THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PROTECTION OF BUNGLE BUNGLE

Report from the House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation

March 1985

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Terms of Reference of the Committee

(1) That a standing committee be appointed to inquire into and report on -

(a) environmental aspects of legislative and administrative measures which ought to be taken in order to ensure the wise and effective management of the Australian environment and of Australia's natural resources, and

(b) such other matters relating to the environment and conservation and the management of Australia's natural resources as are referred to it by -

(i) resolution of the House, or
(ii) the Minister responsible for those matters.

Members of the Committee in the 34th Parliament

Chairman	Mr P. Milton, M.P.
Deputy Chairman	Mr D.M. Connolly, M.P.
Members	Mr R.L. Chynoweth, M.P. Mr R.F. Edwards, M.P. Mr P.S. Fisher, M.P. Mr G. Gear, M.P. Ms J. McHugh, M.P. Mr C.G. Miles, M.P.
Secretary to the Committee	Mr J.R. Cummins

Members of the Committee in the 33rd Parliament

Chairman	Mr P. Milton, M.P.
Deputy Chairman	Mr D.M. Connolly, M.P.
Members	Mr M.A. Burr, M.P. Mr R.L. Chynoweth, M.P. Mr R.F. Edwards, M.P. Mr G. Gear, M.P. Mr A.A. Morris, M.P. The Hon. I.L. Robinson, M.P.
Secretary to the Committee	Mr J.R. Cummins

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

1. the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs discuss with his State counterpart assistance required from the Commonwealth to enable the Warmun Community to be provided with -

   - advisory staff to gather information and coordinate meetings with traditional owners;
   - funds to enable access to experts in areas of park management, law and anthropology, and
   - funds to enable traditional owners to meet and make informed decisions. (paragraph 35)

2. the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in consultation with relevant Western Australian authorities and the Warmun Community offer assistance in developing Aboriginal training programs for the traditional owners.

   (paragraph 39)

3. the Australian Government provide assistance to the Western Australian Government under the States Assistance Program.

   (paragraph 44)

4. the Commonwealth Government discuss with the Western Australian Government the provision of funds to enable -

   - the stationing of rangers in Bungle Bungle during the visitor season; and
   - the commencement of essential minimum capital works.

   (paragraph 49)

5. the Australian Heritage Commission in consultation with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant Western Australian State Authorities undertake investigations to establish the national and international significance of the Bungle Bungle region.

   (paragraph 50)

1 INTRODUCTION

1. During 1983 - 84 the Committee of the 33rd Parliament noted extensive media coverage of the Bungle Bungle area of the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The articles commented on the beauty and the special values of the area. The Committee was concerned about comments on the fragility of the area and the likelihood of increased visitor pressures and the potential for damage. Correspondence received from tourist and conservation interests and the Aboriginal community at Turkey Creek confirmed the media reports.

2. In February 1983 the Western Australian Government established the Bungle Bungle Working Group to investigate the status of Bungle Bungle. The Working Group consisted of conservation, mining, tourism and Aboriginal interests. It reported to the Government in October 1984. The findings and recommendations are outlined in Appendix 2.

3. The Committee visited the Kimberley region on 24 - 26 July 1984. During the course of the visit inspections were undertaken of Bungle Bungle, and Keep River and Hidden Valley National Parks. Discussions were held with the Aboriginal community at Turkey Creek and with representatives of the Kimberley Regional Advisory Committee and officers of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.

4. In addition, the Committee sought the written views of the Premier of Western Australia, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Western Australian Tourism Industry Association.

5. Members who participated in the inspections believed that Bungle Bungle was one of the most spectacular areas they had ever seen. There is no doubt that as more people become

aware of Bungle Bungle pressures to visit the area will increase. The area is in a natural state but will rapidly deteriorate should uncontrolled access be allowed. While the present aerial tours present no problems, the limited overland tourist excursions now taking place have the potential to cause irreparable damage.

6. The Committe realises that only a small area of the Kimberley region was visited and other areas of Western Australia may require special assistance. The Committee believes however, that because Bungle Bungle is at present unaffected but is likely to be subjected to increasing pressures as it becomes better known, special consideration of this area is justified. It also notes the conclusion of the Working Group relating to the national and international significance of the area. While recognising that the management of national parks in Western Australia is a State responsibility, the Committee believes that the Commonwealth can assist the State by the provision of funds and other resources.

2 BUNGLE BUNGLE

Location

7. The Bungle Bungle massif is located in the south-eastern Kimberley region in the far north-east of Western Australia. It is 160km south of Kununurra, 120km north-east of Halls Creek and 50km from the Northern Territory border. The massif extends over a distance of about 28km east to west and 20km north to south for a total area of approximately 450km^2.

8. While Bungle Bungle is the main attraction for tourists the area considered by the Bungle Bungle Working Group comprised the Bungle Bungle massif and surrounding lands representing a total of 350 000 hectares. A map of the study area is at Appendix 1.

Description

9. A striking aspect of Bungle Bungle massif is the marked changes in the land forms which occur across it. It consists of massed towers and gorges, sheer cliffs and waterfalls. One of the most striking features of the landscape is the horizontal orange and black banding.

10. The sandstone is mechanically weak and it can be crushed in the hand and readily crumbles under foot. Once the surface skin is broken the sandstone rapidly disintegrates.

