2014

Pukulpa pitjama Ananguku ngurakutu - Welcome to Anangu land: World Heritage at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

Michael J. Adams

University of Wollongong, madams@uow.edu.au

Publication Details

Pukulpa pitjama Ananguku ngurakutu - Welcome to Anangu land: World Heritage at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park

Abstract
Located in the centre of Australia, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and World Heritage Site is centred on the huge sandstone monolith Uluru, arguably the best known natural symbol of Australia and a major focus of the tourism industry. The Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara speaking Indigenous people of this Western Desert region of the Northern Territory call themselves Anangu. The landscape of the park includes ecological zones typical of the Central Australian arid ecosystems, as well as the monoliths of Uluru and Kata Tjuta themselves, which have been recognised in Anangu culture and practices for millenia. In Anangu terms, this landscape was created at the beginning of time by ancestral beings who are the direct ancestors of contemporary Anangu. For Anangu, all relationships with each other and with their homeland are governed by Tjukurpa, the law. In Western terms, Anangu have lived in the region that now contains Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park for thousands of years. The landscape bears the marks of their presence in an ecology determined by culturally-specific fire regimes and hundreds of archaeological and art sites. As indicated in the quote above, Tjukurpa determines the responsibilities that present-day Anangu have for continuing to care for the country created by their ancestors. These relationships and responsibilities intersect with modern conservation regimes imposed on the region since 1958. Since 1985, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has been jointly managed by the Anangu people and Parks Australia, an Australian government conservation bureaucracy.

Keywords
uluru, heritage, world, land, anangu, kata, welcome, pitjama, national, tjuta, pukulpa, park, ngurakutu, ananguku

Disciplines
Education | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

This book chapter is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/1753
Pukulpa pitjama Anangku ngurakutu
Welcome to Anangu land

WORLD HERITAGE at ULURU-KATA TJUTA NATIONAL PARK

Written by Michael Adams, in consultation with an Anangu Working Group of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management; the Central Land Council Joint Management Officer; and Parks Australia staff.
Introduction


There is strong and powerful Aboriginal Law in this Place. There are important songs and stories that we hear from our elders, and we must protect and support this important Law. There are sacred things here, and this sacred Law is very important. It was given to us by our grandfathers and grandmothers, our fathers and mothers, to hold onto in our heads and in our hearts.

Located in the centre of Australia, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and World Heritage Site is centred on the huge sandstone monolith Uluru, arguably the best known natural symbol of Australia and a major focus of the tourism industry. The Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara speaking Indigenous people of this Western Desert region of the Northern Territory call themselves Anangu. The landscape of the park includes ecological zones typical of the Central Australian arid ecosystems, as well as the monoliths of Uluru and Kata Tjuta themselves, which have been recognised in Anangu culture and practices for millenia.

In Anangu terms, this landscape was created at the beginning of time by ancestral beings who are the direct ancestors of contemporary Anangu. For Anangu, all relationships with each other and with their homeland are governed by Tjukurpa, the law. In Western terms, Anangu have lived in the region that now contains Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park for thousands of years. The landscape bears the marks of their presence in an ecology determined by culturally-specific fire regimes and hundreds of archaeological and art sites. As indicated in the quote above, Tjukurpa determines the responsibilities that present-day Anangu have for continuing to care for the country created by their ancestors. These relationships and responsibilities intersect with modern conservation regimes imposed on the region since 1958.

Since 1985, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has been jointly managed by the Anangu people and Parks Australia, an Australian government conservation bureaucracy.

World Heritage values


We learnt from our grandmothers and grandfathers and their generation. We learnt well and we have not forgotten. We’ve learnt from the old people of this place, and we’ll always keep the Tjukurpa in our hearts and minds. We know this place – we are ninti, knowledgeable.

Tjurkulytju kulinjaku kuranyu nguru pinangku munu utira ngukunytja tjura titutjaraku witira kanyintjikitjaku kututungku kulira. Tony Tjamiwa

Clear listening, which starts with the ears, then moves to the mind, and ultimately settles in the heart

1 All italicised quotes in section introductions are from: Director of National Parks 2010a.
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has been inscribed twice on the World Heritage List. It was first nominated in 1986 by the Australian government for inclusion on the World Heritage List as both a ‘cultural’ and a ‘natural’ site. However, the nomination was processed by UNESCO as a natural site rather than a mixed site, and only considered under the natural heritage criteria. In 1987, two years after the Handback (see below) and initiation of joint management arrangements, the park was listed as a natural World Heritage site only, although IUCN’s evaluation of the nomination recognized (within the terms of the then natural heritage criterion iii) that there was an “exceptional combination of natural and cultural elements” and that the “overlay of the aboriginal occupation adds a fascinating cultural aspect to the site”.

The natural values for which Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is inscribed on the World Heritage List include, among other values:

- the remarkable and unique natural geological and landform features formed by the huge monoliths of Uluru and Kata Tjuta set in a contrasting sand plain environment;
- the immense size and structural integrity of Uluru which is emphasised by its sheer, steep sides rising abruptly from the surrounding plain;
- the exceptional natural beauty of the view fields in which the contrasts and the scenic grandeur of the monoliths create a landscape of outstanding beauty of symbolic importance to both Anangu and European cultures;
- tectonic, geochemical and geomorphic processes associated with the inselbergs of Uluru and Kata Tjuta which result in the different composition of these two relatively close outcroppings, their differing extent of block tilting and types of erosion, the spalling of the arkose sediments of Uluru and massive ‘off loading’ of conglomerate at Kata Tjuta.

