

## 6. Visitor management and Park use

**Kakadu National Park is a World Heritage place and people from all over the world would like to visit Kakadu for its ancient cultural heritage, wildlife and magnificent landscapes. Bininj are happy and proud to share Kakadu, and would like to be more involved in tourism. However, it is important for Bininj that this doesn't happen too quickly, and that tourism respects the wishes of Bininj and helps safeguard their culture, lifestyle and privacy. It is important that Kakadu is promoted in ways that are accurate and give people the right expectations about a visit to the Park. New ways will be looked at to help visitors enjoy Kakadu and all its seasons, look at ways that Bininj can benefit more from tourism, and also look at how tourism activities can be better managed and give more certainty to the tourism industry. This will be done by Bininj, Parks Australia; the tourism industry and Park user groups working together.**

*'I want visitors to feel something they'll never forget – and have in their heart and mind forever.'*

*Bessie Coleman, Wurrkbarbar/Jawoyn*

*'Our land has a big story. Sometimes we tell a little bit at a time. Come and hear our stories, see our land. A little bit might stay in your hearts. If you want more, you can come back.'*

*Jacob Nayinggul, Manilagarr*

### 6.1 Recreational opportunities and tourism directions

#### **Our aim**

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

- a living Aboriginal culture – home to Bininj
- 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, governments, the tourism industry and Park user groups, providing world's best practice in caring for country and sustainable tourism.

#### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Level of Bininj satisfaction with the nature, scope and impact of recreational and tourism opportunities in the Park
- Level of visitor and tourism industry satisfaction with recreational and tourism opportunities in the Park
- Extent to which Bininj gain economic benefit from commercial tourism opportunities

## **Background**

Bininj are proud to share their country with visitors and welcome tourism opportunities that help visitors to learn about, appreciate and experience Bininj culture and country in Kakadu.

In May 2004, the Director of National Parks, on behalf of the Kakadu Board and the Australian and Northern Territory Governments, commissioned the development of a shared tourism vision for the Park.

The following Shared Vision Principles were developed to enable the tourism industry to understand how the Board and Bininj want tourism to be managed in the Park while providing greater levels of certainty to the tourism industry:

1. Kakadu is first and foremost 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 and 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.

The Board accepted these principles as a guide to balance the primary importance of Kakadu's natural and cultural values with the development of a strategic approach to tourism.

## **Issues**

- The management challenge for Kakadu is to strike a balance between providing opportunities for the appropriate use, appreciation and enjoyment of the Park by a diversity of visitors and protecting the rights and interests of Bininj and the natural and cultural values of the Park.

## **What we are going to do**

### ***Policy***

- 6.1.1 Tourism and recreational opportunities in the Park will be managed in accordance with the Shared Vision Principles and the assessment and approval processes outlined in section 8.3 Assessment of proposals.

## ***Actions***

- 6.1.2 The Board of Management will, as a high priority, develop a Tourism Master Plan consistent with the Shared Vision Principles in consultation with the traditional owners, the tourism industry, Park user groups and other stakeholders. The Tourism Master Plan will be made available for public comment and will include details about, but not be exclusive to:
- visitor experiences
  - facilities
  - future access
  - commercial opportunities.
  - how the Park can be protected from adverse tourism impacts
  - how tourism can support management of the Park
  - how tourism can meet the aspirations of traditional owners.
- 6.1.3 Consistent with other provisions of this Plan, the Board and the Director may approve actions and activities, including new visitor infrastructure, that are detailed in the Tourism Master Plan.

## **6.2 Access and site management**

### **Our aim**

Visitor experiences are promoted and managed in ways that are culturally and environmentally appropriate.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Level of Bininj satisfaction with management of visitor access to the Park
- Extent to which visitor impacts are within acceptable levels
- Level of tourism industry satisfaction with site access and management

### **Background**

Appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the Park are core elements of the vision for the Park. Providing for a range of visitors and activities in a manner that ensures a safe and rewarding experience for the visitor while maintaining the natural and cultural values of the Park is a major focus of management.

There are areas within the Park that are not accessible to the public, either on a permanent or a temporary basis. The Director's lease obligations require compliance with any reasonable request from traditional owners, through the NLC, to restrict access to areas of the Park for the purpose of Aboriginal use. These include Bininj living areas, areas that are set aside to enable Bininj to exercise their traditional rights associated with ceremonial activities and hunting, and areas where Bininj carry out their own commercial operations. In addition, the Director may be required to implement temporary or long-term closures of visitor areas if an activity has the potential to impact on Park values or poses a risk to public safety. In other cases, visitor access to sites may be limited to protect visitor experience, Park values, or Bininj interests. In such cases, access is managed through permit and booking systems.

The EPBC Regulations enable the Director to prohibit or restrict entry to areas either by all or some people, at all times or certain times, and to all or part of the Park.

## **Issues**

- Bininj interests need to be respected and Park values protected when making decisions about area and site planning and management.
- With the exception of issues that are of an urgent nature, it is important that the tourism industry is consulted about proposed changes to access and that decisions are made and implemented within appropriate timeframes.

## **What we are going to do**

### ***Policies***

- 6.2.1 Areas and sites within the Park will be managed in accordance with the Shared Tourism Vision Principles and policies and actions in Section 6.1, Recreational opportunities and tourism directions.
- 6.2.2 To help manage access to sites, either temporarily or permanently, such measures as closures under the EPBC Regulations and use of permits and booking systems may be used.
- 6.2.3 Decisions regarding short- and long-term changes to access will be made in accordance with Section 4.1, Making decisions and working together, and procedures approved by the Board.
- 6.2.4 As provided by Section 4.1, as far as practicable the views of the tourism industry and other relevant stakeholders will be taken into account in access decisions and they will be provided with advance notification before decisions are implemented.
- 6.2.5 Bininj enterprise opportunities will be promoted and additional areas of the Park may be set aside for Bininj and joint venture enterprises (see Section 6.14, Commercial tour activities).

## **6.3 Access by road**

### **Our aim**

Road access for residents, visitors and management purposes is provided in a manner that protects Park values and Bininj interests.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Condition of roads within the Park and their capacity to meet existing and forecast use

### **Background**

Most visitors to Kakadu National Park arrive by road and travel within the Park by road. The main roads into the Park are the Arnhem Highway from Darwin and the Kakadu Highway from Pine Creek. The Park can also be accessed via the Old Darwin Road and Oenpelli Road. The Oenpelli Road provides dry season access to Arnhem Land. This road becomes impassable at times during the wet season at the East Alligator River and Magela Creek crossings.

The Northern Territory Government funds the management of all of the above roads, as well as the Cooida Road and Gunlom Road (from the Kakadu Highway to the gate just past the Koolpin turn-off on the Gimbat Road). The Director maintains other roads and tracks as necessary for visitor access and Park management purposes. Aboriginal organisations maintain outstation roads and tracks unless they are maintained by the Director. Lessees of areas within the Park are responsible for maintaining roads and tracks in lease areas.

To maintain gravel roads and tracks, the Director has regularly extracted sand and gravel from gravel pits within the Park. This reduces the risk of introducing weeds, pests and pathogens and is less costly than importing sand and gravel. Sterile crushed rock from quarries outside the Park has been used for road works when required.

All roads and tracks in the Park are part of the Park and subject to the EPBC Act and Regulations. Northern Territory laws also apply to the extent those laws can operate concurrently with the EPBC Act and Regulations. The EPBC Regulations (rr.12.41, 12.42 and 12.43) provide for roads and tracks to be designated as either available for public use or not. The Director may also place restrictions on the persons or types of vehicles that may use a particular road or track, and may impose certain other controls including speed limits.

From time to time the Northern Territory Government may also place controls on the major roads that it maintains, such as weight limits or seasonal closures to protect the road surface and provide for people's safety.

Road works are an activity covered by s.354(1) of the EPBC Act and can only be carried on in accordance with this Plan. Regulation 12.16 of the EPBC Regulations prohibits the introduction of minerals, clay, sand, stone or other earth materials unless authorised by a permit from the Director or otherwise authorised by this Plan.

