ Ibid page 16

a high proportion with significantly higher than average incomes;

have experience with a broad range of tracks in Tasmania and New Zealand;

have done predominately 3-4 day guided walks in the past;

have particular interests in wildlife and nature (relative to independent walkers who seek 'wilderness' and solitude);

avoid large groups preferring the privacy of smaller groups;

prefer the creature comforts of bushwalking (e.g. small packs, good quality accommodation, and good food);

prefer 3-4 days walks but with some interest in 5-6 day walks; and

respond enthusiastically to combine 'other experiences' and modes with their bushwalking e.g. eco-boat cruises, helicopter rides, tours and spa treatments.

B U S H W A L K I N G S U R V E Y

A survey specific to the activity of bushwalking in Kakadu was prepared for this project. The survey was available online via Survey Monkey, with links on the Kakadu National Park, Bushwalking Australia, Willis Walkabouts, and other websites throughout September 2011. The survey attracted over 700 respondents around the country, with a strong representation from members of Australian bushwalking clubs. Review of the demographic information provided by respondents indicated that:

there was a slightly higher representation of men (56.1% of respondents were male) among respondents;

predominately represented by older age groups (e.g. 19.8% were aged between 40-49, 30% 50-59, and 27.4% 60-69);

a significant percentage of respondents were from NSW (35.3%), followed by Victoria (17.6%), and Queensland (14.3%);

respondents were, in general regular overnight bushwalkers, with 35.5% undertaking a bushwalk five or more times a year, followed by 25.2% bushwalking 3-4 times a year, and 24.1% 1-2 times a year; and

more than half of respondents were members of a bushwalking club in Australia.

2.4.4 Recreation Opportunity Assessment of Walking Needs

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) model²⁰ provides a useful framework for considering the varying needs and expectations of different types of walkers. It allows an assessment of the recreational opportunity setting for different types of walking experiences to be made, regarding the physical, social and managerial conditions that give value to a place. It is based on an appreciation that the needs of recreational users do vary and that quality experiences can be delivered through a range of recreational settings.

In other words, recreational users with diverse interests/motives will seek a variety of recreational experiences consistent with their preferences that best meet their expectations and needs. Land managers have the capacity to influence (e.g. manage/change/improve/restrict) the choice of recreational settings that deliver the experiences being sought by different users.

Attachment 5 provides an assessment of walkers within Kakadu using the profile identified in Section 2.4.3, but further divides the 'day walk' category into 'short walks' (less than 4 hours), and 'day walks' (more than 4 hours, but not overnight). The level of social interaction and requirement for management intervention is highest for the shorter walks, and lowest for bushwalkers undertaking overnights walks on unmarked routes. In the case of Kakadu, the opportunity assessment for bushwalkers is affected by the current management systems that require permits for 'approved bushwalking routes' that are not publically identified, promoted or marketed as a matter of policy in accordance with previous traditional owner requirements.

2.5 EXISTING TOURISM WALK PRODUCT

Kakadu National Park is one of the Top Ends iconic attractions, and features on the itineraries of many of the tour companies operating in the area. Whilst walking is incorporated into most tours to the Park, it is generally limited to very short and easy walks to access the main visitor attractions of Ubirr, Nourlangie, Jim Jim Falls and Twin Falls.

²⁰ The model was developed by the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service as a model to help provide a framework to land managers in planning, developing and managing recreational experiences. Over the years it has been adapted as a model to focus on experiences being sought by recreational users rather than recreational settings.

Tour companies currently operating in the Park include:

Adventure Tours Australia (range of tours including one day, 2 days 4WD safari, 3 days 4WD Safari in Style, 3 days 4WD Kakadu Unleashed Safari, 5 days Top End Safari and longer tours that include Kakadu as a destination on the itinerary);

World Expeditions (Explore Kakadu and Beyond – six day tour including Kakadu and Katherine that use day walks based on camps within the Park);

Darwin Day Tours (one-day, featuring Ubirr walk);

Gagudju Dreaming Adventure Tours (one-day, flexible itinerary, featuring Ubirr, Nourlangie, Jim Jim and Twin Falls walks);

AAT Kings (range of day and multi-day and multi-destination tours, featuring Ubirr, Nourlangie, Jim Jim and Twin Falls, and Maguk walks);

Aussie Adventure (two and three-day trips featuring Ubirr, Nourlangie, Jim Jim and Twin Falls, and Maguk);

Travel North (four days in the Top End, including Kakadu featuring Ubirr and Nourlangie);

NT Immersions [five days Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) Gorge to Twin Falls];

Intrepid (range multi-day and multi-destination tours including Kakadu featuring Ubirr, Nourlangie, Jim Jim and Twin Falls, and Maguk).

Commercial tours operating in the Park are in general focused around passive activities, such as boat cruises, visiting the Warradjan Cultural Centre, interpretation of art sites by Indigenous guides, and observation of traditional practices (e.g. fibre arts). Swimming in plunge pools features in multi-day, or more adventurous tours operating in the dry season (e.g. to Jim Jim and Twin Falls, or Maguk).

The exception to this is Willis's Walkabout Tours, who offer extended overnight bushwalks in the remote stone country. Willis's Walkabouts are currently the only commercial business offering this type of guided bushwalk in the Park. Willis's Walkabouts trips are aimed at fit and experienced

bushwalkers, seeking a remote experience, and range from 6-20 days in length.

NT Immersions hold a current permit for walking tours in the Park. World Expeditions are also interested in offering guided overnight bushwalks in Kakadu, as part of their operations in the broader Top End region.

Kakadu Air, Barrier Air Charter and Nitmiluk Tours offer scenic flights over Kakadu and surrounds (e.g. western Arnhem land, and Nitmiluk National Park).

2.6 SWOT ANALYSIS

The following SWOT Analysis summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with walking in Kakadu National Park.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>World Heritage Area listed for both its natural and cultural values</p> <p>Bininj/Munguuy knowledge of country- living Indigenous culture</p> <p>Bininj/Munguuy culture and tradition enhances the visitor experience</p> <p>Pristine, unpolluted environment</p> <p>Diversity of natural landscapes, including rare and endangered species</p> <p>Existing network of developed walking tracks</p> <p>Rock art is a strong visitor motivator</p> <p>Dramatic landscape values especially the Stone Country</p> <p>Size of the National Park (largest in Australia)</p> <p>Proximity to Darwin</p> <p>Management of tracks by Parks Australia</p> <p>Existing tourism industry and involvement of operators</p> <p>General support for walking expressed by traditional owners as an appropriate way to experience country</p>	<p>Wet season restrictions over roads, walking tracks and bushwalking routes e.g. crocodiles, flooding, uncertainty for tourism operators and visitors</p> <p>Safety concerns with exposure to hot dry climate (especially for those with limited experience of living/walking outside of such environs), particularly in the Dry Season</p> <p>Limited engagement with traditional owners in the original selection of 'approved bushwalking routes'</p> <p>Limitations of the current permit system for 'approved bushwalking routes' (e.g. hard to administer, and difficult for walkers to navigate through)</p> <p>Limited information, marketing and promotion of the bushwalking opportunities – limited awareness of bushwalking opportunities</p> <p>Lack of differentiation of the walking experiences on offer</p> <p>Perception for a high level of bushwalking experience</p> <p>Limited walking product associated with traditional owners</p> <p>Limited management resources to ensure compliance with permit conditions e.g. access off routes, illegal viewing/photographs of rock art sites, safety risks</p> <p>Limited management and communication systems in place to help guide tracks and trails planning, development and management</p> <p>Difficulty in developing Indigenous guide programs</p>

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Improved management systems e.g. planning and construction standards, signage, classification, information, interpretation</p> <p>Better matching of walk experiences to needs of different visitor markets</p> <p>Upgrading and promotion of higher-quality walking experiences</p> <p>Improved permit system to manage bushwalking based on engagement/agreement with traditional owners about access and management of walking on country</p> <p>Development of Bininj/Munguuy walking experiences</p> <p>Marketing of key bushwalking routes for promotion</p> <p>Improved visitor information e.g. walks brochure/booklet, KNP website, maps</p> <p>Increased returns associated with walking to enable ongoing resources to plan, manage and develop improved walking experiences (e.g. permit fee, increased fee for tourism operators)</p> <p>Alignment with Experience Seeker and Spirited Traveller core markets – key visitor markets</p>	<p>Climate change implications (e.g. restricting recreational access to some parts of the National Park, and increased unpredictability of seasons)</p> <p>Increasing competitiveness of other well-known walking destinations</p> <p>Closure of some bushwalking routes given sensitivity/significance and evidence of non-compliance with permit conditions on ‘approved bushwalking routes’</p> <p>Vulnerability to global trends affecting more remote destinations (e.g. downturn in tourism, oil price rises, discount international travel)</p> <p>Lack of sufficient resources to sustainably manage existing walking tracks and infrastructure</p> <p>Increased risk management measures being imposed resulting from any future deaths/incidents on walking tracks and trails</p> <p>Impacts on cultural values and natural environment impinging on visitor experience</p> <p>Lack of effective Kakadu brand impact to attract visitation</p> <p>Inaction in relation to the management of walking experiences</p> <p>Lack of genuine Bininj/Munguuy control</p> <p>Loss of Bininj/Munguuy knowledge about areas over time</p> <p>Increased risk management being imposed resulting from damage to significant sites</p>

SECTION **3**

UNDERSTANDING THE KEY ISSUES

The research, fieldwork and stakeholder consultation program identified a number of key issues that needed to be understood and considered in the preparation of the Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy. In a broad sense, these include:

constraints affecting accessibility to walking destinations within the Park, including weather conditions, the seasonal, operational and cultural closures of tracks and routes, and the predicted impacts of climate change;

need to understand and respect the range of views and interests of different stakeholders regarding walking in the Park, including traditional owners, park staff, commercial operators and other park users;

the limitations of the existing management system in the planning, development and management of walking experiences;

the varying quality of walking experiences, and lack of differentiation in promotional material; and

limited marketing and promotion of overnight bushwalking experiences.

These issues are discussed below.

3.1 ACCESSIBILITY CONSTRAINTS

Kakadu encompasses harsh environments, climatic extremes, and cultural traditions, all presenting challenges to accessibility, and influence where and when walking can occur. Access to 'approved bushwalking routes' on the escarpment is also subject to a permit system, which places limitations on the number of walkers permitted on a given route (refer to Section 3.3 for more detail on the existing permit system).

The majority of visitors access the Park by road – either by the Arnhem Highway from Darwin or the Kakadu Highway from Pine Creek. Access to attractions within the Park are also highly dependent on road travel, with

significant distances between some of the major destinations and varying road conditions depending on the extent of flooding or water levels.

A small number of visitors access the Park by air, landing at the Jabiru airstrip, although scenic flights from within the Park are more common.

Environmental and climatic issues affecting access include:

- seasonal restrictions and closures during the wet season due to inundation of roads, walking tracks and other infrastructure, crocodile risk, and flash flooding;

- the limited number of short-walk opportunities available in the wet season as a result of closures (e.g. flooding and crocodile risk);

- access restrictions on some of the multi-day approved bushwalking routes due to flooding, including flash flooding, and crocodile risk;

- access restrictions placed on the 'approved bushwalking routes' as a result of the permit system, and the difficulties in determining whether the current limitations are appropriate;

- the unpredictability of the onset of the wet season (e.g. scheduling difficulties for both commercial tourism operators, and for independent walkers – particularly when permits have been obtained for specific dates, and international and interstate flights booked);

- the need to close the day walks on the escarpment and outliers (e.g. Sandstone Barrk Walk, Barrk Marlam Walk, and Twin Falls Plateau Walk) due to extreme conditions (e.g. high temperature and humidity, and limited availability of fresh water²¹);

- temporary closures to roads, tracks and other infrastructure to facilitate operational and ecological works (e.g. aerial burns) required to ensure visitor safety and protection of natural and cultural values; and

²¹ The current closure strategy is date based to allow certainty for operators. Currently Barrk Marlam and Twin Falls Plateau shut 17 October. Barrk Sandstone shuts 17 Oct and then re-opens with regular rainfall. Jim Jim and Twin Falls site shuts 7 November (it is concurrent with lack of available fresh water on walks and also temperature/humidity).

the significant amount of resources (staff time and proportion of the operating budget) required to maintain roads in the Park influencing the resources that can be directed to the planning, management and maintenance of walking infrastructure.

Cultural traditions and circumstances affecting walking access include:

permanent public access restrictions to areas of the Park, which are Bininj/Munguuy living areas;

seasonal public access restrictions to specific sites or areas for Bininj/Munguuy hunting, food gathering and other cultural practices; and

temporary public access closures to specific sites or areas for funerals or other cultural practices, as determined by Bininj/Munguuy.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING LANDOWNER VIEWS

Extensive consultation has occurred with traditional landowners as outlined in Section 2.3.2 and Attachment 1. The general range of views that traditional owners representing the various clans expressed were:

that they have inherited a serious responsibility to look after country and visitors to country;

they want visitors to walk on country and have good and safe experiences;

they want visitors to be managed properly;

they want visitors to have an appreciation of, and respect for, their cultural values and practices;

they have a real concern about the safety of bushwalkers given risks associated with walking in the harsh climate, and challenging topography, and that the level of experience of some walkers might not be appropriate;

the need to upgrade some of the existing tracks and routes to improve safety and ensure good walking experiences;

traditional owners were not appropriately involved in the original selection of routes in the approved bushwalking route network;

some of the 'approved bushwalking routes' traverse areas of identified cultural significance, and consideration should be given to the options of re-routing, rationalising or closing some routes;

concern that some users are wandering off approved bushwalking routes to view, photograph, record, and in some cases damage or remove cultural objects;

a number of approved bushwalking routes are located within Sickness Country – this is of concern to traditional owners;

concern about the promotion of, and provision of information about cultural sites and routes in some guidebooks, on the internet, and by some tourism operators without the approval of traditional owners or Parks Australia;

formation of unplanned and unauthorised routes in some areas (e.g. short cuts to destinations);

the approved bushwalking route system is not flexible enough to respond to the findings from new research and investigations;

the lack of a walker induction program, to educate visitors about their responsibilities to country;

risk of over-crowding and exceeding the carrying capacity of some routes and attractions – particularly if they are actively promoted;

the need to monitor and manage the impacts of users to ensure compliance with permit conditions (e.g. requirement for an on-ground presence);

the need to determine how best to manage or monitor camping activity (e.g. establishment of formalised campsites or encourage walkers to 'fan out');

need for improved signage, information and interpretation on short and day walks;

a general view that there should not be accommodation infrastructure (e.g. huts) along approved bushwalking routes – “if walkers are in huts they can’t see the stars”;

need to minimise group sizes to maintain the remote experience, and minimise environmental impact;

a need to consider how traditional owners can benefit from allowing visitors to walk on country - currently there is little economic return generated as a result of walking opportunities in the Park;

there are opportunities for new walks to be investigated in some areas; and

reassurance that “tourism is not boss of country”.

3.3 UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

3.3.1 Park Staff

Various meetings were held with Park staff over the course of the project, including administrative, visitor services, interpretative, planning, district rangers and field staff. The following is a brief summary of the recurring topics, ideas and concerns raised by Park staff:

the current permit system is in need of redevelopment – it is resource intensive, does not have an associated fee, and confusing for both staff and applicants;

the need for an improved means of determining carrying capacity of tracks and routes;

the need to rationalise the approved network of bushwalking routes in some locations to respect cultural heritage values of traditional owners;

walker safety is a primary concern for both staff and traditional owners;

communication between head office and district staff needs to be improved in relation to bushwalking given timing for fire burns, safety and rescue responses;

the need to consider how to determine and enforce the appropriate width of bushwalking route corridor;

the need for a standardised track/route monitoring program (this was done at a district level in the past);

concern that day walkers are not well prepared for the conditions - bushwalkers are generally experienced, or go with a guide;

need to consider improved opportunities for mobility impaired access;

need to offer a diversity of short-day walking experiences to give visitors a 'taste' of the longer walks (e.g. stone country experience);

need a consistent design, construction and grading system for tracks and routes;

signage is generally poor and inconsistent, and needs improving across the Park (e.g. encompassing different types of signs, including 'no access' gazetted signs, hazard warning signs, interpretive, and directional);

an overall requirement for walking infrastructure in the Park to be upgraded (there is a preference to ensure that existing infrastructure meets current standards before developing new infrastructure);

long-term maintenance needs must be factored into the cost estimates for new and upgraded tracks;

there are risks associated with walking in the Park (e.g. feral animals, crocodiles, flash flooding, heat and lack of water, and remote, rugged country), and these need to be communicated and understood;

the proposed 'iconic' walk could cross Park boundaries, and there are opportunities for joint ventures, consistent with the broader intent of the National Landscapes program;

concern about fires being lit by campers/walkers – country is vulnerable late in the year, and there are bushfire risks (higher risk of bushfire in the stone country from August onwards);

need to better communicate that the landscape is, and has been, home to generations of people, and that visitors need to show respect and care for culture and cultural sites;

need one brochure for all short-day walks;

the possibility of increasing fines for walking off approved routes, and better investigation of such offences; and

country needs to be 'rested' (e.g. implement seasonal closure of routes) to allow the environment to regenerate from walker impacts, and recuperate in a cultural sense.

3.3.2 Park Users

B U S H W A L K E R S

The information provided below are the results of the bushwalking survey undertaken as part of the consultation for this project (also described in part in Section 2.4.3 above). The survey was the main medium of consultation with the wider bushwalking community across Australia. The survey was conducted with the involvement of Bushwalking Australia, Willis Walkabout Tours and Parks Australia.

The survey received 780 responses. More than half of the respondents who completed the survey were affiliated with a bushwalking group or club (due in part to the distribution channels of the survey).

The following is a summary of the complete results, which have been included as Attachment 6 at the back of this report:

69.4% of respondents indicated that they had done a walk in Kakadu, with 34.1% having walked in the Park between 1-5 years ago, 33.8% within the last year, and 32.1% more than 5 years ago;

the majority of respondents (72.3%) had walked in Kakadu in the dry season with 24.3% in the wet, and only 3.4% during the build up – the main reason given was the cooler, comfortable weather/climate and accessibility/convenience;

70% of respondents indicated that they had done a multi-day walk in Kakadu – this possibly reflects the strong representation of bushwalking club members;

the short walk options listed in the survey all received similar response rates; day walk more than 4 hours (31.5%), 2-4 hours (30.9%), and less than 2 hours (26.2%);

out of the six areas listed, Twin Falls Creek was the most popular walking destination among respondents (79.1%), followed by Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) Creek (75.4%), Jim Jim Creek (72.5%), Barramundi Creek (62.6%), Graveside Gorge (50.3%), Mt Brockman Massif (30.7%), Yurmikmik (27.5%), and Dinner Creek (21.7%)²²;

in answer to the question 'what makes walking in Kakadu special for you?', the majority of respondents selected 'the scenery' (98.3%), followed by 'feeling of remoteness' (93.9%), 'rich Aboriginal cultural heritage' (87.7%), 'climate' (61.5%), 'able to use campfires' (55.4%), and as a contrast to other places walked (43.6%);

55.7% of respondents indicated that they found out about walking opportunities in Kakadu through a bushwalking club, 37.9% through a commercial tour operator, and 32.2% via friends and/or family;

the satisfaction rate among respondents was very high²³; 85.5% of respondents indicated that they were 'very satisfied' with their bushwalking experience; only 0.5% (two respondents) were 'very dissatisfied';

the break up of walkers who walked with a commercial tour operator (46.3%), compared to those who walked independently (43.7%) was similar; walking independently with a bushwalking club group was also popular; and

in answer to the idea of developing a long distance trail (which related to the possibility of an 'iconic' walk) there was a response of 67% agreement, 15% unsure and 17% disagreement.

²² Those listing 'other' indicated mainly Gunlom/Waterfall Creek, East Alligator River/Merl/Ubirr and Nourlangie/Gubara.

²³ Some 131 of the 452 respondents (29%) who answered the question indicated that the bushwalk experience was above expectations and better than first anticipated

Three questions in the survey referred to the current bushwalking permit system:

39.4% of respondents indicated that they considered it 'neither easy nor difficult' to obtain a bushwalking permit; 32.1% considered it 'easy', 20.2% 'difficult', '6.4% 'very easy', and 1.8% 'very difficult';

60% of respondents indicated that they were unable to obtain a permit for areas in which they had planned to walk; and

71.2% said they were provided an explanation as to why they couldn't walk in a given area.

The respondents made a number of comments about their Kakadu bushwalking experience, the main points being:

hope things stay the same, continued access to Kakadu;

felt privileged to be able to experience Kakadu as a spiritual/cultural/natural location;

would like to do other walks i.e. overnight and multi day;

like the remoteness of the experience and hope that it will stay that way;

management issues impact i.e. lack of signage, access, permit, information on walks, fire management etc; and

allow more experienced bushwalkers the freedom to explore Kakadu more.

In response to the question 'what do you think an iconic overnight walking opportunity in Kakadu could or should be, the main responses indicated:

include diversity i.e. escarpments, aboriginal art, rivers, waterfalls possibility of swimming;

other²⁴;

no don't want to see one;

improved facilities/infrastructure –marked trail or built track/toilets/campsites/ huts i.e. Overland Track;

²⁴ Further breakdown of this response to understand better the response has yet to be undertaken.

use the existing most popular routes/main highlights of the park; and

walk with limited numbers to minimize impact on environment.

In response to the question ‘are there any additional bushwalking opportunities/facilities you would like to see in the future?’ the main responses were:

a larger range of walking opportunities for experienced walkers and other day walks , not just an iconic track;

other²⁵;

adequate toilet facilities and other infrastructure such as storage lockers/signage, interpretation, vehicle access, transportation to track heads, huts, water tanks, croc enclosures at camp sites, helicopter drop off; and

less restrictions on permits especially on wilderness walks.

DARWIN BUSHWALKING CLUB

The following is a summary of the views expressed at a meeting with members of the Darwin Bushwalking Club:

there is a minimal presence of rangers and traditional owners in the bushwalking areas (e.g. the stone country);

club members follow Park ‘rules’, and obtain permits for overnight walks;

the Club is aware that there are some people, outside of the bushwalking club, who are walking without permits or off the ‘approved bushwalking routes’;

a group of 10 people is a large group for club bushwalks;

there is a high turnover of members – younger members tend to join to find out where to walk, then go individually;

²⁵ Further breakdown of this response to understand better the response has yet to be undertaken.

there are issue with all year round walking in the Park (e.g. access in the wet season is problematic in some areas), and traditional owner permission for access to certain areas may also be seasonal, based on cultural practices (doesn't necessarily follow western calendar);

rarely see other bushwalking groups – although Graveside area is popular, and have seen other groups on this route;

Twin Falls, Jim Jim Falls, Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) and Gunlom-Barramundi are also popular bushwalking areas;

top of Jim Jim Falls is relatively accessible;

the Club undertakes ~10 walks in Kakadu annually – generally three day walks;

there are shorter and easier walks in Litchfield National Park closer to Darwin – better suited to day walks;

the perception of crocodile risk deters some walkers – visitors don't know the difference between safe and unsafe places;

maps are not adequate – new walkers are not well-informed about risks – the availability of information is sometimes inadequate;

the Barrk Walk is longer than it seems – gets very hot in the afternoon, better in the wet season;

most bushwalking routes follow water – generally camp near water;

routes don't allow for access to high campsites (e.g. up above the creek lines);

Club used to meet with Park rangers once a year to build relations; and

Club members carry EPIRB's (PLB) on remote routes – can get out to a road relatively quickly in an emergency on some routes.

3.3.3 Tourism Operators and Aboriginal Businesses

Contact was made with tourism bodies and operators interested/involved with walk products and existing Aboriginal businesses operating within Kakadu National Park.

The following is a summary of the key points raised in discussion with the tourism operators:

Kakadu needs some new walk experiences to be developed, marketed and promoted;

the importance of improving road access and crossing of rivers (e.g. flying foxes) to improve access to the walking tracks to allow improved operating times during the season;

Larapinta Trail is a good example of the opportunities that can be created for commercial tourism operators through the capacity for step-on and step-off walk products allowing access to overnight camps with some comfort (however tourism operators were aware of the difficulties in applying this model to Kakadu national Park);

the commercial walk market in Australia is relatively small;

should keep in mind the options for potential future walks outside of what just exists now;

need to keep some control over the number of operators and the competitive tender process in place;

the permit system has to be changed to allow for the marketing and promotion of bushwalk experiences;

Northern Territory is considered by many to be a more risky destination for visitors (e.g. heat, crocodiles) and this tends to increase interest in using guides;

Jim Jim Falls and Twin Falls have a high marketing profile for the Park – accessibility is very important to growing the visitor market;

Ubirr and Nourlangie are the more accessible sites for many visitors;

Kakadu is a core element in the marketing of Australia's Timeless North to the international Experience Seeker and delivery of experiences to the domestic Spirited Traveller;

should consider having the option for helicopter access to the Stone Country for walkers in the wet season when road access is not possible;

viewing of the rock art is a major interest for many visitors and it would be good to have approval from traditional owners to do this in an appropriate managed way;

should retain the role of special permits for walks;

difficulty in attracting ongoing interest in Indigenous guide training due to lifestyle, seasonal employment and others having access to other income sources – best prospects are considered to be in building a pool of skilled registered guides for the short-day walks and seasonal ranger interpretation program rather than guiding on the bushwalks;

important opportunity to consider bird watching as part of the walk experience, as well as endemic plants and animals;

importance of short-day walks for visitors who are often time-poor and have not allowed sufficient time within the Park;

need for better interpretation with walks – standards, techniques, upgrading of infrastructure, story telling;

must upgrade signage as poor or inconsistent across the Park;

better promote short-day walks with six seasons;

regulations need reviewing as cannot charge fees for camping/walking under current system²⁶;

tourism operators always looking for new product opportunities in Kakadu; and

²⁶ Park staff indicated that a proclamation can be made under the current legislation to enable fees to be implemented, and that this is not seen as a major barrier.

will need to consider the need for greater management requirements in the long term such as designated campsites, provision of toilets at these campsites, marking of routes, need for emergency call devices or satellite phones, register of walkers on tracks, fee structure.

A Kakadu/Nitmiluk tourism industry forum was held in November 2011 and identified a range of issues and possible solutions for the two parks. Some of the key points raised at the workshop of particular relevance to walks were:

marketing efforts need to investigate the back packer and day touring options; the fit with Australia's Timeless North and how to help dispersal of visitors from Darwin;

developing of walking experiences was seen as being important for product development within both parks along with a more flexible booking system, greater cultural experiences and an iconic walk activity;

the need to develop infrastructure to support access to key visitor attraction in the Park (e.g. Jim Jim and Twin Falls and the stone country) during the wet season e.g. roads, airstrips, helicopter pads;

look at better marketing of the six seasons including more wet season package tours and products;

support for more training and skills development for tourism and service providers operating in the Park, including Indigenous guides;

use off season to offer more opportunities for helping retain staff;

support for mentoring and partnerships between mainstream and Indigenous businesses;

consider increased Indigenous experiences for the domestic market;

support joint ventures and provide more opportunities for accredited operators.