The listing of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park as only a ‘natural’ World Heritage site, and the lack of international recognition of the ongoing relationship between Anangu and their country, was met with concern by Anangu Traditional Owners, the Park’s Board of Management, as well as heritage professionals. This criticism contributed to the decision by the World Heritage Committee to develop the World Heritage Convention’s Operational Guidelines and revise the cultural heritage criteria in order to accommodate the inclusion of ‘cultural landscapes’ on the World Heritage List. In 1992, the Committee adopted revisions to the cultural heritage criteria along with new interpretive paragraphs recognizing three

---

3 The reasons for this are somewhat obscure. While IUCN’s evaluation of the nomination noted that “Cultural values of the area are being reviewed by ICOMOS” (IUCN 1987, p. 8), such a review did not occur. All working documents from the 11th session of the World Heritage Committee (1987), including the Bureau session, treat the park as a natural site. See http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/11COM/documents; and http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/11BUR/documents.
4 IUCN 1987, p. 12. Natural heritage criterion (iii) at the time inter alia referred to sites containing “superlative natural phenomena, formations or features, for instance… exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements”. The reference to “cultural elements” was removed from the text of natural criterion (iii) in December 1992 (see Layton and Titchen 1995, p. 176).
5 Director of National Parks 2010a, pp. 151-152.
distinct categories of outstanding cultural landscapes. These changes to the cultural heritage criteria, through which the significance of Uluru-Kata Tjuta to the Anangu people could be better acknowledged, revived the debate in Australia concerning the international recognition of the cultural values of the Park.

In 1994, Barbara Tjikatu and Tony Tjamiwa, the Anangu Traditional Owners quoted above, were part of a group who travelled to Phuket, Thailand, to present a renomination by the Australian government to the World Heritage Committee, for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park to be listed as a ‘cultural landscape’ in addition to the natural heritage listing. The proposal was accepted and the Park listed as a cultural landscape under cultural criteria (v) and (vi) in the same year. Under cultural criterion (v) recognised values include:

“...the continuing cultural landscape of the Anangu Tjukurpa that constitutes the landscape of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and which:

- is an outstanding example of a traditional human type of settlement and land-use, namely hunting and gathering, that dominated the entire Australian continent up to modern times;
- shows the interactions between humans and their environment;
- is in large part the outcome of millennia of management using traditional Anangu methods governed by the Tjukurpa;
- is one of relatively few places in Australia where landscapes are actively managed by Aboriginal communities on a substantial scale using traditional practices and knowledge that include:
  - particular types of social organisation, ceremonies and rituals which form an adaptation to the fragile and unpredictable ecosystems of the arid landscape;
  - detailed systems of ecological knowledge that closely parallel, yet differ from, the Western scientific classification;
  - management techniques to conserve biodiversity such as the use of fire and the creation and maintenance of water sources such as wells and rockholes.”

Under cultural criterion (vi) recognised values include:

- the continuing cultural landscape of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park which is imbued with the values of creative powers of cultural history through the Tjukurpa and the phenomenon of sacred sites;
- the associated powerful religious, artistic and cultural qualities of this cultural landscape;

---

8 Ibid. Layton and Titchen also note that due to the removal of the reference to ‘exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements’ from natural criterion (iii), which also occurred in 1992 and which they strongly criticize, the “continuing relationship between Anangu and their land at Uluru [was] even less well recognized than at the time of Uluru’s original inclusion on the World Heritage List”.
10 The park was inscribed under the categories of ‘organically evolved landscape; continuing cultural landscape’ and ‘associative cultural landscape’. For details, see Calma and Liddle 2003.
11 Director of National Parks 2010a, p. 150.
- the network of ancestral tracks established during the *Tjukurpa* in which Uluru and Kata Tjuta are meeting points.\(^{12}\)

The World Heritage recognition of the park’s cultural values clearly acknowledges both ancient Anangu occupation and interaction with the landscapes and ecosystems, and the continuity of this into the present, including the necessity of maintaining Anangu practices and cultural structures. It also acknowledges the significance and primacy of *Tjukurpa*. This recognition establishes a very strong basis for the need for the managing authority to integrate Anangu practices and *Tjukurpa* into the management of the World Heritage site.

The listing of the natural values, in contrast, recognises Western scientific explanations for the geological origins of the site, as well as acknowledging that the monoliths are of “symbolic importance to both Anangu and European cultures”.\(^{13}\) This symbolic importance to non-Anangu people is central to the tourism interest in the site, and has clear implications for the activity known as ‘the climb’ (discussed later). The 1986 nomination stated that “Australians tourists perhaps feel more Australian after visiting the park”\(^ {14}\), an observation borne out by subsequent research discussed later.

World Heritage issues in Australia are managed through several policy levels. Day-to-day management is generally the responsibility of one of the state or federal government agencies delivering protected area management. In the case of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, this is Parks Australia. Coordination at a national level is achieved through the Australian World Heritage Advisory Council (made up of representatives of all Australian World Heritage sites), which makes recommendations to the Environment Protection and Heritage Advisory Council, a council of elected Government ministers. On Indigenous issues, the Australian World Heritage Advisory Council is advised by a group comprised of Indigenous representatives from relevant World Heritage Areas, the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network (AWHIN). While the Council fully supports AHWIN, in recent years no funding has been supplied by government to support the operations of AWHIN, limiting their ability to provide effective input. Periodic reporting to UNESCO is done by the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, as part of their responsibilities under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999.

### Historical background

*Park-angka unngu munu park-angka urilta Tjukurpa palunyatu ngaranyi kutjupa wiya. Ngura miil-miilpa tjuta park –angka ngaranyi – uvankara kutju ngaranyi, Tjukur pangka.* Tony Tjamiwa

It is one Tjukurpa inside the park and outside the park, not different. There are many sacred places in the park that are part of the whole cultural landscape—one line. Everything is one Tjukurpa.

Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara-speaking people first encountered non-Aboriginal people when the explorers Ernest Giles and William Gosse crossed the region in the 1870s, following the initial British arrival in Australia in 1788. Attempts from the 1920s to isolate the region’s Aboriginal people from contact with European society included the creation of

---

\(^{12}\) Director of National Parks 2010a, p. 151.

\(^{13}\) Director of National Parks 2010a, p. 151.