### **Issues**

- From time to time, roads and tracks need to be temporarily closed to facilitate Park management operations or at the request of Bininj.
- Roads and tracks require ongoing maintenance.
- Impacts on Park values of road maintenance or upgrading need to be minimised.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policies***

- 6.3.1 The Director will work closely with the Northern Territory Government in relation to road management in the Park.
- 6.3.2 Where practicable the Director will offer road maintenance contracts to local Aboriginal organisations in the first instance (consistent with lease agreements and procurement requirements of the Australian Government and the Director).
- 6.3.3 The Director may determine, in accordance with the EPBC Regulations, roads and tracks that will not be available for public use (permanently or temporarily). The Director may restrict use to particular groups (eg tracks used by Bininj to access outstations) and may determine restrictions on vehicle use of roads and tracks (eg vehicle weight and size limits).
- 6.3.4 Roads and tracks that are generally open to the public may be closed for public safety, environmental protection, cultural and management purposes.
- 6.3.5 Construction of new roads and tracks in the Park will be subject to Section 8.1, Capital works and Infrastructure.
- 6.3.6 The Director will maintain roads and tracks that are not maintained by the Northern Territory Government or others to a standard that provides for residents' and visitors' safe use and for management purposes.
- 6.3.7 In order to minimise the extraction of gravel from the Park, the Director may bring inert treated crushed rock into the Park for the purpose of road works. Other people may bring such material in for that purpose with the approval of the Director.

## **Action**

6.3.8 Prepare a strategy for the management of roads within the Park.

## **6.4 Access by air**

### **Our aim**

A range of recreational and commercial flying opportunities are undertaken in ways that minimise disturbance to residents, visitors and wildlife.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Level of compliance with the Fly Neighbourly Advice

### **Background**

Bininj use aircraft for wet season access to isolated communities and outstations and to remote areas for ceremonies. Visitors, commercial interests and service providers also use aircraft to access the Park and to undertake a range of activities such as scenic flights, image capture and research. Aircraft, both fixed wing and helicopters, are used by Park staff as necessary for management purposes and responding to emergencies.

Prior to the establishment of the Park, airstrips were constructed for a variety of purposes at a number of locations that are now part of the Park. They supported pastoral activities, mining activities, tourism and research and transport for residents in the wet season. The main airstrips are located at Jabiru and Cooina which are not part of the Park. A number of disused airstrips are maintained to enable helicopter access for emergency and management purposes. Others have been closed down and the land rehabilitated.

To balance the interests of visitors on scenic flights and those on the ground and to protect the peace and privacy of Park residents, the Director, in consultation with the then civil aviation regulator (now Air Services Australia) and local scenic flight operators, developed a Fly Neighbourly Advice (FNA) in 1996. The FNA (also known as a Fly Neighbourly Agreement or Policy) describes recommended routes and height and lateral separations for flights over the Park, and is included in the En-Route Supplement Australia issued for pilots by Air Services Australia.

Under the EPBC Regulations (r.12.36) commercial flights operated over the Park up to 3000 metres above sea level (other than flights on approved flight paths to or from an airport) are deemed to be carried on in the Park and need to be authorised by a permit or this Plan. The Regulations (r.12.58) also prohibit landing and take-off of aircraft in the Park except in areas that the Director determines may be used for that purpose (or in an emergency). The definition of 'aircraft' in the EPBC Act includes any apparatus that can derive support in the atmosphere from the reactions of the air, such as gliders, hang-gliders, para-sailers, parachutes and similar equipment.

### **Issues**

- Access to the Park by air is essential for a range of reasons.
- Aircraft use should not detract from the use and quiet enjoyment of the Park by residents and visitors on the ground. At present Bininj hunting areas are not identified in the Fly Neighbourly Advice.
- The EPBC Act enables the use of aircraft in the airspace above the Park to be managed through permits issued under the EPBC Regulations. It is important that consultation with Air Services Australia and the Regional Airspace Users Committee occurs regarding permit requirements.

- Requests have been received for aircraft landings outside defined airstrips for bushwalking, fishing and other recreational and commercial activities.
- Maintenance and management of the Jabiru airstrip may change as the Ranger mine moves towards closure.

## **What we are going to do**

### ***Policies***

- 6.4.1 The Fly Neighbourly Advice will provide details about the appropriate flying routes and use of aircraft over the Park.
- 6.4.2 Aircraft may be operated for the following commercial purposes in the airspace over the Park up to 3000 metres above mean sea level without a permit from the Director: regular commercial and service delivery activities such as passenger transport, charter operations and medical transport to and from Jabiru or Cooinda .
- 6.4.3 Aircraft may be operated for other commercial purposes (such as scenic flights) in the airspace over the Park up to 3000 metres above mean sea level without a permit issued by the Director provided the activity is undertaken in accordance with the Fly Neighbourly Advice.
- 6.4.4 Permits may be issued for the landing and take-off of aircraft in the Park, following consultation with Bininj, for the following purposes:
- authorised research
  - authorised image capture
  - authorised Bininj commercial activities
  - other Bininj activities, including access to isolated outstations and access to remote areas for ceremonies
  - community events in Jabiru and the Park
  - other purposes as approved by the Board.
- 6.4.5 Permits will not be issued authorising the landing and take-off of gliders, hang-gliders, para-sailers, parachutes and similar equipment.
- 6.4.6 The Director may maintain some airstrips for management or emergency purposes.

### ***Action***

- 6.4.7 In conjunction with Air Services Australia and local flight operators, promote the Fly Neighbourly Advice among providers of air transport services and review regularly as required.

## **6.5 Visitor safety**

### **Our aim**

Visitors to Kakadu have a safe and rewarding experience.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Number and severity of incidents involving Park users
- Number of risk assessments completed for key visitor destinations in the Park

### **Background**

Bininj feel a sense of responsibility for all people visiting their country, and feel distressed if a visitor is injured or dies. In addition, the Director has legal responsibilities in relation to

visitor safety. As such the safety and welfare of Park visitors is an important consideration in managing the Park.

At the time of preparing this Plan the EPBC Regulations (r.12.26) prohibit certain activities in the Park other than in accordance with a permit from the Director, or in an area approved by the Director. To protect Park values and in the interest of public safety these activities, which include climbing, abseiling and jumping from cliffs and rock faces, will not be allowed (see Section 6.9, Other recreational activities and public gatherings). Under the Regulations (r.12.23) the Director may also close areas of the Park where it is necessary for safety reasons. This may include closing areas to people engaged in particular activities.

A range of measures are adopted in the Park to reduce risks to visitors, including:

- maintaining roads, tracks and visitor facilities in a safe condition
- providing educational materials for visitors on safety risks and safe behaviour
- controlling feral animals in the vicinity of roads and visitor attractions
- removing estuarine crocodiles from plunge pools in accordance with the Park Crocodile Management Policy
- providing an emergency contact radio network in remote areas of the Park.

All visitor safety incidents are reported, recorded and reviewed regularly. Using this information, the Director has compiled a Risk Watch List for the Park that identifies and rates a range of risks, including risks to visitor safety. The Risk Watch List also specifies risk management measures that are carried out as required. The list is reviewed and updated regularly.

### **Issues**

- The Park by its size and nature presents a number of potential risks to visitors.
- As many visitors come to the Park on commercial tours, tour operators play an important role in helping to provide Park visitors with a safe experience.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policies***

- 6.5.1 Risks will be regularly assessed and management measures to address risks will be reviewed and amended consistent with the Director's Risk Management Policy.
- 6.5.2 Where reasonably necessary and practicable the Director may, subject to and in accordance with the EPBC Regulations, prohibit activities in the Park that present a risk to public safety or close areas of the Park where it is necessary in order to prevent people engaging in unsafe activities.

#### ***Actions***

- 6.5.3 Regularly review and update the Risk Watch List or similar risk monitoring and management systems and prepare risk assessments of visitor sites and facilities. Based on the Risk Watch List and risk assessments, implement management measures to reduce visitor risks to acceptable levels, and review them regularly.
- 6.5.4 Undertake regular safety inspections and maintenance of all visitor facilities including roads and walking tracks.
- 6.5.5 Provide tour operators and visitors with pre-visit and on-site information about safety risks and safe behaviour.



