

ASIA / PACIFIC

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

AUSTRALIA

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK (AUSTRALIA) – ID No. 147

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kakadu National Park is a mixed World Heritage property inscribed under criteria (i), (vi), (vii), (ix) and (x) in the Northern Territories of Australia. It has been inhabited continuously for more than 40,000 years by the indigenous peoples of this area and most of the Park's land is owned by traditional owners and leased back to the National Park for its management. This archaeological and ethnological site contains cave paintings, rock carvings and other cultural features. Its natural values include an exceptional example of a complex of ecosystems, including tidal flats, floodplains, lowlands and plateaus, and it provides a habitat for a wide range of rare or endemic species of plants and animals. The property was inscribed in three stages of nomination in 1981, 1987 and 1992 and is under joint management by the National Park Service and the traditional landowners represented in the Northern Land Council.

2. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

The proposal is to include the enclave known as the Koongarra Project Area in the property. Koongarra is situated in the eastern part of Kakadu National Park and is completely surrounded by the World Heritage property. With 1,228 ha, it would comprise less than 1% of the existing 1.98 million ha World Heritage property.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

As it concerns the inclusion of land into the existing World Heritage property, the proposal is considered in its relation to the criteria under which the property is inscribed and its contribution to the integrity, protection and management of its values. IUCN's comments relate to the natural criteria. ICOMOS will evaluate this proposal for minor boundary modification in relation to cultural criteria.

Koongarra is of high ecological importance within the Kakadu area. It lies in the catchment of Nourlangie Creek which drains into the Ramsar listed wetlands of the Woolwonga Reserve and South Alligator River. It is situated near Nourlangie Rock, a major cultural attraction in the property which is visited by 90% of the 230,000 tourists who visit Kakadu annually. The inclusion of this enclave (one of three in Kakadu) within the property would strengthen the integrity, protection and management system of the property. Known uranium

deposits had led to its exclusion from the National Park and World Heritage site in 1981 with the *Koongarra Project Area Act*. The proposal to now include the enclave within the property follows a request by the World Heritage Committee in 1998 to prevent mining in the park and specific recommendations by IUCN for the Koongarra area (WHC-98/CONF.203/INF.18).

The State Party's proposed boundary modification responds to a request by Djok traditional land owner Jeffrey Lee, supported by the Northern Land Council and Kakadu Board of Management, to integrate this area into the Kakadu National Park and World Heritage property. In supplementary information provided by the State Party to IUCN, the Northern Lands Council confirms the deep wish of its represented landowners to use the land traditionally and their commitment to never consent to mining. It is also planned to establish an outstation within Koongarra. Under the *Australian Government's Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, approvals of mineral exploration licence applications cannot be granted without the approval of the traditional Aboriginal owners of the area.

IUCN notes that Koongarra is not yet part of the National Park although this has been requested by the owner. In the supplementary information requested by IUCN, the State Party confirms that the process to include Koongarra in the National Park and thus add an additional layer of protection in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act 1999* is under way. IUCN encourages the State Party to finalize this process so that Koongarra can be fully managed under the provisions of the existing Kakadu National Park Management Plan 2007-2014.

IUCN considers that the proposal to include the Koongarra Project Area in the property meets the requirements for approval as a minor boundary modification of the property.

4. OTHER COMMENTS

None.

5. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopt the following decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC-11/35.COM/8B and WHC-11/35.COM/INF.8B2, and recalling its consideration of this property at the time of its original nomination as outlined in Decisions Documents WHC-22COM VII.28, WHC-29COM 8B.9 and WHC-98/CONF.203/INF.18, including in relation to the Koongarra Project Area and other areas;

2. Approves the minor boundary modification of **Kakadu National Park (Australia)**, to include the Koongarra Project Area (1,228 ha), in order to strengthen the integrity of the inscribed property and support its effective protection and management;

3. Commends the State Party on its efforts to integrate the Koongarra Project Areas into Kakadu National Park which will involve an absolute prohibition of mining through the application of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Protection Act 1999, and requests the State Party to expedite this process as soon as possible, in collaboration with the traditional landowners of the property;

4. Notes with appreciation the commitment of the State Party, and the traditional land owners, to not permit any mining within the property, as extended through the addition of the Koongarra project area.

Map 1: Nominated property and Koongarra location