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COMPETING INTERESTS: CO-MANAGEMENT, ABORIGINALS AND NATIONAL PARKS IN AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY

By

Amanda Markham

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University.
I, Amanda Markham, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences, the Australian National University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institutions.
Abstract

Since the 1970s, the joint management of national parks and other protected areas has been seen as an ideal political solution to recognising Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory (NT) whilst simultaneously allowing continued public access to its protected areas. Despite widespread public acceptance of the notion of joint management, an examination of the literature reveals that not only is joint management largely unproblematised, the interests and understandings about joint management held by government conservation agencies, their staff and higher levels of government is little understood.

Following a determination handed down in a landmark native title case, Western Australia v. Ward in 2002, thirty-three of the NT's national parks and reserves in the Northern Territory became subject to simultaneous, widespread joint management arrangements. Consequently, this thesis focusses upon how government conservation agencies understand and implement joint management on-the-ground. As the NT's government-run conservation agency, the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) was given primary operational responsibility for implementing these new joint management agreements, an examination of the interests, organisational culture, structures and practices of the PWS, and their dialectic with the interests of other groups involved in these arrangements is the subject of this thesis. Thus, the central question posed in this study is: What does joint management mean to conservation agencies and their staff in the NT?

I argue that conservation agencies can be viewed as complex adaptive systems which operate in dialectic with other similar complex adaptive systems, such as land councils or Aboriginal cultures. Crucial to this approach is the identification of elements within organisations that are resilient, self-organising, dynamic and non-linear. To do this, I examine several normative cultural constructs which underlie the conceptualisation and creation of conservation agencies -national parks, conservation, and conservation agencies- arguing that these are important in understanding how the culture, structure and practices of the PWS function as a complex adaptive system, and in turn, act to influence the implementation of joint management on the ground. Within PWS’s organisation the
agency’s strong sense of autonomy, its legislatively-derived and internally stable understanding about the agency’s role and functions, its fixed notions about natural values and its inherent ‘rangercentrism’ comprise elements which influence and shape the nature of joint management undertaken by the agency. These elements are reproduced not only across multiple scales within the agency, but also in interactions with other groups involved in joint management.
Preface and Acknowledgements

This study arises out of my own interest in human-environmental relationships, in particular the ways in which Australians actively imagine and create so-called 'natural' environments in order to foster a sense of Australian identity. Encapsulated in this interest is a lifelong fascination with national parks and reserves as places we visit to experience nature and wilderness in order to gain a deeper sense of who we are. This interest was fuelled by a childhood spent living on the doorstep of Australia's first national park, The Royal National Park, frequent visits to the nearby Captain Cook's Landing Place at Kurnell, along with numberless weekends and family holidays spent bushwalking, exploring and travelling to many other parks and wild areas in Australia.

Further impetus for this study came from my undergraduate studies in social anthropology and sociology, and my employment as a research assistant in a native title consultancy. These have had a considerable impact upon my ideas about human-environmental relationships. My Honours thesis, *Paganism in Australia: Identity, Meaning and Culture* (Mckay, 1998), examined environmentalism and its influences upon Paganism, a nature-based new religious movement. In my thesis, I argued that the environmental movement was one of several powerful society-wide discourses influencing the revival of Paganism in contemporary society. Pagans drew upon the environmentalist notion of reversing the Western intellectual separation between humans and the environment in order to reconnect both spiritually and physically with nature (*ibid*: 52). Other influences upon Paganism were also found in the feminist and indigenous peoples' movements.

My work in native title, and later, in cultural heritage management in the Northern Territory, presented me with a diversity of understanding held by Aboriginal people about their relationship to the environment. The widely espoused idea of Aboriginal people as the 'original environmentalists', caring for country in a manner we would recognise as conservation was not always true. In reality, I found Aboriginal relationships with the environment to be complex, with examples of exploitation, conservation, and instrumental environmental management all apparent. This revelation, combined with my interest in national parks and other protected areas, lead me to consider the joint
management of national parks by Aboriginal people and conservation agencies as a topic for doctoral research.

My entry into the field of joint management in the Northern Territory came about via my role as an anthropologist for the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA, also known as the Sacred Sites Authority) in Alice Springs. In early April 2003, I was requested to consult with Traditional Owners of Owen Springs, a former pastoral property, about public camping areas within the newly-established reserve. In the company of senior Traditional Owners, I visited Owen Springs and met with Andrew Bridges, the Regional Manager of the Parks and Wildlife Service's (PWS) Southern Region. Whilst undertaking consultations on Owen Springs, Andrew and I briefly discussed both the new joint management arrangements and my doctoral research. He mentioned that Park’s Executive Director, Dr David Ritchie (former Chief Executive Officer of AAPA), had spoken about my research to him and was contemplating the employment of an anthropologist to assist with the joint management process. I said I would be interested in the position if it was to eventuate (I tried to hide my enthusiasm for this from Andrew but probably failed).

Over the next six months, a secondment arrangement for myself was negotiated between AAPA to PWS for an initial period of 12 months. Formally, I was to be both a researcher anthropologist, studying joint management, and an employee tasked with role of developing and facilitating the agency’s new, broadscale joint management program. As the date was set for my secondment to begin, I was both nervous and excited about my new position. *Would I fit in?* PWS had never employed an anthropologist before; what would they make of me? *What exactly would I be doing?* No one could really explain this to me. There didn’t seem to be any set structure or clearly marked responsibilities awaiting me. Indeed, the whole joint management offer was still being negotiated and nothing was certain. *How would I cope with not having anthropological colleagues to support me?* Since 1998 I had been working as an anthropologist alongside other anthropologists, embedded firmly within the habitus and discourses of my own intellectual subculture. In my mind, I was first and foremost an anthropologist and not a public sector bureaucrat. This crisis of meaning and identity was to become something
with which I was to struggle for several years, both internally and with colleagues, causing me a great deal of personal distress and soul-searching.¹

This last point—that of being an anthropologist in Central Australia—is a little explored problematic in Australian anthropology. In Central Australia, the work of anthropologists and indeed, anthropology, is well-known, perhaps more well known amongst general community than anywhere else in Australia. Due to the passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and the *Northern Territory Sacred Sites Act 1989*, most long term residents in Alice Springs and the surrounding areas deal directly with anthropologists at some time during their lives. Usually, this is via sacred site clearances for residential property purchases and constructions in town, or via the government’s requirement that any works undertaken by any of its departments or agencies must possess an Authority Certificate (a sacred site clearance) to proceed. The other way in which the general public have contact with anthropologists is via Central Land Council work area clearances (similar to sacred site clearances), development proposal meetings, and through land claims or native title claims.

The corollary of this is that anthropology—and the ‘domain’ of anthropology within Central Australia—is viewed as having a very particular form, shaped within and granted ‘legitimacy’ via specific legislation and institutions. Ultimately, anthropology in Central Australia comprises only a small number of ‘sanctioned’ activities: being able to identify the ‘right’ Aboriginal people to talk to for a given piece of land; knowing the protocols for talking to Aboriginal people; knowing what dreaming stories or sacred sites are present on a given piece of land; understanding the complexities of Aboriginal kinship. Many of these activities are decidedly *functionalist* in derivation; that is they are concerned with revealing the laws, rules and purposes of certain cultural formations. This position frames both anthropological practice in Central Australia and also shapes outsider understandings of Aboriginal culture as bounded by the politics of land. It also promotes a view of Aboriginal culture that emphasises the categories ‘sacred’ and ‘land’ above all other possible emic categories. Ironically, this ‘functionalist turn’ in Central

¹ A poignant example of the isolation and loss of professional identity I felt occurred when Clifford Geertz died and there was no one else with which to share this sad news; no one at PWS knew who Clifford Geertz was. I had to call a colleague at AAPA to share my sadness.
Australian anthropology is at odds with the dominant 'interpretive turn' in anthropology over the past forty years, serving to increase the divide between applied and academic anthropology found in contemporary Australian practice. In my own experience, this divide created an all-too-distressing tension between the very limited scope of what was being done as anthropology, what *could* be done, and what, because it could not be recognised as anthropology in Central Australia, would never be done.

Given these very public assumptions about what anthropologists do in Central Australia, there were well-formed expectations amongst PWS staff about what I would be able to do for the organisation in the context of joint management. At the time I entered the field, there were overt assumptions about me being able to improve PWS/Traditional Owner relationships, to assist with sacred site clearances, and to teach PWS staff about Aboriginal culture. Further unspoken assumptions emerged in the context of 'doing work'. These were usually concerned with speeding up or alleviating the need for costly sacred site clearances, providing advice about cultural sites, site protection or avoidance, and the perception that employing an anthropologist would announce to others (the land councils, in particular) a shift in PWS's organisational culture and demonstrate its commitment to joint management.

My own assumptions about what I would be doing in PWS derived from my fieldwork experience with New South Wales (NSW) National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) during the years 1998-2001. I brought with me notions of working with Aboriginal people on cultural heritage documentation projects, family and local history as it related to parks and reserves, cultural mapping and interpretation of indigenous values into park management practice, cross-cultural capacity building for PWS staff and Traditional Owners, working with Traditional Owners on cultural heritage projects, and developing monitoring and evaluation of joint management. These ideas were drawn from the pioneering work done by the Culture and Heritage Branch of the NSW NPWS, from the work of anthropologists with Canadian indigenous peoples involved in protected area management, and from the new and burgeoning international literature on co-management. Whilst I could explain Arrernte or Warlpiri kinship in simple terms to rangers and readily identify Traditional Owners, in my own mind there was much more that I could offer to PWS which the organisation could benefit from.
However, the field of anthropological practice in Central Australia, both highly political and tightly constrained, not only cast in doubt my status as an anthropologist, but also acted to de-legitimate and curtail much of the anthropological work that I could do. First, I was ‘outside’ of the legitimate of anthropological institutions in Central Australia (the Land Councils and AAPA). Therefore I could not officially provide the anthropological expertise that PWS –Traditional Owner consultation- had assumed I would give them. Indeed, my initial employment at PWS was viewed with suspicion by the land councils, and my undertaking of any task contiguous with the practice of contemporary Central Australian anthropology (i.e. consulting Traditional Owners) was met with threats by land council staff, who referred to their own legislative authority over mine. Secondly, when I demonstrated or discussed the breadth of anthropological practice and knowledge outside of the narrowly defined ‘Central Australian’ domain of anthropology and pressed for its application (for example, ‘country mapping’ or cultural heritage projects related to family history), it was not viewed as relevant or of any use to my colleagues at PWS, and was dismissed out of hand.

This fraught and narrow bounding of ‘legitimate anthropology’ in Central Australia arises out of the historical dominance of anthropology and anthropologists sanctioned and recognised by the institutional practices of the land councils and AAPA. As a consequence, in Central Australia there is an intense political debate within and between organisations about Aboriginal culture and who has the right to document, store, know about or represent Aboriginal culture which is largely undocumented and unexamined within anthropological discourse. Those who step outside the ‘space’ created by legislatively-backed institutions such as land councils have very few options open to them. To be recognised as a ‘legitimate anthropologist’ in Central Australia they must either negotiate their presence and work through these institutions (i.e. doctoral students seeking to undertake research on Aboriginal lands must convince land councils that their studies will benefit Aboriginal people in order to gain permission and valuable community introductions), or accept that they constitute a ‘threat’ to these institutions and acknowledge that their activities may be circumscribed in very subtle, yet powerful ways. Even more disturbing, as I found during my own fieldwork, anthropologists who work ‘outside the norm’ in Central Australia may find that what they are doing is not viewed by others as ‘anthropology’ within a Central Australian context.
My own experience was a mixture of all three circumstances. In the end, it was simply too distressing for me to maintain the cognitive dissonance between my internal and external worlds. When the opportunity arose to return to AAPA in early 2008, I swiftly took it, withdrawing from the field. I left PWS with many regrets, the foremost of which relate to the narrow framing of anthropology as merely ‘identifying Traditional Owners’. Yet it was this painful experience which provided the impetus write against such a framing of anthropology in Central Australia; in particular, it provided the inspiration to study the organisational, institutional and historical circumstances that surround the complex set of relationships masked by joint management arrangements. In this way, this thesis is as much an organisational ethnography as it is concerned with particular human understandings about the environment. It is also a subtle critique of the narrow focussing of anthropology in Central Australia. If anything, it is time for anthropologists to turn a critical gaze towards organisations, governments and other institutions in Central Australia – both Aboriginal and ‘whitefella’ - embedded in the lives of Aboriginal people. If this thesis achieves anything, it is a small contribution to understanding such institutional forms.

This has not been an easy journey. There are two people to whom I owe my deepest and most profound gratitude: my supervisor, Professor Nic Peterson, and my partner, Gary Weir. During the long years that it has taken to complete this thesis, Nic has continually encouraged me and never lost faith in my ability to write – even when I did. His guidance, feedback and expertise have been invaluable in enabling me to finish this project. My partner, Gary, made a pact with Nic that he would push me along and ensure that I did not give up. He did indeed do that, and states that he is now qualified to write a thesis on those writing theses. I would also like to thank Gary for all the discussions, feedback and for the editing of the thesis. Without his support and assistance, this thesis would never have been completed.

At the Parks and Wildlife Service, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Andrew Bridges for giving me the opportunity to make a contribution to joint management, and Mac Moyses for the introductions, historical insights, discussions and efforts to ‘make joint management happen’. The journey wasn’t ‘all good’ but it was worthwhile. I would also like to thank the following former and current PWS staff for their assistance, discussions, insights and most of all, their companionship and laughs: Chris Day, Stuart...
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I would like to thank Mavis and Herman Malbunka, and members of the Abbott, Kenny and Clyne families for their honest discussions about joint management from an Aboriginal perspective. In particular, I would like to thank Carl, Mildred and Mark Inkamala for their generosity, humour and many long discussions about everything and
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Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Preface and Acknowledgements .................................................................................. iv
Contents ......................................................................................................................... xi
Table of Figures ............................................................................................................. xi
Table of Tables ............................................................................................................... xiii
Abbreviations ............................................................................................................... xiv
Chapter One: Conflicting Interests ............................................................................. 1
Chapter Two: A History of Protected Areas and Conservation Agencies ................. 25
Chapter Three: Joint Management, Certainty and the Literature ............................... 73
Chapter Four: Learning the Culture ............................................................................. 116
Chapter Five: Defining Joint Management ................................................................. 171
Chapter Six: Doing Joint Management ........................................................................ 217
Chapter Seven: Joint Management Planning and Governance .................................... 251
Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusion ................................................................. 286
Appendix 1: Structured Interview Questions .............................................................. 302
References ...................................................................................................................... 303

Table of Figures

Figure 1.1: Locality Map, Northern Territory .............................................................. 3
Figure 1.2: Central Australia Showing Location of National Parks and Reserves ........ 14
Figure 1.3: Southern Region Districts ........................................................................ 16
Figure 1.4: Rangers and Visitors at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station ................... 19
Figure 4.1: A Donkey in an NT Park ........................................................................ 117
Figure 4.2: PWS's Regional Office, Tom Hare Building, Alice Springs...............122
Figure 4.3: Organisation Chart PWS Southern Region ........................................126
Figure 4.4: Southern Region Districts..................................................................130
Figure 4.5: Visitor Management at Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve..............159
Figure 5.1: Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve..................................................169
Figure 5.2: Rangers at a Joint Management Planning Workshop..................................189
Figure 6.1: Staff from PWS, CLC, NLC and Parks Australia at a Joint Management Planning Workshop, December 2007 .................................................................221
Figure 6.2: PEP Participants Carrying out Controlled Burning near Trephina Gorge...237
Figure 7.1: Locality Map Showing Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve...............262
Table of Tables

Table 2.1: IUCN Protected Area Management Categories ........................................60
Table 3.1: Joint Management Models in Australia ...................................................82
Table 7.1: Contents of Joint Management Plans as set out in TPWCA ...............258
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAPA</td>
<td>Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority</td>
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<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
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<td>AGM</td>
<td>Annual General Meeting</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<td>ALR(NT)A</td>
<td>Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976</td>
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<td>ANCILA</td>
<td>Alaskan National Interest Lands Conservation Act 1980</td>
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<td>ANCSA</td>
<td>Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act 1971</td>
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<td>ANPWS</td>
<td>Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service</td>
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<td>ASTS</td>
<td>Alice Springs Telegraph Station</td>
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<td>CAMPFIRE</td>
<td>Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources</td>
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<td>CAS</td>
<td>Complex Adaptive Systems</td>
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<td>CBD</td>
<td>Convention on Biological Diversity</td>
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<td>CCNT</td>
<td>Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory</td>
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<td>CDEP</td>
<td>Community Development Employment Program</td>
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<td>CDR</td>
<td>Chief District Ranger</td>
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<td>CLC</td>
<td>Central Land Council</td>
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<td>CLP</td>
<td>Country Liberal Party</td>
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<td>CSIRO</td>
<td>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</td>
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<td>DIPE</td>
<td>Department of Infrastructure, Planning and the Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEP</td>
<td>Flexible Employment Program</td>
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<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographical Information System</td>
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<td>Ha</td>
<td>Hectares</td>
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<td>ILUA</td>
<td>Indigenous Land Use Agreement</td>
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<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources</td>
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<td>JM</td>
<td>Joint Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMC</td>
<td>Local Management Committee</td>
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<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>NCC</td>
<td>Nature Conservation Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
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<td>NLC</td>
<td>Northern Land Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>National Parks and Primitive Areas Council</td>
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<td>NPS</td>
<td>National Parks Service</td>
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<td>National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975</td>
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<td>NRETA</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts</td>
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<td>NRS</td>
<td>National Reserve System</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
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<td>NTG</td>
<td>Northern Territory Government</td>
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<td>NTPS</td>
<td>Northern Territory Public Sector</td>
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<td>NTRB</td>
<td>Northern Territory Reserves Board</td>
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<td>OCPE</td>
<td>Office for the Commission for Public Employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>OH&amp;S</td>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>POM</td>
<td>Plan of Management</td>
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<td>PSM</td>
<td>Public Sector Management Program</td>
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<td>PWCNT</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory</td>
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<td>PWS</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory</td>
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<td>RDA</td>
<td>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</td>
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<td>RFA</td>
<td>Regional Forests Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVCR</td>
<td>Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDR</td>
<td>Senior District Ranger</td>
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<td>SPR</td>
<td>Senior Park Ranger</td>
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<td>SOMI</td>
<td>Statement of Management Intent</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOPs</td>
<td>Standard Operating Procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPDU</td>
<td>Strategic Planning and Development Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEK</td>
<td>Traditional Ecological Knowledge</td>
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<td>TO</td>
<td>Traditional Owner</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOID</td>
<td>Traditional Owners Identification</td>
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<td>TPWCA</td>
<td>Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2005</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCPA</td>
<td>World Congress on Protected Areas</td>
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<td>WPS</td>
<td>Wildlife Protection Service</td>
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Chapter One: Conflicting Interests

In the late 1970s Australia led the world in accepting the idea that conservation agencies and Aboriginal traditional owners could collaborate in the joint management of national parks. Since then, this arrangement has not only become increasingly common across Australia but also elsewhere in the first world. The idea emerged out of the conflicting interests in the Kakadu region of the Northern Territory between conservation, uranium mining and Aboriginal people. Joint management was seen as an ideal political solution to recognising Aboriginal land rights in the region whilst simultaneously allowing continued public access to its rich biodiversity. Despite the idea being widely welcomed, the arrangement sprung from a marriage of convenience that is still causing difficulty thirty years later. At the heart of the difficulty is an assumed compatibility of interests: the public’s interest in conservation and recreation in protected areas is assumed to mesh not only with Aboriginal environmental interests but to be able to deliver much needed socio-economic opportunities for Aboriginal people (Lawrence, 1997:2; Corbett, Lane, & Clifford, 1998:3-5).

Linking Aboriginal socio-economic development with biodiversity conservation and land management appears to be an ideal marriage. On the one hand, Aboriginal people own approximately 20% of the Australian landmass under a variety of land tenures, yet lag behind other Australians in terms of socio-economic development (SCRGSP, 2007:6; Adams, 2008: 292). On the other, conservationists have long decried the amount of land set aside in Australia for conservation as inadequate, emphasising massive species extinctions caused by habitat loss, and more recently, the need to offset the effects of climate change as reasons to increase the protected estate in Australia (Recher, 1990: 297; NRMMC, 2005:19; Harper, 2007:257). Furthermore, Aborigines are depicted as having ‘nurturing’ and ‘caring’ attitudes towards land, and as being ‘natural conservationists’, whose approach to land management and ecology is assumed to be not only congruent with conservation agencies, but also able to improve outcomes for biodiversity conservation (Larritt, 1995:242; Nugent, 2002: 88; Laudine, 2009: 122 &133-134).
Then, there is the political palatability of wedding of conservation and Aboriginal interests in land. Conservation initiatives involving Aborigines enjoy widespread support from indigenous organisations, academia and within government. This has seen the development of conservation-based enterprises on Aboriginal lands such as community ranger groups, traditional ecological knowledge research and cultural-heritage based tourism heralded as solutions to the complex problem of Aboriginal economic independence in remote areas for over two decades (Rose, 1995; Strang, 1997:105-106; Altman, 2003:67; Altman, Buchanan & Larsen, 2007). The depth of belief surrounding the compatibility of conservation with Aboriginal interests is also witnessed in the support of governments for Aboriginal economic development not only in the joint management of national parks, but through the creation of Indigenous Protected Areas, and in the funding of natural resource management programs such as the Commonwealth Government’s long-running Caring For Country program (http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/index.html), and the recently developed Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation’s (CSIRO) Healthy Country, Healthy People investment strategy in Northern Australia (http://www.csiro.au/resources/HealthyCountryHealthyPeopleReport.html).

Yet, despite the apparent compatibility of Aboriginal and conservation interests in land, thirty years of joint management in Australia have resulted in paper and talk: legislation and governance structures aimed at securing ongoing management control of and public access to parks. The real ‘success’ of joint management has been the creation of new joint management plans, joint decision-making processes and joint management boards and committees. Whilst these structures guarantee certainty for, and the participation of, all legal stakeholders in joint management, the much hoped for socio-economic development for Aboriginal people or improved conservation outcomes via joint management remain unrealised.

One possible explanation for this failure lies in the contrived –some would say forced– nature of joint management arrangements in Australia. Even a brief history of joint management suggests the involuntary nature of these arrangements. The first legally-based joint management arrangement anywhere in the first world, Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory, arose in 1979 following a political decision to allow uranium mining in an area where Aboriginal land rights had previously been
recognised in tandem with the need to protect the area’s high conservation values (Nugent, 2002: 14). This resulted in amendments to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (ALR(NT)A)*, granting of land title to Aboriginal people as well as the creation of a mining excision over the Ranger uranium deposit. This amendment also required the leaseback of 6144 square kilometres of land to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service under the proviso that it was jointly managed with Aboriginal people as a national park.

Similarly in 1981, an impending land claim over the Cobourg Peninsula saw the Northern Territory (NT) Government enter into negotiations with Traditional Owners which resulted in the withdrawal of the land claim. Following this, NT legislation was passed enabling the transfer of title over the Cobourg Peninsula to Aboriginal people as inalienable freehold land. This legislation also required leaseback in perpetuity over part of the land from Traditional Owners to the NT Government, to be managed as a national park. Under this legislation, the national park, *Gurig Ganak Barlu*, was
to be jointly managed by a board of Traditional Owners and the NT’s Conservation Commission (Foster, 1997: 5-7; Smyth, 2001: 76).

The most well-known example of joint management in Australia, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, arose in similar—but not identical—circumstances, following a failed land claim in 1979. The Commonwealth Government responded to widespread public calls for recognition of Aboriginal people’s rights in land at Uluru, and in 1985, granted 1325 hectares of land to Traditional Owners under ALR(NT)A as inalienable Aboriginal freehold land. As with Kakadu National Park, this land was leased back to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service for ninety-nine years to be jointly managed with Aboriginal people as a national park (De Lacy & Lawson, 1997: 167). Most subsequent joint management initiatives in Australia have used variations of the Uluru model as the basis on which to reconcile Aboriginal and conservation interests in land whilst ensuring ongoing public access to these lands (Smyth, 2001:76; Adams 2008:305-306).

Yet many studies of joint management suggest that, despite legal certainty over land or the presence of Aboriginal people on management boards and committees, the practice has many problems. For example, critics of joint management argue that it comprises a form of continued colonialism where European laws and cultural forms are imposed upon indigenous peoples in return for minimal decision making power or economic benefit (Craig, 1991:147, Strelein, 1993:390; Lawrence, 1997: 18; Smyth, 2001: 78). Another criticism is that governments and their conservation agencies have been unable—or unwilling—to devolve ‘real’ decision-making control to indigenous people, especially in ‘on-the-ground’ situations, where they have been reluctant to adopt non-Western land management practices (Foster, 1992: 365; Weaving, 1991: 314; De Lacy, 1994: 493; Lawrence, 1997:10; Wearing & Huyskens, 2001: 192; Adams, 2008: 306). Other problems include: a lack of measurable economic benefits from joint management (Smyth, 2001: 8; Fisher 2001: 85; Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005: 362; Agrawal & Redford, 2006:32); a lack of capacity by both conservation agencies and Aboriginal people to engage in joint management (Weaving, 1991:322; De Lacy, 1994: 493; Foster, 1997: 72; Lawrence, 1997:3-10; Wearing & Huyskens, 2001:195); and, most importantly, an uncritical acceptance of

These criticisms suggest another explanation for the failure of joint management to deliver either socio-economic benefit to Aboriginal people or improved conservation outcomes for protected areas. This is in the assumed and unproblematised compatibility of interests between the many parties—Aboriginal people, governments, park agencies and their staff, land councils, conservation groups and the general public—involving in joint management arrangements. Whilst political solutions to Aboriginal land claims over national parks have created legal certainty and decision-making power for Aboriginal people, problems surrounding the assumed compatibility of interests may only become apparent once responsibility for implementing these arrangements on the ground is devolved from higher levels of government to conservation agencies.

As the legislated role of Australian conservation agencies is to conserve and protect biodiversity and provide for public recreation and enjoyment of these lands, the forced joint management ‘marriage’ may present a challenge to the core values and philosophy of these organisations which their employees and managers find difficult to deal with (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:39, 42). It may be that the groups involved in joint management arrangements such as Aboriginal people, land councils, conservation agencies and even higher levels of government have not only differing or competing interests in land, but also hold divergent understandings about the nature of joint management itself. It is also possible that Aboriginal people—the main operational partners in joint management arrangements with conservation agencies—have aspirations and lifestyles that present unimagined and often unworkable problems for these agencies and their staff. Conservation agencies become the site where the competing aspirations, interests and political will of all groups involved in joint management intersect and are played out: where government policy aimed at improving the lot of Aborigines succeeds or fails. It follows then that understanding the responses of conservation agencies to the operationalisation of joint management arrangements on the ground is a critical one.
It should be noted here that a detailed examination of the understandings of Aboriginal people or organisations such as Land Councils is beyond the scope or intent of this research. As discussed above and in the section which immediately follow, a detailed international literature exists which considers the 'problems' experienced by Aboriginal and other indigenous peoples who participate in joint management. In interrogating this literature, a comprehensive understanding of Aboriginal peoples' expectations and assumptions in regards to joint management emerges across several decades of research. I shall also point out here that an emic understanding of the perspectives of the two large Northern Territory Land Councils and their staff about joint management was not possible, nor was it the intent of this thesis. Such a study deserves a separate thesis in itself in order to fully understand the organisational cultures, practices and aspirations of Land Councils in regards to joint management.

With this in mind, this thesis is first and foremost an organisational ethnography of a particular organisation at a particular point in time, which focuses on the responses of its culture and staff to a higher-level policy decision. In this research, I examine the assumed ability of a government conservation agency and its staff, the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory (PWS), to respond to the differing interests, conflicts and issues that arise when implementing multiple joint management arrangements on the ground. I do this by posing the question: What does joint management mean to conservation agencies and their staff in the NT? In answering this question, I examine organisational culture in PWS and its interactions with other groups involved in joint management in the Northern Territory. I argue that the values, practices and meanings applied to joint management by government conservation agencies are shaped by a number of culturally dynamic, non-linear, resilient and self-organising factors arising both externally and internally to such organisations. In turn, these factors shape the practice of joint management, but do so in dialectic with each other and their context. In conclusion, I suggest that conservation agencies entering into such agreements need to integrate joint management objectives with existing operational systems, focussing strongly on capacity building, cultural heritage management and on the ground practice rather than simply on governance and regulation.
Therefore a concern of this study is with improving the effectiveness of joint management on the ground. It is a concern that has arisen from personal and professional experiences working in the field of joint management, and also from studies in environmental and organisational anthropology, protected area management and ecosystems science. In the following sections, I discuss these issues in detail, their relationship with the aims of this research and the theoretical position I have adopted in this thesis. The remainder of this introductory chapter serves to:

1) provide an overview of the literature on joint management and describe my approach to the research;
2) describe the geographical locations and organisational context of the study area;
3) describe the methodology used in this study;
4) outline the thesis structure.

**Of Silences and Exclusions: Overview of the Literature**

... in the expectant turn to anthropological work for complicating analyses on what bureaucracies are, and who are the actors, one finds in the main a sadly undertheorised body of work known as organisational ethnography, or in ethnographies of contemporary Aboriginal cultural formations, a disappointing reproduction of unitary categories of 'the state' or 'government', in which the agency of the participants involved is determined out of the picture (Lea, 2002:7).

The themes invoked by Lea in her study of Northern Territory Government health professionals provide a sobering parallel to the notion that much is known about the actual operationalisation or 'doing' of joint management by conservation agencies. Lea begins her thesis with a critique of social science, arguing against the representation of the state as a generic, post-colonial objectification; a Foucauldian instrument of regulation and management in people’s intimate lives, minds and bodies. In most ethnographies discussing Aboriginal/government interactions, Lea (ibid) argues that the state appears as a powerful, unified whole, hegemonically able
to insert itself into the lives of passive Aboriginal Others. In many such ethnographies, Aboriginal people are themselves characterised as either powerless to enter into any kind of dialogue with this all-pervasive force, and so must suffer its interventions, or, in their apparent dysfunctionality, are redrawn as active agents resisting the power of the state by transforming its interventions in culturally salient ways. Yet, as Lea strives to demonstrate, the notion of the state acting as a unified whole is a clever fiction of the state itself, masking the agency of those who work for the state, who create, reflect upon, enact, alter, and blatantly disregard its objects, artefacts and policies. If anything, Lea’s study suggests that we should be focussing the ethnographic gaze inside the government bureaucracies, onto the organisational practices and agents involved in the delivery of services, policies and engagement with Aboriginal people if we are to understand the lack of health and socio-economic improvements in Aboriginal lives.

Turning to the joint management literature for ethnographic insight into the responses of conservation agencies to joint management arrangements is not particularly helpful. Most Australian literature referring to joint management falls into three categories. It is either phenomenological\(^2\), describing joint management legislation and models across State and Territory legislatures (e.g. Smyth, 2001); is case-study oriented, providing descriptions of the processes leading to joint management in specific protected areas or individual conflicts and problems arising from particular joint management arrangements (e.g. Larritt, 1995); or comprises ‘overviews’ drawn wholly from literature reviews seeking to identify widespread patterns, problems and processes and to support calls for further research (e.g. Corbett, Lane, & Clifford, 1998).

International literature on joint management (also called co-operative or collaborative management) follows this trend, focussing strongly on case studies (e.g. Infield, 2003: 64-70), participatory planning processes and techniques to establish co-management arrangements (e.g. Borrini-Feyerabend, Farvar, Nguinguiri & Ndangang, 2000), the

\(^2\) It should be pointed out here that throughout this thesis, the term phenomenological is used to refer to a descriptive or cataloging approach to analysing the content or phenomena comprising a particular social construct, institution or practice, such as joint management. It is not used to denote the first person, conscious-based philosophy associated with Edmund Husserl.
use of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) for biodiversity conservation outcomes (e.g. Watson, Alessa & Glaspell, 2003); the development of governance structures (e.g. Borrini-Feyerabend, 2003: 92-101); and community conflicts with protected area managers, particularly in developing nations (e.g. Adams, 2004: 50-60).

Whilst this ever-growing body of literature attests to the acceptance of joint management as a form of protected area management, it provides very little in the way of studies that attempt to examine the broader political economy of or attempt to problematise the interests of the groups involved in this practice. Also - and most pertinent to the current study- there is a dearth of literature that examines critically the role of conservation agencies in joint management; indeed, it is difficult to find a ‘voice’ in the literature not written wholly from an advocacy perspective on behalf of indigenous peoples or local communities. Most problematic of all is the assumption within the literature discussing joint management that the state’s interests in enacting joint management agreements and legislation are identical to the interests of government-run conservation agencies.

If we are to understand the failures of not only joint management, but of other government initiatives over the past forty years to improve the health, life expectancy and socio-economic well-being of Aborigines, then an analysis of the state not as a unified construct but in terms of particular instruments, practices and agents acting in particular circumstances becomes a critical task for anthropology. Rendering the state as a voiceless, unified whole, unproblematised except for its interventions and failures at an abstracted, whole-of-government level is no longer an option. Rather, the notion of the state itself must be deconstructed, and those rendered silent and excluded within the joint management literature - individual government bureaucracies and their staff- subjected to the ethnographic gaze.

I propose to do this by turning away from studies of joint management and towards complexity theory, comparative studies of human-environmental relationships and organisational ethnography. A basic assumption of this study is that government bureaucracies, Aboriginal societies, land councils and even contemporary Australian culture can be viewed through the lens of complexity theory, and can be seen as complex adaptive systems (CAS). CAS theories have been recently applied in
analyses of human cultural forms and share with anthropology the study of multi­scaled, non-linear phenomena (Abel, 1998: 7; Abel & Stepp, 2003: 1). Complexity theories reject simplistic models of hierarchical and multi-agent phenomena systems such as weather and ecosystems, arguing that concepts like *equilibrium* and *determinism* offer only partial explanations of how these systems function. Instead, complexity theories focus on patterns of behaviour across entire systems (communities or aggregates) that emerge from the interaction of individual elements within them or challenges to them arising externally (Lansing, 2003: 185).

Complex adaptive systems possess properties that have been described as *dynamic, non-linear, autocatalytic, surprising, chaotic, historical* and *resilient*—all familiar factors within anthropological studies of human cultures. Furthermore, relationships between human culture and the environment have particularly appealed to those using complexity theories as fertile ground for research (Abel, 1998:9; Olsson, Folke & Berkes, 2004; Lansing, 2006). Anthropologists have recently begun to explore the possibility of framing research in a CAS paradigm across a range of specialisations, from the study of the social organisation of Balinese irrigation systems (Lansing, 2006), to the relationship between humans and the environment in Kathmandu (Neudoerffer, Cynthia, Waltner-Toews, Kay, Joshi & Tamang, 2005), and the interaction between networks of heroin users in Baltimore (Agar, 1999). The notion that a government bureaucracy like PWS is a complex adaptive system possessing interests in land that interact with those found in other complex adaptive systems—Aboriginal communities, land councils, and other government departments—underpins this study.

I approach the interests in land held by conservation agencies and their staff involved in implementing joint management as an example of a *human-environmental relationship*. The idea that human-environmental relationships express certain cultural meanings, values, processes, histories and structures is central to this thesis (Strang, 1997:6). For example, the very possibility that something could arise called ‘the joint management of national parks’ suggests a set of particular beliefs about human-environmental relationships. Underlying this approach is the recent re-thinking in anthropology and other social sciences of the essentialist nature/culture dichotomy, and the argument that both the dichotomy and the categories of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’
are culturally constructed (Descola & Palsson, 1996:3). It would appear that human/environmental relationships are culturally constructed rather than essential – even where there is a systemic and resilient belief that natural values are essential. Consequently, a central part of this study is concerned with deconstructing several culturally constructed concepts that express human relationships to land: conservation, protected areas and joint management. In this thesis, I examine these concepts as they have emerged in socio-context historical contexts and are understood by those involved in the joint management arrangements described in this thesis.

Two studies in anthropology and human geography suggest ways in which to approach a study of joint management incorporating cross-cultural comparisons of human relationships to land. Strang’s (1997) ethnography of non-indigenous pastoralists’ and Aboriginal relationships to land explores the complex interplay of history, education and socialisation that shape cultural differences in human-environmental relationships and interests. Gill’s (2000) study of the response of non-indigenous pastoralists in Central Australia to environmentalism and Aboriginal land rights examines settler conceptions of nature, the environment and the development of these ideas. Both studies emphasise the importance of socio-cultural meanings and historical context in informing indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives on the environment, mapping the effects that differing interests have upon inter-group conflicts and interactions.

A final way of approaching the problem of how conservation agencies and their staff implement joint management comes from two studies within the field of organisational anthropology. Lea’s (2002 & 2008) ethnography of bureaucrats in the Northern Territory Government’s health department, Territory Health Services, has been instrumental in shaping this thesis, not only in terms of analysis, but also in terms of being the first ethnography of an NT Government bureaucracy. Lea points to the importance of examining the manner in which professionals learn institutional ways of being and thinking within government departments, and of the ‘self-replicating’ nature of contemporary bureaucracies. This is particularly salient when exploring how the human-environmental relationships inherent in joint management are reproduced in organisational practice and agency.
Another organisational ethnography, *The Meeting* (Schwartzman, 1989), focuses on the role of meetings, workshops and other formal gatherings as 'work' within large organisations. Schwartzman emphasizes the constitutive and political characteristics of organisational gatherings, as well as their potential for 'revealing' the social structures and discourses within government bureaucracies (ibid: 7). As joint management is characterised by its participants as 'working together' and highly relational, analyses of agents' interactions, both formal and informal, and the ways in which organisational practice is reproduced or rejected within these interactions offers a further means of understanding why joint management initiatives so often result in paper work and talk. In this view, what both Schwartzmann's and Lea's studies emphasise is the way in which organisational structures, practices, knowledge and processes, are reproduced—or changed—by agents within bureaucracies, and in turn create opportunities for negotiation, conflict, resilience and creativity with other external groups.

The central question arising from this discussion of complexity theory, studies of human-environmental relationships, organisational ethnography and the success or failure of the joint management initiatives implemented by conservation agencies is: 'What does joint management mean to conservation agencies and their staff in the NT?'

Specifically, I examine how the internal culture of the *Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory*—a complex adaptive system—in negotiation with broader cultural understandings about human/environmental relationships and the interests of other groups—other complex adaptive systems—involved in joint management, effects the operationalisation of joint management on the ground by agency staff.

This statement invokes a further set of sub-questions which will be answered in subsequent chapters of this thesis: *How are high-level government imperatives concerning joint management dealt with by the PWS? How does broader agency culture and structure 'create' or limit the kinds of joint management practices carried* 

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3 For the purpose of this study, I define the term 'mean' (or meaning) as the shared underlying values, beliefs, knowledge, and understandings attached by a group of people to a particular set of ideas, practices, structures, or institutions.
out by agency staff? How do those working in conservation agencies understand joint management? How are outside interests, such as those of Aboriginal people and land councils, incorporated into or resisted by agency practice? Now, however, I turn to an introduction to the location of this study, followed by a brief description of its subjects, the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory and its staff.

The Study Area: Central Australia

Covering an area of approximately 300,000 square kilometres, the Central Australian landscape is diverse in terms of geology, biological diversity, culture and land use. For the purpose of this study, I define Central Australia as the area bordered by the South Australian-Northern Territory border in the south, Tennant Creek in the north, the Queensland border in the east, and the West Australian border in the west (Fig 1.3).

The area from the South Australian border north to Tennant Creek comprises some thirty four different geological land systems, from gibber plains to sand dunes, to river flood-outs and mountain ranges (van Oosterzee, 2000:9). This diversity is reflected in some of the most well-known geological features in Australia: Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kata-Tjuta (Mt Olga), Kings Canyon (Watarrka), the MacDonnell Ranges, and the Simpson and Tanami Deserts.
Less well-known features of Central Australia include spectacular mountain ranges, gorges and waterholes: Rainbow Valley, Chamber's Pillar, Simpson's Gap, Ellery Creek Big Hole, Glen Helen Gorge, Ormiston Gorge, the Devil's Marbles and the Davenport-Murchison Ranges.

Rainfall in the region is unpredictable and low, varying from annual measurements of 500 mm in the Barkly Tablelands, 250 mm in the central MacDonnell Ranges to 100mm in the Simpson Desert. A large portion of Central Australia lies north of the Tropic of Capricorn, with most of the rainfall occurring from December through to March as a result of tropical monsoon or cyclone systems. Rivers frequently flood during times of high rainfall, and although there is an extensive system of river catchments (the Finke, Hugh, Todd, Hale, and Hay), there are no permanent rivers flowing above the ground. Temperatures are equally variable, ranging from 25-40 degrees centigrade in the summer, down to 0 – 20 degrees centigrade in July.
The geological land systems described above support five main types of vegetation habitat: desert ranges and foothills; riverine woodlands, mulga woodlands, sand dunes and sand plains, chenopod (saltbush) shrublands and gibber plains (van Oosterzee, 2000:8). These habitats support a wide range of plant and animal life, including species that are relict, such as the *Acacia peuce* or Waddywood and the MacDonnell Ranges cycad (*Macrozamia macdonnellii*), unique to Central Australia, such as the thorny devil (*Moloch horridus*), or extremely common, such as the budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) and mulga (*Acacia aneura*). The soils of Central Australia, like much of the Australian continent, are fragile and easily degraded by factors causing erosion, a point I will return to shortly.

The primary form of land use in Central Australia is pastoralism, with some 53% of land currently used for grazing cattle. Aboriginal land comprises some 36% of Central Australia, with most of this land devoted to non-commercial purposes. Protected areas comprise only a small percentage of land, some 4% of land. Residential settlements occupy only .01% land (http://www.anra.gov.au/topics/land/landuse/nt/index.html).

**The Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory: An Introduction**

The *Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory* (PWS) and its staff, specifically, those staff involved with the practice of joint management, are the subjects of this thesis. The PWS is one of two government conservation agencies operating in the Northern Territory, and has existed in various guises since 1956. The organisation is created under a piece of NT legislation, the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, and is funded and administered by the Northern Territory Government. In Chapters 2 and 4, I discuss the agency’s history, structure and functions in detail. Here, I aim to introduce both the agency and the subjects of this

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4 Here I distinguish between the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service and *Parks Australia*, a Commonwealth Government agency that has been jointly managing Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park since 1985.
thesis—agency staff involved in joint management. Following this, I begin to problematise these within a discussion of contemporary approaches to organisational anthropology.

Across the Northern Territory, PWS employs approximately 300 staff. The agency is divided into three regions, reflecting climatic and ecological boundaries: the Northern (Darwin) Region, Katherine Region and the Southern (Alice Springs) Region. The Southern Region employs 43 rangers, six indigenous ranger trainees, and 17 support and specialist staff in the Alice Springs Regional Office. The area where the largest portion of my research was conducted is the Southern Region (Figure 1.4), which is divided into three districts: Watarrka (also called ‘South West’), West (which includes all of the West MacDonnell parks, plus Finke Gorge and Owen Springs), and East/Central/Barkly, which includes everything else. There are nine ranger stations located across the districts: the Alice Springs Telegraph Station (ASTS), Trephina Gorge, Arltunga, Tennant Creek, Simpsons Gap, Owen Springs, Ormiston Gorge, Palm Valley (Finke Gorge) and Watarrka (Kings Canyon).

![Figure 1-3 Southern Region Districts](image)

Figure 1-3 Southern Region Districts
In common with many government agencies, PWS can be described as a legislatively-driven and inherently hierarchical public sector organisation. The Parks and Wildlife Service is created by and has its core functions and responsibilities set out in the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2005*. The *TPWCA* states that the agency is responsible for the protection, conservation, study and sustainable utilisation of wildlife on publicly funded protected areas in the Northern Territory (*TPWCA*, 2005). In comparison with other government departments, which are inherently driven by policy and are subject to swift change, PWS is directed by legislation, meaning that the agency’s core programs and structure remain relatively stable across long periods of time. The responsiveness, adaptation and flexibility found at smaller time scales found within other public sector departments via policy iteration and adjustment are accounted for within PWS in its internal processes and artefacts, via strategic plans, park management plans and individual program ‘action’ plans. It is true to say, that as a conservation agency, PWS is indeed conservative.

A useful way of approaching public sector agencies such as Parks and Wildlife comes from Max Weber. Weber offers the term *bureaucracy* as a label for formal groups or organisations that operate on an impersonal basis to achieve specific objectives, such as the protection and conservation of natural heritage on publicly owned lands. Public sector agencies such as PWS, with their emphasis on providing citizens with services on a transparent and accountable basis, meet these criteria (Weber, 1995: 196-197; Giddens, 1995:286). It is pertinent here to consider the properties of bureaucracies as discussed by Weber in relation to PWS.

Weber (1995:196-198) describes the characteristics of modern bureaucracies as comprising:

- An official and fixed area of jurisdiction controlled by laws and other rules
- An ordered hierarchy of authority and supervision
- Written rules governing the officials (the staff) within the organisation
- A separation of public (bureau) tasks and private (personal) tasks of officials
- Full time, salaried officials (employees)
- Specialist training in and knowledge of organisational rules and processes
Weber is suggesting here that these organisations possess internal structures such as an ‘... ordered hierarchy of authority and supervision’ which “... give the commands required for the discharge of ... duties.” Furthermore, authority is: “... is distributed in a stable way and is strictly delimited by rules concerning the coercive means, physical, sacerdotal, or otherwise, which may be placed at the disposal of officials.” For public bureaucracies such as PWS, the implications of this are that positions exist irrespective of the individuals occupying them and form a ladder or pyramid, where those with the greatest decision-making and supervisory responsibilities sit at the apex of the organisational structure.

In common with the characteristics of modern bureaucracies set out above, PWS possesses organisational ‘rules’ that are formally defined, negotiated and constituted within wider government policies and structures. These rules are critical to guiding action at all levels of the organisation. Rules are defined here as: normative rights and obligations that guide organisational actions (Giddens, 1995: xx). Although I discuss organisational rules and functions in detail in Chapter 4, PWS is typical of government conservation agencies, where rules operate across a number of scales, from the most formal levels where they are codified in legislation, through agency-wide guidelines and policies for undertaking common corporate processes, and at activity or occupation-specific levels in the form of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The Subjects

As stated in the previous section, one of the main aims of this research is to examine the meanings attached to joint management through the embodied actions of those engaged in joint management: conservation agency staff and the joint management ‘work’ they do in their daily duties within PWS. Here, I introduce those most closely involved in creating and enacting joint management within PWS: rangers, planning, joint management and other agency staff – the subjects of this thesis.

One notable feature of PWS setting it apart from other public sector agencies is the concentration a large number of staff in a particular profession: rangering. It has been said to me by many staff within the agency that the organisation is ‘ranger-centric’
and that all other staff are there to support rangers. Given that land management, and in particular, protected area management, comprises a major part of the agency’s legislated functions, the prevalence of protected area management professionals—rangers—is understandable. Rangers comprise around sixty-five percent of the agency’s staff in Central Australia, and are the public face of the organisation. They are also the group that undertakes most of the activities associated with managing the land which falls under the agency’s control.

Another group of agency staff involved in implementing joint management are the staff of the Strategic Planning and Development Unit (SPDU), comprising senior planners and joint management staff. It is this unit which, in essence retains carriage and control of the joint management program, overseeing its budget and the projects undertaken under the label of ‘joint management’. Staff within the SPDU come from a variety of backgrounds. The unit’s head is a former ranger-turned-planner, with over twenty years of service in PWS. Other senior planners have backgrounds in tourism and visitor management planning, natural resource management planning and project management experience in indigenous and overseas non-government organisations. It was within this unit that I was employed, my own experience being in Aboriginal cultural heritage protection and native title anthropology.