## 6.6 Camping

### **Our aim**

A range of camping opportunities are provided that optimise the diversity and quality of visitor experiences while minimising adverse impacts and protecting Bininj interests.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Level of visitor satisfaction with camping opportunities in the Park
- Extent to which impacts from camping are within acceptable levels

### **Background**

Visitors to Kakadu seek different camping opportunities, from quiet and remote places where campers are self-sufficient to more accessible places where facilities are provided.

Five commercially operated camping areas operate in and adjacent to Kakadu. During the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan, four of the commercially operated campgrounds were open in the wet season, but only one of the Director's campgrounds with facilities was accessible and usable at this time (see also Section 6.15, Commercial accommodation).

The EPBC Regulations (r.12.28) prohibit camping in any area of the Park other than camping areas determined by the Director, unless authorised by a permit or otherwise done in accordance with this Plan. The camping areas in Kakadu as at 2005 are shown in Figure 6. To enhance visitor satisfaction and to protect Park values, a range of measures such as setting limits on numbers of people, introducing booking and permit systems, and setting areas aside for the exclusive use of independent travellers or commercial tour groups may be considered. Fees for use of camping areas are determined by the Director under the EPBC Act (s.356A).

For some visitors, campfires are an inherent part of the camping experience. During the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan, research into the impacts of firewood collection found that most campground areas are depleted of on-ground wood to a radius of 50 metres and found damage to trees and other plants.

Under the EPBC Regulations (r.12.30), fires may only be lit or used in a portable barbecue or stove, a fireplace provided by the Director or a fireplace of a kind provided by the Director, or a place approved by the Director.

### **Issues**

- Camping areas sometimes operate at full capacity. Crowding can reduce visitor satisfaction, increase conflicts between visitors and increase environmental impacts. Data on numbers of visitors who use camping areas, their levels of satisfaction, the scale of environmental impacts and the costs associated with their management is essential to inform management approaches.
- Firewood collection can have a negative impact on habitats, and bringing firewood into the Park poses risks associated with the entry of weed seeds, pathogens and ants.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policies***

6.6.1 Camping opportunities in the Park will be considered as part of the Tourism Master Plan (see Section 6.1, Recreational opportunities and tourism directions).

6.6.2 Camping will be managed in a manner that:

- provides for a range of opportunities from small, quiet areas with few or no facilities, to developed campgrounds with facilities for larger numbers of people
  - considers the needs of both independent travellers and commercial tour groups
  - provides visitors with a safe and rewarding camping experience
  - ensures that impacts on Park values are minimised
  - is consistent with the Shared Tourism Vision principles.
- 6.6.3 Subject to the outcomes of the Tourism Master Plan, new camping areas may be developed and others relocated, closed or changed, for example, for environmental or safety concerns.
- 6.6.4 Subject to any access restrictions under Section 6.2, visitors may camp (without a permit) at the campgrounds identified in Figure 6 and other campgrounds established under this Plan.
- 6.6.5 During the life of this Plan, camping fees and management of campgrounds will be reviewed.
- 6.6.6 Decision-making procedures outlined in Section 4.1, Making decisions and working together and in Section 8.3, Assessment of proposals, will be followed in relation to provision of new camping opportunities or changes to management of existing camping opportunities.
- 6.6.7 In accordance with EPBC Regulations, bringing in firewood from outside the Park is not permitted. The Director may put in place alternative arrangements to collecting firewood in and transporting it through the Park.

### ***Actions***

- 6.6.8 Undertake a review of camping in the Park to provide recommendations to the Board on future management options. The review will consider but not be limited to:
- relevant outcomes from the Tourism Master Plan
  - the numbers of visitors who use existing camping areas, their levels of satisfaction, the scale of cultural and environmental impacts, and the costs associated with their management
  - capacity of camping areas, including consideration of the need for booking systems
  - feasibility of developing additional designated camping areas
  - management of camping outside designated areas
  - visitor safety issues and seasonal access constraints
  - camping fees
  - management of firewood collection and use
  - future monitoring requirements.

## **6.7 Day walks and overnight bushwalking**

### **Our aim**

Visitors to Kakadu have the opportunity to experience Kakadu's habitats through provision of a range of day and overnight walking opportunities in a manner that protects and promotes the natural and cultural values of the Park.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Extent to which impacts from walking activities are within acceptable levels
- Level of Bininj satisfaction with management of and involvement in day and overnight walking activities
- Visitor satisfaction with the range of day and overnight walking opportunities

### **Background**

Kakadu provides a range of opportunities that enable visitors to undertake day walks and overnight bushwalks and is sought after as one of the major bushwalking destinations in the Top End. Marked walking tracks in the Park vary in duration from half an hour to whole day walks, are of varying difficulty and are located in a range of habitats including monsoon forests, woodlands, wetlands, rivers and escarpment country.

Opportunities for overnight bushwalks are provided in the escarpment country of the Park. These are undertaken along unmarked routes that have been identified by traditional owners. Due to seasonal flooding, many day walks and overnight bushwalks are inaccessible during the wet season.

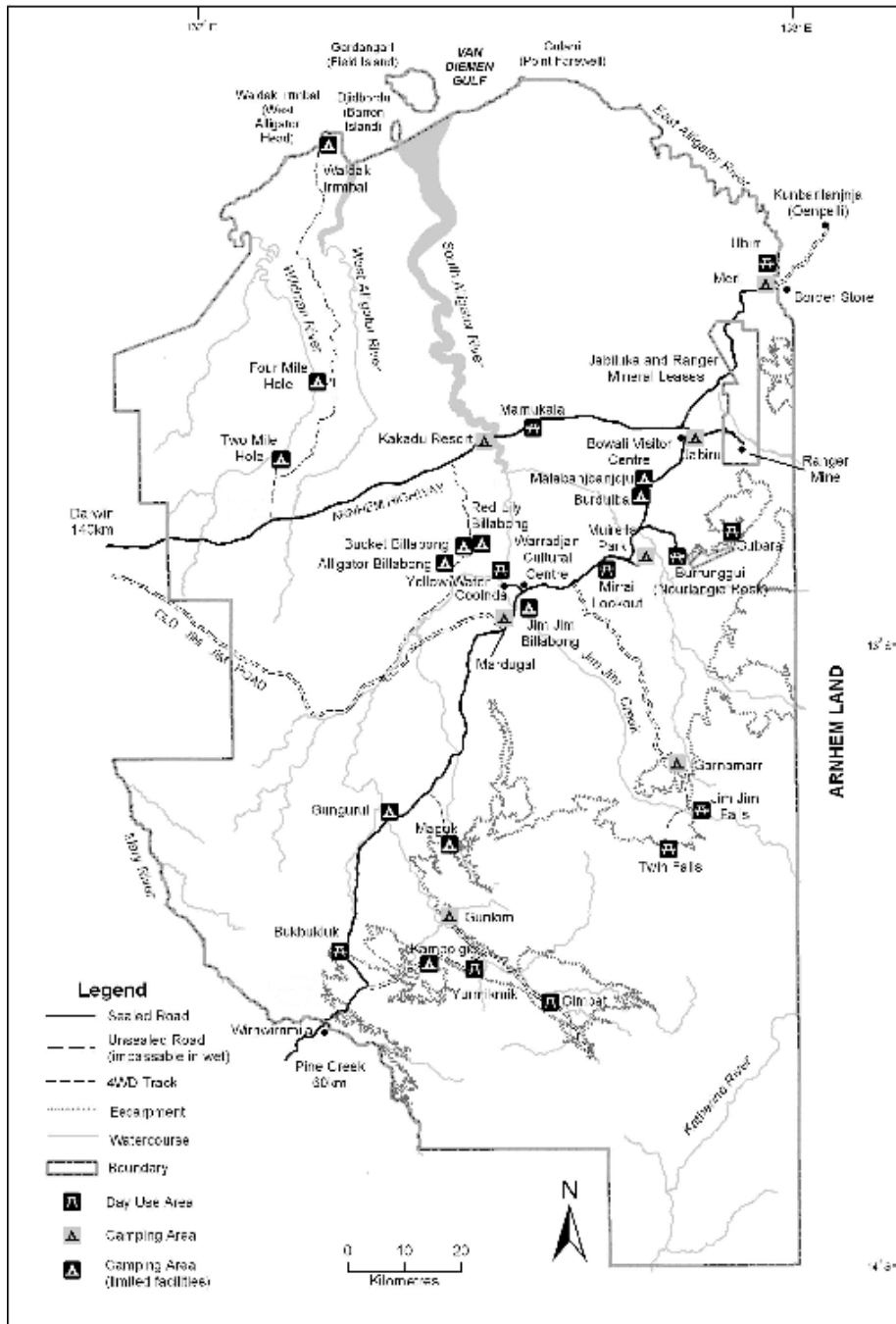
Under the EPBC Regulations, walking off a road or a track open to the public or a designated walking track is prohibited. During the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan, all overnight walks were undertaken only in accordance with a permit. Daily and/or monthly limits apply on the number of bushwalkers for each of the overnight bushwalking routes.