\(^{14}\) Commonwealth of Australia 1986, p. 4.
the Petermann Aboriginal Reserve, which included Uluṟu, and was intended as a ‘refuge’ so “the Aboriginal may here continue his normal existence until the time is ripe for his further development” [sic].

The creation of government reserves, as well as religious-based missions, was in part a response to the violence of the colonial frontier’s pastoralists and police towards Aboriginal people. The development of pastoralism also impacted on water sources and animals traditionally hunted for food, with significant environmental changes due to the introduction of cattle. These pressures contributed to forcing many local people away from their traditional country, sometimes onto nearby pastoral stations, sometimes to the fringes of towns like Alice Springs, and sometimes to the reserves and missions. Since the 1940s the focus from government has been conservation and tourism, in addition to Aboriginal welfare issues. From 1936, tourists started to come to Uluru, and as interest increased ad hoc accommodation facilities were built at the base of Uluru and Aboriginal people were actively discouraged from visiting or staying. In 1958, the area including Uluru and Kata Tjuṯa was excised from the Peterman Aboriginal Reserve, and gazetted as Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park, using the European names given to Uluru and Kata Tjuṯa by Giles and Gosse. Once excised from the Aboriginal Reserve, Aboriginal people had no rights to enter the area. Instead, tourists “freely entered sites to which Aboriginal women and children had never been allowed access” in accordance with Aboriginal law.

Following the massive alienation of land from Indigenous peoples in Australia which took place during the colonial period, Aboriginal leaders were active in campaigning to regain rights to land since at least the 1850s. From the late 1960s and early 1970s those struggles intersected with changing political conditions, and led eventually to the passing of the **Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act** by the federal (Commonwealth) government in 1976. The legislation was the first attempt by an Australian government to legally recognise the Aboriginal system of land ownership and put into law the concept of inalienable freehold title: successfully claimed lands are communally held, and cannot be sold or traded. The only land able to be claimed was unalienated Crown land or land already wholly owned by Aboriginal people. A successful land claim under this legislation required the Aboriginal landowners to prove their traditional relationship to the land under claim. The Northern Territory government of the time vigorously opposed the **Land Rights Act** and formally opposed every land claim, leading to very extensive delays. However, the Act eventually led to the return of very significant amounts of land to Aboriginal peoples across the Northern Territory.

In 1978 a claim was lodged under this Act for an area that included Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park. While the Aboriginal Land Commissioner found that there were verifiable traditional owners for the park, the park itself could not be claimed due to the constraints of the legislation (as a national park, it was not ‘unalienated Crown land’). Other land surrounding the park was granted as Aboriginal land held by the Katiti and Petermann Land Trusts. Anangu successfully lobbied the government to amend the Act to allow the claim over the park and on 26 October 1985, at a large ceremonial ‘Handback’ event, title to Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park was returned to the traditional owners. However, the handback took place under imposed conditions including the simultaneous leasing of the land back to the Commonwealth Government as a national park managed by the Commonwealth agency, Parks Australia, and with the continuation of tourist climbs on the

---

15 Layton 1986, p. 73.
16 Layton 1986, p. 76.
rock. Soon after the handback, the first Board of Management was declared with Anangu man Yami Lester, a seasoned land rights campaigner, as the inaugural Chair.

map
Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park
Joint management

Ngaranyi manta park-angka urilta kulu-kulu manage-amilantjaku. Atunyankunytjaku ngura park-angka urilta ngarantja tjuta. Barbara Tjikatu

The land both within and outside the park needs to be managed. There are many significant places to protect outside the park.

With the 1985 Handback, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park became the second national park in Australia to be jointly managed by Aboriginal owners and a government conservation agency. While the Anangu Traditional Owners hold inalienable freehold title (via a Land Trust), the land is leased back to the Australian Government to continue to be managed as a national park. The staff of the Park are employed as officers of the Department of the Environment, under Australian Public Service conditions. The park is entirely surrounded by the extensive lands of the Petermann and Katiti Aboriginal Land Trusts, with the exception of the small areas of Yulara township and airport.

Variations of this joint management model have been adopted in all conservation jurisdictions in Australia, as a way of resolving competing claims and interests from Indigenous peoples on the one hand, and conservation interests on the other. Over the last 30 years, there has been a very significant increase in such arrangements. Coupled with the creation of Indigenous Protected Areas (which are conservation agreements over existing Aboriginal freehold, without a leaseback arrangement, discussed later), the formally recognised Aboriginal conservation estate comprises around 50 Aboriginal-owned reserves and more than 150 jointly-managed reserves, currently more than 30% of the protected area estate of Australia.

The diversity of approaches to co-management in Australia is in part a response to the existence of the Commonwealth (federal) and six state governments, as well as two territory governments, all with responsibilities for creating and managing protected areas. While a number of generally applicable legislative models are emerging, in the past special legislation has been used to put specific co-management arrangements in place. For instance, the Northern Territory Government enacted the Cobourg Peninsula Land and Sanctuary Act 1981 to create and provide for co-management of Gurig National Park (now Garig Gunak Barlu National Park). This example is distinctive because although negotiations were conducted under the cloud of an unresolved land rights claim, ownership was granted to a land trust to hold on behalf of the traditional owners without any requirement for a leaseback to the protected areas agency.

At Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, a majority of the Board of Management must be Indigenous persons nominated by the Traditional Owners, so Anangu are nominated to eight of the twelve positions on the Board. They typically hold these positions for around five years. The Board is responsible for making decisions relating to the management of the park that are consistent with the plan of management. Also, in conjunction with the Director of

---

17 While Stage 1 of Kakadu National Park was declared in 1979, effective joint management commenced around 1990 (see Lawrence 2000). Gurig National Park (now Garig Gunak Barlu National Park) was established as a jointly managed park under its own legislation in 1981. Both of these are also in the Northern Territory.
19 Smyth 2001; Foster 1997.
National Parks, the Board’s responsibility is to prepare plans of management for the park; monitor the management of the park; and advise the Minister on all aspects of the future development of the park. Board meetings are held several times each year, and are conducted simultaneously in English and Pitjantjatjara and/or Yankunytjatjara. Plans of Management have been prepared five times, with the current Plan covering the period 2010-2020.