The following is a summary of the points discussed with Aboriginal businesses:

bushwalks in Kakadu are not being promoted and marketed;

lots of barriers for tourism development in the Kakadu National Park Management Plan – easier to do things and get approvals outside of the Park (e.g. Arnhem land);

need to have a pool of trained Indigenous guides – people like Victor and Violet are role models for building commitment;

must continue to upgrade existing infrastructure to promote walks;

walking tours are not big \$\$ providers as compared with accommodation, campsites or other tours;

getting Indigenous guides for long trips is difficult;

wet season may offer new walk opportunities in the Park if access can be improved;

Kakadu is seen by many as a very expensive destination – commissions add to the visitor costs;

need for marketing to be more targeted and consider yield rather than numbers;

occupational health and safety issues with some walks including Ubirr and some upgrading is required;

walkers can be a good fit with traditional owners – visit and experience of country;

opportunities for partnerships between tourism industry and traditional owners needs to continue;

need for better pick-up and drop-off services for walkers;

might need to consider using local guides if traversing Sickness Country; and

visitors to Park are important also for revenue to traditional owners.

3.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING BUSHWALKING PERMIT SYSTEM

The current bushwalking permit system has played a useful role in the management of overnight bushwalking. However, it is widely recognised as having significant limitations. Issues cited include inefficiency and approval time, lack of public information about the route network, and limited promotion of bushwalking opportunities. Lack of appropriate management controls, difficulties with communication and the poor customer focus of the system were also raised.

Specific issues associated with the current permit system include:

the approved bushwalking route network is not publically available information, and therefore, it is difficult for bushwalkers to ascertain where they can walk without prior local knowledge of the area;

the rationale for some of the routes within the network is unclear, given safety and cultural concerns;

the myriad of approved bushwalking routes, and potential circuits makes it cumbersome and time consuming to assess permit applications;

communicating route information between staff and permit applicants via scanned topographic maps is not ideal;

the turn-around time for processing applications is relatively long (up to seven days or longer), and limits the capacity of visitors to arrange permits just prior to arriving or when they are in the Park;

the carrying capacity limits for bushwalking routes appears to be based on past tour group sizes, and not a rigorous assessment;

there is very little capacity to check compliance with issued permits (e.g. limited on-ground presence);

there is very little return to the Park from to offset costs (e.g. no fee for service)²⁷;

²⁷ However in April 2014 a new 5 Year licence system is being introduced based on a rate per person per day with increases based on the annual Darwin consumer price index.

there is uncertainty for tour operators regarding bookings (e.g. have to pre-book before confirmation of client numbers, or risk not being able to access a specific route);

the permit system has manual elements, and is time consuming, cumbersome and inefficient to manage and analyse;

communication of permit information to district rangers is clumsy, with safety implications in the event of an accident;

there is a lack of clarity regarding the width of a route corridor; and

there are limited controls over where walkers camp along approved routes.

There are also limited development and adoption of policies and practices that will help:

provide practical guidelines or 'tools' to ensure that walking tracks and routes are developed according to an identified need/priority (particularly considering current supply and demand), managed according to agreed/adopted environmental and social standards, and that funds are allocated on a priority basis;

establish consistency in the design, construction and classification of tracks;

address the issues associated with access and arrival facilities of existing walks (e.g. trailhead signage, parking, toilets, and any activity specific facilities);

provide comprehensive, and consistently presented track related information (e.g. detailed maps, directional signage and trail markers) for the range of walks available in the park;

relate priorities for maintenance of walking tracks with the priorities for delivery of visitor experiences;

allow adoption of a 'code of ethics' or 'code of conduct' for walkers, with particular emphasis on 'caring for country' and cultural protocols;

identify risks associated with the potential spread of weed species as a direct result of track construction activities, and ongoing use;

work towards direct revenue generation from walker fees to assist development and management of tracks and associated infrastructure, including the potential for on-ground presence on popular routes; and

collect user data on which to base management decisions, predict future demand, project benefits, etc.

3.5 QUALITY OF VISITOR EXPERIENCES

The key elements of a visitor experience are place values, level of infrastructure, availability of tours/activities/attractions/services and provision of interpretation. For many visitors, in particular the Experience Seeker, expect high quality place values, good infrastructure and access to a range of tours/activities/attractions/services. Interpretation is often seen as the 'value-adding' component of the experience, and will help differentiate the Kakadu walking experience from that of competing destinations.

Table 3.1 provides a comparison between the existing elements of the Kakadu visitor experience, what visitors are seeking, and how the visitor experience can be better aligned with what the user wants. These elements are all relevant for day walkers but less significant for independent bushwalkers who are self-reliant (place values and basic infrastructure remain important). Commercially guided walking tours often attract clients because they deliver on most of these elements.

Core Elements of a Visitor Experience	Brief summary of the current KNP visitor walk experience	What visitors want...	Basis for Desired Future Visitor Walk Experience
Interpretation	Range of interpretation services available at Bowali Visitor Centre, through Park interpretation programs (e.g. seasonal and Indigenous ranger program), tourism operators and cultural centres. Many walks lack quality information and interpretation to engage visitors, or provoke depth of understanding about country or a quality of experience that will result in the stimulation of lasting memories.	Engagement	There are clear, strong, consistent and engaging messages about the destination that are delivered through a range of different media and targeted to different customer markets. The interpretation delivery allows visitors to engage with local culture and country, to learn about the natural and cultural values in a meaningful way (i.e. not just facts and figures), and provide a contrast to the daily life experiences of visitors. In the case of Kakadu, engagement with traditional owners is/will be highly valued. Interpretation builds a desire for return visits and increased spend in local products.
Tours, activities, attractions and services	Small range of walking-based products and activities (mainly day tours) despite the diversity and strength of place values (natural and cultural).	Accessible, personalised, authentic, value and engaging experiences on offer	Development of a range of walking tours, activities and attractions that will allow more visitors to access and enjoy the destination. Tours, activities and attractions that deliver on the brand, in particular Indigenous culture, and are matched to the target markets (e.g. in relation to price point, experience offered, duration etc).
Infrastructure	Basic infrastructure is in place (roads, tracks, signs, services, accommodation, visitor facilities). However, some of this infrastructure is tired and in need of upgrade (e.g. out of date and faded signage). There is limited differentiation of walks, variations in consistency and limited management systems in place. Visitors will also be influenced by the limitations associated with other infrastructure including accommodations (e.g. limited choice and expensive).	Quality	Better opportunities for visitors to choose walk experiences that match their time, experience, interest and accessibility. This includes for a range of skill and mobility levels. Infrastructure that meets or exceeds expectations in some well-developed locations. Infrastructure that is well designed but complies with all the legislative, planning and environmental requirements.
Place	Kakadu has strong place values (both natural and cultural), which are accessible to visitors within Kakadu National Park, and within which a choice of walk opportunities are available (from wetland and floodplain, to woodland, and exposed stone country).	Connection	The distinctive place values are sustainably managed, marketed and promoted to under-pin the destination, and form the basis for the development of engaging walking experiences. This would include opportunities to understand and connect with country in a way that is consistent with the needs and values of traditional owners.

Table 3.1. Desired Visitor Experience

Some of the short-day walks in the Park offer high quality visitor experiences, but have the potential to become outstanding walking experiences. The quality of other short-day walks are affected by:

poor or inconsistent directional signage to the start of tracks;

limited information about the type of experience at the start of the walk – visitors do not know what to expect;

lack of a destination or feature of interest;

poor quality support facilities;

limited or poor interpretation; and

inconsistent or confusing track marking, including over-marking so that it detracts from the landscape values.

Generally the visitor experience is also affected by the limited pre-planning information available on walking opportunities within the Park, especially for bushwalkers planning trips ahead of arrival.

3.6 LIMITED MARKETING AND INFORMATION

Some of the issues relating to information about walking experiences in the Park include:

a general lack of consistency in the delivery and quality of existing information across the Park (e.g. information categories, detail and reliability of the information provided);

limited online information about walking experiences, to allow for pre-visit planning; and

lack of a centralised publication of walking experiences with appropriate scale mapping and directional information.

The issues in relation to marketing of walking experiences include:

the lack of differentiation in the marketing and promotion of the existing walks – the outstanding walking experiences are not elevated;

lack of a thematic interpretation strategy specifically related to walking experiences (e.g. that identifies the key visitor messages, priorities, media tools, location and presentation to visitors about the walks); and

limited bundling of nature-based tourism products including Indigenous experiences with walking.

SECTION 4

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

4.1 VISION STATEMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A draft vision statement and guiding principles has been prepared to guide the development and management of for walking experiences in Kakadu.

Table 4.1 summarises the vision statements and guiding principles set out in the Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007-2014, Shared Vision for Tourism in Kakadu National Park, Kakadu National Park Tourism Master Plan 2008-2014 and the Cultural Heritage Management Strategy in Kakadu National Park 2011. These provide key messages for achieving synergy in formulating the vision statement and guiding principles for this Strategy.

The proposed vision statement recognises the importance of respecting the views of traditional owners, and the cultural protocols for which they have responsibility to carry out, whilst seeking to deliver sustainable walking experiences to visitors. The vision statement is:

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

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, 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 ‘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.

4.2 GOALS

Four primary goals have been identified for this Strategy, based on the vision and guiding principles:

Goal 1: To enhance the walking experience.

Goal 2: To Improve planning and management systems for walking experiences.

Goal 3: To identify new walking opportunities including those that have the potential to become outstanding walking experiences.

Goal 4: To deliver potential enterprise opportunities and benefits

Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007-2014

The Vision

The vision for Kakadu National Park is that it is one of the great World Heritage areas recognised internationally as a place where:

- the cultural and natural heritage of the Park is protected and the living culture of Bininj is respected
- Bininj guide and are involved in all aspects of managing the Park
- knowledge about country and culture is passed onto younger Bininj
- tourism is culturally, environmentally and socially sustainable

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for the management of Kakadu National Park are:

- culture, country, sacred places and customary law are one, and extend beyond the boundaries of Kakadu, and need to be protected and respected
- Bininj and Balanda keep joint management strong by working together, sharing decision-making, learning from and respecting each other
- young Bininj have opportunities to learn about culture and country
- Bininj and Park management share obligations to look after the natural and cultural values of the Park
- tourism is developed at a pace and level determined by Bininj, and strong partnerships are maintained with the tourism industry
- visitors are provided with opportunities for safe, enriching and memorable experiences

Shared Vision for Tourism in Kakadu National Park

The Vision

Kakadu National Park is one of the great World Heritage Parks, recognised universally as a place with...

- a living Aboriginal culture – home to Bininj/ Mungguy
- extraordinary natural landscapes and a rich variety of plants and animals
- enriching and memorable experiences for visitors
- a strong and successful partnership between Traditional Owners, government and the tourism industry, providing world's best practice in caring for country and sustainable tourism

Guiding Principles

1. Kakadu is first and foremost a home to Bininj. They will influence, manage, encourage and participate in the development of tourism from which they gain economic and social benefits.
2. Bininj have leased their land to the Australian Government to be jointly managed as a national park to protect and manage its priceless natural and cultural heritage.
3. All parties recognise and will enhance the protection of Kakadu's diverse landscapes, internationally important wetlands and spectacular plants and animals.
4. Tourism should not be boss of country. Aboriginal people will determine how and when they will be involved in tourism.
5. The pace and level of tourism development in Kakadu will be determined by the traditional owners.
6. Respect for customary law and traditions will underpin all tourism decisions.
7. All parties will respect the need for Bininj to retain their privacy, to use their land for hunting, fishing and ceremony and to protect and hold private their sacred stories and sites.
8. Aboriginal culture and the land on which it is based will be protected as promoted through well-managed tourism practices and appropriate interpretation.
9. The travel and tourism industry will have security of tenure, profitable investment and the opportunity to provide authentic and memorable visitor experiences, whilst respecting culture and country.
10. Kakadu National Park will be globally recognised as one of the world's most significant natural and cultural World Heritage areas, offering visitors a range of enriching and memorable experiences.

Cultural Heritage Management Strategy for Kakadu National Park

The Vision

Ours is a living culture and today we have two laws- Bininj and Balanda together. We must continue teaching Bininj way because some things are almost floating away. We're running out of time.

We must look after what old people want – Keeping the culture and spirit of this country for the next generations. Now is the time to hold onto our life on country and look after the cultural heritage of Kakadu National Park.

Bininj and Parks staff together will take more 'cultural care' in the way we look after the heritage of Kakadu. This means teaching young people on country, looking after rock art (and other places that remind us of the responsibilities we have) and remembering the historic places and stories of Bininj and Balanda alike.

Cultural heritage comes before tourism. It is our living cultural heritage that makes Kakadu World Heritage, and tourism in Kakadu depends on it.

Cultural and natural heritage are equally important to Bininj. There must be equal priority in allocating resources to them. They must be looked after together. If we don't work hard now on cultural heritage there is a lot at risk: "we lose it, lose it, lose it ...it will get smaller and smaller until it is dust and the wind will blow it away."

The cultural heritage of Kakadu national Park is all our responsibility. We need all people including Park management, the Director and the Minister to support us in doing this.

Core Messages for the Walking Strategy

Important that the vision recognises:

Kakadu National Park has recognised status as a World Heritage Area. The living culture and natural values are integral to those Kakadu experiences associated with walks. There must be sustainable management involving sharing or knowledge and resources through partnerships between the Traditional owners, governments, the tourism industry and other stakeholders.

Important that the guiding principles recognise:

The country within Kakadu National Park belongs to Bininj. Whilst tourism and visitors are important they are not the driver for planning, development and management within the National Park – the protection of the natural and cultural values are paramount. Any tourism development, including walks and associated infrastructure must be well planned, developed and managed with respect to Bininj views of their country.

Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy

The Vision

Kakadu National Park is an outstanding Aboriginal living cultural landscape where a range of quality walking experiences for visitors will be sustainably managed. The walking infrastructure and experiences will be managed with understanding and respect for Bininj views and values of country, and recognition of the Park being a World Heritage Area.

Guiding Principles

Respect – understanding and respecting the views and interests of traditional Aboriginal use rights regarding visitors walking on their country is fundamental to all future planning, development, management, marketing and promotion of walks within Kakadu National Park.

Sustainability – the walks will be sustainably upgraded managed and promoted. Resources and funding must be sufficient to ensure ongoing management, repairs and maintenance can be undertaken. The walks should be an exemplar of environmental 'best practice'.

Quality Experience – the walks will be upgraded, managed and promoted, to ensure that users have the opportunity to attain a quality experience, and connect to the natural, cultural and landscape values of the area, including through such means as quality information and interpretation, and provision of quality trail infrastructure and associated facilities.

Capacity to Manage – management and on-going maintenance of the walks will respond to the realistic capacity of the land manager and the community, and be strategically prioritised. This means it will foster co-operation and partnerships between traditional landowners, government, the tourism industry and the community in order to strengthen walk experiences within Kakadu National Park.

Delivers Benefits – development of walks 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.

SECTION 5

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

This Section outlines the key strategies and recommended actions for each of the four goals.

5.1. GOAL 1. IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

This goal is about putting into place a range of systems that will improve the planning, development and management of walking experiences, including:

- develop and approve a walking policy for Kakadu National Park (Section 5.1.1);

- adopt a consistent approach to the construction and classification of walking tracks (Section 5.1.2);

- adopt a consistent approach to walking track signage (Section 5.1.3);

- improve access for visitors with mobility difficulties (Section 5.1.4);

- improve the bushwalking management system (Section 5.1.5);

- improve visitor safety and compliance systems (Section 5.1.6);

- develop and implement a monitoring and research program (Section 5.1.7);

- improve maintenance, resourcing and funding (Section 5.1.8); and

- build supportive partnerships (Section 5.1.9).

5.1.1 Strategy 1 : Develop a Walking Policy for Kakadu National Park

R A T I O N A L E

The planning, construction and management of walking experiences and infrastructure are not currently guided by a consistent Park-wide policy. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the type and quality of walking infrastructure, and ad hoc decision-making across the Park districts.

In recognition of this, a draft walking policy for the Park has been prepared (see Attachment 7). The intent of the policy is to recognise the importance of walking, define and communicate Parks Australia's position on walking (including both day and overnight bushwalks), and provide an over-arching direction for the future planning and management of walking experiences and infrastructure in the Park.

The draft walking policy incorporates:

- definitions of terminology specific to the topic of walking;

- where walking can and cannot occur;

- guidelines and procedures relating to the sustainable planning, construction, management and maintenance of walking, such as:

 - cultural heritage management as it relates to walking;

 - walking track classification system and construction standard;

 - the need to set walker numbers on routes;

 - bushwalking permit system;

 - information provision, including pre-visit, on-ground signage, interpretation, and promotion of opportunities;

 - monitoring and data collection;

 - visitor safety and emergency procedures; and

 - compliance.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Finalise and implement the draft *Kakadu National Park Walking Policy*, to provide a guide for the sustainable and consistent planning, development and management of walking experiences, track and other associated infrastructure in the Park.

5.1.2 Strategy 2 : Adopt a Consistent Approach to the Construction and Classification of Walking Tracks

RATIONALE

The lack of consistency in the design, construction and classification of walking tracks within the Park was an issue raised throughout consultation by Park staff, traditional owners and other stakeholders. Whilst Kakadu has exceptional walking experiences, many tracks are not developed to the standard expected of such a high profile national park.

The *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Classification and Signage* (AS 2156.1-2001), and the *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Infrastructure Design* (AS 2156.2-2001) are national standards for the design, construction and classification of walking tracks. The standards are aimed at track planners and managers, and are intended for operational application. Aligning Kakadu's walking tracks with the national standard has a number of benefits, including improved quality of infrastructure, safety and risk management, and achieving consistency between Kakadu internal management districts, and with other national parks and protected areas across the country.

The Australian Standards for Walking Tracks are not necessarily easily interpreted by public track users, and therefore have limited benefit when it comes to the communication of track difficulty and type of experience. In 2010, the Victorian Department of Sustainability (DSE) completed the *Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System*. This document presents a consistent approach to the interpretation and communication of the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks, and is aimed at public users. The Guide describes track categories, and technical and public descriptors for each category, including:

- symbols;
- distance;
- gradient;
- quality of track (e.g. surface);

quality of markings;
experience required;
time required to complete; and
presence of steps.

Adoption of the public descriptors outlined in the Guide will enhance public information and safety, clarify personal decision-making about whether a particular track is within the ability of an individual or not.

Table 2.1 above provides a classification of each short-day walking track in the Park, using the *Australian Standards Walking Track Grading System 2009*.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Adopt and implement the *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks*, as defined in the draft Kakadu National Park Walking Policy.

Action 2. Adopt and implement the *Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System*, to ensure a consistent, and visitor-focused means of implementing the *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks*.

Action 3. Liaise with other land management agencies to broaden and share knowledge about walking track design and construction, the interpretation of the standards, and innovative use of materials and techniques.

5.1.3 Strategy 3 : Adopt a Consistent Approach to Walking Track Signage

RATIONALE

The need to improve signage, information and interpretation on the short – day walks was raised by traditional owners and Park staff throughout the consultation process. Traditional owners, tourism industry representatives and bushwalkers were particularly concerned about the safety issues associated with poor signage (e.g. people getting lost, or not receiving the right information about risks and hazards). Stakeholders also recognised the opportunities for interpretation of the landscape – cultural and natural values, through improved information/interpretive signage. Improved regulatory signage to prevent access into areas requiring a permit, was also cited as an issue.

Signage associated with walking tracks within the Park is, in general, tired and in need of updating. There is a lack of consistency in the style and condition of signage within and between management districts, and the Kakadu brand is yet to be carried through into signage design in a coherent way. However a Kakadu Signage Project is soon to be undertaken for the Park.

The *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks – Classification and Signage* (AS 2156.1 – 2001) is a general guide for walking track signage (e.g. design, type of information and location), and trail marking. Implementation of the standard will provide a basis for the development of a consistent approach to signage.

A consistent approach to track signage for the short-day walks should include standardised:

trackhead signage at the start of all ‘must do’ short and day walks²⁸, including a brief description of the walk experience, a map showing the track network, a basic description of track distances (km’s and approximate time), type of experience, difficulty, restrictions and any warnings;

intersection/minor entrance signage, which could list the destinations/track sections accessed from main intersection;

on-track markers – consistently coloured arrows as per the Australian Standard, at appropriate intervals so as to not interfere with the natural qualities of the walking experience, but ensure that visitors are able to follow the track easily;²⁹

regulatory signage to indicate where visitors can and cannot walk without a permit, and to allow for the issuing of fines for non-compliance under the EPBC Act; and

interpretive signage (e.g. consistent colour palette and graphic design elements).

Markers and signs are not proposed for the ‘approved bushwalking routes’ as it is expected that bushwalkers will have the necessary map reading and navigational skills to follow the routes. Consultation with traditional owners and bushwalkers also indicated a desire to keep the routes unmarked or signposted to retain the sense of naturalness and remoteness in these areas. However there may be some locations where information about hazards or

²⁸ The ‘must-do’ walks are identified in Section 5.2.1 of this report – these are the short-day walks that are considered to provide outstanding visitor experiences in the Park.

²⁹ Traditional owners expressed some concern about using markers on bushwalking routes in the stone country

other management requirements (e.g. water quality, redirection of route) may necessitate temporary signs to be used.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Adopt and implement the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1-2001).

Action 2. Continue to prepare the Kakadu Signage Strategy including a signage strategy specifically for walking tracks - trackhead and information signage, on-track directional signage and markers, and regulatory and interpretive signage.

Action 3. Install consistent trackhead signage at the start of the 'must do' short-day walks as a priority.

Action 4. Implement consistent track marking to ensure visitor safety, retain a 'natural' experience, and encourage walkers to stay on approved tracks and routes.

The most appropriate colour for track markers in Kakadu should be investigated (e.g. the background colour of the sandstone in the Park can make the standard orange arrows difficult to follow in some places as the marker colour fades over time).

Action 5. Install standardised regulatory signage, as required under the *EPBC Act Regulations*, in areas where visitors require a permit to proceed beyond a certain point (e.g. where short/day walks end and approved bushwalking routes begin).

5.1.4 Strategy 4 : Improve Access for Visitors with Mobility Difficulties

RATIONALE

Traditional owners expressed a desire for improved mobility impaired access to walks and attractions in the Park. Whilst there are a number of relatively easy short walks (e.g. to Ubirr and Nourlangie rock art galleries) there are currently very limited safe and specifically designed 'easy access' opportunities, particularly suitable for visitors in wheelchairs. It was recognised by stakeholders and Park staff that retro-fitting or constructing long sections of new 'easy access' tracks is problematic in terms of dealing with cultural heritage and environmental impacts, and is resource intensive.

Upgrading sections of existing tracks at popular visitor destinations to a higher standard is a practical way of providing improved opportunities for a broader range of visitors.

'Easy access' tracks are classified as 'Class 1' under the *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks* (AS 2156.1), or 'Grade 1' under the *Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System*. Class 1 tracks are:

intended to be suitable for assisted wheelchair access, with a maximum slope of 7.14% or 4.1 degrees;

broad, hard surfaced tracks, with a minimum width of 1.2m, with minimal intrusions;

of a shorter length (not exceeding 5km); and

free of steps, unless alternate ramp access is provided.

'Easy access' opportunities in the Park may include:

promotion of the Mamukala Birdhide walk and the possibility of an all season access to the interpretative building;

levelling and widening the first section of the Ubirr track surface to the first art gallery, or to an on-track visitor node further along the track where the grade appropriate, to allow visitors in wheelchairs to view rock art;

levelling and widening the first section of the Nourlangie track, and developing an on-track visitor node before the raised boardwalk section of the existing track;

upgrading the short walk (~250m in length) to Anbangbang Billabong from the Nawurlandja Lookout carpark, offering excellent views of the billabong and Nourlangie Rock, with the potential for all season access with an elevated boardwalk (~50m in length);

upgrading the track surface (e.g. levelling, widening, and trimming vegetation where required) to Gunlom Plunge Pool;

upgrading the track surface and lookout points on the Bukbukluk Lookout Walk (~400m in length); and

investigating options for improving assisted wheelchair access along the Yellow Water boardwalk.

In addition to standardising the construction of 'easy access' tracks, associated visitor facilities should be considered. These may include disabled access toilets, and development of on-track visitor 'nodes' to act as end points or destinations for visitors who cannot proceed further along the track. On-track visitor nodes should incorporate a level hardstand area suitable for wheelchairs, signage and interpretation, and seating for visitors assisting a person in a wheelchair.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Ensure that all 'easy access' tracks/track sections are constructed to a Grade 1 standard (Class 1 under the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks).

Action 2. Increase the number of easy access/assisted wheelchair accessible tracks (Grade 1 tracks) in the Park, with a longer-term aim to have at least one in each visitor precinct. The proposed priorities are:

South Alligator District: Mamukala Birdhide Walk;

East Alligator District: Ubirr Loop and Lookout Walk;

Head Quarters District: Nourlangie Main Gallery and Nawurlandja Lookout carpark to Anbangbang Billabong;

Jim Jim District: Yellow Waters Walk; and

Mary River District: Gunlom Plunge Pool and the Bukbukluk Lookout Walk.

Action 3. In the shorter-term, improve easy access (assisted wheelchair access) to Ubirr, Nourlangie, and Yellow Waters as a priority.

Action 4. Incorporate information about easy access tracks/track sections in Park publications, on the Park website, and on trackhead signage (e.g. location, length of easy access section, experience, and other facilities).

Action 5. Consider how access to, and the experience of, popular visitor attractions can be improved for people with other impairments (e.g. vision).

5.1.5 Strategy 5 : Improve Bushwalking Management Systems

R A T I O N A L E

The need to improve the management of bushwalking in the Park was one of the major drivers for the development of this Strategy. Traditional owners, Park staff, tourism industry representatives, bushwalking clubs and other stakeholders have expressed a range of concerns and ideas, about the activity of overnight bushwalking in the Park, and its future management.

This strategy deals primarily with the development of a new bushwalking permit system, but should be considered in the context of the other management strategies under Section 5.1, in particular walker compliance and safety, monitoring and research, and walker education.

The current permit system has served its purpose, providing Parks staff with a means to manage bushwalking following the preparation of the *Management Strategy for Bushwalking in 1996*. Prior to that time, bushwalking access requests were referred to traditional owners and minimal management intervention. The current project provides the opportunity to address the short-falls of the current system, and develop the basis for a new permit system incorporating contemporary, 'best practice' recreation management principles.

It is intended that the new bushwalking permit system will apply to all approved bushwalking routes and day walks requiring a permit, and will incorporate the following components:

- improved application process;
- application of a fee for all permits issued;
- clarification of the maximum number of walkers that can be on a bushwalking route at any given time; and
- revised permit conditions aimed at improving overall management of bushwalking, including safety and compliance mechanisms.

These components of the proposed permit system are described in more detail below.

A P P L I C A T I O N P R O C E S S

The current bushwalking permit application process is inefficient, resource intensive and confusing for both applicants and staff (refer to Section 3.3.1).

A new permit application process is required for the identified Kakadu bushwalks (refer to Section 5.2.2), incorporating the following elements:

an online, instantaneous, user-based system, to streamline efficiency and minimise administration costs, that is easy and quick to navigate through;

backed up by a phone option (e.g. option to speak to a permit officer);

incorporate facility for a separate commercial operator or regular group login (e.g. with a personal password), associated with group camping areas and set group numbers;

allow for easy reporting and analysis of permit data; and

designed so as to allow Park staff to edit and update, rather than relying on external IT consultants.