It is useful here to invoke the term ‘bureau professionals’ to describe those I focus upon within Parks and Wildlife. The term was first applied by Mintzberg (1993) to give a sense of the simultaneity experienced by professionally trained social workers...
undertaking contemporary welfare programs whilst being employed within government-funded bureaucracies. This notion of 'bureau professionals' also suggests the idea that actors such as rangers and planners working within the public sector must combine their professionalism with "... ideals of fair administration as the most transparent and fair means of achieving social welfare." (Llewellyn, 1998 cited in Lea, 2002:6). In the current context, 'social welfare' may be replaced with park or protected area management to give a sense of those who are invested with such occupational dualities: trained as rangers or in natural resource management and undertaking their professional duties through the culture of public sector administration. As will be seen later in this thesis, the marriage between rangers' professionalism and public sector practice is not always a happy one, and the tension that exists within that space -along with the creativity and flexibility it creates- is one all but ignored in the co-management literature.

**Methodology**

Tensions such as those experienced by rangers who act simultaneously as public servants—a role they downplay—and as tertiary-qualified rangers can only be known when the state and its agents are problematised; when the much-maligned fiction of 'the government' as a monolithic whole is taken as an object of study and exoticised. This requires us to challenge our assumptions about knowing and understanding 'the government', by asking questions such as what it does, why it does it and what its interests are. It demands that we come to know the technologies of the state—its systems, programs, processes and artefacts—as well as the agents that take part in, create, resist, alter, and reproduce the state from within. We may ask: *Is it the fault of 'government' that joint management has failed to deliver socio-economic benefits for Aborigines or radically improve conservation?* Which raises the question of whom or what is the thing we call 'government'? If we answer that government is: *all of those departments and agencies which are responsible for the delivery of publicly-funded services*, we could then ask: *Do the rangers in PWS—who struggle with the duality of being public servants and qualified professionals—share the view of joint management held by the agency's Executive Director or the Northern Territory's Chief Minister?* To answer such questions—to understand the interests of conservation agencies and
their staff when implementing joint management on the ground- requires a methodological approach that takes us inside these organisations.

My initial intention in undertaking this study was a desire to understand the state’s attempts to incorporate Aboriginal interests in public conservation initiatives from the perspective of conservation agencies and their staff. The study was motivated by a life-long personal interest in conservation and an unashamed love of bushwalking and wild places. The fieldwork sites –two conservation agencies- were determined by personal circumstance and opportunism. From the year 2000 onwards, new joint management arrangements between government conservation agencies and Aboriginal people occurred in two legislatures in Australia: News South Wales (NSW) and the Northern Territory. A short period of fieldwork for this research was conducted during the commencement of a legislative process aimed at instituting joint management arrangements for Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks on the far south coast of NSW during 2000-2001. This fieldwork, although limited in scope, was important in determining the direction of this study. Most of the data collected and examined within this study refers to Central Australia during fieldwork undertaken there between October 2003 and March 2008.

Originally, I intended to compare the way in which two state government agencies, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW forestry department, Forests NSW, incorporated Aboriginal interests in the co-operative management of their respective estates. This was to be done via an analysis and review of agency participation in the Regional Forests Agreement (RFA) process, and their attempts to implement co-management with Aboriginal people. However, when I arrived on the far south coast of NSW in January 2000, I found that the RFA process was not only unpopular with Aboriginal people, but also with many government employees, viewed as being ‘a done deal’ between the state and Federal governments (field notes, February 2000). One positive outcome of the RFA process was the scheduling of Biamanga State Forest as a national park, and the NSW government’s addition of both Biamanga and Gulaga (Mount Dromedary) National Parks as protected areas potentially subject to joint management. I turned my attention to participant observation of the joint management process as it unfolded over the next fourteen months on the far south coast. During this time, I was also part of a paid
anthropological consultancy tasked with the goal of describing and mapping the
cultural areas of, and the descendants of, the original Aboriginal inhabitants of
Biamanga and Gulaga National Parks.

In early 2001, I was offered full time employment with the Aboriginal Areas
Protection Authority (AAPA), located in Alice Springs in the NT. I moved to Alice
Springs in June 2001. The following year (2002), a determination handed down in a
landmark native title case, *Western Australia v. Ward*, called into question the
declaration of—and by default, the continued management of—fifty national parks and
reserves in the Northern Territory. Some of these parks were able to be re-declared
immediately, but thirty-three were not. Rather than entering into a legal challenge
over this decision, the new Labor Government of Clare Martin proposed that these
areas be jointly managed by Aboriginal people and the government’s conservation
agency, the *Parks and Wildlife Service*. The NT Government entered into negotiations
with the two large Aboriginal land councils, who undertook to consult with the
Aboriginal people they represented, resulting in the eventual acceptance of the offer
by all but six of the Traditional Owner groups. The decision in *Ward*, the NT
Government’s negotiations and the consultations with Traditional Owners are
discussed in detail in later chapters, and are integral to this thesis.

From October 2003 until March 2008, I was employed by the NT Parks and Wildlife
Service in the Central Australian region. My role within the agency was as an
anthropologist, given the task of ‘facilitating joint management’. I entered the field as
both participant-observer anthropologist and as an agent of the state. This was a
dualism that I was both comfortable and uncomfortable with. On the one hand, access
to the subjects of my study, the inner workings of agency and its implementation of
the new multiple-site, simultaneous joint management initiative made for voluminous
and rich data collection and deeply-embedded ethnographic experience. On the other,
it made the ‘Otherising’ of the world I worked and lived in, and the people who were
not only my colleagues, but also my close friends and, in one case, my partner,
difficult. Not only did this require the Othering and critiquing my working self—
turning a harsh lens upon my own successes and failures— but also the successes and
otherwise of those with whom I worked. I acknowledge that I take a stance that is
both critical of the agency and sympathetic towards the ‘natives’ who are ‘just doing
their jobs'. Although it was tempting to censor parts of my analysis due to reprisal - from former colleagues, from agency executives and most especially from land council staff - I have refrained from doing so.

My own journey as a participant observer, in which I came to know the agency, its culture and staff, comprises the main research method employed in this study. Chapters 4 through 7 juxtapose my own arrival in the agency as a new employee and my gradual learning of what was expected of me and how to formulate my organisational self with data about the agency, the implementation of joint management and the interests of Aborigines, land councils and others. Equally, I came to know the agency and its staff through the many artefacts it produced: texts, documents, discussion papers, strategic plans, reporting forms, emails, meeting agenda and minutes. Textual analysis is also used extensively throughout the thesis, especially in the early chapters where the agency's origins and history are encountered largely in annual reports and an internal history written by a former director. Formal interviews and informal discussions at agency social events or during working hours were also used as research methods; formal interview questions are included in Appendix 1.

Overview of the Thesis

The first two chapters focus on the historical background to conservation in Australia and the origins of joint management in Australia and internationally. Chapter 2 defines the terms conservation and protected areas, situated within an overview of the historical development of conversation agencies in the United States, NSW, and the NT. It examines the way that conservation agencies are shaped and limited by legislation, socio-historical context, and understandings about conversation and protected areas. These factors underwrite the role and functions of contemporary conservation agencies, shaping their responses to external interests in the areas they manage with consequences for the potential of joint management undertaken by them.

Chapter 3 defines the term joint management and the related concept, co-management, considering the development of these practices within the Northern
Territory, Australia and now internationally. The chapter presents the background to the emergence of joint management arrangements in the Northern Territory and elsewhere, identifying factors which exert pressure upon conservation agencies to prioritise governance structures and management plans over the provision of on-the-ground resources and programs in the implementation of joint management.

In Chapter 4, I examine the particular structures, agents and practices of the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory (PWS) to show how the legislatively-driven and autonomous nature of PWS, combined with its unique rangercentrism, strongly influences the idea of the agency’s ‘core business’. This chapter identifies a powerful organisational narrative about the primacy of natural values and natural integrity that not only informs agency structure and practice, but also serves to constrain knowledge and action within the organisation, creating the grounds for conflict with alternative understandings about the nature of protected area management.

Chapter 5 explores the political asymmetries between and divergent understandings of joint management held by the key participant groups in respect of each other. This chapter discusses the effects of the unexpected political asymmetries between the Central Land Council and the PWS that emerged during the period leading up to the implementation of joint management. Linked to this is the notion of divergent understandings about joint management. Although all participant groups frame joint management in terms of relationships and working together, each group interprets these terms differently, creating differing expectations and understandings about the outcomes and priorities of the practice.

Chapter 6 examines the interplay of interests and understandings of the key participant groups involved in the implementation of joint management on the ground, through the development of the PWS’s joint management program and the Flexible Employment Program, an Aboriginal employment program. This chapter demonstrates that the implementation of joint management on the ground inhibits the interests of some groups whilst privileging others who may not be directly involved in face-to-face joint management. A fundamental problem that emerges in the implementation of joint management concerns the capacity of Aboriginal people to
engage in it, and difficulties faced by both land councils and conservation agencies attempting to overcome this issue.

Chapter 7 discusses joint management planning and governance and their effectiveness in realising the interests of the participant groups they purport to represent. This chapter argues that the presence of competing sets of interests within joint management inhibit the ability of even highly participatory processes in realising the interests of Aboriginal people and rangers on the ground. Although planning and governance are used to represent 'successful joint management' by higher levels of government, their resourcing and prioritisation within PWS over other joint management initiatives ensures that organisational priorities and structural asymmetries between groups are often subtly reproduced despite the best intentions of all parties involved.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, concludes the thesis. In this Chapter, the findings of the previous chapters are summarised to outline the multiple interests present in the implementation of joint management in the Northern Territory. The series of resilient, self-organising, dynamic and non-linear elements that exist within the PWS which serve to influence, in dialectic with the interests of other participant groups, the nature of joint management are also emphasised. Recommendations for future research and implications for the on-the-ground implementation of joint management are also made.
Chapter Two: A History of Protected Areas and Conservation Agencies

Increasingly, bushwalkers recognised that if they were going to pursue their recreation with the freedom they craved they needed protected bush and lots of it... Active campaigning for conservation was perceived as a necessity to preserve the bush for walking but also as a national duty on behalf of future generations (Harper, 2008: 257).

War and landscape are intrinsically linked to notions of a shared Australian identity (Haynes, 1998:163; Gill, 2000:25; Head, 2000:77). After the ANZACs, it is explorers, pioneers, squatters, farmers, pastoralists -even bushrangers- who are celebrated as national icons because of their connections to the land (Lattas, 1990: 56). Equally, land is part of the nation’s political psyche. As Harper (ibid) points out above, fighting to protect the bush is fighting to protect something uniquely Australian, a national duty equal to serving one’s country in war. Aboriginal land rights, mining, development for agriculture or pastoralism and conservation are issues of national debate. Consequently, conflicts over land and human relationships such as uranium mining in Kakadu National Park or damming the Franklin River in Tasmania invoke angry and profound emotions in Australians that have seen governments and their policies fall, towns divided and protests stir the streets.

National parks and other protected areas cannot be separated from political debates, discussions of national identity or history. National parks are deeply symbolic places embedded in the nation’s consciousness, a means of reconciling the apparent alienation that European settlers felt upon arrival in Australia with nationalist sentiments about territory, which anthropologists and other commentators have labelled as a ‘national crisis of identity’ (Lattas, 1990:54). Political struggles over land and cultural beliefs about human/environmental relationships are thus inscribed in the creation of national parks and the agencies that manage them, just as they are in struggles over Aboriginal land rights or in arguments about Australian national identity. National parks, in this sense, are contested spaces bearing both the moral
conscience of the nation and the power to represent and constitute part of what it means to be Australian.

Yet within accounts of the history of conservation and of national park agencies in Australia (i.e. Pettigrew & Lyons, 1979; Strom, 1979; Ovington, 1980) –which run parallel with many environmental struggles and the emergence of Aboriginal land rights– there is a deathly silence about the way in which both political struggles and the cultural meanings ascribed to land are reproduced in the structures and practices of conservation agencies. In a similar vein, Head (2000) argues that the pervasive narratives of colonial and ‘green’ approaches to environmental problems require an analysis of the cultural contexts that produced them. However, only two accounts, Jenkins (2000) and Adams (2004) currently exist which give any consideration to the role of history in shaping the government organisations involved in conservation and recreation management at all, despite the emergence of a vast literature discussing organisational cultures in the past thirty years and the influence of politics and history upon such institutions (e.g. Schein, 1985; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Shaffritz & Ott, 1992; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Schwartzmann, 1993).

To put this in context, imagine this: I ask a ranger how a particular park is managed. She answers: *we manage it for its values ... for the reasons it was set aside in the first place. We have programs that manage threats to these values. These are called 'projects'. We have eight projects by which we categorise everything we do on park ...*" These comments reveal much about the ways in which conservation agencies and their staff undertake the business of managing parks. There is an assertion that the landscape has ‘values’ worth protecting, there is a belief that there are unquestionable threats to these values and that human intervention through management programs is the means by which these threats can be contained or eliminated. There is a project management system that organises the work undertaken on parks into ‘projects’.

Yet how were these understandings, assertions, ways of thinking and acting arrived at? What assumptions do these ways of thinking, being and acting mask? Given the political debate and cultural beliefs around land in Australia discussed above, the way in which conservation agencies are organised, how they do their business, how they understand themselves and, most importantly, *how they approach joint management*
must be the result of dialectic with these wider discourses. To begin to understand why conservation agencies do what they do and what their interests in land are, we need to understand both the origins of protected areas and conservation agencies against the backdrop of political and cultural assumptions about conservation in Australia. Such an exploration is integral to understanding joint management in the context of this thesis.

This chapter looks at the interplay between socio-political history, cultural understandings of conservation and the contemporary structures and roles of conservation agencies. It begins with an etymological discussion of the notion of parks and protected areas then turns to an ethnographic reading of the emergence of the world’s first national parks and conservation agency in the United States. I follow this with an examination of conservation history in Australia, beginning with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, then presenting a detailed organisational history of the Northern Territory’s Parks and Wildlife Service. My argument is that the intensely political and emotive birth of conservation agencies and protected areas in Australia—particularly in the Northern Territory—is inscribed in the structures and practices of these organisations today. Conservation agencies were created by governments to protect land—and nature—for the future from mainly human threats. Yet political conflicts between governments at Commonwealth and Territory levels, between conservation and development and changing ideas about the nature of government itself have also become systemic, creating resilient practices in conservation agencies which, when encoded in legislation, gives rise to the programs undertaken by and the philosophy that pervades these organisations. These ideas comprise the underlying organisational meanings, values and understandings held by the Parks and Wildlife Service today, and which may, in turn, inform the nature of joint management undertaken by them.
Protected Areas

Protected areas account for approximately 10% of Australia's landmass. A recent Commonwealth Government report, *Directions for the National Reserve System – A Partnership Approach* (2005:14), lists fifty-three different kinds of reserves in Australia set aside for the purpose of conservation, protection or preservation of natural, historical and cultural heritage. In total, there are 7,701 protected areas in Australia that fall within these fifty-three categories (ibid: 16-17). This large number excludes both privately operated conservation reserves, such as the Gluepot Reserve in South Australia established by Birds Australia, and the nineteen Indigenous Protected Areas created to conserve biodiversity on Aboriginal lands. Responsibility for the management of the 7701 protected areas described above is the task of nine different government agencies, one in each of the States, two in the self-governing Territories and one operated by the Commonwealth Government. In using the term conservation agency within this thesis, it is these government-operated and funded organisations and their staff to which I am referring.

Over the past 130 years, a complex system of government-based conservation has evolved in Australia, and as I argue shortly, has its origins in changes within in Western culture linked to the effects of the Industrial Revolution, in particular, to urbanisation and modernity as dominant social discourses. Any discussion about the role and function of conservation agencies, however, cannot be disengaged from either the historical and intellectual contexts that created the world’s first protected areas or from the socio-historical climate in Australia occurring after European settlement. In this section then, I examine the socio-historical context that led to emergence of protected areas and conservation agencies on a worldwide basis as well as in Australia.

The etymology of the terms ‘park’ and ‘conservation’ provide a useful background against which to begin a discussion about the emergence of protected areas within contemporary Western society. The term park can be traced to a 4th Century West Germanic noun ‘parruk’, meaning ‘fence’, which entered Middle Latin around the 8th.
Century as 'parricus', meaning both ‘an enclosure’ and ‘a fence’. From Middle Latin the term migrated into Old French around the 11th Century as ‘parc’ – meaning ‘an enclosure for wild beasts of the hunt’. The first use of the term park as a public space occurs in English in 1663, and is applied to an “enclosed lot in or near a town, for public recreation”, with such spaces originating as areas reserved for the hunting of game by the nobility and opened to the public as they became engulfed within cities (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php).

Interestingly, the term’s etymology invokes the idea of a fenced space for undomesticated animals, or indeed, a fenced enclosure to keep domesticated animals in. The notion of regulating space in some way for the encompassment of ‘wild’ animals, the protection of domesticated ones, or, much later, the recreation of people appears to have been encoded within the Western psyche for more than fifteen hundred years. It may be suggested that it was a latent term whose association with both wild animals and recreation for the masses was readily yoked to emergent ideas in the late nineteenth century about the scientific study of life (biology), the preservation of the natural environment and the need for areas in which humans could recreate. However, most important in this discussion is the notion of humans regulating space in some way -either for the express purpose of non-human life forms or for human recreation- and that the language of the time was simply harnessed to serve a purpose.

In contrast to the term park, the origins of the word conservation are much more recent, but are no less symbolic given the nature of conservation agencies today. The word arises from the Latin conservare meaning “to keep, preserve”, a word that itself has its origin in the term servare – “keep watch, maintain”, and very much invokes the kind of scientific observation and management now associated with conservation agencies. The term first appears in Old French around 1400, carrying the same meaning as the Latin conservare; however the term conservation does not appear in English usage until 1922, when it takes on the linkage with environmentalism that we understand today (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php). These underlying ideas about what a park is and what conservation is have had a powerful ontological effect on the role and functions of conservation agencies, and in turn, the nature of joint
management as enacted within these organisations - an issue I return to throughout this thesis.

The Concept of National Parks: A Brief History

As this discussion indicates so far, land has been regulated and sectioned off for various purposes by humans for centuries. However, it was not until 1872 that the very first area called a national park was established. The origin of the term national park has been attributed to the American artist George Catlin, who, during a visit to the Dakotas in 1832, became concerned at the effects of westward European expansion on Native Americans, wilderness and wildlife (NPS, 2006: 1). Catlin wrote of the need for: “A nation’s Park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature’s beauty! … a beautiful and thrilling specimen ... for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages!” (Runte, 1997: 34). The ideas of Catlin and others like him, such as the novelist, James Fenimore Cooper, and transcendalists, Henry Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, spread throughout the elite and middle classes and have been credited with planting the idea of national parks, or at least, publicly-owned areas set aside for recreation and the preservation of spectacular landscapes firmly within nineteenth century American minds (ibid: 1-13).

Catlin’s idea of linking the people to the nation via its land in the form of a park preserving ‘nature’s beauty’ is an important one. This unique setting (the nation’s park) is not only for the recreation of the nation’s people, but becomes an expression of their ‘refined’ tastes; the inference here being that they are citizens as opposed to uneducated settlers or colonists still struggling against or trying farm the land (Head, 2000: 62-63; Harmon, 2003: 59). In demonstrating their aesthetic sophistication as citizens, Americans were announcing their arrival as a nation to the rest of world, in particular, to Britain and Europe, ‘holding up’ the natural beauty of their land which they only they, as citizens, have first recognised. This particular use of nature and land as territory linked synergistically with nationhood, combined the making of ‘natives’ from settler/colonist citizens has been noted previously by Olwig (1993: 308-311):
The way in which people interact culturally affects, however, the character of the place where they dwell. This in turn can lead to the development of a more permanent bond between the nature, or character, of a particular people and the nature or character of the areas in which they dwell.

Whilst I do not entirely agree with Olwig’s suggestion that it is the role of nature alone that makes ‘natives’ out of citizens or ‘nations’ out of territories – political, economic, as well as climatic, geographical and historical factors must be taken into account – I concur with her ideas about people using land to create national identities and symbols of nationhood. The idea of setting aside ‘natural’ lands as examples of what is unique and valued by a nation’s citizens as examples of their national maturity, displaying their difference in opposition to other nations and control of their own territorial lands is a valid and critical point. National parks in this sense are imbued with national pride and identity, expressing control of and familiarity with land, and become potent symbols expressing national and cultural values. Indeed, what is not preserved in national park and what is says much about national values: the first national parks were areas unsuitable for agriculture or urban settlement.

Forty years were to pass before Catlin’s call for a ‘nation’s Park’ was realised. Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872, following the recommendations of a scientific survey known as the Washburn-Doane-Langford Expedition in the Colorado area of the United States (US) during 1870. Whilst the purpose of setting aside Yellowstone National Park is on record as being “...for the benefit and enjoyment of the people ...” or in other words, recreation, which is ironic as at the time Yellowstone was remote and inaccessible to most Americans who lived on the east coast of the United States (Strom, 1979: 45; NPS, 2006: 1). As I have suggested above, the area was considered unsuitable to agricultural development because of its ruggedness and inaccessibility; furthermore, it was geologically unique with geysers, springs, canyons and waterfalls. These factors assisted Congress in making the decision to declare the area a national park (Nash, 1973:108-112).

Not long after the establishment of Yellowstone, the first national park in Australia was gazetted in 1879 and called simply ‘the National Park’, covering 7284 hectares
near Port Hacking, south of Sydney (Pettigrew & Lyons, 1979:18; Strom, 1979:46).
At the time of its establishment, the National Park was set aside in terms which echo George Catlin’s call: “... to ensure a healthy and consequently vigorous and intelligent community ... all cities, towns and villages should possess places of public recreation ...” (21/03/1879, John Lucas, MLA, quoted in Ovington, 1980:45). Although concerns about ‘land grabbing’ similar to those raised in the US had emerged in New South Wales during the nineteenth century, the discussions left on public record indicate that the need to create spaces for recreation around Australian cities (in particular Sydney) stemmed from unsanitary health conditions and overcrowding in urban areas (Ovington, 1980: ibid), rather than from any desire to preserve any remarkable natural features. These issues arise from the increasing urbanisation of Western nations at the time, associated with changes to society brought about by the Industrial Revolution (Wolf, 1990:267; Giddens, 1994: 53). For example, by the 1890s two-thirds of the Australian population lived in urban areas, and were employed in factories and offices (Glynn, 1970: 3). In Britain, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (ibid) report similar figures.

With the rise of urbanisation also came a direct and immediate change in the nature of relationships between humans and the environment. Where the biological needs of the majority of Europeans were once sourced directly through close relationships with the immediate environment, from the nineteenth century onwards, mass urbanisation saw a shift to reliance on markets and trade to meet biological needs creating a separation from the natural environment. Calls for improvements in the lives of city dwellers living in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions provided the impetus for a new kind of human/environmental relationship (Ovington, ibid). The immediate relationship between humans and the environment present within early national parks was based upon psycho-social needs rather than biological ones. The idea that a landscape can nourish, replenish and rejuvenate humans psychologically and in terms of biological well-being represents a form of human/environmental relationship not fully realised or recognised in Western societies prior to this time.

However, calls for public spaces dedicated to recreation and human well-being were not the only factors contributing to the emergence of national parks, and in turn, the establishment of conservation agencies. At the turn of the century came the
emergence of a radical new idea, a conservation ethic whose aim was to protect non-human species for their own sake. When combined with the rise of the natural sciences as a powerful global discourse, Australia's push for nationhood and new forms of political activism, national parks and conservation became sites where national identity was formulated, expressed and contested, and cultural values were revealed.

The Emergence of Conservation Agencies in Australia

A strong conservation ethic is not immediately apparent in the origins of Australian national parks, even though it is tied closely with the history of Australia's first national park, the National Park (renamed the Royal National Park in 1955) and the origins of the NSW NPWS. The National Park was created under Section 5 of the Crown Lands Alienation Act, 1861, which permitted the reservation of lands for public recreation (Jenkins, 2000: 2). For the first seventy years of its existence, management of the National Park (as with most early national parks in Australia) was directed by its Board of Trustees rather than what we would now call a conservation agency. In keeping with the ideas of its political founders, the park was initially managed through an anthropocentric lens: the park was set aside to provide for human recreation and future human needs, such as lumber. During the park's first ten years of existence, the Board of Trustees oversaw the construction of roads, picnic grounds, zoological enclosures, walking trails, shelters, lawns and public baths, many of which remain in place today. The Board also formulated plans for ornamental gardens, a racecourse, holiday cottages, and at one stage permitted a sawmill to operate within the park (Jenkins, 2000:2). For much of this time, however, the park was poorly funded and Board members frequently contributed their own funds to complete major infrastructure projects (Pettigrew & Lyons, 1979:21).

Following the establishment of the National Park, other parks swiftly followed. By the beginning of the twentieth century, national parks had been established in New South Wales, Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia, and were largely controlled by boards or trustees. At the same time in the United States, fourteen national parks and twenty-one national monuments had also been created. By 1916, all national
parks and monuments in the United States were managed by a dedicated National Parks Service (NPS, 2006:2). However, it was 1967 before Australia’s first specifically dedicated government conservation agency, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), was established (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:32).

Given the slow but steady increase in the number of protected areas in Australia throughout the twentieth century, the immediate question that arises is why did more than half a century pass before any Australian state or territory possess a dedicated government-operated and funded agency to manage its protected areas? The answer to this question lies in the story of the nation’s first conservation agency, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), itself inseparable from the history of the Royal National Park, the rise of a public conservation ethic, and the administration of land in colonial New South Wales.

In turning to the NPWS here, my purpose is twofold. First, I have chosen to present a brief account of the establishment of the NPWS prior to a more detailed examination of the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service, as the NSW agency (and its parent Act) has become the model upon which all other states and territories have created their own conservation agencies (Jenkins, 2000:6). When one turns to the national parks 'canon' in Australia, and indeed, to the textbooks used by those studying protected area management in tertiary institutions, the history of the NPWS is the story that is told over and over again without exception (i.e. Pettigrew & Lyons, 1979; Ovington, 1980; Worboys, Lockwood, De Lacy, 2001). Just as the stories of explorers, pioneers, ANZACs and bushrangers are the founding myths of the nation, the story of the NPWS may be seen as the founding myth of conservation agencies in Australia.

Secondly, I wish to draw attention to the way in which 'history' is recorded about governments and conservation agencies in this canon, characterised by largely anonymous and simplified linear accounts of cause-and-effect events, associated with either the pioneering efforts of individuals or revisionist passages of legislation through the apparatus of government (Lea, 2002: 82, 94). These linear but pervasive simplifications of top-down government history contrast starkly with the ‘messiness’
of everyday reality encountered in human life, even by those working within ‘orderly’ government bureaucracies. Equally, analysis of these accounts reveal how socio-political discourses, such as the linking of national parks to nation building or the rise of a conservation ethic, have come to shape conservation agencies in Australia. In this historical retelling then, are the systemic discourses which have shaped protected area management in contemporary Australia.

The NPWS: A Model for All

...each Colonial capital had to have its National Park for the pleasure of the people ... (Ovington, 1980:45).

At the end of the nineteenth century, European Australians were being drawn into new relationships with the natural environment based upon aesthetic enjoyment, scientific understanding, and as Federation drew closer, via need to establish a unique national identity different to that of Britain. Naturalists’ societies, nature clubs and flora societies flourished at this time. Changes in employment and the advent of mass recreation saw the establishment of cycling clubs, bushwalking and flower picking as activities enjoyed by many, along with the popularity of family picnics in bushland settings (Harper, 2008: 120). In art and literature, the Australian landscape came into its own:

A national spirit was beginning to break through the colonial cocoon. A way of life hitherto regarded as so strange that it could only be depicted for its exotic interest was now seen as a manifestation of sturdy independence (Gleeson, 1979:11).

Many authors have noted the way in which sentiments about the Australian landscape and its uniqueness were harnessed via art and literature from the 1890s onwards to create a cultural ‘myth’ that gave white settlers a sense of national identity and aided in the goal of gaining this ‘sturdy’ independence from Britain (e.g. Hamilton, 1990; Haynes, 1998; Head, 2000; Gill, 2000). In particular, Harper (2008:130) notes the way in which Australia was given a ‘natural’ history within bushwalking literature as
opposed to the cultural history found in similar European travel or walking literature at the time, linking Australian identity not only with the landscape, but with the new field of natural science.

The creation of a national identity centred on the Australian landscape and George Catlin’s calls for the establishment of a ‘nation’s park’ expressing similar sentiments about American nationhood resonate strongly. The swift creation of the Royal National Park –second in the world- was already a source of colonial pride; little wonder that calls to establish more national parks as evidence that Australia was a modern nation state were taken up so quickly within other states. National parks can be viewed as uniquely modernist phenomena, emerging with many other new cultural forms, such as large bureaucracies and nation states during the 19th century. Around this time, the term modern was associated with improvement and efficiency, and the idea of linear evolutionary paths which placed Western civilisation at the pinnacle because of its individual emancipation and techno-rational mastery (Kahn, 2001:656-657). To possess a national park was to have mastery over one’s national territory and to show the wisdom and foresight to set aside these areas for public recreation and renewal, was surely to be a modern nation.

Indeed, as Australia became a nation in its own right, two parallel movements emerged that shaped the way in which the Royal National Park and eventually, conservation agencies, were managed: one –fauna preservation societies- was linked to a widespread public interest in natural science; the other –bushwalking clubs- was an offshoot of mass recreation. It was in this fertile space that a popular ethic concerned with the conservation of non-human species for their own sake first grew within the nation’s psyche (Strom, 1979: 47, 50; Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001: 30).

**Fauna Preservation and Bushwalking: 1901-1948**

Fauna preservation societies emerge at the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century in Australia, partly as responses to public interest in Australian flora and fauna aroused by calls for Federation, and also out of interest in
outdoor recreation and a growing fascination with natural science. Some of the most famous, such as *The Gould League* are still in existence today; others have vanished or changed names. The most influential of the fauna protection societies at the beginning of the twentieth century was the *Wild Life Preservation Society* (WPS), created in 1909 by David Stead, a prominent marine biologist.

The WPS was inherently political from the start, arising out of Stead’s anger at the actions of the National Park’s Trustees in seeking to establish sawmills and housing subdivisions within the National Park. Stead formed the WPS with the aims of drafting legislation that would ultimately protect all native flora and fauna and to lobby for the reservation of more land dedicated to the preservation of wildlife. The WPS focussed its activities on the two national parks ringing Sydney: National Park and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park on the city’s northern outskirts. The Society’s members felt that national parks provided the only realistic sites where flora and fauna could be most readily preserved and protected from human exploitation and development (Pettigrew & Lyons, 1979: 26).

By 1911, the WPS had drafted a bill to replace the existing *Birds Protection Act*, 1893, and the *Native Animals Protection Act*, 1903, aiming to protect all native mammals and birds, excluding only ‘... a few known to be noxious...’(Strom, 1979:52). Although the WPS received support from a number of politicians, the *Birds and Animals Protection Act*, 1918, did not become law until January 1919, albeit in a substantially altered form. Dismayed at the changes to their bill, the Society’s members began to work immediately on having the amendments reversed. The WPS were successful in having the Bill amended to reflect their draft bill, with changes to the legislation passed in 1930. It was 1948, however, before the Bill was restored in its entirety under a new Act, the *Fauna Protection Act* (Strom, 1979: 52; Jenkins, 2000:5). Later in this section, I return to the *Fauna Protection Act*.

Whilst the WPS and its members continued to lobby for the reservation of land for the protection and preservation of flora and fauna, another parallel social movement was emerging, also devoted to the idea of preserving ‘wild’ land. The growth of walking as a major recreational activity in the late nineteenth century soon bred a newer, more adventurous kind of walker, *the bushwalker*, who sought to rugged landscapes away
from cities and towns, keen to test their own endurance and equipment (Dunphy, 1979: 55; Jenkins, 2000:5; and especially Harper, 2008, for a full history of bushwalking). In 1914, Miles Dunphy, often called the father of Australian conservation, formed the Mountain Trails Club along with a few friends (Dunphy, ibid). The club, whilst mainly focussed on bushwalking and the development of lightweight equipment for bushwalking, also promoted the protection of bushland and wildlife.

By the mid-1920s, Dunphy and other members of the Mountain Trails Club were concerned about the destruction of the natural environment and the rapid growth of urban centres. Dunphy in particular had been influenced by the creation of the US National Parks Service in 1916, and had collected an extensive amount of literature on this organisation (Strom, 1979: 52). It was Dunphy’s vision that a similar organisation would eventually oversee the management of Sydney’s national parks, replacing the inefficient and inexperienced national park Trusts. Along with other members of the Mountain Trails Club, Dunphy recognised the need to create a broader group that could focus on securing land for conservation for future generations. In 1932 such a group became a reality. The National Parks and Primitive Areas Council (NPPAC) was formed by Dunphy and others from the Mountain Trails Club and to begin with, primarily drew its members from a number of other bushwalking clubs around Sydney (Dunphy, 1979: 56).

The NPPAC quickly drafted a plan outlining twenty-four ‘conservation projects’. Each project was focussed on a particular area of bushland around the greater Sydney area and often involved protests, intense lobbying, land purchases, mapping and land management planning (Dunphy, 1979: 56-64). Between 1932 and 1962, the NPPAC was successful in creating fourteen new national parks (including the Blue Mountains and Kosciuzsko National Parks). Dunphy’s vision for a national parks service similar to that of the United States was also promoted during this time; however, this campaign was not successful. It took until the 1950s, along with the additional efforts of a science-based bushwalking organisation, the Caloola Club, before the NSW government began to entertain the idea of a national parks service (Strom, 1979:68).
Towards a National Parks Service: 1949-1967

In 1949, the Fauna Protection Panel was established under the *Fauna Protection Act 1948*. The Panel comprised thirteen members, three nominated by bushwalking and conservation bodies (such as the Wild Life Preservation Society, discussed earlier), one nominated by Sydney University and the agricultural industry respectively, and seven government nominated appointees. Under the *Fauna Protection Act 1948* the Panel’s objectives were to find areas of Crown Land that could be set aside as fauna reserves and to educate and inform the public about the protection of fauna in NSW. Allen Strom (nominated by the WPS to sit on the Panel) records that the Panel was chronically under-funded, had only two fulltime staff (the Chairman and his secretary), and met with staunch refusal from the Department of Lands to make any Crown Land available for reservation (Strom, 1979:68).

For the purpose of this study, one of the most important early achievements of the Fauna Protection Panel was the recognition that “...the procedure for selection of faunal reserves should be to secure large areas as diverse in natural systems as possible, and that the reserves in total, should include examples of all natural systems in New South Wales...” (Strom, ibid). It is here, underwritten by science and later by rational management, that setting aside and preserving land with certain ‘values’ —as in ‘natural systems’— is first presented as a goal of establishing reserves in Australia. The other important outcome of this meeting was the calling of a conference to discuss issues relating to conservation in general. At the conference it was decided to create a new organisation, the NSW Nature Conservation Council (NCC), which would meet annually. One of the first issues discussed by the NCC was the creation of a US-style national parks service. At the same time, the Caloola Club (of which Allen Strom was also an active member) published its expectations for a national parks Act:

1. A definition of the term ‘National Park’ to answer the problems of security, purpose, use and misuse.
2. The establishment of a National Parks Authority representing all interests in national parks and administrating all national parks throughout the State. There should be a head or Director of National Parks.

3. The provision of machinery to extend the national parks system and for the local surveillance of individual parks through National Parks Boards.

4. The provision of a regular flow of finance for the work the foregoing envisages (Strom, 1979:68).

The NCC took up the Caloola Club’s call and established a sub-committee to draft a National Parks Bill and submit it to parliament. Fuelled by this action, a number of bushwalking clubs then formed the National Parks Association in 1957, with the main objective of having a National Parks Bill passed. The draft of the Bill prepared by the NCC was used by the National Parks Association to pressure the NSW government to consider such an Act. The government responded, establishing a Committee of Enquiry whose terms of reference included the instructions to draft legislation very similar to that proposed by the NPA. Unfortunately, the process stalled when the Labor government lost office in 1965. The NPA and NCC had to begin the process of lobbying the new Liberal government over again (Strom, 1979:69).

The new government responded to increasing public pressures, accompanied by loud protests from conservation groups over the mismanagement of national parks by the Department of Lands and Boards of Trustees, and acted to draft a National Parks and Wildlife Bill in 1966 (Strom, 1979: 73-74; Jenkins, 2000: 6). The Bill was introduced into parliament in July 1967 and passed on first reading. The National Parks and Wildlife Act (NPWA) came into effect on 1 October 1967, with the National Parks and Wildlife Service established on the same day. The NPWS was overseen by a Director and was responsible to the Minister for lands, but was ultimately an independent authority with its own funding and staff. Over the next twenty years, the NPWS grew to become the main instrument for conservation in NSW. More importantly for the purpose of this thesis, the NPW Act was not only the first of its kind in the world combining both the management of national parks and wildlife, but as discussed earlier, became the model upon which all other Australian conservation agencies were based (Jenkins, 2000:6).
Before turning to the development of conservation in the Northern Territory, there are a number of recurring themes in this discussion about the emergence of national parks and the NSW NPWS which may shape the nature of contemporary conservation agencies in Australia:

1. National parks are places which simultaneously ‘hold’ part of the essence of national identity in the United State and Australia and represent nationhood, underwritten by the notion that a modern nation state must have an ability to exercise control over its territory.

2. The rise of the natural sciences and mass outdoor recreation saw the creation of powerful beliefs about the need to protect natural places and non-human species from human threats. Conflicts between the early conservation movement and other forms of human development are a constant feature in this history.

3. The way to resolve conflict was through political activism and the passage of legislation.

4. Legislation resulted in the creation of new forms of government bureaucracy: publicly funded conservation agencies that managed both land and wildlife.

I will return to these points and their influence on contemporary conservation agencies in the final sections of this chapter. Here, I foreshadow a link between the first and last points above: national parks are publicly funded lands bearing part of the weight of mythic national identity, and comprise an essential part of what is uniquely Australian and constitutive of the nation of Australia. In other words, they are places of the people, for the people, meaning all of the nation’s people. As such they are likely to evoke strong emotions, further political action and conflict if attempts are made to remove them from the ‘public’ hands of the nation, or in this case, from government management and control.

The Northern Territory: A Brief Administrative History

Despite its relatively brief European history, the establishment of a conservation agency in the Northern Territory has been no less complex or context-contingent than those in the United States and NSW. Indeed, the situation in the Northern Territory is
more complex in the light of the Territory’s political and legal status, the passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* in 1976, and the fraught relationship between the conservation agency and other sections of the Northern Territory bureaucracy. Before turning to the historical development of the government conservation agency in the Northern Territory, it is necessary to briefly discuss the Territory’s political status and administration. These have been instrumental in shaping the nature of conservation agency governance in the Territory.

From the period of the first permanent European settlement in 1869 until 1911, the Northern Territory was part of and administered by South Australia. However, problems with developing the Territory due to its isolation, climate, lack of suitable land for many forms of European agriculture, along with a shortage of labour and capital saw the Territory become a financial burden on South Australia (Atherton, 1991:1-3; Donovan, 1984:14). Following a Royal Commission in 1895, responsibility for the administration of the Territory was transferred to the Commonwealth government in 1911 with passage of *The Northern Territory Acceptance Act 1910* (Donovan, 1984: 18; Summers 2001, 15).

The Commonwealth government created the conditions for governance of the Territory with the *Northern Territory (Administration) Act 1910*. Under this Act, the Commonwealth appointed an Administrator for the Territory, responsible to the Minister for External Affairs. Although the Territory Administrator could create Ordinances which would act as laws, the Act required that these pass through both Houses of Federal Parliament before coming into force. This is in accordance with Section 122 of the Australian Constitution, which states that the Commonwealth government is permitted to make laws for any Australian territory (Summers, 2001: 15). The office of Administrator as the sole governing authority remained in place until 1947, when amendments to the *Northern Territory (Administration) Act* created the Northern Territory Legislative Council. The Legislative Council comprised seven

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5 It should be noted that there were four successive attempts to settle Northern Australia between 1824 and 1868. Three attempts were made by the British government at Fort Dundas, Raffles Bay and Port Essington, and one by the colony of South Australia at Escape Cliffs (Lockwood, 1968: 1).
members appointed by the Governor General, six publicly elected members, with the Administrator as President of the Council (Donovan, 1984:165-166). In 1973, the Legislative Council was replaced by a fully elected Legislative Assembly comprising nineteen members.

With the passage of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978, the Northern Territory achieved self government. This Act conferred upon the Territory the legal power to enact its own laws, and in effect, acts as the Territory's constitution. Under this Act, the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly acquired most state-type functions, and has the power to create legislation for all matters pertaining to government except on issues relating to Aboriginal land, most matters concerning industrial relations, uranium mining and -most importantly for the purpose of this study- on national parks (http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/parliament/nt.shtml).

The Northern Territory Reserves Board: 1955-1977

"The Northern Territory is the only part of Australia in which provision has never been made for the declaration, control and development of area which for various reasons could be protected. I refer to areas which contain either historical objects, monuments, or scenic attractions which should be preserved for the benefit of the general public..." (Barclay, 1955, quoted in Hare, 1982:155).

Despite its short administrative history, the Northern Territory's first reserve, the Cobourg Peninsula Flora and Fauna Reserve located 250 km northeast of Darwin, was established in 1924, fifty-five years after the first permanent European settlement had taken place and only thirteen years after Commonwealth government administration had commenced (Foster, 1997:2). The Cobourg Peninsula Flora and Fauna Reserve was created under the Commonwealth Crown Lands Ordinance 1912 (later replaced by the Crown Lands Ordinance 1931). Until the inception of the Northern Territory Reserves Board in 1956, was administered by the Director of Lands (Hare, 1982: xi). By 1955, when the National Parks and Gardens Ordinance was introduced into the Northern Territory Legislative Council, there were only three
reserves in the Northern Territory: Berry Springs Recreation Reserve, Cobourg Peninsula Flora and Fauna Reserve, and Howard Springs Recreation Reserve (Hare, 1982:413-453).

The *National Parks and Gardens Ordinance* Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council by the Director of Lands, H.C. Barclay in March 1955. The intention of the Bill was to create a local authority empowered to reserve land with historical, scenic, recreational, Aboriginal, geological, biological or tourism value (Barclay, 1955, in Hare, 1982:155). The Bill proposed that this authority would comprise a board of five members with additional powers to: employ labour, control development, decide the nature of the activities that could take place on reserves, and to create By-Laws to ensure protection of the reserves and their values. The Bill also proposed that the board be provided with sufficient funds to carry out its activities each year and that it was independent of any other government department (Barclay, 1955, in Hare, 1982: 160-164).

The Bill was passed on first reading and the Northern Territory Reserves Board (NTRB) was established. From the outset, attempts were made to ensure that Board members came not just from Darwin, but from the Territory’s regional centres as well: Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek. To further appease comments made within the Northern Territory Legislative Council that the NTRB would only serve the interests of Darwin’s populace, the Board established its office in Alice Springs. The membership of the Board, its Alice Springs headquarters, and indeed, the Board itself, remained constant until its replacement in 1977 (Hare, 1982: 15, 177-178).

Early on in its existence, the NTRB encountered difficulties in carrying out its functions under the *National Parks and Gardens Ordinance 1955*. Many of these difficulties reflect those encountered in NSW: a lack of funding (Pettigrew & Lyons, 6 This was to offset the effect of what is now called the ‘Berrimah Line’, a perceived division between Darwin and the rest of the Northern Territory. In popular Territory discourse, the Berrimah Line (named after an outer suburb of Darwin) is the place where government spending, concern, and responsibility are deemed to finish. The ‘Berrimah Line’ is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.}
1979: 21; Strom, 1979: 58), resistance to the Board’s independence from other
government departments, and lack of staff7 (Strom, *ibid*). During the first three years
of its existence, the NTRB encountered difficulties with finance as Northern Territory
Treasury officials refused to hand over money to the Board due to concerns regarding
its accountability and reporting requirements as an independent authority.
Furthermore, the Attorney-General advised the Territory Administrator that under the
*National Parks and Gardens Ordinance 1955* he was unsure as to whether the NTRB
was legally authorised to receive the monies paid to it (Hare, 1982:45-46).

Despite these matters, at its first meeting in 1956 the NTRB nominated twenty-one
areas for reservation and sought the funding to acquire some of these areas. As with
issues of finance, the NTRB’s position was frustrated by the instrument that created it,
the *National Parks and Gardens Ordinance 1955* along with the conditions of land
ownership placed upon Australian territories by Commonwealth law. Under the
*Crown Lands Ordinance 1931*, the Northern Territory did not ‘own’ its lands but
leased them from the Commonwealth. Advice from the Attorney-General cast doubts
as to whether the NTRB was a legal entity able to lease and manage lands from the
Commonwealth (Hare, 1982: 3, 71-72). This issue, in concert with the difficulties of
securing annual finance, saw the NTRB lobby to have the *National Parks and
Gardens Ordinance 1955* amended. This was done in 1959, clearing the way for the
NTRB to be given an annual budget allocation from Treasury, and ensuring that it was
legally able to lease and manage its lands (Hare, 1982:3).

Although legal certainty and financial security for the NTRB enabled it to begin
acquiring and managing some of the areas it had nominated as reserves, its activities
were again frustrated by government bureaucracy. Difficulties in having land
nominated as reserve surveyed, the remoteness of some areas, and delays with
gazetting the lands as reserves continued until the early 1970s (Hare, 1982:72-75).
Ten years were to elapse before each of the original twenty-one areas nominated as
reserves were surveyed and gazetted as reserves. Likewise, frustrations with finance
continued. As the reserve estate grew, the operational costs of managing it continually

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7 The problems of hiring and retaining staff in the Northern Territory are ongoing issues. I
return to this matter in detail in Chapter 4.
outstripped revenue raised from entry fees (in 1967 entry fees to Ayers Rock were ten cents) and leases to concessions (private enterprise operations within reserves), resulting in larger requests for budget funding. Hare (1982:47) comments on the difficulties of securing funds for the NTRB:

"The long line of communication from the Board through Darwin to Canberra posed problems and there is little doubt that the amounts granted were dependent to a degree on the whim of the Assistant Administrator handling the overall budget for the Northern Territory.

There was never really any way of finding out where cuts were recommended and an appeal to the Administrator or Minister resulted in the correspondence being referred back to the officer responsible in the first place. Truly Caesar unto Caesar!"

Initially, the NTRB's staff comprised the Board and several part-time clerical officers, but as the number of reserves grew, field staff were needed. Staff responsible for the on-the-ground management of reserves were originally called 'curators'. The first curator employed by the NTRB was Bill Hamey at Ayers Rock Reserve in 1958. Education standards were not specified for curators, or indeed, for rangers for many years (this had, and continues to have, a significant impact on organisational culture and practice - a matter I discuss in detail in Chapter 4). Field staff were employed for their abilities as 'handymen', in particular, building and carpentry skills rather than for any interest in geology, flora or fauna (Hare, 1982: 62-65).