11. Detailed biological surveys of flora and fauna of the region of which Bungle Bungle forms a part are very limited or non-existent. Sheltered moist habitats such as those which occur within the narrow chasms of Bungle Bungle are often of conservation significance as they support specialised communities, are very restricted in their occurrence and often provide refuge areas for species in times of drought. Despite

the very limited specific information on the area the Bungle Bungle Working Group concluded that a large conservation reserve centred on the area in which Bungle Bungle is located would help fill several significant gaps in the coverage of the reserve system of the Kimberley region. The area encompasses a variety of land systems, including elements of outstanding scenic attraction, a combination of land surfaces and vegetation, much of which is not well represented or preserved. Included in the area are tropical grasslands and savannah ecosystems representative of ecosystem groups recognised in the World Conservation Strategy as being poorly represented in protected areas world wide.

12. The Working Group concluded that the land forms of the Bungle Bungle massif are not just visually spectacular but are also of national and international scientific significance. The scale and complexity of the arrays of sandstone towers ranks Bungle Bungle as the best example of sandstone ruiniform topography in Australia and one of the outstanding examples of its type in the world.

13. The Working Group recommended the establishment of a National Park which would cater for the combined needs of conservation and tourism, soil and vegetation rehabilitation, Aboriginal interests and mineral exploration. The Working Group emphasised however, that the Bungle Bungle massif should be excluded from mineral exploration.

Aboriginal Involvement

14. The traditional association with the Bungle Bungle region of the Aboriginal community at Turkey Creek and other places was documented effectively in the Warmun community submissions to the Western Australian Aboriginal Land Inquiry and is summarised in the Bungle Bungle Working Group's report.

In letters to the Committee the Community wrote of their deep affinity to the Bungle Bungle area. Traditional ownership has been passed down through generations. The people of Turkey Creek and Aboriginals living elsewhere still have a great knowledge of its mythology, topography and biota. This association was demonstrated by Aboriginals who travelled with the Committee and who were able to point to places of interest and significance. The Committee examined rock paintings at Bungle Bungle, one of which was a child's handprint of a woman, now living at Turkey Creek, and at least indicated an Aboriginal association with the area in recent times.

15. In addition, Aboriginals were intricately involved in the past development of the region. They helped build the improvements for the pastoral stations which evolved and the first roads to Bungle Bungle were built by Aboriginals. Attempts are being made by one family to establish an outstation near Bungle Bungle.

16. The Community argued that they have a moral right to be involved in the development. This moral right stems from their affinity with the land and the economic benefits which would accrue to the Community. At present, Aboriginals at Turkey Creek live in unsatisfactory conditions, totally dependent on Government funding and welfare payments.

17. The Community requested that they be fully consulted on future development and access. They provided the Committee with a number of examples where proper consultation had not occurred in the past.

18. They indicated that it was necessary for Aboriginals to be involved in the formal management structure of any proposed national park. They were aware of the management structure operating at Kakadu National Park and Coburg Peninsula in the

Northern Territory. They favoured the system which operated at Coburg, which is administered by a board consisting of Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.

19. The Community considers it essential that they be involved in tourism and other developments in the area. They suggested to the Committee that at Bungle Bungle all tourist facilities could be owned by Aboriginals and, if necessary, leased to others to run. They also suggested that Aboriginals should be engaged as rangers and guides as at Kakadu National Park and Coburg Peninsula.

20. The Community emphasised that development should take full account of traditional ties with full recognition of places of religious significance and those areas important to Aboriginal living, hunting, gathering and fishing.

21. The traditional owners indicated a preference for freehold title in conjunction with a negotiated establishment of a jointly managed national park. While recognising the Aboriginal traditional owners' strong ties to the area and their desire to return to their traditional lands, and the spiritual, social and economic arguments, the Working Group commented that the area is an important part of the heritage of Western Australia and Australia as a whole.

22. The Working Group did not support the granting of title to the Aboriginal Community but emphasised that recognition of the special relationship of the traditional owners to their land and their right to secure residence on, and an equitable role in the management of, their traditional lands must be provided for in any national park. The Working Group recommended that the national park be jointly managed by the Western Australian National Parks Authority together with the Aboriginal

traditional owners. They suggested that a board of management be established along the lines of that operating in the Coburg Peninsula.

23. The Community wrote to the Committee and asked that resources be provided quickly so that the Community can be meaningfully involved in the development at an early stage. These resources include the provision of:

- two advisory staff together with an office, telephone and vehicle to gather information and co-ordinate meetings for the traditional owners;
- funds to enable access to experts in areas of park management, law and anthropology; and
- funds to enable traditional owners to meet and make informed decisions.

Tourism

24. It was only recently that Bungle Bungle became known to the general public following widespread media coverage in late 1982. Despite relatively little promotion of the area it has already generated interest to the extent that most tourists to the east Kimberley region want to include it on their itinerary.

25. Access by vehicle is difficult. The rough tracks which reach to within a few kilometres of the massif were constructed for mineral exploration purposes and were not intended to withstand continued use. Beyond the mining tracks, tourists and tour operators have to traverse fragile eroding lands and force an access across country for a number of kilometres.

26. According to the Working Group report, in the past year Kununurra based air charter companies have experienced a 600 percent increase in business. This was attributable to air

charter work associated with the Argyle Diamond Mine and the scenic flights with Bungle Bungle as a primary destination. Of all scenic flights 80 to 85 percent take in Bungle Bungle. The potential for aerial tours over Bungle Bungle is considered to be high because it facilitates year round tourist access to this area and presents a complete perspective which is not obtainable from the ground.

27. The Western Australian Government has adopted an interim policy of discouraging tourist access to Bungle Bungle until the future of the area is determined.

28. The Western Australian Tourism Industry Association wrote to the Committee and advised that the tourist industry wishes to ensure that major natural attractions such as Bungle Bungle are available for the public at large to see and to visit and that access is not restricted to a privileged few. It is the Association's view that the area should be proclaimed as a national park and that adequate environmental management measures be adopted and enforced by limited road and pedestrian access to particular parts to ensure that the fragile beauty of the area is retained for all time. They do not believe that on-ground access should be prohibited but rather controlled.

29. The Association advised that they have no objection to the involvement of the Aboriginal Community in the proper running of the park.

30. The Committee was told that the Turkey Creek Community has accepted that tourism at Bungle Bungle is inevitable and wishes to benefit from it but asked that all ground access be prohibited until areas of Aboriginal significance have been determined and until a proper plan of management has been developed.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

31. In general, the Committee agrees with the findings and recommendations of the Bungle Bungle Working Group relating to the establishment of a national park and joint Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal management. It is the Committee's view that for the Working Group's recommendations to be fully implemented it may be necessary for the Commonwealth Government to provide financial and other assistance to the Western Australian Government. The Committee was told during its inspections that during 1982-83 only $100 000 was spent by the Western Australian Government on all the Kimberley national parks. The proposal to establish a Bungle Bungle national park would effectively double the area of national parks in the Kimberley Region.

32. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service told the Committee that in 1984 the Western Australian Premier wrote to the Commonwealth and advised that his State was particularly disadvantaged with respect to financial assistance in the area of public land management because of the size of the State, its special flora and fauna and the relatively small population. He indicated that he was keen to explore the possibility of obtaining Federal assistance for public land management.

33. In a letter to the Committee, the Premier advised that until the future of the Bungle Bungle region had been decided he was not in a position to consider the question of Commonwealth assistance. He stated however, that should the State Government decide to gazette Bungle Bungle as a national park there may be a number of areas in which the Commonwealth's assistance would be welcomed.

Aboriginal Involvement

34. The question of Aboriginal title to the land is outside the competence of the Committee and is a matter for the Aboriginal traditional owners and relevant Government authorities to determine. The Committee believes however, that the heritage and culture of the Aboriginal people should be seen as equal in importance to the natural and physical values of the national park. The Committee fully supports Aboriginal involvement in its management and economic development.

35. The Warmun Community at Turkey Creek has requested that the Committee give consideration to the provision of resources to enable the Community to be meaningfully involved in the development at an early stage. The Committee supports the Community's requests and recommends that:

- **the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs discuss with his State counterpart assistance required from the Commonwealth to enable the Warmun Community to be provided with -**

  - **advisory staff to gather information and coordinate meetings with traditional owners;**
  - **funds to enable access to experts in areas of park management, law and anthropology, and**
  - **funds to enable traditional owners to meet and make informed decisions.**

36. The Committee believes that it is only with the provision of these resources that the Community will be able to make meaningful and positive inputs to the decision-making process at an early stage rather than simply reacting to decisions which have already been made by others.

37. The Warmun Community and the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service both advised the Committee of the interest in the Kakadu Aboriginal Training Program. In the scheme operating at Kakadu candidates are chosen by the traditional owners and undergo a twelve month course before being employed in the Park on normal ranger duties. The Service also ran a similar program last year in the Gammon Ranges National Park in cooperation with the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service. These programs have been successful in enabling Aboriginal people to play a direct role in the management of national parks on their land.

38. The Bungle Bungle Working Group recommended that the Western Australian National Parks Authority should aim to employ a balance of Aboriginal traditional owners and non-Aboriginals in the proposed national park but the employment opportunities for traditional owners should not be restricted to normal ranger positions nor to permanent full-time employment. The Working Group further recommended that in developing Aboriginal training programs, close liaison be maintained with those responsible for developing training programs in other States, notably the Northern Territory.

39. The Committee recommends that:

> **the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in consultation with relevant Western Australian authorities and the Warmun Community offer assistance in developing Aboriginal training programs for the traditional owners.**

Financial Assistance

40. The Committee fully endorses the current approach of the Western Australian Government which restricts tourist access to the area until such time as a plan of management has been

developed. The Committee was told by Aboriginal groups during its visit that their preference was for ground access to be restricted indefinitely and that aerial tours be promoted with Keep River National Park in the Northern Territory promoted as an alternative to on-ground access to Bungle Bungle. The Committee agrees that the grandeur and beauty of the formation is best experienced from the air. Keep River has many attractions not present at Bungle Bungle but nothing the Committee saw compared with Bungle Bungle. Notwithstanding the experience of overflying the area, Bungle Bungle seen from the ground is still spectacular. It is possible that the cost associated with air transport would preclude many people from seeing Bungle Bungle by that means and there will be continuing pressure for ground access.

41. The Committee sought the views of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service concerning the nature of the assistance the Commonwealth could make to the Western Australian Government relating to the short and long-term management of a national park in the area.

42. The States Assistance Program which is administered by Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is one avenue for offering help to the State. The Program began in 1983-84 and is intended to establish cooperative State/Commonwealth programs:

- for the identification, boundary rationalisation, acquisition of land, planning and management for national parks and reserves of outstanding national or international significance; and

- for the protection, conservation and management of species of wildlife which are designated rare, endangered or of outstanding national significance.

43. While the Western Australian National Parks Authority and Department of Fisheries and Wildlife have participated in this program in the past financial year no request concerning Bungle Bungle has been received.

44. The Committee believes that Bungle Bungle fits the criteria for assistance under the States Assistance Program and recommends that:

- **the Australian Government provide assistance to the Western Australian Government under the States Assistance Program.**

Interim Measures

45. The Working Group was concerned that a full national park may not be proclaimed in the near future and considered it essential that interim measures be adopted to protect the area and recommended that a permanent ranger presence be established immediately and that ground access not be improved until a full plan of management had been established.

46. The Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service believes that complete prohibition of visitors until a plan of management has been prepared and facilities made available may not be feasible.

47. The Service advised of several actions which could be taken to protect the area in the short-term. First would be the declaration of the area as a national park. Without the appropriate legislative backing provided by this declaration there would be probably little that could be done to control visitor activities even if ranger staff were on location.

48. Secondly, ranger staff should be on site during the visitor period. Rangers could begin to gather basic resource information, direct people away from the more sensitive areas, provide information and guidance to the public and regulate use of the area by the public to minimise over-use of popular areas. Stationing rangers in remote locations such as this is an expensive business. Other short-term actions would be the erection of sign posts, the erection of barriers and the initiation of the public information and education program. The cost of providing these minimum facilities may be beyond the financial resources of the Western Australian National Parks Authority. As mentioned previously at present only $100 000 is allocated to all of the parks in the Kimberley region.

49. The Committee considers it appropriate for the Commonwealth Government to offer assistance to the Western Australian Government to provide minimum essential works and to station rangers in the park during the visitor season. Accordingly the Committee recommends that:

- **the Commonwealth Government discuss with the Western Australian Government the provision of funds to enable -**
  - **the stationing of rangers in Bungle Bungle during the visitor season; and**
  - **the commencement of essential minimum capital works.**

Heritage Values

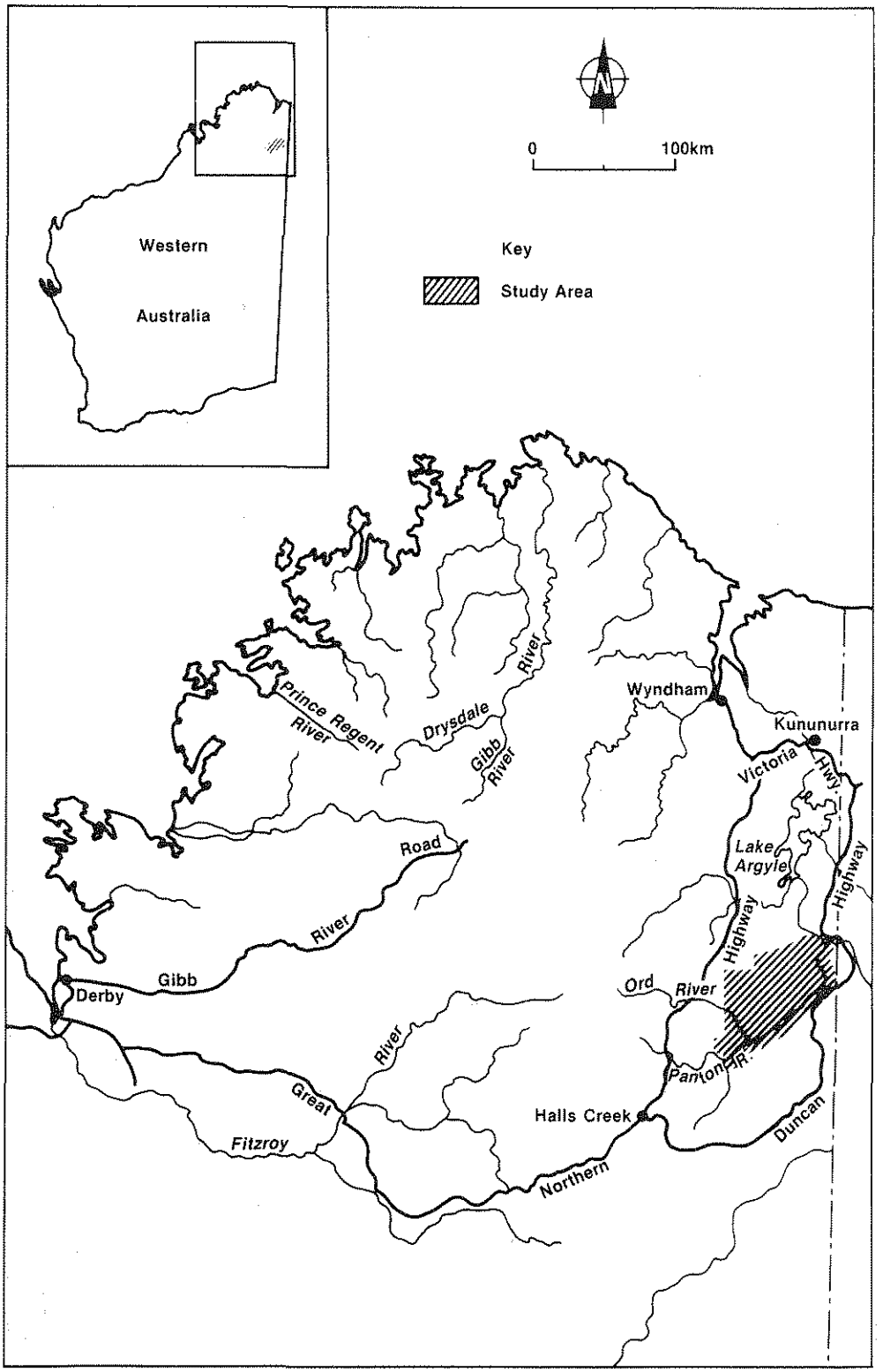
50. The Working Group observed that the savannah and tropical grass ecosystems and river systems represented in the study area are recognised by the World Conservation Strategy as being amongst the six ecosystem groups most critically in need of additional representation in protected areas on a world-wide basis. In addition, the Working Group found that land forms of