Preliminary desktop research into online permit systems indicated that most apply to capacity levels of the camping sites along the routes. For example, in New Zealand, it is often necessary to check the capacity of all campsites to determine whether the bushwalking permit is possible. In Tasmania, a permit system with associated fee has been introduced on the Overland Track³⁰. The permit system applies during the peak walking season (1st November – 30th April), and manages the intensive use of this track over the summer period. Discussions with the visitor services manager for the Overland Track (Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service), indicated that:

there are a variety of 'off-the-shelf' internet-based programs available - these are generally expensive;

custom programs can be developed to meet specific requirements;

the Overland Track permit system is operated using a custom program – developed specifically for the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, which is secure, easy to navigate, and allows for efficient reporting and data analysis;

³⁰ The Overland Track is a six day walk, travelling 65 kilometres through the heart of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and won the award for best adventure holiday destination in the Australian Traveller Magazine's Readers' Choice Awards in 2011. See www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=7771 for more information about the Overland Track permit system.

the Overland Track permit system, according to staff, is not resource intensive to operate - currently requires a part time position to oversee in conjunction with other duties; and

is associated with pre-visit information and interpretation, including pod casts, iPhone applications, Leave No Trace principles, and a walker 'checklist'.

It is intended that the Kakadu bushwalks will be actively promoted whereas the other 'approved bushwalking routes' will not be promoted (similar to the current permit system). The current permit system, or an updated version of the permit system, could continue to apply to these routes. These bushwalking routes were discussed with traditional owners, and it was decided that further consultation, 'ground-truthing' and impact assessments are required to help traditional owners to determine suitability for access and appropriate management requirements.

F E E S T R U C T U R E

Whilst few multi-day bushwalking tracks in Australia have a fee-based permit system, fees and permits are common in other countries (e.g. Canada and the USA), where bushwalking or 'hiking' is popular, and there is high demand for these activities in National Parks and reserves. The Overland Track in Tasmania, and the Jatbula Trail in the Northern Territory are examples of bushwalking tracks in Australia that have permit systems and associated fees, which apply to all walkers (independent and guided).

The Overland Track fee is currently \$180 per person (\$30/day, based on an average 6 day/5 night trip). Fees are used directly to improve track and facility conditions. A marked improvement in visitor satisfaction and environmental management is evident since the implementation of the permit system. However there are walker facilities provided on the track including huts with potable water, tent platforms, toilets, and various forms of track hardening (e.g. raised timber boardwalk, and stone paving).

Whilst this permit and management system have had significant sustainability benefits, the Overland Track is operated as a self-sustaining Business Enterprise, and does not receive funding from consolidated Parks and Wildlife Tasmania revenue. The annual management costs of the Overland Track currently exceed the annual revenue generated by the permit system. The short-fall is absorbed by re-shuffling resources (e.g. incorporating a maintenance role into track ranger positions to double-up on skill bases).

In comparison, the Jatbula Trail is only \$5.00/night/person (recently increased from \$3.30/night/person). This is the standard fee for a bush camping site in Northern Territory National Parks and reserves, and would not cover even minimal track management costs. The differences in price between the two tracks, in part, reflect the differences in level and quality of facilities and services available to walkers.

Parks Australia currently does not receive direct revenue from the permits issued for 'approved bushwalking routes' within Kakadu. In this light, it is appropriate that consideration be given to applying permit fees to offset part of the management costs and potentially contribute funds towards management and maintenance of the bushwalks. Whilst a specific bushwalking fee is yet to be introduced in the Park, new commercial operator fees (e.g. per commercial tour group – including guided bushwalking groups) are set to be introduced on the 1st of April 2014.

Revenue from permit fees should be used directly for the management of overnight bushwalking routes, and associated management requirements, rather than be absorbed into consolidated Park revenue. However, the revenue generated from permits and commercial licences would not allow bushwalking management to be self-sufficient in the short-term, given the relatively low number of overnight walkers, and commercial operators. Fees are to apply to all bushwalking routes whether they are 'Kakadu bushwalks' (refer to Section 5.2.2) or other approved bushwalking routes.

In order for the Park to be able to implement a fee system for overnight bushwalking permits, a proclamation will need to be made under Part (A), Section 356 (a) of the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

SETTING WALKER NUMBERS

Determining the carrying capacity of walking tracks and routes is difficult, time consuming, and resource intensive. Carrying capacity assessments for recreational activities are based on in-depth investigations of environmental conditions, and cultural and social values. Land management agencies grapple with the need to ensure that the use of recreational infrastructure is sustainable, with limited time, funding and staff with which to determine what the level of 'sustainable use' might be.

Therefore, an adaptive approach to determining sustainable bushwalker numbers is suggested, which will facilitate trialling and monitoring against a range of sustainability indicators. The types of indicators used to monitor the impact of walkers should include:

route and camping area condition;

water quality;

evidence of vegetation disturbance;

actual walker numbers on each route; and

level of satisfaction expressed by walkers (e.g. in relation to environmental and social factors).

The setting of bushwalker limits will be most relevant to the peak bushwalking season (e.g. dry season), as the number of permit applications in the wet season is significantly lower. Bushwalker limits should be:

based on a maximum number of walkers per route (e.g. the total figure including independent walkers, commercially guided groups, and community groups) per day;

realistic whilst also being precautionary – as indicated in Section 3.3.1 the current permit system has set very low limits on routes and having limited control over booking requests, there can be problems leading to ‘booking-out’ routes; and

consistent with ‘best practice’ guidelines (e.g. the methodology used to determine walker limits on bushwalking tracks in other National Parks, safety guidelines for activities in remote areas).

In the setting of walker numbers, the popularity of short overnight bushwalks (e.g. 1-2 nights) should be considered. The ability to approve additional walker numbers at either end of popular routes (e.g. a one night bushwalk from the Twin Falls end of the Jim-Jim to Twin Falls route) will need to be built into the new permit system. Short duration overnight bushwalking options cater for less-experienced, and short-visit bushwalkers. This sub-segment of overnight bushwalking is likely to see a continued increase in participation in the Park, higher than that of extended and remote bushwalks.

Other management tools may be considered, aimed at maintaining a quality visitor experience, a sense of remoteness, and minimising visitor impacts include:

staggering group bookings (e.g. depart 2-3 days apart), so that there is only one large group in a camping area at any one time;

requiring groups to move on every day to the next campsite, as part of their permit conditions, to facilitate an enjoyable and 'remote' experience for walkers (however there may be some bushwalks where it is desirable to allow additional nights for side trips on approved bushwalking routes);

implementing directional routes (e.g. require visitors to walk one way only along a route) is another management tool that can be used to prevent walkers from constantly meeting/passing other walkers along the route;

designating camping areas/zones – particularly at the beginning and ends of popular routes, where one-two night bushwalks are common (e.g. camp zones./areas could be located a minimum of 1km from the official end of the short-day walks to minimise environmental impacts and provide a sense of 'remoteness' for overnight walkers); and

separating group camping areas away from independent walker camping areas, as occurs along popular tracks in other National Parks to minimise walker conflict and environmental impacts.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

The conditions associated with the new permit system may include, but are not limited to requiring:

individual bushwalkers and walk group leaders to complete an online induction process, which may involve a 'check box' system that must be filled out before the permit application can be processed;

commercial operators and their guides to complete a basic in-park training program with Park staff and traditional owners, to ensure that cultural and environmental sensitivities and protocols are understood;

having a practical system whereby there is responsibility for overnight walkers or walk group leader to inform Parks after completion of their bushwalk;

all overnight bushwalking parties to carry a PLB and/or satellite phone for emergency purposes – this will require the Park to purchase PLB's for hire, otherwise walkers could be asked to provide the number of their personal satellite phone; and

all walkers or walk group leader to de-register on completion of their walk (the options for doing this should seek to minimize use of Parks resources).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Further clarify and endorse the approved bushwalking route network in consultation with traditional owners and Park staff (refer to Section 5.2.2).

Action 2. Further refine and implement a new bushwalking permit system for the 'Kakadu bushwalks' and those day walks requiring a permit.

Action 3. Undertake trials and monitoring on selected bushwalking route/s to determine sustainable walker numbers. This should be done on a route-by-route basis.

Action 4. Consider developing a custom online platform for the new bushwalking permit system.

Action 5. Initiate the process required under the *EPBC Act* to allow for the introduction of fees for an overnight bushwalking permit.

Action 6. Develop and trial a bushwalking permit fee structure (e.g. over an initial two-year period), applicable to the promoted Kakadu bushwalks and other approved bushwalking routes, and to both independent and commercially guided bushwalkers.

Action 7. Implement a set of new permit conditions, to reflect the proposed management improvements recommended in this Strategy, and described in brief above.

Action 8. Update/modify the existing permit system to cater for the small number of permits likely to be requested for the other approved bushwalking routes.

5.1.6 Strategy 6 : Improve Visitor Education, Safety and Compliance Systems

R A T I O N A L E

The traditional owners of Kakadu want visitors to enjoy their visit to the Park, to learn and be inspired by the landscape, wildlife, and culture. Their responsibility for country encompasses the wellbeing of visitors, and therefore, they feel personally responsible for the safety of visitors and for any injuries or deaths that occur on country. Visitor safety is one of the most important aspects of the current project for traditional owners.

Kakadu's climatic and environmental conditions can make walking difficult; extreme exposure to high temperatures, limited water during the dry season, and rugged and remote terrain mean that walkers need to be well prepared. Safety and risk management is also an important part of Park management, and is a primary consideration in the design and maintenance of visitor infrastructure, and the delivery of experiences. A number of procedures are in place to minimise risk to visitors undertaking walks, including the provision of printed and online information, signage (information, directional and hazard warning), installation of cool-down showers on some short walks (e.g. at Twin Falls) and closure of exposed short walks in stone country when conditions become too extreme.

E D U C A T I O N P R O G R A M S

Recreational user education programs have been implemented successfully in National Parks in Australia and elsewhere in the world. Improving the knowledge base of walkers not only conveys 'right' and 'wrong' conduct, but can also engender respect and a sense of 'care for country'. Education programs generally comprise a number of different elements, including pre-visit information and instructions (online and printed material), user 'codes of conduct', on-ground signage (regulatory and interpretive), and themed activities, as occurs at popular visitor sites in Kakadu during the dry season.

A bushwalker induction program was discussed at meetings with traditional owners, as a means of communicating respect for country. For example, the induction program may include a 'checklist' of cultural, environmental and safety information that the applicant indicates and demonstrates that they have read prior to the application for an overnight bushwalking permit is processed.

A separate induction program for commercial operators is required. Some traditional owners indicated that operators and their staff should be required to

visit the Park and undertake training to learn about country, appropriate conduct in relation to cultural sites and objects, minimal impact environmental practices, and client health and safety. Importantly, the induction program for commercial operators should emphasise the extreme concern that traditional owners have for visitor safety on country. Training should include Park staff and traditional owners and/or clan members, and be a condition of the commercial tourism licence.

‘Leave No Trace’ is an international ‘code of conduct’ that aims to educate and encourage responsible outdoor recreation. The principles incorporate minimal impact walking, respect for country and Indigenous culture, respect for other visitors, and safety principles and guidelines.

The seven principles of Leave No Trace are:

1. Plan ahead and prepare;
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces;
3. Dispose of waste properly;
4. Leave what you find;
5. Minimise campfire impacts;
6. Respect wildlife; and
7. Be considerate of your hosts and other visitors.

Attachment 8 provides additional detail about each of the principles. Principles four and seven are particularly relevant to the cultural heritage values within the Park. Principle 4 refers to avoiding the disturbance to, or removal of, cultural heritage sites and objects. Principle 7 refers to the need to respect traditional owners and their country, including their relationship to, and cultural responsibilities for country.

The Leave No Trace principles are relevant to all walkers. Therefore, the walker code of conduct will need to be adapted to ensure that the particular aspects relevant to day walkers and overnight walkers is emphasised and incorporated into trackhead signage, printed material and online information. Whereas all principles would apply to overnight walkers, it would seem that principles 1,3, 4, 6 and 7 are of particular relevance to short-day walkers. Further information about Leave No Trace can be found at <http://www.Int.org.au>. It is important to tell the right story for country, and therefore, the walker code of conduct will need to be developed in consultation with traditional owners.

COMPLIANCE

Cultural responsibility for country is also at the heart of the need for improved compliance mechanisms for walking. Traditional owners expressed concern about some bushwalkers visiting art, burial and other sacred sites, which are not considered culturally appropriate to be viewed by Balanda, or in some cases, even by Bininj/Munguuy.

Whilst the majority of bushwalkers exercise respect for country and the cultural beliefs and values of traditional owners, culturally significant objects have been damaged or removed from the Park by visitors in the past. This is unacceptable behaviour, and an offence under the *EPBC Act*. In addition to physical damage and removal of cultural material, the ease by which the location of sites can be accurately recorded, photographed, and disseminated via the internet, is also cause for extreme traditional owner concern. Given the relatively low number of overnight walkers and the vast landscape, there is a certain 'freedom' associated with walking in the stone country.

Commercial operators have a more tangible incentive to follow appropriate protocols, given the possibility of incurring a fine, or contravening the conditions of their operating permit.

Compliance, as it relates to the culturally appropriate conduct of bushwalkers, is one of the most difficult aspects associated with the management of walking. Kakadu National Park is vast, and Park staff and traditional owners cannot be stationed on every track or route to ensure that walkers are in permitted areas, and showing respect for cultural sites and artefacts.

Compliance and enforcement within the Park is subject to the provisions of the *EPBC Act*, the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*, and other relevant policies and legislation. The park currently operates under the *Parks Australia Compliance and Enforcement Manual*, which sets out broad guidelines and procedures for managing compliance in Commonwealth reserves.

There are a range of mechanisms used in national parks around the country, and elsewhere in the world to address compliance, including track ranger programs, self-registration and de-registration, issuing of fines for non-compliance, and various educational tools to increase public awareness and appreciation of the reasons behind protected area rules and regulations.

In the past, district staff inspected bushwalking routes on foot. Whilst these inspections occurred infrequently, they did provide a Park presence in the stone country over the peak bushwalking season, allowed staff a means to informally monitor impacts, and also introduce young traditional owners to the

escarpment country. In the short-term, track ranger duties could be re-introduced as a duty of district staff and/or other Park staff regularly working up on the stone country. In the longer-term, the introduction of bushwalking permit fees may facilitate a dedicated part-time track ranger position. This is considered to be an opportunity for capacity building with Traditional owners.

Self-registration is a simple system used in other national parks in Australia, where a log book is kept at trackheads and filled in by walkers (one contact person per group) prior to departing on their walk, including name, contact number, vehicle registration number, permit number, date and time of departure and expected return time. It does, however, require Parks staff to check the log book regularly. This simple system is not considered to be suitable for overnight bushwalking routes in Kakadu, given the significant distances to the start of some of the overnight routes, and the infrequency with which some areas are visited by Park staff. However it may be beneficial at trackheads for day walks in areas that staff visit on a regular basis. The Jatbula Trail now requires a \$200 deposit to be made, which is repayable on de-registering (walkers provide a credit card blank and the payment is only taken if walkers do not deregister).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. 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 Indigenous culture, sites and objects.

Action 2. Develop and trial an online bushwalker induction program associated with the permit application.

Action 3. Develop and implement a commercial operator and guide induction program, including mechanisms for recovery costs.

Action 4. Incorporate educational messages into online, printed material, and signage - in particular the walker code of conduct.

Action 5. Continue the seasonal ranger program, with an aim to increase Indigenous guided activities, and expand to ‘must do’ walks not currently included in the program.

Action 6. Revise the bushwalking permit system and associated conditions (see Section 5.1.5), including the following mechanisms relating to improved visitor safety and compliance:

a bushwalker 'information package', including detailed 'approved bushwalking route' map, safety information, and the walker code of conduct;

an online induction process for independent walkers, and an in-park training program for commercial tour operators and guides; and

requiring walkers (or the group leader) to carry a copy of their permit, to enable Park staff to quickly determine that they are permitted walkers, and are in the area the permit was issued for.

Action 7. Trial a walker self-registration system at trackheads for extended day walks (e.g. the Barrk Walk).

Action 8. Require all overnight bushwalking parties to carry a personal locator beacon (PLB) and/or satellite phone, as a condition of the bushwalking permit.

The number associated with the satellite phone, or the PLB identifier number could be required as part of the bushwalker checklist to be completed as part of the permit application process.

Action 9. Investigate options for a new de-registration process associated with the bushwalking permit, that meets the concerns of traditional owners, but is not unrealistic in terms of the resources required to administer it.

Action 10. Establish a mechanism (e.g. Park policy or procedure) to provide for the closure of tracks and routes for safety, cultural or management reasons. Extreme heat or other climatic condition (e.g. associated with seasonal conditions), track/route maintenance works, or cultural gatherings, are the types of reasons that the tracks or routes may be closed for.

Action 11. Trial a track ranger program during the peak bushwalking season on popular bushwalking routes.

Action 12. Continue to implement the compliance and enforcement actions set out in Section 8.2 of the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan* and the *Parks Australia Compliance and Enforcement Manual*, including ensuring that Park staff involved in walking related compliance and enforcement (e.g. track

rangers) are appointed rangers or wardens under the *EPBC Act*, enabling them to exercise the powers and functions of this act (e.g. issue warnings and fines), and that staff are properly trained in this area.

5.1.7 Strategy 7 : Develop and Implement a Monitoring and Research Program

R A T I O N A L E

Research and monitoring are important elements of park management, and are an essential means of gathering and making sense of information about specific activities, such as walking, which in turn can be used to ensure that use and development of the Park is sustainable, and that the Park remains relevant and 'attractive' to visitors in the longer-term.

Monitoring and research has been undertaken in the Park since its inception, including:

visitation data (e.g. visitor numbers) through surveys, road counters and analysis of park pass data;

research into specific species, habitats, and broader environmental phenomena (e.g. climate change);

cultural heritage research, including archaeology, recording art and other cultural sites, and working with traditional owners to understand culture (language, traditions, and other cultural practices); and

monitoring changes in environmental and cultural conditions, particularly associated with population visitor attractions.

Regular track monitoring enables the establishment of a solid information base, the establishment of environmental benchmarks, and a basis for long-term sustainable management.

Section 8.6 of the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan* addresses research and monitoring. Policy 8.6.11 states that "Park management actions should, as far as practicable, be monitored regularly, and in relation to specific projects to assess effectiveness"³¹. This policy applies to the activity of walking, and the monitoring of specific actions recommended in this Strategy,

³¹ Kakadu Board of Management (2007) *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*, Director of National Parks, page 145.

such as the impact of upgrading the 'must do' walks, and promoting a number of the proposed Kakadu bushwalks³².

Scheduling of on-ground assessments should be formalised in district operational plans and/or risk management plans, and may include photo point monitoring, measuring changes in track condition (e.g. location and extent of erosion and soil displacement), condition of camping sites and vegetation, and helicopter fly-overs. A standardised approach to on-ground assessments will minimise time and resourcing required, and streamline this process.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Review existing visitation monitoring mechanisms (e.g. visitor surveys, location of traffic counters, and analysis of commercial permit information), to ensure that standardised information about walking is captured.

Action 2. Undertake regular (e.g. bi-annual) on-ground environmental and cultural heritage assessments of all short-day walks, and Kakadu bushwalks.

Action 3. Review methodology for capturing both qualitative and quantitative walking data, including:

installing automatic track counters on popular short-day walks;

developing a standardised survey to capture walker profile data and gather feedback about short-day walks (e.g. the survey may be available online, and/or distributed face-to-face by Parks staff);

developing a standardised bushwalking survey, which could be distributed online via email using the permit system database; and

working with operators who regularly conduct walks in the Park to collect data, particularly in areas where Park staff visitation is infrequent.

Action 4. Continue to work in partnership with Tourism NT and other tourism organisations, to share and obtain information relating to visitor numbers and market trends, with a particular focus on walking.

³² These are discussed in Section 5.2.2 of the report.

5.1.8 Strategy 8 : Maintenance, Resources and Funding

R A T I O N A L E

Regular track maintenance is essential for visitor safety and enjoyment, to minimise environmental and cultural impacts, and to prolong the life of assets and infrastructure. Maintenance can result in significant costs over the lifetime of a track, which is often not factored into development and upgrade proposals. Poorly designed and constructed tracks can become a burden in the long-term. It is more efficient to construct high quality track infrastructure for high-use short walks, using robust materials and techniques at a higher initial cost, than it is to have to continually repair and upgrade cheaply constructed and poorly designed infrastructure.

Maintenance programs for walking tracks incorporates tasks that need to be completed frequently, and tasks that can be completed on an annual or seasonal basis. Maintenance and monitoring programs should be integrated, as monitoring will inform the prioritisation of maintenance tasks. The two can be implemented concurrently.

A monthly program of track maintenance for short and day walks may include:

- walking the length of the track to clear fallen branches and other debris;

- ensuring that track surfaces are in good condition (e.g. appropriate for the designated grade under the *Australian Standard for Walking Tracks*);

- checking that signage and track markers are in place and legible; and

- a general risk/hazard assessment and what actions should be taken to mitigate any risk/hazard.

An annual or seasonal program of track maintenance for short and day walks may include; repairing damage to track surfaces and associated infrastructure following the wet season, and undertaking other significant tasks that require closure of the track. Clearing of debris from drainage infrastructure is also an important pre-wet season task, which could limit water damage to tracks. Maintenance requirements of the bushwalking routes will be much lower, given the general lack of infrastructure and facilities, particularly in the shorter-term.

There are opportunities to rationalise track maintenance and monitoring resource requirements, by combining basic maintenance and monitoring tasks with other seasonal ranger responsibilities. Seasonal rangers are generally based in locations where there are 'must do' walks.

Development, maintenance, and promotion of walking tracks is just one of a number of assets for which Parks Australia have responsibility for. The amount of funding available for track infrastructure in the annual budget, and the staff time that can be dedicated to management, is limited. Maintenance of road infrastructure, environmental management programs (e.g. ecological burning, feral animal and weed control) and major visitor attractions often has to take higher precedence, however:

- recreational walking has the highest participation rate of all recreational and sporting activities within the Australian community, with bushwalking also ranked highly;

- walking experiences are critical to the activity base of the Park – they are undertaken by the majority of visitors and provide a major opportunity for visitors to engage with, and understand the Park's natural and cultural values;

- the management of walking experiences centres around the management of visitor impacts – the lack of effective management can threaten the Park's inherent natural and cultural values;

- walking experiences under-pin most of the tour product developed by the tourism industry in the Park;

- walking experiences facilitate overnight stays and increased spend within the Park;

- the marketing and promotion of the proposed Kakadu bushwalks will allow for some capacity to introduce user fees, and off-set some of the management and maintenance costs associated with walking impacts and infrastructure;

- the opportunity exists to better position Kakadu as a leading walking destination; and

there is opportunity to create new tourism investment and jobs in walking products in the future, that will help sustain social, environmental (e.g. better management systems) and economic benefits to the community and tourism industry.

Funding for infrastructure and works within National Parks comes from direct funding by the government, user fees and donations. An indication of possible partnership opportunities to access potential donations is provided below.

Partnering with non-governmental organisations (e.g. Conservation Volunteers, Green Corps) is an alternative means of obtaining assistance with on-ground works on a project basis, and potentially access to external funding. For instance, Conservation Volunteers recruits volunteers to support conservation projects and enters into business – community partnerships that provide funding or in-kind assistance to support projects.

In the USA, the National Park Foundation working with partners, funds grants and programs that meet priorities and critical needs in the areas of youth, community outreach, conservation and professional engagement within National Parks. This includes an Active Trails Grants Program that was designed to promote healthy lifestyles while simultaneously protecting and enhancing national parks' trail resources.

A Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife is established in Australia with the vision to be Australia's foremost philanthropic partner for national parks. It is involved with purchasing land for conservation, funding threatened species recovery actions and involving the community in the conservation of Australia's natural and cultural heritage. This has included small grants for improvements to walking tracks, viewing platforms, interpretive signage and disabled access in national parks.

There are also grant programs that may be available to National Park projects through collaboration with non-governmental partners, including the following programs.

Program	Summary
Indigenous Heritage Program (IHP)	Is a competitive annual grants program, which provides grant funding to support the identification, conservation, and promotion of heritage places important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The projects have provided employment and other skill development opportunities that contribute to greater economic participation through training in site survey and recording techniques, database management and fencing. Funding is available to incorporated organisations (maximum of \$100,000) with smaller grants to individual applicants (maximum of \$5000). Applications for larger amounts may also be considered along with triennial funding (maximum of \$250,000).
Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations (GVESHO)	Is a program that helps eligible community based organisations to value, conserve and protect Australia's natural environment and historic heritage and to promote sustainability by assisting with their administrative costs.
Aboriginal Benefits Account (ABA)	This program provides grants for projects, which help improve the lives of Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory. Funds can be used to support initiatives that promote economic development, small business, land and sea management, community enhancement, education and leadership.

The establishment of a community-based group to assist with the maintenance and management of walking infrastructure (e.g. based on the successful 'Friends of' model commonly used in other National Parks across the country) is a formalised way in which local volunteers can be involved in Park management. However this would need to be done with the support and co-operation of traditional landowners.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Implement the track monitoring recommendations described in Section 8 above, and in the draft *Kakadu National Park Walking Policy*, and integrate with district work plans and/or the Park operational plan to provide a baseline for maintenance requirements.

Action 2. Implement a monthly program of track maintenance tasks for the 'must do' short-day walks, and integrate into district operational plans.

Action 3. Consider opportunities to rationalise monthly track maintenance and monitoring resource requirements, by combining maintenance and monitoring tasks with seasonal ranger responsibilities.

Action 4. Implement an annual maintenance and significant works program for short and day walks (integrate into operational and district plans), and Kakadu bushwalks (integrate into operational and relevant district plans).

Action 5. Upgrades to existing short-day walks, and construction of new tracks, should be completed to a high standard, including sound design (e.g. alignment and drainage infrastructure appropriate to local environmental conditions), and use of robust materials and construction techniques, to minimise long-term maintenance requirements.

Action 6. Ensure that track planning, development and maintenance tasks are incorporated into the annual Park budget; on a special-project basis (e.g. new tracks or significant upgrades), and/or accounted for in annual or monthly work plans.

Action 7. Investigate opportunities to increase revenue from walking experiences, including walking-based tourism products, to be used directly to maintain tracks and associated infrastructure, and fund management systems (e.g. track ranger program).

Action 8. Work with external organisations to access potential funding, donations and support for projects that will improve walking experiences and management within the Park.

5.1.9 Strategy 9 : Build Supportive Partnerships

R A T I O N A L E

Kakadu's joint management arrangement is an exemplar of a cross-cultural partnership between a government agency and the Aboriginal traditional owners of a unique part of Australia. Joint management pervades all areas of land and visitor management within the Park, and whilst a complex system, aims to ensure that the Park that country and culture continues to be nurtured.

The Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy Steering Committee, or a working group with a specific focus on the development and management of walking opportunities in the Park could be established, as a sub-group to the Board of Management. This will ensure that the joint management philosophy is applied to the development and management of walking experiences.

Land manager and community organisation partnerships are a common means of 'spreading the burden' of protected area management. Most national parks in Australia have 'Friends of' groups, who contribute significant amounts of volunteer labour, assisting staff to complete tasks that may otherwise be beyond the capacity of the land manager within the constraints of annual budgets and staff time.

There is an opportunity for the establishment of a volunteer-based organisation, such as a 'friends group' for Kakadu National Park, as a means to engender community support, and create opportunities for volunteers to assist Park staff in the on-ground maintenance and management of walking tracks. In the case of Kakadu, a 'Friends of' group should be driven by traditional owners and other Bininj/Munguuy, and provide traditional owners and others in the community a chance to work together to achieve common outcomes. A community-based group affiliated with the Park would also provide another means of accessing external funding not available to governmental organisations.