The period 1968-1972 marked an increasing awareness by the Board of the need to 'professionalise' ranger staff. This occurred in parallel with developments in NSW (discussed in previous sections) and a growing number of visitors to the Territory's parks and reserves. From 1968 onwards, curators and rangers from the Northern Territory were sent to 'ranger school' in NSW, or attended training run by interstate conservation agency staff. In 1972, the NTRB changed the designation of its field staff from 'curator' to 'ranger' in line with other State-run conservation agencies (although it did retain a number of staff as 'labourers') (Hare, 1982:60). From the mid-1970s onwards, a growing emphasis upon education and interpretation in parks
saw the NTRB change the selection criteria for its ranger staff shift away from building skills towards educational and interpretive skills, thus permitting the employment of female staff and Aboriginal staff (Hare, 1982: 65).

As staff and reserve numbers grew, the NTRB’s organisational structure was modified. Due to the size of the Northern Territory and the dramatic variations in climate and ecology, the NTRB was regionalised. Staff were overseen by a Field Supervisor in the north (based in Darwin) and another in the south (based in Alice Springs), with the small town of Elliot (200 km north of Tennant Creek) marking the division between north and south (Hare, 1982:59). Regionalisation remains an important part of the organisation’s culture and structure today. During the 1970s, the move to professionalise the organisation saw a number of new ‘specialist’ staff employed. The first ‘planner’ was appointed in 1972, along with several draftsmen. Scientific staff, however, were employed only as consultants due to the failure of funding approval from the Minister, which Hare (1982:66) describes as being “... for reasons that can only be described as fatuous.” Unfortunately, Mr Hare was too polite to reveal the exact nature of the Minister’s excuses.

The final years of the NTRB are marked by issues originating within, but essentially, being imposed from without: the passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (ALR(NT)A), the Commonwealth National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975, and the move towards self-government for the Northern Territory. In Chapter 3, I discuss the ALR(NT)A and its relationship to joint management in detail. Here, it is suffice to say that under the ALR(NT)A certain national parks and reserves set aside as ‘unalienated’ Crown Land were potentially subject to claim by Aboriginal people. Although Hare (1982:79) suggests that this inclusion is “obviously anomalous” and was not the intention of the ALR(NT)A, history suggests that the Commonwealth government of the time was determined to enact both land rights legislation and establish a role for itself in conservation in the Northern Territory; albeit, one which was intimately aware of the significance of

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8 There are currently three regions in the PWS, based upon distinctive variations in climate and geology: North, Katherine and South. By default, Elliot remains the ‘line in the sand’ between the tropical north and the arid south.
approaching self-government in the Territory and the need to act swiftly (Hare, 1982: 79-81; Foster, 1991:6).

Although the passing of the ALR(NT)A created some legal uncertainty for the management of parks and reserves in the Territory, it was the passage of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 (NPWC) prior to this that threatened to wrest from the NTRB and its staff the authority to manage its lands and carry out its duties (Hare, 1982: 83). The purpose of the NPWC was to establish a Commonwealth authority responsible for conservation in Australian territories and to administer international conservation agreements signed by the Federal government. In particular, this agency was to facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal people in conservation in Kakadu and Ayers Rock-Mt Olga National Parks (Gare, in Worboys et.al., 2001:35-36). The NTRB lobbied against the removal of its authority to manage the Northern Territory’s parks and reserves —in other words, its right to exist-successfully. However, Commonwealth control and management of Kakadu and Ayers Rock-Mt Olga (Uluru-Kata Tjuta) National Parks was achieved through reservation of these lands from Territory control during the transition to self-government (Hare, 1982: 81-81; Gare, ibid).

The NTRB’s efforts in lobbying to retain the Territory’s control of its reserves resulted in legal responsibility for conservation, national parks and reserves being one of the first handed over to the Northern Territory, just prior to self-government. In November 1977, the NTRB was dissolved and its functions transferred to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, along with all of the NTRB’s staff.

On 1 January 1978, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1978 came into effect, seven months before the Territory officially became self-governing (Wright, 1979:59). Whilst the NTRB ceased to be in November 1977, under the new legislation a similar executive authority, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, comprising eight members, was established. Today, the PWS continues to be overseen by an executive, the Parks and Wildlife Commission, now ironically comprising only one member — the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts.
The Conservation Commission Years: 1978-1994

From 1 January 1978, forty-five reserves in the Northern Territory were managed by the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Commission. In July 1978, Forestry, Land Conservation and Environment units were added to the Commission after the move to Territory self-government created the need for a restructure. The expanded role and functions of the organisation prompted the Chief Minister at the time, Paul Everingham, to amend the TPWC Act to incorporate forestry, land and soil conservation and environmental protection. A Bill, the Conservation Commission Act 1980, was introduced to the Legislative Assembly to create a new organisation reflecting these changes: the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory (CCNT) (Wright, 1979:59-60).

The CCNT came into being on 28 March 1980. Under amendments to the TPWC Act, the main functions of the new Commission were to:

- Promote the conservation and protection of the natural environment
- Establish and manage parks, reserves and sanctuaries
- Undertake and assist in education concerned with, and research into matters relating to the environment
- Assist in soil conservation
- Assist in the development of environmental impact studies
- Monitor and assist in the management of the impact of development on the environment
- Cooperate and assist any person (including the owners of Aboriginal land), organisation or government authority in matters relating to the environment
- Carry out other such functions conferred to it by the TPWC Act (CCNT, 1980:6)

This new and much larger organisation was overseen by a Director and a new body, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, comprising eight members
appointed by the Minister. The Commission became responsible for administering several Acts in addition to the TWPC: the Conservation Commission Act 1980, the Forestry Act and the Soil and Land Utilization Act. The Commission was divided into six units reflecting its newly acquired functions: Environment, Forestry, Land Conservation, Parks and Wildlife and the Resources Planning Unit. In 1981, responsibility for the Bushfires Council of the NT and the Feral Animals Committee were also transferred to the Commission (CCNT, 1981:3). The organisation’s head office remained in Alice Springs, whilst the Deputy Director was situated in Darwin, and a ‘sub-regional’ office was established in Katherine. At the time, 392 were staff employed across all units (CCNT, 1980:10-12).

Much of the period from 1980-1986 was characterised by organisational growth, socio-political change, a deliberate policy of acquiring new reserves and the push to professionalise and establish a ‘world class’ conservation agency. Annual reports during this time reflect these trends, with significant space given to discussions about the gazetting of major new reserves such as Gregory National Park, Keep River National Park and the George Gill Range (later to become Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park):

“Proposals for the establishment of a number of new parks and reserves are well advanced. The aim is to achieve conservation of representative portions of distinctive Territory environments, to provide recreation facilities for the growing population and to establish an expanding base for the tourist industry (CCNT, 1983:iv).”

The new organisation was perceived positively by its staff as “…an attempt to be an integrated conservation agency” that was “…vibrant and effective” to work for. Although leadership of the organisation changed often, and former CCNT staff keenly relate that the organisation’s leaders had “…their hearts in the right places but had no experience in conservation.” The organisation enjoyed high morale, energy and

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9 The Resources Planning Unit comprised the following sections: resource survey and inventory; management planning; support services; interpretation; printing and publications; the mysteriously named projects section; drafting; and design and survey (CCNT, 1980: 26).
enthusiasm. A large number of reports, surveys and publications were produced by CCNT staff during this period, laying the scientific and cultural foundations for more effective conservation in the Territory (CCNT, 1980:26). Being able to exchange information and ideas with other units (the soil conservation unit was especially revered by former CCNT staff) was seen as highly valuable, and something missing in later years: “...you got to mix with a lot of different people and learned a lot from them.” (S.Traynor, personal communication).

Whilst organisational morale and output was high, perception of the agency’s functions within wider government was at times misunderstood or resented. In comments that reflect Tom Hare’s story of the NTRB’s ongoing battle with the Territory bureaucracy, the 1983 CCNT Annual Report (pg. iv) states:

There still appears to be misunderstanding of the role of the Commission both at industry and departmental level, accompanied by evidence of some passive opposition to policies and programs. Greater efforts will be needed in the future to bring about understanding and cooperation, so that conservation can work more positively for Territorians.

Interviews with long term PWS staff suggest that much of this resentment arose from Country Liberal Party (CLP) constituents – the CLP held power in the NT from 1978 until 2001 – who viewed the CCNT’s conservation agenda as anti-development and “…a fly in the ointment” (S.Traynor, personal communication). Again, this reflects tensions between long term political desires for development of the Territory and a growing economic reliance on tourism derived from park and reserve visitation (Hare, 1982:45-46).

Another long-standing tension in the Northern Territory – that of Canberra-based political control – was played out directly within the CCNT: the Commonwealth management of Territory national parks. Whilst open antipathy towards the Commonwealth government’s management of Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu National Parks, and the effects of the ALRA is tempered within the CCNT’s annual reports, elsewhere the CLP government and many Territorians were less than guarded with their critique. Given the growing importance of tourism to the Northern Territory’s
economy, the iconic significance of these two reserves and the Commonwealth government’s removal of their management from the NT administration in 1975, murmurings of disquiet (many Territory residents of the time would say utter disgust) can be carefully read between the lines:

“These two national parks (Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu), generally regarded as the most significant in the NT, are declared under Commonwealth legislation. The Commission handles all day-to-day management at Uluru, and has 13 staff positions seconded to Kakadu under ANPWS supervision ... (CCNT, 1981:13-14).”

Whilst the Commonwealth conservation agency, ANPWS, administered Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu National Parks, the CCNT was responsible for the day-to-day management of both reserves. At Uluru, all staff were CCNT employees; at Kakadu, supervisory staff were employed by ANPWS, whilst other staff were seconded from CCNT. The attitude towards both parks within the organisation was overwhelmingly negative:

“... from the CCNT’s perspective it (Uluru) was the bottom of the heap. It seemed to be the place where people who erred within the eyes of the Commission were sent, along with new ranger recruits. It was a very disorganised place to work, but I guess the mentality was: Why invest in it when it won’t be the NT’s? This meant that morale there was very low ... not only was there uncertainty over the land tenure and what the Commonwealth government were going to do, but there was uncertainty in the day-to-day management of the place. There was no planning ... no organisation at all” (interview informant).

When the hand back of title to the Traditional Owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park occurred in October 1985, CCNT staff were told they could not attend the ceremony. Organisational memories of the event are marred with mixtures of resentment and shame:
"...the CLP ran a shameful campaign based on a racist agenda. Someone organised a plane to fly over Uluru whilst the ceremony was on, trailing a banner that read: Ayers Rock for all Australians. I’m not sure whether it was Pete Severin (a nearby pastoralist) or Ian Tuxworth (a CLP politician) who sponsored the plane ... but I do remember being embarrassed. People in other states would see it on the ABC news and just think we (NT residents) were all a bunch of rednecks." (interview informant).

In May 1986, day-to-day management of Uluru was ceded to the ANPWS; all CCNT staff were removed from the park. However, the CCNT maintained an office at nearby Yulara (a resort town established some 15 km from Uluru) for some years, presenting visitor walks and talks around the resort and staffing a visitor's centre (CCNT, 1986:44). Needless to say this office was seen as something of a joke by CCNT staff; a political statement of ill will rather than any real attempt at park or conservation management.

The period 1986-1995 is marked by organisational reforms along with changes in the management style and structure of the CCNT. These reflect worldwide reforms in public sector management, the move towards smaller government and market-based service provision – something I return to shortly. The first sign of these changes comes with the adoption of the organisation’s first Strategic Plan, intended to: “direct the administration of the Commission’s functions into the future” (CCNT, 1986:15).

For the agency, this meant a dissolving of work units such as ‘Parks and Wildlife’ and ‘Land Conservation’ and the establishment of five administrative regions, each overseen by a Regional Manager. Day-to-day tasks across all former units were designated into 76 discrete projects, with the resources needing to be identified and responsibility assigned to a project manager (CCNT, ibid).

For staff on the ground, the initial changes to the organisation’s operations meant little more than a “... flatter reporting structure and devolution of authority to districts, along with more forward planning” (interview informant). However, after several years, recurring budget cuts resulted in staff attrition and the slowing of major land
acquisitions (CCNT, 1989:4). During this time, the organisation’s head office moved from Alice Springs to Darwin.

Despite budgetary restraints and moves towards cost-efficient, smaller government, the CCNT encouraged its staff to gain professional training through scholarships, traineeships and subsidised study schemes. This is especially apparent in a push to recruit tertiary-qualified rangers from interstate and encourage existing staff to take up tertiary study (CCNT, 1988:53). Whilst the justification given to staff by the Commission was that tertiary study would increase their career prospects, the move towards higher education reflects the overall trend towards presenting a more ‘professional’ image to the public. This drive went in tandem with a dramatic increase in tourist visitation to Central Australia following the sealing of the Stuart Highway in 1987, and internal moves to "...break down the ‘park-worker’ culture entrenched in the Top End" via staff transfers from the more “scientific” Central Australian rangers (S.Traynor, personal communication; CCNT, 1988:i). The differences between the Top End and Central Australian organisational cultures of the PWS are topics I return to in Chapter Five.

By 1995, the CCNT had undergone another restructure and had seen the introduction of the first Territory-wide conservation strategy and corporate plan. Major projects such as the Larapinta Trail (a 220km long walking trail from Alice Springs west to Mount Sonder) and planning for the Alice Springs Desert Wildlife Park were under way. The final CCNT annual report foreshadows the transformations that were about to occur, stating that the Northern Territory government intended to announce changes to its administrative arrangements and that “significant restructuring for the Commission” would occur in the following financial year (CCNT, 1995:15).

**From Commission to Parks and Wildlife Service: 1995-2005**

In July 1995, the Northern Territory government made a number of far-reaching changes to its entire administration arising as a result of an external review (S.Traynor, personal communication). For the CCNT, these changes had immediate effects. The “significant restructuring” foreshadowed in the 1995 Annual Report
translated into a ‘break up’ up of the Commission reducing both is functions and size, resulting in amendments to the Conservation Commission Act. These amendments saw the creation of a new statutory authority, the Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWCNT), under a new Act, the Parks and Wildlife Commission Act 1995. From July 1995 onwards the CCNT ceased to be, having its forestry management, land and soil conservation functions and its environmental assessment powers transferred to the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment. Administrative functions such as finance, salaries and human resources were also removed from the new authority and outsourced to the Department of Transport and Works (PWCNT, 1996:17).

For many PWCNT employees, these changes had a devastating effect on morale. With the broader conservation functions of the CCNT gone, many staff felt a loss of corporate identity and direction. Where the integrated nature of the old organisation imbued staff with a sense of “... working within a bigger picture” and “... making a difference in promoting conservation across the entire Territory,” the new organisation’s focus on park and reserves management was viewed by many as being a retroactive step, creating the impression that conservation only had a place within dedicated protected areas (S.Traynor, personal communication).

There were day-to-day frustrations, too: whereas soil conservation, hydrology and scientific data were readily accessible within the CCNT, the new organisation had to traverse bureaucratic and external departmental channels to source such specialists and their data, incurring increased costs and time delays. A tangible sense of loss in terms of human relationships also comes across from former CCNT employees who speak of this time: the knowledge and experience of colleagues, organisational camaraderie, and the prized Territory ‘informality’ were all seen as being removed when the Conservation Commission was dissolved.

Although a number of major projects were completed during this time, such as the Parks Masterplan in 1997, the opening of the Alice Springs Desert Wildlife Park, and continuing construction of the Larapinta Trail, in the eyes of many staff, worse was to come. In August 2001, the CLP which had held government in the Northern Territory for twenty-six years was swept from office by the Australian Labor Party. For many in the PWCNT, there was some sense of relief. The Australian Labor Party were
viewed as being pro-conservation and pro-Aboriginal; there was a sense that the new
government would act swiftly to mend the very poor relationships it had with
Aboriginal Land Councils and would increase spending on parks and reserves. However, severe financial restraints—a legacy inherited from the previous
government—and a government restructure saw the PWCNT ‘decommissioned’; that is, its status as a statutory government body removed altogether. In 2002, the PWCNT
was renamed as the *Parks and Wildlife Service*, finally losing its Commission Board (although retaining an advisory council), and was placed within what was termed as a
’mega-department’: the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and the Environment.

The resulting loss of morale and identity is not difficult to convey. When I commenced work for PWS in October 2003, many long-term and senior staff I spoke
to were disillusioned. The idea of being in a department alongside road builders and
bore drillers was an anathema to many, especially to scientists and rangers with a keen
interest in science-based conservation. The sense of personal pride and esteem that
people had once gained from working for a conservation agency was vocally
mourned. A number of senior and long-term staff left the organisation during this
period, taking with them years of experience and energy and leaving a vacuum in their
place.

By mid-2005, the new Labor government had settled in to governing and announced
another restructure along with a loosening of budgetary constraints. A new
department was created: the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the
Arts (NRETA); the *Parks and Wildlife Service* was re-situated within it (NRETA,
2006: 3). For everyone within the organisation, it was seen as a positive and even
retrospective move. NRETA brought together again heritage, land and soil
conservation, and protected area management. In the eyes of many PWS staff, this
restructure was seen as the government “... coming full circle” in some ways.

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10 Suffice to say that relations between the CLP government and the Northern and Central Land Councils, which had never been good, deteriorated further during the mid-1990s due to the introduction of the Commonwealth Native Title Act. In 2002, the Labor government signalled its intent to redress this situation with its offer of joint management over 31 parks and reserves following a Native Title decision by the High Court known as the Ward Decision. In Chapter Three I return to these issues in detail.
recognising the need for an integrated approach to conservation in the Northern Territory (S. Traynor, personal communication).

For many ranger staff, the succession of organisational restructures and shifts in government policy meant very little. Rangers interviewed for this study stated that in their day-to-day reserve management activities, the changes of name and legal status and department had only a minor impact on the nature of reserve management. Often, such changes affected administrative tasks or translated into further delays in construction of infrastructure; occasionally, changes meant streamlined administrative or approval processes. Rangering as a profession, as one colleague put it, was already well-established by the time the CCNT ceased to exist, so changes to organisational structure at higher levels had little or no impact. Equally, the organisational changes brought about by wide scale joint management have been far less disruptive for staff in the field than one might expect. I return to this issue in following chapters; first however, it is necessary to examine briefly international trends in protected area management and discuss the impacts upon conservation agency staff at ground-level.

International Trends

As mentioned earlier, Australia currently has nine conservation agencies, situated within government departments that are responsive to wider government policies as well as national and international conservation trends (NRMMC, 2005: 14). However, a number of changes to protected area management have occurred on an international level since the late 1960s, with some far-reaching effects upon Australian conservation agencies. As previous sections suggest, national parks were initially set aside for anthropocentric reasons such as human recreation and enjoyment. However, during the twentieth century the reasons for establishing national parks and other reserves changed due to the rise of conservation interest groups. Whilst land was still being set aside for recreation or the preservation of history, increasingly, areas were being set aside for the protection of plants and animals, and to a lesser extent, for the preservation of natural systems (Strom, 1979: 68; Figgis, 1999:1; NRMMC, 2005: 13). By the 1960s, most national parks were being managed for their conservation values (although reserves managed for their economic values – that is, the ability of a
reserve to draw tourists because of their scenic or historical significance and contribute to the local economy—were also gaining importance). Most of these reserves had management regimes based upon what is commonly called the ‘Yellowstone Model’ (McNeely & Miller, 1984: 3; Foster, 1991: 36; Lawrence, 1997: 4; Kalamandeen & Gillson, 2007: 167; Adams, 2008:291).

The Yellowstone model of protected area management may be defined as the preservation of ‘natural areas’ for the conservation of ecosystems and their inhabitants. Management of Yellowstone-type protected areas is done by removing perceived threats to natural biota, such as exotic species, and by strictly prescribing human action: prohibiting human consumption, destruction or use of natural resources, controlling visitors within the area, and restricting or forbidding permanent human occupation (Lawrence, 1997:4; Foster, 1991:363; Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005:342). The Yellowstone model has been alternatively called ‘island’ (Dasmann, 1984:669), ‘sanctuary’ (Figgis, 1999:8), or even ‘fortress’ conservation (Hutton et. al., ibid) because it preserves isolated or discontinuous pockets of natural areas and operates under management regimes that ‘lock out’ humans or seek to reduce their impacts. The Yellowstone model has come under intense criticism for these reasons, yet despite the criticisms levelled at it, remains the most influential model of protected area management today (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:66; Hutton et.al, 2005:342).

With the spread of national parks and reserves across the globe during the 1960s, both the diversity in the kinds of reserves (i.e. historical monuments, national parks, nature reserves, nature parks, karst reserves etc.) and the limits inherent within the Yellowstone model of protected area management soon became apparent. One outcome of the growth of the protected areas on a global level has been the move by non-government conservation agencies such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the World Congress on Protected Areas (WCPA) to create worldwide standards and classifications for parks and reserves. Another upshot of this has been the emergence of the term ‘protected areas’, both a move away from the Yellowstone model as the ‘only’ legitimate model for protected area management, and an acknowledgement of the vast diversity and
number of these areas which exist\textsuperscript{11} (Brechin, West, Harmon & Kutay, 1991: 7; Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari & Oviedo, 2004:13).

The current IUCN categories of protected areas are summarised in Table 2.1. It is not my intent here to describe in detail or critique the IUCN categories; for the purpose of this discussion it is important to note that Australia, as a signatory to the \textit{Convention on Biological Diversity} (CBD), has agreed to establish a national reserve system that reflects these categories\textsuperscript{12} (NRMMC, 2005: 36).

| Category 1a | Strict Nature Reserve: managed mainly for science |
| Category 1b | Wilderness Area: managed mainly for wilderness protection |
| Category II | National Park: managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation |
| Category III | Natural Monument: managed mainly for conservation of specific features |
| Category IV | Habitat/Species Management Area: managed mainly for conservation through management intervention |
| Category V | Protected Landscape/Seascape: Managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation |
| Category VI | Managed Resource Protected Area: managed mainly for the sustainable use of ecosystems |

\textit{Source: Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001.}

Another important function of non-government organisations such as the IUCN and WCPA has been to promote the idea that protected areas are of political, economic and social concern to all levels of government. At a policy and whole-of-government level, this has been done through international agreements, conventions and treaties (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:58; Borrini-Feyerabend et.al., 2004:1). On

\textsuperscript{11} According to IUCN estimates, there are about 102,000 protected areas throughout the world occupying 11.5\% of the earth’s surface (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari & Oviedo, 2004:1).

\textsuperscript{12} Refer to IUCN, 1994; NRMMC, 2005: 62-64 for a detailed explanation of the objectives and selection criteria for these categories. For a critique of the IUCN categories in relation to indigenous and local communities, refer to Brechin, West, Harmon & Kutay, 1991: 7-10).
the ground, this has been achieved by linking conservation and protected area management to indigenous and traditional peoples’ rights movements, development projects, poverty-alleviation initiatives and other social justice outcomes. In particular, efforts to foster greater local community participation in conservation through cooperative, collaborative or joint management projects have become commonplace on an international level, especially in developing nations (Fisher, 2001:84; Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005:344). In the following chapter, the effectiveness of using protected area management to achieve social justice and development outcomes is discussed in the context of joint management. Suffice to say here that many attempts to achieve non-conservation outcomes via protected area management have produced mixed results\(^\text{13}\).

In the Australian context, all State, Territory and Federal conservation agencies have adopted the IUCN’s categories (NRMMC, 2005:36). Whilst this has had implications for protected area management at a policy and organisation-wide strategic planning level (especially for World Heritage Area nominations, RAMSAR (significant wetlands) nominations, and the development of a National Reserve System (NRS) based upon IUCN categories and adequate bioregional representation within protected areas, the effect of international standards and classifications upon day-to-day park and reserve management is minimal. At best, the management objectives implicit within the IUCN categories are achieved through the implementation of broad management objectives set out in park and reserve plans of management. The way in which rangers perceive and actually use the IUCN categories to guide their day-to-day activities is perhaps best summed up by the following conversation:

Amanda: I’m trying to figure out how the IUCN’s protected area categories affect what rangers do on the ground everyday.
Ranger: (wry grin and pause) What categories?

\(^\text{13}\) Agrawal & Redford (2006:ii) reviewed more than 40 case studies regarding the alleviation of poverty through biodiversity conservation initiatives and concluded: “... The vast sums channelled toward joint achievement of poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation are all the more remarkable in light of the basic lack of evidence on the extent to which these goals can jointly be reached.”
Although the nation-wide adoption of the IUCN protected area classifications has meant little for on-the-ground operations in most Australian parks and reserves, the effect of international trends towards greater community participation and partnership in protected area management has had considerably more influence (Figgis, 1999: 13). As the historical accounts in previous sections relate, community involvement in protected areas in Australia, especially that of conservation interest groups, has been integral to the development of national parks. By the early 1980s, critiques of the Yellowstone model as ‘fortress conservation’ and ‘anti-human’ had lead to a reflexive self-searching amongst many international conservationists about the ongoing relevance of protected areas—particularly in developing nations faced with poverty, social justice, and indigenous peoples’ issues (see especially volume edited by McNeely & Miller, 1984). In Australia, this trend has manifested in conservation agency policy initiatives towards consultation, cooperation and partnership with a range of stakeholders, such as the direct neighbours of national parks and nearby local communities (Figgis, ibid; NRMMC, 2005: 44). Joint management is an example of—and precursor—of this trend, emerging in tandem with the political recognition of Aboriginal land and cultural rights almost a decade earlier.

Along with moves to introduce international standards and systems of classification and attempts to resolve tensions between local communities and ‘fortress’ conservation, shifts in the ways in which nature has been perceived and managed within protected areas have also acted to define the role and functions of Australian conservation agencies today. These changes have been influenced by the development of ecology and more recently, environmental science as disciplines, with the paradigm of biodiversity conservation being adopted as a basis for management programs at both on the ground and at a policy level. Another more recent trend in environmental

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*Biodiversity* (biological diversity) is defined as: “...the variety of all living things: the plants, fungi, animals and micro-organisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001: 15).”
management, *ecosystem management*\(^{15}\), has had implications at a policy and planning level, but in an Australian context has meant little for day-to-day protected area management (Grumbine, 1994:43; Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:XX; Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005:347-348).

The most significant shifts in protected area management during the past forty years have not come from international trends in conservation towards greater community inclusion and standardisation, nor from the emergence of environmental sciences as paradigms for management programs. Rather, the most influential changes have come from global economic reform and the resulting market-based management regimes. Following a period of stagnating economic growth and high inflation in the mid-1970s, Western governments increasingly adopted private sector-style management practices for public sector agencies. These regimes have focussed upon reforms such as decreasing the size of government, introducing market-based (supply and demand) provision of services, increasing efficiency and competitiveness, ‘downsizing’ and ‘outsourcing’ or contracting out of services previously provided in-house (Larbi, 1999:1; Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:88; Shultis, 2005:52). It should be noted that there are substantial arguments against many of these ideas, particularly against the market-based economic models which often assume inexhaustible supply of natural resources to fuel infinite economic growth and production (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:45).

As government-run conservation agencies are public sector organisations, these trends have introduced major changes to the ways in which protected area management is done, particularly since the 1980s. The history of the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service, with its various restructures, name changes, decrease in staff numbers, gain and loss of functions, presents an example of the ways in which political cycles and socio-historical context affect on-the-ground protected area management. These systemic shifts have implications for organisational culture as well as the ways in which joint management and protected area management are

\(^{15}\) *Ecosystem management* is defined as integrating "...scientific knowledge of ecological relationships within a complex sociopolitical and values framework toward the general goal of protecting native ecosystem integrity in the long term (Grumbine, 1994:31)."
conceived and undertaken within conservation agencies. The most significant of these can be detected in the shift towards management plans and agency-wide strategic business plans described in the history of the PWS above. These artefacts aim to account for government expenditure in the parks estate and require that agencies set out clearly in a scientific and rational manner the ways in which the investment of public monies will be spent. I return to these shifts in the concluding section of this chapter.

**Contemporary Conservation Agencies: Structure, Roles and Functions**

It is apparent from the preceding sections that context—geographic, political, social, historic—has played a primary role in shaping the conservation agencies which have emerged in Australia and elsewhere. For example, in NSW the conservation movement campaigned for the creation of the state’s conservation agencies; these organisations remain influential in park management today (Jenkins, 2000:6). In the NT where there was no strong conservation movement to argue for the creation of parks, it was economic development in the form of tourism that saw the gazetting of the first reserves, whilst conflicts between the Commonwealth and Territory government over park management and Aboriginal land rights gave impetus to the NT to expand and professionalise its own conservation agency. Likewise, internal conflicts over the CCNT’s potential power to halt economic development *in the name of conservation* contributed to its dismantling in 1995. However, whilst contexts such as these have created many differences in these organisations, there are also many similarities between the nation’s nine government-run conservation agencies.

The most important of these similarities lies in the fact that each of these agencies are created under a given piece of legislation with certain powers, roles and functions conferred to them. In all cases, they are answerable to a Minister who may or may not have statutory powers that exceed those of any officer employed by the conservation agency (such as a director), and in most cases, are just one organisation amongst others within larger government departments. With the exception of one conservation agency in Australia, *Parks Australia*, all conservation agencies are created under state
or territory laws. It is an outcome of the drafting of the Australian Constitution at the time of Federation that until 1999 responsibility for creating legislation about land, and, as a consequence, for national parks and conservation agencies, rested entirely with the states and territories (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:39, 42).

A second commonality between these agencies is found in the ability of legislation to directly determine the roles, functions and daily operations of conservation agencies rather than high-level government policy. For example, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (2005) states that the purpose of the Act is to:

... to make provision for and in relation to the establishment of Territory Parks and other Parks and Reserves and the study, protection, conservation and sustainable utilisation of wildlife.

Likewise, the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972, states that it is:

An Act to provide for the establishment and management of reserves for public benefit and enjoyment; to provide for the conservation of wildlife in a natural environment; and for other purposes.

These pieces of legislation commonly set out the philosophical underpinnings of government conservation agencies, yet also serve as a means of setting long term goals and to some extent, determine agency structure. As will be seen in later chapters, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (TPWCA) is particularly prescriptive, going so far as to set out the principles of joint management and the contents of park management plans. This is somewhat different to other government departments, for whom policy and strategic plans perform the roles of goal setting and organisational priorities, whilst corporate structure —including the dominance of

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16 In 1999, the Commonwealth Government introduced the Environment and Biodiversity Protection Act (1999), which specifically recognises and defines the role of the Commonwealth Government in environmental conservation and protection (EBPA, 1999).
administrative staff is derived from both public sector conventions and internal policy (see, for example Lea, 2008).

It should be pointed out that whilst there are some individual differences in legislative responsibilities between conservation agencies in Australia (for example, the NSW NPWS holding legal responsibility for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and environmental impact assessments, whereas in the NT legislative responsibility for these matters are split between Heritage Services, Land Councils and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority), at a general level all conservation agencies are responsible for: the conservation of native animals and plants; promoting community awareness of, understanding and appreciation of conservation; managing land and infrastructure within the reserve system; and assuring compliance (i.e. enforcing By-Laws and Regulations concerning protected wildlife, rubbish dumping, illegal vehicle access, firearms in parks etc).

Consequently, high-level policy may be less important than legislation in determining action in conservation agencies than it is in other government departments, even though policies and strategic plans do exist, setting out organisational directions and priorities on a medium-term basis (often for periods of one to five years). Policy can be defined as: the selection and allocation of "values" which guide future actions of park agencies and governments" (Weaver, 1991:312). Although I discuss these further in Chapter 4, it is helpful to point out here that policies within PWS may be seen as responses to repeated instances of practices, as arising from circumstances for which there is seen to be a need. New policies arise out of on the ground actions, and are bottom-up rather than top-down in most cases. In this way, policy is inherently iterative, shaped by practice and context, whilst at the same time, providing a structure on which consistent patterns of organisational action can emerge across time. The outcome of such legislative determination is that the functions of, and daily programs undertaken by conservation agencies are relatively stable across decades rather than altering with each and every change of government.

Organisational structure within conservation agencies varies widely, however in common with other government departments they are hierarchical, ultimately answering to a Minister and an executive body. Other variations in agency structure
are derived from legislative responsibility. For example, whilst the NSW NPWS has a large Culture and Heritage Division, PWS has not a single heritage officer, relying on another section within NRETA (the department in which the PWS is situated) to assist with heritage management. Whilst I discuss the organisational structure of the PWS in detail in Chapter Five, here I wish to focus upon conservation agency structure as it relates to agency function derived from legislation and policy. For example, Worboys, Lockwood and De Lacy (2001:81) describe the practice of protected area management as comprising four main actions: planning, organising, leading and controlling (reviewing, monitoring and reporting). These are framed by the concept of management, meaning a human-driven process to achieve defined goals (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, ibid).

To implement these four kinds of management action, conservation agencies in Australia are commonly divided into the following sections: park management, comprising rangers and technical/field officers who directly manage land, wildlife, and reserve infrastructure; executive management, who oversee organisational direction and accountability; policy, responsible for writing and review organisational goals, planning, responsible for creating plans of management for reserves and other projects, administration, who provide organisational support for finance, recruitment, records, and specialist sections such as scientific, educational and interpretive (signage) staff. It should be noted that, unlike most other public sector agencies, the majority of conservation agency staff are professional or technical rather than administrative staff. This factor, along with the division of these agencies into park management, planning, executive and the other sections detailed above, should be viewed as a function of legislation combined with the characteristics encountered commonly in government bureaucracies (Lea, 2008:56).

It is my intention here to emphasise the role of legislation in shaping and informing the practice of conservation agencies. I have pointed out that most government bureaucracies rely much more upon policy -both their own actions in formulating policy as well as responding to its imperatives- rather than directly upon legislation to guide their day-to-day business. This is not to say that legislation does not underpin the actions of all government agencies; it does, via various public administration and public sector employees' Acts (Moe, 1989: 274; McCubbins, Noll & Weingast,
However, in conservation agencies it is conservation-specific legislation that directly dictates the creation of, the day-to-day operations of, and in most cases, the structure of conservation agencies rather than policy. Indeed, McCubbins et al. (ibid) state that: "... in terms of policy outcomes, the best solution is legislative specificity: writing into the law precisely what the agency is to achieve, and how it is to achieve it."

An outcome of this specificity is that in agencies which have their functions determined by legislation as opposed to policy, the underlying roles, functions of and daily operations of these agencies remains stable across decades, rather than being responsive to high-level policy changes which commonly occur with changes of government. Consequently, change within these organisations is slow, costly, and often requires changes in legislation to effect; unlike other government agencies they are less responsive to high-level policy changes, changes in government or interest groups (Moe, 1989, 327). In this sense, conservation agencies may be seen as truly conservative; not simply in the manner in which they manage parks and reserves as areas protected from certain kinds of threats, but also in their internal structuring, philosophy and operational orientations. As examples of complex adaptive systems, conservation agencies may be seen to have properties that are internally coherent and resilient, and resistant to change.

National Parks and Conservation Agencies: Bastions of National Conscience, Ecological Fortresses and Legislative Resilience

Resistance to change is really attraction. An attractor describes the predominant pattern of behaviour in a complex system. The pattern emerges from the interaction of the parts, but it also constrains the behaviour of the parts. In this way, the attractor becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Eoyang, Yellowthunder & Ward, 1998:9).

I began this chapter with the notion that national parks ‘hold’ something of the nation’s identity and moral conscience relating to land, and that within these ideas are inscribed both conflicts about and deeply embedded cultural attitudes towards land.
Underpinning this conceptualisation of national parks is two important factors. The first is connected to the way in which modern nation states require a definable territory over which they can demonstrate their control and sovereignty, and in doing so define themselves as nations (Anderson, 1996: 99). The second is inherent in the manner that national parks are, in George Catlin's words, nation's parks, (Rutne, 1997: 34). In other words, national parks are publicly-owned places where the nation's sense of what is unique, valued and desirable -its national 'character'- is set aside and preserved (Harmon, 2003:59).

This dual vesting of nationhood in national parks invokes strong images of these places as sacred sites, sites for pilgrimage and renewal. I do not intend to argue that national parks comprise national sacred sites in the way in which Kapferer (1988) has suggested that the Australian War Memorial has, nor are they sacred sites as understood by Aboriginal people. However, I do contend that national parks are national sites of public pilgrimage and renewal, and have been so since their inception as places that John Lucas hoped would “... ensure a healthy and consequently vigorous and intelligent community ...” (21/03/1879, John Lucas, MLA, quoted in Ovington, 1980:45).

Corroborating this perspective are studies of the values commonly associated with national parks and other protected areas by their visitors. For example, during a study of why parks were valued by their users (Manning, Valliere and Minteer, 1996), participants stated that aesthetic, educational, recreational and therapeutic were the main reasons for valuing and visiting these areas. A worldwide study undertaken by the IUCN found that eleven intangible values, including recreational, therapeutic, spiritual and cultural/identity, education, existence, and aesthetic were described by participants as being most important to those who visited these places (Harmon, 2003: 56). In pairing these understandings with the notion of pilgrimage, I draw upon Anderson's (1996: 33) usage of the term pilgrimage as a journey of meaning-making which influenced the creation of nation states. If national parks both represent and constitute essential parts of national identity which can be accessed through pilgrimage, and are furthermore imbued with the potential for the therapeutic renewal of a nation's citizens, as Harmon (ibid) and Manning et.al. (ibid) have argued, then they must be recognised as special places within the national psyche.
What are the implications of these understandings about national parks and how are they reproduced in contemporary conservation agencies? The outcomes of this conflation of national identity and human well-being in landscape are the encoding of two deeply resilient ideas—attractors in the sense invoked by Eoyang et.al.(1998) in the opening quote to this section—within conservation agency structure: the primacy of legislation in informing practice and action; and, a predisposition towards managing these places to preserve them for their national and cultural significance:

*These constructs are institutionalised in the structure and processes of conservation agencies, and, as such, have a constant presence in the policy and decision making process* (Adams, 2008:293).

Previous sections of this chapter have emphasised the role of legislation within conservation agencies. The very act of setting aside such areas and making laws to protect them, laws that regulate, constrain and prescribe the manner in which people access and use these areas is a fundamental one. Despite being public places, protected areas comprise one of the most regulated forms of land in Australia. A narrow range of activities such as camping, bushwalking, birdwatching, and holidaying—all quite distinct from those undertaken daily by most Australians—are associated with these places. Furthermore, most national parks are in places that require some travel or planning to get to, heightening the sense of pilgrimage discussed above. To visit a national park is to step out of the ordinary frame of everyday life, to do things one does not ordinarily do, to visit a place one does not ordinarily visit and behave in a prescribed—some would say almost ritualistic—way. To manage such a place requires an organisation oriented towards control, constraint and protection, underwritten by the sovereign authority of the nation. As a result, one would expect a predominance of law over policy in these agencies and as a consequence, a lessening of the responsiveness to political and social change. As I have argued above, such an orientation creates conservation agencies that are, by nature, legislatively driven, conservative and resilient to change.

The second narrative emerging from this history of protected areas and conservation agencies follows closely from the notion of legislative regulation and control of land.
It is concerned with the process whereby law is translated into organisational and human action, glossed here as management. There are two parallel threads of this narrative that need to be discussed here: the cultural assumption of threats to protected areas and their need for management; and, a much deeper, philosophical presumption of conflicting interests in land which underpins and encompasses the notion of threats to the landscape and their management.

I begin here with the idea that the very notion of protected areas assumes threats: from humans, such as urban expansion, agriculture, forestry and mining, and following the rise of scientific-based conservation, from threats such as non-native plants species (weeds) and animals (ferals). The assumption of threats to these areas is inherent in their legislative setting aside, and as a consequence must be present in the model of land management developed to administer these landscapes. Protected areas require a model of land management able not only preserve the very qualities in land that people hold in high regard whilst allowing some access to it, they also require the means to identify sources of potential harm, and to assemble resources to control these sources of harm. This model, discussed in the preceding section, is called the Yellowstone model of protected area management.

I have pointed out in a previous section of this chapter that, despite revisions of the Yellowstone model and widespread criticism of the notion of unpeopled wilderness underpinning it, its encoding in legislative structure and organisational practice has ensured its resilience more than one hundred years after the first conservation agencies were established. Given that the very idea of protected areas assumes threats, it follows that the means of managing these areas must be oriented towards the minimisation or removal of threats; indeed, it would be expected that a large part of the daily actions of these agencies is taken up with eradication of threats. Even today, people may visit parks, but not live on them. People may take photographs, but not pick flowers or collect firewood. People must walk on tracks, camp only in authorised areas. Control and regulation of humans within these spaces is paramount – if humans were not controlled then national parks would –as many have suggested of Yellowstone itself- become victims of their own popularity and lose the very qualities for which they were regarded as special (Oeschlager, 1996: 39; Worboys, Lockwood
The outcome for conservation agencies is a philosophical orientation towards threat management as a primary organisational objective.

This does, of course, lead to the fundamental notion of conflict between interests in land. If there are human threats to protected areas, there must be differing human interests in the land. There is indeed a conflict inherent within the very notion of protected areas itself: that of publicly-owned lands set aside for public benefit versus preservation, control and regulation of these areas through the exclusion or control of humans. Early attempts to create national parks in NSW by conservationists and bushwalkers attest to the conflict between human development and protection of the non-human environment. Arguments about the culturally constructed nature of a 'non-human environment' and separation of people from nature aside, national parks must be seen as originating in a conflict between human development and the preservation of the natural environment. The result is that conservation agencies are not only finely tuned to manage threats in their daily business, but their particular organisational contexts orientations and practices are shaped by the threats particular to them. Differences in organisational structure and practice between conservation agencies in Australia -despite their legislative and protectionist orientations- arise from their local socio-political context. For an organisation like the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Northern Territory, conflicts over interests in land with the Commonwealth Government, with other sections of the NT Government or populace, and from Aboriginal and mining interests in land have shaped the nature of the organisation. The presence or absence of certain functions, skill sets, programs and actions may then be seen as arising out of much earlier socio-historic contexts encoded first as law and then as structure and practice within the agency. This is a narrative that I take up in the following chapters of this thesis as it is enacted in the everyday actions of those working to implement joint management within the PWS.

The history of protected areas and conservation agencies presented in this chapter has argued that at a fundamental level protected areas are important 'storehouses' of national identity and moral conscience that need to be set aside from human development. The vesting of national identity and human well-being in land, combined with perceived threats to these qualities, requires that places imbued with such attributes need to be protected by government legislation and managed by a
government authority. The creation of conservation agencies with precise roles and functions defined and constrained by legislation rather than by ever-evolving policy further ensures that the original intent for which these areas were set aside remains present within legislation, organisational structures and practices even after the passage of more than a century. Furthermore, the model of land management that developed as a response to the need to manage mainly human threats to protected areas—the fortress or Yellowstone model—is also a resilient structure within contemporary conservation agencies, presupposed by the philosophical notion inherent in the act of protecting an area of land from perceived threats. Finally, the structure and practices of individual conservation agencies must be seen as arising in response to particular socio-historic contexts including conflicting interests in land. Conservation agencies, although sharing many common structural and functional aspects, will be seen to be the product of local as well as national and global contexts, such as the socio-political emergence of joint management discussed in the following chapter.
Chapter Three: Joint Management, Certainty and the Literature

Landscape is never inert; people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group or nation-state (Bender, 1993:3).

If protected areas and conservation agencies are structured around enduring cultural assumptions about human relationships to land—about the power of the land to contain and represent certain ideas about nationhood and the land’s potential to bestow well-being upon a nation’s citizens—how do such interests in land interact with the interests of other groups in protected areas, such as those of Aboriginal people? Given that these enduring cultural interests in land are reproduced in the legislation creating conservation agencies, and may well be reproduced in their structures and practices, is there indeed any space for reconciling the interests of different groups in protected areas?

Recognising competing interests in land—as joint management attempts to do—appears to challenge the basic philosophy underpinning protected areas: that of setting aside such places because of the qualities they possess. These ideas about land have been resilient within Australian society for more than a hundred years. It may be that attempts to recognise the interests of indigenous people and others in protected areas actually serve to reproduce pervasive cultural ideas about land, or even invoke other powerful assumptions—such as those conflating Aboriginal relationships to land with those of conservationists raised in Chapter One.

If we are to begin to understand how conservation agencies—charged with implementing joint management arrangements on the ground—respond to the incorporation of conflicting interests in protected areas, we must first ask: Whose interests in land are represented by joint management arrangements and what are they? Indeed, it should be asked: what does the very notion of joint management assume? This chapter examines the notion of joint management and a related term,
**Definitions and Assumptions**

What can be understood about both joint management and its international partner, co-management from the widely used definitions of these terms found in the statements of governments and bodies like the IUCN? At the very heart of these questions lies an assumption that these terms can mean the same thing to all groups involved in these arrangements. Yet, these widely held beliefs are themselves problematic, and definitions that fall readily from the tongue mask an intellectual trajectory where meanings are contested, compete with alternatives and are unequally positioned in political and socio-historical contexts. Such issues are glossed over in comments such as those by Wells et al. (ibid), presuming there is any common ground to be had at all in notions such as joint and co-management.

Internationally, arrangements that involve the management of land and/or resources by government conservation agencies and indigenous peoples or local communities have been termed co-management, cooperative or collaborative management. A useful place to start is to consider the underlying commonalities inherent in these terms. At a very general level, the words 'co-operative', 'collaborative' and 'joint' imply the willing participation of multiple players: groups, stakeholders, people, or
organisations in mutual social action. If these terms suggest multiple actors, then the word 'management' suggests a number of planned actions and processes through which '...resources, institutions, services, and people are organised for purposes such as efficient production' (Baker, Davies, and Young, 2001: xxii). Worboys, De Lacy and Lockwood (2001:81) further define management as a "...process through which goals are achieved. It involves coordinating all resources (both human and technical) to accomplish specific results." At a fundamental level then, co-management assumes a set of instrumental actions undertaken willingly by groups of non-contiguous actors aiming to realise their own interests in land.

Definitions of co-management offer further insight into what is understood by those using this term both internationally and within Australia. One of the earliest definitions of co-management found within the literature is that of Berkes, George & Preston (1991:12), drawn from their experiences in Canadian natural resource management. Berkes et. al. define co-management as: "...the sharing of power and responsibility between the government and local resource users." Another commonly quoted definition of co-management, that of the World Bank (1999:11) also emphasises the sharing of responsibility between government and non-government stakeholders, defining co-management as: '... the sharing of responsibilities, rights and duties between the primary stakeholders, in particular, local communities and the nation state; a decentralized approach to decision-making that involves the local users in the decision-making process as equals with the nation-state.'

Another widely quoted definition of co-management within the literature comes from a jointly produced IUCN-WCPA publication, Indigenous and Local Communities and Protected Areas (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari & Oviedo, 2004:32). This publication – a ‘how-to manual’ of co-management for potential participants- defines the co-management of protected areas as: '... where decision making power, responsibility and accountability are shared between government agencies and other stakeholders, in particular the indigenous peoples and local and mobile communities that depend

17 It should be noted that this definition also includes the management of single-species resources such as caribou as well as that of protected areas.
on that area culturally and/or for their livelihoods.' A final definition offered here is that of Carlsson and Berkes (2005: 67) who draw upon sources such as Borrini-Feyerabend et.al. (ibid), in offering a summary of common themes found within the literature surrounding co-management:

1. Co-management is associated with natural resource management,
2. Co-management is a partnership between public and private actors,
3. Co-management is not a specific set of management prescriptions for every circumstance, but a process that takes place along a continuum.

A working definition that can be drawn from this summary is that: *co-management represents a series of iterative processes negotiated in context-specific partnerships between public and private actors to provide for the management of a set of specific natural resources or protected area.*

There are a number of unproblematised assumptions embedded within such definitions of co-management –definitions which, it should be noted, are promoted by internationally influential and powerful organisations such as the World Bank, the IUCN and national governments. The first widely-held assumption found within these definitions is in the perceived willingness of various groups to participate in co-management. This in itself is problematic –especially in Australia- where joint management arrangements arise out of adversarial processes such as land claims or protests over mining in national parks. Secondly, there is the assumed compatibility of public and private actors’ interests in protected areas and the possibility that they can be reconciled. Here again is another problematic: if public interests in national parks in Australia are related to nationhood and citizens’ well-being, then introducing the private interests of groups that might bring closures or changes to the ways in which these areas are used as public spaces invokes the possibility that a reconciliation of interests may not be possible or desirable.

Third, there is an assumption here that all groups involved in these arrangements have the ability to participate. There are many issues masked in this assumption: literacy, understandings that all participants know what protected areas are and what their management entails, some level of political organisation and socio-economic...
conditions that permit participation. Consider for a moment the ability of Aboriginal Traditional Owners living in remote areas with little or no access to transport or communications to fully engage in the processes required by joint management – attendance at board meetings, informed decisions about park management programs, participation in employment or business opportunities- and then the ability of rangers to respond to the challenges faced by Aboriginal people who cannot attend meetings, speak English as a first language let alone read, in making decisions about implementing joint management on the ground.

Although references to a lack of capacity to participate in or even comprehend joint management arrangements on behalf of Aboriginal people are made several times within the literature discussing joint management (i.e. Lawrence, 1997:10; Wearing & Huyskens, 2001: 195) this issue remains largely undiscussed. Even more telling, the capacity of conservation agencies and their staff to participate in or respond to the demands of implementing joint management is met with a vast silence, which one can only assume arises from an assumption amongst anthropologists and others that these agencies possess such skills and simply fail to use them, or that these agencies should be readily dismissed as being one and the same as ‘the government’.

This last point leads me to a final assumption evident within definitions of co-management: the complexity of state actors, indigenous peoples and other organisations –such as large non-government organisations- is cleverly hidden and dismissed. In particular, the simplifying of the state into the ‘government’ is particularly insidious and presumptive. As I have pointed out in the preceding chapter, governments are neither cohesive nor do they share a single, monolithic perspective on conservation. Governments may compete over the ownership and management of national parks, or may act to curtail the power of their own agencies if the need arises. The question to be asked then is: How does this assumption –and those preceding it- play out in joint management arrangements, particularly when the interests of other groups are taken into account? How are such assumptions altered or reproduced in an Australian context?
Joint Management in Australia: An Overview

In Australia the practice of co-management of protected areas between indigenous people and government conservation agencies is commonly referred to as joint management. In contrast to the term co-management, joint management is used in Australia in a very specific way, with a number of subtle differences that may or not be present elsewhere. The most important of these nuances is that joint management in Australia has been associated with the legal recognition of Aboriginal rights in land, affecting both land tenure changes (or ‘hand backs’) and attempts to create equitable, legally sanctioned decision-making arrangements over protected areas (Lawrence, 1997:9). Australian definitions of joint management commonly reflect these characteristics. For example, Smyth’s (2001:75) definition is one quoted often within Australian and international literature and is worth considering here:

... the term ‘joint management’ in this context means the establishment of a legal partnership and management structure that reflects the rights, interests, and obligations of the Aboriginal owners of the park, as well as those of the relevant government, acting on behalf of the wider community.

Smyth is very clear about what is unique in Australian joint management arrangements: they have a legal basis either in particular state or territory statutes, or in Commonwealth legislation such as Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) created in accordance with the Native Title Act 1993. Further, they are specifically aimed at the inclusion of indigenous people as equitable decision-makers in protected area management (NRMMC, 2005:53). The other salient point is that, unlike many overseas co-management agreements, the term ‘joint management’ carries the specific connotation of partnerships created to manage protected areas rather than agreements to manage other kinds of common-property resources or particular species (Fisher, 2005).

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18 Several Australian conservation agencies have recently begun to adopt the international term co-management. For example, refer to the NSW NPWS website: http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/Aboriginal+co-management+of+parks.

19 I use Smyth's definition here as it has been widely quoted within the literature (i.e.
For the purpose of this thesis, joint management is defined as: a legally-enabled partnership that seeks equity in rights, functions and interests between government and indigenous stakeholders involved in managing protected areas. This is not to say that outside of legislation co-management of protected areas between indigenous peoples and government conservation agencies does not occur in Australia; rather, it is to clarify that the joint management arrangements discussed within this thesis are those underpinned by legislation that recognises and seeks to promote equitable indigenous interests in protected area management.

In common with the international examples discussed above, there is some diversity amongst legislatively-derived joint management arrangements in Australia. Smyth (2001:75) points out that: "... joint management agreements differ according to provisions in the enabling legislation, the existence and provisions of a lease, provisions on the plan of management, levels of resourcing, and particularities of on-ground management." For example, the most common style of joint management arrangement in Australia is commonly called the 'Uluru' model. In this scenario, protected areas affected by Aboriginal land claims are 'handed back' to Aboriginal traditional owners via a legislatively enabled transfer of title. The land is then leased back to the state or territory government by Aboriginal traditional owners for a long period of time (anywhere from 30 to 99 years) to be managed as a protected area, with some financial and social justice benefits accruing to indigenous communities.

However, as pointed out in the section above, the contextuality of these arrangements means that what appears to be the same 'model' of joint management can be arrived at via very different processes and have substantially divergent outcomes. Whilst Uluru-style agreements are the most common, the politico-legal process through which they are arrived at varies widely. In the Northern Territory, all of the earliest joint management arrangements (i.e. Kakadu and Nitmiluk National Parks) came about via land claim processes under the ALR(NT)A; in NSW, joint management has been arrived at via Aboriginal community action and the wishes of senior management in NPWS to address the perceived failure of native title legislation on the east coast (field notes, 2000). These concerns were addressed in an amendment to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Aboriginal Ownership) Bill (NPWS, 1998). Likewise, arrangements for the day-to-
day management of these protected areas vary widely. In some places, (i.e. Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) Conservation Reserve which featured in Vignette 1), a local management committee meets every three months to decide higher level management directions, whilst all day-to-day management activities are conducted by the conservation agency. At Mutawintji National Park in NSW, most day-to-day management is carried out by Aboriginal park staff, and the park’s board comprises an Aboriginal majority (REF).

In general, it is possible to identify a number of common Australian joint management models based upon legally empowered structures such as land tenure, leaseback arrangements and governance. For example, Smyth (2001:83) identifies four structural ‘models’ of joint management in Australia. However, as Smyth was writing prior to the determination of whether native title was extinguished within some protected areas, there are now six models in existence. These are summarised in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model:</th>
<th>Gurig Model</th>
<th>Uluru Model</th>
<th>Queensland Model</th>
<th>Witjira Model</th>
<th>Keep River Model</th>
<th>Mungo Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Tenure</td>
<td>Aboriginal ownership (ALR(NT)A Title)</td>
<td>Aboriginal ownership (ALR(NT)A Title)</td>
<td>Aboriginal ownership</td>
<td>Park leased to Traditional Owners</td>
<td>Aboriginal ownership (Park Freehold Title)</td>
<td>Government ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Board of management with equal representation of Aboriginal owners and government representatives</td>
<td>Board of management with Aboriginal majority</td>
<td>No guarantee of Aboriginal majority on board of management</td>
<td>Aboriginal majority on board of management</td>
<td>Board or committee with Aboriginal majority</td>
<td>Management committee with Aboriginal majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaseback</td>
<td>No leaseback to government agency</td>
<td>Leaseback to government for long period</td>
<td>Leaseback to government agency in perpetuity</td>
<td>Ownership of land remains with government</td>
<td>Leaseback to government for long period</td>
<td>No leaseback; ILUA recognises Native Title rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee/rental payments</td>
<td>Annual fee to Aboriginal Owners</td>
<td>Annual fee to traditional owners, community council or board</td>
<td>No annual fee</td>
<td>No annual fee; operational money provided to board to manage park</td>
<td>Annual rental to traditional owners plus half of reserve income</td>
<td>No annual fee; Traditional Owners receive half of reserve income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Gurig National Park</td>
<td>Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu</td>
<td>Witjira National Park</td>
<td>Watarrka National Park</td>
<td>Mungo National Park; Rainbow</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nitmiluk, Mutawintji National Parks (pending) Valley Conservation Reserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3-1 Joint Management Models in Australia</th>
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The reason for the diversity of models found in Australia has a basis in differing politico-legal approaches taken to joint management by individual State and Territory governments. By this I mean that the joint management of protected areas has most often been achieved using mechanisms within legislation that recognise Aboriginal land rights in a broader context. As a result of the nation’s constitution, which determines that the States have primacy in creating laws regarding land use, all States and Territories have separate legislative instruments that recognise Aboriginal land rights, forms of land tenure (i.e. lands acts), and the roles and functions of conservation agencies (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy, 2001:39, 42). With the exception of the ‘Keep River’ and ‘Mungo’ models, it is the state or territory legislation-specific interplay of each of these legislative instruments that has created the range of joint management models which exist in Australia today. The exceptions to this, the ‘Keep River’ and ‘Mungo’ models presented in Table 3.1, also have a politico-legal basis, arising directly out of recognition or determination of native title rights and interests over protected areas under the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993. In a later section of this chapter, I return to the issue of joint management models and their particularities in the context of the history of joint management in the Northern Territory.

Returning to an analysis of the assumptions inherent in Australian understandings of joint management, two further observations can be made. In addition to the assumptions outlined in the section on co-management above, Australian joint management initiatives presume firstly that joint management takes place over national parks or other government-managed protected areas between governments and Aboriginal people, and secondly, that such agreements must have a basis in law. The pursuit of legal and political solutions to recognise indigenous people’s rights in land is one that appears -like the very notions of joint and co-management- to be unproblematic, inherently right and just. Yet, as I have pointed out in relation to the emergence of protected areas and conservation agencies, the creation of these cultural
forms is the result of historico-political processes, where what is written in law arises as the result of many factors, such as competing political claims to national parks, the concern of citizens for flora and fauna or political aspirations relating to nationhood. So whose interests and whose rights are represented in joint management arrangements and how are differing interests in land contested between groups across time and translated into law? What are the political and socio-historical circumstances leading to these legal decisions that create joint management?

International Context

Legally-sanctioned joint management first occurred in Australia in 1979 at Kakadu National Park, however the idea of joint management first emerged in an international setting at the beginning of the 1970s and gains pace rapidly throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. The emergence and spread of co-management can be interpreted within the broader socio-historical context as a response to changes in the conceptualisation of protected areas as well as to the growing international trend towards legal recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples inside nation-states (Figgis, 1999:5-12). During this time, co-management emerges along two very distinct trajectories: 1) attempts to reconcile non-renewable resource development with the interests of governments and indigenous peoples in First World nation-states; and, 2) the growth of protected areas within developing and Third World nations. Embedded within the second branch of this ‘history’ are linkages to other important trends arising from other domains of influence: the rise of international conservation organisations such as the IUCN and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as foci for promoting the rights of indigenous and local peoples; and, the influence of the ‘participatory approaches to development’ upon international development methods (Christens & Speer, 2006: 2).

The first historical trajectory outlined above, concerned with reconciling the interests of government and non-government stakeholders in land and natural resources, has often been called ‘claims-based’ co-management within the literature (Rusnak, 1997:6; Goetze, 2004:8). Claims-based co-management has its origin in indigenous claims to land in First World nations, particularly in the face of non-renewable resource development, and arises earlier (during the early-1970s) than ‘development-
The first examples of claims-based co-management arrangements have in common the discovery of or development of non-renewable resources in what has been called a ‘worldwide resource exploration boom’ in the early and mid 1960s (Peterson, 1981:1). The resource exploration boom itself has been discussed as associated with post-World War II industrial development in first world nations, the cold war, and the technological revolution focussed on space exploration and reliance on fossil fuels. In Alaska, the discovery of oil and gas on lands on which the state had informally recognized the rights of indigenous people to live and use resources for more than a hundred years led to a series of court cases to protect native rights and interests (Gardner & Nelson, 1980:48). The result was the passage of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act 1971 (ANCSA), and following this, the Alaskan National Interest Lands Conservation Act 1980 (ANCILA) (Foster, 1991: 364). With the passage of ANCILA, ten new protected areas were created (43 million acres in total) and a new category of protected area, the ‘national preserve’, was also created, permitting both indigenous subsistence activities and co-management of natural resources (Foster, 1991: 365). Despite this legislation however, to date no formal co-management agreements have been established in Alaskan national parks or preserves even though the legal provisions and means to do so have existed for more than a quarter of a century.

In Canada, it was the development of hydroelectricity and logging that led to the first examples of co-management in the province of British Columbia (Rusnak, 1997:6; Craig, 2002: 121 & 141). In 1971, the Nisga’a Tribal Council brought a suit against the government of British Columbia (Calder et al. v. Attorney General of British Columbia) declaring that their native title rights had not been extinguished on their traditional lands. Although the Supreme Court of Canada ruled against the Nisga’a in
1973, *Calder* is significant in that the court recognised native title to land at the time of European colonisation (Sadler, 2005:28). Following the *Calder* case, the Canadian government instituted a policy of regional land claims settlements, in order to create legal certainty in regard to a number of outstanding native title claims. The first of these, James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was created in 1975 and has resulted in the co-management of fishery and wildlife, forestry resources in tandem with indigenous socioeconomic development (Rusnak, 1997:11; Craig, 2002:120). In 1982 the Canadian constitution was amended following *Calder* to give recognition to indigenous peoples’ prior occupation of and continued rights in land (Rusnak, 1997:4).

The first example of protected area co-management in Canada arose out of a land claim during the same period as the James Bay Cree and Nishga’a peoples’ claims. In 1974, a logging proposal in the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia saw the Haida people take action and declare the area ‘protected’ on both natural and cultural reasons (Rusnak, 1997:7). The South Moreseby Wilderness Area was proposed in 1985, and was declared a World Heritage Site that year as well. The Gwaii Haanas National Park was created in 1988. A co-management agreement took six years to negotiate and was signed by both parties in 1993 (Craig, 2002: 141; Sadler, 2005: 68-69). The Gwaii Haanas co-management agreement is unique in that both parties formally agree to disagree over who ‘owns’ the land, and continue with the business of management regardless. Despite its early setbacks, Gwaii Haanas has become an important precedent for Canada. By 2005, Canada had moved from co-management of a single park to “…full-fledged collaborative management for the operation of all national parks in the territories” (Brown-John, 2005:1).

The second co-management trajectory found within the literature is associated with developing and Third-World nations and arises in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This trajectory could be called ‘community’ or ‘development-based’ co-management given its links with both international movements to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples living within nation-states and the influence of development agencies and development theories upon its emergence. Development or community-based co-management can be seen as a response to the establishment and rapid expansion of ‘Yellowstone’-type national parks and reserves in third world and developing nations
during the 1960s and 1970s, and the resulting displacement or denial of the land and resource rights of local and indigenous peoples in these areas (Hutton, Adams, Murombedzi, 2005: 342; Kalamandeen & Gillson, 2007:168). During the mid to late 1970s, local and indigenous peoples in developing and Third-World nations sought assistance from foreign NGOs, academics and international conservation agencies in representing their demands for recognition and rights to land and resources to national governments and other international bodies (Corbett, Marcus & Clifford, 1998:2). Development agencies saw community involvement in conservation as a possible means of ending poverty and bringing social and economic development to many parts of the world (Agrawal & Redford, 2006:32).

The ability to link conservation to development became a very powerful idea during the 1980s (indeed, it continues to be influential today), readily adopted by international monetary bodies such as the World Bank. The appeal of ‘community conservation’ to many development agencies is not hard to understand; it marries readily with ideas and methods familiar to them such as the notion of sustainable development, the drive for community empowerment through grass-roots or bottom-up approaches to problem solving, techniques of participatory planning and engagement, the idea of decentralised local governance and decision-making models. Many of these notions also appealed to governments and funding bodies worldwide, themselves embarking upon new and major public-sector reforms derived from the market-based, neo-liberal policies discussed in Chapter 2 (Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005: 344-354).

Furthermore, these issues were well-received by the international conservation community, which at the same time was grappling with the relevance of the Yellowstone model of protected areas in an increasingly complex world. The synergies flowing between development and conservation groups at fora such as the Third World Parks Congress, often called the ‘Bali Congress’, in 1982, contributed to the creation of new categories of protected areas which included human culture and habitation, and in particular, addressed the concerns of indigenous peoples (Lawrence, 1997:8; Corbett, Lane & Clifford, 1998:2). Indeed, the major theme of the Third World Parks Congress was how to reconcile the interests of indigenous and local peoples and conservation in protected areas and how to best create categories of
protected areas to reflect this. Subsequent WCPAs have continued this theme, for example, the Fourth World Protected Area Congress held in Caracas in 1992 which endorsed the expanded categories of protected areas that included the interests of indigenous and local peoples. This led to the IUCN’s creation of a detailed organizational policy on indigenous peoples’ involvement in protected areas and the subsequent development of IUCN sub-groups and publications promoting co-management (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari, Oviedo, 2004:1-12).

Unlike claims-based co-management, which has evolved in terms of legislation and legally sanctioned agreements between indigenous and government stakeholders, development or community-based co-management is characterised by a diversity of formal and informal agreements. These vary from those enshrined in legislation to those that exist as verbal agreements in highly local settings. One of the earliest and best known examples of community-based co-management is the Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe. CAMPFIRE arose directly out of the efforts of NGO workers and local academics wishing to link community development to conservation in the late 1970s, following changes to Zimbabwe’s Parks and Wildlife Act in 1975, which sought to give ranchers economic incentives to manage wildlife for conservation on private lands (CAMPFIRE, 1994:162).

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, community-based co-management spread widely across Africa, Asia and Latin America. In many cases, such as in Zambia, Nepal and India, this has resulted in the creation of legislation recognising indigenous people’s rights to participate in protected area management and in dramatic changes in government policy (Fisher, 2001:82; Hutton, Adams & Murombedzi, 2005:346). In other nations, community-based co-management takes place along a continuum of formal agreement to tokenistic consultation. Nonetheless, the rapid uptake of the practice has produced a burgeoning case-study literature, particularly over the past five years, much of it appearing in publications supported by the IUCN such as Sustainable Livelihoods and Co-Management of Natural Resources (2002), Community Empowerment for Conservation (2003), and various edition of the CEESP taskforce journal Policy Matters. The emergence of co-management in all its forms
and its highly ‘publishable’ subject matter has produced a number of important critiques of the practice, an issue to which I return later in this chapter.

Before moving on to the Australian context, I wish to emphasise several key themes that emerge from the international history of co-management. The first of these is the focus upon political solutions to indigenous peoples’ claims over land via ‘top-down’ legislation and agreements aimed at creating legal certainty for all stakeholders. In developed nations such as the United States, Canada and Australia, the main impetus for co-management has arisen from governments seeking to retain some management control of national parks with high symbolic or public value, or ensure access to land where resource extraction is possible, through the creation of legislation, agreements and governance bodies. Without pre-empting the discussion in later chapters, whilst this politically-derived solution has produced sophisticated and legally sound models of co-management, it has resulted in the prioritisation of governance structures and plans of management at the expense of ‘ground-level’ activities such as sustained indigenous involvement in day-to-day management programs. This may have led not only to the reification of governance structures and legislation as ‘successful co-management’ by governments, academics, and even members of the public (i.e. the idea that because Gurig National Park has a legal agreement and a board of management, joint management is successful), it might have also served to focus resources and the capacity development in these areas.

A second theme encountered in the history of co-management in First World Nations again relates to pursuit of legal means to secure rights to land by indigenous peoples, governments and resource developers. Although I discuss this in the Australian context shortly, the adversarial nature of the Western legal system arguably creates a climate in which participants are situated as ‘opponents’ contesting each other’s claims. Furthermore, resolutions handed down by courts can be seen to reinforce the oppositional nature of the process by creating ‘winners’, ‘losers’, and outsider determinations with which both parties must comply. In the context of co-management, this is often interpreted as a means of continuing the processes of colonisation (where indigenous peoples agree to leaseback arrangements), and importantly, within conservation agencies is viewed as an external political imposition (see for example, discussion in the previous chapter regarding NT responses to the
Uluru-Kata Tjuta handback, and Foster, 1991, for the (non)response of Alaskan NPS officials to co-management requirements). This external and adversarial imposition of co-management upon conservation agencies by higher levels of government and agencies representing indigenous peoples may act to disenfranchise these agencies and their staff, and create the grounds for future conflict at worst, or indifference at best.

The third important point arises from the emergence of co-management in Third World and developing nations, and the recent upsurge of ‘how-to’-type literature aimed at promoting co-management for those with little prior experience (for example, Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner & Haylings, 2003). The linking of development and conservation, and the uptake of this idea by the IUCN and its partner agencies, has brought to the attention of many park managers and government employees the existence of action research, participatory planning, and bottom-up community-centric techniques previously associated with the international development sector. This important cross-fertilisation has acted to introduce new ideas and methods for co-management planning and governance, and, may have acted to created new spaces in which indigenous alterity, values and voices can be heard and affirmed. The existence of truly participatory forms of co-management in Australia (for example, the detailed exploration and adoption of Aboriginal values into park management plans and on-the-ground-programs) was very limited prior to the emergence of participatory planning literature and its uptake by conservation agency and indigenous NGO staff.

**Land Rights, Mining and Certainty: The Beginnings of Joint Management in Australia 1963-1976**

I have suggested thus far that the emergence of joint management as in Australia comprises a political solution to the legal recognition of Aboriginal rights in traditional lands that are also protected areas (Lawrence, 1997; Smyth, 2001: 75). Although a large body of literature exists dealing with the origins of the land rights movement (Goodall, 1996; Wilmsen, 1989), the development of legislation addressing land rights and native title, and analyses of the effectiveness these
instruments (Woodward, 1974; Peterson, 1981; Maddock, 1983; Hiatt, 1989; Reeves, 1998), it is salient to summarise these issues here. As was discussed in Chapter 2, local responses to the ‘imposition’ of land rights upon the Northern Territory and the management of NT national parks by the Commonwealth government have been influential in creating the socio-historical and organisational contexts -in particular, acting to inform local conflicts and issues- in which the current study is located.

In common with similar cases in Alaska and Canada, the initial recognition of land rights in Australia arose from the development of non-renewable resources. In 1963, a plan to extract bauxite from a site near Yirrkala in Arnhem Land resulted in senior Aboriginal men from this area presenting a petition written on bark opposing the mining excision to the House of Representatives. A subsequent Parliamentary Select Committee was convened to consider the matter, and found that although Aboriginal people could not hold title to this land under Crown Law, they were entitled to some form of compensation for loss of ‘traditional occupancy’ (Hiatt, 1989:100). However, no other concession were made to the Yirrkala people and mining of bauxite commenced at the site.

Following this, in December 1968, Yirrkala people brought an action in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory against Nabalco Pty Ltd over the occupation of their traditional lands (Howie, 1981:28). The hearing for this landmark case, *Milirrpum and Others v. Nabalco Pty Ltd and the Commonwealth of Australia*, began in May 1970, and was presided over by Justice Blackburn. Milirrpum and other Aboriginal plaintiffs were represented in the case by A. E. Woodward, Q.C. In April 1971, Justice Blackburn handed down his findings in the case, stating that Aboriginal law did not contain any form of proprietary interests in land and that the laws of the Commonwealth and Northern Territory did not recognise communal title (Maddock, 1983:11-13).

A change of government in November 1972 saw Gough Whitlam elected on a number of socially progressive issues, including the promise to recognise Aboriginal land rights in law (Howie, 1981:28). In early 1973, Whitlam appointed Justice Woodward as Aboriginal Land Rights Commissioner, asking him to report upon “... the appropriate means to recognise and establish the traditional rights and interests of
the Aborigines in relation to land, and to satisfy in other ways the reasonable aspirations of the Aborigines to rights in or in relation to the land” (Woodward, 1974:1). Initially, Woodward was to investigate means of creating legislation that recognised land rights across all of Australia, but this proved too difficult and he focussed upon the Northern Territory (Maddock, 1983: 27-28). Two reports were compiled by the Aboriginal Lands Commission, one in July 1973 and a final report in April 1974, making recommendations for draft legislation recognising Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory. A Bill presenting the draft legislation was introduced into the House of Representatives in October 1975; however the Bill was opposed by both the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, mining companies and pastoralists (Howie, 1981:30). Following substantial alteration, the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (ALR(NT)A) was passed by Federal parliament in December 1976 (Hiatt, 1989:102).

Within his Second Report, Justice Woodward discussed the issue of reconciling Aboriginal interests with conservation. Several of Woodward’s recommendations relate directly to joint management. In his opening paragraphs to this section, Woodward (1974: 95-97) states:

...an attempt should be made to reconcile Aboriginal interests with those of conservation. In many cases this should not present any problems. It should be possible to employ Aboriginal rangers and guides in protected areas. A scheme of Aboriginal Title combined with national park status and joint management should be acceptable to all interests.

It is pertinent to note the sentiments recorded within the submissions to the Commission and the very subtle differences between them. The Central Land Council (CLC) reported that Aboriginal people in its region supported the idea that national parks which became Aboriginal lands should retain their status as national parks, except for Uluru-Kata Tjuta, which needed to be dealt with separately. The Northern Land Council (NLC) supported the return of wildlife sanctuaries to Aboriginal ownership, and stated that if protection of wildlife was necessary, this be undertaken jointly by Aboriginal people and government officers (Woodward, ibid).
The Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Conservation submitted its support for the “... traditional use of land by Aborigines” in national parks and reserves, but stated that management control of the land should remain with the Department or a “... new National Parks and Wildlife Authority.” The Australian Conservation Foundation submission supported joint management on the basis that it offers a solution that mutually benefits Traditional Owners and the broader community, whilst the CSIRO raised concerns about access to Aboriginal lands for ongoing scientific research (Woodward, 1974: 95-96).

Perhaps the greatest and most surprising difference of opinion is in those expressed by the Department of the Northern Territory, representing the NT Legislative Assembly, and the Northern Territory Reserves Board (NTRB). The Department of the Northern Territory opposed any move towards the reservation of land for either Aboriginal or conservation interests, arguing for “... reconciliation between conservationist and exploitative interests ... through expert multi-disciplinary surveys in consultation with Aborigines”. In clear opposition to this, the NTRB submitted that “... there be joint management of National Parks”, and that “... management is seen as initially a cooperative effort leading ultimately to control by Aborigines” (Woodward, ibid). Given the history of poor relations between the NTRB and other sections of the NT Administration this is not difficult to understand.

Predictably, the introduction of the ALR(NT)A was opposed by the Northern Territory’s CLP-led Legislative Council at the time, pastoralists, mining companies and many members of the Territory’s administration. Whilst the NTRB did not oppose land rights legislation and, as indicated above, was openly supportive of joint management, the passage of the Commonwealth’s National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 (NPWC) which removed the management of Uluru-Kata Tjuta and the proposed Kakadu National Parks from Northern Territory control, substantially altered the attitude of many Conservation Commission staff towards joint management in later years (Hare, 1982:81-83). What is important to note here is that support for or opposition to joint management was a point of conflict between NT Government departments as well as between the NT and Commonwealth Governments, something cleverly masked by both legislation and much of the joint management literature.
In the Wake of ALR(NT)A: Kakadu National Park

At the time the ALR(NT)A was introduced, no national park or reserve was included in Schedule 1 of the Act, which listed lands available to claim. Kakadu National Park, Australia’s first jointly managed national park, arose out of the complex interplay of uranium mining, Woodward’s recommendations for joint management, a land claim and the NPWC. In the context of widespread public concern about uranium mining, a Commission of Inquiry, the Ranger Uranium Environmental Inquiry was established under the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974 to investigate the environmental, social and economic impacts of uranium mining in the Alligator River area (De Lacy, 1994:485; Lawrence, 2000: xx; Nugent, 2002: 14). The inquiry was chaired by a senior Supreme Court judge, Russell Fox, and sat for a total of 121 days between September 1975 and March 1977.

During the course of the Inquiry, the Whitlam Government was dismissed from office and a new pro-uranium mining government headed by Malcolm Fraser was elected. The timing of this change of government coincided with the tabling of the Bill for the draft ALR(NT)A in Federal parliament (only two days earlier). The Fraser government subsequently made a number of amendments to the draft legislation, most notably removing the power of Aboriginal people to veto or fully veto mining explorations on their lands. Sub-clause 40 (c) of the ALR(NT)A specifically excludes the proposed Ranger uranium mine from veto. As the Ranger Inquiry proceeded and the ALR(NT)A passed into law, the Fraser government realised that it had failed to appoint a Land Commissioner to investigate Aboriginal claims in the area covered by the proposed mine. The task of doing so was then given to the Ranger Inquiry itself (Nugent, 2002:15; http://www.sea-us.org.au/ranger/ranger-gulliver.html).

The findings of the Ranger Inquiry were published in two parts. The first report discussed the impacts of developing a uranium industry in Australia. The second report dealt with the Ranger uranium deposits in detail. Its findings contained recommendations for recognising the conservation value and cultural significance of the area, and proposed that a jointly managed national park be established in the area.
Another significant recommendation was that the two uranium deposits sites (Ranger and Jabiluka) be excised from the new national park. Under stringent restrictions, uranium mining was to be permitted at the Ranger deposit only (Nugent, 2002: 14). The conclusions handed down by the Commission regarding the creation of a jointly managed national park were drawn largely from Woodward’s advice in his second report (1974:95-97) and submissions heard as part of the land claim within the Ranger Inquiry. As a result, the ALR(NT)A Schedule 1 was amended to include lands successfully claimed in the Ranger Inquiry.

Following the release of the Ranger Inquiry’s findings, the Commonwealth government commenced intense negotiations with ERA, the mining company seeking to develop the deposits, Aboriginal people via the NLC, and the Northern Territory government. It is pertinent to note that these negotiations were often fraught, with legal inconsistencies, misinformation and ‘heavy-armed’ tactics reported by several authors to ensure a quick sign off on both the national park and uranium mining agreements (Nugent, 2002: 22; see also http://www.sea-us.org.au/ranger/ranger-gulliver.html for a detailed timeline and interviews with participants in the process). The NLC lobbied strongly that the new national park should not be managed by the Northern Territory Administration, a point with which the Commonwealth government concurred. The ALR(NT)A was subsequently amended to ensure that the proposed Kakadu National Park was to be managed by the Commonwealth government’s Australian National Parks and Wildlife (ANPWS) Service (De Lacy & Lawson, 1997:164).

On 3 November 1978, both the Kakadu and Ranger agreements were signed. Under the Kakadu agreement, traditional owners were required to lease their lands to the Director of ANPWS for one hundred years. This was later altered to ninety-nine years (Woenne-Green, Johnston, Sultan & Wallis, 1995:273; Nugent, 2002, 14). To permit such a lease arrangement, the NPWC Act was amended (De Lacy & Lawson, 1997: 164). The initial agreement did not include formal joint management structures such as a board of management, but did require ongoing Aboriginal consultation in regards to day-to-day park management, along with employment and training for traditional owners (Woenne-Green, et.al., 1995:275).
The formal declaration of 6144 square kilometres as Kakadu National Park (Stage I) took place in June 1979 (Weaving, 1991:318). Stage II of the park was added in 1984 covering lands claimed successfully under a subsequent land claim, along with land over which Aboriginal traditional ownership was not upheld during the claims process. Stage III of the park was Aboriginal land incorporated into the park over a period of four years, from 1987-1991. A new lease agreement, which followed criticisms of the first agreement (see discussion below), was also signed in 1991, which required the formation of a legally-empowered board with an Aboriginal majority (Nugent, 2002:17). This model of joint management, based upon the arrangements at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, is now the most common joint management arrangement in Australia.

It is pertinent here to discuss the organisational structure of Kakadu National Park, the role of the Gagadju Association in park management, and the nature of organisational culture within the Park. Weaving (1991: 320-231) and Lawrence (2000) note that financial and decision-making power for the park were initially concentrated in Canberra and to some extent in Darwin. To offset this, the Park was staffed by a comparatively large, specialist staff of twenty-nine. Although there was at first no formal role for the Gagadju Association, which was created to disperse mining royalties, subsequent renegotiation of the lease agreement has seen this organisation become a major vehicle for planning, policy and management of the park. Finally, high levels of day-to-day level of communications between ANPSW staff and Aboriginal people comprising informal consultations and decisions, shared tasks on the Park, and in some cases, close residential arrangements, have created an organisational culture strongly focussed upon incorporating Aboriginal needs and values into park management (Pearson, personal communication, 2007).

Several issues are worth noting here before moving on. The first concerns the absence of a formal, legally empowered Aboriginal governance body within the first Kakadu lease. This has lead a number of authors (e.g. Foster, 1997:2; Smyth, 2001:75) to discount Kakadu National Park as Australia’s first example of joint management in favour of Gurig Ganak Barlu National Park (also called Cobourg and Gurig). To suggest this is to deny the well-documented accounts from both traditional owners and ANPWS staff of the highly embodied, intimate and intense relationships and co-
operative management actions that took place on the ground at Kakadu during its first years—which they describe as joint management—regardless of the lack of a formal governance structure (Weaving, 1991: 321; Wonne-Green, et al., 1995:273). This again draws attention to the emphasis placed upon top-down governance structures found in the co-management arrangements of First World nations. Whilst these structures create legal certainty, they also serve to mask and delegitimise the highly contextual nature of joint management as a ‘practice’—a series of relationships between actors on the ground—as well as a legal process.

My second point here concerns the emergence of national parks in the Northern Territory as a site of political struggle between the Commonwealth and Territory governments. As discussed in Chapter 2, the power of the Northern Territory to govern itself and make decisions concerning its lands is circumscribed to some extent by the Australian Constitution, which grants the Commonwealth government the authority to make laws over Australian territories (Summers, 2001: 15). The most significant site of struggle over land and laws in the Northern Territory has been in relation to Aboriginal land rights which until recently the Territory challenged vehemently on the basis of territorial sovereignty, asserting that “... land rights should not be within the legislative province of Canberra” (Heatley, 1990:128).

However, the declaration of Kakadu National Park under the Commonwealth NPWC Act and its subsequent administration by a Canberra-based park agency represented another instance of the imposition of Commonwealth rule upon the Territory—and a significant one given the economic potential of the Park. It also signalled what was potentially to come for the rest of the Territory’s national parks and reserves, and most especially, for Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. The Northern Territory government reacted swiftly in 1978, vesting title for all of its national parks and reserves in the Conservation Land Corporation. This vesting was to have

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20 Anecdotally, a number of PWS staff told me this was done to prevent parks and reserves either 1) being claimed under the ALR(NT)A, or 2) removed from NT management and placed into Commonwealth hands. In my conversations with former CCNT Board members, the first suggestion has been rejected in favour of the latter. Given the historical context—and Board members’ political affiliations—I remain cautiously sceptical.

96
unparalleled ramifications for the Territory’s national parks and reserves in later years, as will be discussed shortly.

There are two other factors encompassed within this power struggle which I shall mention briefly here. The management of Kakadu by the ANPWS, and more deleteriously, the absolute removal of CCNT management and staff from Uluru in May 1986 created hostility towards joint management amongst CCNT staff which was still evident in senior and executive PWS staff when I commenced work at the agency in 2003. The other factor arising from the vesting of the land associated with both Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks in the Commonwealth was that when the possibility of a land claim being lodged over the Cobourg Peninsular Flora and Fauna Reserve - the NT’s oldest reserve - arose the Northern Territory government took joint management into its own hands.

**Territorial Struggles: Joint Management 1981-1990**

Joint management in Australia between 1981 and 1990 continued to focus largely on the management of Northern Territory parks, although moves were made in NSW to begin drafting legislation that would eventually lead to ‘hand backs’ (De Lacy, 1994:493). The second park to come under joint management arrangements during this time was Gurig National Park, located about 250km northeast of Darwin. In comparison with its world-renowned neighbour, Kakadu National Park, it remains relatively unknown to most visitors to the Territory despite its considerable natural and cultural significance. Gurig (now called Gurig Ganak Barlu) National Park, has been referred to by several commentators as Australia’s first jointly managed park, in that it has been governed by a board of management comprising both Aboriginal people and conservation agency staff since its inception (Foster, 1997:2; Smyth, 2001:75). The creation of joint management arrangements over this park need to be viewed in terms of both local responses to Commonwealth control of the NT’s park estate and failed attempts by the NT government to institute its own land rights legislation.
In many ways, joint management at Gurig arose out of the efforts of Paul Everingham, the NT’s first Chief Minister, and his desire to demonstrate that the Territory could manage its own affairs. Everingham attempted to create legislation recognising Aboriginal land rights contiguous with the creation of the ALR(NT)A however this was rejected by Traditional Owners and the Land Councils. Instead, he chose to focus his efforts on creating a system of joint management that was legally stronger than that offered to Aboriginal people by the Commonwealth government. He chose Gurig National Park not only because of the impending land rights claim that was being prepared by the NLC at the time, but also because of the time he had spent there both fishing and relaxing. Politically, this can be interpreted as an attempt to recognise Aboriginal rights in land in a manner that appealed to non-indigenous (and largely conservative voters) and indigenous (mainly ALP voters), also able to promote economic development via tourism within the Territory (Foster, 1997: 5-7).

Following long negotiations, Traditional Owners advised the NLC that they would not proceed with the land claim, but rather, wished to accept the return of title and the ongoing operation of a national park (Smyth, 2001:76). After ten separate drafts of the legislation, the Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Sanctuary Act 1981 was passed in March of the same year. The Act creates an eight member Board of Management, comprising four Aboriginal and four non-Aboriginal members. The Board’s Chairperson must also be Aboriginal and has the right of veto on any decision (Weaving, 1991:316). The title of the land is inalienable freehold owned by Traditional Owners and vested in an Aboriginal land trust. This is then leased back to the NT government in perpetuity, and a lease fee paid to Traditional Owners. Day-to-day management of the park is undertaken by PWS staff, a number of which are Traditional Owners (De Lacy, 1994:487). The Act also made provisions for the building of houses at Outstations on the Park (N.Peterson, personal communication).

The organisational structure and culture of Gurig should be considered briefly here. Unlike Kakadu, with its replication of a small government agency to account for its own bureaucratic isolation, the simple organisational structure of Gurig National Park (that of a chief ranger, a senior ranger, and a number of lower ranked ranger staff) is identical to that found in most of the PWS-managed parks and reserves. Policy, administrative and planning functions and staff take are located in Darwin, rather than
on-park. Further, there is no Aboriginal association such as Gagadju to resource Aboriginal people’s efforts to participate in park management; rather this is done formally through the Gurig Board and NLC representation and informally via close relationships between Traditional Owners as PWS staff (Weaving, 1991:317; interview informant, 2004).

Although Gurig has been upheld as a successful example of joint management by the NT government, interviews and informal conversations with rangers who have worked at the park suggest that its success is mixed. Whilst the Board of Management is functional and a number of Aboriginal staff are employed on the park, the rapid growth of outstations at the Park following the return of many Traditional Owners to Gurig has placed strain upon ranger-Aboriginal relations. To paraphrase one senior ranger who worked at the Park for many years, it was difficult to balance the expectations of the Aboriginal community in regards to the maintenance of community housing and infrastructure with the everyday commitments of park management duties. Another problem recounted by colleagues has been increasing community dysfunction and its connection to alcohol. Anecdotally, I was told of the disruption of Board Meetings by members fighting with relations or simply falling asleep due to heavy drinking (field notes, 30 September 2004). However, park staff also described the deep satisfaction of being part of an Aboriginal community and stressed the positive nature of interpersonal relationships.

In contrast to Gurig, Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park is perhaps the best known example of joint management in Australia. A reserve was first established at Uluru in 1958 (Ayers Rock Reserve), and was first managed by the NTRB and then the CCNT until 1985. A land claim was lodged over the area covered by the Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park in 1979, however this was unsuccessful. Following widespread and popular appeals to the Commonwealth government, 1325 hectares of land comprising the current national park were added to Schedule 1 of the ALR(NT)A in 1985 (De Lacy & Lawson, 1997: 167). In Chapter 2, I discussed some of the events surrounding the hand back of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park to Traditional Owners in October 1985 as recounted by PWS staff. Here, I will discuss the joint management arrangements and organisational structure of the park.
The Uluru ‘model’ of joint management, as discussed earlier in this chapter, has become the most widely applied form of co-management in Australia. At Uluru, land is held under inalienable freehold title by Aboriginal people and vested in an Aboriginal Land Trust, and then leased back to the Commonwealth government for 99 years. Initially, a Board of Management comprising six traditional owners, the Director of Parks Australia (formerly ANPWS), the Federal Minister for the Environment, the Federal Minister for Tourism, and an arid zone ecologist was established under the joint management arrangements. Day-to-day operations at the park are jointly undertaken by Traditional Owners and ANPWS (now called Parks Australia North) staff. Plans of management are to be renewed every five years, and there is a substantial annual fee paid to Traditional Owners and their communities (De Lacy & Lawson, 1997: 167; Smyth, 2001:79, 83).

The organisational structure of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park has more in common with Kakadu than it does with its Territory counterparts. For example, Uluru has the most sophisticated and complex organisational structure of any jointly managed park in the Northern Territory. The park has a total of 44 employees (31 full time and 13 part-time), with fifteen Aboriginal staff (this compares with nearby Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park, which has only seven full time staff managing an area of 71,000ha). Planning, administrative, interpretation, media, community liaison, cultural heritage, training, scientific and environmental management staff are all based on-park and reside at Mutijulu (Planning for People, 2006:10). There is also a dedicated Joint Management Office, responsible for developing relationships with Anangu and the Mutijulu community. This structural complexity reflects the park’s isolation from its executive and policy personnel based in Canberra and to a lesser extent in Darwin.

21 The Uluru Board now comprises 8 Aboriginal members, the Director of Parks Australia, and one representative from the NT government, tourism industry and Commonwealth Department of the Environment respectively (Planning for People, 2006:7).

22 The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is possibly the only Australian park with a more complex organisational and inter-governmental structure.
Interviews and informal conversations with former Parks Australia staff reveal a high level of responsiveness to the incorporation of Aboriginal cultural values within the organisation, as well as a structured program of daily on-the-ground joint management activities (for example, regular cultural days, hunting trips and participation of Anangu in park management programs) (interview informant, 2005). However, issues of staff retention (a common problem in the NT), overly complex and inefficient administrative structures, and limited capacity of Anangu to participate in and benefit from park management were cited as reasons why joint management was not as successful as it could have been. At the time of writing, an independent organisational review is taking place at Uluru-Kata Tjuta in the hope of addressing some of these issues (Planning for People, 2006).

One other protected area came under joint management arrangements in the Northern Territory during the 1980s, Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park. This followed the successful Katherine Area Land Claim which included the then Katherine Gorge National Park (Merlan, 1998:172). As with Gurig, the Northern Territory Government undertook negotiations with the Park’s Traditional Owners, offering joint management of the Park in return for not contesting the findings of the land claim. In contrast to the Gurig negotiations, the NLC were largely excluded from the discussions. An agreement to jointly manage the Park was reached between the NT government and the Jawoyn Association in 1988. In the opinion of many PWS staff, it has largely been through the efforts of the well-organised Jawoyn Association, a body comprised of Katherine area traditional owners, that joint management arrangements in Nitmiluk National Park have been successful (interview informants; field notes, November 2003).

As with Gurig, the Park has its own legislation underpinning the arrangement, the Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Parks Act 1989. Under the terms of the agreement, Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park is Aboriginal Freehold Land granted under the ALR(NT)A, and Traditional Owners of the Park have agreed to lease back the land to the NT government for 99 years (Smyth, 2001:78). The Act establishes a 13 member board, comprising eight Traditional Owners, four PWS staff and one local resident. A substantial lease fee is also paid to the Jawoyn Association. Although the Act states that Nitmiluk is to be managed on a day-to-day basis by PWS,
in reality, the Jawoyn Association owns and operates the large visitor centre, the campground and several tourist operations within the Park. They have also, at times, constructed housing and other infrastructure at the Park. At present, sixty percent of ranger staff at Nitmiluk are Jawoyn or people with cultural affiliations to the area.

PWS staff and Aboriginal informants asked about joint management arrangements at Nitmiluk for this study expressed an overall satisfaction with the arrangements currently in place, but were reflexively aware of the cyclical nature and personality-driven nature of ‘successful’ joint management, saying that this hadn’t always been the case. This raises several issues that I will discuss briefly below.

In discussing the history of joint management in the Northern Territory, the role of context cannot be understated. Contextually derived themes which recur throughout the previous discussion include: park location, the nature of the relevant government authority managing the park, the capacity of Aboriginal people to participate in park management, the history of relationships between organisations and the nature of relationships on the ground are all recurring themes within the four case studies of the first jointly-managed parks discussed above.

For example, the isolation of Gurig National Park has had implications for the ease of access to resources, such as NLC representation for Traditional Owners, whereas this has not been the case at neighbouring Kakadu, with a bitumen access road making it only a three hour journey from Darwin. The nature of the government authority is also deeply contextual, with Parks Australia North investing far more in human and other resources on location at Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks than the PWS has been able to, and giving higher importance to selecting staff with experience in or an aptitude for working with Aboriginal people. Likewise, a significant factor in the success of joint management arrangements at Nitmiluk can be argued to be the capacity in the Jayown Association and its members to participate in more than simply board meetings. Arguably, however, it is relationships on the ground, skinned over in most discussions of joint management, that determine the success or otherwise of joint management for its participants – something I return to in detail in Chapter 5.
Another theme that emerges from this linear history is the role of iteration in joint management. For example, it is evident in the narrative that a process of retrospective ‘improvement’ of the effectiveness of enabling structures such as legislation and board structures (especially in the case of Kakadu) is something which has taken place not only on a single park, but also where new joint management arrangements are created and lessons learned from the experiences of others put in place. This last point is particularly evident in the creation of joint management arrangements for Gurig National Park, where Traditional Owners opted to take up the NT’s offer of joint management because they felt it was ‘stronger joint management’, despite an uneasy relationship between Aboriginal and the then CLP-led NT government (Wonne-Green et.al, 1994:297). Another instance of iteration is in the commissioning of an external review at Uluru, seeking to identify problems and improve relationships between Anangu and Parks Australia North. Iteration, it should be noted, also takes place at program level within most park agencies through annual reviews and internal monitoring processes. Again, this is something I return to in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Accepted Practice, Native Title and the Ward Decision: Joint Management 1990-2002

In 1992, the full bench of the High Court upheld an earlier (1988) decision that the native title rights of the Meriam people of Murray Island were not extinguished at common law (Strelein, 2006:170). This decision, now known as the Mabo case, or simply as Mabo, has had profound implications for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal political, legal and social relations in Australia. In particular, it heralded the crafting of the Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993, an instrument that seeks to legally recognise the continuance of Aboriginal peoples’ rights and interests in land (De Lacy, 1994:489). The decision also creates (and continues to create) widespread public debate and detailed academic and legal discussion, and has significant ramifications for resource development, government policy and practice, and land tenure regimes across Australia. As I discuss below, the Act would have unforeseen implications for the Northern Territory, bringing into question the legal status of its parks and reserves.
After the implementation of joint management arrangements at Nitmiluk National Park in 1989, the momentum of new joint management arrangements slowed in the NT. In 1990, Gosse Bluff (Tnorala) Conservation Reserve became the first reserve in Central Australia to come under joint management arrangements since Uluru-Kata Tjuta in 1985. This was the outcome of a negotiated land rights claim settlement, involving the grant of title to the Tnorala Aboriginal Land Trust and the leasing back of the land to be managed as a reserve for 99 years. Under this agreement, a Local Management Committee (LMC) comprising an Aboriginal majority of 2-4 members, along with two members appointed by the Minister is established. The agreement also establishes the rights of Aboriginal people to occupy and use the reserve and that day-to-day management of the park rests with the PWS (Tnorala plan). At the time of negotiation, a very small lease fee was to be paid to the Land Trust, but this has since been renegotiated (C.Day, personal communication).