the Bungle Bungle massif are not just visually spectacular but are also of national and international scientific significance. The Committee considers that further investigation into the heritage values of the region is warranted. Should these studies confirm the findings of the Bungle Bungle Working Group, special and additional Commonwealth assistance may be justified. Accordingly the Committee recommends that:

> **the Australian Heritage Commission in consultation with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and relevant Western Australian State Authorities undertake investigations to establish the national and international significance of the Bungle Bungle region.**

(PETER MILTON)
Chairman

21 March 1985



Kimberley region, showing Bungle Bungle Working Group Study Area.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RESERVATION AS NATIONAL PARK

The working group considered a Study Area comprising the Bungle Bungle massif and surrounding lands, a total of some 350 000 ha comprising the north west portion of the Ord River Regeneration Reserve, together with the adjoining Osmond Valley Pastoral lease and the mountainous southern portion of Texas Down Pastoral Lease.

Based on its assessment of the Study Area's natural resources, past and present landuses and Aboriginal associations with the area, the working group recognised five key issues which it considered in determining the future landuse and management options toc the area. They are:

- Conservation (of biotic and landscape resources);
- Aboriginal interests (cultural, social and economic);
- Tourism;
- Mineral exploration and
- Soil and vegetation rehabilitation requirements.

The area encompasses a variety of land systems ranging from complex folded and faulted uplands, of basaltic, limestone, siltstone and doloritic rock; the sandstone structural plateaux of Bungle Bungle and surrounding sandplains together with outwash frontage slopes and alluvial flats along the Ord and Panton Rivers.

The working group recognises in this area, elements of outstanding scenic attraction and a combination of land surfaces and vegetation, much of which is not well represented or reserved at all, in the existing or currently proposed system of conservation reserves in the Kimberley region. Included in the area are tropical grasslands and savannah ecosystems, representative of ecosystem groups recognised in the World Conservation Strategy as being poorly represented in protected areas worldwide and in need of further reservation.

The working group considers that the purpose of National Park best caters for the combined needs of conservation and tourism and soil and vegetation rehabilitation requirements. It notes potential advantages of joint management with Aboriginal traditional owners who have demonstrated deep ongoing ties to their traditional lands and an extensive, detailed knowledge of the flora, fauna and ecology of the area. This issue is discussed further in later sections of the report.

Irrespective of the adoption of National Park status over this land mineral exploration may continue - National Park status will however facilitate the application of conditions to minimise the impact of exploration.

The working group believes however there is a strong case for excluding the Bungle Bungle massif from mineral exploration. It is the spectacular core of the subject area and is of low mineral prospectivity.

TENURE

The working group recognises the Aboriginal traditional owners strong ties to the subject area and their desire to return to their traditional lands for spiritual, social and economic reasons. It also recognises that this area is an important part of the heritage of Western Australia and indeed Australia.

Security of tenure and purpose is essential for a National Park if it is to perform its function in perpetuity as intended. Equally essential is security of the traditional owners to reside on and participate in the management of their traditional lands. For a National Park security is vital if it is to adequately perform its function in perpetuity as intended.

In recognition of the value of the area as an important part of the heritage of all West Australians the working group favours the vesting of the Area in the National Parks Agency, as an A Class reserve for National Park. Recognition of the special relationship of the Aboriginal traditional owners to their land and their right to secure residence on and an equitable role in the management of their traditional lands must be provided for. The working group considers that the vesting of the area in the National Parks agency should be subject to conditions providing secure residence and equitable input to management for Aboriginal traditional owners. An A Class Reserve, which requires the approval of both Houses of Parliament before any ammendments can be made to the vesting conditions, is necessary to provide an adequate level of security under this mechanism.

At present there is no legislative basis in Western Australia which will provide for the necessary security required by both parks to a joint management National Park. The working groups terms of reference do not allow a consideration of the legislative changes necessary to facilitate its proposals.