### **Issues**

- Walking provides one of the best opportunities to experience and become more familiar with Kakadu National Park.
- Areas of the Park that are sought after for overnight bushwalking may also be areas of great significance for Bininj. Bininj are particularly concerned that people adhere to agreed routes to avoid entering culturally sensitive areas.
- Walking in remote areas of the Park has potential risks and each year a number of incidents occur. Visitor safety is of particular concern to Bininj.
- There are insufficient data on the number of visitors undertaking day walks and the type and extent of impacts associated with day and overnight walks.
- At certain times of the year, such as during school holidays or on public holidays, demand for bushwalking permits exceeds availability. As a result, there have been requests for the development of additional bushwalking routes.
- There is a need to consider appropriate access to various visitor sites for visitors with physical impairments.
- Opportunities need to be available for Bininj wishing to be more involved in the management of bushwalking in the Park.

**Figure 6 – Camping and day use areas**

This figure shows camping areas in the Park as at 2005 that were available for camping without a permit. There are other areas in the Park where camping is provided for only in accordance with a permit. Such areas may be restricted to minimise environmental impact, to protect the visitor experience, or for cultural purposes. Management arrangements for all camping in the Park will be reviewed during the life of the plan.



## **What we are going to do**

### ***Policies***

- 6.7.1 A range of day walk and overnight bushwalking opportunities will continue to be provided. New bushwalking routes and facilities may be provided, or existing ones altered, as a result of the recommendations of the Tourism Master Plan.
- 6.7.2 Walking track development will be managed in accordance with Section 8.3, Assessment of proposals.
- 6.7.3 Overnight bushwalking will be managed in the following way:
- Provision of overnight bushwalking opportunities will only be made following approval from relevant Bininj.
  - In conjunction with Bininj, routes will be regularly monitored. Management arrangements will be amended if needed, following consultation with bushwalking interests, to protect natural values or areas of cultural significance.
  - Pre-visit information will be provided to all intending walkers, including information on minimising impacts and bushwalker safety.
  - Visitor safety will be a primary concern and measures may be introduced as necessary, and in consultation with stakeholders, to help ensure this.
  - Agreed walking routes, permit requirements, limits and other arrangements in place at the commencement of this Plan will continue to apply until such time as any alternative arrangements are put in place following the development of a Bushwalking Strategy.

### ***Actions***

- 6.7.4 Develop a Bushwalking Strategy with Bininj and in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The strategy will address, but not be limited to:
- new bushwalking activities and facilities that may arise from the Tourism Master Plan
  - requirements for the management of cultural sites and objects
  - timing and frequency of bushwalking activities
  - reports associated with safety and compliance incidents
  - monitoring requirements and acceptable levels of impact
  - permit administration procedures.
  - provision of pre-visit and on site information.
- 6.7.5 Develop and implement walking track management guidelines and standards consistent with the National Standards for Walking Tracks.
- 6.7.6 Unless otherwise determined by the Director and Board, maintain or upgrade existing walking tracks in accordance with National Standards for Walking Tracks standards and the Bushwalking Strategy.
- 6.7.7 Where practicable, provide access and facilities for visitors with physical impairments at major visitor sites.
- 6.7.8 Establish programs to monitor:
- numbers of visitors undertaking day walks and overnight bushwalks
  - associated impacts
  - visitor satisfaction with walking opportunities.
- 6.7.9 Provide opportunities for Bininj to participate in the management of bushwalking.

6.7.10 Promote the use of fuel stoves and other means to reduce reliance on firewood use on overnight bushwalks.

## **6.8 Swimming**

### **Our aim**

Visitors to Kakadu understand the risks associated with swimming in the Park and risks are appropriately managed.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Number and seriousness of incidents associated with swimming

### **Background**

In the hot, tropical climate of the Top End swimming is an enjoyable activity. However, there are a number of potential risks and impacts associated with swimming in Top End waterways and entering waterways for other purposes.

Crocodiles, particularly estuarine crocodiles, are a major risk. Crocodile hunting ceased in the 1970s and the population has been steadily increasing since then. Crocodiles are now moving back into waters they inhabited prior to hunting. Since the late 1990s, crocodiles have been located in plunge pools at the base of the Arnhem Land escarpment each wet season.

During the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan a Crocodile Management Strategy was developed to help protect the natural abundance of crocodiles, while minimising the risks that crocodiles pose to people. Consistent with the Strategy, plunge pools that were visitor destinations were routinely monitored for the presence of crocodiles. Park staff removed any crocodiles from these areas at the start of the dry season, prior to the areas being opened to the public. In 2004, given the high level of crocodile risk at Twin Falls gorge, the Board decided to provide a boat shuttle service with local indigenous interpreters and to ban swimming to ensure safe public access to the base of Twin Falls and to promote the area's cultural values. A longer term strategy for access and use of this area is under development (see Section 5.8, Native plants and animals, for further information about crocodile management).

Due to the risks associated with the potential interaction of visitors with crocodiles, swimming in the Park is not actively promoted. The Director endeavours to warn visitors of the risk of crocodile attack through prominent signs near water bodies and warnings in information provided to Park visitors. Visitors are encouraged to use the public swimming pool at Jabiru or pools provided at hotels and other commercial accommodation. Traditional owners feel considerable responsibility for the welfare of visitors and this features significantly in their responsibilities in looking after country. Other cultural considerations are also a factor in making decisions about swimming.

Top End waterways in the escarpment country are also characterised by high cliffs and rock faces, strong currents and flash flooding during the wet season, and deep and cold water in plunge pools. These characteristics are unfamiliar to many visitors to the Park.

Waterways and their surrounds, particularly plunge pools, are unique and sensitive Top End environments which have the potential to change in character through inappropriate use, or introduction of pollutants such as sunscreens.

As noted in Section 6.5, Visitor safety, the Director has power under the EPBC Regulations (r.12.23) to close areas of the Park where it is necessary for safety reasons.

### **Issues**

- There are very few places in the Park where visitors can swim without significant risk of crocodile attack and some visitors may have unrealistic expectations about swimming. Ensuring visitors are aware of the risks associated with swimming and applying appropriate risk mitigation measures while protecting visitor experience is a key management challenge.
- Some plunge pool areas are very crowded during peak visitation times. This can adversely affect the quality of visitors' experience.
- When making decisions about swimming the Board considers implications on the tourism industry and visitor experience but must ensure visitor safety is not compromised.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policies***

- 6.8.1 Swimming will be managed in accordance with Section 6.5, Visitor safety and in accordance with the following policies and actions.
- 6.8.2 The Board and Director will not promote swimming as a visitor activity. Park staff will liaise with the tourism industry to ensure that promotion of the park helps to create appropriate visitor expectations about all activities, including swimming (See Section 6.12 Promotion and marketing)
- 6.8.3 Any water bodies in the Park that are downstream of the Arnhem Land escarpment and considered to pose an unacceptable risk to visitors of attack by estuarine crocodiles will be closed to swimming (which includes entering the water) under the EPBC Regulations.
- 6.8.4 Waterways above and below the escarpment will be monitored regularly for environmental impacts and assessed for potential safety risks. Swimming may be prohibited if impacts or risks are considered to be unacceptable.