Formalisation and supervision of community groups is important ensure that health and safety requirements are met (e.g. members are covered by insurance), and that tasks are carried out correctly and to the standard required by the land manager. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is often used to set out the responsibilities of each partner.

Community-based organisations also provide a means of accessing funding for Park projects that is otherwise unavailable to government agencies.

Other opportunities for partnerships include:

- strengthening relationships with other Parks and land management agencies in Australia and overseas, to share knowledge and skills relating to the planning, design, construction, management and promotion of walking infrastructure and experiences; and

- continuing to work with tourism organisations, including Tourism NT, local operators, and Aboriginal businesses, to better understand the visitor market.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. 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.

Action 2. Consider the role of the Steering Committee or the establishment of a working group to focus specifically on the development and management of walking opportunities in the Park, and the implementation of the *Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy*.

Action 3. Establish a 'Friends of Kakadu Group', to assist staff with the on-ground maintenance of tracks and routes, and provide a means of accessing external funding for track-related projects.

Action 4. Strengthen relationships with the Darwin Bushwalking Club and tourism operators to gain assistance with environmental monitoring of bushwalking routes and to act as 'eyes and ears' in the more remote parts of the Park.

Action 5. Strengthen relationships with other Parks and land management agencies to share knowledge and skills relating to walking infrastructure and experiences.

It is integral that Bininj/Munguuy are included in the sharing of knowledge and skill development regarding the development and management of walking experiences in the Park.

5.2 GOAL 2 : ENHANCE WALKING EXPERIENCES

This goal is about providing engaging walking experiences that meet the expectations of visitors, and are consistent with the standards for World Heritage Areas, including:

upgrading the 'must do' walking experiences;

promoting the 'Kakadu bushwalks';

improving visitor information;

upgrading roads to enhance access to walking opportunities;

preparing a thematic interpretation plan for the Park; and

developing a marketing strategy for Kakadu walking experiences.

5.2.1 Strategy 1 : Upgrade the ‘Must Do’ Walking Experiences

R A T I O N A L E

The majority of visitors to Kakadu undertake short-day walks, rather than overnight bushwalks. Short-day walks provide opportunities for visitors to engage with the natural and cultural values of the Park. Many visitors have time and mobility constraints; it is important that these walks are easy to access, are of a good quality, offer diverse choices to fit time restrictions, create memorable experiences, and are safe to use.

Kakadu’s short-day walks are scattered over a wide geographical area, with considerable travel distances between them. The majority of visitors are only in the Park long enough to experience a small number of walks and attractions, and must make decisions based on the available information.

Marketing of walking experiences in the Park is currently a ‘shopping list’ approach. Walking experiences are not differentiated – on either quality or type of experience, leaving visitors with limited capacity to select walks that best meet their interests, level of skill and fitness, and length of stay.

Differentiation of short-day walking experiences has proven beneficial in other parts of Australia. For example, a review of the development of the 60 Great Short Walks program in Tasmania³³ indicated that:

the 60 Great Short Walks product has been integral in ‘raising the bar’ of short walking experiences in Tasmania, and encouraging visitors and local residents to participate in recreational walking;

the number of interstate and international visitors undertaking short walks has doubled since the program was introduced;

there is a high level of visitor satisfaction associated with the program (e.g. track construction, general maintenance, information provision and innovative interpretation);

³³ Inspiring Place Pty Ltd prepared the *Tasmanian Walking Track Strategy and Marketing Plan 1997* in partnership with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, Tourism Tasmania, Forestry Tasmania and Sport and Recreation Tasmania. The Strategy was instrumental in the implementation, promotion and marketing of the 60 Great Short Walks, the 8 Great Bushwalks, and the Great Island Walks, and in setting out criteria to ensure that walks and trails were of a high standard, and matched the capacity and demand placed on them. The Program \$2.8m from the Commonwealth Government under the National Heritage Funding Program to implement upgrading of the walks, signs, interpretation and information.

local economies have benefited as a result of visitors spending locally on equipment that they require for their activity, food, transport and to a lesser degree, accommodation; and

the high quality walking experiences have provided opportunities for tour operators, hire companies and transport businesses to expand services, employ staff, with further economic flow-on effects.

Elevating a selection of short-full day walks that offer diverse and interesting experiences, that showcase Kakadu's varied landscapes and cultural heritage will boost the Parks profile and allow visitors to make informed decisions.

A selection of the short-day walks have been chosen using the following criteria. The 'must do' walks:

should be consistent with the vision and guiding principles of this Strategy;

must be accessible for visitors (e.g. within proximity to visitor attractions, hubs, and main transport routes);

have a profile, and existing high level of use;

must have unique qualities that make it an outstanding walking experience (e.g. landscape setting and cultural value); and

must have the capacity to sustainably cater for higher levels of use.

The 'must do' walks are listed below.

Short Walk (< 2 hours)	Half Day Walk (2-4 hours)	Day Walk
Mamukala Bird Hide Ubirr Loop and Ubirr Lookout Bardedjilidji Walk Nourlangie Main Gallery and Nourlangie Shelter Loops Nawurlandja Lookout Anbangbang Billabong Walk (short link from Nawurlandja Lookout) Yellow Water Walk (boardwalk section) Twin Falls Walk Jim Jim Falls Walk Gunlom Plunge Pool and Gunlom Lookout Maguk Plunge Pool	Gubara Pools Barrk Marlam Walk Twin Falls Plateau Motor Car Falls	Barrk Walk

The 'must do' short-day walking experiences should have priority for upgrading, which may include:

- improved directional and information signage;

- formalised car parking, including safe pedestrian connections to trackheads, and any visitor facilities;

- installation of trackhead signage to inform visitors of the walk experience on offer and essential information about the track;

- upgrading of visitor facilities such as toilets, shelter, seating, and outside showers where required;

- upgrading track surfaces to ensure safe use (e.g. steps, handrails, bridges etc), compliance with the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks, and facilitate ongoing maintenance (e.g. drainage, vegetation management);

- appropriate on-track marking;

- track realignments to facilitate circuits, and better visitor flow and reduced congestion in busy areas;

- enhanced interpretation, using a range of communication techniques appropriate to the natural and cultural setting; and

upgrading viewing and end points of tracks (e.g. establish a formalised visitor destination).

A full inventory of the short-day walks in the Park is provided in Attachment 6, including recommended actions for improving the visitor experience of each track.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Differentiate the short-day walking experiences in the Park, using the criteria and subsequent selection of ‘must do’ short-day walks provided.

Action 2. Upgrade the ‘must do’ short-day walks as a priority.

5.2.2 Strategy 2 Elevate Kakadu’s Best Bushwalks

“We like to work on it slow, to show respect to country...we don’t want to rush, we take time, we talk”

(Kakadu traditional owner talking about the proposed Kakadu Bushwalks).

RATIONALE

Section 3.3.1 highlights the issues with the current overnight bushwalking permit system. Currently there is very limited public information available about the overnight bushwalking opportunities (other than by commercial operators) to assist visitors to plan bushwalking trips in Kakadu. Bushwalkers with personal knowledge about the Park have a general insight into the approved bushwalking route network; other visitors find applying for a permit a difficult process. The current policy of not promoting bushwalking routes was a deliberate decision made by the Board of Management and its traditional owners, in an effort to protect country in the absence of other planning systems, and to better manage access.

This section is about the potential selection and elevation of Kakadu’s best bushwalks. It responds to various findings from the research and consultation, as well as to the project brief, including: the lack of public information about bushwalking opportunities, the potential to elevate the Parks profile through the provision of quality bushwalking opportunities, the need to prioritise resource input into bushwalking to ensure sustainable management, and a requirement by traditional owners and Park staff that safety and cultural concerns are better managed.

“Kakadu bushwalks’ are defined as those bushwalking experiences that offer the best overnight bushwalking experiences within the Park, but in a way that is sustainable – culturally, environmentally, and economically. It is intended

that they will offer walkers a 'taste' of the stone country and its long cultural history, and an experience of the remote and beautiful landscapes that make Kakadu unique in the world.

Table 5.1 provides an analysis of the bushwalking routes/areas on which permit applications were approved over the five year period 2008-2012, and Table 5.2 the approvals for 2012 only.

Bushwalking General Areas	Number of Permits	Number of Walkers
Headquarters District		
Mt Brockman	157	707
Jim Jim District		
Bilkbilkmi (Graveside Gorge)	58	352
Jim Jim	83	525
Maguk	94	559
Twin Falls	56	370
Mary River District*		
Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin)	97	656
Dinner Creek	40	240
Gunlom	94	679
Yurmikmik	62	252
Total	741	4340

*these figures exclude overnight camping at Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) and Ferny Gully

Table 5.1. Analysis of Approved Permit Applications, 2008-2012.

Bushwalking General Areas	Number of Permits	Number of Walkers
Headquarters District		
Mt Brockman	53	227
Jim Jim District		
Bilkbilkmi (Graveside Gorge)	22	98
Jim Jim	19	92
Maguk	29	199
Twin Falls	14	103
Mary River District*		
Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin)	8	91
Dinner Creek	7	36
Gunlom	23	177
Yurmikmik	21	91
Total	196	1114

*these figures exclude overnight camping at Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) and Ferny Gully

Table 5.2 Approval of Permit Applications 2012

The four most popular areas for bushwalking, in order of the most permits issued and the number of walkers over the five-year period (2008-2012), were:

Mt Brockman;

Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) Gorge area;

Maguk; and

Gunlom.

The permit data for 2012 indicated that whilst permits and walkers to Mt Brockman, Maguk and Gunlom remained higher than other areas, the level for Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) was similar to Twin Falls, Bilkbilkmi, Jim Jim Falls and Yurmikmik. Analysis of the permit data indicated that the average time approved for the permits (i.e. bushwalking groups/parties) was 4.6 days.

Several rounds of community meetings were conducted with traditional owners and other Bininj/Munguuy in the Park³⁴. The first meeting provided the opportunity for traditional owners to talk about all walks/tracks and routes on their country, the issues associated with walking, and the opportunities to improve management and visitor experiences. The notes from the first meeting along with initial concepts were then presented back to traditional owners in the second round of meetings, to test some of the intended strategies, and to invite further discussion and clarification. A third round of meetings was arranged with some traditional owners following the preparation of the draft Walking Strategy.

A map of the existing network of approved bushwalking routes was presented at meetings with traditional owners. The routes that had attracted higher levels of permit applications were highlighted for discussion. In general, discussions indicated a willingness by traditional owners to allow visitors to continue walking on country on approved bushwalking routes as long as a range of issues could be effectively managed³⁵. These issues included:

- the safety of walkers;
- achieving minimal impacts on country;
- ensuring respect for and protection of cultural sites and protocols (e.g. following Sickness Protocol);
- ensuring routes are located away from sacred sites, burial sites, and other important cultural areas;
- considering rationalisation of the existing approved bushwalking routes where there are safety concerns, unacceptable environmental and/or cultural impacts, duplication, or minimal evidence of past use;
- the need to ensure that walkers are compliant in keeping to 'approved bushwalking routes' (e.g. on the appropriate alignment and within a reasonable corridor width);
- the importance of traditional owners and clan members to be involved in 'ground-truthing' of the routes;
- the implementation of a program of ongoing monitoring, research and evaluation of the selected routes; and

³⁴ Community forums or meetings were organised with the assistance of the Northern Land Council Park Officer and were held at South Alligator, East Alligator, Jabiru, Cooida and Mary River/Pine Creek.

³⁵ The exception was in the Mt Brockman area where traditional owners indicated strong concern with existing access for bushwalking.

a general desire to not see roofed structures and other infrastructure along routes.

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. Overnight bushwalking permits will not be issued for this area in the near future, while cultural heritage assessments are taking place.

Whilst the consultation process has provided some clarity about the existing network of approved bushwalking routes, and the potential for some of these routes to become 'Kakadu bushwalks', further investigation and assessment is required. 'Ground-truthing' will need to be undertaken, including cultural and environmental assessment, and consideration of existing route alignments prior to promotion and marketing. This will require a significant commitment of time and resources by both traditional owners and Parks.

The outcomes of this assessment process will determine whether or not it is appropriate to proceed to promote the proposed routes, if and where realignments are required, and the width of route corridors. The assessment process should:

follow the impact assessment process outlined in the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*;

use the Rapid Site Assessment process to record all sites along the proposed Kakadu Bushwalk route as an initial priority;

involve the Sacred Site Assessment Team; and

seek cultural knowledge further afield (e.g. Bininj/Munguuy with Mother's country ties, traditional owners and other clan members not contacted as of yet).

Funding was allocated under the consultation program for this project to allow for an initial heli-based assessment of one of the more popular bushwalking routes in the stone country. The Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls route was chosen by Parks with the support of traditional owners for country for this purpose. The funding allowed traditional owners/clan members, along with Parks staff to access the general route area³⁶ by helicopter. The purpose of the initial assessments was to identify any obvious issues (e.g. significant cultural sites) with the existing alignment, and identify opportunities to mitigate any impacts (e.g. through realignments), and provide an initial feasibility assessment of the route.

There are a number of routes that have the characteristics (e.g. strong natural attractions and scenic values, accessibility) that elevate them above other routes in the Park. Consultations with traditional owners and Parks led to support for the following routes to be considered for trial investigations as potential 'Kakadu bushwalks':

Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls (4-5 day route); and

a walk within the Mary River District that may involve linking Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) to Gunlom.

The potential for Gunlom - Maguk – Bilkbilkmi to be a Kakadu bushwalk requires consultation with traditional owners of country.

The Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls route was considered to be a particularly good option, due to the:

strong attractions (Jim Jim and Twin Falls) at either end of the route – being among the most visited and striking destinations in the Park;

preliminary support from traditional owners for the commencement of a detailed assessment process, and potentially followed by trialling as a 'Kakadu bushwalk';

support from the District Ranger for the route to be the first trial of the 'Kakadu bushwalk' concept and assessment process; and

existing popularity of the route.

³⁶ It should be noted that the alignments of individual routes that make up the approved network of bushwalking routes have not been accurately mapped (e.g. are not spatially correct). The existing mapping available as part of the Park GIS system has been transcribed from hard copies of topographic maps with the routes marked on originally by hand. It is intended that all routes within the network will be accurately mapped by GPS in the future.

There were reservations expressed by some experienced bushwalkers about this route being elevated as a 'Kakadu bushwalk', due to the rough terrain and difficult conditions characteristic of the route. This concern will be addressed as part of the 'ground truthing' process taking place and may result in the realignment of some sections of routes through particularly difficult terrain and/or sensitive country. The proposed ground-truthing/assessment process and subsequent trial will also allow environmental and cultural impact analysis and monitoring over a period of time, for compliance mechanisms to be tested, and provide a means to gauge public interest/demand.

It will also allow time to test and refine management tools such as:

- development of a new permit system to allow for easy and efficient booking and improved management of overnight bushwalking;

- the types of conditions to be associated with the permit;

- the adequacy of existing and proposed compliance mechanisms;

- whether the routes selected as 'Kakadu bushwalks' need to be formalised (e.g. designated³⁷; camping zones/areas, track markers, and other infrastructure such as toilets may be required) in the longer-term; and

- provision of improved public information about these routes (e.g. on the Park website, in printed material, including topographic maps and interpretive information specific to the route).

Selection of the first, and subsequent Kakadu bushwalks will also be subject to the assessment of proposals process outlined in Section 8.3 of the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Cultural heritage assessments be undertaken 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.

³⁷ There were varying opinions amongst different traditional owners as to the need for designated campsites – the impact of bushwalking use and camping can be part of the monitoring program put in place for the trials.

Action 2. Undertake an assessment process (ground-truthing') to determine the feasibility of the Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls route (shorter option) to become the first 'Kakadu bushwalk'.

The findings from the assessment and trial of this route as a higher-profile bushwalking experience will provide a model for subsequent 'Kakadu bushwalks'.

Action 3. Based on the findings of the above trial, undertake ground-truthing of the following potential Kakadu bushwalks (e.g. within the next 10 years):

a walk within the Mary River District such as Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) to Gunlom; and

potentially Gunlom - Maguk – Bilkbilkmi subject to consultation with traditional owners.

Action 4. Progressively undertake ground-truthing of the other identified approved bushwalking routes including further opportunities for Kakadu bushwalks.

5.2.3 Strategy 3 Improve Visitor information

R A T I O N A L E

Walking tracks and associated infrastructure are major Park assets and can provide a trigger for visitors planning their itinerary. Consequently, information about walking opportunities needs to be readily accessible and 'sell' the overall experience, as well as provide the detail that allows a visitor to plan ahead, and determine whether they have the skill and fitness level required to match the walk experience.

The official government Kakadu National Park website³⁸ has no direct link to a 'walking' page (e.g. fishing and boating have direct links from the home page). Visitors have to search via the online visitor guide, or park notes on individual walks, which are located under the 'experience' link. Information can also be gleaned about walks via searching itineraries and information packages (1- 5 day visits) under 'experiences', which list suggested walks and other activities. The 'Kakadu National Park' drop down menu lists permits and a link to information about the need for a bushwalking permit and downloading the permit application form.

³⁸ www.environment.gov.au/parks/kakadu/

The Kakadu tour guide website³⁹ has images of walkers on the home page, however, information about walking experiences is buried within other pages. Visitors need to search for this information through the different regions of the Park. The short-day walks are presented under 'unguided walks' with a brief outline of the location, features and time required to walk. Further detailed information can be sourced about some selected walks via specific reference (e.g. Jim Jim Falls Gorge Walk or the to Nourlangie Rock Park Notes).

In summary, the two main websites currently under-sell the diversity of walk experiences available in Kakadu. Links to walking experiences are not readily obvious, and the information provided lacks any emotive 'hook' to grab visitor interest. There is very little differentiation among the short-day walking experience on offer on either website

There is very limited information about bushwalking opportunities in the Park, due to the current Park policy and decisions about freedom of information made by traditional owners. Available information is focused on the permit approval process, rather than the location, diversity and quality of the bushwalking experience.

Online information is a key element in pre-visit communication with visitors. Podcasts, smart phone applications, and other electronic information (e.g. electronic maps) have become important information and promotional sources. The limited phone coverage in Kakadu means that live streaming of information is impractical, however, pre-downloaded, detailed information about short-day walking experiences could be improved.

The Kakadu National Park Visitor Guide contains an overall visitors information map, a basic reference to bushwalking (including short-day walks), and briefly lists some of the walks within the seven regions of the Park. Locating walks on the Visitor Guide map is difficult, given the amount of other information provided, scale of the Park and regions, and the conceptual design of the map. The information provided about individual walks is very brief, and does not stand out from the other information presented in the guide.

³⁹ www.kakadunationalparkaustralia.com

Individual Park Notes have been prepared for a number of walks within the Park and are available for download or hard copy from the Visitor Information Centre in the Park. Park Notes provide information about access, a basic description of the walks, key features of interest and walker safety, and cover the following walks:

Anbangbang Billabong Walk and Nawurlandja Lookout Walk;

Barrk Sandstone Bushwalk (includes Nanguluwurr Gallery art site);

Bardedjilidji Sandstone Walk;

Bubba Wetland Walk;

Gunlom Area walks – Gunlom Plunge Pool, Gunlom Lookout Walk, Murrill Billabong Walk, Bukbukluk Lookout, Maguk (Barramundi Gorge);

Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin Gorge) Walk;

Nourlangie Art Walk;

Ubirr Walk (gallery and lookout); and

Yurmikmik walks – Boulder Creek walk, Yurmikmik Lookout Walk, Motor Car Falls Walk, Motor Car Creek Walk and Motor Car and Kurrundie Creek Circuit Walk (overnight walk).

Park Notes maps are also conceptual in design, and do not provide walkers with detailed information (e.g. topography, walk distances, and difficulty), particularly important for the longer half-day to full day walks. The Park Notes have been prepared within a wider policy framework of non-promotion, and consequently are oriented to the attraction to be reached by walking, and not necessarily the walking experience itself.

There is value in continuing to provide individual Park Notes for the most popular walks (e.g. rock art walks), and longer walks where a map and information is of assistance to visitors. However, the preparation of a dedicated short walks brochure and installation of trackhead signage would replace the need for many of the existing brochures. Importantly, the information would be available to the visitor on arrival at the site without the need to have previously picked up brochures elsewhere.

The *Tasmanian 60 Great Short Walks* brochure is a good example of a simple walking specific publication, which is both an experience 'selling' tool, as well as a sound source of information and safety advice. The brochure includes the very best short-day walks within the State that meet criteria for being a Great Short Walk. The brochure provides the following information about each walk:

location and access;

an attractive photograph that helps sell the walk experience;

the pitch about why do the walk (e.g. what sort of experience) and what visitors will see or enjoy;

use of pictograms and a brief description including time and distance, if fees apply (walks are on a range of tenures), facilities, grade, what visitors need, hazards, a map, and what is prohibited and a basic map.

The brochure is now available as a free iPhone application. The 60 Great Short Walks have consistently designed directional and trackhead signage.

The information requirements of overnight bushwalkers are different to the needs of visitors doing short walks. Bushwalkers rely primarily on topographic maps or track notes/publications, and hand-held GPS for navigation. This is particularly important in Kakadu, given there are no formed tracks, and few markers in the stone country. A small number of bushwalkers have intimate knowledge of the walking routes from past experience.

The Park is covered by 1: 100,000 scale topographic maps that were originally produced in the 1970's by the Army, and 1:50,000 scale maps produced in the 1980's and 90's. Vehicular tracks and other facilities may have altered in some places since this time. Currently, detailed information about the approved bushwalking route network is not available to the public. A photocopied base map (using the 1:50,000 maps) is issued to a permit applicant showing an approved walking route. Bushwalkers consulted indicated that the 1:50,000 topographic maps are adequate for navigational purposes.

Whilst the existing topographic maps are considered to be an adequate base for navigation, they do not provide the level of detail (e.g. the route alignment) to allow new bushwalkers in the Park to select and safely plan their trip. The current process of photocopying is inefficient, and appears unprofessional. Providing bushwalkers with a map of the route alignment would allow Park

staff to enforce compliance and management requirements (e.g. walking off-route), and more easily issue fines for breaches of permit conditions.

It is intended that improved delineation of route alignments, including clarifying the acceptable width of route corridors (e.g. how far from the centre of the route marked on the map a walker can go) will also lessen some of the concerns expressed by traditional owners. The 1996 Bushwalking Strategy recommended a route corridor of 1km either side of the approved route alignment. Consultation as part of this project suggests that 1km is too far in many cases, and that the distance should be based on the location of cultural sites, other sensitive areas, and take into account the specific topography along the route.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Upgrade the official government Kakadu National Park website to feature short-day walking experiences more strongly (e.g. a walking link under 'experiences', or a higher level link from the homepage).

Action 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. The brochure could be produced in different languages (e.g. European visitors make up a significant percentage of the international visitors to the Park). A downloadable version and a phone application should also be considered.

Action 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 (e.g. Barrk Walk).

Action 4. Improve the level of information available about bushwalking opportunities in the Park (e.g. online and printed), with a focus on the development of maps and track notes, detailing approved route alignments, for the selected Kakadu bushwalks.

Action 5. Consider 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.

Action 6. Support the updating of the 1:50,000 topographic maps of the main bushwalking areas, where required.

5.2.4 Strategy 4 Upgrade Access to Walking Opportunities

RATIONAL E

The seasonal changes in the environment of Kakadu are an integral part of Bininj/Munguuy culture, each marked by traditions that make the best of the changing conditions. Seasonality of access is a natural condition in Kakadu, and just one of the challenges of operating a National Park and associated tourism businesses in the Top End of Australia. With the onset of the wet season, road access in the Park becomes very restricted, with the majority of visitor attractions and trackheads, cut off by rising water levels.

The Park is dissected by two highways; the Arnhem Highway, running east-west, from Darwin; and the Kakadu Highway, running north-south from Pine Creek (and on to Katherine as the Stuart Highway). Both highways are sealed, and are generally passable in the wet season (although at times high water levels can inundate some sections). Other publically accessible roads in the Park are gravel, with the exception of the Ubirr (Oenpelli), Nourlangie, Cooida/Yellow Water, and Gungural roads, which are sealed. The Ubirr Road is regularly impassable in the wet.

The gravel access roads into some of the popular walking areas, including Gubara (Mount Brockman), Yurmikmik, and Gunlom⁴⁰ are 2WD accessible in the dry season, and Gubara in the wet season. Yurmikmik is generally only closed for short periods in the wet season, when Kambolgie Creek is flooded. Other visitor attractions and popular walking areas, such as Jim Jim and Twin Falls, and Maguk are accessible only by 4WD, and closed to the public with the onset of the wet season.

Improving access to visitor attractions, which generally encompass the major trackheads, will increase the diversity of walking opportunities available to a broader range of visitors throughout the wet season. This will go some way to making Kakadu more of an 'all year' destination, spreading the economic return from tourism more evenly across the year.

The seasonal nature of accessibility, and the type and condition of roads in the Park, have a significant influence on visitation and the capacity of independent walkers and the tourism industry to organise walks. Many of the tourism operators consider the wet season could offer bushwalking experiences if access was possible either by improved roads or allowance for helicopters to access parts of the stone country. Differing opinions were

⁴⁰The access road into Gunlom is closed during the wet season.

expressed among traditional owners and other stakeholders regarding the merits of allowing wet season 'heli-walking' access to the stone country.

Whilst extending the tourism season in Kakadu is desirable from a tourism and economic perspective, there may be some impacts. Traditional owners expressed a need for country to be 'rested'. The restricted access to the stone country over the wet season is a way in which traditional owners see that this country can regenerate – both spiritually (e.g. in respect to the ancestors) and environmentally. Further consultation with traditional owners is required regarding wet season access into stone country, as some traditional owners expressed concern about the potential implications of this. One traditional owner stated that:

"gotta let country rest, [to show] respect to our ancestors, that's why this bushwalking is really big in a way..."

Scheduling park management works, such as feral animal culls, repairing roads, and undertaking management burns, would also be more difficult with an extended tourism season.

The *Road Infrastructure Priorities for Tourism 2011* report recommends a number of road upgrades within the Park, aimed at improving access for visitors. The recommendations are categorised as 'significant development priorities', and 'moderate development priorities'.

The significant development priorities, with relevance to improving bushwalking access, were:

- upgrading of the Arnhem Highway to enable year round access;

- upgrading of the Jim Jim Road; and

- improving shoulder/off peak seasonal access to the Gunlom area, that would facilitate year-round access to the 'must do' plunge pool and Gunlom lookout short walks.

The moderate development priorities of relevance were:

- upgrading/raising the height of the Oenpelli Road where it crosses Magela Creek, facilitating year-round access to the range of short walks at Ubirr and elsewhere in the East Alligator area; and

increasing the standard of Gimbat Road to provide year round access to the Yurmikmik walks and the Kambolgie campground.

Consultation with Parks staff and traditional owners indicated a range of issues with these proposed priorities given the high costs and potential impacts on cultural heritage values.