The working group acknowledges that the people recognised by the Aboriginal community as traditional owners of this area have indicated their preference for freehold title to the area, in conjunction with a negotiated establishment of a jointly managed National Park.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1

The working group recommends that:

6.1.1 the proposed National Park be vested in the National Parks agency as an A Class reserve.

6.1.2 the vesting be subject to mechanisms providing secure residence and equitable input to management for Aboriginal traditional owners. Such mechanisms are not available under existing legislation.

The small Osmond Valley pastoral lease and the southern upland areas of Texas Downs pastoral lease, group, would add substantially to the representation within the Park of the flora, fauna and landscapes associated with the diverse substrates and moisture regime prevailing in the Osmond Rangesand compliment the generally drier environments of the sand plain and Bungle Bungle range. These ranges are also understood to contain sites to significance to Aboriginal traditional owners.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1

The Working Group recommends that:

4.1.1 the north western portion of the Ord River Regeneration Reserve (No.28538) extending to a boundary located south and east of the Ord and Panton rivers, corresponding to a rationalized version of the existing fencelines adjacent to these rivers should be proclaimed for a National Park;

4.1.2 consideration should be given to including within the National Park at the earliest opportunity, the Osmond Valley Pastoral Lease and southern upland portions of Texas downs Pastoral Lease; and

4.1.3 in view of its high conservation values and low mineral potential the Bungle Bungle massif be excluded from any future mineral exploration.

JOINT MANAGEMENT

The working group recognises the Aboriginal traditional owners' very strong ties to the area and their desire to return to their traditional land for spiritual, cultural and economic reasons. It believes that they could make a valuable contribution to the management and interpretation of the National Park, through their extensive and detailed knowledge of plant resources and ecological relationships in the area and the interpretation of Aboriginal culture and mythology.

Experience with Kakadu and Gurig National Parks, the established jointly managed national parks in the Northern Territory, has shown that National Parks jointly managed with Aboriginal traditional owners can work in a functional manner for both interests.

The concept is well accepted by the Aboriginal traditional owners who are typically interested in the management of their traditional land and is also recognised and accepted by the people in the National Park Agencies (ANAWS, CCNT) and the Northern Lands Council and Department of Aboriginal Affairs with whom members of the working group spoke.

Formal mechanisms are needed to provide a guarantee of equitable input to management decision-making. This is important if the traditional owners are to remain satisfied with the system in the long term. Decision making processes should aim to be compatible with traditional Aboriginal approaches to decision making, by facilitating discussion of issues amongst traditional owners before decisions are made.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2

The working group recommends that:

6.2.1 the proposed National Park be jointly managed by the National Parks agency and the Aboriginal traditional owners;

6.2.2 a Board of Management be established with representatives from the National Parks agency and a incorporated body representing the traditional owner to guarantee equitable input to management decision making for both parties. The Board should be the primary decision making authority with respect to management of the reserve. There are considered to advantages in a co-operative and collaborative decision making process based on consensus agreement;

6.2.3 the Board should function as a reviewing and ratifying body, considering recommendations on major issues, including policy, planning and budget issues develop by it or referred to it by the National Parks agency or technical sub-committee (below);

6.2.4 a technical sub-committee be established by the Board using the Aboriginal Association for its administration. The sub-committee should comprise Aboriginal traditional owners and on-site agency staff. It should function as a mechanism for communication of management issues within the Aboriginal community, to resolve routine management issues and to discuss and develop recommendations and major issues for consideration by the Board.

6.2.5 both parties on the Board should have access to independent advice.

6.2.6 there be some recourse to technically competent and independent adjudication should agreement not be possible within the Board; and

6.2.7 the National Parks agency to prepare, at the earliest opportunity and in liaison with the Board of Management, a draft plan of management for public comment. The final plan of management to be made public following its endorsement by the Board.

REGENERATION OF DEGRADED AREAS

The Study Area lies for the most part within the Ord River Regeneration Reserve which was procalimed in 1967, to facilitate the stabilization and regeneration of eroded areas in the Ord River catchment and so mitigate siltation of Lake Argyle.

Within the Working groups Study area, degraded lands are confined to the more productive pasture lands along the major drainage lines, notably the Ord River.

These areas supported tropical grasslands and vegetation communities, representative of ecosystem groups regarded as a high priority for further reservation on a world wide scale by the World Conservation Strategy.

Furthermore, they offer the only opportunitiy to include river frontage slopes and alluvial surfaces representative of the major Kimberley sedimentary basins in the conservation reserve system, short of purchasing a pastoral lease.

In view of the high intrinsic conservation value of these land the working group favours their inclusion in the proposed National Park despite some of it being in a degraded state at present. It recognises Department of Agriculture concern that the National Parks Agency may not be able to adequately fund a regeneration programme. Funding for the Department of Agriculture's ongoing regeneration work in this area comes out of consolidated revenue, as do funds for park management. The working group believes that in the context of this area being included in a National Park, funding for regeneration work could be directed towards either agency, that is, it need not be directed to the National Parks agency, provided it is utilized for the purposes of rehabilitation to indigenous vegetation.

There are considerable advantages perceived in continuing to utilize the equipment and the expertise, within the Rangelands Management Branch of the Department of Agriculture in any regeneration programme.