#### **Actions**

- 6.8.5 Provide information to visitors, the tourism industry and the media about risks associated with swimming in the Park including the potential for crocodiles to enter areas undetected and the dangers of climbing cliffs, jumping from rocks and swimming in deep or very cold water or in strong currents.
- 6.8.6 Provide information to visitors regarding the range of ways to protect water quality.
- 6.8.7 Establish programs to monitor impacts and assess risks associated with swimming, including the effects of potential pollutants such as sunscreens and insect repellents, and review management arrangements as needed.

## **6.9 Other recreational activities and public gatherings**

### **Our aim**

Opportunities for a range of other recreational activities and public gatherings are provided in a manner that protects Park values, Bininj interests and visitor safety.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Visitor and tour operator satisfaction with the range of recreational activities available

- Extent to which impacts on the Park and other visitor activities are within acceptable levels

## **Background**

Requests are occasionally received for approval to carry out recreational activities that are not specifically addressed elsewhere in this Plan. These may include, but are not limited to:

- mountain-bike riding, horse riding, abseiling, rock climbing and the use of airboats
- large public gatherings such as weddings, theatrical performances, charity functions or barbecues and picnics at particular sites
- Bininj commercial tourism proposals that seek to provide visitors with recreational opportunities that are currently not available in the Park
- Orienteering/rogaining.

At the time of preparing this Plan the EPBC Regulations (r.12.26) prohibit certain activities in the Park, such as climbing, abseiling and jumping from cliffs and rock faces unless the Director has designated areas where the activity may be carried on. Regulation 12.31 prohibits public gatherings of more than 15 persons.

Some requests may include proposed activities that are regulated generally by the Regulations, such as use of vessels (r.12.56), landing and taking-off of aircraft (r.12.58), and use of firearms or other hunting equipment (r.12.18).

## **Issue**

- Some recreational activities are considered inappropriate in Kakadu due to safety, environmental or cultural reasons.

## **What we are going to do**

### ***Policies***

- 6.9.1 The following recreational activities are prohibited by the Regulations, and permits will not be issued to undertake them in the Park:
- climbing, abseiling on, or jumping from rock faces
  - bungee jumping and BASE jumping
  - hang-gliding, paragliding and similar activities
  - recreational shooting and archery. (Note: These activities are allowed at recognised clubs near Jabiru.)
- 6.9.2 In addition, determinations will be made to prohibit the following activities in all parts of the Park:
- scuba diving
  - use of hovercraft, airboats and amphibious vehicles
  - use of non-motorised boats and craft, including kayaks and canoes.
- 6.9.3 Mountain-bike riding may be undertaken without a permit, but only on public vehicle access roads and tracks.
- 6.9.4 Subject to the Regulations, other recreational activities may be prohibited in all or parts of the Park if considered to pose an unacceptable risk to public safety, Park values, or Bininj interests.
- 6.9.3 Permits may be issued for public gatherings of more than 15 persons, subject to consultation with Bininj.



## **Action**

- 6.9.4 Develop guidelines for the management of public gatherings, including permit conditions and required safeguards for ensuring that environmental impacts are minimised.

## **6.10 Boating and fishing**

### **Our aim**

Visitors enjoy a range of recreational fishing and boating opportunities in a manner that protects Park values and Bininj interests, and minimises risks to public safety.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Level of visitor satisfaction with fishing and boating opportunities
- Level of Bininj satisfaction with management of and involvement in planning and management of fishing and boating activities
- Extent to which impacts from fishing and boating activities are within acceptable levels
- Number and seriousness of compliance and safety related incidents

### **Background**

Fishing is a major recreational activity in the Top End of the Northern Territory and Kakadu includes some of the prime recreational fishing areas. Most fishing in the Park is undertaken by boat, though opportunities are also taken to fish from river and creek banks. The catch and release method of fishing is commonly practised in the Park.

Fishing competitions that involved catching, measuring, photographing and releasing each fish were provided for in the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan. The management of recreational fishing tours is addressed in Section 6.14, Commercial tour activities.

Under s.354(1) of the EPBC Act fishing and commercial activities are actions that can only be carried on in accordance with this Plan.

Commercial fishing and crabbing have not been allowed in the Park since 1990. Limited transport through the Park of crabs caught by commercial crabbers outside the Park was allowed during the life of the 4th Plan.

Regulation 12.35 of the EPBC Regulations (which operates subject to s.354(1) of the Act and this Plan) allows the Director to make determinations regulating recreational fishing in the Park. In addition, other parts of r.12.35 and other Regulations prohibit certain fishing practices. EPBC Regulation 12.35(4) prohibits taking fish by any method other than with a hook or a lure. As a result, it is not legal to catch small fish for bait with a net in Kakadu. Regulation 12.35(5) prohibits the use of a live animal as bait for fishing, and the use of any native species as bait except fish. Regulation 12.19 prohibits bringing an animal into a Commonwealth reserve, dead or alive, which means that it is not legal to bring fish or other animals into Kakadu for use as bait. Regulation 12.35 prohibits the cleaning of fish within 50 metres of any waterway within the Park. Fish cleaning facilities are provided at a safe distance from the water's edge at the South Alligator River and East Alligator River boat ramps, mainly to reduce the risk of crocodiles being attracted to these boat ramp areas.

Northern Territory laws, including laws regulating fishing, apply in the Park in so far as they can operate consistently with the EPBC Act and Regulations and this Plan.

Regulation 12.56 enables the Director to control the use of vessels in the Park including where vessels can and cannot be used, speed of vessels, number of vessels, and where vessels may be launched, anchored or moored.

For environmental reasons, a number of waterways within the Park have been closed to recreational boating and fishing under the Regulations (see Figure 7). These are:

- areas that provide important dry season breeding and refuge sites required for the long-term maintenance of fish stocks
- the West Alligator River catchment which provides an important long-term reference area as there are no equivalent river systems in the Top End that are entirely protected from recreational boating and fishing.
- a section of the Magela Creek system downstream of the Ubirr Road to boating only, and upstream of the Ubirr Road to boating and fishing
- downstream of Yellow Water to The Forks on the South Alligator River; this closure is designed to help minimise the risk of further spread of the weed *Salvinia molesta*
- Barramundi Creek between the Old Darwin Road and the Kakadu Highway
- areas upstream of the Kakadu Highway (except Djarradjin–Muirella Park, Sandy Billabong and Jim Jim Billabong).

In the interests of visitor safety, the use of non-motorised boats will not be allowed under this Plan (see Section 6.9, Other recreational activities and public gatherings).

### **Issues**

- The Park is popular for recreational fishing and boating and there are potential conflicts with wildlife protection, Bininj use of waterways and other management practices.
- Visitors need to be aware of the potential risks associated with boating and fishing. These include the possibility of interactions with crocodiles and encountering unfavourable weather and tidal conditions.
- Boating has the potential to spread aquatic weeds such as *Salvinia*.
- Appropriate measures are needed to ensure maximum survival rates of fish caught and released.
- To provide clarity and consistency with respect to the management of recreational fishing, bag limits for barramundi and other fish species should be consistent with the Northern Territory bag limits. To protect breeding stock, an upper size limit for barramundi has been suggested.
- During the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan, there were requests for commercial fishermen to travel through the Park to Coopers Creek, which flows into the East Alligator River, and to transport live crabs and crab-catching equipment through the Park.
- There is limited information available on the level and extent of potential environmental impacts of boating and fishing in the Park.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policies***

6.10.1 The Director and Board will work and consult with Bininj and the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory (AFANT) and the Northern Territory Fishing Tour Operators Association to improve management of fishing and boating to;

ensure protection of Park values

improve visitor safety and visitor satisfaction.

