

CONFIDENTIAL

CABINET DECISION

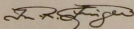
NO. 388

Submission No.: 335

Title: A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A MACDONNELL RANGES
NATIONAL PARK AS A PLANNING INITIATIVE

Submission deferred for six months as Cabinet considers possible developments in the Uluru and Kakadu National Parks may require the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission to have money available this year for either of these areas.

Further, the general view of Cabinet is that the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission should be consolidating at this stage rather than considering further expansion.



(M.R. FINGER),
Secretary to Cabinet.

15.8.78

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Director General

DATE: 8.8.78

FROM: The Chief Minister

REF:

RE:

Can you please circulate the attached submission to the Treasury, the Public Service Commission and the Departments of Law and Mines.

PAUL EVERINGHAM

*Copies sent to - R. Donaldson (P.S.C.)
(by hand). B. Wallon (Mines)
W. King (for Solicitor-General)
R. Dennis (Treasury)*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Director-General *amb 15/8*

DATE: 14-8-78

FROM: Solicitor-General

REF:

RE: PROPOSED PURCHASE OF GLEN HELEN STATION

I support the proposal. The cost is minimal and the acquisition will result in a park of international significance.

The method of acquisition will require careful thought, having regard to the fact that what is being purchased is a pastoral lease. There are various courses open. The simplest method suggesting itself is for the lessee to surrender the lease and the Administrator to vest title to the land in the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

I would like to give further thought to the matter, and I suggest that the Cabinet decision be in the following general terms :

That the Government purchase or otherwise acquire for \$127,000 all right title and interest in and to the land comprised in Pastoral Lease No. 681 known as Glen Helen Station, with a view to having the land declared to be a park pursuant to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Ordinance.

Ian Barker
Ian Barker

Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission

Established under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Ordinance 1976.



NORTHERN DIVISION OFFICE

P. O. Box 38496 Winnellie Darwin
Northern Territory, Australia, 5789

Telephone 22 0211
Telex Parks AA85336

In reply please quote
our reference

Your reference

14 August 1978

DIRECTOR-GENERAL *mrf 15/8*

CABINET SUBMISSION - A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A MACDONNELL
RANGES NATIONAL PARK AS A PLANNING INITIATIVE

335
Enclosed please find amended page 3 of the above Cabinet
Submission. The amendment was necessary as the area of
the lease should read 2,050 sq. kilometres.

J.P. Hauser
(J.P. HAUSER)
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

3.

BACKGROUND

3. The MacDonnell Ranges National Park is a concept which has long been regarded by the Northern Territory Reserves Board and others as a most desirable and important proposal. Small isolated portions of the ranges were acquired by the Reserves Board which are of tourist interest and importance and in the conservation of the natural environment. These include Ormiston Gorge, Red Bank Gorge, Glen Helen and Ellery Creek Reserves which are already subject to heavy visitor pressures.

4. The owner of Glen Helen Station, which includes a very valuable portion of the MacDonnell Ranges, has informed officers of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission that he would sell to the Commission. The asking price for the lease area, free of stock, is of the order of \$127,000. The area of the lease is 2,050 sq. kilometres.

CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES

5. The proposal to establish a MacDonnell Ranges National Park is seen to be of such significance that it should be established as a planning initiative of the Northern Territory Government and progress reviewed on a regular basis. The proposed park is of national and international significance and would enable the development of a major tourist attraction

CONFIDENTIALSUBMISSION NO. 335FOR CABINET

Title:	A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A MACDONNELL RANGES NATIONAL PARK AS A PLANNING INITIATIVE
Cabinet Member:	P.A.E. Everingham
Purpose:	To establish a MacDonnell Ranges National Park and initially to purchase Glen Helen Station.
Relation to existing policy:	Conforms to existing policies of conservation of the natural environment and development of tourist industries. Is also associated with collaboration with Aboriginal people in National Parks management.
Timing/ legislative priority:	Urgent
Announcement of decision, tabling, etc.:	Announcement of Cabinet Decision could be made immediately after initial contact with Glen Helen Pastoral Company.
Action required before announcement:	Official discussion with Mr. Bowman of Glen Helen Pastoral Company.
Staffing implications, numbers and costs, etc.:	Not fully developed, but financial expenditure unlikely to be significantly higher than existing levels.
Total cost:	Initially, approximately \$127,000.

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Comment by
Director of
Finance:

Approved/Not Approved

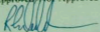
Signed:

Date:

Comment by
Public Service
Commissioner:

As mentioned in the submission, the establishment of a MacDonnell Ranges National Park will mean a requirement for a number of Ranger and associated positions. Salaries and on-costs for say three positions will amount to approximately \$52,000 without considerations to machinery or possible housing requirements.