RECOMMENDATION 6.4

The working group recommends that:

6.4.1 the National Parks agency to initiate administrative arrangements with the Department of Agriculture, to ensure the allocation of funds and co-ordination of a regeneration programme to restore degraded lands within the proposed National Park to indigenous vegetation, utilizing the expertise built up by the Rangeland Management Section of the Department of Agriculture; and

6.4.2 the National Parks agency maintains close liaison with the Board of Management of the proposed National Park with respect to this programme.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAINING

Aboriginal traditional owners are seeking to return to their traditional lands for spiritual and cultural reasons. However, quite apart from these reasons, they wish to escape the severe social and economic conditions associated with life in large non traditional communities and fringe settlements.

The opportunity to return to reside with security on their traditional lands and the renewed strengthening of spiritual and cultural ties that this would facilitate, will be important in building the self-esteem and confidence of the traditional owner. However increased employment opportunities and the reduced dependency of the community on social welfare that results, will also play a crucial role in their quest for a better more meaningful life.

In the context of a National Park on Aboriginal traditional lands, for which the traditional owners have a deep and ongoing attachment, it is considered appropriate that the traditional owners should be given opportunities for employment.

In the context of the National Park proposed in this report, it is likely that relatively few employment opportunities for traditional owners would be available in the normal ranger stream, at least in the next few years. It is envisaged however that considerable potential exists for the employment of traditional owners in an interpretative role and in contract employment related to specific management, regeneration or development projects in the National Park. The working group also believes that the traditional owners should have the first option on any proposed tourist operations within the National Park on a leasehold or consessionaire basis.

Training programmes are needed to train traditional owners to fill ranger and other positions within the proposed National Park. The aims, content and format of these programmes need considerable thought and should be developed to cater specifically for the needs of the position and include a considerable on-the-job component.
It is not appropriate that the working group make specific recommendations on the form that Aboriginal training should take. It is understood that the WA National Parks Authority recognises the need for an aboriginal ranger training programme and is in the process of formulating concepts.

RECOMMENDATION 6.5

The working group recommends that:

6.5.1 the National Parks agency should aim to employ a balance of Aboriginal traditional owners and non Aboriginals in the proposed National Park. Employment should aim to utilize the Aborigines' traditional skills and cultural knowledge for the benefit of park interpretation and management;

6.5.2 employment opportunities for traditional owners should not be restricted to normal ranger positions, nor to permanent full-time employment. The possibility of contract employment for specific projects should be considered;

6.5.3 for the job satisfaction of both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal employees it is important that all are subject to the same dismissal clauses;

6.5.4 in developing Aboriginal training programmes, close liaison be maintained with those responsible for developing the training programmes in other States, notably the Northern Territory. The structure and content of training programmes should be closely linked to the requirement of the employment.

ABORIGINAL OUTSTATION AND WELFARE ISSUES

Experience at Gurig and Kakadu National Parks has clearly shown the importance of Aboriginal traditional owners forming a legally incorporated body. Such a step is a normal requirement before these groups can become eligible for Federal and State funding under various schemes and is of course necessary if the group wishes to control its own finances or take out loans for development.

The working group believes that it is not appropriate for the National Parks agency to be required to adopt this role. Rather it supports the development of self-management with assistance from Aboriginal resource organizations and relevant State and Federal Government Agencies as necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 6.6

The Working group recommends that:

6.6.1 the Aboriginal traditional owners form a legally incorporated body should the proposed joint management National Park proceed. The working group recognises the role of Aboriginal resource organizations and various Federal and State agencies in assisting the establishment of Aboriginal outstations, it believes that this is not a role that should properly be adopted by the National Parks agency.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS

The remoteness of the Bungle Bungle massif, the nature of the terrain involved and climatic considerations impose constraints on tourist development in the proposed National Park.

Vehicle access at present is only possible via two rough track from the west and north-west respectively. The Main Roads Department estimate the costs of upgrading the tracks to a formed gravel road, suitable for conventional tourist vehicles at some $25 000/km. At that rate upgrading either one of the tracks is likely to cost in the order of $1 000 000. Vehicle access would still be cut for 3-4 months of the year a the road would require an expensive maintenance progamme following each wet season.

Scenic flights over the Bungle Bungle massif are increasingly popular. Flying offers a spectacular perspective not possible from the ground enabling visitors to gain a better appreciation of the features, variety and scale of the Bungle Bungle massif. It also offers a means of seeing the area year round.

Access from the ground provides visitors with a close-up perspective of the range, it enables detailed appreciation of its features, texture, flora and fauna and its scale from a human perspective. Importantly it also facilitates interpretation of elements of traditional Aboriginal culture and lifestyle.

The provision of aircraft landing facilities within the proposed National Park, in conjunction with transport within the proposed National Park offers an interesting and cost effective alternative to major upgrading of road access. Significantly it would facilitate year round access, offering the potential to boost summer "Green Season" tourism in the region.

The rapid access made possible from nearby centres such as Kununurra, Halls Creek and Turkey Creek as a result of the air-surface option makes it very attractive, particularly in the initial years to avoid the major costs and inevitable environmental disruption associated with the development of accommodation facilities and associated infrastructure in the proposed National Park.

Accommodation requirements could be met by private enterprise within the existing regional centres such as Kununurra and Halls Creek. The cost of establishing and servicing accommodation facilities in the National Park, given the complete absence of any services and the remote location, would be very high and in many ways counter productive.