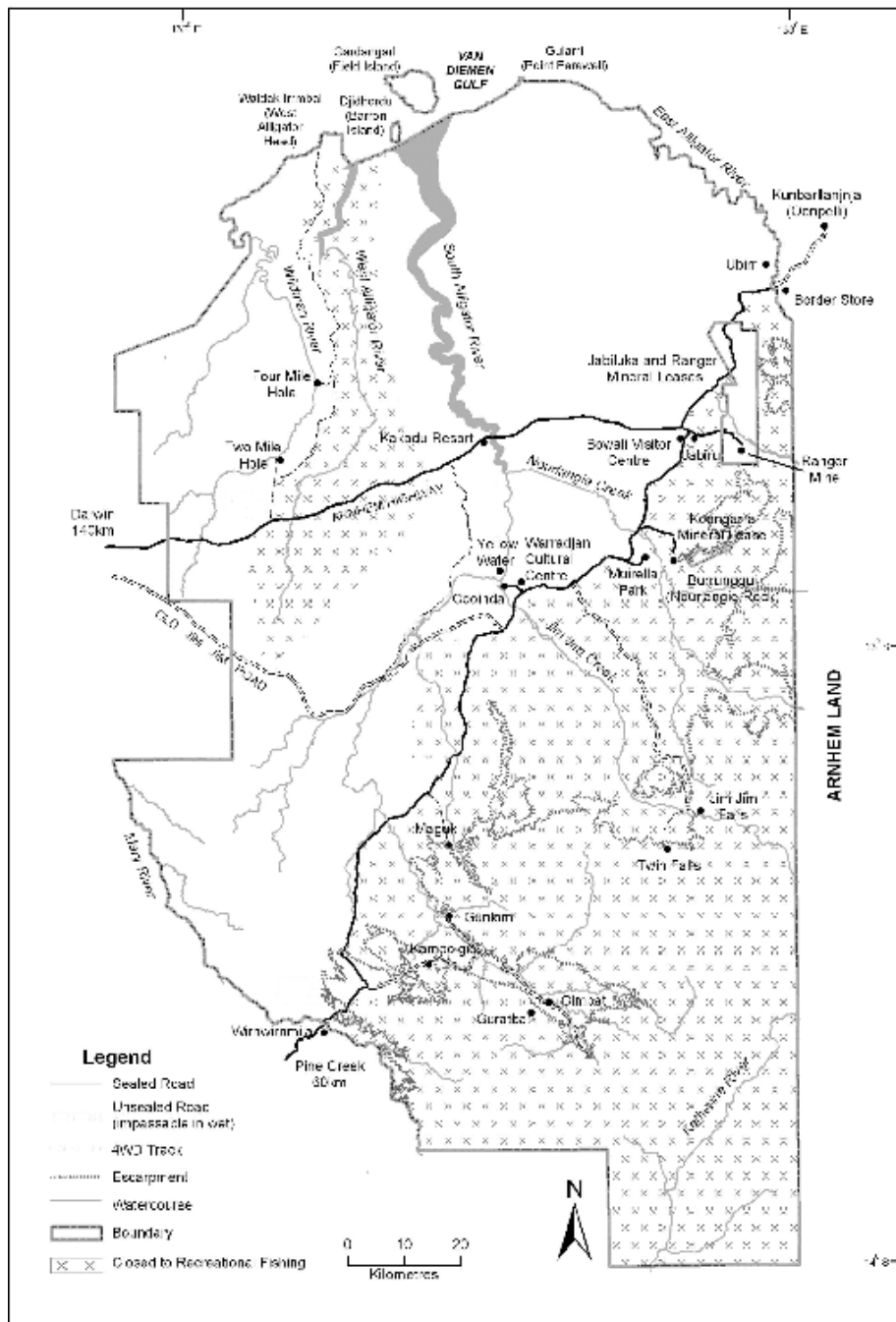
ensure interests of traditional owners are respected

consider access arrangements and other stakeholder issues

promote and exchange information

- 6.10.2 Areas closed to boating and fishing at the commencement of this Plan under r.12.56 of the Regulations (see Background above and Figure 7) will be maintained.
- 6.10.3 Recreational boating may be carried on subject to the following:
- The Director may make further determinations under r.12.56 of the Regulations to prohibit or regulate use of vessels in areas of the Park. This may include regulating vessel speed limits, vessel numbers and class of vessel, and closing areas to vessels.
  - Use of non-motorised vessels will not be allowed.
- 6.10.4 Subject to any decision by the Board under Policy 6.10.5 and the conditions specified in Policy Section 6.10.7, recreational fishing may be carried on in accordance with Northern Territory fisheries laws (at the time of preparation of this Plan the *Fisheries Act*), including possession and size limits and any licensing system that may be introduced to manage recreational fishing.
- 6.10.5 The Board may withdraw approval under Policy 6.10.4 if it is considered necessary to more closely manage the impact of recreational fishing. If approval is withdrawn, recreational fishing will require a permit issued by the Director under the Regulations, or other authorisation, from the Director.
- 6.10.6 Recreational fishing may be carried on subject to the following conditions:
- other policies in this Plan, and provisions of the EPBC Regulations, relevant to recreational fishing, including determinations made under r.12.35 of the Regulations;
  - the only bait that may be used is fish caught in the Park, with the exception that the Board may approve the use of processed bait in some areas of the Park;
  - crabs must not be taken;
  - use of barbless hooks by recreational fishers will be encouraged;
  - recreational fishing competitions may be held in accordance with a permit issued by the Director. The Board may approve guidelines for authorising fishing competitions.
- 6.10.7 Nets, traps and pots used for recreational fishing outside the Park, and any fish caught outside the Park, may be transported into or through the Park only along the Oenpelli Road, Arnhem and Kakadu Highways if securely stowed. Subject to consultation with recreational fishing stakeholders, transporting of fish and recreational fishing gear into or through other areas of the Park may be conducted in accordance with a permit issued by the Director under conditions approved by the Board and where consistent with this Plan.
- 6.10.8 Commercial fishing operations including crabbing must not be carried on in the Park. Fish and crabs caught for commercial purposes outside the Park, and nets, traps and other equipment used for the purposes of commercial fishing, may be transported into or through the Park along the Oenpelli Road, Arnhem Highway and Kakadu Highway only, in accordance with a permit issued by the Director.

Figure 7 – Areas closed to recreational fishing and motorised boating



- 6.10.9 Commercial fishing vessels licensed to operate in Coopers Creek (Arnhem Land) may travel in the Park on the East Alligator River between the mouth of the river and the mouth of Coopers Creek in accordance with a permit issued by the Director. Permit conditions will include:
- fish, crabs, nets, traps, dinghies and other equipment may be transported provided they are securely stowed in the mothership at all times while in the Park
  - tenders must be towed behind motherships and not be used for the transport of fish products, nets and other equipment.
- 6.10.10 Commercial fishing vessels may enter the Park for emergency purposes.

### ***Actions***

- 6.10.11 Develop and implement monitoring programs to assess the level and extent of environmental impacts in waterways subject to high levels of boating and fishing activities.
- 6.10.12 In consultation with Bininj, develop guidelines for the conduct of fishing competitions. These will cover, but not be limited to:
- location and duration of fishing competitions
  - requirements for limits on the number of fishing competitions that may be permitted per year in the Park as a whole and/or in a particular area of the Park
  - number of participants permitted
  - recording requirements
  - safety provisions.
- 6.10.13 Undertake regular patrols of waterways and fishing activity with Bininj, Northern Territory Fisheries and Northern Territory Police when feasible.
- 6.10.14 In conjunction with AFANT, the tourism industry and government agencies as appropriate, investigate options for safer fishing locations on waterways.
- 6.10.15 Provide information to boat users and anglers about safe boating and fishing practices.
- 6.10.16 Advise boat users on the East Alligator River about the need for a permit before entering Arnhem Land.

## **6.11 Visitor information, education and interpretation**

### **Our aim**

Working with Bininj, visitor expectations are appropriately set and the visitor experience is enriched through accurate, high quality information that promotes the World Heritage values and management of the Park.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Number of visitors participating in educational and interpretive programs
- Range, type and quantity of interpretive materials and activities provided
- Visitor satisfaction with visit to Kakadu
- Number of hits on Parks Australia's Kakadu web page

### **Background**

Well prepared and distributed information enables people to plan their visit and enjoy Kakadu in a safe and appropriate way. Visitors are able to obtain information about the Park from:

- pre-visit information through publications, the tourism industry, and Parks Australia's web site
- Park brochures and publications
- interpretive and regulatory signage
- displays, videos and face-to-face contact with Park staff
- guided activities presented by Park staff and Bininj in the dry season
- commercial tour operations.

Educational resource materials are also available for students and teachers.

Tourism industry seminars are conducted to enable tour guides and other people from the tourism industry to learn about Park values, management issues and practices. A detailed resource manual has been developed for tour operator use. Management of commercial tour operations is addressed in Section 6.14 of this Plan.

Many Bininj are involved in providing talks and activities for Park visitors. Most Bininj are employed on a casual basis by the Park to do this work, but some work with tour companies. The Director contracts out the operation of the Bowali Visitor Centre and the Warradjan Cultural Centre.

### **Issues**

- It is important that visitors, whether travelling independently or on a commercial tour, are able to access accurate information about the values and management of the Park and safe behaviour.
- Suggestions for the future management of the Bowali Visitor Centre include a booking centre for Aboriginal-guided tours and activities, an art gallery and interactive educational media.
- Provision of interpretive activities will be considered as part of the Tourism Master Plan (see Section 6.1, Recreational opportunities and tourism directions).
- Bininj would like more opportunities to conduct interpretive activities in the Park.
- Interpretive signs are required at a number of popular visitor sites to provide information about the values of the sites, orientation and safety.
- Interpretive and regulatory signs in the Park should meet national standards.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policy***

- 6.11.1 The following key messages will be promoted and interpreted in Kakadu:
- Kakadu is an Aboriginal place and a cultural landscape.
  - The cultural and natural heritage of the Park is of World Heritage significance.
  - Kakadu is managed jointly by Bininj and the Director.
  - Bininj welcome visitors to their country and would like visitors to learn about the cultural and natural heritage and joint management of the Park.
  - Bininj and the Director care about visitor safety and would like visitors and tour guides to take good care of their own and other people's safety while they are in Kakadu.
  - Kakadu changes greatly through the seasons and offers different experiences in each season.

#### ***Actions***

- 6.11.2 Deliver a range of up-to-date information and interpretation programs to visitors, either directly or through Aboriginal business enterprises.

- 6.11.3 Regularly review Park information and interpretation programs and materials to ensure they are consistent with the above key messages and effectively reach target audiences.
- 6.11.4 Review the operations of the Bowali Visitor Centre. Consider and, where appropriate, implement options for different or additional facilities and services.
- 6.11.5 Identify opportunities to increase employment, training and business enterprises for Bininj to provide information and interpretation programs to visitors.
- 6.11.6 Provide information about the Park to tour operators and guides on a regular basis, through methods such as seminars, newsletters, notices, and industry meetings.
- 6.11.7 Prepare guidelines for the development and installation of signs in accordance with national standards and legislation.

## **6.12 Promotion and marketing**

### **Our aim**

Promotion and marketing of Kakadu presents accurate and appropriate information and images.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Level of satisfaction of the Board with messages in various media about Kakadu
- Number of promotional and marketing programs developed in collaboration with external agencies

### **Background**

Strategic promotion, marketing and media coverage can influence visitor awareness levels, numbers, length of stay and levels of satisfaction. Accurate promotion also helps to give people realistic expectations of their visit to the Park.

Promotion and media coverage can help the Board to communicate its messages to Park visitors and the general public and assist with gaining public support for the Park and, more generally, for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The Park provides information and assistance to visiting journalists, professional photographers and film crews (see Section 6.13, Filming, photography and audio recording).

The Northern Territory Tourist Commission, regional tourism associations and other members of the tourism industry are major promoters and marketers of Kakadu as a major visitor destination. Conservation groups, researchers, professional photographers and filmmakers have also made the name and images of Kakadu and aspects of its natural and cultural heritage well known nationally and internationally.

### **Issues**

- The use of culturally inappropriate images and other messages and promotion that create unrealistic expectations or give inappropriate information is of considerable concern to Bininj. It has the potential to create challenges for Park management, and the potential for visitor dissatisfaction with their Kakadu experience.
- It is important that the promotion and marketing of the Park and use of the media are managed strategically and in collaboration with other stakeholders such as the tourism industry and other Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies.

- The tourism industry needs sufficient time to change information in its promotional materials when there are changes to visitor management in the Park that may affect tour operations.

## **What we are going to do**

### ***Policies***

- 6.12.1 The Director and the Board will promote and market the Park in accordance with the Shared Tourism Vision and key messages determined by the Board (see Section 6.11, Visitor information, education and interpretation).
- 6.12.2 The Director will inform the tourism industry as soon as possible when changes are made to visitor management in the Park that will affect tourism products and their promotion.

### ***Actions***

- 6.12.3 As a high priority the Board will promote elements of the Shared Tourism Vision.
- 6.12.4 Develop and implement a cooperative promotion and marketing strategy with the tourism industry and Northern Territory and Australian Governments. This strategy will seek to increase the involvement of traditional owners, develop advertising campaigns, and contain guidelines on the use of appropriate information, images and messages about Kakadu.

## **6.13 Filming, photography and audio recording**

### **Our aim**

The World Heritage values of the Park and joint management practices are appropriately promoted through commercial filming, photography and audio recording.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Extent to which the World Heritage values of the Park are appropriately promoted
- Level of Bininj involvement in the management of filming, photography and audio recording

### **Background**

Each year many people from Australia and overseas seek to carry out commercial filming, photography and audio recording in Kakadu. Imagery and sound materials are used for the production of documentaries about the cultural and natural significance of the Park, tourism and travel promotion materials, reference books and other publications. In addition, commercial media use images and sound in news reports about the Park.

Under s.354(1) of the EPBC Act commercial filming, photography and audio recording can only be carried on in accordance with this Plan. Regulation 12.24 of the EPBC Regulations allows the Director to place restrictions on image capture in the Park. Regulation 12.38 prohibits use of captured images of the Park to derive commercial gain.

### **Issues**

- It is important to ensure that people engaged in commercial image capture and use are aware of rules about capturing and using images and the need to record appropriate imagery that promotes the values of the Park and is consistent with the key interpretive



messages developed by the Board (see Section 6.11, Visitor information, education and interpretation).

- There are many Kakadu images held in commercial film and photo libraries. Some of these images were captured before the activity was regulated, or without authorisation, and include areas that are not publicly accessible due to their cultural significance.
- Opportunities need to be available for Bininj who would like to be involved in managing commercial filming and photography.

## **What we are going to do**

### ***Policies***

- 6.13.1 Commercial filming, photography and audio recording may be carried on in the Park, and images of the Park may be used for commercial gain, in accordance with:
- guidelines approved by the Board
  - a permit issued by the Director or other authorisation arrangements approved by the Board.
- 6.13.2 Bininj will be consulted in accordance with consultation guidelines (see Section 4.1) before permits are issued for commercial filming, photography or sound recording.
- 6.13.3 The Director will support and actively encourage Bininj to be involved in managing commercial filming, photography and audio recording in the Park. This may include:
- supervising film, photography and audio recording crews
  - providing contract commercial filming, photography and audio recording services
  - supporting the development of commercial opportunities between Bininj and commercial film and photography crews.

### ***Actions***

- 6.13.4 Develop guidelines for the conduct and management of commercial filming, photography in consultation with the Australian Institute of Professional Photographers.
- 6.13.5 Encourage film and photo libraries to withdraw inappropriate imagery of the Park, and encourage publishers to replace inappropriate images when reprinting books.

## **6.14 Commercial tour activities**

### **Our aim**

A range of commercial tour activities provides rewarding experiences for visitors and provides benefits to Bininj while protecting Bininj interests and minimising adverse impacts on the natural and cultural values of the Park.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Extent to which Bininj benefit from tourism opportunities
- Level of visitor and tourism industry satisfaction with commercial tour opportunities

### **Background**

Well managed commercial tour operations help visitors to experience, enjoy and learn about the Park in a sustainable manner while providing an important contribution to the local and regional economies. Between 40–60 per cent of visitors to Kakadu, depending on the season, visit the Park with commercial tour operators. The majority of these visitors are from

overseas. In addition, many independent travellers participate in boat cruises, scenic flights and other commercial tours while in Kakadu.