North Island (Barranyi) National Park (located in the Gulf of Carpentaria, near Borroloola, 737 km south east of Darwin) came under an identical arrangement in 1992 following another negotiated ALR(NT)A claim settlement. The only significant differences between the Barranyi agreement and that of Tnorala is in the establishment of an Aboriginal living area on the park, and the employment of Traditional Owners as rangers (PWCNT, 2001:5) However, both the Barranyi and Tnorala arrangements have been criticised for not equitably sharing decision-making powers with Traditional Owners. This arises from the lease agreements, which state that the LMCs are empowered to only ‘assist’ and ‘make recommendations’ for the management of these reserves (Brown, 1992:87; Woenne-Green et.al, 1994:298). The adequacy of power sharing and decision-making mechanisms is a common critique of co-management arrangements within the literature to which I return to in the following section. Senior rangers and regional managers within PWS were aware of these criticisms and have, during discussions with their Land Council counterparts, indicated an urgency to ‘bring them into line’ with other more recent joint management arrangements (field notes, August 2006).

Another negotiated land claim settlement over the Cape Hotham Conservation Reserve, Cape Hotham Forestry Reserve and the Marrakai Conservation Reserve led to the creation of the jointly-managed Djukbinj National Park in 1997 (PWCNT, 104
2001:5; CALM, 2004: 13). Under this arrangement, the Limilngan-Wulna people were granted Aboriginal freehold title to these reserves and agreed to lease them to the PWS for management as a national park for 50 years. A Board of Management was also established, although it operated under similar terms to the LMCs of Tnorala and Barranyi. Day-to-day management of the park is undertaken by the PWS; however, several Traditional Owners are employed as rangers to manage the park (along with two nearby parks). Aboriginal living areas have also been established within the Park.

By the close of the decade, no new title transfer/lease back arrangements had taken place in the Territory, although joint management arrangements via LMCs identical to those in place at Barranyi and Tnorala were instituted at Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park, Keep River National Park and Flora River Nature Park and Tjuwaliyn (Douglas Hot Springs) Nature Park (PWCNT, 2001: 4-5). These arrangements have met with varying success, and often suffer from periods of inactivity. For example, the much discussed Watarrka LMC became inactive in the early 2000s with some PWS staff saying that it was ".... too difficult to get the Traditional Owners interested in coming to meetings..." and others suggesting that successive Chief District Rangers (responsible for organising LMC meetings) were ideologically opposed to joint management and thus had no interest in running such meetings (field notes, November 2003).

Such mixed sentiments regarding joint management are further revealed in internal documents and in my own discussions with long term PWS staff. Whilst the CLP-led Northern Territory government maintained its opposition to land and native title claims in the courts, PWCNT records include memoranda with titles such as 'Negotiation Opportunities with the Central Land Council Regarding Southern Regions Parks' (circa 2000), which made recommendations for parks and reserve title transfers to Aboriginal land trusts with leasebacks to PWCNT on Watarrka, Davenport Ranges and Finke Gorge (Palm Valley) National Parks, and the Joint Management Issue Paper (PWCNT, 2001) which called for a much expanded and 'even' approach to joint management. This latter paper notes that:
A number of successful cooperative conservation and joint management initiatives have been achieved... But the full potential of such cooperative ventures has not been realised. This has been partly related to various levels of commitment within the Commission, partly a question of resources and partly due to somewhat prickly relationships with the Territory’s Land Councils (PWCNT, 2001:2).

Whilst relationships with the Land Councils were unlikely to improve or be sanctioned without support from other sections of government, the PWCNT was also aware of its own shortcomings in regard to co-management: varying levels of commitment to joint management from staff, varying levels of interest amongst Aboriginal people, socio-economic barriers to participation within Aboriginal communities, lack of capacity (as in communicating with Aboriginal people or knowing which Aboriginal people to communicate with), resource constraints, and lack of understanding between both Aboriginal people and PWCNT staff (PWCNT, 2001: 8-9). Furthermore, although many PWCNT staff revealed to me during interviews and informal discussions that they were supportive of joint management initiatives at the time, most remained suspicious and adverse to the Land Councils’ ‘... gatekeeping, bullying and paternalism’ or said they were keen to avoid ‘... Uluru-style bureaucracies’ viewed as inefficient and restrictive (interview informant, September, 2006).

As joint management initiatives in the NT slowed, by 2001, most state and territory governments in Australia had instituted means to recognise Aboriginal peoples’ connections to land reserved as protected areas (Smyth, 2001:75; CALM, 2004). As it is outside of the scope of this thesis to discuss these arrangements in detail, a brief summary is presented here. Currently, institutional arrangements aimed at recognising Aboriginal peoples’ rights in protected areas vary from legislation enabling full title transfer and lease back (similar to those at Uluru and Nitmiluk National Parks) to purely consultative means. Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia (along with the Northern Territory) are at present the only states to have enacted legislation which permits title transfer and lease-back arrangements to Aboriginal people (CALM, 2004:1, 13 &17). Although Western Australia, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Tasmania as yet have no formal
mechanisms for title transfer and lease-back arrangements (Western Australia is currently drafting legislation to this end), they have instituted a variety of means for achieving some degree of co-management of protected areas with Aboriginal people. These include advisory committees and cultural heritage management (Smyth, 2001:82; interview informant, 2004). However, the impacts of successive native title cases may alter this situation in the future – as has happened in the Northern Territory.

In 1994 the Mirriuwung and Gajerrong peoples lodged a claim under the Commonwealth *Native Title Act 1993* over an area of some 136,000 square kilometres in the eastern Kimberley region of Western Australia and parts of the Northern Territory (Strelein, 2006:59). The claim included Lake Argyle, the town of Kununurra, part of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme, the Argyle Diamond Mine and Keep River National Park and surrounds. In November 1998, Justice Malcolm Lee handed down his findings on this claim, determining that native title existed over 7900 kilometres of land in the claim area.

Justice Lee’s determination was significant not simply for those directly affected by it (the claimants and defendants) but for future applications of the Native Title Act. Lee J. recognised that native title existed as an underlying right in land, from which specific rights (as in ‘bundles of rights’) were derived. Amongst a number of other important findings relating to the extinguishment of native title over minerals, and the nature of native title itself, Lee J. determined that the reservation of land for a public purpose such as a national park did not automatically cause extinguishment. This decision marked the first successful recognition of native title on mainland Australia since the enactment of the *Native Title Act* (Strelein, 2006: 59-60).

Both the claimants and defendants appealed to the Full Federal Court in 2000, and then again to the High Court in 2002. In August 2002, the full bench of the High Court handed down its findings on the case in *Western Australia v. Ward* (Strelein, *ibid*). This decision has become known as *Ward*. A number of the findings in *Ward* clarified issues relating to the nature of native title itself: its extent under the Native Title Act, that partial extinguishment could occur and that claimants did not need to prove recent presence in an area to establish a connection. Other findings related to the extinguishment of native title by various land tenures: that pastoral and mining leases did not completely cause extinguishment; however, the High Court found that
under West Australian (WA) Law, the vesting of Crown reserves in the *Land Act 1933* (WA), native title was extinguished over national parks and other reserves (NTT, 2002:1-2).

Whilst this might have sounded like good news for the NT government and its concerns over Keep River National Park, the determination in *Ward* found that the special purpose lease which had created this park was not in accordance with the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act* (RDA) 1975. In simple terms, the grant of the lease creating Keeping River National Park was one of ‘exclusive possession’, and as the High Court determined that the *RDA* was in operation at the time of this grant, the Northern Territory had not taken into account the interests of other people (in particular, Aboriginal people) in creating this ‘exclusive’ grant and vesting it in the Conservation Land Corporation (Strelein, 2006:75). This in turn meant that a number of claims lodged under the ALR(NT)A and Native Title Acts over parks and reserves in the NT which, until this time had been deemed to be invalid on the grounds that these lands could not be claimed under either Act, were now potentially valid.

Furthermore, legal advice to the NT government suggested that this decision not only ‘revived’ claims under the ALR(NT)A and Native Title Acts, but meant that a significant number of parks (50) in the NT were invalidly declared. Whilst legal opinion was that the PWS did have the powers to manage many of these areas under its own Act (the TPWCA), the invalid declaration of all fifty reserves meant that many would have to be redeclared. Those affected by now ‘valid’ claims under the ALR(NT)A or Native Title Act were, however, not able to be redeclared (NTG, 2003:1). Given that many of the parks affected by this latter point were ‘tourist icon’ parks such as Gregory National Park, the West MacDonnell National Park and Watarrka National Park, the Northern Territory government found itself in a difficult political and legal situation. The determination meant that, although PWS could manage these reserves, commercial tourism concessions could be threatened, there were potential issues of compensation related to native title, and in some parks, the possibility that a successful land claim under *ALR (NT)A* would see the parks closed to public access altogether. To challenge such land claims meant litigation lasting years, costing millions of dollars and halting any further developments on these parks; to agree to recognise land rights and native title meant negotiating with the Land
Councils, being seen as ‘giving away’ public assets, and risked alienating sections of the Territory public (Dillon & Westbury, 2007:101).

The Framework for the Future: A Negotiated Settlement

It is salient here to revisit the political situation in the Northern Territory, as I believe that the events that took place immediately following Ward, particularly in regards to the swiftness and the ‘spirit’ in which they took place, would not have previously been possible in the NT. In September 2001, after twenty-six years of Country Liberal Party government, a Labour government led by former ABC journalist, Clare Martin, was elected to power. As recounted in Chapter 2, a number of major changes took place, such as the creation of ‘super’ departments and the replacement of senior public servants whose loyalties to the previous regime placed them in conflict with the new government. The sense of disbelief, excitement and relief in the Northern Territory community at this time is perhaps best summed up by a personal anecdote. Whilst at the Yeperenye Festival in Alice Springs in October 2001, I met the newly elected Chief Minister, Clare Martin, and congratulated her. I said it was a welcome surprise to many that Labour had been elected. To this Chief Minister smiled broadly and said: Yes, I'm still getting over it. I can hardly believe it myself.

By September 2002, less than a month after the High Court had handed down its findings in Ward, the NT government had not only sought its own legal advice, but had also formulated a strategy for dealing with this compromising situation:

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23 I will postscript this comment by stating that there are indeed instances where previous governments have attempted to accommodate Aboriginal peoples’ rights and interests throughout the history of the Northern Territory. This said, I would suggest that the speed with which the developments took place after Ward and the composition of the group authoring these developments (i.e. the inclusion of Land Councils in every stage of drafting legislation and agreements) would have been markedly different in previous Territory administrations.
It is proposed that the core of the proposed New Parks and Conservation Agenda for the Northern Territory should be a negotiated settlement of all ALR(NT)A Land Claims over parks and reserves (NTG, 2003:6).

Underpinning this strategy was a set of principles aimed at enabling title transfer (to Aboriginal land trusts), leaseback, and detailed joint management arrangements over thirty-three parks and reserves in return for blanket removal of ALR(NT)A and Native Title claims. The parks and reserves, along with Aboriginal land affected by the offer and the principles for lease agreements, were detailed in five different schedules that were to become part of the Framework for the Future Act. Native title was to be recognised via ILUAs over all parks and reserves affected by the agreement. The Territory government's reasons for this decision are evident within the strategy document: "...negotiation is more cost effective and less socially divisive than litigation in relation to the resolution of Land Rights and Native Title issues". Furthermore, the Territory government felt that such an offer to Traditional Owners and Native Title holders would enhance the appeal of the Territory's parks to visitors and "... generate for traditional owners significant socioeconomic benefits" (NTG 2003:4-5).

Negotiations with the Northern and Central Land Councils would be crucial to securing any such agreement, something the NT Government recognised even before it released its strategy document to PWS staff. Without agreement from the Land Councils, it was unlikely that any agreement would be reached with Aboriginal people. Initial negotiations with the land councils took place through the NT Office of Indigenous Policy. Formal negotiations with the land councils were undertaken by a team of NT Government and agency personnel, including representatives from the Chief Minister's Department, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, the Director of Parks and Wildlife (along with the PWS Director of Conservation Policy) and legal counsel from the Department of Justice (Dillon & Westbury, 2007:100). The Land Councils were understandably cautious about the offer, although comments made to me by CLC staff suggest that they were on the whole pleased with the conciliatory approach taken by the NT government. Their main contention was -and remains- that, in every case, Aboriginal people had no choice but to lease their lands.
back to the government. This reflects the ‘continued colonialism critique of joint management discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter One.

By April 2003, draft legislation creating the conditions and setting out the timetable and terms for such an agreement had been negotiated and prepared. In order to accomplish this, a series of open workshops between the NT Government, PWS and land council staff took place, with further high-level discussions held between legal and policy representatives of all organisations concerned. The involvement of the land councils in drafting the legislation and their success in securing the inclusion of points such as Aboriginal living areas on parks, consultation with Traditional Owners on any mining application along, with detailed principles and objectives for joint management, arguably hastened the process. The resulting piece of legislation was called *The Framework for the Future Act 2003*. Another document, the ‘*Deed Concerning Joint Management Principles for NT Parks*’ was also prepared, outlining joint management principles and objectives, decision making structures at Territory and regional levels, and also defining the roles and functions of all parties to the agreement (NTG:2003).

If the offers regarding land title and joint management, the timeframe and conditions proposed by the *Framework for the Future Act* were accepted by Traditional Owners, then the *Framework Act* would enable a process of amendments to both the TPWC and ALR(NT)A Acts reflecting the terms and conditions contained within the Act. Further negotiations took place between the Land Councils and government before the legislation was finally introduced into the NT Legislative Assembly in June 2004 (NT Gazette, 2004:2). During this time, Land Councils began the process of taking the offer to Traditional Owners and explaining it to them. In Central Australia and the Barkly region, nineteen parks were affected by the proposal. In terms of the timeframe proposed by the *Framework Act*, the CLC had six months to not only explain the offer, but also to ascertain the wishes of all Traditional Owners and Native Title holders connected to these nineteen parks. If however, additional time was needed, a mechanism within the *Framework* allowed the Chief Minister to extend this by another six months.
Given the number of reserves and logistical challenges involved in consulting with such large numbers of Traditional Owners, both Land Councils requested that this additional time be granted. The Chief Minister obliged, and the deadline for the offer was extended to 31 December 2004. By late 2004, the CLC had held three rounds of meetings with each Traditional Owner group affected by the offer. All Traditional Owner groups in the CLC’s region accepted the terms. The NLC was unable to secure agreement on Litchfield National Park, due to longstanding disputes over traditional ownership within traditional owner groups associated with the Park, Elsey National Park, where Traditional Owners rejected the offer, and Keep River National Park, where agreement was unable to be reached by 31 December 2004. The NLC requested an additional six weeks to negotiate with the Traditional Owners of Keep River National Park, which the government granted. During this time, the Framework for the Future Act expired.

In early February 2005, the NLC advised the NT government that the Traditional Owners of Keep River National would not accept the offer on the ground that the form of tenure offered (Park Freehold) was a lesser form of title than ALR(NT)A title. The government accepted this, and revived the Framework for the Future Act on February 17, reducing the number of parks and reserves affected by the legislation from 30 to 27. In March 2005, the amendments to the TWPC Act were passed through NT Legislative Assembly. Under these amendments, joint management agreements, plans and ILUAs could be established over 27 parks and reserves. In Chapters Five and Six, I return to events contiguous with these processes and the manner in which they were negotiated through organisational culture at the time of my own arrival within PWS.

24 Although most Traditional Owner groups in the CLC region accepted the offer in the first instance, Traditional Owners of Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve (approximately 100km south-east of Alice Springs) initially rejected the offer. This was due to the offer over Rainbow Valley being a ‘joint management agreement only’, rather than title to the reserve. Subsequent negotiations between CLC, PWS and Traditional Owners were able to reach a compromise whereby employment and business development programs for the reserve’s Traditional Owners, along with a Joint Management Plan and joint management governance body were to be given priority over other parks in return for acceptance of the government’s offer.
Whose Interests?

This discussion of the development of joint management in the Northern Territory highlights that it is not simply Aboriginal people as Traditional Owners or the government as the representative of the people whose interests are represented in these arrangements. The interests of mining companies, individual government ministers and their legal representatives, and most importantly, the two large NT land councils are also part of the trajectory of negotiation, dispute, consultation and compromise hidden within changes to the law and enacting of leasebacks that form the basis of joint management. It is pertinent to draw attention to the fact that during the initial high level negotiations which underpinned all the joint management initiatives discussed in this thesis, it was only executive members of the Parks and Wildlife Service staff members who were present. Whilst confidentiality is to be expected in such difficult and politically sensitive negotiations, the perception of this by PWS staff was slightly negative. Some PWS staff—although very supportive of joint management—felt that the interests of the land councils had been given precedence over those of the agency and its park management staff.

In considering the particular interests that each of these groups has in protected areas, it can be said that some are clear, whilst others are complex and well-hidden. For example mining companies have a clear and well-stated interest in extracting non-renewable resources from these areas and making a commercial profit from their activities. The higher levels of government and their legal representatives have an interest in securing certainty of tenure over protected areas for the interests of both the public and the tourism industry, and in the case of Kakadu and other resource-rich protected areas, for mining companies as well. However, representation of the interests of other sections of government, such as the department containing the Parks and Wildlife Service, are less evident in these processes. Whilst certainty over legal tenure may be the ultimate concern of the Chief Minister and his or her legal representatives, it cannot be assumed to be the primary interest in these areas of other sections of government. Indeed, most staff within PWS oppose mining in parks in any form, and many others view tourism enterprises and the management of large numbers of visitors as inimical to biodiversity conservation.
Alongside the complex and paradoxical nature of government, an equally complex set of interests encoded within the NT’s joint management arrangements are those of the land councils. Whilst the land councils are statutory bodies set up to administer the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act*, whose functions include acting as the legal representatives of all Aboriginal people with an interest in land, such interests are initially mediated through the land councils’ own legal and policy staff. Offers for initiatives such joint management are not directly negotiated between governments and Aboriginal Traditional Owners, but rather, pass through legal interpretation—and possible rejection—within the land council. Following this is a process of further translation and consultation mediated by largely white anthropology staff who arrange meetings with groups of Traditional Owners. Participants in these meetings are not self-selected via community or affiliation to land, but rather, are selected by land council staff following processes derived from the *ALR(NT)*A and formulated within the land council itself.

The interests of the land councils in joint management initiatives must be recognised and taken into account. Certainly, the tacit sub-narratives of controlling access to Aboriginal people via anthropologically-obscured ‘Traditional Owner Identification’ (TOID) processes and of assisting Aboriginal people in claiming land and administering land trusts are present within the previous historical narrative. Less obvious, but evident within the resulting legislation and agreements is the role negotiated for and by land council staff in almost every aspect of the park management from vetting filming applications and tourism enterprises, to demanding a say in job advertisements and interview processes, to input into and veto of feral animal culling programs, and even in sequestering large amounts of the NT Government’s joint management budget to employ land council staff and fund land council projects. The interests of land councils cannot be simply viewed as those of the legal representatives of Aboriginal people, but must be viewed as large and self-replicating complex bureaucracies seeking to promote their own continuation and influence within these arrangements. Indeed, the political power of the land councils to have themselves included in the entire joint management process—and their power to exclude others from this process—is discussed in the following chapters—evidence of this.
That said, this chapter has emphasised the diversity of interests inherent within joint management arrangements in the NT and elsewhere, and provided a critique of the assumptions on which these arrangements rest. Ironically, such arrangements in First World nations have arisen out of political settlements surrounding resource extraction in competition with indigenous peoples’ rights and conservation interests in or near protected areas. Such interests should not be assumed to be mutually compatible, nor are they perceived as mutually compatible by all participants. Assumptions about the willingness of participants to enter into joint management arrangements need to be carefully assessed. As the historical narrative demonstrates, such arrangements are invariably marked by compromise and forced participation through legal imperatives—such as successful land claims by Aboriginal people or the existence of mining leases. Participation by Aboriginal people, governments, mining companies and conservation agencies in joint management, therefore, should not be glossed over as either voluntary or desirable.

Furthermore, the political ability of participants to negotiate their interests within these arrangements is far from equal. This raises the issue of whether the interests of either Aboriginal people or conservation agencies are fully understood or represented in joint management arrangements. Whilst the inability of the NT Government to prevent the takeover of Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks by the Commonwealth Government suggests a clear political asymmetry between governments, another political asymmetry is seen in the joint management arrangements which form the context of this thesis. Aboriginal people at a community level were consulted two years after the initial framework for legislation and supporting agreements had been agreed to in principle by their own legal representatives (the land councils). Park managers—staff in PWS below that of senior executive level—had no choice about the arrangements at all. Rather, they were told of the NT Government’s policy decision and of the likelihood that their legislation would be altered. They would both participate in and implement the joint management of the areas they managed regardless of the compatibility of such arrangements with protected area management. Thus, assumptions of willingness and ability to participate equally, along with that of the diverse interests masked by joint
management arrangements all serve to highlight the potential for conflicts of interests and the possible failure of these initiatives.

Ultimately, joint management arrangements represent politically-motivated legal solutions to the issue of competing interests in protected areas. The combined negotiations of high level government officials, their legal representatives, resource companies and the land councils act to create agreements whose core aims are the creation of legislation to enable joint arrangements and supporting structures such as plans of management and joint management boards. This frames joint management as a practice that is inherently legal, oriented towards satisfying the aims and imperatives of legislation and representing—at least in some cases—an external imposition upon participants who may otherwise not choose to participate. What the interests of those at the core of this practice—conservation agencies and Aboriginal people—are and how those interests interact with the interests of other groups are explored in detail in the following chapters.
Chapter 4: Learning the Culture

Vignette: Jesus Dreaming

Donkeys were brought to the Davenport Ranges (approximately 350km north-east of Alice Springs) by pastoralists and miners in the years between the First and Second World Wars. They were used as quiet, reliable pack animals - a hardy alternative to horses. The Aboriginal people of this area, the Alyawarr, worked closely with donkeys on cattle stations and consequently developed a great affection for them. To Alyawarr people, donkeys belong to the country. Even more significantly, Alyawarr people consider donkeys to be sacred: donkeys carry the 'Jesus Dreaming story'. In the Bible story, a donkey carried Jesus to Jerusalem. People laid palm fronds on the road to make the journey smoother for him and to show their respect. As Alyawarr people see it, after riding the donkey to Jerusalem, Jesus left his mark and something of his essence in the animal. This is represented on the donkey's withers in the form of a black cross. Therefore, every donkey now 'carries Jesus Dreaming'.

The Davenport Ranges are now part of a national park, the *Davenport Murchison Ranges National Park*. The rangers who manage the Park see donkeys in a very different light. To rangers, donkeys are a feral animal - a threat to many native species of plants and animals in the Davenports. Donkeys cause erosion, foul waterholes, spread weeds and compete with endemic fauna for food, water and shelter. As rangers
see it, donkeys don’t belong in the Davenport Ranges. Both the PWS’s operational priorities and the legislation creating the organisation demand that rangers eliminate such threats.

In winter 2000, a large program to cull feral donkey and horse numbers in the Davenport Ranges was undertaken. Animals were shot by PWS staff, mostly from helicopter but also on foot. Due to the rugged terrain, and the fact that many animals were shot from the air, most carcasses were left to rot where they fell. Aboriginal people living adjacent to the Park were shocked by this. Driving home along the road and seeing this for the first time, several older Alyawarr women commented: *when we saw them* (dead animals) *we felt bad, very bad. We were driving out from one meeting, first time, and all these people were real sad. All on the road – horses and donkeys. We coming along the road, ‘Oh look at the donkeys, horse lying there’ ...killed on the road* (PWS & CLC, 2005:15).

Relationships between Traditional Owners of the Davenport Ranges and PWS staff had always been good. Yet, at a meeting several years after the feral animal shoot, Alyawarr people were still upset by what they had seen. Senior rangers tried to talk about the shooting program, explaining that the donkeys did not belong there and showing pictures of the damage they were doing to the environment. Some Traditional Owners were so upset they turned their backs on the rangers at the meeting. Traditional Owners said that they had not been asked about the donkey shoot and that the rangers did not understand their point of view: the donkeys carried Jesus Dreaming and belonged to the country. They understood that the donkeys harmed the country, but they did not want the donkeys shot – they wanted the donkeys moved out of the Park and the Park fenced.

Rangers told Traditional Owners that they did not have the money to muster every donkey from the Park, nor did they have the money to fence the entire Park. Yet, they wanted to do as Traditional Owners asked and remove the donkeys from the Park. Without the means to remove every donkey and keep them out permanently, however, the matter could not be resolved. Years later, there are still donkeys in the Park.
How then to deal with the issue? Should donkeys be allowed to remain on a national park because they now carry spiritual significance for Alyawarr people? Or should they be shot? Can park managers reconcile the legislative requirement to remove feral animals with contradictory or alternative conceptions? Indeed, can disparate values, attitudes and beliefs about the same park ever be reconciled?

Conflicts over land -over the meanings embedded in land- are central to joint management. In joint management, ‘big picture’ issues such as national identity, public wellbeing, European notions of conservation, Aboriginal land rights and the political interests of the parties involved in negotiating joint management arrangements all represent sources of potential conflict. On the ground, in parks and reserves throughout the Northern Territory, these ‘big picture issues’ pair seamlessly with local issues: the recognition of Aboriginal land rights underpins questions about donkeys in the Davenport-Murchison Ranges National Park; the financial resourcing of conservation agencies is juxtaposed with the culturally-derived beliefs of rangers about feral animals and threats to the environment. The site through which all of these twisting and multifarious layers of meaning are negotiated is conservation agencies themselves, inhered with the legal responsibility to implement joint management arrangements on the ground.

The interests, assumptions and understandings of conservation agencies -why, for example, are rangers required to remove donkeys from the Davenports?- represents another layer of cultural interpretation, structure, practice and agency in joint management arrangements. This is a critical layer -and one which is largely overlooked in discussions about joint management. Conservation agencies and their staff act as the lens through which the interests of all other parties involved in joint management arrangements are negotiated, implemented and at times resisted or superimposed. Responsibility for writing and enacting joint management plans, for running and supporting joint management boards and committees, for reporting on progress, for expending public monies allocated to joint management initiatives are largely the role of conservation agencies. In order to understand joint management -to begin to unravel the multiple interests in land centred upon jointly managed protected
areas - it is necessary to understand the interests of conservation agencies and their staff - not only in joint management, but in the broader management of protected areas as well.

In this chapter I examine the culture, structures, practices and agents of the Northern Territory’s conservation agency, the Parks and Wildlife Service. The central questions posed by this chapter are: How are conservation agencies structured? Who are their agents? What are their practices? What are the interests and understandings of conservation agencies in protected area management? In answering these questions, I engage the narratives of NT and organisational history presented in the previous chapters, arguing that their combined presence affects not only how the agency is structured, but also continues to shape what is done by the agency (including its staff) as well as providing rationale for why it is done. Central to this perspective is the role of legislation in PWS as both a cultural artefact and means of structuring practice, particularly in regards to joint management. This chapter builds upon the notion of conservation agencies as being legislatively rather than policy driven – and therefore slow to respond to or implement change.

Throughout the chapter, I also emphasise the notions of autonomy, values and natural integrity as structural elements arising from the day-to-day business of the agency and its staff. These factors, along with legislation, take on a fundamental role within PWS that shapes the agency’s internal culture and strong sense of identity, as well as its external dealings with other organisations. To arrive at these understandings, I examine the manner in which PWS staff undertake and perceive their role in protected area management across multiple scales within the agency, from social organisation to written artefacts to hands-on land management. In discussing these dominant structural narratives, I identify factors which may be influential in the agency’s approach to implementing joint management and in negotiating the interests of other groups involved in the broad scale joint management – which are the subjects of subsequent chapters.
Learning the Culture

On the 16th October 2003, I commenced employment with the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). Prior to my commencement with PWS, my knowledge of the organisation and its internal culture was limited. I knew that the Parks and Wildlife Service was a relatively small organisation, employing around 300 people across the NT. I knew that the agency’s head office was located at Palmerston, an outer suburb of Darwin, in a six-storey office building known as the Goyder Centre. The Goyder Centre houses Parks’ CEO, its Director, the head of Biodiversity Conservation, senior support staff, secretariat, administration and policy staff, and the organisation’s central library. I had a sense that like many NT Government agencies, PWS was structured around the familiar core-and-periphery administrative model: all NT Government departments had their head offices in Darwin with a number of smaller regional offices located in other population centres. After working in the agency for a few weeks, this perspective was confirmed. The Goyder Centre was referred to by staff as ‘Head Office’ or simply ‘Darwin’. Beneath this, the agency was divided into three geographical regions: Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs (colloquially called Northern, Katherine and Southern Regions). Each region was then further divided into two or more districts (refer Figure 4.2 for the Southern Region’s districts).

In my first few days at PWS, it was made clear to me that staff considered the agency to be ‘different’ to other government agencies. This was derived from the agency’s strong corporate identity –replete with symbolism- and its unique place in the NT Government. The agency’s strong sense of identity invoked a sense of pride and autonomy amongst staff, expressed to me terms of PWS’s well known logo, a wedge-tailed eagle in flight suspended over a map of the NT (humorously called ‘the eagle that never lands’), its possession of a uniform that clearly identified its officers, its exclusive role in managing parks and reserves and the contribution that this management made to the Territory’s economy and lifestyle. Yet, pride and symbolism were offset by disappointment regarding the new political position of the agency within the NT Government. There was a palpable sense of loss amongst staff when I arrived, related to the agency’s reduced political autonomy – its ‘decommissioning’- and placement within a new ‘mega department’: the Department of Infrastructure,
Planning and the Environment (DIPE). Previously, PWS had been an independent statutory authority, the Parks and Wildlife Commission, set apart from any other agency or department within the Northern Territory Government.

Administratively, the agency's incorporation within DIPE resulted in very few changes to the daily operations of its staff. Indeed, the most significant change in the agency's function was in its executive reporting and accountability structures, rather than its long-established management of parks and reserves. Despite this, most staff were vocal in their opposition to being part of DIPE: "... put in with the road builders and developers when it's our job to protect the environment" (fieldnotes, October 2003). Staff interpreted the agency's incorporation into DIPE as a concerted effort by successive NT administrations to reduce their autonomy and play down the agency's strong identity. This fact, when combined with a decade of budget cuts dating from the break up of the Conservation Commission (CCNT) in 1995, was seen by PWS staff as further evidence that conservation was not a priority in the NT. Subsequent departmental rearrangements –the agency is now part of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (DNRETA) – have also had little impact on the agency's internal structure. Unfortunately, staff morale has also remained low.

Figure 4-2 PWS's Regional Office, Tom Hare Building, Alice Springs
Source: Gary Weir
When I arrived at the agency, I was given an office in the agency’s southern regional (Alice Springs) office, the Tom Hare Building (figure 4.1). Colloquially this building is known to PWS staff as: Tom Hare. Tom Hare is located eight kilometres south of Alice Springs in the Arid Zone Research Institute (AZRI) complex on the Stuart Highway. The building is named after the former Northern Territory Reserves Board director, Tom Hare, who is credited with founding the Territory’s first conservation agency.

Two divisions of PWS are situated in the Tom Hare Building: Park Management and Biodiversity Conservation (called ‘Biodiversity’), along with a few executive staff from a third related entity, the Alice Springs Desert Park. When I arrived at the agency, this meant that Biodiversity staff were located in the upstairs wings of the building, comprising scientists, their support staff and the ‘Wildlife’ rangers – who ‘controlled’ feral animals, rescued snakes from suburban backyards, and assisted injured animals. Downstairs, on the eastern side of the building, were the Park Management staff, which included myself. Here I was placed amongst administrative staff, technical staff, planners, a Geographic Information System (GIS) specialist, community education and interpretive staff, one senior district ranger and the regional manager. On the western bottom floor were the senior marketing staff connected to the Alice Springs Desert Park, the Executive Director of both the Desert Park and Territory Wildlife Park, and the Principal Biodiversity Conservation Scientist.

On my first day in the agency I attended two meetings -meetings would comprise a large part of my work within PWS- and was introduced to about half of the staff in the regional office. I was given a desk, a phone, some new bookshelves and a few vital pieces of information: an organisational chart, a list of departmental phone numbers, the ‘necessary’ administrative forms dealing with expenditure, and a small ream of memoranda, internal discussion papers and briefing notes on the new joint management arrangements. I was seated next to the planners; indeed it was myself and a senior planner, Mac Moyses, who comprised the entire Joint Management Unit (JMU). For the rest of the week, I was left to read up on the joint management arrangements, the Parks and Conservation Masterplan, and to familiarise myself with both the organisation and other staff.
Social Organisation, Locality and Rangercentrism

Whilst PWS staff feel that the agency is significantly different to many other NT Government agencies because of its unique identity and role—and staunchly affirm its autonomy in terms of uniform, legislation, and function—it is nonetheless a bureaucracy like all other public sector organisations. Weber’s concept of bureaucracy is a useful notion to invoke here. Weber (1995:196-198) describes the properties of modern bureaucracies as being:

- An official and fixed area of jurisdiction controlled by laws and other rules
- An ordered hierarchy of authority and supervision
- Written rules governing the officials (the staff) within the organisation
- A separation of public (bureau) tasks and private (personal) tasks of officials
- Full time, salaried officials (employees)
- Specialist training in and knowledge of organisational rules and processes

Public sector agencies such as PWS are required to provide citizens with services in a manner that is transparent, accountable and impersonal to achieve specific public policy objectives (Weber, 1995: 196-197; Giddens, 1993: 286). For PWS, many of these objectives are clearly set out in the legislation that creates the agency—which I shall discuss shortly—whilst other objectives, such as those relating to public accountability and the separation of public and private duties are set out in legislation common to all NT Government agencies. Some characteristics, however, are not determined by legislation but arise internally out of organisational history, function and in the case of PWS, geography. This was particularly evident in the organisation of the agency’s personnel, revealed to me swiftly via the whirl of faces, names and most importantly, titles and roles, encountered in my first few days within the agency. In Weber’s terms, this is the organisation’s hierarchy of authority and supervision. In PWS, authority and supervision are both hierarchically and geographically ordered.

The simplest way to convey the ‘ordered hierarchy’ of PWS is by examining its formal organisational chart (see Figure 4.3). For PWS, this is the ‘map’ upon which staff are categorised and located within the organisation’s social structure. In my own
introduction to PWS, one of the first official pieces of paper given to me was the organisation chart – or the ‘org chart’ as it is colloquially known. The org chart allowed me to place people somewhere in the agency’s structure – an especially difficult task in a large agency during your first few weeks when the sheer number of faces and names defies recollection! The org chart was also useful for keeping track of where ranger staff were located. Staff turnover, promotion and transfer amongst rangers in PWS was frequent; in my own experience, knowing who was where and at what level assisted with the organisation of project-based work teams, training courses and assessing levels of experience and allotting tasks in joint management activities.

A superficial glance at the org chart reveals that the PWS Southern Region employs 43 rangers, six indigenous ranger trainees, and 17 support and specialist staff in the Regional Office. The org chart outlines who reports to whom, who supervises whom, tells something of the geographical context of the organisation and suggests the likely decision-making structures present within the agency. In this way, the org chart does indeed map organisational authority in terms of decision-making and supervision. The org chart also confers to agency staff an understanding of the roles and duties associated with, say, a Chief District Ranger as opposed to a ‘T1’ ranger. Furthermore, it suggests those with whom staff are likely to interact on a daily basis, as determined by work location. Another readily accessible emic understanding of the org chart is that of salary level: this is evidenced in the designations T1 to T5 and P1 and P2. To PWS (and other NTG) staff, this ‘dual banded’ salary system announces at once who has a university degree (those paid on the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) General Award ‘Professional’ or ‘P’ scale) and those who don’t have tertiary training (paid on the NTPS General Award ‘Technical’ or ‘T’ scale).

After the hierarchal, top-down chain of decision-making and authority, the most significant feature of the agency’s social organisation is geography, which I will refer to here as locality. I use the term ‘locality’ to not only signify the physical
Figure 4-3 Organisation Chart PWS Southern Region
emplacement of the agency’s offices and staff - as in their actual geographical locations - but to also imply a sense of specific context which has an observable - structural- effect upon the agency’s operations. Whilst the organisation is physically characterised by ranger stations located at various places in the NT, locality is also present at a structural level within the organisation via the influence of individual local context, derived from unique geological, aesthetic, cultural or historical features in the landscape and the peculiarities of their management as they vary from park to park.

Locality, then, operates structurally across a number of scales within PWS. At one level, locality is reproduced within the organisation’s hierarchy of authority and command. For example, where infrastructure and resources are physically located, who rangers go out on patrol with, seek approval from to purchase equipment and submit applications for recreation leave to all arise from the structural impact of locality in both social organisation and daily operations. At another level, locality reinforces the agency’s strong sense of autonomy via the operational specificity required for the day-to-day management of individual parks and reserves. For example, Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve is known as the only weed-free reserve in Central Australia, thus rangers spend a great deal of time at Rainbow Valley, searching for weeds, planning to search for weeds and mapping vegetation changes across time. In contrast, at Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park, which has more than 250,000 annual visitors, rangers spend much more time undertaking visitor management programs, such as maintaining toilets and barbeques or patrolling the canyon walk to interact with tourists.

This locational specificity in daily management programs also serves to reinforce the agency’s sense of autonomy in regards to both park and regional differences in organisational culture and practice. Within the agency there is widespread acknowledgement by staff that each region is not only climatically, geologically and biologically unique – thus requiring different emphases in land management programs – but that there are strong regional differences in relation to administrative duties and
day-to-day working culture –actions which are apparently taken to be ‘the same’ regardless of who or where they are performed. Such differences are readily described by staff who have worked in more than one region. For example, here is a conversation I had with one ranger about regional differences in administration and general organisational culture:

Amanda:  How are Darwin and Katherine regions different to Alice Springs?

Ranger:  In Darwin, they spend money they haven’t got. We’re always bailing them out down here because we’re much better with our budgets. You know X?(senior ranger’s name). He decided they needed some new chainsaws right before the end of the financial year. It didn’t matter that the whole region was overspent ... he just went out and bought 5 new chainsaws and gave them out to places that didn’t even need them.

Amanda:  And Katherine?

Ranger:  It’s a real drinking, blokey culture. They all drink, fish, shoot and don’t spend much time in the office. They think we’re shiny bums down here...

Whilst these observations about differences between the regions (and in some cases, differences within regions) are humorous, in practice, they result in real variations as to how a given duty is carried across different locations –such as whether one ‘balances’ one’s budget or not. Staff working on individual parks interpret these differences as statements of autonomy and authority derived from time spent working in a particular locale. Again, this locational specificity reinforces the agency’s strong internal and external sense of autonomy: working on a particular park gives one special knowledge about that park, and the authority to act in certain ways to manage that place, which are ultimately determined by the location –by geography- itself. This knowledge is something that staff working in Darwin or outside of the agency cannot possibly possess unless they too have worked on that park. Consequently, directions to ‘manage’ parks according to external or long term strategic priorities –such as in
accordance with budgetary restraints or the wishes of the land councils- are often rejected or passively resisted by PWS staff.

There is one final -and critically important- feature of the agency’s social organisation that I shall discuss here before moving on. This arises from the presence of a large ‘core’ of staff of a particular profession: rangers. It has been said to me by specialist staff within the agency that the organisation is ‘rangercentric’ and that all other staff are there to support rangers. Given that land management, and in particular, protected area management, comprises a major part of the agency’s legislated functions, the prevalence of protected area management professionals –rangers- is understandable. Not only do rangers comprise around sixty-five percent of the agency’s staff in Central Australia, rangers are the public face of the organisation and the group who undertake most of the activities associated with managing the land which falls under the agency’s control. Indeed, very few activities are undertaken ‘on-park’ by other PWS staff without the inclusion or assent of rangers.

This concentration of staff in park management-based professions has consequences for the nature of practice and agency within PWS. Although I discuss this in detail later in this chapter, there are two important issues that I shall raise here. The first relates to the nature of activities or programs undertaken by the agency, and the notion of ‘core business’ within PWS. The term ‘core business’ is used by PWS staff to denote the legitimate functions and actions of the agency, comprising mainly land management but also general public sector administration tasks. In using this term staff and the agency’s executive convey a clear sense of what PWS does, what its business is, and most importantly, what it does not do, all centred around rangering, land management, and the agency’s long-established legislative roles and functions.

My second point follows directly on from the notions of rangercentrism and core business. Rangers in PWS are specialists at managing threats, visitors and biodiversity. PWS as an organisation is structurally set up to support rangers and to meet its requirements as a public sector agency. Given these factors, it follows that the
skills and capacity possessed by the agency's staff are concentrated in rangering, land
management and public sector administration. When compared with the requirements
of successful joint management, such as strong cross-cultural capacity and
governance, the ability to impart employment and training to Aboriginal people and
even the ability to teach basic numeracy and literacy, it is apparent that the agency
does not - and should not be expected to possess - the capacity to undertake or
implement such initiatives without substantial external support.

Meeting the Locals

My initial observations about the agency's strong sense of autonomy, its hierarchy
and its rangercentrism were confirmed over the next few months. To introduce me to
the agency, we (Mac and I as the Joint Management Unit) undertook a program of
visiting ranger stations, enabling me to meet ranger staff and to talk to them about the
proposed joint management arrangements. There are nine ranger stations in the
Southern Region, so whilst we had visited most of ranger stations by the end of
November, it was in fact February 2004 before I had visited every one of them.
Ranger stations are located at: the Alice Springs Telegraph Station (ASTS), Trephina
Gorge, Arltunga, Tennant Creek, Simpsons Gap, Owen Springs, Ormiston Gorge,
Palm Valley (Finke Gorge) and Watarrka (Kings Canyon). The Southern Region
(refer Figure 4.3) is divided into three districts: Watarrka (also called 'South West'),
West (which includes all of the West MacDonnell's parks, plus Finke Gorge and
Owen Springs), and East/Central/Barkly, which includes everything else.
Visiting ranger staff in remote parks proved to be not only a good way to meet colleagues I might otherwise meet once every couple of months, it was an ideal way to learn about PWS’s culture. Our visits were arranged in advance with senior rangers, often by several weeks, to allow all staff to be present in the office rather than attending duties on park. Initial contact and scheduling of visits were made through the Senior District or Chief District Ranger. Whilst being formally scheduled and pre-arranged, however, the visits were inherently social. This became readily apparent during my first visit to a park. Either we would be staying overnight or would share a meal with rangers, such as morning tea or lunch. If we stayed overnight, we stayed on the park and attended a barbecue at the park’s social club arranged specially for our visit. Most parks have their own social club, constructed by rangers and given a unique and meaningful name. For example, the Glen Thirsty Bar at Watarrka is named after a remote outcrop overlooking Lake Amadeus that was itself named by explorer Ernest Giles; the Maggot Bar at Palm Valley is a play on words – not only can one get ‘maggotted’ (drunk) at the bar, but one of the Western Arrernte Dreaming...
stories attached to Palm Valley relates to maggots. When staff from Regional Office or elsewhere visit the park, it is an informal tradition that they will be treated to a barbecue to which they must bring food to share, along with any emergency shopping orders for ranger staff and the park's mail. If the visit is a short one, then visitors are required to supply morning or afternoon tea. Another nuance of this tradition is that a high value is placed upon homemade treats such as salads, cakes and slices than upon store-bought food.

The formal part of our visits to parks was much the same at every park: Mac would introduce me, I would talk about my anthropological background, Mac would talk a little about the new Masterplan, and then we would discuss the proposed joint management arrangements. Much of the meeting time was spent discussing rangers' ideas or answering questions about joint management. An equal (and sometimes greater) amount of time was often spent looking around the park with senior rangers, who took great pride in imparting to me what was unique about the reserve and the described the management programs undertaken by staff (such as feral animal control, weed control or visitor management). Here, I learned such things as: large numbers of wild horses were causing significant damage to remote areas of the West MacDonnell National Park, 'Grey Nomads' in 4WD camper trailers were placing ever-increasing pressure upon parking and camping space at Chambers Pillar Historical Reserve, and that one did not ever camp at the Devil's Marbles Conservation Reserve in peak tourist season and expect to have a good night's sleep – the camping area was simply too popular for its own good and required urgent upgrading.

These meetings also gave me a sense of that rangers perceived the impending new joint management arrangements with a mixture of resentment, apprehension, excitement and caution:

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25 There is also a tradition of recipe-swapping amongst both male and female staff, and of supplementing store-bought foods with home grown vegetables and keeping chickens.
What will Aboriginal people get out of this? Will there be funding to employ Aboriginal people? (field notes, 21 October 2003)

...if we're going to do this (joint management) we're going to need more resources. More money for programs, but more staff, too. There's enough pressure on the people here from visitors alone without more pressure from Aboriginal people (field notes, 5 November 2003)

...it isn't going to work. It doesn't work at Uluru... (Aboriginal) people can't even read or write, can't even get themselves to meetings. How are they going to manage a park? What they need is education ... get up off their backsides and do something for themselves instead of waiting for hand outs all the time... (field notes, 3 December, 2003)

Such comments not only revealed the personal concerns and assumptions of rangers in regards to joint management, they also suggest a very clear -yet subtle- understanding of the relationship between the agency's organisational structure, functions and culture and the expectations inherent in the new joint management arrangements.

Indeed, I discovered that what people did not say to me in these early meetings was as important as what they did say. In the last statement, for example, concerns about the ability of many Aboriginal people to participate in joint management are rendered clear. As Lawrence (1997: 15), Rose (1995:20) and Bauman and Smyth (2007:61) have noted, in remote areas, Aboriginal capacity to participate in employment, education and other economic development initiatives is often limited. However, the unspoken inference in the final comment above is equally revealing; that is, in stating the lack of Aboriginal capacity to participate in joint management, this ranger also invokes the organisation's own inability to provide things such as education or transport to Aboriginal people. This unspoken inference reflects the structural reality of PWS: the agency is not equipped to provide education, transport or general
assistance to Aboriginal people. It is an organisation empowered to manage protected areas. The belief expressed here is that such assistance needs to come from elsewhere, preferably at the behest of Aboriginal people.

Concerns about the demands and structural changes that broad scale joint management will bring to the organisation, as well as a desire to make sure that Aboriginal people did derive benefit from such initiatives are also evident within these statements. The first comment is typical of those made to me by rangers who genuinely wanted joint management to make a difference to Aboriginal people in Central Australia. Here, the ranger’s unspoken inference is that joint management has in the past offered much but delivered very little to Aboriginal people. His hope—albeit cynical—was that broad scale joint management would give the government no choice but to provide ongoing jobs in parks to Aboriginal people, instead of casual employment or no employment at all.

The second comment above reveals the very real apprehension amongst rangers about the effects broad scale joint management upon their daily duties, in particular, the effects of changing the agency’s legislated roles and functions to reflect the expectations of higher levels of government and the land councils. This proposed change to legislation strikes at the heart of the organisation’s sense of identity—it’s core business, its rangercentrism, its very rationale for existing. Here, the fundamental role of legislation and the agency’s long-standing autonomy are suggested but left unsaid. Yet, in this ranger’s statement the message is clear: to change the legislation is to change the agency itself. The role of legislation and autonomy, as I have suggested throughout this section, must be viewed as central factors in the agency’s structure, ordering its operations, culture and practice—orienting the Parks and Wildlife Service towards certain activities and programs, and serving to limit it from undertaking others.
Legislation, Structure and Practice

...structure ... [is]... doubly practiced: It is both lived in, in the sense of being a public world of ordered forms, and embodied, in the sense of being an enduring framework of dispositions that are stamped on actors' beings (Ortner, 1992:13).