The Lease Agreement, first signed in 1985 and continuing for a period of 99 years, sets out the obligations of Parks Australia. These include a specified rent payment to the Traditional Owners as well as 25% of receipts in respect of entry fees and other charges, fees, or fines received arising out of the operation of the legislation. The Lease also commits Parks Australia to a suite of tasks, including the maintenance of Anangu tradition through protection of sacred sites and other areas of significance; maximising Anangu involvement in Park administration and management, and providing necessary training; maximising Anangu employment in the park by accommodating Anangu needs and cultural obligations with flexible working conditions; and using Anangu traditional skills in Park management. The Lease includes provision for a five-yearly review.

Diagram of joint management structure

It could reasonably be argued that Australia has been a global leader in the concept and implementation of joint management of protected areas with Indigenous peoples. The many versions of joint management operating in Australia in part reflect the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, local cultures and landscapes, as well as the diversity of policy situations, and while there are challenges and disagreements in probably every case, there are also generally continuing attempts to work towards better outcomes. This is sometimes achieved by Indigenous litigation and political advocacy challenging entrenched government structures, and sometimes achieved by committed individuals, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, working towards solutions. For non-Indigenous individuals working within the various parks agencies, it can be a frustrating paradox to be responsible for implementing public service regulations which are clearly at odds with the practice of Indigenous culture. For Indigenous owners, it can be disheartening and frustrating to hear a repeated set of commitments to an ideal, while watching the failure of those ideals in practice. While some of the difficulties are due to individuals, much is a product of ineffective and contradictory legislation and policy.

As well as jointly managed reserves, there are also now more than 50 Indigenous Protected Areas declared across Australia, covering more than 36 million hectares, and with an ambitious program for expansion. Indigenous Protected Areas differ in general from joint-management arrangements in that they are voluntarily requested by Indigenous owners over land owned by them. They are recognised as part of Australia’s national system of protected areas, and Indigenous owners are able to access funds to assist with management and planning. Within Indigenous Protected Areas, Indigenous owners maintain autonomy over their land and cultural practices, choosing or not to collaborate with non-Indigenous institutions. Recent developments include multi-tenure Indigenous Protected Areas, providing a further vehicle for collaboration between government protected areas and Indigenous landowners.

Anangu Traditional Owners have been working with the Central Land Council to develop an Indigenous Protected Area on the Katiti and Petermann Aboriginal freehold land that surrounds Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. This has the potential for very positive outcomes, with clear Anangu control and the opportunity to coordinate conservation and cultural activities across a very large area.

The role of Tjukurpa and Anangu traditional knowledge in the management of the Park


At Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, the joint management framework and philosophy are central to the successful protection of World Heritage values. Prioritising Tjukurpa and

Anangu traditional knowledge is the only way that some World Heritage values can be maintained, for example:

“…landscapes are actively managed by Aboriginal communities on a substantial scale using traditional practices and knowledge that include: particular types of social organisation, ceremonies and rituals which form an adaptation to the fragile and unpredictable ecosystems of the arid landscape; detailed systems of ecological knowledge that closely parallel, yet differ from, the Western scientific classification; [and] management techniques to conserve biodiversity such as the use of fire…”

This section examines examples of management to investigate the effectiveness of these processes. It shows an embedded and ongoing tension in the differences between Western scientific and bureaucratic structures and assumptions, and Anangu society and beliefs, which is expressed in the detail of management operations and policy decisions.

**Mala**

Australia has the worst record of mammal extinctions in recent times of any country in the world, with arid and semi-arid ecosystems having the highest rates of extinctions and decline. Three key factors have been identified as causing these extinctions: habitat clearing, introduction of non-native animals, and changes to fire regimes. Amongst mammals that became regionally extinct in the area is the rufous hare-wallaby (*Lagorchestes hirsutus*). This small animal is known to Anangu as mala, and *Mala Tjukurpa* (the Mala Law) is central to Anangu culture. One of the creation stories for Uluru tells of the journey of the *Mala* ancestors, who travelled to Uluru from the north. This *Mala Tjukurpa* connects Uluru to places to the north, south and south-east, embedding Anangu cultural meaning across the landscapes, including areas far outside the park.

At a 1999 cross-cultural workshop, Anangu identified *mala* as one of the priority species for reintroduction to the park’s ecosystems. Since 2005 the Mala Project has successfully bred, from an initial group of 24, a population of more than 200 *mala* in a 170 hectare predator-proof enclosure. Anangu also support the reintroduction of a number of other locally extinct species, including mitika, the burrowing bettong (*Bettongia lesueur*), wayuta, the common brushtail possum, (*Trichosurus vulpecula*), ninu, the bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*), and *waru*, the black-footed rock wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*). Like all management at Uluru-Kata Tjuta, the Mala Project attempts to navigate a path through Western scientific perspectives and Anangu cultural tradition. How successful this is depends on the commitment and involvement of both Anangu and park management.

All extant *mala* derive from 24 animals captured in the Tanami Desert in 1998. One of the challenges this creates is to avoid inbreeding in the captive populations, which Anangu recognise in terms of Anangu marriage laws. These laws specify protocols for choosing appropriate marriage partners within Anangu society. Uluru’s population of around 200 *mala* is extremely important nationally, as only about 300 exist in total.