Under s.354(1) of the EPBC Act commercial tour operations can only be carried on in accordance with this Plan. Commercial tour operators must also comply with relevant Northern Territory legislation eg licensing of fishing tour operators and registration of tour vehicles. Fees for commercial tour permits required by this Plan are set out in the EPBC Regulations. Under the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan, permits for standard land-based tours were issued on an annual basis. Permit conditions were substantially revised during the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan in consultation with the Kakadu Tourism Consultative Committee.

Under the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan limits were placed on the number of permits available for certain types of commercial tour operations. Permits were issued for these specialised activities for up to five years through a competitive application process.

Under the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan the following commercial tours were available:

- Standard land-based tours including coach tours and budget to luxury 4WD tours. No limits were placed on the number of permits that could be issued or the length of stay in the Park.
- Boat tours – one permit was available for each of the South Alligator River, Yellow Water and East Alligator River. These permits were restricted to relevant organisations or Bininj.
- Fishing tours – up to 15 permits were available. One permit was available to operate on Yellow Water and was operated by a Bininj enterprise.
- Safari camps – two safari camp permits were available for each of Gunlom, Mardugal, Muirella Park and Merl campgrounds, and one for Jim Jim campground.
- Bushwalking tours – one permit was available for conducting regular bushwalking tours, and two permits were available for occasional tours.
- Tours to limited access or exclusive use areas – some sites are particularly sensitive to large numbers of visitors or may be areas Bininj wish to have greater access to. These sites may provide visitors travelling with a commercial tour with an exclusive, remote experience. During the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan, permits for such tours were available to operate at Jarrangbarnmi (Koolpin Gorge).

A number of commercial tour activities are also undertaken by Bininj and Bininj organisations. The Regulations generally provide for exemption from permit fees for such activities.

Specific management guidelines have been introduced or proposed for some visitor destinations that are relatively small and environmentally or culturally sensitive. These guidelines include setting limits on the number of visitors or tour operators that can access or camp in these areas. Some areas have been set aside for the use of independent travellers. During the life of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plan, a number of sites were not available for use by commercial tours and others had restricted access. A small number of local tour operators have negotiated benefit-sharing agreements with Bininj through the NLC under which tour groups gain access to areas that are generally not open to the public.

The five-year allocation period of the special permits referred to above has been extended to 31 March 2008 to allow for review of the future management of commercial activities in consultation with the tourism industry, and to ensure that the Shared Tourism Vision and accreditation issues are taken into account.

The lease agreements require the Director to implement an induction scheme for tour operators and their guides. Tourism industry seminars are conducted to provide information about the cultural and natural heritage of the Park and its management. To date, attendance of tour guides at the seminars has not been compulsory.

In 2005, the Board endorsed the introduction of compulsory entry-level tour guide training that can be delivered flexibly eg through e-learning, in addition to the voluntary tourism industry seminars. The training will be based on core competencies related to the interpretation of cultural and natural values, minimising visitor impact and understanding permit conditions. The Board has also agreed to encourage, through provision of incentives, the adoption by tour operators of voluntary accreditation. Bininj have identified cross-cultural training as an essential component of any tour guide training scheme.

The Shared Tourism Vision (see Section 6.1, Recreational opportunities and tourism directions) establishes future directions for management of tourism. A Tourism Master Plan will be developed to consider the spectrum of visitor experiences and tourism opportunities in the Park and how to increase benefits flowing to Bininj from tourism.

### **Issues**

- The key management challenge is to optimise commercial tourism opportunities in ways that protect and present the unique characteristics of the Park and are consistent with, and respect, Bininj aspirations for their country, including improving benefits Bininj receive from tourism and ensuring that management of tourism is efficient and effective.
- Opportunities need to be available for Bininj who are interested in operating commercial tour activities in the Park, either as Bininj enterprises or joint ventures.
- To assist with planning and formulation of sound business investment decisions, commercial tour operators seek long-term certainty about access to the Park and permit conditions and charges, advance notice about any changes and longer permit periods.
- To date, there has been no limit set on the number of permits that may be issued for standard land-based tours.
- It is important that all commercial tour activities are carefully managed to reduce the potential for environmental impacts and ensure visitor safety.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policies***

- 6.14.1 Commercial tour operations may be undertaken in the Park in accordance with a permit issued by the Director.
- 6.14.2 A range of commercial tour activities will be provided for. These must be consistent with the Shared Vision and Guiding Principles of this Plan, the Shared Tourism Vision principles, the Tourism Master Plan (see Section 6.1 of this Plan) and key interpretive messages for the Park (see Section 6.11).
- 6.14.3 All commercial tour activities will continue to be managed in accordance with arrangements in place at the commencement of this Plan until reviewed by the Board following consultation with the tourism industry.
- 6.14.4 Permits for standard land-based and specialised tour activities allocated when this Plan commences will remain valid until 31 March 2008 subject to annual review.
- 6.14.5 Commencing at a time to be agreed with the tourism industry, tour guides will be required to complete compulsory entry-level training before being permitted to operate in the Park. The Director will encourage tour operators to take up industry-based accreditation. Consideration will be given to the introduction of incentives to

encourage the uptake of accreditation, such as extended permit tenure and exclusive or restricted access to sites or types of activities.

- 6.14.6 Some tour permits will be reserved for enterprises that Bininj own or part-own or where legally binding employment and/or benefit-sharing arrangements are in place between the company and Bininj. Permits for powered boat tours will be reserved for these enterprises. Some areas in the Park may also be reserved for enterprises owned or part-owned by Bininj.
- 6.14.7 The Director will review commercial tour permit conditions at least every two years.
- 6.14.8 Night-time boat tours will generally not be permitted unless approved by the Board.
- 6.14.9 Land based spot lighting activities will generally not be permitted unless approved by the Board.

### **Actions**

- 6.14.10 In consultation with Bininj and the tourism industry, undertake a review of management of standard land-based and specialised commercial tour permits. The review will be consistent with the Shared Vision Principles and consider amongst other things:
- limits on the number of permits or visitor numbers, and conditions that apply, for each activity type and identified visitor area
  - the tenure of each type of permit
  - permit fees
  - type of competitive application process applicable eg public tendering, auction or other open special selection processes
  - activity types or permits that are reserved for Bininj enterprises, and assistance required by Bininj in developing their capacity to pursue commercial tourism opportunities
  - management of exclusive access permits
  - monitoring criteria (for example environmental impacts, numbers of visitors, levels of visitor satisfaction).
- 6.14.11 Following the review, implement any recommendations approved by the Board in consultation with the tourism industry.

## **6.15 Commercial accommodation**

### **Our aim**

A range of commercial accommodation is provided consistent with protecting the values of the Park and providing benefits to Bininj.

### **Measuring how well we are meeting our aim**

- Visitor satisfaction with the range of commercial accommodation available
- Extent to which Bininj benefit from commercial accommodation opportunities
- Impacts, including cumulative impacts, from commercial accommodation are within acceptable levels

### **Background**

Darwin and Katherine are the major accommodation centres in the vicinity of Kakadu National Park. Within the Park there are several commercial developments offering various types of accommodation at a wide range of prices.

Three Aboriginal organisations currently own or have interests in commercial accommodation in or adjacent to Kakadu.

The Director may grant leases, subleases and licences to use and occupy land in the Park for the purpose of commercial accommodation only in accordance with this Plan (s.358 EPBC Act).

### **Issues**

- The quality and range of accommodation in the Park influences the quality of visitor experiences and levels of visitor satisfaction.
- Accommodation facilities, if not carefully planned, can have a significant impact on the Park. Supporting infrastructure such as water, sewerage, access roads, power and staff accommodation can all affect the surrounding environment. It is important to ensure that potential short- and longer-term cultural and environmental impacts associated with commercial accommodation developments are minimised.
- Bininj would like to be involved in and derive benefits from commercial accommodation on their land including financial benefits, employment and training opportunities.

### **What we are going to do**

#### ***Policies***

- 6.15.1 Commercial accommodation may be established in the Park on areas occupied under a lease, sublease or licence granted by the Director with the approval of the Board, consistent with the Shared Tourism Vision principles, and as identified in the Tourism Master Plan.
- 6.15.2 Proposals for the development of commercial accommodation will be considered in accordance with Sections 8.1, Capital works and infrastructure, 8.3, Assessment of proposals, and 8.5, Leases, licences and associated occupancy issues.