Structures, as Ortner suggests above, are doubly practiced, present in organisation-wide characteristics -such as its physical location- and in the actions or predisposition towards certain actions of staff. Structures can be understood here as external orders - the 'public world of ordered forms' in Ortner’s words- which function in dialectic with actors; that is, they both shape the actions of agents and, through the actions of the agents interacting with them, are themselves shaped. Structures are defined here as: the repeated patterns, elements or relationships that exist across time within the organisation, regardless of the identity of any individual agents (Giddens, 1993: 18).

In the Parks and Wildlife Service, legislation is one such structure –along with the organisation’s locality-based social organisation- that pervades every facet of the organisation’s culture, interacting with history, external agencies and reproducing itself within a wide range of daily tasks undertaken by agency staff. When I first began working for PWS, the importance of legislation as a structure in Ortner’s sense of the term was not immediately apparent. After all, rangers in Queensland, South Australia and elsewhere cleaned toilets, shot donkeys and sprayed weeds- but as my familiarity with the organisation grew, so too did my understanding of the enduring and pervasive effect of legislation upon the agency’s operations. Almost everything that the agency did had a basis in legislation - whether it was apparent to individual staff members or not.

The role of legislation in PWS is unique. Unlike other government agencies whose programs and day-to-day activities are set out in policy and the requirements of
various public sector administration Acts, the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* (TPWCA) contains detailed provisions for daily action within PWS. The Act vests in the organisation the power to manage certain lands, and requires that it undertake specific programs for the protection of endangered plants and animals, the protection of cultural heritage and biodiversity or the removal and destruction of feral animals. The legislation even sets out in detail the content of management plans and makes provisions for annual action plans in regards to certain management programs.

The concern of staff about the proposed changes to the TPWCA arising from the decision in *Ward* could be easily understood. Under the proposed amendments to the TPWCA, the objectives and principles of joint management – the result of negotiations between higher levels of government and the land councils which excluded PWS staff- would be part of agency practice along with provisions for the specific contents for joint management plans and the creation of a role for land councils as quasi-partners alongside Traditional Owners in joint management arrangements. During my first few months within the agency, prior to the joint management ‘offer’ being accepted by Traditional Owners, ranger staff often expressed their apprehension about these proposed changes with reference to added layers of administration:

*Rangers are concerned about the length of time taken to make things happen if CLC are involved in these processes. Rangers want to know who are the right people (the right Traditional Owners) to talk to and involve on the ground ... but they don’t want to be running to the CLC every five minutes...* (Senior Park Ranger, 30 August 2004).

Yet, underlying this concern is a subtle acknowledgement that changes to the Act would mean changes to the way things were done -and had been done for several decades- within the agency. In particular, the possibility that the land councils would interfere with the daily operations of parks was a very real fear for many staff.
These concerns highlight the role of the TPWCA as both a specific and general factor in effecting the agency’s daily operations. Structurally, the TWPCA creates a place for local variation and response whilst ensuring that, strategically, actions and responses take place across the entire agency. Legislation creates the space for local variation, timely review and response through the creation of individual management plans, policies, Standard Operation Procedures as well as in the organisational traditions passed on in unwritten daily practice. For example, the TPWC Act, Section IV – Animals and Plants, 32 (3), sets out what a program for managing feral animals created by the PWS should contain:

**Subdivision 3 – Management programs**

32. Management programs

(3) The matters that a management program referred to in subsection (1)(b) is to provide for include –

(a) assessment and analysis of the population and distribution of the feral animal within the Territory;

(b) examination of the habitat of the feral animal within the Territory;

(c) evaluation of the impact the feral animal has on wildlife and its habitat and on ecosystems, vegetation and the landscape in general;

(d) control of the population and distribution of the feral animal within the Territory;

(e) assessment of whether the survival of the feral animal in its natural habitat is threatened and, if so, whether its protection and survival in the Territory would assist its conservation; and

(f) review of the program at appropriate intervals.
Whilst the legislation clearly states what a feral animal management program should include, it does not suggest the ways in which particular actions should be carried out, i.e. whether feral animals should be shot or poisoned, or when actions should take place, nor does it presume to know exactly which species of feral animal will be present at a given park. However, Ortner’s double practice is clearly present in its implementation. In shooting the donkeys that threatened the Davenport Ranges, PWS staff were embodying the structural requirements of the TWPCA in their own practices. They identified a threat, created an action plan, allocated resources and carried out the shoot. A localised ‘problem’ required a programmed, localised solution which acted to reproduce the structural requirements of the TWPCA whether the staff undertaking these actions were consciously aware of it or not.

The centrality of legislation within the agency not only ensures its reproduction in everything that staff do, but culturally, it predisposes the organisation to a clearly defined yet somewhat narrow understanding of its roles and functions –colloquially referred to as core business by staff. One consequence of defining corporate practice within legislation is that the organisation’s roles and functions change very little over long periods of time. In both written accounts of rangers’ duties from preceding decades, and in interviews conducted with long term staff, it was apparent that even though the organisation’s hierarchical structure (i.e. its organisation chart and regionalisation) had altered somewhat, the duties undertaken by rangers had changed very little from the mid-1980s through to the time of my own employment.

Yet when new or external imperatives arise –such as the desire of Traditional Owners in the Davenport Ranges to have donkeys moved rather than culled or the impending insertion of the land councils into daily agency operations- the narrow bounds of ‘core business’ anchored in slow-to-change legislation creates difficulties for the agency both ideologically and practically. Even after the meeting where Alyawarr people made their feelings about donkeys known to PWS staff, rangers still wanted to remove –shoot if necessary- the animals on the park. Such was the depth of belief about the damage that donkeys were causing to the environment –readily seen around waterholes- and the effect on rare and endangered mammal species, that donkeys were
shot on the park in subsequent years. Donkeys were still threats, described as such in the park’s annual action plans, with a budget set aside for their control. The imperative to identify and control feral animals on the park, and the power to do so without recourse to any other authority (apart from advising neighbours and the public that the program is taking place) is expressly granted to the agency by its legislation.

This unique empowerment to act arising from legislation carries with it two further consequences: it again serves to reinforce the agency’s sense of autonomy and to orient the agency towards an understanding of core business inextricably linked with broader cultural understandings about the role of protected areas in society. The autonomy I described earlier, relating to both the agency’s social organisation and rejection of its placement within another government department, results from PWS’s inception in legislation as a statutory government agency. Until 2002, the agency was independent from any other government body, carrying responsibility for the management of protected areas –large tracts of the NT’s landmass- and programs such as feral species control and endangered species across all land tenures in the NT. This longstanding political separation and independence had its basis in legislation. Although the agency has now been incorporated within a larger department, the continuing structural arrangement and culture of the agency –as evidenced by regional variations in management programs and in artefacts such as management plans which bestow upon PWS the legal right to manage protected areas- continue to reproduce a culture of autonomy derived from legislative separation and independence within the agency.

Furthermore, the very existence of legislation creating conservation agencies and the areas they manage links PWS to broader socio-historical understandings about the role and function of protected areas in Australian society. In Chapter 2, I argued that protected areas are imbued with widely-held cultural beliefs about national identity, the need for human well-being and the importance of preserving and protecting non-human species from largely anthropogenic threats. Protected areas are created and protected by laws enacted at the highest levels of government on behalf of all citizens. Like the provision of education, health and emergency services by national, state and
territory legislatures, protected areas are public spaces of the people, for the people created with the intent that they will be there for the benefit of future generations. The understanding that rangers will remove threats to the natural environment, that parks will provide for visitors’ recreation and education and that they will be preserving something of the nation’s own essential character—as in unique flora, fauna or landscape—are significant factors in present in the TWPCA and reproduced in the agency’s programs and daily practices. Thus, the role of legislation in PWS is structural, invoking a sense of historical continuity and links to broad understandings about the role of protected areas in society, imbues the PWS with a sense of autonomy, function and purpose, and acts to direct daily park management programs at an organisation-wide level.

Policy, Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Given the structural dominance of legislation within the PWS it is then perhaps ironic that although staff are aware of the TPWCA and its role in setting out the agency’s functions, most rarely refer to legislation or discuss its presence in their daily activities. It should be noted here that some roles within the organisation require staff to act consciously with legislation in mind, and, from time to time, situations arise requiring staff to refer to both the TPWCA and other legislation for guidance. Rangers, for example, refer to the legislation in situationally-determined circumstances, such as determining which By-Laws to apply and when to apply them. Planners refer consistently to legislation in the creation of plans of management, making sure that what is written in the document concurs with legislation. However, legislation is relatively fixed, slow and difficult to change and does not provide a mechanism for annual review. Whilst other NT Government departments rely upon high level policy for shorter term adjustments in departmental direction, within PWS this role is undertaken by artefacts such as strategic plans, which operate for periods of between 1-5 years, divisional business plans, lower level policies, guidelines and standard operating procedures which serve to orient and direct organisation action across smaller time frames.
It is worth discussing the role of policy within PWS here as it differs significantly in comparison with other NT Government departments. Although policy is an organisation-wide structure that provides guidance on how to do things within the agency, it operates at a very specific and narrow level within PWS. Policy is defined by the agency as “... a written statement of intent or plan of action to be adopted by the Parks and Wildlife Service. The policy may include specifying the particular circumstances or situation in which the action will apply...” (http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/aboutus/policies.html). In general, policies within PWS comprise sets of broad principles arising either in response to repeated instances of practice, or for circumstances for which there is seen to be a need. Rather than being ‘high level’ directives that determine strategic organisational directions and priorities as they do in other public sector bureaucracies –this function is performed by legislation and strategic plans- policies in PWS arise out of the specifics of day-to-day agency action, such as the need for guidelines about bringing pets into parks, for undertaking research on parks, for employing volunteer conservation officers. Whereas other government departments have dedicated policy officers and even large sections devoted to the creation of policy (see Lea, 2008, for a discussion of the role of policy staff within NT Health), within PWS, there exists no dedicated policy officers and no policy section. Policy has generally been written by senior planners and senior rangers as the needs arise.

At the level of daily operations within the organisation are documents which describe finer details, setting out procedures and practices for specific programs: guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs). Guidelines and SOPs set out ways of ‘doing things’ that are consistent across time regardless of individual agents or location. Guidelines are defined as “…administrative support documents that provide procedures for undertaking specific actions … guidelines may provide detail on an issued policy or reflect requirements of legislation, government decisions or Service directives” (http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/aboutus/policies.html). In contrast to guidelines, standard operating procedures guide specific actions. Two kinds of SOPs exist within PWS: formal and informal. Formal SOPs are derived directly from either
government-wide or organisational policy, and inform staff actions with regard to: "... how something should be done across the board, for consistency's sake ..." (interview informant, August 2007). These instructions for carrying out actions in standardised and consistent ways are formally constituted within a clear corporate process: they are triggered by the practice of policy ‘on-the-ground’, documented in a pre-defined corporate style, circulated amongst staff for comment, and then sent to the PWS Executive Leadership Group (ELG) for approval. Once approved, they are stored in standardised folders and corporate computer systems at all PWS locations. New staff are familiarised with formal SOPs upon commencement. In daily duties, it is guidelines and SOPs to which staff mainly refer.

In contrast, informal SOPs are those that are location or program-specific. They are termed ‘informal’ as they arise in response to particular actions or processes that must be undertaken routinely by staff, but given their specificity or context, are not encountered widely enough within the organisation to be constituted via the ‘formal’ SOP process. For example, common informal SOPs relate to ‘daily checks’ specific to a particular park, such as checking the rain gauge and recording rainfall, and checking traffic counters and recording the number of vehicles that enter the park, or to routinely performed duties such as park patrols. As with formal SOPs, informal SOPs are written down and stored in a folder and on park computer systems, checked and updated regularly. However, informal SOPs also serve another purpose: to deal with the high turnover of staff within the organisation:

... There's seen to be a need to have this information written down. It's come about as a result of huge staff turnover ... you get sick of telling everyone (new staff) over and over again. For instance, X (new staff member's name) said they've been a great benefit to him in coming down here (from the Top End) when they've had a huge sweep through the office ... Just coming in and picking up the SOPs to see how everything is done made it really easy for him (fieldnotes, August 2007).
As will be seen in the following section, a number of organisational practices for managing high staff turnover have evolved within the agency. It should be noted that high rates of staff turnover are not limited to PWS; in the Northern Territory, and in Central Australia in particular, they are a long-established tradition (Lea, 2008: 189; OCPE, 2007, personal communication).

Park Management: Agents and Practice

It is useful to again invoke the term ‘bureau professionals’ to describe those who work within Parks and Wildlife (Mintzberg, 1993). This notion of ‘bureau professionals’ suggests the idea that actors such as rangers and planners working within the public sector must combine their professionalism with “... ideals of fair administration as the most transparent and fair means of achieving social welfare” (Llewellyn, 1998:26). In the current context, ‘social welfare’ may be replaced with park or protected area management to give a sense of those who are invested with such occupational dualities: trained as rangers or in natural resource management and undertaking their professional duties through the culture of public sector administration. It should be noted that the marriage between professionalism and public sector practice is not always a happy one, and the tension that exists within that space –along with the creativity and flexibility it creates- is one all but ignored in by the co-management literature.

Rangers

Amongst natural resource or park management graduates, rangering is a popular career choice. Rangering as a profession can be difficult to gain entry into. In NSW, for example, an entry level ranger position can attract up to 1200 applications, whilst in the Northern Territory, the figure is between one and three hundred (NPWS: 2000, personal communication). As a consequence of the lower number of entry-level applicants in the NT and the perceived ‘ease’ of securing a position, a significant proportion of ranger staff in PWS come from interstate (particularly South Australia.
During the period of my field research, only nine PWS rangers (including 4 Indigenous Trainee Rangers) were born in the Northern Territory. One outcome of this pattern of recruitment is that a high portion of rangers from interstate join PWS with the intent of staying only long enough to gain the necessary skills and experience to enable them to secure a ranger position in their home state. This pattern establishes a high rate of staff turnover in the ranks of T1 and T2 rangers. This practice has significant implications for both the organisation and for joint management.

During my time in the field and in formal interviews, I asked many rangers why they chose their profession. The most common answers I received were: *an interest in protecting the natural environment*, *an interest in flora and fauna*, and *an interest in working outdoors*. Others stated that they were passionate about conservation, whilst a few said they like educating the public about the environment. It should be noted here that within PWS, rangering is a male dominated profession, although this is slowly changing. The organisation’s cultural emphasis on ‘outside work’ discussed earlier has contributed to this. Rangering in Central Australia requires that one undertakes heavy lifting, fencing, digging holes and shooting feral animals. Despite attempts by the PWS executive to recruit more female staff and to promote them to senior levels (PWSNT – report), only about a third of the rangers in the Southern Region are female (n=13). At the time of writing, only one occupies a Senior Park Ranger position.

Most rangers employed within PWS possess formal qualifications in natural resource or park management. As discussed earlier in this chapter, rangering in the NT is viewed as unique, with an emphasis on practical skills, self-reliance, a tolerance of harsh climates and life in remote areas. It has often been said to me by PWS staff, and indeed, it is echoed in the organisation’s Annual Reports as far back as 1980, that rangers from the NT are highly sought after elsewhere because of their practical and problem-solving skills. Whilst there is a definite culture of valuing practical skills in the field, for entry-level rangers, professional qualifications are now almost a pre-
requisite for employment within the organisation. This continues the trend towards professionalisation underway in the agency since the mid-1980s, evidenced by concerted efforts by senior management to encourage tertiary training through supported study leave, financial incentives and higher pay (on the ‘P’ scale) for university-qualified ranger staff. As a result, most rangers recruited since the 1980s possess tertiary qualifications, especially degrees. The degrees possessed by ranger staff in PWS vary. Some rangers have applied science degrees in park and natural resource management or conservation and land management, whilst others have environmental science degrees. A small number of rangers have certificates in conservation and land management and, combined with previous work experience and the agreement to undertake degree study, are able to secure employment within PWS.

There is a strong correlation between years of service within the organisation and ‘rank’ within the organisational hierarchy. For example, rangers at the levels of Chief District Ranger (CDR) and Senior District Ranger (SDR) in the Southern Region of PWS have an average of 17 years of service \( (n=6) \) between them, whilst those at Senior Park Ranger (SPR) have an average of 10 years \( (n=8) \). Ranger staff at T1 level on the other hand have an average of six months of service \( (n=9) \). For the agency, these staffing trends translate into higher transaction costs as time and money are spent recruiting new staff, lower productivity as staff vacancies remained unfilled and new staff are trained, and finally, result in a concentration of knowledge and expertise in predominantly office-based positions, such as CDRs and SDRs. In approaching a discussion of joint management, the impact of staff movements, experience and skill needs to be considered in some detail.

The concentration of knowledge and expertise in a few office-based positions is of particular note here. The kinds of organisational knowledge that senior rangers (CDRs and SDRs) possess: practical knowledge, such as how to repair and use a wide range of equipment (from chainsaws to bore motors and tractors) and undertake a wide range of daily tasks; situational knowledge, which deals with how to respond to particular circumstances, such as large wildfires, floods or visitor emergencies;
corporate knowledge, for example, knowing a wide range of protocols for interactions both within the agency and externally, knowing which forms to use and/or processes to undertake to make something happen; and finally, corporate memory, which captures details such as who has worked at a particular park, the way in which processes were carried out in the past, or even where a rarely used piece of equipment might be stored.

Whilst there are obvious inefficiencies for the daily work of rangers with the concentration of skills and knowledge in office-based positions, this concentration further creates an artificial barrier in organisational capacity to transfer such information and skill sets efficiently to other staff. In response, a variety of in-house solutions have evolved to deal with them. Some of these are codified in the roles of senior rangers, the CDRs and SDRs; others have arisen in the form non-compulsory, formal learning opportunities. For example, two of the three Southern Region Chief District Rangers have offices located within ranger stations (Simpsons Gap and Watarrka), and the third spends a significant portion of his time in the field (the previous two staff members occupying this position are also reported to have done this). CDRs frequently attend meetings with senior management in PWS and also with external stakeholders, such as Traditional Owners, land councils, tourism operators and pastoralists. They work most closely and directly with the Senior District Ranger (SDR), through whom directions and communications are channelled to other ranger staff.

The role of the SDR has emerged as a senior specialist whose duties include: "... making sure that the SPRs have the resources they need to run their parks" (field notes, August 2004). This requires SDRs to spend much of their time visiting parks, assisting junior staff with park projects and passing on knowledge in the field: "... teaching them how we do things" is how one former SDR explained this to me. SDRs

26 Here, I distinguish compulsory formal training which is must be undertaken as part of one’s role as opposed to non-compulsory formal training undertaken due to personal interest or periodic organisational need.
also attend meetings with other PWS work units, such as the Strategic Planning and Joint Management or Interpretation and Community Education Units. Organisationally, SDRs act as a conduit for communication between PWS non-ranger staff and rangers on park, and also as disseminators of information in both directions. It is the Senior Park Ranger (SPR), however, who most often has the role of training staff in the daily duties associated with protected area management. SPRs are the staff directly responsible for managing both park programs and staff on the ground. Senior rangers with trade qualifications—at both SDR and SPR level—also conduct non-compulsory formal training, such as small motors and welding courses, whilst Territory-wide annual ranger training camps provide opportunities for newer rangers to learn from more experienced staff members.

Although the mechanisms described above are successful in terms of passing on job-specific knowledge and practical skills to lower ranked ranger staff, in regard to joint management, high staff turnover and knowledge concentration amongst senior staff has detrimental effects. One of the most important components of joint management identified by both Aboriginal Traditional Owners and rangers is the need for understanding, trust and strong interpersonal relationships. Underlying these qualities is an assumption of an ongoing relationship between two or more groups with a fairly stable core of individuals who have built the capacity to communicate with each other based upon familiarity and trust. If staff turnover is high, relationships will be in a constant state of flux and renewal—which is often draining and confusing to Aboriginal people.

Another salient point here is that whilst CDRs and SDRs often enjoy long-standing relationships with Traditional Owners, they are not the staff most often involved in everyday work on the ground with Traditional Owners. Whilst a CDR might only attend a meeting with Traditional Owners at a given park every six months, or may attend meetings with Traditional Owners where other ranger staff are not present, most rangers are required to work with Traditional Owners in the PWS’s Flexible
Employment Program on a regular basis. For rangers who are not only new to their jobs but also new to the Northern Territory, fears about upsetting Aboriginal cultural protocols are very real. One of the most frequent requests for information I received from new rangers is in regards to how to approach Aboriginal people – for example, what to do when you go to a community to pick someone up for work. Some of this information is easy to pass on via word of mouth or in classroom based cross-cultural education. However, the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Central Australia, combined with the subtle and complex nature of cross-cultural relationships, means that observing real interactions with real people are often the only effective way in which to learn such skills.

Ranger's own perceptions of their role also have an important impact upon joint management and other park management activities. Surprisingly, rather than seeing themselves as being present to educate or even entertain visitors, rangers perceive their role primarily as 'land managers' who adapt to changes in, maintain and protect the values and infrastructure of parks or reserves. Furthermore, rangers commonly told me that what they did on the ground often differed from what was codified within formal duty statements. It was often said to me that rangering was less about community education, monitoring or promoting biodiversity and more about managing ‘threats’ to park values such as "... visitors, fires, ferals and weeds". For example, one ranger described his role in this way:

A ranger manages people rather than land ... manages people to limit their impact on reserves. Rangers assist with education and research and they undertake specific land management practices to enhance natural value... like weed spraying, fencing, or burning. Seventy percent of rangers' time is spent in visitor management, however ... (interview informant, 30 August 2004).

27 The Flexible Employment Program is a paid work experience and training program for Traditional Owners of jointly managed parks, developed by the PWS. The program offers Aboriginal people the opportunity to undertake paid ranger work on parks, and acts as an employment pathway to further training and indigenous traineeships.
Another salient point here is that rangers’ roles in Central Australia are viewed as unique to both organisation and context—again reinforcing PWS’s strong sense of identity and autonomy. For example, in my previous experiences with the NSW NPWS, rangers spent much of their time managing projects from a district office whilst field staff carried out the ‘hands-on’ duties such as the building of fences and spraying of weeds. In comparison, rangering in Central Australia is viewed as ‘hands-on’ or ‘action oriented’. By this, I refer to the emphasis placed upon doing work ‘out on the park’ or ‘in the field’ rather than managing projects from the office. Rangers who have previously worked in NSW, Victoria or South Australia commonly describe differences between their roles in those locations in comparison with Central Australia:

... in South Australia there is a big emphasis on law enforcement for rangers. They see that as an important part of their job. Rangers who come up from down there (SA) tend to issue infringement notices without hesitation. Up here (NT) we don’t do that. We talk to people first.

In many ways, the orientation of rangers in PWS towards ‘hands on’ work can be said to arise as a result of the physical location of the parks and the nature of duties that rangers are required to perform in remote areas. For example, most rangers live ‘on-park’ and are expected to perform tasks such as maintaining the park’s diesel power generators, perform minor repairs on small motors (such as whipper-snippers and chainsaws) and weld breaks in metal objects (i.e. tools, signposts and vehicles). These tasks are occupational necessities for those working in places located several hundred kilometres from the nearest town. Other skills such as off-road driving, tyre repairs, fire fighting, emergency rescue and feral animal culling are also viewed as core duties performed by rangers living on remote parks.

Furthermore, organisational history and tradition also reinforce the framing of outdoor activities as ‘real ranger work’ in opposition to administrative tasks—most especially in the Darwin and Katherine regions—and in turn, create a ranger role and identity.
distinct not only from other PWS staff, but also from rangers' roles as perceived within other Australian conservation agencies. For example, in Chapter 2 I discussed the Northern Territory Reserve Board's (NTRB) formation and noted that its first park-based employees were 'handymen' engaged for their skills with building and carpentry rather on the basis of any capacity for land management (Hare, 1982: 62-65). The emphasis upon establishing visitor infrastructure during the NTRB's early years and the preference for people with tradesman-like skills, in combination with the need for self-reliance in remote locations, can be suggested to have created a strong tradition within the agency of valuing 'outside work' over 'inside' office work. Within the agency, the preference for outside work over inside work is continued in subtle ways, such as discouraging rangers from making coffee upon arrival at the office in favour of 'getting up to the workshop', and in limiting the number of computers available in ranger stations.

As noted earlier in this chapter, regional variations in work practices and traditions within the agency exist. Within PWS there are strong regional alliances and differences, themselves derived from the social and political divides between the Top End and Central Australia well known to most Territorians. For example, one ranger who transferred from the Katherine region to Central Australia told me that he "... did half the paperwork up there that I do down here" even though his position within the organisational hierarchy, along with his role, had not changed. Colloquially, and in my own observations of agency staff, the regional dichotomy of 'action' in the Top End and 'office work' in the Southern Region remains a part of the organisation's understandings about itself today.

Staff attribute this variation to the historical employment of handymen in the north, where the parks system was established earlier and employees were needed to build infrastructure, whereas in the south, the acquisition of land was slower and there was a history of employing contract labour to build infrastructure (Hare, 1982: 65). The slower development of the reserve estate in the south coupled with the development of tertiary-based land management courses and drive towards professionalisation from
the mid-1980s onwards, probably contribute to this 'in-house' cultural dichotomy. This is further evidenced in interviews with long-term staff and efforts made by executive staff during the 1980s to "... break down the 'park-worker' culture entrenched in the Top End" that were worrying enough to be noted in the agency's Annual Report (CCNT, 1988: i). To remedy this situation, rangers were transferred from Central Australia, where the number of tertiary trained rangers was greater and the culture was seen as being more 'office based', to Darwin and Katherine (S. Traynor, personal communication; CCNT, ibid).

A final point needs to be raised here: the importance of the distinction between 'office work' and 'outside work' which rangers make, and the implications of this for joint management. Rangers, through formal tertiary training, on-the-job training, and perhaps even a personal predisposition for 'outside' work, are oriented towards outside, land management-based work ('real work') and away from office-based paperwork and meetings. This is structurally reinforced within the organisation, via a group of clearly defined daily work programs and practices, but also via subtle telling and re-telling of organisational 'stories' and narratives celebrating ranger work which restate the division between office-based 'not real' work and 'real' work for rangers.

Paradoxically, much of what comprises joint management work within the agency can be categorised as 'talk work'. Talk work is defined here as meetings, workshops and informal conversations which serve to facilitate key decision-making and legitimating functions within organisations. To elaborate, talk work is not only about decision-making; it creates organisational identity and action, empowers and legitimates decisions and actions, and acts to validate or define social relations within the organisation (Schwartzmann, 1989:40-42). The corollary of this is that rangers -those who are ultimately expected to implement joint management programs and activities on the ground- view meetings and other 'talk work' as not being important or 'real work', and often choose to self-exclude themselves from meetings. The implication of this for joint management is a further paradox: whilst there is a strong desire for a 'hands-on', field-based joint management program, much of what comprises the joint
management program within PWS is oriented strongly towards policy, planning - and talk work.

**Planning and Joint Management Staff**

At the time of writing, there are four planning and joint management staff employed in the Southern Region: three planners and myself, employed as a ‘joint management anthropologist’. This unit of four has been stable for several years; previously there was a senior scientist (who retired after a short time in the position), and an indigenous ranger also employed in the unit. The indigenous ranger’s role was to facilitate the involvement of Traditional Owners in the Flexible Employment Program (FEP) at the time of its commencement, whilst the overall management of the program was left to myself. When the indigenous ranger resigned to take up a joint management position with the NSW NPWS, the position was replaced with a dedicated joint management planner. This change was dictated not only by the increased capacity of ranger staff to carry out FEP projects once relationships with Traditional Owners had been established, but also by the legislatively-driven commencement of joint management planning. With maturation of the FEP program (I discuss this program in detail in Chapter 6) and the need to address the large number of joint management plans (19 new joint management plans in the Southern Region) requiring completion, the agency has recently undertaken steps to employ a second joint management planner and a dedicated indigenous employment officer.

The three current planners within the unit come from a variety of backgrounds: the principal planner (the unit head), is a former ranger who has worked for PWS for 22 years. The senior (non-joint management) planner came to the agency from an NT government tourism position and continues to specialise in tourism and visitor management planning. The joint management planner, employed after the indigenous ranger resigned, has extensive natural resource management planning and project experience in indigenous communities and overseas community-sector agencies. My
own previous work experience has been discussed earlier in this chapter: Aboriginal cultural heritage protection and native title anthropology.

As with rangers, each member of the unit has some form of professional tertiary qualification: a Bachelor of Applied Science in Park Management, a degree in natural resource management, and a degree in communications and tourism management. My own qualifications —in social science— are substantially different to those of my colleagues and, as discussed earlier, were initially not recognised as being ‘useful’ to the agency outside of a limited understanding of Central Australian anthropology. However, the gradual evolution of a joint management ‘program’ with a number of socio-cultural elements such as cross-cultural capacity building, cultural heritage policy and programs, and joint management planning has meant that anthropological knowledge and understandings of both Traditional Owners’ and organisational culture have been applied within the unit’s approach to joint management. Arguably, the most significant evidence of the application of anthropological knowledge has been in joint management planning, particularly in the development of a program of cultural mapping in order to translate the values of Aboriginal people into park management practice. Also, anthropological skills such as translating words from Arrernte and related languages, taking detailed field notes and in ‘deciphering’ kinship systems have also proven to be useful during joint management planning activities.

My own role in the unit —and the apparent difficulties faced with translating my knowledge and expertise into something recognisable and useful to the agency— raises the related issue of the role of dedicated joint management staff within PWS. Whilst planning and planners enjoy a clearly understood and well-established role within PWS, joint management on a broad scale (twenty-seven parks across the NT) and the employment of specified joint management staff is new. For example, planners prepare plans of management, compile and monitor visitor numbers, are involved in site planning for new works such as car parks and campgrounds, and are often involved in shaping the strategic direction of the organisation, such as in the Parks
Masterplan. These functions have evolved over several decades of practice and are supported by clear organisational policy and processes, and even by tertiary training.

In comparison, joint management, despite nearly three decades of existence, has relatively few standard, organisation-wide processes and practices associated with it, outside of those connected with the creation of governance structures (board and committee meetings) and management plans. For PWS, the broad scale joint management pressed upon it following Ward decision has meant creating new programs and finding ways of doing things that may not have been done before or are entirely new to the agency. Most often these programs have arisen out of the experience and expertise of the individuals involved in joint management and planning.

For example, the Flexible Employment Program (discussed in detail in Chapter 6), although strategically situated within a government-wide indigenous training and employment framework, developed from an idea put forth in a discussion paper by a senior planner in late 2003, who then further developed the concept via his participation in the Public Sector Management Program. The cultural mapping process, the PWS cross-cultural training program and cultural heritage policy all arose from my own previous experience in native title and cultural heritage protection work, and from a decade of experience working with Aboriginal people in several states. The joint management planning process, with its strong emphasis on preparation, facilitation and Traditional Owner input has been developed and trialled by the joint management planner over successive workshops and meetings, drawn from his work in overseas non-government organisations and work with the Central Land Council.

In Chapter 7, I will return to the role of agents in developing a joint management practice within PWS, and particularly how pre-existing programs both within PWS and elsewhere combined with input from Central Land Council staff have shaped joint management practice. Suffice to say here that the role of individuals in establishing a
joint management program has been strong, and reflects the experience and expertise of the individuals involved in these programs.

**Park Management Practice**

Protected area management practice can be defined as: *the processes and actions through which the goals of protected area management are achieved*. Inherent with in this statement are the underlying discourses discussed above: the legitimate ‘models’ of management that protected areas are subject to, weighted by the history and underlying cultural configurations of protected areas; and the influence of what I shall term ‘managerialism’ – the market-based, economic rationalist reforms which public sector agencies have adopted over the past twenty-five years. Yet these are the ‘top down’, structural and systemic views of protected area management; the tropes of history, legislation, policy and the ‘legitimate canon’ of protected area management texts. Within this conceptualisation of protected area management, the voices of rangers, planners and other conservation agency staff – those described in the previous section – are silent or muted. We know little of the meanings and understandings they attribute to what they do and little of the daily practices they undertake when ‘doing’ protected area management. This raises the question of how do conservation agency staff understand protected area management? How do they describe protected area management? What activities comprise this practice and what meanings and understandings underlie these practices?

One means of answering these questions is to examine how PWS staff understand the term phrase *protected area management*. When defined by PWS staff, the term *protected area management* is closely related to vernacular definitions of the concept ‘protected area’ found within the organisation. For example, here a ranger describes to me what a protected area is:
An area of land that's been set aside because of certain values to people. It's about people.... Maybe their historical connection, cultural value, social value, land use and sometimes their environmental value to people. Comes back to human values and that people want to protect those values into the future ...
(fieldnotes, 29 April 2005).

Here, the same person describes their understanding of protected area management:

**Protected area management is the protection of those values ... the reasons these areas have been set aside. What makes them unique is that the protection has been handed over to an organisation whose values may or may not be the same as those reasons for which they were set aside. Management may be same or different according to the government's values. There could even be conflict ... Government objectives could differ or conflict with values for which the land has been set aside... (ibid).**

In another instance, a PWS staff member defines protected areas as:

**Land and resources set aside for a specified purpose; whether it's protected to maintain biophysical characteristics for specific purposes, to protect catchments for water supply or to store diseased stock. It's for a designated purpose that's agreed on by a community and government (fieldnotes, 8 May, 2007).**

The same staff member describes protected area management as:

**... Whatever has been prescribed by the community for that land, are the goals, aspirations and prescriptions for that land. Management is the process of attaining and maintaining. It comes down to what's the (the protected area's) purpose, and management is about how we decide that purpose is attained (ibid).**
In both examples, protected areas are framed within notions of ‘land and resources set aside’ by some legitimate authority - the government, the community, landholders - for a predefined reason. Ultimately, these comments suggest that protected areas are places set aside not only on the basis of State intervention, but because they possess desirable, human-defined qualities or values which the wider community wishes to preserve or protect. Here, I apply the term ‘value’ in a sociological sense. A value in this context is defined as: ‘... an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence’ (Rokeach, 1973:5). Yet, in addition to Rokeach’s notion of desirable states of existence, PWS staff use the term ‘value’ with several associated, but not identical, connotations to describe protected areas and protected area management.

For example, when the term ‘values’ is used to justify why a particular piece of land is dedicated as a protected area, it is not simply being used to state beliefs or desires about the qualities of a piece of land, it is being used to indicate that these values exist or are actually present within the land:

Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve lies about 100 kilometres south of Alice Springs at the eastern end of the James Range... For its relatively small area (2483 Ha) the reserve has surprising diversity of significant cultural, natural and recreational values.... The reserve’s values ... together with the joint management partners’ vision, establish the purpose and management directions of Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve for the term of this joint management plan. (Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve Draft Joint Management Plan, 2007:2)

Another way in which the term value is used by PWS staff is to invoke a particular set of actions or management practices associated with a given quality or property located in the physical landscape:
... We manage the Reserve according to its values... The values tell us why this place is a park or reserve, why it is special. The Plan of Management tells us what these values are, like natural values, cultural values, tourism values, recreation values, and tells us what programs we need to have here. For Rainbow Valley, the priorities are cultural and biodiversity management...
(fieldnotes, Rainbow Valley, 14 September 2005).

For PWS staff values are not only desirable end-states, they are physically and sensually perceptible qualities located in the landscape, possessing a set of practices associated with finding, looking after and monitoring them; for PWS staff, this is arguably the process of park management.

Based upon the statements of PWS staff, plans of management and observations in the field, a vernacular definition of protected areas could be: land set aside by the State for the purpose of protecting and preserving culturally desirable values. A simple vernacular definition of protected area management derived from the statements of PWS staff could thus be: managing—in the sense of planning, organising, leading and controlling—the values present in the land. For those working within the agency—especially rangers and planners—values are real objects or properties located in the environment. This is a pervasive and central narrative within PWS: protected areas have tangible values which staff look after, seek out, admire and develop great affection for. Values can be found, mapped, surveyed, planned for, protected, threatened, watched, and reported on.

Yet these statements also reveal that protected area management is more than simply managing values as a series of rational actions performed by humans—the 'management' aspect of the phrase. Protected area management is a set of practices derived from desire and perception of a particular kind; emerging from cultural understandings about landscape, authenticity and the role of protected areas in maintaining the 'natural' integrity of landscapes, combined with legitimate forms of
organisational 'seeing', 'knowing' and 'doing' – defined within PWS as 'core business'. Just as it is difficult to define protected area management without reference to a definition of protected areas, it is difficult to capture this organisational 'seeing', 'knowing and 'doing' without reference to the routine activities undertaken by PWS staff, defined by them as protected area management or as core business.

Core Business: Protected Area Management

Rangers are the most publicly visible staff of conservation agencies, recognised by their uniforms, their badges bearing the PWS logo, and their work places - national parks and reserves. Most Australians have some understanding of what rangers do: educate the public about native flora and fauna, look after facilities in parks, conduct controlled burns, and make sure visitors to parks are safe. Less obvious tasks performed by rangers such as cleaning toilets, repairing fences and spraying weeds, might be suggested by those who've spoken to or watched rangers on parks, yet asking most people what a park planner or interpretive officer does is less likely to draw an informed response. However park planners, interpretive officers and other conservation agency staff are all engaged in park management and contribute to the cultural meanings and understandings circulating within the agency. Although these professional divisions within the agency introduce a diverse and complex array of specialist practices to the overall definition of park management practice, there are common understandings about what these practices are within the agency.

In my employment within PWS, I observed my colleagues undertaking a broad range of tasks: from attending meetings to reporting on budgetary expenditure to camping out whilst maintaining the Larapinta Trail or conducting workshops for management plans. When asked to describe park management practice, PWS staff commonly categorise the activities they do –and particularly those done by rangers 'on-park'– under eight project headings:
From the values that are on the park comes the need to manage the park. We manage parks using eight projects:

1. Weed Management
2. Visitor Management
3. Fire Management
4. Feral Animal Management
5. Stakeholder Management
6. Cultural Management
7. Biodiversity Management
8. District Management ... which includes administrative duties, leave forms and commitments registers (fieldnotes, Rainbow Valley, September 2005).

These eight ‘projects’ are used throughout PWS in Central Australia and derive from an online project management system originally instituted within the organisation in the mid-1990s. Although the online system with its associated recordkeeping, time and budget monitoring has since been abandoned, the project classifications themselves continue to be used as a pervasive and readily accessible framework for categorising, naming, planning, enacting and monitoring the activities that comprise protected area management. Not only do senior rangers organise their financial accounting and monitoring under the project headings, they divide actual duties to be carried out on park into these ‘project’ headings and delegate them to subordinate staff. Each ranger then becomes responsible for planning, enacting, monitoring and reporting on activities within ‘their’ delegated project (or projects, at smaller ranger stations). In this way, the project categories are passed on both verbally and in formalised practices associated with training, accounting and reporting, and maintaining an organisational tradition ‘learned’ by all staff commencing work within the agency.
It is useful to consider the nature of the park management projects, along with the reporting and monitoring cycles associated with them here. It will be noted from the project titles that a number of categories are strongly associated with land or natural resource management. Furthermore, they are inextricably linked to physical properties as well as to perceived values in the landscape. Fire, weed, feral, biodiversity management are all categories of practice which have tangible and measurable physical properties, such as particular species, habitats, or risks associated with them. In the case of the first three — fire, weeds and ferals — PWS staff class them as ‘threats’; undesirable species or risks which pose a hazard to natural resources, natural systems, humans and human infrastructure. These threats then need to be mitigated, reduced or removed, and rangers often state that they spend most of their time either doing this or managing visitors:

Weeds, fire, ferals ... everything depends on the landscape and problems at hand (interview informant, 1 May, 2005).

... Minimising threats ... Ensuring the sustainability of the protected area. In reality, a lot of the time it’s managing the people who use them. In the NT, a lot of time and effort goes into to looking after visitors and providing infrastructure for them (interview informant, 11 May, 2005).

Visitor management, as discussed earlier, occupies a significant portion of rangers’ time. Visitors require facilities, information, education, and also need to be kept ‘safe’; however, many rangers will state openly that it is not the visitors that need to be kept safe from the park, but the park from the visitors. Such statements are not made simply in regards to people who become lost, bogged or fail to take adequate water and food with them in Central Australia (a very common problem) but also in regards to people who bring pet dogs into parks (Alice Springs locals are notorious for this), camp illegally and start fires. Occasionally, and not without some seriousness, rangers have joked to me that some visitors to parks should be classified as threats and eliminated along with weeds, feral animals and wildfires.
Other project categories - stakeholder, visitor and cultural management deal with people: the interests of neighbours, community and visitors that must be taken into account when management actions are proposed for the park or reserve. Whilst stakeholder and visitor management are relatively well defined and understood within the agency, the category of ‘cultural management’ is indistinct. Some staff consider cultural management to be the management of cultural heritage associated with the European settler past, whilst others suggest that it comprises all facets of European and Aboriginal social significance, both past and present, connected to a given landscape. Not surprisingly, cultural management practices within PWS vary from park to park: one park may have a detailed database of cultural sites and information, whilst another equally significant park might not. Several parks in Central Australia have Cultural Heritage Action Plans or Strategies (such as Arltunga and Watarrka), but this practice is far from widespread.

Figure 4-5 Visitor Management at Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve

Underlying this uneven approach to cultural management is the highly political and loaded notion of ‘Aboriginal culture’ in Central Australia, ownership of which is contested strongly by the two large Aboriginal land councils. One tactic for dealing with cultural heritage management in PWS has been to locate another government
authority or external agency with either legislative responsibility or expertise to deal with the management of culture and avoid the issues of collecting and storing data, identifying Traditional Owners and conducting consultations. Issues to do with sacred sites are swiftly passed on to AAPA or the CLC, heritage issues are passed on to the NT Heritage Services, advice about the conservation of rock art is outsourced to several well-known university-based archaeologists. The problematic of culture, and the manner in which PWS has negotiated this issue, is a recurring theme within this thesis. Suffice to say here that cultural management has traditionally been—and remains—an underdeveloped project within PWS’s protected area management practices and organisational priorities.

Before moving on to district management, I would like to raise two salient points about park management projects and their relationship to practice. So far, I have linked the categories of park management projects to both the notion of managing the values present within the landscape, to the overarching terms ‘land and natural resource management’ and to accounting for the interests of people who either visit parks or those who are present in the near vicinity of these areas. The first point I shall raise here is linked to this division between natural resource/land management and the management of peoples’ interests. The practices of fire, feral, weed, visitor and biodiversity management form a core ‘narrative’ about what protected area management practice is within PWS: maintaining or promoting the natural integrity or authenticity of the land. This is evidenced firstly in the identification of certain values in the land, as discussed earlier, and in the definitions of PWS staff about what protected areas are, and what protected area management is.

Associated with the maintenance of this ‘natural integrity’ of the landscape, is a detailed and formalised body of knowledge and practices captured within the eight categories of park management projects. Each of these categories has an organisational ‘tradition’, in the sense of a body of knowledge, routinised actions or rituals captured within agency information systems, and most importantly, the transmission of knowledge and ritualised actions across time between staff. In other
words, there is a clear and legitimate system for ‘doing work’ on projects which have as their focus the maintenance of the landscape’s natural integrity: staff are able to learn how these things are undertaken within the organisation and carry them out time and time again, regardless of location. This contrasts sharply with projects such as cultural and stakeholder management, where routinised actions—for example, standard procedures for dealing with the fences and cattle of neighbouring pastoralists\textsuperscript{28}, or the systematic documentation of cultural sites on parks and reserves—are few, knowledge is scant or sourced from outside authorities such as university-employed archaeologists, and ‘traditions’ of management action vary from location to location and are not formally encoded in organisational information systems.

This leads to my second point. The organisation’s traditions, that is, the formalised body of knowledge, processes and actions passed on between staff over successive ‘generations’, arise from the legitimate methods of knowing, seeing and doing that exist within the agency. These methods of knowing, seeing and doing are reinforced by both the professional training and education that PWS staff receive in tertiary institutions prior to employment and from the complex interplay of socio-cultural factors implicit in the organisational history presented in Chapter 2. In other words, both professional training and organisational history inform what can be known, seen and done within the agency. The corollary of this is that the organisation and its staff are predisposed towards certain actions in certain ways, which are related to—but not identical to—the values imbued in the landscape. It follows then that a position which views naturally ‘authentic’ landscapes as desirable will privilege particular ways of seeing and understanding land over others. And, as I have argued throughout this thesis, such a position arises from the complex interplay of organisational history, the broader socio-cultural milieu, from agency structure and culture and the actions of agents on the ground. These factors are, however, neither linear nor predictable; they are dynamic and often manifest in unexpected ways—\textsuperscript{28} as both rangers’ statements

\textsuperscript{28} Indeed, PWS staff often bemoan the number of informal agreements made between senior management or higher levels of government and individual pastoralists, which cause frustration and confusion in dealing with pastoralists as a group.
about park visitors and the uneven management of cultural heritage in PWS discussed above attest.

**District Management and the Lot of the Bureau Professional**

District management, as suggested previously, refers to a body of routine tasks and duties associated mainly with ‘inside’ or ‘office’ work. These are often generic public sector tasks, such as the reconciling of expenditure, the submission or checking of leave forms, or attending meetings with other PWS staff or stakeholders. Ranger staff commonly view such work as an aside, or even a nuisance, consuming time and resources they could be devoting to other ‘core’ tasks linked with both their roles within the agency and their professional training. As with visitor management, ranger staff have often stated to me that too much of their time is spent doing district management: answering emails, reconciling accounts, acquitting credit card expenditure, learning how to use the latest version of the Travel Allowance form, or chasing up cost codes. Underlying these subtle complaints is the tension to which I alluded earlier: the occupational duality experienced by bureau professionals -those trained within a given vocation and subject not only to the demands of their profession, but also to the wide imperatives of an agency situated within the public sector.

As is evident from the previous discussion, many of the practices associated with park management are ‘outside’ work, based in maintaining the natural integrity of the landscape. Indeed, as I have argued previously, the culture of PWS is rangercentric, reinforcing this focus on outside land/natural resource/visitor management activities. Rangers in particular express a sense of disillusionment and frustration with the dual demands of their roles —the distraction from ‘real ranger work’ that non-agency-derived administrative work brings with it. Not surprisingly they can and do formulate means of subtle resistance, such as refusing to fill in new electronic forms on the grounds of inadequate network access, or reporting that they are unable to carry out...
certain tasks because of a lack of funds or human resources. From time to time, rangers in remote parks will purposely ignore or refuse to carry out such externally imposed tasks. It is worthwhile noting that most PWS staff view themselves as working for the agency and not for the Northern Territory public service, reinforcing the pervasive sense of autonomy within the agency discussed earlier, even though most—if pushed gently—most staff will acknowledge they are public servants.

Associated with the issue of ‘office work’, and found predominantly within the category of practice known as district management, but also crossing into several other project categories, are externally imposed financial and reporting cycles associated with wider agency and public sector processes and imperatives. Many of these cyclical practices are related to monitoring expenditure and reporting on the progress of projects throughout the financial year; others require staff to respond to Treasury timelines in terms of preparing submissions for additional money for large capital works projects or budget increases. At park level, written action plans and operational plans (discussed earlier) are all subject to rigid timelines; whereas on the ground work such as controlled burns, weed spraying and fauna surveys are weather-dependent or dependent upon the availability of staff.