~~Approved/Not Approved~~



Signed:

R. L. DONALDSON
for Public Service Commissioner
11 August 1978

Date:

MEMORANDUM

TO: Director-General

DATE: 14-8-78

FROM: Solicitor-General

REF:

RE: PROPOSED PURCHASE OF GLEN HELEN STATION

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The method of acquisition will require careful thought, having regard to the fact that what is being purchased is a pastoral lease. There are various courses open. The simplest method suggesting itself is for the lessee to surrender the lease and the Administrator to vest title to the land in the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

I would like to give further thought to the matter, and I suggest that the Cabinet decision be in the following general terms :

That the Government purchase or otherwise acquire for \$127,000 all right title and interest in and to the land comprised in Pastoral Lease No. 681 known as Glen Helen Station, with a view to having the land declared to be a park pursuant to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Ordinance.


Ian Barker

This proposal has arisen as a matter of urgency to purchase the Glen Helen Pastoral Lease in Central Australia and is part of a longer term objective to establish a MacDonnell Ranges National Park.

2.

THE ISSUES

- .. The proposal to establish the MacDonnell Ranges National Park is of considerable significance to the Northern Territory and to the Nation, and should be established as a planning initiative of the Northern Territory Government.
- .. On an opportunistic basis, the Glen Helen Pastoral Lease, which is presently available for sale, should be purchased as an initial positive step in the creation of this National Park.
- .. The Aboriginal people, through the Central Land Council, have agreed to a proposal that the land should be purchased and to commence discussions towards the joint management of the proposed National Park.

3.

BACKGROUND

3. The MacDonnell Ranges National Park is a concept which has long been regarded by the Northern Territory Reserves Board and others as a most desirable and important proposal. Small isolated portions of the ranges were acquired by the Reserves Board which are of tourist interest and importance and in the conservation of the natural environment. These include Ormiston Gorge, Red Bank Gorge, Glen Helen and Ellery Creek Reserves which are already subject to heavy visitor pressures.

4. The owner of Glen Helen Station, which includes a very valuable portion of the MacDonnell Ranges, has informed officers of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission that he would sell to the Commission. The asking price for the lease area, free of stock, is of the order of \$127,000. The area of the lease is 2,050 ha.

CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUES

5. The proposal to establish a MacDonnell Ranges National Park is seen to be of such significance that it should be established as a planning initiative of the Northern Territory Government and progress reviewed on a regular basis. The proposed park is of national and international significance and would enable the development of a major tourist attraction

as well as the achievement of the conservation of a significant portion of the Central Australian landscape and environment.

6. The purchase of the Glen Helen Pastoral Lease is important and the Government should take the opportunity to purchase the lease at an early date. This is a rare opportunity and in view of the importance of the land, is put forward as a matter of urgency.

7. The Central Land Council was approached by the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission (Attachment B) with a proposal that the lease be purchased by the Northern Territory Government for management as a National Park and that if Aboriginal land claims were successful, a joint management arrangement would be negotiated. The Central Land Council agreed to this proposal (Attachment C). The proposal offered employment of Aborigines and possible involvement in commercial ventures associated with tourism in the Park.

8. The sealing of the road to Glen Helen Gorge is programmed for 1978/79. This will have considerable impact on tourism in the proposed National Park.

THE OPTIONS

9. There are a number of options available, particularly in respect to the management of this area in the future.

.. The most favoured option is for the Government to purchase the land and negotiate with the Central Land Council towards future joint management when land claims by Aborigines have become established. This is seen as the most positive approach to the establishment of this National Park.

.. An alternative option is to do nothing and this would mean that another pastoral company would purchase the land and it would remain alienated for pastoral purposes.

PUBLIC IMPACT

10. The purchase of the land with the stated objective of creating an important National Park would be very well received by the community both in the Territory and in other States. It is believed that the Australian tourist industry and, in particular, the tourist industry in Alice Springs, would fully support the proposal. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service previously proposed that the MacDonnell Ranges would be one of the parks of significance in Australia which they would seek to dedicate under Federal Legislation.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

11. The initial expenditure of approximately \$127,000 (subject to negotiation) should occur early in 1978/79. Savings could be made from the operational estimates of the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission for this purpose. Alternatively, it could be funded by substitution for items in the acquisition programme. Future financial implications are not significantly higher than present expenditure of \$220,000 in the existing reserves in the area.

EMPLOYMENT CONSIDERATIONS

12. An additional Ranger position to staff the West MacDonnells area is already proposed for 1978/79. There will be a need to employ and train several Aboriginal Rangers under joint management of the park in the future.

PUBLICITY

13. A draft press statement announcing the Cabinet Decision, if approved, is provided at Attachment A. Mr. Bowman of Glen Helen is keen to sell the property to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, but discussions with him have been informal. It would be appropriate to contact Mr. Bowman officially prior to making a press statement.

TIMING

14. In view of the advantages of this invaluable area of great significance for conservation and National Park development, a request for urgency for Cabinet's consideration is made. The Commission is not sure how long the option to purchase the lease is available, but it could be foreclosed at any time by the owner selling to another company.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15.

- (1) To adopt the concept of the establishment of a MacDonnell Ranges National Park in principle and to include this proposed National Park as a planning initiative of the Northern Territory Government.
- (2) To purchase, as a matter of urgency, the Glen Helen Pastoral Lease, free of stock.
- (3) To negotiate with the Central Land Council a basis for joint management and participation of Aborigines in the proposed National Park.