---

23 Director of National Parks 2010a, p. 150.
24 McKenzie et al. 2007.
25 *Waru* has been reintroduced to an enclosure on Anangu-controlled lands in South Australia, under Anangu control and in collaboration with Western scientists (see Muhic et al. 2012).
Mala ecology is like that of many central Australian species with its close link to fire. Mala prefer a particular mosaic of burnt and unburnt patches of habitat. Park management has determined a ratio of 50% recently burnt, to 50% regenerating spinifex areas as the optimum for the captive mala. To ensure that the mala in the enclosure are not accidentally burnt in these habitat fires, burning is conducted at night when mala are active and can react to the approaching fire. Although burning at night is not Anangu practice, Anangu have so far accepted this approach.

Similarly, while Anangu are very keen to use the presence of mala to teach their children and grandchildren mala law, constraints around Western animal ethics procedures, occupational health and safety, and other bureaucratic processes make it increasingly difficult for Anangu to do this. During interviews the Working Group indicated that some young Anangu assist in the annual population surveys and the Aboriginal ‘Junior Rangers’ are occasionally taken to the mala enclosure, but they are concerned that most children remain ngurpa/unfamiliar with mala and their ways. Anangu continue to teach mala inma, the dances and song narratives associated with the mala at Uluru. Anangu aspire to see more opportunity to directly teach about mala with support from the non- Anangu Rangers while some of the older people who grew up with those animals are still alive. Support may include such things as providing vehicles and time to accompany groups to track by day, observe within the enclosure at night, produce and show films about mala as well as access to ara iritiija [a multi-media cultural heritage database], and to the park’s database, including recordings of cultural stories.

Fire

Jim Nukiti

The senior men select the areas for burning, look after all the places and teach the young men. They watch and really learn about the proper way to do things well. The senior men are the ones that ensure sacred places are not burnt and look after the young men so burning is done correctly according to traditional law. Presently we want to use it, fire, to get good green regrowth in grasses and regenerate bush foods like the desert raisins and the various other plants.

Traditional burning of the Uluru area ceased when Anangu were forced away from the area in the 1930s, resulting in large wildfires through the park in 1950 and 1976, and mala became extinct in the wild soon after that. Anangu were able to begin burning appropriately again when joint management commenced. The use of fire is a clear recognition of the significance of Anangu knowledge and management in preserving World Heritage values. This reintroduction of Anangu burning has increased protection from wildfire and there is significant scientific literature demonstrating the positive biodiversity outcomes of northern Australian Aboriginal fire regimes.

---

26 Lundie-Jenkins 1993.
27 See Reid et al 1993, Director of National Parks 2010a
28 See Woinarski et al. 2007; Gammage 2011; Bliege Bird et al. 2012.
Anangu fire knowledge is held by particular Elders and transmitted orally and experientially to younger people over time. The early years of joint management were a period of Anangu teaching non-Aboriginal people about the correct way to burn Country. The Western science of fire is comparatively recent, with most research in Australia being developed over the last few decades. There is now a general level of dialogue between Indigenous burning practices and Western approaches to fire management.  

While regular burning has been a feature of park management since Handback, the level of Anangu control over and involvement in burning has fluctuated. With increasing bureaucratic regulation of activities in the park, Anangu face a number of challenges to the level of their involvement. These regulations, for example, exclude the involvement of children. To continue traditions of teaching grandchildren, Anangu are having to go off-park, into the Petermann and Katiti Land Trust areas, to burn in ways which are culturally appropriate and under their control. There are also quite tight prescriptions, identified from a Western perspective, on when and how burning can be done, which are not necessarily reflective of Anangu cultural tradition or knowledge. Anangu decision making processes do not always mesh well with increasingly regulative planning processes, and limits on the resources available within the organisational structure restrict both the range and number of burns planned. If there is less flexibility or less resources available within the organisational structure to involve and incorporate casual employees in the adaptive planning and conduct of burning throughout the season, then there will be less Anangu involvement in the Park’s fire management program. One of the Anangu strengths is the ability to make and adapt fire plans in response to changing environmental circumstances throughout the year.

The current Plan of Management says “fire management is integral to Tjurpua and there are expectations that skills and knowledge will be passed through generations of Anangu and practised in day-to-day management”. However, Anangu in interviews described the fire management in the Park as being about essentially protective burns planned by Park Staff in the winter, when they cautiously burn spinifex Kutju-kutju tilira nyanganyi/one by one watching Kapitjara kutju/with water tanks available. They try not to burn within mulga areas or near Mulgara (a small marsupial carnivore) or tjakura (Great Desert Skink). Anangu would like to see more direct teaching of the creative Anangu way within the park, and be asked/altinyi to plan and do these type of burns more often in the park. It was said that elder Reggie Uluru and the young fellas go to Patji, look at the grasses drying and when the time is right, they can burn within mulga areas to create grass for animals, and on the sand plains to produce bushfoods for Anangu. Anangu light fires ‘putingka kutju’/in the bush, outside the park for these purposes, as well as to communicate: the quote at the beginning of this section reflects some of these Anangu aspirations.

29 Murphy and Bowman 2007; Vigilante et al. 2009.
30 Director of National Parks 2010a, p. 78.
**The climb**


This is Anangu land and we welcome you. Look around and learn so that you can know something about Anangu and understand that Anangu culture is strong and really important. We want our visitors to learn about our place and listen to us Anangu. Now a lot of visitors are only looking at sunset and climbing Uluru. That rock is really important and sacred. You shouldn’t climb it! Climbing is not a proper tradition for this place.

Many tourists visit Uluru specifically to climb the monolith. The route used by tourists in climbing the rock is the traditional route taken by the ancestral Mala men on their arrival at Uluru. It consequently has great significance to Anangu and Anangu have long been opposed to the climb. **Tjukurpa** requires Anangu to look after visitors to their country – when visitors are killed or injured on the climb, Anangu participate in the grieving. So far more than 30 people have died and many more have been injured on the climb.

That’s a really important sacred thing that you are climbing... You shouldn’t climb. It’s not the real thing about this place. The real thing is listening to everything. And maybe that makes you a bit sad. But anyway that’s what we have to say. We are obliged by Tjukurpa to say. And all the tourists will brighten up and say, ‘Oh I see. This is the right way. This is the thing that’s right. This is the proper way: no climbing.’

