

## Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Management Plan 2010-2020

### EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Section 366(3) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) requires the Board of Management established for a Commonwealth reserve under the Act to prepare management plans for the reserve in conjunction with the Director of National Parks (the Director). Once prepared a management plan is approved under section 370 by the Minister responsible for administering the Act and has effect for a period of 10 years.

The purpose of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Management Plan 2010-2020 is to describe the philosophy and direction of management for the Park for the next ten years in accordance with the EPBC Act. This is the fifth management plan for the park. It enables management to proceed in an orderly way; helps reconcile competing interests and identifies priorities for the allocation of available resources.

#### Background

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park covers about 1,325 square kilometres and is 335 kilometres by air and about 470 kilometres by road to the south-west of Alice Springs. The Ayers Rock Resort at Yulara adjoins the park's northern boundary. Both the park and the resort are surrounded by Aboriginal freehold land held by the Petermann and Katiti Land Trusts. The park was declared by Proclamation under the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975* on 24 May 1977. From 16 July 2000 the Proclamation has been continued under the EPBC Act and the park is managed and protected as a Commonwealth reserve under the Act.

The park was granted as Aboriginal land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* on 26 October 1985 and leased to the Director of National Parks to be managed jointly with the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land as a national park. A Board of Management is established for the park under the EPBC Act with a majority of members nominated by the traditional Aboriginal owners.

Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is part of an extensive Aboriginal cultural landscape that stretches across the Australian continent. The park represents the work of Anangu (Western Desert Aboriginal people) and nature during thousands of years. Its landscape has been managed using traditional Anangu methods governed by *Tjukurpa*, Anangu Law. Within the park is Uluru, arguably the most distinctive landscape symbol of Australia, nationally and internationally. The park has a particularly rich and diverse suite of arid environment species, most of which are unique to Australia. The importance of the park's natural and cultural values is reflected by its inscription on the World Heritage List and its inclusion in the Commonwealth and National Heritage lists under the EPBC Act.

Along with other places of natural beauty in Australia such as Kakadu National Park and the Great Barrier Reef, Uluru has become a major international and domestic tourism destination attracting over 300,000 visitors each year.

The purposes for which Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was declared are consistent with the characteristics for International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) protected area category II 'national park'. In accordance with the EPBC Act the park is assigned to this category under the management plan.

## Structure and content of the management plan

Overall the content of the management plan is consistent with the intent and direction of the previous plan. The plan consists of two parts. Part 1 explains the context for managing the park, including the legal context. Part 2 sets out how the park will be managed. The plan sets out how provisions of the EPBC Act and Regulations relating to Commonwealth reserves will operate and be applied and provides greater flexibility in management arrangements.

The plan has been structured according to the Parks Australia Planning and Performance Assessment Framework. The purpose of the Framework is to achieve consistency and comprehensiveness in the management and conservation within and between reserves.

The management plan includes six of the Framework's seven Key Result Areas:

- Key Result Area 1 (**KRA1**): Natural Heritage Management
- Key Result Area 2 (**KRA2**): Cultural Heritage Management
- Key Result Area 3 (**KRA3**): Joint Management
- Key Result Area 4 (**KRA4**): Visitor Management and Park Use
- Key Result Area 5 (**KRA5**): Stakeholders and Partnerships
- Key Result Area 6 (**KRA6**): Business Management

*NOTE: Key Result Area 7 (Biodiversity Knowledge Management) is not relevant to this management plan.*

Within the management plan, each chapter covers the protection and management of the various aspects of the park's values and uses:

- Background
- Introductory provisions
- IUCN category and zoning
- Natural heritage management
- Cultural heritage management
- Visitor management and use of the Park
- Stakeholders and partnerships
- Business management

Most sections within the management plan's chapters are structured as follows:

- Our aim (describes the desired result of park management activity)
- Measuring how well we are meeting our aim
- Background (explains why the section is needed)
- Issues (indicating the key factors to consider)
- What we are going to do
  - Policies
  - Actions

The plan allows sufficient flexibility to maintain or enhance park values in the face of unforeseen circumstances and to provide an adaptive framework to deal with the uncertainties of climate change and its implications for the management of the park over the life of the plan.

The management plan covers a wide range of issues associated with managing such a significant park. The plan places particular emphasis on creating opportunities for Anangu education, employment and participation in the management of the park in accordance with obligations under the park lease. It

provides for the establishment of new visitor experiences to introduce visitors to the extraordinary desert environments and the natural and cultural values of the park.

The plan covers the on-going protection and management of park values, particularly through the use of fire, the control of weeds and feral animals, the effective management of precious water resources and responding to and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The plan also provides for the sustainable development of the Mutitjulu community within the park.

Greater emphasis is placed on the importance of taking a regional approach in the management of the park, acknowledging that it is part of a much larger natural, cultural and social landscape. The park will work with neighbours and government partners towards the more effective management of regional ecosystems and encouraging visitors to experience the many destinations and attractions on offer across the Red Centre.

The Director of National Parks is obliged under the park lease to provide a range of benefits and opportunities for relevant Aboriginals, including assisting in the maintenance of cultural traditions, providing employment opportunities, training in administrative and management skills and to protect areas and things of significance to relevant Aboriginals. This plan strengthens these commitments and facilitates intergenerational transfer of Anangu knowledge and skills.

## **Consultation**

The EPBC Act makes specific provision for consultation in the preparation of management plans including two opportunities for public comment under section 368 of the Act.

On 15 March 2006, consistent with paragraph 368(1)(a) of the EPBC Act, a notice was published in the Australian Government Gazette, the Australian newspaper, the Northern Territory News, the Centralian Advocate and placed on the Department of the Environment and Water Resources website, inviting comments on the proposal to prepare a draft management plan. A 'Have Your Say' brochure was also circulated to stimulate awareness of the planning process and the opportunity to contribute to the plan. This comment period closed on 28 April 2006 and six public submissions were received.

Following consideration of these submissions, the Director and the Board of Management prepared a draft plan which was released for public comment on 8 July 2009 until 4 September 2009. Invitations to comment on the draft plan were published in the Australian Government Gazette, the Australian newspaper, the Northern Territory News, the Centralian Advocate and on the Department's website. Draft plans were sent to stakeholders with an invitation to comment (including those who provided comments towards the preparation of the draft plan). Copies of the draft plan were made available from the Park Headquarters, from the Darwin Office of Parks Australia, from the Department's website and through the Department's Community Information Unit.

One hundred and seventy two submissions were received. Three meetings of the Board of Management were held during October and November 2009 to consider the submissions and proposed changes to the plan. The Director and the Board changed aspects of the plan as a result of their consideration of these submissions.

At a meeting of the Board of Management on 19 November 2009 the Director and the Board agreed to the final wording of the new management plan for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and endorsed the Director providing it to the Minister for approval under section 370 of the EPBC Act. The plan was approved by the Minister on 4 January 2010.

**Commencement date of legislative instrument**

The management plan is a legislative instrument for the purposes of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003*. The plan was made on the day it was approved by the Minister and commenced the day after registration on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments.