



Kon Vatskalis

ACTING MINISTER FOR PARKS AND WILDLIFE

28. December 2006

Howard Springs Nature Park Draft Plan of Management

Giving Territorians greater access to one of the Top End's favourite recreation spots will be the priority of a new management plan, Acting Parks and Wildlife Minister Kon Vatskalis announced today.

Mr Vatskalis today encouraged Territorians to have their say on how they wanted the Howard Springs Nature Reserve managed with the launch of its Draft Plan of Management for public comment.

The Nature Park has been an important community recreation site since World War Two when Australian and American servicemen used the site for rest and recreation.

"This is an iconic Top End recreation spot for thousands of Territorians – and the Government wants to keep it that way and make it even more accessible to locals and tourists in the future," Mr Vatskalis said.

"The Draft Plan is part of the process to establish a long term management program for the Park including long term management of its water resources."

He said not only does the Draft Plan recognise the importance of protecting and interpreting the Park's natural and cultural values, it also focuses on the maintenance of the water quality in and near the waterhole and spring, which are key attractions.

"The Parks and Wildlife Service has been working to implement a water quality maintenance program that will reduce the need for the waterhole to be closed for swimming due to high levels of harmful bacteria."

The main strategies of the Draft Plan include maintaining swimming as a recreation activity, further development of the Park for tourism and general recreation and implementing natural resource management programs to control weeds, fire and feral animals.

"While I am sure many of the 130,000 people who visit the park annually enjoy their visit, the Territory Government recognises that proposals to upgrade the facilities in the Reserve, especially around the waterhole and spring will enhance the experience for locals and tourists in the longer term.

"As part of the upgrade the Draft Plan suggests increasing the walking and cycling opportunities within the Park, so that visitors can experience the range of habitats protected in the Park."

"The suggested improvements will also make the Reserve more enjoyable for tourists without affecting other uses of the reserve.

"The Draft Plan takes a long term approach to the Park's management and I urge Territorians to read it and provide feedback," Mr Vatskalis said. Community and Park user feedback will ensure the best possible management outcomes are achieved and the community's aspirations are incorporated into the Park's long term management."

The public can go to www.nt.gov.au/howardspringsplan to read the Draft Plan of Management and provide feedback by 9 February 2007. After comments are collated, there will be further opportunity for public input before finalisation on the Plan of Management.

Contact: Maria Billias 0401 119 746