It is in part the remoteness and intrinsic wilderness values of Bungle Bungle that have captured the public imagination. Upgraded road access would to a degree diminish these values.

In developing its recommendations for tourist development the working group has recognised that tourists will be seeking a range of experiences tailored to fit their budget, time constraints and expectations. In this context the working group proposed the following development concepts for the short to medium term.

RECOMMENDATION 7.2

The working group recommends that:

7.2.1 - scenic over-flights of the proposed National Park be regarded as an appropriate tour option for tourists on an organised tour and those otherwise constrained by time considerations.Various cost options, based on flight duration, for example from Turkey Creek or Kununurra would be possible;

7.2.2 - an air-surface tourist option should be facilitated by the construction of a landing ground on a suitable site where it would not compromise the scenic, conservation or anthropological values, and the provision vehicle access to and from the landing ground to various scenic landscapes in the proposed National Park;

7.2.3 - an access track be upgraded to enable the supply of resources to the proposed National Park and to facilitate vehicle access during the dry season for the suitably equipped tourist. To provide access to a standard suitable for caravan or coach based tourists would be prohibitively expensive and is not considered feasible in the short to medium term at least;

7.2.4 - discrete low-key camping facilities be provided at a suitable location or locations near the periphery of the park. It is envisaged that these facilities would primarily cater for vehicle-based visitors, but they could also cater for self-contained air-surface tourists and with the availability of camping equipment for hire, a wider selection of flying tourists proposing to stay more than one day;

7.2.5 - subject to full investigation and analysis of park resources, detailed consideration could be given to the construction of a higher standard of facilities in detailed management plans to be prepared by the management agency in conjunction with the Board of Management;

7.2.6 - access for private vehicles could be provided to a few scenic locations and interpretation facilities. Sightseeing beyond these areas would be by guided or self-guide walking tracks, with the option of an agency or consessionaire vehicle-based guided tour to more remote areas; and

7.2.7 - the first option for the development of tourists facilities within the National Park on a leasehold or concessional basis should be available to the traditional owners.

INTERIM MANAGEMENT OPTION

It is desirable that access to the area should continue to be discouraged until the long term future of the area has been resolved and a true management capability established.

However, the event that a jointly managed National Park cannot be proclaimed for the 1985 tourist season it is recognised that it will be necessary to facilitate management of the area and direct visitors towards the most appropriate areas without compromising park values, future management options or the needs of the Aboriginal traditional owners.

RECOMMENDATION 7.3

The working group recommends that:

7.3.1 - as an interim measure the Study Area should be declared a C class reserve for a National Park, so that a management presence can be established in the area and National Park regulations applied over it;

7.3.2 - two management staff be established in the National Park;

7.3.3 - work should be carried out to determine the appropriate location of access tracks and camping areas and to discourage access to inappropriate areas; and

7.3.4 - ground access not be improved until the future of the area is secure and a permanent management presence is established.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

The combination of remoteness, difficult access, substantial tourism interest rehabilitation requirements, and costs associated with joint management will make this an expensive park to establish. It is estimated that capital costs for access and development in the first year of permanent National Park status will be in the vicinity of $500-600 000 based on the following breakdown,

$300,000 - to establish two management staff and families and and associated infrastructure (housing, power, water, communication vehicles, etc.)
$ 40,000 - temporary accommodation for visiting staff
$100,000 - to establish and maintain basic access and management tracks and facilities
$50-100,000 - contingency for the development of an aircraft landing field.

These costs do not include those associated with the regeneration programme, however the proposed National Park should not add significantly to the ongoing funding requirements of this programme. Costs associated with the establishment of Aboriginal Outstation/s should be largely outside the budget of the National Parks agency. While the costs of supply services to outstations will be more expensive than to large central communities, the benefits of reduced dependence on welfare and improved social and cultural life are expected to offset this.

The provision of adequate funding and staff resources will be critical to the successful running of the proposed National Park, more so even than in the case of a typical single management National Park. It should be recognised that unlike the typical National Park, a joint management National Park includes a community as an integral part of the reserve. To a significant degree the well being of the community will be dependent on adequate resources being made available for management.

It is estimated that initially two permanent management staff will be required, with provision for additional park maintenance staff required subsequently. When the area is established as a jointly managed national Park there will be a requirement for professional management staff (one initially) to be based on site. This position is critical to the success of the proposals; it requires a person with sensitivity and skill in the issues involved in joint management of a National Park and of sufficient standing in the Agency to be empowered to make complex decisions. Professional regional staff and support facilities will also be necessary. The selection of appropriate staff is one of the critical factors in determining the success of a joint management National Park.

RECOMMENDATION 8.5

The working group recommends that:

8.5.1 - adequate funding be made available to establish, develop and manage the proposed National Park. Adequate funding is critical to the success of the proposed park and it is suggested that, if such funds are unlikely to be available, then other alternatives to the recommendations made in this Report may need to be considered. It is estimated that approximately $500 - 600,000 would be required for operations and capital improvements in the first year of joint management.

8.5.2 The provision of adequate funds from Aboriginal resource agencies, and State and Federal government agencies to establish Aboriginal outstation facilities, should be considered a priority.