The inappropriateness of the climb has been formally acknowledged since at least 1991 (3rd Plan of Management) and discussed in consecutive management plans. The climb has nevertheless continued to be available to tourists through the strong lobbying activities of the tourist industry. Research has started to identify what particular segment of visitors chose to climb, and investigate how the creation of alternatives may reduce the interest of visitors in the climb. The centrality of Uluru as an Australian icon has also been extensively analysed by researchers, included its contested ‘ownership’. The 5th Plan of Management (2010-2020) is significant as it for the first time identifies the permanent closure of the climb as an objective and sets out conditions to enable the permanent closure. These conditions include minimising impacts on the tourism industry and meeting the following criteria:

- the Board, in consultation with the tourism industry, is satisfied that adequate new visitor experiences have been successfully established, or

- the proportion of visitors climbing falls below 20 per cent, or

- the cultural and natural experiences on offer are the critical factors when visitors make their decision to visit the park.

---

31 Kunmanara, Nguraritja (5th PoM, p. 90)
32 Director of National Parks 1991, p. 61; 2000, p. 119; and 2010a, p. 92.
34 Director of National Parks 2010a, p. 92.
While the existence of the climb for several decades has clearly been contrary to Anangu wishes, and Anangu have expressed disappointment that the climb continues, the explicit objective of permanent closure is a very positive step. However, the wording of the criteria to be met for closure continues to create uncertainty. The move towards closure of the climb will, however, also support the aspirations of some Anangu to develop new tourism experiences.35

**Kata Tjuta**

Kata Tjuta (Pitjantjatjara for ‘many heads’) is the other distinctive landscape feature in the park about 30 kilometres west of Uluru and also a focus of tourism attention. The multiple monoliths of Kata Tjuta are, however, treated distinctly differently to Uluru. Kata Tjuta is sacred under Anangu men’s law: it is at the intersection of two of the most sacred ancestral routes of the Western Desert. Details of the special stories of this place cannot be revealed to non-Anangu, and access to some places is restricted. Climbing of any of the 36 domes is expressly forbidden. Because Uluru was already being accessed by tourists, to reassert control Anangu needed to identify which sites they wanted closed for cultural reasons, and why. Conversely, as no information is divulged about Kata Tjuta, Anangu were able to just indicate which areas were available for access.

**The tourism industry**


Uluru is a very significant place with significant law that has been looked after and protected by our grandfathers and grandmothers for a long time. Do not photograph it without regard for the proper way to do this. This applies to both Anangu and non-Anangu alike. You are seeing a really beautiful rock but you might not be seeing and considering its cultural significance.

It has been argued that World Heritage designation “acts as an international top brand” for tourism.36 At Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park the recent Tourism Directions: Stage 1 strategy refers to “the Uluru brand” as being nationally and internationally significant.37 Economic analysis completed in 2008 found that Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is “the largest contributor of economic activity to the Northern Territory economy, followed by Kakadu National Park”.38 This demonstrates the dominance of nature tourism, culture tourism, and World Heritage in the economy of the Northern Territory. Tourism is Australia’s largest service export industry with significant expenditure in many regional areas.

Over the last decade visitor numbers at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park have averaged around 350,000-400,000 people annually, half of whom are overseas visitors. While the monolith itself is the focus of much tourism interest there is also significant interest, particularly from international visitors, in engaging with Anangu culture. However, the

---

35 Director of National Parks, 2010b, p. 8.
36 Buckley 2004, p. 70.
37 Director of National Parks 2010b, p. 3.
38 Gillespie 2008, p. 50.
tourism industry in the region is dominated by non-Indigenous enterprises, with Aboriginal tourism enterprises forming a tiny fraction.

The Working Group said it was good that tourists came: on the whole tourists respect Tjukurpa and enjoyed learning about it. The group said Anangu wanted visitors to learn about their land and their law from Anangu. This was the proper way. Visitors are seen as wanting to understand the relationship Anangu have with their country and how they look after it. They also felt a strong sense of responsibility to Kanyintjikitja/look after visitors properly and said that is done best by following Tjukurpa as well as Government law. The challenge for the joint management is to find a balance between enabling tourism whilst maintaining cultural traditions. For example Anangu mentioned that over time it had become more difficult to access some sites at Uluru and teach the younger people in the proper way. The numbers of tourists and their proximity to sacred sites made Anangu anxious about conducting activities there. Tourism is a key revenue source for both the park and the Traditional Owners, and maintaining a balance between tourism numbers and income, and appropriate privacy and space for normal life as well as cultural activities is a key challenge.

**Aboriginal/Anangu employment**


Many young Anangu want to work and to learn about the proper way to do everything; good land management, provide information, all the different aspects of park work. The young men and as well as young women are learning to maintain the park well. In land management, they are showing them, for example, how to track feral cats and then they are learning to use computers—to learn in turn.
In Western nations such as Australia, employment is central to social institutions and identity. However, this is not necessarily the case for Aboriginal people in remote communities, who often have many cultural commitments and aspirations, as well as a desire to engage with both the cash economy and opportunities to ‘work on Country’.

Negotiating the relationship between a Western work culture and Indigenous cultural frameworks is one of the many challenges at Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park, and there is an ongoing spectrum of approaches to this. There are essentially three sources of employment for Anangu at Uluru Kata Tjuta: the park itself, the tourism industry (including Indigenous-owned enterprises), and Indigenous organisations and enterprises.

Discussions with current Uluru Kata Tjuta staff and those from earlier periods of the park’s history indicate particular changes in the relationships between Anangu and park management over 28 years. After the Handback, there was a very clear sense of the development of a ‘new way’ to manage the park, with strong acknowledgement of Anangu expertise, and practical strategies to incorporate this knowledge into the operations of the park. This was seen as an effective response to an entirely new kind of relationship, based on very exploratory approaches. Many non-Aboriginal staff from the period of the Handback consider themselves very privileged to have been part of that process. Since then, however, there continues to be high levels of turnover in non-Aboriginal staff, including senior management positions. In many respects there is limited opportunity for non-Aboriginal and Anangu staff to develop effective and collaborative long term relationships.