Furthermore, the cycles and activities associated with district management also link rangers with other PWS staff through meetings, planning sessions and workshops and with higher order agency priorities. For example, agency-wide timeframes and priorities associated with producing plans of management or high-profile tourism projects, such as the Larapinta Trail or Red Centre Way, often have their own planning cycles, workshops, and meetings associated with them. PWS staff involved in these projects are required to prepare submissions, attend meetings and workshops, and undertake actions arising from these events which may be outside of their control. Joint management planning is an example of this; the priorities in joint management planning arose from a combination of land council preferences, Traditional Owners’ aspirations and perceived ease of completion of plans. Rainbow Valley and the Devil’s Marbles Conservation Reserves became the first reserves on which joint
management planning were undertaken – without the direct input of ranger staff. This further belies the subtle tension between wider government imperatives – such as progress on joint management- and the priorities of agency staff on the ground. Rangers’ preferences for joint management plans were initially focussed upon the ‘icon’ parks of Watarrka and the West MacDonnellls (field notes, September 2005).

Joint management is most often placed into the categories *district* and *cultural management*. Given that this is the case, both the underlying assumptions surrounding, and the ramifications of such an ordering are not difficult to reveal. If *district management* is not about ‘real work’ and *cultural management* is vaguely defined or even too politically difficult to undertake, then predictably, agents will fail to develop practices in relation to joint management that become routine and are able to feed back into the culture of PWS. There is more to this argument, connected inexorably with the legitimate ways of knowing, seeing and doing contained within agency culture –its core business– in particular, linked with those practices I have discussed here as park management. The interplay between the underlying cultural narratives and understandings about park management held by PWS and its staff as they interact with those of Traditional Owners and land councils engaged in the implementation of joint management is also something that requires further examination.

**Autonomy, Legislation and Values: Pervasive Themes in Protected Area Management**

In this chapter I have described the culture of the Parks and Wildlife Service, focussing on agency structures, such as hierarchical and spatial organisation and legislative role and function, as well as the emic understandings of the agency’s roles and functions held by its staff. In particular, I have emphasised the agency’s strong
sense of autonomy and self-identity, and the effect of this upon ranger staff and operational practice across the regions within the agency. Whilst some aspects of the organisation's structure and functions are shared with other NT Government departments—such as administrative procedures associated with fiscal accountability and public sector employment conditions and codes of conduct, staff within PWS view the agency as unique, and essentially different to other public sector agencies. This is derived from its clearly defined legislative roles and functions, the agency's previous political independence as a statutory body, and the nature of the organisation's core business: managing large and culturally symbolic areas of land for the purpose of biodiversity conservation and human recreation.

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that a significant feature of PWS’s culture is a pervasive orientation towards institutional autonomy. This is reproduced across multiple scales within the agency from a structural, organisation-wide level, to the level of daily tasks and duties undertaken by individual staff. At a structural level, PWS’s autonomy is derived from its legislative specificity and, as mentioned above, its former status as an independent statutory body. The perception of the agency as autonomous by its staff has continued despite its de-commissioning and placement within a larger government department. Again, this may be attributed to the functional specificity of the agency’s roles and their clear delineation in legislation. At the level of internal structural organisation, agency autonomy is reproduced through locational specificity. In particular, this is manifest in the delegation of authority—as in the authority to make decisions and undertake actions—via geographically determined factors such as the location of regional offices and ranger stations, and climatic, geological and biological variations within the Northern Territory. Autonomy is also inherently associated with internally legitimated ways of knowing, seeing and doing within the agency—and the manner in which staff acquire such knowledge. Again, this arises as a result of locational specificity, where experiential knowledge is gained by working on a particular park and becoming familiar with its unique ‘values’, thus permitting an understanding of what must be done to manage a given park, and providing rationale for why it must be done.
This structural orientation towards autonomy may have implications for the way in which PWS and its staff interact with external agencies and other parties involved in joint management. For example, rangers’ concerns about added layers of administration in joint management, about changing authority structures (i.e. the need to obtain the land council’s approval to carry out certain tasks) or, indeed, the imposition of an external political solution to a legal problem and the resulting change in the agency’s legislation were all rendered clear to me during in discussions with PWS staff. The implication of the erosion of this fiercely guarded autonomy for the agency and the subsequent implementation of broad scale joint management may be resistance, rejection or even passive indifference – as in the case study of feral donkeys in the Davenport Ranges, where rangers decided to do nothing, and then several years later, began culling feral donkeys once more. Where external interests differ to those that are held by the agency –such as differing attitudes between Aboriginal people and rangers about feral donkeys- joint management initiatives may serve to create conflicts at an ideological level that cannot be readily resolved.

Another significant feature of the agency’s structure is legislation, which is also reproduced in its culture in a number of ways. Autonomy, legislation and the notion of values form a series of nested feedback loops within the agency, which both orient and predispose the agency towards certain kinds of knowledge, action and forms of social organisation. Legislation operates at a subtle and pervasive level within PWS, giving the agency a clear, yet narrowly defined, sense of self and function –described as ‘core business’ by staff- and giving direction to almost every action undertaken within the agency. This creates a feedback loop within the organisation, where the agency legitimates certain forms of seeing, knowing and doing –described as the practice of protected area or land management- requiring the employment of staff skilled in park or land management to carry out this seeing, knowing and doing.

One outcome of the structural and functional specificity contained within the agency’s legislation is rangercentrism. The organisation’s legislative functions require the
employment of a large number of tertiary-educated staff located in one profession: rangering. This in turn creates yet another nested feedback loop, contributing to both PWS's corporate identity as well as the clear understanding of the agency's narrowly-defined roles and functions, expressed by the term 'core business'. Whilst legislation and rangercentrism ensure a continuity of park management programs across time regardless of changes of government, these factors also create some rigidity in ideas about the agency's functions; some would say that PWS is inherently conservative and rigid in its operations. When considering the likely impact of broad scale joint management upon PWS, again the possibility of conflict and difficulty arise. To PWS staff, changing the agency's legislation means changing its daily operations, its sense of identity and challenging the autonomy which forms the core of the agency's understandings about itself. In other words, joint management of the form proposed by the NT Government following the decision in Ward represents potentially deep and far-reaching structural change to PWS. Most notably, the change to the agency's legislation includes the insertion of external agencies -the land councils- directly into the daily operations of the organisation. Again, this raises the issue of conflict as the interests and cultural differences of two large bureaucracies interact and negotiate potentially disparate organisational priorities.

A final series of nested feedback loops relates to the notion of values within the agency. Protected area management, as described to me by PWS staff, is strongly based around the protection and management of values located in the landscape. These values are negotiated with reference to higher level socio-cultural beliefs, and are represented in the landscape as physical, tangible qualities that staff can perceive, assess and act upon to protect. Values must be 'managed' -suggesting the dominance of managerialism as a narrative with public sector agencies- and subject to some form of rational human action which can be planned for, acted upon, monitored and reported on. This structural orientation towards the management of values inherent in the landscape also feeds back into the idea of seeing, knowing and doing described above. By this I mean that there are a small number of legitimate and narrowly defined categories or 'possibilities' under which protected areas can be set aside, such
as biodiversity, tourism, recreation or cultural, which themselves arise out of the dialectic of legislation, policy and broader socio-historical context.

This legitimate categorisation of values not only underpins the existence of protected areas, it equally suggests a mechanism for being able to ‘find’, formally categorise and set aside land imbued with such recognisable values. In the case of government-run protected areas, these processes are closely aligned with the feedback loops discussed above: protected areas are brought into existence by scientific survey and government legislation which are themselves informed by cultural understandings about what is desirable in regards to a nation’s lands, its natural integrity and protected areas; staff within conservation agencies are trained to recognise, gather information about and manage these values. In PWS, values are doubly encoded upon the system: manifest in the possibility of the creation and dedication of lands as ‘protected areas’, and again in the agency’s project management system, where categories or projects classify and give rise to the kinds of actions that are able to be effected in order to protect, recognise or maintain values.

Such a position further presupposes the existence of a process for translating values from abstractions into physicalities; in other words, a means of converting human desires about what protected areas should contain –values in the sociological sense– into objects located in real physical space and time. This is again linked to what is scientifically knowable: facts that can be known through the process of verification. As the comments of rangers reveal, protected areas are places that require the recognition and translation of human-defined values in the landscape, their codification in government processes such as legislation and plans of management, and the physical and instrumental actions focussed upon protecting, preserving or enhancing these values. There exists a legitimate ‘canon’ of agency knowledge and practice related to values. The corollary of this is that certain values can be managed because they can be known and recognised by the agency, whilst other values cannot be known to the agency, and therefore cannot be managed. This has clear implications

171
for issues such as cultural heritage management – a central factor in joint management initiatives.

This knowing, seeing and doing – and the meanings underlying them – can be rendered clearer via comparison: joint management versus non-joint management activities; Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal understandings of land and land management; the interests of conservation agencies, Aboriginal people and other involved in joint management initiatives. It is to this interplay of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests – and the conflicts that arise – in the implementation of joint management within the NT’s parks that I turn to in the following chapters.
Vignette: Business as Usual - The Politics of Film Permits at Rainbow Valley

Figure 5-1: Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve

Permit applications from commercial enterprises wishing to film (or photograph) on parks and reserves are routinely assessed by PWS, as they comprise part of its legislative function. In late January 2004, PWS received an application from a company wishing to undertake filming at Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve, approximately 100 kilometres south of Alice Springs.

Following the receipt of the application, the Senior District Ranger responsible for Rainbow Valley approached me with the permit request. He asked whether I would assist in arranging a meeting with the Aboriginal families who were associated with the Reserve to discuss the application, giving them an opportunity to veto or approve the permit application based on cultural considerations.

I knew the Traditional Owners of Rainbow Valley well as I'd worked with them previously, so arranging a meeting wasn't difficult. Indeed, as many of these people lived on Outstations directly adjoining the Reserve's boundaries, they were also well known to rangers. I went ahead and arranged the meeting. The Aboriginal families concerned asked to meet with the filmmaker so they could hear more about the filming proposal. An invitation was also given to CLC staff members to attend, but they advised that they were unable to come along.
The meeting came and went. On site, the filmmakers explained what they wanted; the Aboriginal families listened and made recommendations to protect significant sites and explained cultural protocols relating to Rainbow Valley. There was a hiccup with the payments—a lump sum being paid to the family instead of to individuals, but this was later corrected with the help of the CLC. The filming permit was issued with strict conditions.

Several days later, a letter arrived from the CLC. The letter warned us that our actions in holding the film permit meeting had jeopardised future prospects for joint management. The CLC stated that in the spirit of goodwill, we should be operating under the core principles of joint management set out in the yet unsigned Joint Management Agreement between the NT Government and the land councils. Under the proposed joint management arrangements, it was the CLC’s role to identify Traditional Owners—regardless of whether PWS had a prior history of consulting Aboriginal people or not. The letter instructed us that no PWS staff member was to have any kind of contact with an Aboriginal person without the CLC’s approval. From now on, all contact with Aboriginal people was to be negotiated via the CLC. This position was reinforced several days later during a meeting in which I was told firmly by CLC staff members that the land council was the only organisation who could ‘identify’ Traditional Owners.

Outside of the meeting, my supervisor assured me that I had done nothing wrong. As far as PWS was concerned it was business as usual: the issuing of film permits was PWS’s role, and if that included consulting with Traditional Owners where necessary, then so be it. I was told not to worry about it and to keep doing what I was doing. Other colleagues were cynical: they assured me that my actions would come back to bite me. The CLC would never trust or accept me unless I dropped the label ‘anthropologist’ immediately—something both abhorrent and unthinkable to me.

The episode played on my mind—and continued to play on my mind for many months. The land councils had the ear of the highest levels of government. They were far more influential and powerful than a conservation agency, and would soon have a legislated role in the agency’s own Act. Yet PWS, with its hands-on operational
culture, its autonomy and public sector managerialism was fiercely protective of what it considered to be its terrain. As far as PWS was concerned, they were the land managers - the experts in park management and in joint management- and the CLC had no right to tell them what to do.

How then would these two agencies work together? What kind of joint management - if any- would arise when the interests in joint management held by each organisation appeared to be so different?

The joint management of protected areas assumes a congruity of interests between the groups involved in the practice at a fundamental level. Joint management agreements approach the interests of participating groups broadly, focussing on commonalities such as the desire to protect the environment and to improve Aboriginal socio-economic prospects, rather than on divisive factors, such as closing tourist access to popular waterholes that may also be sacred sites. This use of broad, general principles in negotiation is a tool used by politicians, lawmakers and senior bureaucrats, ensuring that joint management can be rendered into law, whilst leaving potential conflicts of interest, localised cultural or biological differences to the annual or daily minutiae of park managers and Traditional Owners. On the ground, as the case of filming at Rainbow Valley demonstrates, attempts to implement joint management may be much more complex. Quite simply, joint management involves not only the interests of park managers and Aboriginal people, but of politicians, the general public, and in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal land councils as well.

For the Parks and Wildlife Service the period from late 2003 until early 2005 was a time when these multiple interests made a sudden and disruptive entrance into departmental life. Routine tasks such as consulting with Traditional Owners in regards to film permits that had been part of established agency practice for decades became complex and fraught with political tension. On a number of levels, the new arrangements promised to be radically different to previous forays into joint management (discussed in Chapter Three). Not only were the number of parks and reserves affected by the new legislation unprecedented, the legislation itself contained
detailed prescriptions for joint management – such as explicitly setting out the content required in joint management plans – which had been absent in previous pieces of legislation. The legislation also contained - whether PWS staff welcomed it or not - a role in joint management and the daily operations of the agency for the two large Northern Territory land councils.

This chapter explores the interests of, conflicts between and understandings of joint management held by the groups involved directly in its implementation: staff within the Parks and Wildlife Service, the Central Land Council and Aboriginal Traditional Owners. The events discussed in this chapter comprise those leading up to the actual on-ground implementation of broad scale joint management in the Northern Territory. In this chapter, I pose two broad questions: How do those involved in the implementation of joint management define and understand joint management? and What are the interests of the groups involved in joint management? In answering these questions, I continue to describe my own experience within the agency – along with those of my colleagues – following the introduction of the new joint management arrangements by the NT Government and the corresponding changes to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (TWPCA) described in Chapter Three.

Throughout this chapter, the PWS’s sense of autonomy, its internal understandings of its roles and functions, and its strong focus upon the protection of natural values intertwine with the agendas of land councils, the NT’s history, and the aspirations of Aboriginal people. Emerging from this complex interplay are issues relating to unexpected and hidden political asymmetries, and the divergent understandings of joint management held by and even within each group. The implications of these divergent interests and political imbalances hold the potential for conflict, tension and deleterious effects for the implementation of joint management on a broad scale, yet are neither unavoidable nor insurmountable.

The Interests of Land Councils in Joint Management

Early in 2004 – the time when the events described in the opening vignette were taking place – most PWS staff expected that the new joint management arrangements would become a reality. Yet at the same time, whilst the outcome of the NT Government’s
joint management offer to Traditional Owners remained undecided—and potentially might be rejected by Aboriginal people— the agency continued to operate in the manner it had always operated in. Within the agency, this way of being was described by the term ‘business as usual’. However, the ‘ambiguity of the new’—a phrase I use here to imply the unwritten, untested space in which established operational processes could no longer be relied upon—ensured that acting in familiar ways in this novel situation produced conflict and misunderstanding with those groups who also had interests in joint management. Indeed, the assumptions made by PWS staff that they could simply carry out their duties as they always had were countered swiftly and forcibly by the Central Land Council (CLC) from the earliest days following the Chief Minister's announcement of a negotiated settlement between the government and Traditional Owners. Quite simply, the CLC had interests of their own in joint management and—to the surprise of many PWS staff—intended to pursue them from the start, regardless of whether legal agreements were signed and legislation was been passed or not.

This clear and potentially disastrous sequence of events raises the question of the interests of the two large Territory land councils in joint management, and at a deeper level, of the underlying interests of land councils as self-replicating bureaucracies. The interests of land councils in joint management are legislatively defined, and easily understood. Division III, Section 25 AO of the TWPCA, states that the role of the land councils in joint management is:

(a) to ascertain and express the wishes and the opinion of Aboriginals living in its area as to the management of the parks and reserves in that area and as to appropriate legislation concerning those parks and reserves;

(b) to protect the interests of the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves;

(c) to consult with the traditional Aboriginal owners of, and other Aboriginals interested in, those parks and reserves about the use of those parks and reserves;
(d) to negotiate with persons desiring to obtain an estate or interest (including a licence) in any of those parks or reserves on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners of that park or reserve and any other Aboriginals interested in that park or reserve;

(e) to supervise, and provide administrative and other assistance to, the Park Land Trusts holding, or established to hold, park freehold title in parks and reserves in its area.

This clarity of function and its insertion into the TWPCA —although at the time of the Rainbow Valley filming incident, the legislation conferring these duties to the land councils had not yet been passed— had clear implications for the way in which PWS interacted with Aboriginal people. The most obvious effect of the legislation upon PWS and its staff was the implicit assumption that direct consultation with Aboriginal people about joint management would now need to be undertaken by—or negotiated through—the land councils. The other less clear implication was that, under the first three points listed above, the land councils could—and indeed, as the opening vignette demonstrates, would—assert their interests into the day-to-day operations of PWS. For a fiercely autonomous agency such as PWS, the insertion of an external agency—replete with its own organisational and unashamedly political activist agendas—into its daily operations was unwelcome and resisted:

If I need to go and speak to Ulpanyali (the name of a small Aboriginal Outstation located on Watarrka National Park) about something, I will. They (Ulpanyali residents) come down here for barbecues all the time. They came down here for X’s (name of a ranger’s child) birthday last week. I’m not ringing X (land council staff member’s name) in Alice Springs to ask whether I can talk to our next door neighbours! (Senior Ranger, July 2004).

Whilst there was an overt, legally-derived understanding about the land councils’ interests in joint management—to act as the legal representatives of Aboriginal people in any matter relating to land—interactions with land council staff, in particular, staff from the CLC’s land management section, yielded further insight into the organisation itself and its internal understandings of joint management.
One of the first understandings of the NT Government’s joint management offer that emerged during dealings with CLC’s land management staff was that joint management was viewed as an opportunity to access additional funding for CLC-defined land management projects, and to expand the numbers of staff working in the land management section. This was evidenced during numerous meetings and workshops in late 2003 and throughout 2004, where CLC land management staff argued that they would need additional funding and additional staff if they were to undertake the work involved in presenting the NT Government’s offer to Traditional Owners. Furthermore, they suggested, they would need continuing funds to undertake joint management planning, and once this task was complete, to carry out their ongoing legislative functions in the administration of joint management agreements (field notes, May 2005). To this end, the NT Government and PWS did indeed supply funding for four initial land management staff (two in each land council), including on-costs such as vehicle leasing and enabling funds for projects. This funding—around $150,000 per position per annum—was drawn wholly from the PWS joint management budget.

The motivation underlying these requests by CLC’s land management section was to source funding that relieved their staff from the arduous and time-consuming task of applying for and administering Federal Government grants for land management. Unlike the legal and anthropology sections of the land council whose funding is derived from the Commonwealth Government’s Aboriginal Benefits Account, much of the land management section’s funding came from government grants. The complex process of administering these grants reduced both the effectiveness of, and the time available for, on-ground implementation of the very projects the money was intended to support.

Furthermore, the land management section was viewed within the land council as being of a lesser strategic importance than those sections concerned with pursuing land or native title claims, such as the legal and anthropology branches (field notes, 15 September, 2005). This is further expressed within the agency’s annual report:
Securing and maximising the land base for traditional Aboriginal landowners has been one of the most important statutory functions for the Central Land Council...(CLC, 2008: 35).

Another motivation for the land council’s involvement in joint management was the expansion of the land management section’s role—especially in biodiversity conservation—and via this involvement, a subtle but strategic shift in the organisation’s overall functions based on internal politics. This was often expressed by land management staff in statements such as: “...CLC will eventually do what Parks does, but on Aboriginal land...” (field notes, 15 September 2005). Joint management on a broad scale, then, was viewed within the CLC’s land management section as an opportunity to relieve internal administrative burdens, as an opportunity to expand and enhance the status of the land management section within the agency, and most importantly, to alter the agency’s strategic direction away from land-claim related work to land management work.

The interests and agendas of land councils in general—and their effect on the land council’s understandings of joint management—can be also gleaned from the actions of land council staff in joint management, and more generally from the land councils’ legislated roles and functions, set out in the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act (ALR(NT)A). Like PWS, the land councils are statutory authorities with clear roles and responsibilities set out in Section 23 of the ALR(NT)A. These roles are summarised here as representing, consulting and assisting traditional Aboriginal owners to access, maintain and protect their interests in land.(http://www.clc.org.au/Ourland/land_rights_act/Land_rights_act.html)

These legislative functions suggest that land councils, like the PWS, are autonomous organisations with clearly defined duties and legislatively driven cultures. What is not suggested by the roles and functions set out in ALR(NT)A, however, are the interests of the land councils as self-replicating bureaucracies, with a culture of staunchly and fiercely guarding their territory—meaning Aboriginal people, culture and land—to the exclusion of all other agencies. In other words, land councils—like conservation agencies and other bureaucracies—perform their duties with regards to retaining control of their own functional domains and the promotion of organisational
continuity, as well as in regards to their more apparent, legislated duties. This cultural property of the Central Land Council is particularly strong, as evidenced by their insistence that PWS staff comply with joint management agreements and legislation in draft form—prior to the CLC completing its own legislated obligations in seeking Aboriginal peoples’ instructions regarding those very same agreements.

This position may derive from the CLC’s inception as a ‘grassroots activist’ organisation predating the passage of the ALR (NT)A, and the participation of its staff in overt political lobbying (Stead, 2002: 3-4). The strong culture of activism and of ‘fighting the good fight’—an expression borrowed from American Puritans and used ironically, but with great sincerity, by CLC staff to denote ‘fighting’ for Aboriginal peoples’ rights—was apparent in many interactions between PWS and CLC staff members. For example, the manner in which land council staff assumed control of the joint management process and excluded PWS staff from all early meetings with Aboriginal people (see discussion in the following sections), demanded funding from the PWS joint management budget part way through 2004, and very overtly lobbied both the NT and Commonwealth Governments to fast-track land tenure changes associated with ‘handbacks’ demonstrates the organisation’s cultural orientation towards overt political activism and securing ongoing funding to ensure its own continued existence. The following quote from the CLC’s first annual report (CLC:1981, cited in Stead, 2002:4), serves to further illustrate the fiercely independent and politically-driven nature of the CLC:

*The Aboriginal Land Rights Act provides for the establishment of land councils as bodies corporate. The Central Land Council is such a body, but it is not and never has been simply a statutory body established by a government law. ... From the start CLC was determined to be independent and run its own affairs. An offer by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies of an anthropologist to be employed by and under the direction of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies was rejected. Staff had to be employed by and be accountable to the Council....*
The organisation’s activism and pursuit of its own interests is also apparent in the opening vignette where land council staff stated that they were the only agency through which access and contact with Aboriginal people by PWS staff could be established. To emphasise this, land council staff frequently cited the functions and responsibilities of land councils as set down in the ALRA(NT)A, as well as the organisations’ legal and anthropological expertise. Even in cases where Aboriginal communities exist on specific parks and have frequent—if not daily—contact with PWS staff, land council staff forcefully asserted their right to intervene and mediate these relationships, and threatened legal reprise if compliance was not forthcoming. As a consequence, land councils were (and continue to be) perceived by PWS staff as inherently adversarial to external organisational interests, legally controlled (meaning that they are controlled by lawyers at an executive level) and also as skilled and powerful political lobbyists, whose agenda lies not so much with promoting the interests of Aboriginal people, but with asserting their own political power within the Northern Territory.

The adversarial and political nature of the land councils—who fought for and achieved remarkable success in claiming forty percent of the NT for Aboriginal people under the ALR (NT)A—is not difficult to understand. As discussed in Chapter Three, successive Northern Territory Governments had poor relationships with the land councils, perceiving them as organisations with an agenda inimical to that of the NT Government’s policies of economic and social development through mining, pastoralism and tourism (Dillon and Westbury, 2007: 99-100). Prior to the election of a Labor Government in 2001, most land claims in the NT had been contested by successive NT Governments via the courts. The land councils developed a tough, legalistic culture that aimed to—in the words of several CLC staff: “... keep the bastards honest...” meaning the NT Government, mining companies and other European interests (fieldnotes, August, 2004).

Whilst the desire of the land council’s staff to represent and defend the rights of Aboriginal in land is unquestionable, the question of whether the land councils do indeed represent living Aboriginal peoples’ interests in land or instead, represent their own internal cultural, political and bureaucratic interests is a valid one. Throughout the course of my fieldwork—and during previous experience whilst working for the
AAPA- most CLC staff I encountered were dedicated to carrying out the organisation’s functions as set out in the *ALR(NT)*A. CLC staff readily quoted sections of the *ALR(NT)*A, interpreted their roles in terms of assisting with the completion of some function of the Act, or in the case of joint management, a function derived from another piece of legislation which itself was derived from the *ALR(NT)*A. My own observations were that CLC staff did indeed carry out their duties as defined in the *ALR(NT)*A effectively - albeit, at times with complete insensitivity to the interests of others, including Aboriginal people. The term ‘*hard line CLC*’ was frequently used by NT Government employees to describe the manner in which CLC staff undertook their duties and interacted with non-CLC staff. This manner of acting was described by non-CLC staff as being inflexible, aggressive, arrogant, paternalistic to Aboriginal people and bullying towards non-Aboriginal people. Such behaviours may be interpreted to reflect the organisation’s somewhat abrasive internal culture, perhaps derived from its grassroots political activism, rather than its attempts to represent the interests of Aboriginal people.

However, it should be said here that individually, my experience of CLC land management staff was of a group of people dedicated to making a difference to the lives of Aboriginal people via the successful implementation of joint management. These people were commonly graduates of natural resource or land management degrees, and displayed a deep affection for the landscapes, plants and animals of Central Australia. They were markedly different to the anthropological or legal staff of the land council, concerned less with carrying out the literal functions of the land council as set out in the *ALR(NT)*A, and much more with establishing land management projects conceptualised and ultimately carried out by Traditional Owners. To the land management staff of the CLC, joint management represented a way to combine traditional Aboriginal ecological knowledge and aspirations with European land management practices, and most importantly, represented employment and empowerment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Yet, despite this apparent congruence with rangers in terms of tertiary education, land management skills and interest in flora and fauna, land management officers were tempered by -PWS staff frequently termed this ‘*brainwashed*’- by the adversarial and political culture dominant within the organisation. At times, land management staff did indeed
represent land council’s interests as a self-replicating bureaucracy concerned with maintaining control of what it considered its domain—Aboriginal people and culture.

What did become apparent in terms of the representation of Aboriginal interests by the CLC was that some Aboriginal people—especially Western Arrernte and Anmatyerre people—claimed that the organisation did not represent their interests, and they did not agree with the organisation’s insistence that it should act as their legal representative. This was expressed to me in terms of: “...the land council doesn’t speak for us - we speak for ourselves...” (field notes, Hermannsburg, March, 2007), or “…those CLC (the CLC), they gotta stand behind us. They’re jumpin’ up in front. They gotta go behind...”(field notes, Aileron, July, 2008). At several meetings I attended, CLC staff were told to leave and let Aboriginal people and rangers talk together. Such requests were countered by CLC lawyers firmly stating their obligations under the ALR(NT)A and staunchly remaining at the meetings, despite the protests of Aboriginal people.

On other occasions, Aboriginal people expressed to me their suspicions about the CLC’s own internal agendas, in particular, the organisation’s well known and highly successful financial investments and its lawyer-driven and controlled culture as not being representative of Aboriginal interests, but rather, of European interests. The contentions raised by Aboriginal people about the CLC would appear to indicate that at a localised level, the organisation may not represent the interests of all Aboriginal people, as defined and understood by particular groups of contemporary Aboriginal people. This could be attributed to the changing interests and agendas of Aboriginal people in the years following the passage of the ALR(NT)A, for example, the shift from fighting for land rights to establishing livelihoods on remote outstations and communities. In comparison to those of its Aboriginal constituents, the CLC’s interests have remained relatively ‘fixed in ink’, concerned with carrying out the agency’s functions under the ALR(NT)A. In the case of groups such as the Western Arrernte and Anmatyerre, this divergence of interests could be attributed to a history of consistent and vocal demands for self-representation, rather than representation by what is perceived as an externally imposed, ‘Whitefella’ organisation (Austin-Broos, 2008:126). It could also be attributed to Aboriginal perceptions of the CLC as a ‘Whitefella bureaucracy’ rather than a localised Aboriginal organisation. However,
both the contentions of Aboriginal people and the actions of CLC staff in dominating the joint management process strongly suggest that the organisation possesses interests oriented towards self-replication, control of what it perceives as its institutional domain, and its own autonomy, as well as of pursuing its functions as defined in the \( ALR(NT)A \). The interests of land councils in joint management and more generally may be described as legally-driven, politically activist, autonomous and self-replicating; qualities that are ironically similar to those of the PWS.

**Power and Exclusion**

Given that the land councils, like PWS, were accustomed to acting autonomously and with little recourse to interests of external agencies – apart from responding to the demands of funding bodies – from the outset of the joint management process, conflicts of interest and misunderstandings between the agencies seemed almost certain to arise. For PWS staff, one of the most poignant examples of misunderstanding happened when the agency’s staff were initially excluded from meetings with Traditional Owners that officially marked the beginning of negotiations regarding the ‘formal’ offer of joint management to Traditional Owners in late 2003.

Following the NT Government’s offer, the CLC conducted three rounds of meetings with Traditional Owners in Central Australia over a period of approximately fifteen months. The first round of meetings was intended to present the government’s offer, and in particular, explain the details of the proposed ‘hand backs’ of land to Aboriginal people, including tenure changes, Indigenous Land Use Agreements, and lease back arrangements. It should be pointed out here that, under the conditions set out in *Framework Act* and the ‘*Deed of Agreement*’ between the NTG and the Land councils, until negotiations with Traditional Owners were concluded and the offers of joint management accepted or rejected, PWS was to manage its estate on a ‘business as usual’ basis. Even if the offer was accepted, PWS was still to manage parks and reserves on this basis until new *Joint Management Plans* were prepared and gazetted in the Legislative Assembly. This is an important – and divisive – point to which I shall soon return.
Although PWS staff were aware of the timing and locations of this first round of meetings regarding the NTG’s offer, and asked to be involved in presenting information sessions to Traditional Owners concerning the practices and processes involved in park management, CLC staff were adamant that no ‘PWS uniforms’ would be present at any of these community meetings. Whilst individual CLC staff were generally supportive of the government’s offer, they were sensitive about perceived bias relating to the Land council’s position in the negotiations. Quite simply, the CLC wished to demonstrate to Traditional Owners that they had not ‘signed off’ on the NT Government’s agreement behind Traditional Owners’ backs (field notes, 20 November, 2003).

Even though I understood the rationale behind the CLC’s approach, I sympathised with many of my PWS colleagues who believed that the land council’s protective approach to Traditional Owners was not only unnecessary, it was inherently hypocritical. Parks staff discussing this issue with me frequently invoked the land council’s assertion that, under its own Act, the ALR(NT)A, it had to obtain the informed consent of Traditional Owners in regards to decisions made concerning their land. The following quote made to me by a senior ranger is typical of the sentiments expressed by many PWS staff at the time:

*How can they (Traditional Owners) make informed decisions about joint management when they’ve only heard half the story? We are the park managers. We know how to manage parks as parks. How will they know what they’re supposed to be managing if they can’t hear from the people doing it every day?* (field notes, February 2004)

In other words, given that the offer concerned the joint management of national parks and reserves as national parks and reserves—not as Aboriginal land—Traditional Owners needed to understand what park management was before they could be expected to make an informed decision about whether they wanted to accept or reject the NTG’s offer. The exclusion of PWS staff from these initial community meetings was rendered even more bitter to agency staff when it became retrospectively known that many Traditional Owners were asking at these meetings:
Where are Parks mob? The rangers have got to come and talk to us about this...not Land council (field notes, Hermannsburg, November 2003).

Not only did this reinforce perceptions of the land councils as ‘gatekeepers’ amongst PWS staff, it also fuelled a sense of frustration and disillusionment with joint management. The agency had experienced eighteen months of sustained government commitment to joint management in the form of workshops, meetings, briefings, and the circulation of draft agreement documents, to say nothing of the provision of a large ($5 million) budget and the creation of its own Joint Management Unit. Furthermore, it was widely felt within the agency that the Martin Government’s conciliatory approach to Traditional Owners following the decision in Ward was authentic, reflecting both genuine goodwill and acknowledgement of Aboriginal people as having unquestionable rights in land. To be then excluded from a process imbued with such a strong sense of hope and authenticity was an anathema to many in PWS – an expression that the land councils did not trust them and did not really trust the government- and would continue to act as they always had: gatekeeping and obstructing relationships with Aboriginal people. Needless to say, from the perspective of many within PWS, the possibility of a productive working relationship between both organisations at this time seemed a distant reality.

**Business as Usual?**

The formation of a workable relationship with the CLC in joint management appeared even less likely as rangers and other on-the-ground staff attempted to operate under the direction of ‘business as usual’ in the day-to-day management of parks and reserves affected by the new (and yet unpassed) legislation. *Business as usual*, a term arising out of the high-level negotiations between the land councils and the Northern Territory Government in 2002, is used within the *Framework Act* and *Deed of Agreement* to refer to parks and reserves affected by new joint management arrangements which *do not yet have operational joint management plans*. These parks and reserves are to be managed on a day-to-day basis by PWS as they have been in the past, but with reference to a group of ‘core joint principles’ agreed to by the NTG and the land council in October 2002:
• Recognising, valuing and incorporating Aboriginal cultural knowledge and decision making processes;
• Utilising the combined land management skills and experience of both joint management partners;
• Recognising and addressing the need for institutional support and capacity building of the joint management partners;
• Recognising that community living areas in or in close proximity to parks and reserves are an integral part of the natural and cultural resource management of parks and reserves;
• Involving continuing statutory responsibilities and functions of the Minister with respect to parks and reserves;
• Managing parks and reserves may include cooperative management agreements for areas of land outside parks and reserves;
• Establishing a process for the consideration of applications for mining and petroleum.

Under the direction of senior management, PWS staff understood ‘business as usual’ to mean that parks and reserves would be managed as they had always been – which included interactions with Aboriginal people - until the amendments to the TPWC Act were made. Here I refer again to the opening vignette of this chapter and the agency’s response to the ‘ambiguity of the new’ contained therein. The episode described in the vignette represents a critical and important juncture in the joint management process. It was here that the PWS and its staff came to understand they were truly ‘between’ one way of being and another; albeit, an uncertain and not altogether desirable way of being and acting. After the Rainbow Valley film permit incident, it became apparent to most PWS staff that business could not and indeed, would not, ever be ‘as usual’ again. The CLC would act to influence and control interactions with Aboriginal people, and by default, decisions regarding the management of parks and reserves. Indeed, the CLC had the ears of the highest levels of government, and as an agency, were far more politically powerful and skilled at securing their own interests than a small, poorly funded conservation agency. Compliance, albeit bitter compliance, was PWS’s only real choice.
The official PWS responses to the episode discussed in the opening vignette were surprisingly few. Senior management, including my own supervisor, advised us to proceed along the ‘business as usual’ path, saying that the CLC had no legal basis on which to insert its authority into PWS business until—and if—the NTG’s offer of joint management was accepted by the majority of Traditional Owners. Yet it was clear to those of us on the ground that ‘business as usual’ as referred to in the Joint Management Agreement was not simply business as usual, but something which the agency now had to carefully redefine and understand in consultation with the land councils. Central to this new concept of ‘business as usual’ was the need for PWS to accept the role of the land councils in joint management. The legal standing and presence of the land councils within the process had been secured at the very highest levels of government; it was not something that could be ignored or minimised as it had been in the cases of Gurig Ganak Barlu and Nitmiluk National Parks, where legislation has controlled or even excluded land council interventions.

Furthermore, despite the agency’s strong sense of autonomy, ‘business as usual’ was not a choice when the land councils had already begun defining the boundaries of ‘business as usual’—and indeed, joint management itself—from their perspective at the highest levels of government. For the Central Land Council, ‘business as usual’ meant that they would assert their functions under Section 23 (2) of the ALR(NT)A. They would act as the legal representatives of any Aboriginal person with an interest in an NT park or reserve. To this end, they were determined to make certain that PWS adhered to the ‘core principles’ set out in the Deed of Agreement (listed above). ‘Business as usual’ was not simply ‘business as usual’; it was ‘business as usual’ negotiated and constrained by the ambiguity of the new.

Operational ‘Retreat’

Despite the assurances of PWS’s senior management that business was as usual, there was a subtle response from the agency and its staff once the Rainbow Valley filming permit incident became public knowledge. There was a retreat by staff at all levels
from engagement with Aboriginal people, evidenced here by the following comment made by a senior ranger later in 2004:

*Now that there's joint management, we've got less involvement with Aboriginal people than we've ever had. We don't know what to do... What we can or can't do ... We have to tell our staff not to talk to Aboriginal people because of the CLC, which is ridiculous because we have Aboriginal people living next to this park who are our friends and the people we socialise with ... Unless the land council wakes up to themselves, this (joint management) isn't going to work* (field notes, 17 August 2004).

This retreat involved a conscious and at times, semi-fearful, avoidance of any kind of conflict with the CLC. As word of the filming permit incident spread within the organisation, few rangers would make contact with Aboriginal people unless it was through CLC or through sacred site clearances conducted by AAPA. CLC made it clear that there were to be no more informal consultations, barbeques or cups of tea at Outstations until the joint management deal was 'signed off'. And, although we were all complicit in this avoidance, privately many PWS staff, especially those who had worked for the agency for a decade or more, expressed their utter disgust at the situation: *Senior management need to stand up to the land council and tell them to piss off* (Senior Ranger, August, 2004).

However, underlying this retreat was the deeper realisation by some within the agency that the previous understandings about the ways of 'doing' joint management within the organisation might need to be reworked. *New joint management*, as the Rainbow Valley film permit incident revealed, was not only about working with Aboriginal people as equals in park management, it was also about *working with the land councils* —because there simply was no other choice. In other words, the first critical step in establishing the new joint management agenda was to create it anew by devising the space for, and ways of working with, the land councils. Yet, to do this also invoked the need to think deeply about the accepted definitions of joint management held within the agency —an uncomfortable proposition for many PWS staff whose understandings of joint management were modelled on Nitmiluk and Gurig National Parks. Thus defining joint management —uncovering the ways in
which PWS staff understood and gave meaning to the practice—was critical to gaining an understanding of complex interplay of organisational interests, histories and cultures and their effect on the kind of joint management that emerged.

**Defining Joint Management: Organisational Perspectives**

When asked to define joint management, PWS staff exhibit considerable diversity in opinions, firsthand experience of, and understandings of joint management. Many of these differences can be readily explained by whether an individual has worked on a jointly managed park or reserve (such as Nitmiluk), their position within the organisational hierarchy and their exposure to joint management in parks run by other government conservation agencies, such as Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. Despite these variations, a number of common themes emerged when I asked PWS staff to define joint management: working/managing together, relationships, governance/decision making structures, cultural exchange and complexity/difficulty.

Working with or managing parks together with Aboriginal people is one of the most commonly cited definitions of joint management amongst PWS staff. It should be noted that this definition occurs not just amongst PWS staff, but also amongst Aboriginal people and other NT Government staff as well (Bauman & Smyth, 2007: 127). When asked to define joint management, many rangers frame the concept in terms of working together:

*I'd define joint management as working together ... TOs and Parks working together to manage a protected area in a way that satisfies both parties. It's taking into consideration the values ... the different values that both parties have.* (field notes, May 2007)

*Joint management to me is working together with traditional Aboriginal people jointly managing a piece of estate for all to benefit from it. I don't believe that we can turn back time ... kick off all the tourists, exclude everyone and give it back to Aboriginal people. We need to work together, move forward in time and concentrate on getting benefits for all.* (field notes, 2007)
In defining joint management first and foremost as ‘working together’, informants reveal a number of underlying assumptions about joint management. In the statements above, these can be gleaned from the qualifying statements following the initial phrase working together. For example, it is apparent that joint management is about two groups –PWS and Aboriginal people- managing a protected area (the second example above substitutes the word ‘estate’ for ‘protected area’). Informants also emphasise the mutuality of this arrangement: the parties must both be satisfied with and/or benefit from this combined group management of the protected area. It is also expected that ‘the different values’ held by each party will be apprehended, understood and adopted in the management of the protected area. The use of the word ‘values’ here is insightful in itself; the management of desirable values is viewed by the agency and its staff as the central practice –or, to paraphrase agency terms ‘the core business’- that protected area management encompasses.

It is pertinent here to ask: what do rangers understand by the phrase ‘working together’? The use of this phrase by PWS staff is neither arbitrary, based on a convenient shorthand explanation of joint management popularised by government rhetoric nor a simple taken-at-face-value choice of words. Rather, in both examples the phrase working together is followed by the words ‘...to manage ...’, and it is here that rangers’ implicit understandings about joint management are rendered visible. Joint management is framed specifically as park management, carrying with it all of the values, practices, assumptions, and understandings about managing protected areas. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapter 4, the idea of undertaking planned and scientifically-based actions which have some beneficial or conservatory effect upon lands deemed as possessing desirable natural or cultural values is the main focus of protected area management. In defining joint management as working together to manage parks, rangers reaffirm their commitment to this ideal and reproduce these assumptions in their definition of joint management. In the minds of rangers, there is no question of these areas being managed as anything other than as protected areas replete with desirable values that need to be managed via established organisational programs and practices.
A second theme encountered found in staff definitions of joint management is that of establishing, nurturing and engaging in relationships with Aboriginal people:

*The true value of joint management is in the effort we put in that can't be seen in budgets or reports or milestones. I can't quantify the amount of time I spend chasing up indigenous staff... It's in the effort you put in and what you get out of it. I get to work with some incredible people and see some incredible things that others don't see. It's about relationships. Those that you build with people on a personal and professional level* (Chief District Ranger, Nitmiluk, April 2007).

*Joint management is determined by the legislation and the willing interests and capacity of the participants. It's founded in legislation and policy ... however, it's the relationships, interests and human side that actually allow it to function* (Senior Planner, May 2007).

These comments suggest the importance of face-to-face contact between individuals engaged in joint management – the establishing and nurturing of relationships. Indeed, as the quote from the second informant above indicates, embodied human relationships are the site of the 'real work' in joint management, far more relevant to
successful outcomes than legislation or policy. There is an unmistakable sense of positive affect and personal fulfilment expressed when rangers talk about such relationships: rangers participating in joint management expect to have meaningful and beneficial relationships with Aboriginal people – even in context of chasing up aberrant indigenous staff.

Yet there is also a sense of good relationships correlating with good outcomes for joint management and park management in general – evidenced in the statement above: ‘true value of joint management is in the effort we put in that can’t be seen in budgets or reports or milestones...’. What can be inferred from this comment is that the establishment and nurturing of relationships with Traditional Owners by PWS staff has an instrumental element to it, linked to organisational efficacy and efficiency. Investing in relationships becomes a means of saving time, managing risk, reducing conflict and ensuring that decisions affecting park management can be made. The narrative of maintaining good relationships with stakeholders draws upon the trope of ‘risk management’, a component of contemporary management practice (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997: 859). The managing of relationships, particularly the management or mitigation of conflict, invokes the socio-centric nature of Aboriginal societies in Central Australia, where the maintenance of family and other kinship relations is paramount (Folds, 2000: 72; Myers, 1986:163). For both European and Aboriginal people, the maintenance of relationships links to, and indeed is a means of controlling another commonly defined property of joint management: its complexity and difficulty.

The notion of personal fulfilment is another aspect of relationships that emerges from discussions with rangers and other staff. As indicated in Chapter Four, one of the reasons rangers cite for coming to Central Australia is to gain experience in working with Aboriginal people. Anecdotally, such experience is valued highly by prospective employers in other States. However, the high value placed upon establishing relationships with Aboriginal people whilst working in joint management goes beyond the instrumentalities of career advancement. Instead, it is framed within individually salient statements associated with personal development and yearning for cross-cultural exchange:
The reason I came to the Territory was to work with Aboriginal people in joint management ... you know, to learn about their way of life and come to understand it better, and hopefully contribute to their opportunities in some way. In Victoria, I’d never really spoken to an Aboriginal person ... I had no idea. Coming up here where there seems to be so much culture I thought I would learn so much.

But it’s much harder to learn about it (Aboriginal culture) than I expected. There’s not always the time to sit down with people and talk and share — you’ve got all your other work projects to do, with deadlines and supervisors to answer to. Other times, you find out that (Aboriginal) people have lost the knowledge you thought they’d have ... and sometimes, they’re just not interested in park management. Which isn’t bad, it’s just that they’ve got other priorities in their lives (Ranger, Watarrka National Park, May 2007).

The deep personal yearning for cross-cultural exchange and ‘Two-Way learning’, coupled with statements of disappointment are common to those who work in joint management. However, the desire for cross-cultural exchange and the high value placed upon it by PWS staff remains intact even in the face of often revelatory experiences which challenge widely-held notions about Aboriginal people in Central Australia:

I had no idea about joint management until I’d worked at Uluru. I’d been working on a partly-joint-managed park in Victoria which had no Aboriginal people working in it.

At Uluru I had a rude awakening. I learned about joint management by learning with Aboriginal people on their own country. Not sitting in a classroom... learning what does and doesn’t work on the ground and learning by screwing up. Things that I learned very quickly — no hard and fast rules, must be flexible, what works one day might not work tomorrow. It all changes.
I learned that what you learn and see in the mainstream TV and press about what Aboriginal people want and expect is not what the reality is on the ground. Like in 1999, for instance, when I first arrived at Uluru, the push for the apology for the Stolen Generations not one person down there cared about it (Chief District Ranger, Nitmiluk, April 2007).

...Working with (Aboriginal) people in joint management here, you realise how much as been lost. There's no fire knowledge - or very little. There's hardly any species knowledge, either ... like they know the names of things, but not about their habitats. There's Dreaming Stories, but even they seem to be less detailed than they probably were... (Ranger, Palm Valley, October 2006).

The issue of loss of traditional knowledge, of ranger's and indeed, mainstream views about the kind of knowledge Aboriginal people possess and the applicability of this knowledge to contemporary park management are central to joint management and how it is understood within Central Australia. Previous forays by PWS into joint management in the tropical north, particularly in Kakadu and Nitmiluk National Parks, have influenced organisational and mainstream perceptions about what joint management is and should be. This is evident in both rangers' expectations about joint management involving seasonal work programs derived from Aboriginal seasonal calendars and land management practices, and in organisational responses, such as the prioritisation of planning and governance structures over cultural heritage management or traditional ecological knowledge projects.

**Governance, Complexity and Difficulty**

At the level of middle and senior management within PWS, understandings of joint management focus less on cross-cultural exchange and personal relationship building, and more on creating certainty and structure in park management. For middle and upper level PWS staff, relationships established upon interorganisational contexts – building trust and understanding with both land council staff as well as with
Traditional Owners. Furthermore, the understandings of joint management held by senior PWS staff are inherently ‘top-down’, linked closely with addressing annual government reporting requirements, current strategic directions and budgets – all commonly labelled as ‘management’ tasks. Consider the following definition of joint management, elicited from a Senior Park Planner:

(It's about) ... the resources available and the designated goals set by the community and government. It's also the skill base and capacity (within government and community). The tools and approaches to attain these will reflect those objectives (the designated goals set out by the government and community)...