ATTACHMENT ADRAFT PRESS RELEASEMACDONNELL RANGES NATIONAL PARK

For many years there has been a great amount of interest in the establishment of a MacDonnell Ranges National Park in Central Australia. The grand vista of the Ranges extending from Alice Springs is one of the most valuable scenic attractions of the region and typifies the Central Australian landscape.

Mr. Everingham announced that the establishment of this important National Park is a policy objective of the new Northern Territory Government and that the Government are to purchase the Glen Helen Pastoral Lease as an initial positive step to create the National Park. The acquisition of the lease will unite the existing reserves of Glen Helen, Ormiston Gorge and Redbank Gorge which are already important tourist attractions. Some of the most magnificent scenery of the MacDonnell Ranges is in the Glen Helen lease, including Mount Sonder and the approaches to Mount Zeil and Mount Razorback.

Mr. Everingham stated that the development of the National Park would be undertaken with the Aboriginal people who have traditional affiliations with the land in the proposed park and negotiations would soon commence to establish joint management with the Aborigines and the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission.

- COPY -

TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE
COMMISSION - ALICE SPRINGS

23 June, 1978

The Chairman,
Central Land Council,
P.O. Box 1960,
ALICE SPRINGS. N.T. 5750

Dear Sir,

For some years there have been proposals to create a MacDonnell Ranges National Park in Central Australia and this concept has a very wide following throughout Australia as well as the Northern Territory. The proposed park is certainly one of national significance and is seen by the Commission to be a National Park of very great importance in conservation and tourism as it really characterises the Central Australian landscape and environment. It is appreciated by the Commission that within a National Park type of management protection, the Aboriginal sites of significance in the area can be protected from intrusion by people and cattle and not further threatened by pastoral development.

Although the concept for the establishment of the MacDonnell Ranges National Park has been in front of us for some years, the major constraints have been the land status of the Ranges, most of which have been included in Pastoral Leases and at times of good cattle prices, have been of considerable value to pastoral production.

The Glen Helen Pastoral Lease, which includes important areas of the MacDonnell Ranges, is available for sale, free of stock. The Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission is desirous of purchasing all or portion of this lease to establish an important National Park and to incorporate the existing Ormiston Gorge, Glen Helen and Redbank Gorge Reserves into a consolidated National Park.

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2.

The Commission is aware of the interest of the Central Land Council on behalf of the Aboriginal people to acquire this property as Aboriginal land and respects their wishes in this regard. We are proposing that the Northern Territory Government should acquire the property for the purpose of a National Park and thus enable Aborigines with traditional interests and affiliations in the area to make land claims. For those portions where land claims are successful it is proposed that joint management between Aboriginal landowners and the Commission be established to protect the area along similar lines to the proposed Kakadu National Park in the Northern portion of the Territory. Plans of Management for the area would be jointly prepared and be mutually acceptable. We are sure that this joint management would be of benefit to our common interests.

It is envisaged that the Management Plan will involve the training of Aboriginal Rangers to assist with the staffing of the Park and we can jointly examine the opportunities for some commercial enterprises based on the tourist use of the Park as has been successful at Standley Chasm.

We are treating this matter as one of urgency to avoid the situation of another pastoral company or individual purchasing the lease for pastoral use in the future. If your Council is agreeable to the proposal we will put it forward as a submission to the Northern Territory Government immediately.

I look forward to your early reply in this matter as we believe it is necessary to move very quickly. You will appreciate that the final details of joint management and participation cannot be worked out at this stage but we do provide the assurance that the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission will work in close collaboration with the Central Land Council and the Aborigines in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

(signed)

W.T. HARE
DIRECTOR

- COPY -

The Director,
Territory Parks & Wildlife Commission,
P.O. Box 1046,
ALICE SPRINGS. N.T. 5750

I acknowledge your letter dated 23rd June 1978 and have discussed your proposal with several of the traditional owners who were interested in the purchase of the station.

Whilst the owners would, of course, love to be able to purchase such a significant area themselves they are aware of the force of your argument that their own inability to obtain funds to purchase the land means that the station will probably be purchased by another pastoral interest unless a body such as the Commission gets the title.

The owners feel that your proposal is far preferable to another commercial operator obtaining the lease and therefore will not stand in the way of the Commission's bid for the property. I explained the terms outlined in your letter and they agree to these. I should say however that some fairly strong concern was expressed about the Commission's likely attitude to Aboriginal hunting in the area. One man referred to the early history of Section 122 and another to what he'd heard a Commission witness had said about Aboriginal hunting during the Warlpiri claim hearings.

I said to the people that we would insist on the same arguments that we presented in the Warlpiri claim about peoples right to hunt with guns (subject to protection of rare species) and that all the terms of the management scheme would be fully discussed with them and be written down in an agreement. So I imagine that we will still have to do a fair bit of negotiating as to the precise terms of any agreement. But subject to that assurance by me (which I trust was right for me to give) that they will have an equal chance to put their point of view as to what should be in such an agreement, they accept your terms and welcome the Commission's involvement.

I hope this letter will give you the necessary support for your bid for funds with which to make the purchase and wish you luck in the bidding.

(Signed: J. EAMES,
Solicitor -
Central Land Council)