Since the late 1990s, changes in legislation governing Australian Public Service activities, including employment and procurement, have increasingly proscribed local, adaptive responses. Employment must be ‘merit-based’ and there are requirements around English language literacy proficiency. As many Anangu are fluent in several Indigenous languages before English, and older Anangu are often not literate in English, this creates clear barriers to Anangu employment in some positions. The occupational health and safety requirements discussed earlier are standard government regulations, but clearly have the potential to impact the practice and teaching of culture in a number of ways. A recent IUCN analysis of Booderee National Park, another Commonwealth administered joint-managed park in south east Australia, also indicated the impact of these regulatory and competitive environments.

In interviews, Anangu said that a lot of Ananguku work wiyaringu/work for Anangu had finished and non-Anangu Tjana piranpa ma paturingu/were a long way ahead in terms of employment. They feel what work there is for Anangu in the Park, is sporadic, casual work. A higher value is put on writing and computer literacy over Anangu understanding of the land. It was often said there was mani wiya/no money to be able to do more work or employ more staff to do land and cultural heritage management work. This made it hard to play a strong role in the management of the Park. The group said a higher priority could be put on cultural heritage management work to help keep Tjukurpa strong. This would lead to more resources being provided to get the work done by Anangu to protect and look after/atunmara kanyintjaku the Park and be able to teach younger Anangu about this more effectively. In 2012, the Park Manager advised that five positions in the park were held by Anangu: the Cultural Heritage Officer, the Interpretation Officer (job-shared by two people), and two Operations Rangers. There are also Indigenous staff from other areas of Australia employed in the Park. In addition to permanent positions, there is a flexible casual work

---

39 McRae-Williams and Gerritsen 2010.
40 Farrier and Adams 2011.
program that regularly employs Anangu in a variety of areas. Typically, the permanent positions are largely protected from budget fluctuations, whereas the casual positions, which often facilitate ‘working on Country’, are subject to cuts, however the casual budget has been retained at the same amount now for a number of years now while permanent positions have reduced.

Increasing centralisation of administrative control and regulation into state structures reduces flexibility and innovation at Uluru itself, a situation recognised by current management. The park and World Heritage Area are now beginning to transition to a new generation of Anangu Traditional Owners, with only a few of the Anangu involved in the World Heritage nomination still alive. This new generation have indicated growing dissatisfaction with government structures and ways of operating, prompting recent and ongoing discussions around ‘rethinking management’ that might lead to new approaches.41

Since 1984 ‘Ayers Rock Resort’, located outside and adjacent to the national park, has been the sole provider of accommodation for visitors to the park. Aboriginal representation amongst the resort’s nearly 600 employees was almost non-existent up until recently, with only two Aboriginal employees in 2010. However, in 2011 the resort and its company, Voyages, was purchased by the Indigenous Land Corporation42, with an ambitious plan to create an Indigenous tourism training academy integrated with the resort.43 By late 2013, more than 200 Aboriginal people, including 60 trainees had been employed and it is planned to create 350 hospitality jobs for Indigenous workers at Uluru and elsewhere in Australia. This is clearly a major development, and while many of the proposed positions will be for Aboriginal people from other parts of Australia, there will likely be significant benefits for Anangu both in direct employment and training and in increasing the acceptance of Indigenous tourism workers in the region.

There is also an active process to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the resort and the park to guide more formal collaboration. This formalised approach to collaboration, combined with the purchase of the resort by the Indigenous Land Corporation and the potential development of activities on the Katiti and Petermann Land Trust areas, are all very positive indications for significantly increased Anangu involvement and benefit from the tourism industry. In interviews Anangu said they hope to be more meaningfully involved in the tourist industry and benefit more from tourism activity in the park in the future.

Mutitjulu

Nganana wirura councilangka warkaripai Mutitjulula parka kulu-kulu atunymara kanyilpai munula tjukaruru kanyinma ngura nganampa. Judy Trigger

We do good work on the Council, both at Mutitjulu and also protecting and looking after the park. We must look after our place properly.

41 Director of Parks Australia 2012.
42 The Indigenous Land Corporation is a statutory authority established in 1995 with the purpose of assisting Indigenous people with land acquisition and land management to achieve economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits. See http://www.ilc.gov.au/.
43 See http://www.voyages.com.au/corporate/. Voyages was purchased by the Indigenous Land Corporation on behalf of Wana Ungkunytja which represents the business interests of the nearby communities of Mutijulu, Imanpa and Docker River.
Anangu recognised as Traditional owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park live within the park at the Mutitjulu Community as well as a number of other communities in the region including Kaltuktjara (Docker River), Pukatju (Ernabella), Utju (Areyonga), Imanpa and Amata. Increasingly, individuals live at Alice Springs (the regional centre), to access health services that are relatively limited at Mutitjulu and other small communities. Families continue to move between places as the need arises. They have a corporation called the Yangkunjtajjarra Kutu Aboriginal Corporation whose role is to distribute Park rent and entry gate income to Traditional Owners.

One of the historic idiosyncrasies of the establishment of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is that park management inherited the responsibility for providing essential services (power, water, sewage disposal) for Mutitjulu. This costs around 1 million Australian dollars from the annual operating budget of about 13 million, and is clearly outside normal national park management activities. Mutitjulu has a troubled social history, reflecting that of many small and remote Indigenous communities in Australia. It is nevertheless a key place for contemporary Anangu.

Two decades of World Heritage

Nguraritja tjuta tjana mantu tjana ma pamparinganyi tjilpiringanyi ka tjana mukuringanyi tjitji malatja tjutangku runamilentjaku ngulaku munu tjanampa tjitji ku. Nyinku Jingo

Naturally the traditional owners, the senior women and men are growing older, and they want their children to be able to run the park in the future, and their children in turn.