There is a range of other infrastructure improvements and services that could be introduced to improve the seasonality and safety of access to the escarpment country – particularly the Jim Jim and Twin Falls area. Some of the options worthy of consideration include:

the introduction of a shuttle service from Garnamarr in the peak season, to allow visitors with 2WD vehicles to access the falls – the shuttle may also limit the number of private 4WD vehicles on the road, and therefore, minimise damage and repair costs;

exploring the options for 'heli-walking - helicopters could be used to drop off and pick up walkers from the stone country during the wet season, if impacts can be appropriately managed (e.g. noise and visual intrusion for remote county walkers)⁴¹;

considering the feasibility of installing basic pedestrian bridges (e.g. single-tread suspension bridge) across creeks, rivers, or low-lying areas, which become impassable in the wet season, or have significant crocodile risk; and

undertaking a feasibility study into constructing a new track from Garnamarr into the Jim Jim Falls area (e.g. to an elevated area from which to view the escarpment), to provide walkers with an experience of the falls in the wet season.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Consider the options discussed above 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. The shuttle service from Garnamarr being the easiest to implement, but suitable only during the dry and shoulder seasons.

⁴¹ Heli-access is a sensitive issue for traditional owners, as well as preservation of quality visitor experiences (e.g. minimising noise and visual impacts associated with air traffic). Further consultation with traditional owners on the matter is required.

Action 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.

‘Heli-walking’ should be initially implemented on a small-scale trial basis to determine feasibility, and may be associated with a fee if determined appropriate following trials.

5.2.5 Strategy 5 Prepare a Thematic interpretation Plan for Kakadu National Park

R A T I O N A L E

Interpretation should be a key element of the visitor experience in Kakadu. Walking in country presents opportunities for the delivery of messages and stories to visitors, engendering a sense of connection with culture and place.

Currently, interpretation is delivered through a range of communication mechanisms, including:

- pre-visit information provided by publications and websites;

- printed brochures available about the Park;

- static displays, audio visual presentations, brochures and face to face contact with Park staff at Bowali visitor centre;

- the Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre;

- interpretation panels at visitor sites including along popular walks to art sites;

- the seasonal ranger and Aboriginal guided activities; and

- guided activities by commercial tour and accommodation providers.

Parks Australia have recognised the need to develop an interpretation strategy for the whole of the Park. This is yet to be undertaken. The existing interpretation infrastructure and themes have evolved over time, in the absence of a clear strategy, resulting in a lack of consistency.

The development of a thematic interpretation strategy will bring together the components of communication to visitors, including the Kakadu brand, consistent and quality signage, general information, delivery of core messages

and stories, aid in setting priorities for funding, and significantly enhance visitor experiences.

Thematic interpretation is based on more than two decades of communications psychology research, and identifies the strongest intellectual and emotional connections arising from a place that is thought provoking rather than fact-oriented. It recognises that the most powerful impressions people take away with them from a site are the conclusions or meanings they have drawn from the facts presented. Thematic interpretation aims to make it easy for visitors to develop strong memories through the innovative delivery of themes – sometimes referred to as ‘central’ messages or ‘take-home’ messages.

A fundamental premise of thematic interpretation is that once visitors attach meanings to the place being interpreted, the place matters to them. Once the connection is made between the visitor and the place, outcomes such as high levels of visitor satisfaction, word-of-mouth promotion and repeat visitation follow. This approach to interpretation also incorporates a ‘media matrix’ that matches core messages with different communication techniques to reach the identified audiences.

The thematic interpretation strategy should:

- assess the current interpretation situation (e.g. current branding and communication work);
- identify the visitor audiences;
- identify the interpretive goals and outcomes;
- develop the core themes underpinning the messages and stories;
- formulate a media matrix; and
- include an action plan that identifies interpretive priorities, ideas for funding sources, signage approach, annual interpretation delivery plans, reviewing of events, training opportunities and partnership opportunities.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 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.

5.2.6 Strategy 6 : Develop a Marketing Strategy for Kakadu Walk Experiences

R A T I O N A L E

Section 5.2.3 indicated there are a number of limitations with the current delivery of information to visitors about walking opportunities in the Park.

Integral to the marketing of Kakadu, is the continued implementation of the brand. The brand will allow Parks Australia, tourism organisations and operators to integrate the core message into their marketing approaches, building consistency and brand recognition. The walking opportunities are among the 'core' experiences within the Park with potential to be brand exemplars.

The implementation of the current strategy will allow for focused marketing and promotion of the walking experiences, in particular the 'must-do' short-day walks, and the Kakadu bushwalks. Focused marketing will involve the development of a marketing strategy, which:

- reviews and incorporates the intent of this Strategy and other management documents to ensure consistency;
- aligns with the proposed thematic interpretation strategy discussed above;
- defines the marketing objectives and key communication messages, consistent with the core themes developed as part of the thematic interpretation strategy;
- identifies the target audiences and customer profiles; and
- develops marketing strategies and actions for reaching each of the target audiences.

Tools to improve the promotion of Kakadu's walking experiences include:

- upgrading the official Park website to ensure walking is strongly featured on the home page;
- developing links to walking information, that responds to the target audiences and their length of stay, and types of walking experiences available in the Park (e.g. short, half day, full day and bushwalking, and a range of difficulty levels);

developing links to external sites, such as the web-pages of bushwalking guiding companies and equipment suppliers;

recognising the potential for other state-of-the-art communication tools available, including podcasts (e.g. short films of engagement with traditional owners), smart phone applications that can be downloaded;

preparation of a dedicated short walks brochure for the Park with distribution both inside and outside of the Park;

preparation of detailed park notes for some of the popular individual walks (e.g. rock art walks and longer day walks);

preparation of a communication plan about walking experiences to ensure consistent and correct messages about walking experiences are presented, including quality photography and printed information;

partnerships and collaboration in joint marketing and advertising with NT Tourism, tourism bodies and tourism operators;

compiling a 'walking in Kakadu' image bank for promotional purposes⁴²;

continuing to participate in the visiting journalist program, leading to editorial and story features;

briefings with national and international sellers of the Kakadu experiences;

filming, photography and audio recording in accordance with the provisions of the Management Plan (e.g. including downloadable podcasts);

participating in a range of tourism travel promotional materials, guides and other publications; and

preparing media releases that are targeting Northern Territory visitors.

Kakadu National Park is one of the selected places in Australia to become part of Australia's National Landscapes Program. The program aims to utilise existing networks and resources to provide a collaborative and sustainable

⁴² Traditional owners have indicated that only images of rock art at Ubirr and Nourlangie rock art is to be used for promotional purposes. No other rock art images are to be used for the promotion of the walking experiences.

approach to tourism planning, development and conservation. Kakadu is part of *Australia's Timeless North National Landscape* that incorporates a wider region including Nitmiluk National Park, Mary River, Garig Gunak Barlu and, West Arnhem land. Marketing of walking experiences should actively engage with the National Landscape Program.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 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.

Action 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.

Action 3. Identify a range of promotional tools to assist with the marketing of Kakadu's walking experiences to target audiences.

5.3 GOAL 3 : IDENTIFY NEW WALKING OPPORTUNITIES

This goal is about extending the range of walking opportunities in the Park to cater for different users, including the potential to develop a new iconic walk.

5.3.1 Strategy 1 : Investigate the New Short-Day Walking Opportunities

RATIONALE

A range of short walks of varying length and difficulty are currently available in the Park. The majority are located in or near the identified visitor precincts and hubs, and if upgraded and enhanced, including improving wet season access, provide a good diversity of short walking opportunities.

The northern part of the Park has a greater supply of short walks (particularly in the Ubirr and Nourlangie areas), with fewer easy, short walks in the south. For example, there are no formally developed short walks within close proximity to the Goymarr Interpretive Centre (Mary River Roadhouse) – the closest being the Yurmikmik walks to north.

Traditional owners and Park staff expressed a general preference to focus on improving the quality and safety of existing short walks, rather than developing new infrastructure. Exceptions to this were potential new walking experiences in the Mary River District and Jim Jim Falls area:

an ~8km walk along Moline Ikoymarrwa, following the southern side of the creek in the shade, and passing historic cattle yards – the possibility of a shuttle service from Goymarr was also mentioned;

a stone country short-day walk in the Mary River area; and

a new track from Garnamarr into the Jim Jim Falls area.

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, to add to the diversity of experiences on offer to campers. It was also indicated that a cultural heritage survey would need to be carried out, as a site of significance is thought to be located in the area.

The proposed addition in the Jim Jim Falls area should be considered within preparation of the Jim Jim Falls – Twin Falls Precinct Plan project. This includes the potential for improving vehicular access as far as Garnamarr, and the potential of implementing a shuttle service from Garnamarr to the falls. This proposed track would be ~20km return, which is further than the average person would be comfortable walking in a day, especially in the climatic conditions at Kakadu. This proposal, is therefore, considered a lower priority. A shorter walk to a spot where the falls/escarpment can be viewed was also raised as a preferable option. This is a concept only, and would require a feasibility assessment in the event it is deemed to have merit.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Ensure that new short walk opportunities are investigated in accordance with process set out in the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*, and the draft *Kakadu National Park Walking Policy*.

Action 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. Other potential opportunities in the area should also be explored.

Action 3. Assess the feasibility of constructing a short walk to a look-out above the Garnamarr campground.

Action 4. As part of the Jim Jim Falls – Twin Falls Precinct Plan project, consideration be given to the feasibility of constructing a new track in the Jim Jim Falls area, originating from Garnamarr, and facilitating shoulder season access into the area (e.g. when the section of road as far as Garnamarr might be passable), or to a location where the escarpment can be viewed.

5.3.2 Strategy 2 : Assessing the potential for an Iconic Bushwalk Experience

The project Brief required consideration of opportunities for the development of an iconic walking experience within the Park. Whilst research and consultations were undertaken into potential iconic bushwalking experiences, it was clear that some traditional owners, bushwalkers and Parks Australia held reservations about the appropriateness and capacity to achieve this within the Park. However the following notes provide a brief context to the opportunities and issues identified through the project.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF AN ICONIC BUSHWALK

The Milford Track in New Zealand, the Overland Track in Tasmania, the Annapurna Track in Nepal and the Appalachian Trail in the USA, along with many other walks in the world have reached high market recognition as some of the great bushwalks in the world. The term 'iconic' is often associated with these walks, especially within the tourism industry, to denote a sense of 'greatness', and uniqueness. In short, 'iconic' walks have the following attributes:

provides a remarkable example of natural or cultural phenomena distinct to the local area, with opportunities to interpret stories in the landscape that speak of the essence of the place;

is widely recognised within the walking, tourism and community as being an exceptional walking experience, and one, which visitors will want to brag about;

engages the participant on a number of experiential levels, including the educational/entertainment (thematic interpretation), the escapist (i.e. as juxtaposed against their everyday experiences) and the aesthetic (immersion in a landscape of unique beauty);

where it has distinct competitive advantages or points of difference from other walks within Australia, and elsewhere in the world; and

is often associated with high quality services (e.g. guiding, booking etc) and support infrastructure, and often offers a level of exclusivity of experience.

There can be substantial benefits associated with the establishment of an 'iconic' or high profile bushwalk experience, including attracting a new visitors

market, the potential for spin-off's in terms of increased yield, investment and employment opportunities associated with the walk. Equally it has aspirational and promotional value as 'iconic' walking experiences can attract visitors to a destination - not necessarily to undertake the bushwalk, but to get a 'taste' of the 'iconic' experience. A good example of this is the Overland Track in Tasmania, where many day visitors are attracted to Cradle Mountain (start of the track) and Lake St Clair (end of the track) where the physical environs and visitor interpretation convey a sense of the remoteness and experience gained by bushwalkers. It often becomes a 'braggable' experience for visitors to indicate they have done a short walk that forms part of the iconic bushwalk, and have interacted with bushwalkers.

INVESTMENT IN COMMERCIAL GUIDED WALKS

Bushwalking holidays have become increasingly popular over the last decade, with the emergence of 'luxury' guided walking experiences. Australia and New Zealand have become international leaders in walking-based nature tourism, with the development of exclusive walking tours in unique and wild landscapes. Private and luxury accommodation, small group sizes, highly-trained guides, gourmet food, and the ease of carrying a small pack are all elements of successful premium walking products. The high quality of amenity, level of exclusivity, and demand, mean that premium walking experiences are generally high yielding tourism operations. Attachment 10 provides a brief outline of some of the commercial tour operators, costs and accommodation style for roofed accommodation on selected walks in Australia and New Zealand. It also provides a brief comparison of experience and costs associated with commercially guided, tent-based bushwalking.

Further investment into new commercial guided walks is occurring around Australia. The Tasmanian Government is currently proceeding with the development of a \$38m Three Capes Walk that aims to be Australia's premier coastal bushwalking experience. The walk will feature hut accommodation and water-based experiences. There will be two levels of experience offered; one for independent walkers; the other a fully guided experience provided by a commercial operator. In Victoria, the Great Ocean Walk has received considerable funding as Victoria's best prospect for a market-ready nature-based tourism walk product that could generate high-yielding visitor interest.

There are a number of significant challenges associated with the development of a commercial iconic bushwalk/s in Kakadu National Park, including:

- the competitive advantages of other well-developed and marketed walking destinations in Australia and overseas;

the relatively high costs of travel to the Northern Territory and to Kakadu, to access the walking opportunities in comparison with other destinations;

the relatively short dry season suitable for operating guided bushwalks, compared with extended operating season of other destinations;

current management and safety requirements to undertake seasonal closure of access roads and walking tracks in the Park;

currently limited support from traditional owners for the installation of visitor infrastructure in the stone country;

the regular occurrence of fire management in the stone country;

the need to protect and conserve rock art and other significant cultural sites;

remoteness and difficulty of access to the stone country, where the majority of the bushwalking routes are located, with implications for servicing camps, re-provisioning, and limiting opportunities for 'step-on-step-off' walking experiences;

the growth in commercial bushwalking tours across Australia is generally associated with high quality facilities and services that offer comfort (e.g. standing camps, lodges, safari tents, campsites with facilities) and the market for tent based camping is smaller and potentially offers less yield; and

the perception that bushwalking in the Top End is more suited to experienced walkers given limited information available for places like Kakadu, extreme temperatures, remoteness, and other risks (e.g. crocodiles).

CURRENT TOP END LEADING MULTI-DAY BUSHWALKS

The Jatbula Trail and the Larapinta Trail are the leading multi-day bushwalks in the Northern Territory being marketed to both domestic and international visitors. Attachment 10 provides a profile of the types of walking experiences being offered by the two trails, the management and safety systems in place, and examples of commercially guided tours available. Both tracks can be

walked independently, but have several commercial guiding companies that visitors can choose to walk with operating on the track. One of the great strengths of the Larapinta Trail is the segmentation of the track, which allows visitors to choose where they begin and end, and the distance of their walking experience. It also encourages visitors to return a number of times to complete the entire track, and provides employment for transport operators (e.g. pick ups and drop offs, and delivery of provisions).

Whilst few multi-day bushwalking tracks in Australia have a fee-based permit system, fees and permits are common in other countries (e.g. Canada and the USA), where hiking is popular, and there is high demand for activities in National Parks. The Overland Track in Tasmania, and the Jatbula Trail in the Northern Territory, are examples of bushwalking tracks that have permit systems, incorporating fees, applying to all walkers (independent and guided).

ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL FOR AN ICONIC WALK/S IN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

Kakadu National Park has some strong competitive advantages for developing iconic walk experiences, including:

- World Heritage Area listing for both natural and cultural values as a living landscape;

- inclusion in the National Landscape program as part of Australia's Timeless North promotion and marketing campaigns to international visitors;

- the unique opportunity for visitors to experience, and interactive with Indigenous culture, including with Aboriginal guides, and through restricted access to rock art and interpretation based around traditional stories about the landscape;

- a strong sense of remoteness, ruggedness, and 'wilderness';

- few well-established 'iconic' bushwalking tracks in the Northern Territory; and

- the potential to market and promote Kakadu as a new emerging bushwalking destination to visitors⁴³ in Australia.

⁴³ Whilst bushwalking has been occurring for over 30 years in the National Park, the current management system involving 'approved bushwalking routes' has limited marketing and promotion of bushwalking opportunities.

A number of potential iconic bushwalk options were identified for consideration through background research, site visits and stakeholder consultation. These options included potential bushwalk routes within Kakadu National Park and also links to Nitmiluk National Park and Western Arnhem land. An initial assessment of potential strengths and weaknesses of these options was undertaken.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. At the request of the Kakadu Board of Management, in collaboration with Nitmiluk National Park, investigate the potential development of an iconic bushwalk between Nitmiluk and Kakadu.

5.4 GOAL 4 : DELIVER POTENTIAL ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS

The brief identified the development of management and enterprise opportunities for traditional owners as a specific outcome of the project. The strategies for achieving these benefits include investigating the opportunities for traditional owner enterprises to be associated with walking and to support existing, and attract new nature-based tourism operators, to develop a stronger base of walking product within the Park.

5.4.1 Strategy 1 Investigate Opportunities for Traditional Owner Enterprises Associated with Walking Experiences.

RATIONALE

Most Indigenous owned tour products have a relatively strong cultural activity focus and there appears to be limited examples of overnight bushwalk tours being conducted by Indigenous people. Figure 5.1 provides a summary profile of some Indigenous walk products developed around the world.

The consultation program indicated widespread interest from all stakeholders for opportunities that would provide greater involvement by Indigenous people with walking in the Park. This is currently occurring in a limited way through the tourism industry engagement of trained Indigenous guides as part of tour programs, the seasonal ranger interpretation program, and through various tours provided by Aboriginal businesses.

There have been attempts to encourage young Indigenous people from the area to complete guide training programs. Whilst Indigenous guide training occurs, and there are highly recognised Indigenous guides operating in the Park, they are few in number. It has been difficult to maintain strong interest. There are several reasons for this; the importance of family and community lifestyle above other external responsibilities, the seasonal nature of the work and the opportunity to earn higher incomes, such as in the mining industry.

The 'Away from Base' program is an important training initiative where funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is available to assist eligible Indigenous students to participate in approved courses, where that course requires students to travel from their permanent home to study. For example, Indigenous people have the option to apply for training as tourism guides with different levels of certification.

The Gagudju Association has been pro-active with its Indigenous employment program, having won a 2010 tourism award for the best provider of tourism, education and training in the Northern Territory. This training program is being run through the various enterprises such as Crocodile Hotel and Yellow Water Tours. Apart from creating Indigenous employment opportunities, the program is also seeking to assemble a pool of trained Indigenous guides that become leaders for a range of outdoor activities, including any future walking tours.

Traditional owners expressed a range of ideas about how walking experiences for visitors can be associated with Aboriginal enterprises – both existing and new ventures. They also raised concerns about the capacity to develop and operate walking-based products, in particular regular overnight bushwalking guided enterprises, in the context of cultural responsibilities and the demands of joint management. The consultations suggested that it was more likely to that Indigenous people will be interested in becoming involved in guiding short-day walks, rather than overnight walks.



The People -

Haisla Tourism, owned and operated by the Haisla Nation

Location -

North Coast of British Columbia, Canada in the Greater Kitlope Conservancy and Foch-Gilttoyees Park, Haisla Traditional Territory

Tour Types -

Offer a range of adventure and guided cultural tours, and accommodation.

More Information -

www.haislatourism.com

The Tour -

Haisla Heritage Trail

Description -

- 3 hr guided walking tour, along an interpretive trail to Kitamaat Village (totem poles, smoke house, community garden, gallery, studio and gift shop)
- Indigenous interpretive guide
- Easy trail - wheelchair accessible
- Operates twice a day

Rates -

Adult - \$25 + 12% GST

Child - \$15 + 12% GST



The People -

Amuwarngka Cultural Tours; Aboriginal owned and operated company - warninindilyakwa people

Location -

Groote Eylandt, off the coast of the Northern Territory

Tour Types -

Guided cultural tours (Rock Art and Culture Tour, Shallow Water Hunting Tour, and the Bush Walkabout Tour)

More Information -

www.amuwarngkatours.com.au

The Tour -

Bush Walkabout

Description -

- 2 hr bush walk with an Indigenous guide
- Welcome to country
- Highlight culturally important plants
- Story telling - Dreamtime and Saltwater stories

Rates -

\$45/person

Figure 5.1. Examples of Indigenous Tourism



The People -

Kootenay Wilderness Tours (cross-cultural wilderness adventure and education organisation). Assisted by First Nations elders from Western Canada and North Western United States (e.g. Cowichan, Blackfoot, Mohawk, Nuxalt)

Location -

Kootenay National Park and surrounds, BC, Canada

Tour Types -

Range of guided cultural and wilderness adventure tours, including hiking, canoeing/rafting, traditional ceremony, wilderness skills, First Nations craft, and environmental immersion sessions.

More Information -

www.kootenaywildernesstours.ca

The Tour -

Spirit Walker Tour

Description -

- 8 day, 7 nights - cabin/lodge (5 nights), tent (2 nights)
- 3 days backpacking and exploring
- river rafting, native ceremony with an elder, adventure and wilderness activities
- Supported by the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia

Rates -

- \$1965 (ca)
- All inclusive (food, accommodation, certified guides, permits, group gear)



The People -

Pureora Walks, with local Maori Guides

Location -

Taupo District, Central North Island, New Zealand

Tour Types -

Mix of guided nature-based, cultural and educational activities, based around three forest centre sites, hut and lodge accommodation

More Information -

www.pureorawalks.com

The Tour -

Tongariro Alpine Crossing (Tongariro National Park)

Description -

- one-day guided walk (19.4km) to the summit of the active volcano, Tongariro
- Moari guide (descendent of the chief of Tongariro and Rotoarira, Te Wharerangi)
- storey telling and cultural information
- lunch and snacks provided

Rates -

Not listed, but includes transfers

Figure 5.1. Examples of Indigenous Tourism

Some of the potential opportunities for Bininj/Munguuy to be more involved in walk experiences within the Park may include:

- development of commercial Bininj/Munguuy businesses, involving walking product;

- being partners in walking tourism businesses;

- involvement in training programs that help build a pool of skilled Indigenous guides within the Park;

- focusing Indigenous guiding around the 'must-do' short-day walks and providing authentic interpretation of country;

- greater involvement in the seasonal ranger interpretation program;

- development of support facilities and services such as pre-walk interpretation and briefing, on-park accommodation (e.g. a 'base' from which to undertake short-day walks), sale of walking supplies and basic equipment;

- involvement in the development and delivery of the proposed induction program for independent bushwalkers and commercial guides; and

- involvement in the monitoring of the impacts and management measures for the proposed Kakadu bushwalks and any iconic bushwalks within the Park.

The Walking Strategy, if adopted, would help provide support to existing operators to continue business or grow existing commercial tours and walking trips despite the recent decline in Park visitation. New tourism operators may also be attracted to the Park, where there is an opportunity to create a new walking experience – either associated with the 'must do' short-day walks, or the Kakadu bushwalks. New walking –based tourism opportunities could include:

- transport services for walkers, to facilitate pick-up and drop-offs;

- Indigenous guide tours on the 'must do' short-day walks;

- development of private camping facilities either at new sites or in association with existing camping areas, targeted at walkers;

access by helicopters to stone country tracks and routes during the wet season or to allow for food-drops on longer bushwalks; and

the creation of new and innovative walking-based experiences, with a strong cultural heritage element (e.g. 'bundling' of cultural activities with the 'must do' short-day walks), led by Aboriginal businesses with assistance from the tourism industry.

The regulations and management prescriptions governing tourism operators within the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan* have been reviewed and will be implemented in the future.

The tourism industry will also need to consider ongoing mechanisms for improving training and customer service skills.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action 1. Support new opportunities for Bininj/Munguuy involvement in the development and operation of walking-based businesses within the Park, including guiding short-day walks, with the possibility of being a 'guest guide' on overnight bushwalks (e.g. joining the group for a day from an accessible point on the route).

Action 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.

Action 3. Ensure that Bininj/Munguuy are involved in the monitoring and management of visitor impacts, that may be associated with walking experiences.

Action 4. Continue to implement recommendations from the 2010-2011 review of the regulations and management prescriptions governing tourism operators within the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*.

Action 5. Consider ongoing mechanisms for improving training and customer service skills.

SECTION 6

IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 10 YEAR ACTION PLAN 2013 - 2022

The Action Plan presented in this Section has been prepared to guide the implementation of the Strategy over the next 10 years.

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

Table 6.1 sets out the strategies, recommended actions, priority and lead responsibility for each of the four goals.

The priority for implementation is based on the following timeframes:

High – should be implemented within the next 2 years;

Moderate - should be implemented within the next 5 years;

Low - should be implemented within the next 10 years; and

Ongoing – action may be required on an ongoing basis.

Lead responsibility acronyms refers to:

KNPBOM – Kakadu National Park Board of Management

KNPWSSC – Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy
Steering Committee

Parks – Parks Australia

TNT – Tourism Northern Territory

DBC – Darwin Bushwalking Club

TO's – traditional owners and clan/community members

GOAL 1 : TO IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES WITHIN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK.			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 1. Develop a walking policy for Kakadu National Park	Action 1. Finalise and implement the draft <i>Kakadu National Park Walking Policy</i> .	High	KNPBOM
Strategy 2. Adopt a Consistent Approach to the Construction and Classification of Walking Tracks	Action 1. Adopt and implement the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Adopt and implement the Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Liaise with other land management agencies to broaden and share knowledge about walking track design and construction, the interpretation of the standard, and innovative use of materials and techniques.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
Strategy 3. Adopt a Consistent Approach to Walking Track Signage	Action 1. Adopt and implement the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1-2001).	High	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Prepare a signage strategy specifically for walking tracks.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Install consistent trackhead signage at the start of the 'must do' short-day walks as a priority.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Implement consistent track marking on day walks.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Install standardised regulatory signage, as required under the <i>EPBC Act Regulations</i> , in areas where visitors require a permit to proceed beyond a certain point.	High	Parks Australia
Strategy 4. Improve Access for Visitors with Mobility Difficulties	Action 1. Ensure that all 'easy access' tracks/track sections are constructed to a Grade 1 standard (<i>Class 1 under the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks</i>).	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Increase the number of easy access/assisted wheelchair accessible tracks. The proposed priorities are: South Alligator District: Mamukala Birdhide Walk; <i>East Alligator District:</i> Ubirr Loop and Lookout Walk; <i>Head Quarters District:</i> Nourlangie Main Gallery and Nawurlandja Lookout carpark to Anbangbang Billabong; <i>Jim Jim District:</i> Yellow Waters Walk; and <i>Mary River District:</i> Gunlom Plunge Pool and the Bukbukluk Lookout Walk.	Low	Parks Australia

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 1 : TO IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES WITHIN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK.			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 4. Improve Access for Visitors with Mobility Difficulties (cont.)	Action 3. In the shorter-term, improve easy access (assisted wheelchair access) to Ubirr, Nourlangie, and Yellow Waters as priorities.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Ensure that easy access track sections are kept clear of debris.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Incorporate information about easy access tracks/track sections in walking related publications, on the Park website, and on trackhead signage.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 6. Consider how access to popular visitor attractions can be improved for people with other impairments (e.g. vision).	Low	Parks Australia
Strategy 5 : Improve Bushwalking Management Systems	Action 1. Further clarify and endorse the approved bushwalking route network in consultation with traditional owners and Park staff	High, ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Further refine and implement a new bushwalking permit system for the 'Kakadu bushwalks' and day walks requiring a permit.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Undertake trials and monitoring on selected bushwalking route/s to determine sustainable walker numbers.	High, Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Consider developing a custom online platform for the new bushwalking permit system.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Initiate the process required under the <i>EPBC Act</i> to allow for the introduction of fees for an overnight bushwalking permit.	High, Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 6. Develop and trial a bushwalking permit fee structure applicable to the promoted Kakadu bushwalks and other approved bushwalking routes.	High, Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 7. Implement a set of new permit conditions, to reflect the proposed management improvements recommended in this Strategy	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 8. Update/modify the existing permit system to cater for the small number of permits likely to be requested for the other approved bushwalking routes.	Ongoing	Parks Australia

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 1 : TO IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES WITHIN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK.			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 6. Improve Visitor Education, Safety and Compliance Systems	Action 1. Develop and implement a walker code of conduct, based on the international Leave No Trace principles.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Develop and trial a bushwalker induction program associated with the permit application.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Develop and implement a commercial operator and guide induction program, including mechanisms for recovery costs.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Incorporate educational messages into online, printed material, and signage, in particular the walker code of conduct.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Continue the seasonal ranger program, with an aim to increase Aboriginal guided activities, and expand to 'must do' walks not currently included in the program	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 6. Revise the bushwalking permit system and associated conditions.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 7. Trial a walker self-registration system at trackheads for extended day walks (e.g. the Barrk Walk).	High	Parks Australia
	Action 8. Require all overnight bushwalking parties to carry a personal locator beacon (PLB) and/or satellite phone, as a condition of the bushwalking permit.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 9. Investigate options for a new de-registration process associated with the bushwalking permit.	High - Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 10. Establish a mechanism (e.g. Park policy or procedure) to provide for the closure of tracks and routes for safety, cultural or management reasons.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 11. Trial a track ranger program during the peak bushwalking season on popular bushwalking routes	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 12. Continue to implement the compliance and enforcement actions set out in Section 8.2 of the <i>Kakadu National Park Management Plan</i> and the <i>Parks Australia Compliance and Enforcement Manual</i> .	Ongoing	Parks Australia

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 1 : TO IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES WITHIN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK.			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 7. Develop and Implement a Monitoring and Research Program	Action 1. Review existing broad monitoring mechanisms to ensure that standardised information about walking is captured.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Ensure monitoring and research is consistent with the <i>Kakadu National Park Management Plan</i> .	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Undertake regular on-ground environmental and cultural heritage assessments of all short-day walks, and Kakadu bushwalks.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Review the methodology for capturing both qualitative and quantitative walking data for the Park.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Continue to work in partnership with Tourism NT and other tourism organisations, to share and obtain information relating to visitor numbers and market trends, with a particular focus on walking.	Ongoing	Parks Australia and TNT
Strategy 8. Maintenance, Resources and Funding	Action 1. Implement the track monitoring recommendations described in this Strategy.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Implement a monthly program of track maintenance tasks for the 'must do' short and day walks, and integrate into district operational plans.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Consider opportunities to rationalise monthly track maintenance and monitoring resource requirements, by combining maintenance and monitoring tasks with seasonal ranger responsibilities.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Implement an annual maintenance and significant works program for short and day walks.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Ensure that upgrades to existing, and construction of new tracks is completed to a high standard.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 6. Ensure that track planning, development and maintenance tasks are incorporated into the annual Park budget.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 7. Investigate opportunities to increase revenue from walking experiences.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 8. Work with external organisations to access potential funding, donations and support for projects that will improve walking experiences and management within the Park.	Ongoing	Parks Australia

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 1 : TO IMPROVE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS FOR WALKING EXPERIENCES WITHIN KAKADU NATIONAL PARK.			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 10. Build Supportive Partnerships	Action 1. Continue to work with traditional owners to strengthen walking opportunities in the Park.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Consider the establishment of a working group to focus specifically on the development and management of walking opportunities in the Park.	High	KNPBOM and KNPWSSC
	Action 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.	Low	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Strengthen relationships with the Darwin Bushwalking Club and tourism operators to gain assistance with environmental monitoring of bushwalking routes and to act as 'eyes and ears' in the more remote parts of the Park.	Ongoing	Parks and DBC
	Action 5. Strengthen relationships with other Parks and land management agencies to share knowledge and skills relating to walking infrastructure and experiences.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
GOAL 2: ENHANCE THE VISITOR WALKING EXPERIENCE			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 1. Upgrade the 'Must Do' Walking Experiences.	Action 1. Differentiate the short-day walking experiences in the Park, to raise the profile of the 'must do' walks.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Upgrade the 'must do' short-day walks as a priority.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
Strategy 2. Elevate Kakadu's Best Bushwalks	Action 1. 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.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Undertake an assessment process (ground-truthing) to determine the feasibility of the Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls route (4-5 days) to be trialed as the first 'Kakadu bushwalk'.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Based on the findings of the above trial, undertake ground-truthing of the other potential Kakadu bushwalks, being: walk within the Mary River District such as Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin) to Gunlom; and potentially Gunlom - Maguk – Bilkbilkmi subject to consultation with traditional owners.	High	Parks Australia

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 2: ENHANCE THE VISITOR WALKING EXPERIENCE			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 2. Elevate Kakadu's Best Bushwalks (cont.)	Action 4. Progressively undertake ground-truthing of the other identified approved bushwalking routes.	Moderate	Parks Australia
Strategy 3. Improve Visitor Information	Action 1. Upgrade the official government Kakadu National Park website to feature walks more strongly.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 2. Produce a dedicated short walks brochure.	High	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Limit the printing of individual Park Notes to service only the most popular short walks-day walks.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Improve the level of information available about bushwalking opportunities in the Park (e.g. online and printed), with a focus on the development of maps and track notes, detailing approved route alignments, for the selected Kakadu bushwalks.	High - Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Consider 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.	High, Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 6. Support the updating of the 1:50,000 topographic maps of the main bushwalking areas, where required.	Low	Parks Australia
Strategy 4. Upgrade Access to Walking Opportunities	Action 1. Consider the options to improve access to, and the experience of, the stone country in the wet season.	Moderate	Parks and TNT
	Action 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.	Moderate	Parks Australia
Strategy 5. Prepare a Thematic Interpretation Plan for Kakadu National Park	Action 1. Prepare a thematic interpretation strategy for the Park, with specific guidance for the interpretation of the 'must do' short-day walks, and Kakadu bushwalks.	High	Parks Australia

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 2: ENHANCE THE VISITOR WALKING EXPERIENCE			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 6. Develop a Marketing Strategy for Kakadu Walk Experiences	Action 1. Review and implement a brand strategy for the Park.	Ongoing	KNPBOM
	Action 2. Continue to support the marketing of Kakadu as one of Australia’s selected National Landscapes.	Ongoing	KNPBOM
	Action 3. 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.	Moderate	KNPBOM
	Action 4. Identify a range of promotional tools to assist with the marketing of Kakadu’s walking experiences to target audiences.	Ongoing	KNPBOM

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 3 : IDENTIFY NEW WALKING OPPORTUNITIES			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 1. Investigate the New Short – Day Walking Opportunities	Action 1. Ensure that new short-day walk opportunities are investigated in accordance with the process set out in the <i>Kakadu National Park Management Plan</i> , and the draft <i>Kakadu National Park Walking Policy</i> .	High	Parks Australia
	Action 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.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 3. Assess the feasibility of constructing a short walk to a lookout above the Garnamarr campground.	Moderate	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Consider the feasibility of constructing a new track in the Jim Jim Falls area, originating from Garnamarr.	Moderate	Parks Australia
Strategy 2. Planning for an Iconic Bushwalk Experience	Action 1. At the request of the Kakadu Board of Management, in collaboration with Nitmiluk National Park, investigate the potential development of an iconic bushwalk between Nitmiluk and Kakadu.	Low	Parks Australia

Table 6.1. Action Plan

GOAL 4 : DELIVER POTENTIAL ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS			
Strategies	Recommended Actions	Priority	Lead Responsibility
Strategy 1. Investigate Opportunities for Traditional Owner Enterprises Associated with Walking Experiences.	Action 1. Support new opportunities for Bininj/Munguuy involvement in the development and operation of walking-based businesses within the Park.	Ongoing	Parks Australia and tourism industry
	Action 2. Support training programs for Indigenous guides and the development of a pool of skilled guides.	Ongoing	Parks Australia and tourism industry
	Action 3. Ensure that Bininj/Munguuy are involved in the monitoring and management of visitor impacts.	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 4. Continue to implement recommendations from the 2010-2011 review of the regulations and management prescriptions governing tourism operators within the <i>Kakadu National Park Management Plan</i> .	Ongoing	Parks Australia
	Action 5. Consider ongoing mechanisms for improving training and customer service skills.	Ongoing	Tourism industry

Table 6.1. Action Plan

6.2 12 START-UP ACTIONS

Table 6.2 identifies the 12 key actions that should be considered for implementation within 2 years of completion of the Walking Strategy in mid 2012.

No.	Recommended Action
1	Finalise and implement the draft <i>Kakadu National Park Walking Policy</i> , to provide a guide for the sustainable and consistent planning, development and management of walking experiences, track and other associated infrastructure in the Park.
2	Adopt and implement the <i>Australian Standards for Walking Tracks, Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System</i> and the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1-2001).
3	Differentiate the short-day walking experiences in the Park, to raise the profile of the 'must do' walks and give priority to upgrading the infrastructure and condition of the 'must do' walks.
4	Revise the bushwalking permit system and associated conditions including the mechanisms relating to improved visitor safety and compliance.
5	Undertake an assessment process (ground-truthing) to determine the feasibility of the Jim Jim Falls to Twin Falls route (4-5 day walk) 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 - trackhead and information signage, on-track directional signage and markers, regulatory and interpretive signage. Install consistent trackhead signage at the start of the 'must do' short and day walks as a priority.
8	Implement an annual maintenance and significant works program for short and day walks (integrate into operational and district plans), and Kakadu bushwalks (integrate into operational and relevant district plans).
9	Prepare a thematic interpretation strategy to guide visitor communication for the whole of Kakadu National Park.
10	Improve the level of information available about bushwalking opportunities in the Park (e.g. online and printed), focusing on the 'must do' short-day walks, identified Kakadu bushwalks and new permit system.
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 and appropriate behaviour relating to cultural heritage sites and objects.
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.

Table 6.2. Start-up Actions

ATTACHMENT 1
CONSULTATION LIST

Community Meetings

The 15 community meetings generally involved members of the traditional owners, community and Parks staff. The names of traditional owners and community members are listed below. Parks staff from both the District and Bowali also attended the meetings. Kathy Bannister from NLC organised and attended all the round 1 and round 2 community meetings. Vicky Shilvock NT Tourism also attended a number of the round 1 and round 2 meetings.

SOUTH ALLIGATOR DISTRICT

Victor Cooper

EAST ALLIGATOR DISTRICT

Alfred Nayinggul, Jacob Nayinggul, Jimmy Marimowa, Daryl Marimowa, Darryl Cooper, James Nadji, Walter Nayinggal, Elizabeth Neidji, Connie Nayinggul Shane Franey, Natasha Nadji, Katie Nayinggul, Columba Banggalang, Andriana Nayinggul, Anita Nayinggul

HEADQUARTERS DISTRICT

The meetings were held with the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation Board. Those involved in the meetings included Yvonne Margurula, Valerie Balmore, Melanie Manganbarr, Annie Ngalmirama, May Nango, Vernadene Hardy, Justin O'Brien (Executive Officer), Tom Johnson, Tony Djandjul, Darryl Gamarrawu and Eddie Hardy (interpreter), Dell and Doug Hunter.

Discussions were also held with Jeffrey Lee, Andy Ralph, Jenny Hunter, Dell and Doug.

JIM JIM DISTRICT

Jeffrey Lee, Johnny Reid, Violet Lawson, Sandra Ben Tyler (Parks and clan member)

MARY RIVER DISTRICT

Beryl Smith, Elsie Smith, Denise Williams, Josh Hunter, Carl Willika, Joseph Marapunya, Ryan Baruwei, Wendy Willika, Marilyn Pamkal, Rebecca Pamkal, Suzanne Indyawanga, Curtis Ford, Wendy Alangale, and a number of children including Malachy, Tamara, Felecia Alangale; Analiese Williams, Peter Williams

Tourism Industry

Russell Willis, Willis Walkabout Tours; Chris Buykx, World Expeditions; Scott Russell, Tourism Top End; Rick Murray, Middle Star Pty Ltd and Chair of the Kakadu Tourism Consultative Committee; Mick Markham, Werenbun Aboriginal Corporation and Chair of the Kakadu Board of Management; Mick Jerram, NT Immersions; Brian Worsley, AAT Kings; Ben Humphries, Charles Darwin University; Tony Clementson, Tourism Top End and chair for Australia's Timeless North National Landscape; Mark Crummy, NT Parks; Andy Ralph and Jenny Hunter, Kakadu Culture Camp P/L and with staff from Tourism NT.

Aboriginal Businesses in Kakadu National Park

Invitations for contact were forwarded to all known Aboriginal businesses in the Park. This included the following businesses – Gagudji Association, Djigardaba Aboriginal Corporation, Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation, Limilngan-Wulna Land Holding Corporation, Minitja Aboriginal Corporation, Werenbun Aboriginal Corporation, Djabilukgu Association, Warnbi Aboriginal Corporation and Kakadu Culture Camp P/L.

Discussions or contact was made during the course of the project with Rob Trennery (Gagudji Association), Samson Henry/Victor Cooper (Minitja Aboriginal Corporation and Warnbi Aboriginal Corporation), Mick Markham (Werenbun Aboriginal Corporation), Liam Maher (Djabilukgu Association), Preston Lee (Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation), Andy Ralph and Jenny Hunter (Kakadu Culture Camp P/L). Graham Kenyon (Limilngan-Wulna Land Holding Corporation) attended a meeting of the Kakadu Board of Management

Bushwalkers

The main contact with bushwalkers was through bushwalking representatives on the Steering Committee and the websurvey conducted across Australia. The representatives on the Steering Committee were David Reid from Bushwalking Australia and the Darwin Bushwalking Club (Yasmin Barnes, Andy Peart and Marj King). A meeting was held with other members of the Darwin Bushwalking Club in the early stages of the project.

ATTACHMENT 2

REVIEW OF MAIN POLICY DOCUMENTS

Document	Key Directions for Consideration within the KNP Walking Strategy
<p>Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007-2014</p> <p>Statutory management plan applying to the entire Park, including vision and guiding principles, aims, policies and actions.</p>	<p>Recognises day and overnight walking as an important means for visitors to experience Kakadu National Park.</p> <p>Provides for a range of walking opportunities, including new routes and facilities, or the alteration of existing routes and facilities.</p> <p>States that provision of overnight bushwalking opportunities will only be made following approval from relevant Bininj/Munguuy.</p> <p>Requires the development of a 'Bushwalking Strategy' in consultation with Bininj/Munguuy and relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>A Shared Vision for Tourism in Kakadu National Park</p> <p>Guiding document setting out ten principles for a shared tourism vision.</p> <p>The principles strongly place Bininj/Munguuy culture above tourism, and state that "tourism should not be boss of country".</p>	<p>Incorporates a range of 'ideas' for making the shared vision happen, including:</p> <p>Enhancing information and interpretation, including through storytelling and trained guides.</p> <p>Developing quality, higher yield experiences targeted to specific markets - quality not quantity.</p> <p>An emphasis on 'experience' of local culture and environment, rather than sightseeing.</p> <p>Experiences appropriate to the different seasons, and which will attract visitors all year round.</p>
<p>Kakadu National Park Tourism Master Plan 2008-2014</p> <p>Non-statutory master plan, which sets a broad direction for tourism development within the Park, including a strategic framework identifying tourism precincts and 'hubs'. Focus on infrastructure and facilities.</p>	<p>Recommends review and revision of the Bushwalking Management Strategy 1996.</p> <p>Recommends the need for regular monitoring and review of track classifications in consultation with traditional owners.</p> <p>Identifies the need to develop an efficient and customer focused bushwalking permit system.</p> <p>The potential to implement a certification/induction system for independent walkers who are seeking to walk in more remote areas of the Park.</p> <p>Identifies potential for developing an iconic walk, which may provide a business opportunity to Bininj/Munguuy.</p>
<p>A Management Strategy for Bushwalking for the Plan of Management of Kakadu National Park 1996</p> <p>Non-statutory report that provides a general overview of bushwalking within KNP. It provides maps and notes of 'commonly used areas' used by bushwalkers within KNP.</p>	<p>Need for Strategy with bushwalking management evolved in an ad hoc manner and given relatively low priority.</p> <p>Identifies range of concerns among traditional owners about safety, responsibility, impacts and need for management/monitoring controls over bushwalking.</p> <p>Permit system needs to be improved and current approved routes remain available until surveys completed for sites.</p> <p>Advocates using limits based on 'limits of acceptable change'.</p> <p>Aboriginal people be encouraged to participate in bushwalking management and commercial enterprises.</p>

Document

Draft Angarre Gen – A strategy for cultural heritage management in Kakadu National Park 2011
Guiding framework for the implementation of a cultural heritage management program within KNP – it identifies the management requirements that need to be in place.

Key Directions for Consideration within the KNP Walking Strategy

Identifies the existing state of knowledge of cultural heritage values within KNP and provides an overview of its significance.
Sets out the management context including management obligations and responsibility.
Identifies the cultural heritage management issues and what can be done along with important and clear statements made by Bininj/Munguuy members.
Sets out a cultural heritage management action plan with objectives for looking after heritage sites, continuity of living culture, sacred sites, ceremony, cultural heritage objects and collections, looking after cultural heritage records and managing the work.

Sickness Country (Buladjang) Access Protocols
Sets out agreed conditions and processes regarding access to and the protection of the Sickness Country within KNP.

The Protocol includes all associated Aboriginal cultural material such as rock art, archaeological sites, physical artefacts, human, animal and plant remains, photographic, audio and video recordings and reports, maps, field notes and other data.
Forms basis for working in co-operation between Parks Australia, Northern Land Council, Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and Jawoyn traditional owners.
Special Exclusion Areas prohibit entry to identified Bula focal sites (access is allowed for designated exceptional circumstances only) – maps and associated information will be kept confidential.
Visitor access and activities will be prohibited across Sickness Country except where bushwalking permits are allowed (but does not include Special Exclusion Areas).
Unmonitored bushwalking in Sickness Country is to be comprehensively reviewed as a matter of priority.
Behaviour according to Aboriginal tradition in Sickness Country to be communicated to all Park staff and to visitors to the Park.
Importance of traditional access in Sickness Country; research is needed into 'safe routes' especially for groups including women and children.

ATTACHMENT 3

BROADER TOURISM TRENDS

Tourism Trends	Potential Implications for tourism in Australia and Kakadu National Park
Increasing affluence in developing countries	The wealth of developing countries will continue to grow, coupled with a growth in consumption and a desire to travel. Countries with emerging middle classes include Brazil, Russia and India, and China, are likely to become increasingly important international source markets for Australia. These travellers are likely to have a lower level of awareness about Australia, and the Kakadu National Park and innovative marketing based around the right messages will be important to trigger interest.
Projected increases in international travel	Global travel is easier than it has ever been. International travel is expected to double by 2020 - again China is at the forefront of this trend. This means that Australia, the Northern Territory and Kakadu National Park will have to compete with myriad other destinations. Kakadu National Park must position itself in a way that reflects the desires of the key market segments, and be innovative, authentic and capitalise on the unique strengths of the destination (e.g. World heritage Area status, Indigenous culture, landscape and nature). However, this increasing trend could be adversely affected in the longer-term by factors such as rising oil costs and an increasing awareness of environmental issues, and the impacts of travel.
Low cost airlines	Global travel is easier – and cheaper than it has ever been before. Many more people can afford to travel more often, due in large part to the growth in the number of low cost airlines. Low cost airlines are also an important factor in the observed decrease in domestic travel, with international travel becoming affordable to a broader section of the socio-economic spectrum.
Decline in domestic travel	<p>The decline in domestic travel may be attributed to several factors, including the Global Financial Crisis, low cost airlines to overseas destinations and the strength of the Australian dollar. International travel is an attractive and affordable alternative to intrastate/interstate holidays, and considered good value for money. The Global Financial Crisis has resulted in a shift away from non-essential spending (e.g. drop in disposable income) for many of Australia's traditional international source markets (e.g. USA, Britain) and this is having an impact on the amount people spend on travel, and the frequency they undertake holidays.</p> <p>This trend is relevant to Kakadu National Park given the intrastate and interstate markets are major market segments. It will be competing to capture domestic visitors from well-known international destinations.</p>
Rising oil costs (oil crisis)	It is expected that oil costs will continue to rise, given recent (although hotly debated) predictions relating to the depletion of easily accessible oil resources. Australia is a long haul journey for the majority of international travellers and also a longer travel journey for much of the domestic market. Increased travel costs, particularly following a period of affordability, could act as a deterrent for travellers otherwise interested in visiting Australia and the National Park. Rising oil costs could also impact flight scheduling, and the ease with which visitors can access locations, as well as the affordability of hire vehicles. This may be relevant to the Top End given a high proportion of visitors travel via their own vehicle or a hire vehicle.

Tourism Trends	Potential Implications for Tourism in Australia and Kakadu National Park
Environmental awareness and demand for sustainable tourism	<p>There has been a burgeoning interest in environmental, as well as social justice issues, driven in part by increased media coverage and political attention. The concern about environmental issues (e.g. the projected impacts of climate change) are translating to new demands and expectations for tourism operators. A growing number of visitors want to feel that their holiday is not placing unacceptable burden on the local environment, or adversely impacting the lives of local people. They want to feel that their dollar is contributing in a positive way to 'sustainability' and that they are 'treading lightly' on the place in which they have chosen to holiday. Volunteer tourism is an extension of this, where visitors pay to be involved in a conservation or other type of project that directly benefits the local environment and community.</p> <p>Kakadu National Park has the opportunity to benefit from this "green shift" in tourism, with low-impact and innovative tourism experiences, which are sensitive to the local environment, and provide a range of benefits to the traditional land owners and local community.</p>
Climate change	<p>Following on from the above trend, climate change has become the number one environmental and scientific debate of recent years. Data published by the (International Panel on Climate Change) IPCC strongly supports the case for anthropogenic climate change, with sophisticated modelling providing insights into the projected global long-term environmental and social implications. The potential implications of climate change and sea level rises on the South Alligator River within Kakadu National Park have been assessed as part of a case study⁴⁴. This research suggests that future saltwater intrusion is likely to occur and that this will have significant impact on the weather conditions and the frequency, duration and extent of large floods. This in turn will have impact on the key environmental, cultural and economic values of the National Park (e.g. decrease in freshwater flora and species of cultural significance, reduced recreational opportunities).</p> <p>Travel contributes to climate change mainly through the production of CO₂ (e.g. long-haul flights in particular, but including other forms of motorised transport, as well as the production of goods and services). Many travellers are concerned that their travel choices are contributing to global climate change, and are increasingly factoring such considerations into their travel choices.</p>
Ageing population	<p>The global ageing trend driven by the Baby Boomer generation, is reflected in national and state demographic data. People are living longer, and staying healthier for longer, representing an increasingly significant segment of the tourism market. The needs of older people will need to be increasingly considered in the design and delivery of contemporary tourism experiences.</p> <p>The growth in camper/motorhome tourism is an example of this trend with the Top End and Kakadu National Park being leading destinations for attracting this market. Future predictions suggest continued growth in the next 10-15 years (due in part to the Baby Boomers providing the next wave of travellers)</p>

⁴⁴ BMT WBM (2010).Kakadu – Vulnerability to climate change impacts. A report to the Australian Government Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency

Tourism Trends	Potential Implications for Tourism in Australia and Kakadu National Park
Increased technology sophistication and personalisation	<p>The internet has brought about significant changes in the way in which people access information about places they are interested in visiting, and the way in which they book and organise holidays. It has facilitated independent travel and increased flexibility. Ease of access to information through communication technology media also means that visitors are better informed about a destination pre-visit, and will have formed expectations about the type of experience they want before they arrive. In general, the majority of travellers are much more savvy when it comes to communications technology – in particular the use of the internet, than in the past.</p> <p>This requires an ongoing commitment to exploring new technologies, and applying them in innovative ways to improve access to local tourism opportunities. This may include the application of new technologies to information provision and interpretation, or to the design and development of innovative infrastructure and services. This is of particular importance to the marketing and promotion of walking experiences within the National Park, especially extended bushwalks, which require considerable pre-planning.</p>
Increasing demand for authentic, personalised and experience-rich tourism	<p>No longer is the 'build it and they will come' mentality an adequate means of attracting visitors to a destination. Travellers in general, have higher levels of awareness and education, as well as expectations about what the experience offers on a personal level.</p> <p>Increasingly visitors are seeking tourism experiences that are authentic (e.g. true to the location/environment and local culture), are personalised and offer an element of exclusivity (e.g. not a 'mass market' approach), where they can interact, learn and undertake an activity first hand in an intimate setting.</p> <p>Kakadu National Park is a good model of the opportunity for tourism to be integrated with the local community and be built on the strengths of the local environment and culture.</p>

ATTACHMENT 4

PROFILE OF THE SPIRITED TRAVELLERS

	Young and the Restless	Great Outdoors	New Lease of Life	Ready, Set, Adventure	Looking for Inspiration
Positioning Pillars	Indigenous culture, Nature	Indigenous culture, Nature-based adventure	Nature	Indigenous culture, Nature, Nature-based adventure	Nature, Nature-based adventure
Description	Believe there is nothing better than the freedom of travelling and having fun with their friends. They are saving up to travel around Australia as a group. They also want to take their time, enjoy physically challenging activities and make new friends along the way.	Busy balancing work and family. When they travel they seek some quietness and escape from the daily grind. Camping and visiting nature reserves is one way they achieve this. They believe that their kids also benefit from the experience.	Highly motivated by opportunity for personal growth. Can travel longer and they want to experience things and places not experienced before. See emotional nourishment and expanding their perspectives as a way of revitalising themselves and want this to be part of their travel experience.	Enjoy getting back to nature. They feel young and fit and relish the challenging activities like mountain bike riding and bushwalking. Those that have children are keen to introduce them to this active lifestyle as well. They use outdoor activities to strengthen relationships and escape from their usual routine.	They are typically well travelled, and likely to have visited the NT previously. Enjoy the solitude and soul-enhancing feel of the countryside and are likely to be return visitors to places with these qualities. Tend to have significant money to spend on travel as they work but do not have children to support.
Segment size	12%	8%	44%	15%	21%
Profile	18-29 age group, travel with partner or friends	40-45 age group with children at home, travel with partner or as a family	55+ with no children at home, travel with partner or a tour group	30-30 age group, travel with partner or as family	40-54 age group with no children at home, travel alone, with partner or with a group of friends
NT as a destination	65% likely to visit and have particular interest in Kakadu	42% likely to visit and have particular interest in Kakadu	58% likely to visit	52% likely to visit	56% are likely to visit
Walking interest	Bushwalking, trekking and hiking is attractive to market	Walking/bushwalking is an activity they are likely to do	Walking/bushwalking is an activity they are likely to do	Bushwalking, trekking and hiking is attractive to market	Walking/bushwalking is an activity they are likely to do