The World Heritage listing for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park’s cultural values is quite specific: “the continuing cultural landscape of the Anangu Tjukurpa that constitutes the landscape of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park and which… is in large part the outcome of millennia of management using traditional Anangu methods governed by the Tjukurpa;…[and] is one of relatively few places in Australia where landscapes are actively managed by Aboriginal communities on a substantial scale using traditional practices and knowledge…”

After 28 years of joint management, it is clear that there are many successes, but also ongoing challenges. While there are fluctuating numbers of Anangu staff within the park, there has never been an Anangu Park Manager and Anangu continue to be very poorly represented in the tourism industry. The monolith of Uluru itself is an internationally recognized symbol of Australia and Aboriginality but its recognition as a site of sacred significance has been compromised by the continuing presence of the climb. Western science is successfully bringing back the mala but with limited Anangu control and involvement. While Anangu have had a majority of members of the Board of Management since handback, a majority does not necessarily mean that Anangu are in control. Powerful external influences such as the tourism industry, and powerful internal influences such as Australian government politics and processes, exert significant pressure. Anangu have often accommodated these pressures rather than create disharmony and conflict by challenging how these affect cultural practices.

44 Director of National Parks 2010a, p. 150.
In the interviews, Anangu in the Working Group felt the listing was just as relevant now because they continue to live on and look after their land today. The Government understood that Uluru was a significant place/Tjukurpa pulkatjara that Anangu continued to look after. The group reaffirmed they Tjukurpa Kanyini/still hold the Anangu law and this works together with the Government laws to run the Park. When there is enough money things are equal and running properly according to both laws. They said a key to finding the balance between the two sets of law in joint management was to Wanganara kulintjaku/listen responsively to each other/ngapartji-ngapartji. From the Anangu perspective it seemed that when resources were reduced/mani wiya it was the non-Aboriginal/Pirampa priorities and law that took precedence because the Government knew those laws well and saw them as essential. They underlined that Anangu are equally responsible for and accountable under Tjukurpa. When things don’t happen according to Tjukurpa there is trouble for Anangu. When people work closely together, things work well and joint management is strong. The challenge is to maintain the balance and strength in joint management. When this does not happen, things become Kali kali kuwari/not straight or lipula/level.

Anangu want to work in the Park to atunyamankunytjikitjangu/look after the Tjukurpa/the cultural landscape and the law associated with the park, in a way that allows their children to rawangku atunmara kanyintjaku/continue to protect and look after it properly, according to the law, when they are gone. In the Working Group there is a real sense of urgency about this, as ‘only two are left’ of the generation of senior men leading up to Handback. This makes teaching a crucial priority. Senior members of the group spoke of their aging, punu piltiringu/a metaphor for the amount of time that had passed since they began talking about this and how important it is that people listen properly to their concerns about the future. They want their children to be able to play a strong role in the management of the Park, as they do. They would like to see more opportunities for younger Anangu to learn about park management and work in the Park to help keep Tjukurpa strong.

The values underpinning Western and Anangu societies differ in many fundamental aspects. These differences are evident in on-ground management activities. Institutional change in Australian society and government, reflected in a greater concern with regulation of risk management and increasing economic and bureaucratic efficiency, can interact negatively with Anangu cultural tradition. While at least some of these impacts are well outside the control of park management agencies and Anangu, this incommensurability is reflected in joint management tensions at World Heritage sites and other protected areas across Australia, and while often acknowledged by management, they continue to be unresolved.

World Heritage designation at Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park is a point of pride for Anangu people: their cultural traditions are acknowledged as being internationally significant, and Anangu Tjukurpa is explicitly recognised as the appropriate way to care for this Country. A central challenge for the future is whether Western science and management can facilitate, or even allow, a process that supports the meaningful practice of Anangu traditions of caring for country and the passing on of this knowledge and skill to subsequent generations of Anangu.
Acknowledgements
The information in this chapter was derived from four sources. An Anangu Working Group of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Board of Management comprising eight Anangu Traditional Owners held discussions with the Joint Management Officer, responding to a set of questions about World Heritage. These people were: Anangu men - Jim Nukuti, Johnny Tjingo, Malya Teamay; Anangu women – Barbara Tjikatu, Yvonne Yiparti, Judy Trigger, Millie Okai, Rene Kulitja; Joint Management Officer: Patrick Hookey. Patrick collated and translated the responses. The author interviewed several non-Indigenous Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park staff, including the current Manager, Acting Manager, Training Officer and others; as well as previous Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park staff. Two key Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park documents were consulted for additional statements by Anangu Traditional Owners: the 2011 Visitor Guide and the Plan of Management 2010-2020. Both published and unpublished research and management documents were sourced.

References


Commonwealth of Australia. 1986. Renomination of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park for
Inscription on the World Heritage List. Canberra, Department of the Environment, Sport
and Territories.

Paper presented to the Symposium “Keeping the Outstanding Exceptional: the Future of
Australia’s World Heritage”, Cairns, 9-10 August 2012.


Director of National Parks. 2000. Fourth Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Management

Director of National Parks. 2010a. Fifth Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Management

Director of National Parks. 2010b. Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Tourism Directions:
Stage 1. Canberra, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and
Communities.

National Park Visitor Guide. Canberra, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water,
Population and Communities.

Director of National Parks. nd. Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park Note: Fire Management.
Canberra, Parks Australia.

Areas: Booderee National Park and the National Framework in Australia. B. Lausche (ed.),
Guidelines for Protected Area Legislation. Gland, IUCN.

Gammage, B. 2011. The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia. Sydney,
Allen & Unwin.


Hueneke, H. and Baker, R. 2009. Tourist behavior, local values, and interpretation at Uluru:


James, S. 2007. Constructing the climb: visitor decision-making at Uluru. Geographical