ATTACHMENT 5

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITY SPECTRUM

	SHORT WALKERS (less than 4hrs)	DAY WALKERS (more than 4hrs)	INDEPENDENT BUSHWALKERS (extended walks overnight stays)	COMMERCIALY GUIDED BUSHWALKERS (extended walks overnight stays)
PHYSICAL FACTORS				
Hazards/risks	Hazard/risk should be low and highly managed. High level of management responsibility evident e.g. warning signs, barriers, diversions.	Risks/hazards are known and management intervention is apparent.	Accept there are risks or hazards but have the equipment, experience, skills and knowledge to deal with these conditions. Low management intervention to manage risk/hazards.	Accept that the tour operator has the equipment, experience, skills and knowledge to deal with these conditions. Low management intervention to manage risk/hazards.
Length of walking track	Choice of short walk options from short (less than 1 hour) to half day walks, preferably with loop/circuit return. Tracks lengths sufficient to cater for very short to half-day walking experiences.	Choice of access to half day to day walks. Track length sufficient for a full day walk experience.	Choice of routes catering for multiple-night experiences.	Choice of routes catering for multiple-night experiences.
Difficulty	Easy-Moderate	Easy - Moderate	Moderate to Challenging	Moderate to Hard
MANAGEMENT FACTORS				
Access	Ideally by 2WD but may be locations or times when 4WD is required. Relatively easy access for emergency response purposes (e.g. via road).	Ideally by 2WD but may be locations or times when 4WD is required. Relatively easy access for emergency response purposes (e.g. via road).	Ideally by 2WD but would expect some locations or times when only accessible by 4WD. Access for emergency response likely to be more difficult (e.g. helicopter).	Possible that 4WD access may be part of the commercial experience. Access for emergency response likely to be more difficult (e.g. helicopter)
Signage	Highest level of information, interpretation and safety signage (e.g. trackheads).	High level of information, interpretation and safety signage. On-track signage less than for highly developed short walks to ensure a sense of 'naturalness'.	Low-level directional signage.	Low-level directional signage.
Parking provision	Capacity for private/hire vehicles, tour operator vehicles and large buses at any highly promoted short walks. Lower capacity at less popular short walks to match level of use.	Parking capacity to match level of use but including provision for tour operator vehicles.	Require secure/safe parking location to leave vehicles for multiple days. Low capacity likely to be required, but may be part of higher use day visit destination.	Require secure/safe parking location to leave vehicles for multiple days. Low capacity likely to be required, but may be part of higher use day visit destination.
Walking Track Difficulty (AS standards)	Class 1-2 (easy to moderate).	Class 2-5 (range of tracks between easy to hard, but typically aimed at a moderate skill level).	Class 3-5 (moderate to hard).	Class 3-5 (moderate to hard).
Disability access	Access for mobility impaired provided at a selection of short walk options. Access may only be to a section of the track.	No provision likely.	No provision likely.	No provision likely.
Walking Track Information	Highest level of information, on-ground (trackhead, interpretation), pre-visit information and marketing of best short walking experiences (e.g. brochure and website). Lower level information for lower level short walks.	Highest level of information, on-ground (trackhead, interpretation), pre-visit information and marketing of best short walking experiences (e.g. brochure and website). High emphasis on climatic conditions required for day walks. Lower level information for lower level day walks.	Do not require trackhead signage but information about any promoted walks should be available in advance (subject to management systems in place). This includes mapping, hazards, and type of experience.	Do not require trackhead signage but information about any promoted walks should be available in advance (subject to management systems in place). This includes mapping, hazards, and type of experience.
Marking of tracks	Track marking required to ensure that walkers with low level of route-finding or general walking experience can easily follow the track.	Sufficient track marking to maintain self-discovery and sense of naturalness (e.g. avoid track markers too close together).	Some track marking may be required as a means of ensuring that walkers stay on approved route alignments.	Some track marking may be required as a means of ensuring that walkers stay on approved route alignments.
Management presence	Would expect to see on-site management presence at times (e.g. rangers, guides).	May see some onsite management presence but not on a regular basis.	Would not expect to see management presence other than associated with fire management, research and monitoring.	Would not expect to see management presence other than associated with fire management, research and monitoring.
Rules and regulations	Would expect some rules and regulations to apply to walking given higher level of use and to minimise potential for conflict in users behaviour (e.g. no access areas, one-way directional tracks).	Would expect some rules and regulations to apply to walking tracks, although lower-level signage, including Walker Code of Conduct.	Permit conditions applying to use of tracks and routes, including Walker Code of Conduct.	Permit conditions applying to use of tracks and routes, including Walker Code of Conduct. Expect tourism operator to be aware of, follow and communicate regulations and rules to guests.
Visitor impact	Would expect some signs of impact from the level of use and also some management intervention to mitigate/reduce impacts (e.g. hardening of surfaces, use of markers, barrier fencing, steps etc).	Would expect some minor signs of impact from the level of use and also management intervention where appropriate (e.g. hardening of surfaces, use of markers, barrier fencing).	Would expect minimal impacts from walking but possibly site impacts at camping sites. Expect tourism operator to be aware of, follow and communicate regulations and rules to guests.	Would expect minimal impacts from walking but possibly site impacts at camping sites.
SOCIAL FACTORS				
Visitation levels	Would expect moderate to high use by visitors with times of congestion and use by large groups.	Would expect low to moderate levels of use by visitors at all times.	Would expect low levels of use and generally not by larger groups.	Would expect low levels of use and generally not by larger groups.
Interaction with other users	High level of contact due to higher visitor numbers, longer periods of contact, possible congestion at times, groups associated with interpretation, and likely to see use by larger groups	Low level of contact (infrequent), short period of contact and expect little use by large groups (exception may be school groups or small tourism operator groups)	Very low level of contact with other users – any contact would be infrequent and for short periods of time (other than at camping locations) with little expectation of meeting large groups	Low level of contact expected and tour operator likely to seek camp locations for group away from other users




Table 2.7. Application of the ROS Framework

Back of A3




ATTACHMENT 6

BUSHWALKER SURVEY RESULTS




1. Have you ever walked or considered doing a walk in Kakadu National Park?

		Response Percent	Response Count
I have done a walk in Kakadu		69.4%	541
I have considered doing one but haven't done so		26.0%	203
Neither of the above		4.6%	36
		answered question	780
		skipped question	7




2. When was the last time you walked in Kakadu?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Within the last year		33.8%	186
1 to 5 years ago		34.1%	188
More than 5 years ago		32.1%	177
		answered question	551
		skipped question	236





3. In which season or seasons did you visit Kakadu? Tick all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Wet season (December-March)		26.4%	146
Dry season (April-September)		92.6%	511
Build Up (October-November)		19.9%	110
		answered question	552
		skipped question	235

4. If you walked in Kakadu in more than one season, which season did you prefer and why?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Wet		24.3%	57
Dry		72.3%	170
Build Up		3.4%	8
	Why?		223
	answered question		235
	skipped question		552






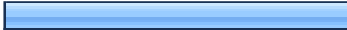



5. What kind of walk or walks did you do? Please tick all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Multi-day, pack carrying walks		70.0%	387
Day walk more than 4 hours		31.5%	174
Day walk 2 to 4 hours		30.9%	171
Day walk of less than 2 hours.		26.2%	145
	answered question		553
	skipped question		234

6. Which of the following areas have you walked in? Please tick all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Mt Brockman Massif (Baroalba Creek above Gubara)		30.7%	115
Barramundi Creek above Maguk		62.6%	234
Koolpin Creek		75.4%	282
Dinner Creek		21.7%	81
Twin Falls Creek		79.1%	296
Jim Jim Creek		72.5%	271
Yurmikmik (Motorcar Creek area)		27.5%	103
Graveside Gorge area		50.3%	188
	Other (please specify where)		76
	answered question		374
	skipped question		413

7. What makes walking in Kakadu special for you? Please tick all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
The rich Aboriginal cultural heritage		87.7%	358
The scenery		98.3%	401
The climate		61.5%	251
The feeling of remoteness		93.9%	383
The reputation of the Park		29.4%	120
Being able to use campfires		55.4%	226
As a contrast to other places walked		43.6%	178
For the challenge		43.6%	178
To engage with Traditional Owners		17.6%	72
None of the above		0.0%	0
answered question			408
skipped question			379

8. How did you find out about overnight walking opportunities in Kakadu? Please tick all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Bushwalking Club		55.8%	222
Internet		21.9%	87
Brochures, maps or other printed material		17.8%	71
Kakadu park staff		9.8%	39
Through a commercial tour operator		37.9%	151
Friends and/or family		32.2%	128
	Other (please specify)		46
answered question			398
skipped question			389





9. Overall, how satisfied were you with your bushwalking experience in Kakadu?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Rating Average	Response Count
	85.0% (322)	13.2% (50)	0.8% (3)	0.5% (2)	0.5% (2)	1.18	
answered question							
skipped question							



10. Please explain how your actual Kakadu bushwalking experience compared with what you expected.

	Response Count
	309
answered question	309
skipped question	478

11. Who did you walk with? Tick all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Independently as an individual or with a private group		43.7%	166
Independently as part of a bushwalking club group		33.4%	127
As an individual with a commercial tour operator		46.3%	176
As part of a bushwalking club group with a commercial tour operator		11.1%	42
	answered question		380
	skipped question		407



12. Were you involved in applying for a bushwalking permit for your group?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		42.3%	110
No		57.7%	150
	answered question		260
	skipped question		527



13. How easy was it to obtain your bushwalking permit?

	Very easy	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Very difficult	Response Count
.	6.4% (7)	32.1% (35)	39.4% (43)	20.2% (22)	1.8% (2)	109
answered question						109
skipped question						678

14. When planning your trip to Kakadu were there any areas where you considered walking but were unable to obtain a permit for?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		60.0%	66
No		40.0%	44
answered question			110
skipped question			677

15. Were you provided with an explanation as to why you couldn't walk in the area?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		71.2%	47
No		28.8%	19
answered question			66
skipped question			721

16. Please use the space below to make any additional comments about your experience with the Kakadu bushwalking permit system

	Response Count
	85
answered question	85
skipped question	702

17. Please use the space below to make any additional comments about your Kakadu bushwalking experience.

	Response Count
	340
answered question	340
skipped question	447

18. The Kakadu Tourism Master Plan discusses the possibility of developing an "iconic" long distance walking trail in the park. Here's what it has to say.

Kakadu is best appreciated over a number of days and there has long been support in the bushwalking community for developing at least one world-class walking experience based on culture and landscape, as is found in other World Heritage national parks.

An iconic walk has the potential to deliver a well interpreted and truly memorable experience for the target market. It could provide visitors with choices to link into some segments of the trail rather than complete the entire walk. A walk of this kind would need to be developed through consultation with traditional owners, most likely from several clan groups, and include more than one route for discussion. It would also need to be based on a properly surveyed, marked and more-or-less constructed trail over a route that minimises cultural and environmental impact.

An iconic walk could be appropriate for guided or self-guided visitors. Its management of walker numbers could confine activity to the trail route line and appropriate nearby features. This will enhance safety and avoidance of culturally sensitive areas.

What do you think of the idea of developing a long distance trail?



	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	Response Count
.	42.4% (286)	26.3% (177)	10.4% (70)	9.1% (61)	7.7% (52)	4.2% (28)	674
	answered question						674
	skipped question						113

19. What do you think that an "iconic" overnight walking opportunity in Kakadu could or should be?

In responding consider existing "iconic" Australian walking trails such as the Cradle Mountain walk in Tasmania, the Larapinta Trail in the MacDonnell Range in Central Australia and the Bibbulmun Trail in Western Australia.

	Response Count
	502
answered question	502
skipped question	285

20. Are there any additional bushwalking opportunities and/or facilities you would like to see introduced into Kakadu in the future?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		50.4%	264
No		49.6%	260



If you answered yes above, please use the space below to outline the things you would like to see introduced. 290

answered question	524
skipped question	263




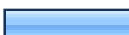
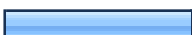
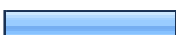

21. Do you have any other suggestions regarding the management of bushwalking in Kakadu?

	Response Count
	331
answered question	331
skipped question	456









22. Are you?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Male		56.1%	364
Female		43.9%	285
answered question			649
skipped question			138

23. How old are you?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Under 20		1.1%	7
20-29		3.8%	25
30-39		12.3%	80
40-49		19.8%	129
50-59		30.0%	196
60-69		27.4%	179
70 or over		5.7%	37
answered question			653
skipped question			134

24. Where are you from?






		Response Percent	Response Count
NT		16.0%	98
Qld		14.3%	88
NSW		35.3%	217
Vic		17.6%	108
Tas		4.7%	29
SA		3.7%	23
WA		4.7%	29
ACT		3.6%	22

Overseas (Which country?) 45

answered question 614

skipped question 173



25. On average, how often do you undertake an overnight bushwalk?

		Response Percent	Response Count
5 or more times per year		33.5%	217
3-4 times per year		25.2%	163
1-2 times per year		24.1%	156
Occasionally but less than once a year		13.0%	84
Never		4.3%	28

answered question 648

skipped question 139

26. Do you belong to a bushwalking club in Australia?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		56.5%	366
No		43.5%	282
answered question			648
skipped question			139

27. The Draft Kakadu Walking Strategy will be available for public comment for a short time after it is released.

If you would like to be notified when it is available, please provide your email address in the space below.

	Response Count
	421
answered question	421
skipped question	366

ATTACHMENT 7

DRAFT KAKADU NATIONAL PARK WALKS POLICY

1.1 Introduction:

The land that is now known as Kakadu National Park has a long history of walking. The ancestors of Bininj/Munguuy traversed their country on foot for thousands of years, moving between the coast, floodplain, and stone country to hunt, gather and trade. The Park has been a favourite destination for avid bushwalkers since the late 1960's. Bushwalkers continue to be attracted to the remote escarpment country for its rugged and beautiful landscape, which many describe as a 'wilderness'.

Short walks provide the main means of accessing and experiencing visitor attractions in the Park, including rock art galleries, wetlands, billabongs, rivers, and other natural and cultural features.

The activity of walking is identified in the Kakadu National Park Plan of Management as providing "one of the best opportunities to experience and become familiar with Kakadu National Park", in a way that is generally low impact. Walking as a mode of travel and way of experiencing and learning about country, is also considered appropriate in a cultural sense, when undertaken in a way that respects country and the values and beliefs of Bininj/Munguuy.

1.2 Policy Intent:

The intent of this policy is to recognise the importance of walking, and to define and communicate the Director of National Park's position on walking (including both day and overnight bushwalks), within Kakadu National Park.

The Policy incorporates:

- Definitions of terminology specific to the topic of walking;

- Where walking can and cannot occur;

- Guidelines and procedures relating to the sustainable planning, construction, management and maintenance of walking, such as:

 - cultural heritage management as it relates to walking;

 - walking track classification system and construction standard;

 - the need to set walker numbers on routes;

 - bushwalking permit system;

 - information provision, including pre-visit, on-ground signage, interpretation, and promotion of opportunities;

 - monitoring and data collection;

visitor safety and emergency procedures; and
enforcement.

1.3 Definitions:

‘Approved bushwalking routes’ means: those routes where a permit is required to be issued for bushwalking within Kakadu National Park.

‘Australian Standards for Walking Tracks’ means: the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1-2001), and the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks; Infrastructure Design (AS 2156.2–2001).

‘Australian Walking Track Grading System’ means: the *Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System*⁴⁵. The Users Guide details the practical application of the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks, and assigns five main walking track categories:

Grade 1 Track (AS 2165.1 Class 1); “No bushwalking experience required. Flat even surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for wheelchair users who have someone to assist them. Walks no greater than 5km”;

Grade 2 Track (AS 2165.1 Class 2); “No bushwalking experience required. The track is a hardened or compacted surface and may have a gentle hill section or sections and occasional steps. Walks no greater than 10km”;

Grade 3 Track (AS 2165.1 Class 3); “Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Some bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may have short steep hill sections and rough surface and many steps. Walks up to 20km”;

Grade 4 Track (AS 2165.1 Class 3); “Bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough and very steep. Directional signage may be limited”; and

Grade 5 Track (AS 2165.1 Class 5 and 6); “Very experienced bushwalkers with specialised skills, including navigation and emergency first aid. Tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked. Walks may be more than 20km”,

‘Bushwalking’ means a walk undertaken by self-reliant walkers or walking with the assistance of tour operator guides and includes walks for more than 3 hours and walks involving camping or staying overnight.

⁴⁵ Walking Tracks Grading and Improvement Project, Victorian Government (2010) *Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System*, Victoria.

'PLB' means personal locator beacon carried by walkers to aid communication in serious emergency situations that are or could become life threatening.

'Short Walk' means: walks with a duration of less than a full day, and encompasses the following categories referred to in the Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy:

less than 2 hours;

2-4 hours (half day); and

more than four hours (day walk).

'Track' means: an approved and formalised walking route, which is of an appropriate standard (e.g. including level of construction and associated infrastructure) for the intended track category under the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks. 'Track' is generally associated with short-day walks in Kakadu National Park.

'Trackhead' means: the start or entry to a walking track, or network of tracks, where a sign provides detailed information for visitors about the track experience, conditions and risks

'Route' means: an unmarked 'way' or corridor within the Park, where visitors are able bushwalk with a permit. Routes are not formally constructed tracks (e.g. there is no hardened track surface, drainage, signage and track markers, or other infrastructure associated with constructed tracks).

'Bushwalking Permit System' means: the official system used by Parks to assess the approval, refusal or modification of applications for bushwalking on approved routes within the Park. The permit system is associated with a set of conditions used to manage bushwalking.

'Satellite Phone' means: a type of mobile phone, which can be carried on a person, and connects to satellites instead of land-based service towers or sites. Satellite phones provide a means of communication in locations where land-based service is not available (as is the case throughout much of Kakadu National Park).

'Sustainable' means: environmentally, socially and economically sustainable (i.e. triple bottom line success). This means that resources and funding are sufficient to ensure ongoing management, repairs and maintenance can be undertaken. The walks should be an exemplar of environmental 'best practice', and have the potential to provide long-term, ongoing benefits to the community.

1.4 Policy Statements:

1.4.1. The Director of National Parks (the Director) supports walking as a valid and important means of experiencing the natural environment and culture of Kakadu

National Park. A diversity of walking opportunities will be provided to cater for the range of visitors, including:

short-day walks (e.g. less than 2hrs, half-day, and full-day) of varying levels of difficulty, some of which are promoted as the 'must do' short walks in the Park;

other short-day walks, which are not actively promoted as 'must do' walks, but provide additional walking opportunities for visitors;

multi-day bushwalks, some of which are promoted and marketed as the 'Kakadu bushwalks' in the Park, and follow 'approved bushwalking routes'; and

other multi-day bushwalks, which are not actively promoted, but also follow 'approved bushwalking routes'.

1.4.2. Walking, as a recreational activity and tourism opportunity, will be developed and managed in accordance with the Kakadu National Park Shared Vision Principles.

1.4.3. Walking is permitted only on designated roads, tracks and routes open to the public and approved by Bininj/Munguuy. Walking off designated roads, tracks, or routes is prohibited under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Regulations 2000*, and attracts a fine. Section 12.55 of the *EPBC Regulations 2000* defines a 'track' available for walking if:

a) a sign or other marker indicating that the track is for walking (or riding) is displayed near the track; or

b) the track is indicated as a track for walking (or riding) under the management plan.

1.4.4. Walking in Kakadu National Park will be underpinned by respect for the culture and values of Bininj/Munguuy, who will be involved with Parks Australia in determining where visitors can and cannot walk, when they can walk (e.g. seasonal or cultural constraints on timing), the type of walking infrastructure that is appropriate on country, and how walking is managed.

1.4.5. Walking opportunities will generally be located within, or easily accessible from existing visitor 'hubs' and precincts (e.g. as described in the *Kakadu National Park Tourism Master Plan*) and will:

contribute to strengthening the diversity and quality of the visitor experience available in these areas;

minimise the need for new visitor amenities, services and infrastructure; and

concentrate visitor impacts away from culturally or environmentally sensitive areas.

1.4.6. Kakadu National Park will adopt and implement the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks – Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1 - 2001), and the Australian Standards for Walking Tracks – Infrastructure Design (AS 2156.2 – 2001), to guide track classification, design and construction. The Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System⁴⁶ will form the basis for the classification and communication of the difficulty and type of experience of walking tracks within the Park.

1.4.7. Kakadu National Park will use the *Australian Standards for Walking Tracks – Classification and Signage* (AS 2156.1 – 2001) as a general guide for the design of signage (e.g. style, type of information and location), and trail marking.

1.4.8. The bushwalking permit system will apply to all 'approved bushwalking routes', and may also apply to some designated day walks. The permit system will:

be an online user-based system, backed up by a phone option, to streamline efficiency and administration;

incorporate a fee for all overnight bushwalks, the proceeds of which will be used directly for the management of bushwalking - fees will apply on a per person, per trip (e.g. average trip length per route) basis, and be structured around the following categories:

independent bushwalkers;

commercial bushwalking groups;

community (non-commercial) bushwalking groups, including schools and bushwalking clubs; and

be associated with conditions, including:

the completion of an online bushwalker induction process, and a commercial operator training program;

a requirement for bushwalkers to carry a satellite phone (e.g. one phone per group);

a requirement for bushwalkers to carry their permit as specified;

a requirement for bushwalkers to follow in-park registration and de-registration procedures; and

⁴⁶ Walking Tracks Grading and Improvement Project, Victorian Government (2010) *Users Guide to the Australian Walking Track Grading System*, Victoria.

a requirement for bushwalkers to remain within the defined route corridor other than for identified safety or risk reasons⁴⁷;

will incorporate the option for a special permit to be issued, subject to approval of Bininj/Munguuy, for bushwalking within the Park to conduct approved research or management investigations;

act as a management tool by setting walker number limits applying to each route, as set out in Section 5.1.5 of the *draft Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy* – indicative walker number limits should be trialled over a number of years, and adapted following the results of monitoring;

incorporate walker information (e.g. a bushwalker ‘package’, including detailed mapping, permit slip to be displayed in car window, Code of Conduct, and interpretive information); and

be associated with a walker survey as part of the ongoing monitoring process for bushwalking management in the Park.

1.4.9. All proposed actions associated with walking tracks (e.g. new tracks, realignments and/or upgrades) will be subject to the ‘assessment of proposals’ process outlined in Section 8.3 of the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*. This process includes:

consideration and assessment of proposed walking track actions in accordance with Table 2 (impact assessment procedures), and Table 3 (environmental impact and assessment matters and considerations), in Section 8.3 of the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*; and/or

assessment of proposed walking track actions defined as ‘controlled actions’ under the EPBC Act.

1.4.10. The Director has the ability to close roads, tracks or routes to walking for safety, environmental, cultural, or seasonal reasons. Walking access to roads, tracks and routes may be suspended temporarily due to:

extreme conditions (e.g. high temperatures in combination with lack of water along tracks and routes);

visitor safety concerns including presence of saltwater crocodiles, feral animals, fire (including management burns), or other risk issue (e.g. unstable or washed-out tracks, and flash flooding);

⁴⁷ As a specified condition of the permit, a distance of greater than 50m either side of the route may be allowed within an approved designated camping area or zone.

adverse impacts on the environment or cultural heritage of the Park, including erosion, damage to vegetation, impact on threatened species, or evidence of damage, illegal or unacceptable access to rock art or other sites of cultural significance to Bininj/Munguuy;

Bininj/Munguuy cultural practices on country (e.g. customary hunting and harvesting, sorry business, or other cultural gatherings); and

seasonal conditions, such as high water levels.

Permanent closure of roads, tracks and routes may also occur, in the event that such an action has been assessed to be justified under the assessment of proposals process outlined in the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*.

1.4.11. Regular track monitoring (e.g. for risk assessment, general condition, and environmental and cultural heritage management) and data collection (e.g. walker numbers, profiling and feedback) will be undertaken to provide a good information base for future comparison of impact and conditions, and to ensure that tracks and routes are sustainably managed.

Monitoring and research will be consistent with the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*, and may include:

regular (e.g. annual or bi-annual) on-ground assessments of short-day walks;

scheduled on-ground environmental and cultural assessments of approved bushwalking routes, undertaken on foot or by helicopter by Park staff and Bininj/Munguuy, including photo point monitoring, measuring of changes in track condition (e.g. location and extent of erosion and soil displacement), and assessing the condition of camping sites, and vegetation disturbance;

installing automatic track counters on popular tracks and routes;

a standardised survey for bushwalkers; and

walker profiling and gathering of feedback through the development of a standardised walker survey, undertaken annually or biannually (e.g. online and/or 'face-to-face' survey).

A consistent set of sustainability indicators and delivery methodology should be developed, to allow qualitative and quantitative to be compared over time, such as water quality, track/route and campsite condition, socio-economic mix of walker, level of walker satisfaction, % cost recovery from fees.

1.4.12. Up to date information will be provided about the range of walking opportunities within the Park, including, but not limited to:

pre-visit online information with links to the different walk categories, and incorporating information about safety/hazards, difficulty, type of experience, and with quality images on the official Park website;

a comprehensive 'short walks' brochure/booklet, detailing all approved short and day walks, organised by visitor hubs/precincts, with basic location and track maps, and including safety, access, seasonality, type of experience, and difficulty information;

detailed topographic maps and track notes for the Kakadu bushwalks, including topographic, distance, and track profile information of a detail to allow navigation and day-to-day trip planning; and

regular online updates of track conditions, hazards, and closures, reinforced by posting of information at visitor nodes/precincts and trackheads.

1.4.13. Visitor safety is of the utmost importance to Bininj/Munguuy. Walker safety in the Park will be managed through the implementation of the following safety and compliance procedures:

an improved permit system, including improved information for walkers, and a number of new conditions intended to improve safety of walkers, including:

requiring all bushwalking parties to carry a satellite phone or a PLB;

a walker registration and de-registration system; and

regular search and rescue training for Park staff.

1.4.14. A Walker Code of Conduct will be developed and implemented in the Park, based on the universal 'Leave No Trace principles', with an emphasis on 'respect for country', minimising impacts on cultural heritage and natural values, and as a means to improve compliance with permit conditions. The Walker Code of Conduct will be incorporated into walking information including trackhead signage, printed material, and with overnight bushwalking permits.

1.4.15. Other compliance and enforcement mechanisms will be implemented as outlined in the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan* and the *Kakadu National Park Walking Strategy*, including a track ranger program.

1.4.16. Commercially guided walking operations are provided for under the *Kakadu National Park Management Plan*. All proposals for guided walking tours and associated ventures will be assessed according to the assessment of proposals

process (Section 8.3 of the Management Plan). All commercially guided walking operations:

will be associated with an annual permit fee;

be subject to regular review to ensure that conditions and protocols associated with individual permits are being followed, and that environmental, cultural, and visitor experience quality conditions are not adversely impacted; and

may also require a special lease or license.

ATTACHMENT 8

LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLES

Principles	Summary
Plan Ahead and Prepare	<p><i>Educate yourself:</i> know the regulations and special concerns for any area that you visit.</p> <p><i>Ask first:</i> ask about local Indigenous cultural heritage, ecology and minimum impact practices</p> <p><i>Plan for your group size:</i> the area in which you choose to travel should reflect the skill level and objectives of your group</p> <p><i>Keep it small:</i> Whenever it is possible, visit natural and cultural heritage places in small groups of no greater than 6 to 8</p> <p>Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use</p> <p><i>Use proper gear:</i> prepare for extreme weather, hazards and emergencies</p> <p>Plan your meals and carry water</p> <p><i>Develop the skills:</i> practices vary depending on where you are</p> <p><i>Take responsibility:</i> getting lost has dangerous and hazardous implications for you, the people who attempt to find you, and the environment</p>
Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces	<p><i>Concentrate use in popular areas:</i> in popular areas, aim to concentrate use on tracks, established campsites and other developed sites</p> <p>Stay on designated tracks, and use established campsites</p> <p><i>Disperse use in natural areas:</i> where there are no established routes, tracks or campsites, use the most durable surfaces such as bare rock, gravel, sand or navigable water</p> <p><i>Protect fresh water resources:</i> camp at least 100m away if possible</p>
Dispose of Waste Properly	<p><i>Practice good sanitation/human waste:</i> use toilets if available, if not deposit solid waste into a 10-15cm 'cat hole' or use rocks to cover, at least 100m from water</p> <p>Carry out all other waste</p>
Leave What You Find	<p><i>Respecting culture:</i> Indigenous rock art and engravings are manifestations of belief; never interfere with rock surfaces and cultural artefacts, and some sites may have specific rules</p> <p><i>Conserve the past:</i> It is illegal to excavate, disturb, or remove objects from cultural heritage places</p> <p>Leave natural objects undisturbed</p> <p>Take steps to stop the spread of invasive species</p>
Minimise Campfire Impacts	<p>Check local regulations and conditions</p> <p><i>Use a fuel stove:</i> on a durable, non-flammable surface rather than an open fire in sensitive and remote areas</p>

Principles	Summary
Respect Wildlife	<p><i>Observe from a distance:</i> don't disturb wildlife to get a better photo</p> <p>Avoid sensitive times and habitats</p> <p><i>Never feed animals:</i> feeding wildlife damages their health alters natural behaviours, and exposes them to predators and other dangers</p> <p>Store food and rubbish carefully</p>
Be Considerate of Your Hosts and Other Visitors	<p><i>Respect traditional owners and their country:</i> respect the community's story associated with a particular site; recognise, acknowledge and respect local knowledge</p> <p><i>Always ask first:</i> respect the three 'R's'; relationship (spiritual beliefs connect different clans to the land and water of a particular area. This is a person's 'country'; responsibility (relationship to country carries important cultural and spiritual responsibilities; respect (respect Indigenous knowledge and beliefs, which place cultural restrictions on stories or places due to gender, status for ceremonial reasons; respect all sites of sacred, archaeological or historical significance</p> <p>Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience</p> <p><i>Maintain a cooperative spirit, and yield to others:</i> whether you are running, walking or riding a mountain bike, maintain control, politely announce your presence and proceed with caution before passing others</p> <p><i>Keep a low profile:</i> if possible, camp out of site and sound of tracks and other visitors</p> <p><i>Let nature's sounds prevail:</i> avoid the use of bright lights, radios, electronic games and other intrusive urban devices</p>

ATTACHMENT 9

INVENTORY OF EXISTING SHORT-DAY WALKS

Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km) Return	Walk Type	Track Category	Brief Description	Issues and Opportunities	Recommended Improvements	Must Do' Walk
South Alligator	South Alligator	Ayal Walk		? less than 2 hrs	Grade 2	Not in visitor guide. Did not access this walk due to seasonal closure.	Low visitor numbers due to remote location, and is resource intensive given the need to re-establish following the wet season and impact of storms. Feral animal risk (e.g. pigs).	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.	No
	South Alligator	Gun-garre Walk	3.6	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	This walk can start from the southern end of the Aurora Kakadu Resort through monsoon forest and woodlands to reach the billabong (0.8km). Alternatively it can be accessed from the Resort through woodland to the billabong (3.6km). Incorporates viewing pontoon on the Anggardabal Billabong.	Seasonal closure restricts access to this track. Access to the pontoon is not possible at higher water levels on the billabong.	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 loop - the shorter end may appeal to some visitors with time restrictions. Consider extension of the pontoon to higher land level to improve accessibility for longer in the year. Install standardised track markers where required.	No
	South Alligator	Mamakala Bird Hide Walk	~0.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 1 Walk	High quality boardwalk to large bird hide. Accessible to a wide range of users.	This track is not accessible at times due to the water levels covering the pathway to the interpretation hide. The opportunities for making this short walk accessible all seasons should be investigated although it may involve substantial infrastructure costs given the length of the path. Updated interpretation, and continuation of the seasonal ranger/TO activities will ensure that this walk continues to be an attractive visitor experience, showcasing the wetland, bird life, and traditional use of the area.	Update thematic interpretation. Continue and enhance the seasonal ranger and Aboriginal guide program, including interactive activities, talks and walks. Potential to further enhance the bird hide experience with the creation of more intimate spaces for individuals to experience away from large groups. Ensure track surface is clear of debris and suitable for assisted wheelchair access.	Yes
	South Alligator	Mamukala Circuit	3	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Very level, mown track on the edge of the wetland. Easy walking, but exposed.	Poor quality experience - with only glimpse of the wetland, and through monotonous grassy landscape. Very exposed. Potential for a second wetland viewing platform part way along the track may add an element of interest - particularly for bird enthusiasts.	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 basic maintenance.	No
Head Quarter	Jabiru	Bowali Walking and Cycling Track	4	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Utilitarian connection between Bowali and Jabiru. Important local connection for residents and staff, as well as for visitors staying in Jabiru. Level with good surface.		Improve signage (e.g. directional, including at road crossings and track intersections for safety).	No
	Jabiru	Illigadjarr Billabong Walk	3.8	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Level, well-defined and shady path to a large billabong at the Malabanjbanjju campground. Scenic picnic spot at the end of the track. Popular with campers, as it connects the campsites to the billabong.		Install basic trackhead and directional signage. Consider interpretation of vegetation types and traditional use of specific plants.	No
	Nourlangie	Anbangbang Billabong Walk	2.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Attractive billabong walk with impressive views to Nourlangie Rock. Wide, level track, not modified except by slashing.	Subject to early closing due to rising water levels covering the access road, car park and picnic facilities on the eastern side of the billabong.	Investigate the potential to make the track all season accessible by upgrading the last part 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).	Yes
	Nourlangie	Barrk Walk	12	Day	Grade 4 Walk	One of Kakadu's highest quality day walking experiences, providing relatively easy access to a stone country landscape - a taste of the escarpment country. This track is very exposed, with no water at the end of the dry season.	The track is well marked, but requires improved trackhead signage and pre-walk information. Potential to better develop and promote shorter walk options using this circuit, including reinforcing the first lookout as a destination, and potentially establishing a second lookout/destination approx. half way around as an alternative to completing the entire 12km circuit.	Install detailed trackhead signage in place of existing signage (e.g. at the track junction near the Gunwarddehwards 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 existing orange arrows). Develop a detailed track map, including warnings about high temperatures etc. Continue policy of closing track in high temperatures (e.g. 37 degrees and above).	Yes
Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km) Return	Walk Type	Track Category	Brief Description	Issues and Opportunities	Recommended Improvements	Must Do' Walk
Head Quarter	Nourlangie	Bubba Wetland Walk	3.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Follows management vehicle track on a circular walk past several wetland habitats.	Often early seasonal closure due to feral animals and rising water levels.	Develop and install basic trackhead signage.	No

	Nourlangie	Gubara Pools Walk	6	Half-day	Grade 3 Walk	One of the most diverse and interesting half day walks in the Park. Whilst the track is predominately a vehicle management trail, it is level and easy to walk, and quite shady. The monsoon rainforest and small plunge pools are interesting.		Relocate 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).	Yes
	Nourlangie	Mirrai Lookout	3.6	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Steep and rocky track with evidence of erosion. Large lookout, but views are obscured by vegetation. Only distant views of the escarpment possible from this location.	Evidence of erosion. Lookout is obscured by vegetation. Requires improved signage describing trail condition, difficulty, and experience.	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, and improving the track alignment (e.g. following the natural contours) and improving the standard of the track surface.	No
	Nourlangie	Nawurlandja Lookout	1.2	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Short walk over rock shelves to a rocky high point. One of the best lookout experiences in the northern part of the park. Interesting geology and elevation of surrounding landscape, and clear views to Lightning Dreaming on the edge of the adjacent escarpment.	Potential for interpretation based on the story of the Lightning Dreaming, which ties in well with the painting of the Lightning Man in the gallery below. Requires trackhead signage and improved track delineation. Traditional Owners indicated that they don't want visitors accessing the country immediately behind the main lookout due to presence of significant site. Access along the bottom of the Nawurlangja rock (e.g. heading left towards Anbangbang Billabong) from the main track before the stairs) is also to be closed to the public for cultural reasons.	Install basic trackhead signage (this lookout walk should be included on trackhead signage at the main Nawurlandja 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) above the main lookout area, and a 'management vehicles only' sign at the left branch of the track at the base of Nawurlandja rock.	Yes
	Nourlangie	Nanguluwur Art Site Walk	3.6	2hr-half day	Grade 2 Walk	Short walk to significant art site which can form part of the Barrk circuit.	Lack of any trackhead signage or information at the start of the track to inform visitors of the walk experience. Overall track experience is reduced by walking along a vehicle track. Requires improved signage, including warning sign at the base of the scree slope below the art site.	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.	Yes
	Nourlangie	Nourlangie Main Gallery and Shelter Loop	1.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Follows vehicle track through attractive woodland. Premier art site experience. Well-designed raised boardwalk, providing low-impact access to shelters. Well-formed steps to shelter.		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.	Yes
	Nourlangie	Gunwarddehwardde Lookout	~1.5-2	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Extension of the Nourlangie Main Gallery and Shelter Loop. Rocky and uneven steps. Views of the sandstone cliffs of Nourlangie outlier, surrounding forest and plains.	Requires improved signage, and improved track surface in places.	Upgrade track surface along the final section before the lookout - stabilise surface to minimise erosion and improve walking experience and safety. Improve the lookout (e.g. seating, interpretation and improved basic trackhead for the Barrk walk).	Yes
East Alligator	East Alligator	Bardedjildji Walk	2.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Easy track winding through interesting rocky outcrops/outliers.	Opportunity to improve the experience with interpretation and trackhead signage. Requires track markers along some short sections. Quite exposed along some sections. First section of the track follows the East Alligator River, where there may be a risk of crocodiles when the water level is higher. Rangers close this area off when water levels begin to rise, and switch to the wet season loop.	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 along the track). Investigate the need to install croc barriers along river section of track.	Yes
	East Alligator	Sandstone and River Walk	6.5	2hr - half-day	Grade 2 Walk	Wide natural surface, bridges, good condition. Seasonal closure meant that could only access part of this track.		Upgrade signage, particularly at track junctions. Consider interpretation.	No
Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km)	Walk Type	Track Category	Brief Description	Issues and Opportunities	Recommended Improvements	Must Do' Walk
East Alligator	East Alligator	Manggarre Rainforest Walk	1.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Shady and easy track through monsoon rainforest, with viewing points to the river to womens sacred site.	Improved trackhead signage which illustrates the three loop options and reinforces the message and protocol associated with the women's site.	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.	Yes

	East Alligator	Ubirr Loop	1	less than 2 hrs	Grade 1-2 Walk	Premier art site experience - highly promoted and visited. First section of the track is an easy grade, suitable for assisted wheelchair access with minor upgrades.	Opportunities to enhance the experience by updating interpretation, trackhead and on-track signage. The high number of visitors passing on the return track compromises the visitor experience during busy times.	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).	Yes
	East Alligator	Ubirr Lookout	0.25	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Highly promoted and visited lookout experience (e.g. sunset at Ubirr). Fantastic vista of Nadab Floodplain.	Visitor experience and safety could be enhanced by improving access to the main lookout. Traditional Owners expressed concerns about visitor safety to the lookout, and indicated that steps or similar could be considered to assist visitors.	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).	Yes
	East Alligator	Merl Campground-Border Store Walk	1.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 1 Walk	Utilitarian connection between the campground and the Border Store. The campground end of the track follows a vehicle management track, and the latter section passes through interesting country with large sandstone boulders and outcrops. Facilitates safe movement for visitors staying in the campground.		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.	No
	East Alligator	Merl Campground-Cahills Crossing Walk	1.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 1 Walk	Utilitarian connection to Cahills Crossing, branches off Merl Campground-Border Store 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.	No
Jim Jim	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Barrk Marlam Walk	6	Half-day	Grade 4 Walk	One of the best half-day walk experiences in the Park, providing a taste of the sandstone escarpment country.	Views from the edge of the escarpment into the Jim Jim gorge. Experience could be enhanced with detailed trackhead signage, consistent track markers, and interpretation. Information about exposed and challenging conditions needs to be presented clearly. Traditional owners and Park staff expressed concerns about visitors scrambling down to the lower platform - for safety (unstable and rugged terrain) and cultural reasons (there is a painting located on the lower platform).	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. Continue track closures in hazardous conditions (e.g. high temperatures and times of limited water availability).	Yes
Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km) Return	Walk Type	Track Category	Brief Description	Issues and Opportunities	Recommended Improvements	Must Do' Walk

Jim Jim	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Jim Jim Falls Walk	2	less than 2 hrs	Grade 4 Walk	The most popular short walk experience in the southern part of the Park - well-promoted, with imagery of the gorge. The Jim Jim plunge pools are one of the few relatively easily accessible locations that visitors can swim in the Park (this is not actively promoted).	The boulder hopping/scrambling is challenging for some visitors. Traditional owners and Parks staff expressed concerns about safety of less-mobile visitors, as many falls occur each year sometimes requiring helicopter evacuation. Upgrading the first section of the track as far as the first pool (e.g. to a Grade 2 standard), to allow less mobile visitors to view the falls is planned to occur in the near future. Experience could be improved with interpretation (e.g. at the first viewing pool), and detailed trackhead signage, alerting visitors to the challenging terrain orientating walkers and alerting them to the challenging terrain.	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 assessing whether the proposed track upgrade to the viewing pool can be sustainably constructed and maintained (e.g. will be relatively robust to withstand the amount of water flowing through the gorge in the wet season, and does not compromise cultural values). Improve delineation of the Barrk Marlam track where it branches off the Jim Jim Falls Walk.	Yes
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Budjmi Lookout	1	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Short, steep walk to lookout providing vistas of the adjacent escarpment country (including Jim Jim and Twin Falls gorges), and a perspective of the scale of the surrounding landscape.	Requires improved trackhead signage. There are opportunities for interpretation at the 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).	No
		Twin Falls Walk	1.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Very popular visitor attraction in the southern part of the Park. Short walk with some boulder scrambling, combined with short, interpreted boat trip through the Twin Falls gorge.	The boulder hopping/scrambling is challenging for some visitors. Experience could be improved with interpretation and detailed trackhead signage, alerting visitors to the challenging terrain.	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.	Yes
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Twin Falls Plateau Walk	6	Half-day	Grade 4 Walk	One of the best half-day walks experiences in the Park - well-promoted. Similar to the Barrk Marlam, offers a taste of the escarpment country. The experience differs from Barrk Marlam in that the country is less-exposed - with a section of the trail following along Twin Falls Creek, with shady monsoonal rainforest vegetation. Steep, rough section of track at the start of the walk, which levels out to interesting and fairly easy walking. Opportunities for swimming upstream in Twin Falls Creek.	Requires trackhead signage and improved directional markers.	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. Continue track closures in high temperatures (e.g. 37 degrees and above).	Yes
	Jim Jim and Twin Falls	Mardugal Billabong Walk	1	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Level, defined path along the edge of the Mardugal Billabong.		Consider interpretation of the bushfoods growing along the track.	No
	Yellow Water	Yellow Water Boardwalk	0.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 1 Walk	One of the best (very) short walks in the Park, with high quality and interesting boardwalk infrastructure allowing visitors to be emerged in the yellow waters wetland landscape. A focal point for wetland experiences in the Park.		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).	Yes
	Yellow Water	Yellow Water Walk (seasonally submerged trail between Yellow Waters and Gagudju Lodge)	2.6	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	This walk is an extension of the Yellow Waters boardwalk, and provides a scenic experience as well as a utilitarian link to Cooida.	Seasonal closure prevented access to this track - the track wasn't officially opened for the 2011 dry season. The location of the track means that it is prone to prolonged inundation, and vegetation growth.	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).	No
Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km) Return	Walk Type	Track Category	Brief Description	Issues and Opportunities	Recommended Improvements	Must Do' Walk

Yellow Water	Yellow Water	Gun-gardun Woodland Walk	2	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Very flat and easy woodland walk experience associated with the Mardugal campground. Traverses a seemingly uniform landscape, that whilst has strong ecological and cultural values, are not readily obvious to visitors.	The visitor experience could be improved by creating a stronger trackhead away from the main road, and shortening the length of the circuit to take in the most interesting part of the woodland. The poor condition of seating and signs along the length of the track also detracts from the visitor experience.	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.	No
Mary River	Mary River	Maguk Plunge Pool Walk	2	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Boardwalk through wet, shady forest to scenic plunge pool. Seasonally inundated, but boardwalk makes walking fairly easy.	Crossing the river just below the plunge pool is difficult, but could be improved to enhance and make the experience safer. Can swim in the plunge pool, although saltwater crocs are known to have occurred in this area. Traditional owners and Park staff expressed concerns about visitors walking to the top of the small waterfall. The informal track is steep, rocky and eroded in places, resulting in environmental and cultural concerns. Traditional Owners also expressed concerns about the behavior of visitors (in particular tour groups) who jump of rocks into the water and wander around at the top of the falls.	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.	No
	Mary River	Bukbukluk Lookout	0.4	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2 Walk	Very short and easy walk, with views of the woodland landscape.	The lookout experience is not strong, due to a lack of formalisation and interpretation of the woodland landscape (visitors are not sure what they are looking at). There is an opportunity to interpret the European use of the landscape (e.g. the Goodparla Station and operations) to make more sense of why there is a lookout in this area.	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 (eg. 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. Do not promote as a 'Must Do' walk.	No
	Mary River	Gungural Lookout	3	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	This walk provides an activity for visitors camping in the area, but is not likely to attract significant use from passing visitors.		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.	No
	Mary River	Gungural River Walk	1	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	This walk provides an activity for visitors camping in the area, but is not likely to attract significant use from passing visitors.	The landscape is not strong, and the poor signage contributes to this (e.g. it is confusing when the dry river bed is reached and the trail peeters out before reaching the South Alligator River).	See above. Install standardised track markers through the sandy riverbed section.	No
	Mary River	Gunlom Lookout	2	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	One of the most popular short walking experiences in the Park. The climb is steep, but with the reward of views over the southern part of the Park and access to the top of the falls.	Track stabilisation work, interpretation and improved trackhead would enhance the visitor experience.	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 the 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 this steep 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.	Yes
Management District	Precincts/Hub	Track Name	Length (km)	Walk Type	Track Category	Brief Description	Issues and Opportunities	Recommended Improvements	Must Do' Walk
Mary River	Mary River	Gunlom Plunge Pool	0.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 1 Walk	Very short and easy walk to the most easily accessible plunge pool attraction in the Park.	Experience could be improved with interpretation and upgraded trackhead signage.	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. Promote as a 'Must Do' walk.	Yes

	Mary River	Murrill Billabong Walk	2.5	less than 2 hrs	Grade 2/3 Walk	Easy walk to Murrill Billabong, and onto the South Alligator River.	Track is uneven in places from trampling by feral animals and inundation, and the end point at the river is currently a poor experience, with evidence of trampling (denuded of vegetation and large patches of dusty bare ground). Directional signage is in need of replacement, as is the temporary bunting used for track marking. The experience of the billabong could be enhanced by the addition of an artful bird hide or viewing platform. Exposed walking in the heat.	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.	No
	Mary River	Boulder Creek Loop	2	less than 2 hrs	Grade 3 Walk	Easy short walk to small pool, providing a good water experience on a hot day.	The experience could be enhanced through improved signage (current signage is confusing and in need of standardisation). Not the strongest walking experience at Yurmikmik, but accessible for those visitors who don't want to do, or are not able to do the longer walks.	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.	No
	Mary River	Motor Car Falls Walk	7.5	Day	Grade 3 Walk	One of the most popular half day walking experiences in the Park. The walk is level and easy, with sections in shade, with the reward of a swim in a plunge pool at the end. Very popular with tour groups.		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.	Yes
	Mary River	Kurrundie Creek Falls	11	Day/Overnight	Grade 4 Walk	This track is currently promoted as a day circuit, and provides a good experience for fit and experienced bushwalkers.	The track is hot and exposed in places. Traditional Owners expressed concerns about access to the top of both falls, including the use of an informal track across the top of the escarpment between the two destinations (primarily used by tour operators), and indicated that they would like this track to require a permit in the future.	See above re trackhead signage (main trackhead to be located in the Yurmikmik car park). Close and rehabilitate informal track between Motor Car Falls and Kurrundie Falls along escarpment. Remove existing signage, printed and on-line information referring to this track being a day experience not requiring a permit. Develop new information about permit requirements for this circuit. Install standardised directional signage and track markers. Liaise with tour operators re unauthorised access to the top of the falls (and consider reviewing commercial permit conditions).	No
	Mary River	Yurmikmik Lookout	5	Half-day	Grade 3 Walk	Did not access this walk.		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.	No

ATTACHMENT 10
BENCHMARKING OF COMMERCIAL WALKS AND A
PROFILE OF THE JATBULA TRAIL AND THE
LARAPINTA TRAIL

Roofed Accommodation			
Walk	Operator	\$/day	Type of accommodation
Overland Track Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmania	Cradle Huts	\$466 (peak months)	Luxury, exclusive eco-huts
Maria Island Walk Maria Island, Tasmania	Maria Island Walks	\$537	Luxury standing camp, and historic cottage accommodation
Bay of Fires Bay of Fires area, Tasmania	Bay of Fires Lodge Walk	\$537 (peak season)	Luxury standing camp, luxury eco-lodge
Milford Track Fiordland National Park, New Zealand	Ultimate Hikes	\$366	Luxury huts
Great Ocean Walk, Great Otway National Park, Victoria	Bothfeet	\$482	Luxury eco-lodge (off-track)
Hans Heysen Trail, Flinders and Gammon Ranges, South Australia	Epicurious	\$425	Resort accommodation - various
Traditional Tent-based Accommodation			
Overland Track Cradle Mt-Lake St Clair National Park, Tasmania	World Expeditions	\$299	Tent
Bibbulmun Track South West of Western Australia	World Expeditions	\$299	Tent
Jatbula Trail Nitmiluk National Park, Northern Territory	NT Immersions	\$258	Tent
Larapinta Trail West MacDonnell National Park, Northern Territory	Trek Larapinta	\$281	Tent
Kakadu Short Circle [Jarrangbarra (Koolpin) Gorge – Graveside – Barrumundi Creek – Gunlom Falls]	Willis Walkabout (this just one of many trip options)	\$176	Tent (clients expected to provide their own tent, or pay an extra f

	Track Description	Features of the Walking Experience	Management System	Safety System	Fees	Commercial Tour Products
Jatbula Trail, Nitmiluk National Park	<p>58km route between Katherine Gorge (Nitmiluk) and Edith Falls (Leliyn)</p> <p>Walk between 8 and 17km/day (4-6 days)</p> <p>Best walked in the cooler months between June and September</p> <p>One-way walking experience – independent walkers need to arrange transport back to Nitmiluk Visitor Centre</p> <p>Ferry ride across the 17 Mile Creek to access the start of the track</p>	<p>Follows a route travelled by generations of Jawoyn people; “Jatbula Trail follows an ancient Jawoyn songline through the Nitmiluk National Park”⁴⁸</p> <p>Diversity of landscapes, including savannah grasslands, rocky escarpment country, and pockets of monsoonal rainforest</p> <p>Jawoyn rock art sites</p> <p>Water falls, plunge pools and creeks – swimming near all designated campsites</p>	<p>Bushwalking permit system (based on campsite booking)</p> <p>Designated campsites with toilets</p> <p>Campsites are limited to a maximum of 10 people/night</p> <p>Marked and signed route (no formed track, but blue arrows marking the route, with directional signs at junctions)</p> <p>Route is marked in one direction only – visitors must walk from Katherine Gorge to Edith Falls</p> <p>Fuel stove only</p> <p>Detailed map available for purchase at the Nitmiluk Visitor Centre</p>	<p>Closed between October and April (due to high temperatures)</p> <p>Designated campsites located near permanent water supplies</p> <p>Walkers required to register at the Nitmiluk Centre prior to starting the walk (between 7am and 1pm to ensure that the first campsites can be reached before dark)</p> <p>Walkers required to deregister at Edith Falls</p> <p>ECD located at each campsite</p> <p>Check point logbooks at most campsites</p>	<p>Camping fee: \$3.30 per person per night</p> <p>Camping fee deposit: \$200 – refunded when walkers deregister</p>	<p>Australian Wilderness Tours</p> <p>Tour Description: 6 days, two guides, all meals, camping equipment and fees included, gear hire available, transport Darwin return</p> <p>Cost: \$1795 per person</p> <p>NT Immersions</p> <p>Tour Description: 5 days, guided and all inclusive</p> <p>Cost: \$1290 per person (all inclusive); \$575 (guide only)</p>

⁴⁸ <http://australianwildernessadventures.com.au/jatbula.html>. Accessed 1st of December 2011.

	Track Description	Features of the Walking Experience	Management System	Safety System	Fees	Commercial Tour Products
Larapinta Trail, West MacDonnell National Park	<p>223km track between Alice Springs and Mt Sonder, in 12 main sections</p> <p>Sections vary in grade (level of difficulty)</p> <p>Each section encompasses a 1-2 day walk (e.g. ranging from 9-31km), with a trailhead that can be accessed by vehicle (some 4WD only), and intermediate points.</p> <p>Trailheads facilities and amenities include: shelters, water tanks, trailhead signage, gas barbeques, and some campsite furniture</p> <p>Intermediate points have fewer facilities and amenities, but include water tanks, basic shelters, and camping areas</p>	<p>Track follows the spine of the West MacDonnell Ranges, through a range of desert habitats, over rugged ranges, ending with 360 view from the summit of Mt Sonder</p> <p>Incorporates attractions such as Simpsons Gap, Ellery Creek, and Ormiston Gorge</p> <p>Opportunities to join or leave the track via vehicle access to trailheads, including day and overnight walks – ‘step on-step off’</p>	<p>Designated campsites (at trailheads and intermediate points)</p> <p>No permit system, but some campsites have a fee</p> <p>Tracks are marked (with blue arrows) and signed (e.g. information at trailheads, directional signage at junctions, and interpretive panels)</p> <p>Detailed topographic maps of the trail sections are available for purchase (\$5.50 each)</p>	<p>Log books are provided at all trailheads</p> <p>Other communication options along the track include one emergency radio, one pay phone, and Park ranger stations at two locations</p> <p>Information recommends that independent walkers carry satellite phones and PLB</p> <p>Water tanks at trailheads and intermediate points are regularly filled by Parks</p>	<p>Camping fees apply in some areas: \$3.30 per person per night (e.g. applies to some Bushcamping and Category B campsites in the West MacDonnell Ranges National Park)</p>	<p>Trek Larapinta</p> <p>Tour Description: Various sections and lengths (6-9 days), all inclusive (all inclusive; meals, camping equipment, guides, and transfers)</p> <p>Cost: 6 Day Larapinta Trip - \$1690 per person</p> <p>9 Day Larapinta Trip - \$2190 per person</p> <p>End2End – 2x 9 day trips - \$2400 per person for 9 days</p> <p>World Expeditions</p> <p>Tour Description: 6 days, highlights and attractions</p> <p>Cost: \$1690 per person all inclusive</p>

	Track Description	Features of the Walking Experience	Management System	Safety System	Fees	Commercial Tour Products
Larapinta Trail, West MacDonnell National Park	<p>There are few natural water sources along the track, and these are unreliable – water tanks provided by Parks are critical to walkers</p> <p>Best walked between May and August (October-February being the worst time of the year)</p>	See above	See above	Online information recommends that individual walkers develop and submit a Walkers Plan to the Parks Office in Alice Springs	See above	See above