... all management activities will be limited – all geared around minimum effort because of limited time and money. Everything is strategic. Comes down to the basics of minimising waste in effort ... effort in the broader sense... Management is a considered process mindful of many factors. Implementation of the sharp end, but mindless implementation will always be short-lived. It wastes money, time and potentially compromises the long-term purpose and values prescribed by the community and the government.

Management can easily succumb to the tail wagging the dog unless there is an emphasis on and consistent reflection to the core purpose and priorities. Ill considered investment in any element of implementation can compromise so many... it compromises effective management (Senior Planner, May 2007).

Here, joint management is framed as part of general ‘management’ practice, with a focus on achieving high-level strategic objectives using the resources at hand in planned stages, with clear accountability to stakeholders (the broader community). The corollary of such an approach to joint management by the middle and senior levels of PWS is an emphasis upon joint management planning processes and joint management governance structures, such as committees and boards of management:
There is no real joint management until we have joint management plans. Joint management is about putting in place those things ... plans of management, decision-making processes and bodies that allow the parks to function in a jointly-managed way. It's in the legislation: there's no real joint management until that happens... (Senior Planner, September 2004).

There are two issues that I wish to mention briefly here before moving on: the role of organisational culture and joint management history in shaping contemporary definitions of joint management. Firstly, the defining of joint management via terms such as ‘plans of management’ and ‘governance structures’ by senior staff is embedded within PWS’s organisational culture. In Chapter Two, I discussed the importance of planning in Australian conservation agencies, stating that there exists a statutory requirement that all protected areas have legally sanctioned plans of management. It follows then that planning and plans of management are viewed as clear and powerful processes within conservation agencies, and are promoted over other possible courses of action, such as the creation of programs aimed at building relationships or indigenous capacity.

Secondly, the role of joint management history –the ‘models’ of joint management established in the 1980s- remain cognitively potent within the organisation, continuing to influence senior staff in regards to what joint management is and should be. The establishment of Aboriginal boards of management and other similar governance structures is of primary concern within PWS’s internal dialogues. For many senior and middle level staff within PWS, joint management is first and foremost about certainty of governance. In effect, what this means is that for many higher level staff, and certainly within many strategic organisational documents, joint management is viewed as a purely administrative managerial activity, concerned with the creation of joint management plans and the establishment of governing boards and committees, rather than as the involvement of Aboriginal people in land management practices.

The final common theme encountered in staff definitions of joint management relates to complexity and difficulty. Joint management is understood by many staff as being
‘worthwhile’ and indeed, morally correct and desirable, but fraught with uncertainty and a multiplicity of intervening variables. For example, in this definition of joint management, a joint management staff member reflects upon the difficulties of reconciling diverse cultural values, and gives a sense of the embedded complexity of joint management via its widely espoused linkages to socio-economic development:

To have a partnership, you need a collaborative vision. I don’t know how realistic joint management is in the sense that current visions that look at both parties’ involvement are quite different. We need some innovative ways to make them both meet. Balance environmental management with poverty and development ... it needs to be incorporated into a much larger picture of sustainable economic development. (Senior Ranger, May 2007).

It is pertinent here to raise the question of whether it is—and should be—the role of a conservation agency to address such problems. Within PWS there is great empathy for and a willingness to assist in Aboriginal socio-economic development at the level of park employment; however, it is felt that the agency is neither responsible for, nor possesses the skills to address Aboriginal socio-economic development on a structural level. As I have suggested in the preceding chapter, PWS is an agency whose staff and expertise is in protected area management, most notably, in land management and public sector administration. Given that, it is unreasonable to expect that such an agency could on its own make a significant contribution to improving socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal people across vast tracts of Central Australia, despite high levels government rhetoric about joint management being effective in addressing such issues. Indeed, as Agarwal and Redford (2006:4) have convincingly argued, there is very little evidence that participation in biodiversity conservation by indigenous people has any effect on the alleviation of poverty at all. Framing joint management as a solution to complex and longstanding socio-economic issues is perceived by PWS staff as problematic, and as further evidence of the inherent difficulty and complexity present within joint management initiatives.

This framing of joint management as complex and difficult is also evident in the statements of those who have worked elsewhere in the Territory on jointly managed
parks. In particular, issues of difficulty and complexity are found in statements about Aboriginal capacity to engage in joint management:

There isn’t the capacity in a lot of (Aboriginal people) ... they can’t read and write, and don’t turn up for meetings even after we’ve gone down to see them the day before ... (Chief District Ranger, 2007).

At Gurig it was often hard because the people expected rangers to be like Centrelink—filling in forms and doing all the maintenance on houses and things. Like when a bore broke or someone’s oven stopped working. They expected us to drop what we were doing and go and fix it. We just couldn’t do it. We had other work to do—so we often had to upset people, and the Board members got cranky at the rangers... We all had different ideas about what joint management was (Senior Park Ranger, 2004).

This is a critical issue in terms of both the effectiveness of joint management and in regards to PWS staff perceptions of the practice. The issue of formal capacity building in park management activities for Traditional Owners—what to do, how much to do, and when to do—is often debated within PWS, as is the level of assistance that should be provided to Aboriginal communities by PWS staff. Quite simply, many Aboriginal people cannot participate in joint management initiatives without assistance. Many Aboriginal people cannot speak or read English, do not own vehicles and cannot readily attend meetings, are old, sick or frail, have other commitments to which they must attend, or lack critical knowledge of European work and business practices.

Whilst there is willingness amongst PWS staff to assist Aboriginal people to participate in joint management up to a point—for example, helping old people to get to meetings or providing them with additional care or services during meetings—there is reluctance amongst PWS staff to offer the same assistance to all Aboriginal people. For example, little sympathy exists for young Aboriginal people who, when offered paid employment as rangers, are unable to turn up for work everyday, yet can find their way into Alice Springs to purchase alcohol. Likewise, there is a strong perception amongst PWS staff that Aboriginal people have: “…had too much done for them and should get up off their backsides and help themselves...”.

200
A final point I will make here in regards to the notions of complexity and difficulty in the definitions of joint management found amongst PWS staff is that of relationships. There are two particular relationships within joint management that are framed as difficult by PWS staff: those involving land councils and those involving Traditional Owners. As I have pointed out earlier, land councils assume certain functions under the TPWCA with regards to joint management, and the enactment of these functions by land council is often perceived as interference or even outright hostility towards biodiversity conservation and "government" in general by PWS staff. Underlying this is a widely-held perception of all land council staff as indigenous advocates who cast "Whitefellas" in opposition to "Blackfellas" and seek to assert land council control over any activity involving Aboriginal people. Whilst this is not always true, the historically fraught relationship with land councils is granted weight within PWS by tellings and re-tellings of anecdotes problematising interactions with land council staff, and the low esteem in which land councils are held within the public imagination of the Northern Territory.

Relationships with Traditional Owners involved in joint management—indeed, simply working with Traditional Owners—are also viewed as complex and difficult by PWS staff. There are a number of points here that PWS staff raise when discussing joint management: lack of capacity to undertake and interest in park management on the part of Aboriginal people; differing expectations about joint management; and, cultural barriers such as language and communication styles, where white PWS staff and Aboriginal people misunderstand or fail to apprehend intentions. It should be noted that such difficulties are also reflected in the observations of joint management made by Aboriginal people, a topic to which I shall turn shortly.

It is easy here to frame such notions of difficulty and complexity in relationships with Aboriginal people, as being indicative of the wider "Aboriginal problem", which, as Lea (2002:122) argues, requires constant restating and attendance and reinvention. However, as the comments by the Senior Park Ranger above reveal in relation to joint management at Gurig Ganak Barlu National Park, the intimate and often daily contact between rangers and Aboriginal people living on or near parks is framed by rangers much in the way they frame interactions with visitors: another work-related
stakeholder requiring time and resources, valuable and scarce commodities – something which the agency perceives itself as lacking.

On Country at Last: Joint Management Camps

In mid-2004, the CLC announced that the majority of Traditional Owners in Central Australia were going to accept the NT Government’s offer. This coincided with the government’s gazetting of the Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) Act at the end of June 2004. From the original group of thirty-three parks and reserves affected by the decisions in Ward, three parks in the Darwin Region were omitted from this first scheduling of the legislation: Elsey National Park, Daly River (Mount Nancar) Conservation Reserve and Litchfield National Park. With the legislation gazetted, there was a perceptible ‘loosening up’ of the CLC’s attitude towards the presence of PWS staff at community meetings. Indeed, during the last two community meetings held with Traditional Owners, myself and a senior ranger from the associated park were permitted to attend, observe, and if sufficient time was available, to address the meeting about park management and possible employment opportunities.

However, it was in the context of organising and conducting ‘joint management camps’ that PWS staff began to feel more confident in asserting the agency’s interests in the joint management process during meetings with the CLC. The initial approval to begin planning for the camps arose directly from the formalised fortnightly meetings held between CLC and PWS staff. It was clear at the time – and this cannot be understated here – that CLC’s approval was necessary before this level of contact between PWS staff and Traditional Owners could take place. Had PWS attempted to facilitate a gathering between Traditional Owners and PWS staff, the land council would have acted swiftly to bring an end to such action – much as they did in the vignette presented at the beginning of this chapter. Despite the irony of situations where there were Traditional Owners residing in living areas on parks, PWS was powerless to change the situation _legislatively bound_ and beholden to both the internal processes and culture of an organisation it had recently viewed in an adversarial light.
My field notes record that the notion of joint management or 'ranger' camps were discussed at meetings between CLC and PWS staff held in July 2004, and then throughout August and September once fortnightly meetings between senior CLC and PWS staff had become established. The camps were conceptualised during these meetings in the following way:

- **To provide an opportunity for rangers, CLC staff and traditional owners to meet and establish/build relationships**
- **To discuss park management programs and elicit traditional input**
- **To visit country with Traditional Owners (according to TO wishes)**
- **To conduct fauna surveys as a focus for Traditional Owner involvement in an activity**
- **To conduct a paid employment project for Traditional Owners as a demonstration of the NT Government's commitment to participation/employment for Aboriginal people** (field notes, August 2004).

Negotiation over the location, intent and content of these camps shifted considerably during the first few months after they were conceived. Initially, the locations of the camps were determined by the CLC. Often, suggestions over where to hold these camps was linked closely to whether Traditional Owners had signed—or were close to signing—Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and other agreements necessary to legally satisfy the NT Government’s offer of joint management. The first locations suggested for joint management camps were the Devil’s Marbles Conservation Reserve and Watarrka National Park. However, delays with the establishment of the Land Trust and signing of the ILUA at Watarrka postponed the camp there until mid-2005. In the end, only one camp was held in 2004, this being at the Devil’s Marbles. Eventually, camps were held at Trephina Gorge Nature Park (April 2005), Finke Gorge (Palm Valley) National Park (May 2005), Ormiston Gorge (West MacDonnell National Park) (June 2005), and finally, Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park (June 2005).

There are two issues here that I wish to mention before moving on to a discussion of Aboriginal definitions of joint management. As the planning for these camps began, a sense of genuine relief and purpose infused PWS staff involved in this process,
including myself. At last, rangers and Traditional Owners would be getting out 'on country' to discuss their aspirations for joint management together. Rangers expressed their hopes to me that Traditional Owners would candidly discuss their aspirations for joint management or would talk about the cultural significance of parks and reserves or would perhaps share information about bush tucker, medicine and their own forms of land management. Other PWS staff simply felt that joint management was starting to happen—and it was happening because Parks was finally leading the way.

This sense of 'joint management finally happening' links to a second point I wish to raise. In the act of planning for the camps, the notion of embodied action—the pervasive corporate narrative of 'hands-on' action discussed in Chapter Four, or in other words doing something—also emerged. Examining the agendas for the meetings, and most notably the programs for the camps themselves, a sense of action is readily apparent:

**Ranger Camp—Devil's Marbles, 17-19 August 2004**

- Camp to be held at old dump site on Aboriginal Land adjoining Devil's Marbles
- Visit Whistleduck Creek to look at Buffel Grass, cattle damage, fire damage
- Go to the DM's campground to look at visitor interpretation and discuss campground management issues
- Put in firebreak and conduct small controlled burn
- Demonstrate weed spraying
- Set up Elliot and pit traps (used for fauna surveys)
- Discuss a Bilby monitoring program
- Discuss Warramungu seasons/calendar
- Discuss ranger work program (field notes, August 2004)

In later camps, workshop-type discussions about joint management legislation, roles and responsibilities, and joint management planning came to dominate the agendas, reflecting the passage of amendments to the TPWC Act in March 2005 and the
ensuing legislative imperative for new joint management plans to be created. Although the turn towards planning—the creation of plans that set out a reserve’s distinct values and the broad strategies for managing them—focuses heavily on office-based work and the production of a document (a plan of management), within PWS this is categorised as ‘doing work’, another form of action, albeit one less valued than ranger work.

**Defining Joint Management: Aboriginal Perspectives**

It is pertinent to restate here that a detailed analysis of Aboriginal perceptions of land or landscape is neither the focus nor the intent of this research. As discussed in Chapter One, a large body of work exists which examines the understandings of indigenous people in regards to both relationships to land (for example, Myers, 1986; Rose, 1995; Rose & Clark, 1998; Baker, Davies & Young, 2001). In Chapter One, I also noted a considerable body of work describing Aboriginal perceptions of and aspirations for joint or co-management in both Australia and overseas. In this body of work, Aboriginal people are portrayed as understanding joint management as a means of regaining ownership and control of land, community and economic development, access to resources and cultural continuity or renewal (Lawrence, 1997: 2; Baker, Davies & Young, 2001:52-53). When read carefully, this body of work hints at the diversity of understandings held by Aboriginal people about land management and joint management, which in turn, reflect the diversity of Aboriginal culture not only across Australia but also within the Northern Territory (Wohling, 2001: 159). My intention here is to examine the understandings of joint management held by Aboriginal people involved directly in the NT’s joint management arrangements in comparison with those of PWS and CLC staff involved in the same processes and actions. The data contained within this section was gathered in face-to-face discussions with Aboriginal people, from interactions and discussions at joint management camps and planning activities, and from work done with the Traditional Owners of Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve following the reserve’s first year of joint management (2006-2007).

Initially, understandings about joint management held by Traditional Owners were related to me via land council staff during the rounds of community meetings held
between mid-2003 and early 2005 (described earlier in this chapter). The most commonly cited definition of joint management by Traditional Owners at this time was that *joint management would mean jobs as rangers for young people*. The other important conceptualisation of joint management by Aboriginal people was that of *handbacks* or ‘land coming back to them’ in the same way as land successfully claimed under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*. The issue of ‘land coming back’ to Aboriginal people, or ‘handback’ is well documented in the literature (see discussions in Chapters 2 and 3), and is accepted here as a core understanding of what joint management means to Aboriginal people. Included in the notion of *handback* is the concept that Aboriginal people will be involved in the governance of and decision-making processes concerned with the management of land returned to them. During joint management meetings I attended, particularly at Watarrka National Park, some Traditional Owners appeared to equate handbacks with material resources such as ‘gate money’ or ‘royalty payments’, as payed to the Traditional Owners of Uluru-Kata-tjuta National Park. Others defined joint management as looking after country with rangers or cross-cultural exchange.

However, once PWS staff and Traditional Owners began meeting together at joint management camps, and in the initial stages of the joint management planning process, a clearer understanding of what joint management meant to the many Aboriginal people involved in this process emerged. Although the understandings shared with me by Aboriginal people at such gatherings reflected those related to me by land council staff, an important difference soon emerged: Traditional Owners defined joint management first and foremost as *working together* – just as PWS staff did. The other meanings attributed to joint management at these events by Aboriginal people included (in this order): *jobs, training and education; land coming back to Aboriginal hands*; and, *Two-Way learning* (defined here as a facet of cross-cultural exchange).

**Working Together**

The most common definition of joint management by Traditional Owners, *working together*, was often glossed over by Aboriginal people as *Aboriginal people and rangers engaging in nurturing actions on land, together*.
It's working together with rangers to look after country... (Traditional Owner, Simpson’s Gap, March 2006).

... Might have to talk to their family more and keep them strong. Tell them about it, not about land claim... It's about working together (Traditional Owner, Hermannsburg, September 2007).

Strong culture and country ... we are together and doing this together ... the right thing for this place so future generations can see ... if you mob gone (PWS and CLC staff), they can learn about what is planned and by working together... (Traditional Owner, Devils Marbles Joint Management Planning Meeting, March 2007).

It is valid to ask here: what do Traditional Owners mean when they say joint management is about ‘working together’? As with rangers and other PWS staff, Aboriginal people imbue joint management with a sense of mutuality. That is, this definition infers that both park managers and Aboriginal people will be mutually satisfied with, and stand to benefit from, the combined management of a piece of country. In common with rangers, Aboriginal people also expect that their idea of ‘looking after country’ will be mutually apprehended, understood and applied in the management of the protected areas.

Yet even here, when Aboriginal people use the term ‘looking after country’, a diversity of opinions is present. Some of these ideas diverge sharply with the notion of Aboriginal land management being contiguous with Western biodiversity conservation, whilst others draw heavily upon the individual’s experience with and exposure to European methods of land management. For some Aboriginal people, looking after country means undertaking land management in ways that are very similar to that undertaken by rangers:

We’ve gotta make sure there’s no camels or cattle coming in to the Reserve that will spread buffel grass around. Those young fellas and X (senior Traditional Owner’s name) have been going out and surveying...
for buffalo... We want to look after all the plants and animals on the Reserve that belong there... so no one, not even family, should go there for bush tucker without asking the Committee first (Traditional Owner, Rainbow Valley, September 2006).

In contrast, other Aboriginal people gloss the term looking after country as maintaining a relationship with land that they have a filial, residential or spiritual connection to. For example, establishing a community living area on a park is seen by some Aboriginal people as ‘looking after country’, an idea based in uniquely Central Australian notions of the structural relationships between land and people (Myers, 1986: 67-68). Within such relationships, country (apmere in Arrernte) is both a home, where one’s physical house, camp and belongings are, and a broader space to which an individual is spiritually connected to Dreaming ancestors. In this latter interpretation, country is the space upon which the actions of Dreaming ancestors must be personally apprehended as features in the landscape by a living person and given social meaning. Such meanings and experiences only arise in the course of people living on or moving across country and engaging in a social relationship with it, as well as acquiring ritual knowledge about sacred sites and other places.

The mere presence of being on country is often understood by Traditional Owners as looking after it, without the need for burning, weed eradication or the removing feral animal species—all commonly viewed as land management within European notions of the term:

Amanda: So looking after country means that you...?
Traditional Owner: It means we get a living area here. Be here on the country to look after it.
Amanda: Is that apmere nhenhe (this country here) or all this park? You know, apmerele (at home) ... where you’re apmereke-artweye (Traditional Owner)?
Traditional Owner: Yeah, that’s right. Apmereke-artweye have to be on our own country, looking after it. The country gets lonely for us, and we get lonely for country. So you know, I gotta get living area here.
Bring my sons here, get jobs with the rangers. Get away from all the dogs barking in Santa Teresa... I can’t sleep there!

Amanda: And what do apmereke-artweye do to look after country?  
Traditional Owner: Live there, drive around, look around. Make sure everything’s ok. Make sure there’s no tourists leaving rubbish. Sometimes, we might light a fire. Make the country all fresh. All the new shoots come up, real green... (field notes, 30 June, 2004)

To this Traditional Owner, living on country is a direct action, just as killing feral donkeys is for rangers. However living on country, as the Traditional Owner quoted above points out, invokes a very specific set of relationships between Aboriginal people and land –that of being the people who belong to or have a relationship with that particular piece of country. This requires a particular set of experiential actions, such as travelling over a given piece of country and looking around, which are then rendered as categories of Aboriginal land management action.

Another aspect of working together emphasised by Aboriginal people is the notion that working together denotes equality in decision-making about park (or land) management. This is often phrased as Aboriginal people being able to ‘talk straight’ or ‘talk up strong for country’ to white people -and other Aboriginal people- and have their opinions listened to and acted upon:

(We)... make decisions if rangers will come and talk ... and then go away and you’ll think ... you should have said this to the ranger ... but if we’re all talking and thinking with rangers (more regularly), we’ll be able to tell them, to talk up strong, and we’ll feel better inside.  
(Traditional Owner, Hermannsburg, September 2007).

Of course, the very notion of working together draws upon Aboriginal ideas about relationships, and the importance placed upon them by Aboriginal people, something to which I have alluded to earlier in this chapter. Aboriginal conceptualisations of working together are framed within Central Australian Aboriginal understandings of mutuality, reciprocity and social obligation; that is, an essential part of working together involves Aboriginal people and rangers ‘holding’ or ‘looking after’ each
other. Myers (1986:146) describes the notion of ‘holding’ in human relationships as having a responsibility that is signified by carrying a heavy physical burden. One Traditional Owner explained the concept to me in this way:

(Holding is like)... Before, when we were talking about worrying over country or jobs for young people, we couldn’t tell anyone (meaning people outside of close family). I didn’t really know these rangers, so I couldn’t talk to them. But now, I know them. When the rangers come to talk, and I can tell them when I’ve been worrying, I feel rwekere (places her hand on her heart, lifts it off and gestures over her shoulder), much lighter and free. I can share my worries... (Traditional Owner, Hermannsburg, September 2007).

Another quote illustrates the associated idea of ‘looking after’ in the context of joint management:

...(joint management is about) ... rangers helping us when we’re broken down. Fixing our car or getting petrol for us ... they gotta help us, not just drive right past... (Traditional Owner, M’Bunghara Joint Management Meeting, July 2006).

For this Traditional Owner, joint management is much more than attending meetings, sitting on a board and making decisions about country, and is even much deeper than the return of land title: it is about relationships as constructed and understood from an Central Australian Aboriginal framework. Working together, when viewed through this lens not only invokes, but demands from Aboriginal participants actions and requests that to rangers might be deemed inappropriate or even nonsensical, such as fixing a car broken down on the side of the road:

“(D)eading from relatives, regardless of need, such as asking for money when you have your own, may look fraudulent, but is a way of testing the relationship, of reaffirming its unconditional value ...” (Folds, 2000:72-73).
As Folds suggests, Aboriginal people asking for help, demanding the time of rangers, the use of park vehicles, is seen by Aboriginal people as verifying and investing in the value of the relationship. To rangers, however, such demands are often seen as ‘humbug’ or intrusions upon work time and personal space, and in many cases, are seen as devaluing the joint management relationship. Cultural differences in understanding joint management - even when using the same words - are deeply potent. In the real world of actions and events, the outcomes are often misunderstanding, frustration, anger in joint management relationships or tasks - framed by rangers as ‘complexities and difficulties’, and by Aboriginal people perception of a lack of respect - as giving in to demands is a large part of what is perceived of as respect within Aboriginal constructs of behaviour.

This mismatch of understanding about the term working together is a critical point for the success or otherwise of joint management. Indeed, the notion working together, when interrogated for its underlying meanings, contains numerous shared understandings by both Aboriginal people and by PWS staff: respect, relationships, complexity and difficulty and in a subtle manner, cross-cultural exchange. However, in my experience, reconciling or even exploring the cultural dissonance of working together is a space into which few PWS staff willingly venture, even when Aboriginal people invite them to do so. Those that do wander into this space find themselves swiftly encountering organisational constraints such as lack of time, resources or support from superiors, and firm reminders about core business and their roles and responsibilities.

**Employment, Education and Two-Way Learning**

Employment, training and education were also important aspects of what joint management means to Aboriginal people. At the outset, these appear to be straightforward issues: jobs, socio-economic development and education. However, as with the divergent understandings inherent in working together, this is not the case. For some Aboriginal people, employment arising from joint management was described to me “...as wearing a ranger uniform and driving around the country, checking on sites...” (field notes, August, 2004, and July, 2008). When asked exactly what was meant by this, Aboriginal people’s understandings of authority -expressed
via the wearing of uniforms- and of ‘country’ emerged, rather than simply ‘employment’ as understood by mainstream Australians – including both PWS and CLC staff. As in the interview excerpt with the Traditional Owner from Santa Teresa above relates, travelling over country and ‘checking on it’ is a fundamental understanding of what rangers do, and what employment as a ranger might entail, amongst some Traditional Owners. It may also be a reason that employment as a ranger is viewed as highly desirable by many Traditional Owners; quite simply, Aboriginal perceptions of what rangers do fit closely with ideas about looking after country and categories of action comprising such.

For other people, especially older Aboriginal people, employment was often a multi-faceted notion. Employment in ranger jobs was often seen as desirable for young men (and occasionally, young women), whilst for older people, employment meant sitting on boards and committees, attending meetings or acting as cultural advisors.

We want our young people to get training and become rangers. That’s the main thing we want from joint management. There’s not many jobs here for young people. They’re sitting around bored because there’s nothing to do. Sometimes they go to town (Alice Springs) and get drunk, and get in fights. If they had jobs, then they’d stay here and stay away from town. (Traditional Owner, meeting notes, May, 2005).

Those young fellas, they can become rangers and work with the other rangers clearing that buffel (a species of exotic grass). Us older people, we gotta sit down and talk with each other. Go to committee meetings. Help the rangers make decisions about joint management... (Traditional Owner, Rainbow Valley, September, 2005).

Some Aboriginal people stated their desire for new community ranger groups that would work on both Aboriginal land and jointly managed parks, and offer employment opportunities to young people modelled on existing Aboriginal community ranger groups in Northern and Central Australia. In the following chapter, I discuss employment and Aboriginal perceptions of ranger work in detail. Here, I will foreshadow this discussion, stating work as a ranger or in a community ranger group.
is held in high esteem by many Aboriginal people, even if the notions of what ranger work actually entails and the responsibilities involved in undertaking it, are not well understood—or even desirable—for many Aboriginal people.

Other Aboriginal people expressed the desire to start their own tourist ventures to me; however, these were viewed less as ‘employment’ and more as ‘businesses’, modelled upon cultural tourism operations or selling art and crafts:

...Later on, family group tours (business) will come. It will happen later down the track. Any big tourism companies coming through, come through that committee... We’ve all got our own business ideas but these will happen down the track. These are all tourism ideas...

(Traditional Owner, meeting notes, April 2007).

The main way in which Aboriginal people viewed employment arising from joint management was via direct employment as rangers or as part of a joint management board or committee. Likewise, educational opportunities arising from joint management were likewise strongly associated to ranger-based land management activities. Indeed, training was inherently linked to obtaining work as a ranger by most Aboriginal people. The following comment is indicative of similar comments made to me in other locations across the space of three years:

...Young people go and do that training... get that training, then they can become rangers...(Traditional Owner, Watarrka National Park, December, 2007)

The term ‘Two-Way learning’ is a term used by many government and non-government agencies in the Northern Territory to denote the exchange of ideas and knowledge between cultures. Two-Way learning was linked closely with work opportunities and land management activities by Traditional Owners, which contrasts strongly with PWS staff perceptions of the term as a means of acquiring greater understanding about Aboriginal culture. For example, when asked about whether training and learning had been occurring ‘Two-Ways’, Traditional Owners framed
their responses in terms of ranger work, particularly as gaining knowledge and skills in conservation and land management:

This has been happening. Traditional Owners have been looking after the camp. PWS have been helping. There is direction there and it can be better down the track (Traditional Owner, April 2007).

I’ve been talking to family about what I learn and encouraging family to ask questions. I do this at FEP (the Flexible Employment Program), when I’m home, during meetings. Whenever I come in contact with them (Traditional Owner, April 2007).

This contrasts with the responses of PWS staff to the same question, which focus heavily on learning about aspects of Aboriginal culture classed a ‘traditional ecological knowledge’:

We’re not spending the time on the ground there. The Traditional Owners have been a bit reluctant. They’ve been saying: you blokes know what you’re doing. Also, they might feel a lot of the traditional knowledge is gone (Ranger, April 2007).

From what I understand this has been happening especially with the man’s sites (men’s sacred sites), teaching the rangers where women can’t go. Also with FEP, we’ve been talking about the Samphire (a species of plant) and how it’s important as food and we keep people off the claypans. We showed the Traditional Owners the Eremophila plots (another plant species). I think they’re great with fire and have an eye for buffel. And then they show you echidna tracks and bush tucker... (Ranger, May 2007).

What is suggested here is that promotion of Two-Way learning as a form of cross cultural exchange may not bring about the exchange of knowledge that PWS staff hope for. Indeed, the imparting of such knowledge by and between Aboriginal people would appear to occur during what might be termed ‘informal’ situations according to
Europeans, such as travelling around country, travelling between places or simply being on country with family members. In contrast, Aboriginal people interpret the notion of Two Way learning as inherently linked with ranger work and employment, in particular, they appear to associate it with the idea of being on country with rangers, gaining skills that will enable future employment. Again, this reinforces the recurring notion of joint management as means of economic development amongst Aboriginal people.

Political Asymmetry and Divergent Meanings

This discussion has highlighted the differing interests in, and understandings of, joint management held by those involved directly in implementing these agreements: the staff of PWS, the Central Land Council and Aboriginal Traditional Owners. Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that issues of political power, internal organisational agendas and practices, and at a fundamental level, differing perceptions about the very notion of joint management itself, mean that conflict, misunderstanding and mistrust are often predictable outcomes amongst the groups involved. Joint management may be characterised as complex and difficult, whilst at the same time, being paradoxically rewarding, coveted, and most all, highly valued by those who participate in it. I am not suggesting here that joint management is unworkable or that it is always characterised by conflict. As this chapter and the ones which follow demonstrate, joint management happens in spite of and in tandem with such complexities. My contention throughout this thesis has been that joint management agreements do not merely represent the interests of governments and Aboriginal people, but are also representative of other groups, in particular, those of the conservation agencies tasked with implementing them as well. To this end, it must be acknowledged that in the Northern Territory, joint management agreements intimately involve land councils and conservation agencies, and at times, mining companies, pastoralists, and the general public.

In this chapter, I have particularly drawn attention to the issue of political asymmetry in the NT's joint management arrangements, not only in terms of Aboriginal people in comparison with government agencies or indeed, in comparison with the non-
government agency that represents them —but also the differences in power between the Central Land Council and the Parks and Wildlife Service. This unexpected asymmetry, not immediately apparent in either the legal agreements or in the political negotiations which created them, was foreshadowed in Chapter Three, in the context of the high level negotiations which lead to the creation of the joint management arrangements discussed in this thesis. The redrafting of the TPWCA meant that the land councils would have a legislated role in the management of jointly managed parks in the Northern Territory. In this respect, PWS was both unprepared and unaware of the actual political asymmetry that existed between it and the CLC.

At face value, this may seem absurd: a well-respected government agency powerless to counter the demands of a non-government organisation to alter its own internal practices. However, this political asymmetry reflects other political asymmetries inherent within the Northern Territory, arising from the administrative history of the Territory discussed in Chapter Two, and the outcomes of the land rights movement in Central Australia. Decades of Darwin-centric government has created a political asymmetry between Darwin and Central Australia. For example, Darwin is the seat of the Territory’s government, the location of the head offices of most government departments, and therefore, the place where most senior bureaucrats reside. Darwin remains the Territory’s largest population centre and is unquestionably the focus of most NT Government investment (Lea, 2008:56 & 60). Senior bureaucrats in Darwin are often dismissive of regional concerns, suggesting that those residing in the regions ‘don’t see the big picture’ or are failing to ‘...align themselves with the department’s strategic aims...’ (comment from former PWS Executive, June 2005). The effectiveness of senior PWS staff located in Alice Springs to raise concerns about the CLC’s actions, or convince senior bureaucrats within the broader department (NRETA) to counter them at higher levels of government, is perhaps limited by both geo-political factors and a culture of Darwin-centrism within the NT’s administration. It could also be suggested that the agency’s senior management were concerned with impression management; that is, it would not be seen as ‘good form’ the longstanding inter-agency conflict between PWS and CLC to be viewed as being beyond the capacity of senior PWS management to deal with.
This sustained government inattention and lack of political investment in Central Australia by successive NT Governments has meant that other institutions often attempt to fill this political void. The ability of the CLC to access the highest levels of government and the PWS Executive directly, parallels closely the ability of senior departmental bureaucrats to influence executive levels of government. Furthermore, the CLC is able to exert its influence across a range of domains in Central Australia that extend well beyond its main statutory functions. This occurs via an investment corporation, Centrecorp, set up by the CLC in 1992, which has ownership or part ownership of many large businesses, including car dealerships, tourist resorts and building companies, and also owns much of the commercial and retail real estate in Alice Springs (The Age, August 20, 2007; www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fapa_ctte/Aboriginal_land_council/submissions/sub1.pdf). Not only is the CLC effective in lobbying Federal Government ministers, its role in administering approximately 50% of the land south of Elliot (located approximately 800 km north of Alice Springs) grants it considerable influence over mining, agricultural and pastoral development in the region. Given these factors, the authority of the CLC in Central Australia is considerable, and the political asymmetry between it and the PWS not difficult to understand.

Yet this political asymmetry between institutions and Aboriginal people is perhaps a less potentially divisive factor in joint management arrangements than the divergent understandings of what joint management is and what people aspire to gain from it. The effects of different and often incompatible understandings about joint management and its outcomes are not difficult to illustrate, and perhaps explain the high rate of dissatisfaction that many indigenous peoples report in international contexts (see Fisher, 2001: 83 and Paudel, 2006:155).

Both definitions of joint management and the reasons for people’s or agencies’ participation in these arrangements, must also be interpreted as a reflection of the historical trajectory of particular groups, the internal cultural understandings of particular issues or ways of being, such as working together, and specific ideas about the outcomes that joint management with bring, for example, employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people or an increased understanding of Aboriginal culture amongst non-indigenous rangers. Given these factors, criticisms of
park managers by Aboriginal people—such as those levelled at rangers in Gurig Ganak Barlu National Park in regards to *not* maintaining houses on Aboriginal Outstations—are readily explained, and could perhaps be avoided if these differences in understanding had been perceived. However, achieving this level of familiarity and cross-cultural understanding for white rangers is often problematic. As noted in Chapter Four, the high level of staff turnover amongst rangers in PWS often precludes the establishment of long term relationships with Aboriginal people.

The convergence of organisational processes, of history, different meanings, political asymmetry and cross-cultural negotiation—and the tensions and congruence inherent within their interplay—render joint management as a complex and paradoxical practice for those intimately involved in it. In the next two chapters, this interplay of higher level government policy, PWS culture, Aboriginal notions about and aspirations for joint management, as well as the changing nature of interorganisational relationships between PWS and CLC are threads which I explore further through a discussion of joint management on-the-ground.
Chapter Six: Doing Joint Management

Parks (sic) Joint Management Programs establishes an equitable joint management partnership with local Tradition Owners to manage, maintain and protect the biodiversity of a Park or Reserve while at the same time serving the needs of visitors and the wider community (NRETA, 2005: 82).

...joint management arrangements are distinctively coercive, with the Governments falsely asserting that they have something to offer indigenous land owners. Without exception, the models have bargained with ownership. These ‘negotiations’ often result in ridiculous sacrifices of control and autonomy for the recognition of secure title. Joint management ‘allows’ indigenous people to be involved in habitat preservation within the confines of the Australian political system ... (Strelein, 1993:390).

Joint management in the Northern Territory is much more than the legislated -or coercive- participation of Aboriginal people in park management committees or other decision making processes. Contrary to Strelein’s assertions above, joint management represents a complex interplay of the interests of land councils, conservation agencies and many different Traditional Owner groups, in addition to those of higher levels of government. However, unexpected political asymmetries, understandings about, and expectations of joint management exist between the groups involved. This may mean that in the implementation of joint management arrangements on the ground, the interests of those directly involved in these initiatives, such as Aboriginal people and PWS staff, may be overlooked, rejected or ignored, or may even find alternative means of expression –such as resistance to carrying out certain activities. Given this, the implementation of joint management can be seen to be not only fraught with potential misunderstandings, but may actually work against the interests of those it purports to be of benefit to.
Whether joint management represents the monolithic interests of governments as Strelein (ibid) suggests or indeed, of local Traditional Owners as the NRETA document (ibid) aspires to, may only become clear after legislation has been passed and joint management is being carried out on the ground. In the Northern Territory, vast distances, the diversity of Aboriginal groups and small population density mean that joint management may be at best, an uneven enterprise, constrained by external, top-down factors (legislation or human resources) and mediated by inherently local interests. If we are to understand the outcome of broad scale joint management in the Northern Territory –its success or otherwise- then we must look carefully at its implementation on the ground and ask: whose interests are represented in joint management on the ground? and: How do such interests shape the implementation of joint management?

In this chapter and the one that follows, I discuss the implementation of joint management on-the-ground via employment and training initiatives, joint management planning, and the creation of joint management committees and boards. In particular, I continue the dialectic between historical process, legislative convenience and the interests of the groups involved intimately in the process as joint management took place on a broad scale across Central Australia. The first section of this chapter focuses on the ‘behind-the-scenes’ work of joint management –the meetings, discussions and production of documents- which created the joint management program, before turning to a discussion of the Flexible Employment Program, a project-based causal employment and training program for Aboriginal Traditional Owners established by the PWS as a part of its broader joint management program.

Emerging from this discussion is the possibility that the interests of apparently politically asymmetrical groups may not always conflict with each other –although this does not mean that each group pursues joint management for the same reasons. Furthermore, the implementation of joint management can be seen to inhibit the interests of some groups involved in it, and is at times unachievable for those with whom the responsibility for its implementation rests. This would appear to suggest that equal responsibility for the implementation and ongoing success of joint
management should rest not only with conservation agencies, but with Aboriginal people and land councils as well.

Chanting to Know: 'Finding' the Joint Management Program

The chanter chanting creates and occupies a strange position, inside yet outside, part of, yet also observer of the scenes being sung into being. This is not to be confused with liminality because it is both positions at one and the same time. Embodying the doubling necessary for magical mimesis, the chanter runs the risk of self-annihilation (Taussig, 1999: 111).

The Parks and Wildlife Service is an autonomous, conservative and ranger-centric organisation with a legacy of independence from the short term cycles of public sector policy iteration and uncertainty that permeate other sections of the NT Government. Change within the organisation is slow to occur, which can be attributed to the agency’s legislatively-driven nature, its previous incarnation as an independent statutory body and the unique nature of its core business: park management. Despite this apparent isolation from the ebb and flow of policy, the strategic alignments of higher levels of government and NT public sector processes do permeate the organisation, albeit slowly. Often, these shifts enter internal strategic documents – where ironically, they often go unnoticed by the majority of PWS staff- or affect whole-of-government administration procedures, such as changes in the way staff can claim allowances. In other words, few department-wide policy (meaning NRETA) adjustments have any effect on the day-to-day duties of rangers in the field or alter dominant methods of land management practice within the agency. Yet from the outset, the joint management program was highly attuned to the strategic aims of government and of NRETA in a manner that park management programs were not. This is readily evidenced in internal PWS joint management documents such as annual business plans and program strategies:

The Flexible Employment Program (FEP) is one initiative in the mix intended to deliver employment and training to Aboriginal people. It particularly focuses on
Aboriginal people with whom the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) is working to foster cooperative management of parks.

This strategy is in line with principles of Aboriginal employment and training jointly agreed by the PWS, the Central Land Council and the Northern Land Council at a workshop in Alice Springs in October 2003. It is also consistent with NT Government initiatives such as the Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy (Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, 2001) and Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs, 2005). (PWS, 2005:2)

The reason for this, I believe, relates to the unique way in which joint management was managed within the agency, or rather, to whom senior management granted operational responsibility for overseeing the implementation of joint management: the Strategic Planning and Development Unit 29 (SPDU). In other words, unlike most of the agency’s other core business programs related to either land management or tourism, it was not rangers who managed the process, but planners. Not only does this contrast markedly with previous organisational practice, it also differs from practices within other Australian conservation agencies. For example, in NSW, it was the National Parks and Wildlife Service’s (NPWS) district and regional managers, along with specifically-employed Aboriginal project officers, who shared responsibility for implementing new joint management initiatives (field notes, 2000). Furthermore, when the time came to write plans of management for many jointly managed NSW national parks, the NPWS contracted external planning consultants to do so rather than having them written by in-house planning staff, to overcome perceptions about agency control and bias (A.Ginns, personal communication, August 2006).

I am not suggesting here that PWS’s executive and senior management did not participate in the strategic development of joint management, or that senior rangers

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29 In June 2005, the Joint Management Unit, in which I was employed, was absorbed into the Strategic Planning and Development Unit, which was headed by the agency’s Principal Planner. This change occurred across the entire organisation.
within the organisation were not involved in these processes; rather, I am pointing out that these groups were not responsible for the day-to-day creation and implementation of joint management during the years that I worked within PWS. The outcome of this was that the process came to reflect the practices of planning staff more than those of the dominant—and largest—group within the agency, rangers. In particular, control of the process by planners resulted in the conscious alignment of joint management with higher level strategic policies—a core part of planning practice within the agency—a strong bias towards ‘talk work’ and an orientation toward the production of internal documents, or artefacts, which in their drafting, permitted the space for the interests of both individual PWS and Central Land Council staff to be represented.

The question of exactly whose interests are represented and how these interests came to be represented in what became the joint management program needs to be asked. The answer, I suggest, is found in the ‘magical’ mimesis of Taussig’s Cuna shaman chanting words of power to create changes that heal, or, if the words are incorrect, changes that kill (Taussig, 1999:111). Talk work within government agencies is also a kind of magical mimesis where, within ritualised meetings, spoken words both generate and comprise organisational knowledge which is then able to be represented (transfigured) into artefacts or written forms. ‘Talk work’ is a term that masks the messy, complex, politicised, multi-scaled, intercultural process of both formal and informal relationship building, negotiation, decision-making. The ‘mimesis’ is in the transfiguration of talk into paper, first into dot points, minutes or meeting notes, and later into organisationally-legitimated artefacts, and finally, into action via a process equally fraught as the shaman’s chanting between the worlds, communion with spirits, and subsequent healing or harming actions.

Furthermore, Lea (2002:130-131) suggests that the function of ‘talk work’ such as meetings and workshops within public sector agencies is to provide a means of democratic problem-solving, establishing trust and removing barriers between participants:

*Public health professionals further believe in the power of talking things through, of having facilitated group sessions which democratise problem-solving and decision-making. By sharing stories about one’s*
work within supportive group encounters, professional boundaries will be broken down, coordination synergies will be created, and the emotional burden of working in such arduous areas as remote area Aboriginal health will be managed.

Schwartzman (1993: 39) concurs with view, and further describes meetings as a ‘constitutive’ social form far more real to actors than the organisational chart or any strategic plan might suggest:

...the world does not appear to us as formalized concepts (such as structure or culture, or hierarchy or value), but only in particular routines and gatherings, composed of specific actors (or agents) attempting to press their claims on one another and trying to make sense of what is happening to them.

Employing such constitutive social forms, agents are able to ‘...transact, negotiate, strategize, and attempt to realize their specific aims’ (Schwartzman, ibid: 40). Meetings thus become a space where one’s own status can be subtly assessed, as in enquiring whether one really needs to be present at a meeting, a means of controlling an issue, a method of affirming one’s status and authority – particularly when one is the person who organises the meeting- and a space where difficult issues such as cross-organisational relationships and the nature of ‘business as usual’ can be explored in a tentative, contained and controlled manner.

Over a period of several years, a ‘Joint Management Program’ was ‘found’ by staff within the SPDU, made known after countless human exchanges, often breezed over as ‘catch up meetings’, ‘relationship building’ or in Central Australian terms: ‘cuppa tea’. It was in this space that the means for capturing the interests of particular people or agencies within was most apparent. For example, an early inter-regional phone link up of all joint management staff contained some of the following discussion points:

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Phone Hookup

30/08/04

• Meeting is to sort out who's doing what in the big joint management (JM) picture
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• X (staff member’s name) working on employment and training strategy – can’t just be a whole lot of ‘nice words’

• Y gave a summary of where Traditional Owner (TO) groups negotiating are at (ILUAs/leases). Thirteen meetings need to be held by CLC in the next 2 ½ months

• Training and employment strategy funding approved ($51K) for the first few parks

• Idea for a ‘mobile Indigenous’ work crew not well received at CLC

• Z: need to create a ‘What is a National Park?’ big book for use at JM camps in the Katherine Region. Can she use Y’s powerpoint as a template?

My point is this: to even arrive at these apparently few dot points noted on a white board within a meeting and transferred faithfully to a note book, there was a long process of lobbying one’s point, talking to colleagues, emailing, and informal discussions where the subjects were introduced, explored, tested and accepted or rejected privately before being approved for discussion as part of ‘the big joint management picture’. Following these internal exchanges, another series of external interactions with land council staff occurred. It was within these exchanges that the interests of PWS staff, in particular, of SPDU staff, of land council staff, along with organisational agendas of each agency were rendered into the program, and linked, via the sensitivity of PWS planning staff to strategic directives, to higher level policy imperatives within both the NTG and NRETA.
From these discussions, across time and both within and between organisations that a PWS Joint Management Program was ‘found’ or ‘known’, and rendered visible, first as whiteboard dot points and private notes in meeting attendees’ notebooks, and as shall be seen shortly, formalised in business plans and other documents. This excerpt from my notes shows the progression of above ideas into discrete projects almost a year later:

**JM/Planning Meeting**

Whiteboard Dot Points Outlining Major Joint Management Projects:

1. **Cross Cultural Education Courses**
2. **JM Manual**
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (M&E)**
4. **Promotion of JM**
5. **Developing TO’s Capacity**

Once more, these ‘major projects’ were revealed after much discussion across the course of the year between the two meetings, in numerous other phone hookups, face-to-face meetings, emails and individual conversations. The detail contained under each dot point recorded in my note book is the result of further ‘talk work’ within the August 2005 meeting:

**Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy**

-Can gain insight from the Integrated Natural Resource Management M&E process
-Links inextricably to Plan of Management process
-Pass on NSW M&E process
-Check on Chief Minister’s and Office of Indigenous Policy’s expectations
-Scoping study needed
-Jointly pursued with land councils
-Balance between ownership and independence
Talk work is a legitimate means of organisational discovery within PWS even if it falls outside of the normative category of ‘work’. Talk work is a way of knowing what can be known, which must occur always before it can be seen or done. Yet, as the example above demonstrates, talk work is also doing; it is both discursive and generative, a mimetic doubling of itself. The power of meetings and other organisational gatherings to create and structure ‘work’ within agencies such as PWS, has been noted by Schwartzman (1989: 9-10):

*Meetings reproduce themselves by the volume of decisions, problems, crises and the like than an organization (sic) produces. The more sense-making a setting requires, the more meetings it needs and therefore the more decisions, problems, and crises it produces.*

The intense and iterative ‘sense-making’ work of meetings, particularly in the early stages of joint management, was used to create organisational knowledge about joint management – its content, limits and possibilities. This knowledge, often emerging after many meetings or discussions across a series of years, was eventually rendered into a form able to be ‘seen’ by the agency as a documented ‘Joint Management Program’. Furthermore, the Joint Management Program was given further visibility and ultimately, legitimacy, by its linkages with organisation-wide strategic business plans and reporting systems, although as I will demonstrate later in this chapter legitimacy and visibility alone do not ensure that actions listed within business plans automatically become part of organisational practice.

It is not just white government or land council employees who recognise the generative and discursive power of talk work in relation to joint management. In discussing Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park, Bauman & Smyth (2007:50) noted the importance that Aboriginal people give to relationship building via informal and formal discussions as: “...the most important aspects of joint management.” Furthermore, the talk work described by both Aboriginal and PWS informants in my interviews (see Chapter Five) suggests that words, time, and knowledge shared intimately between individuals is constitutive of Aboriginal understandings of sociality, and the reciprocity inherent within it. This invokes Myers’ (1986:170) observations of Pintupi reciprocity as ordering social relations: *whether it is shared*...
identity or conflict that is expressed in social action, Pintupi expect that reciprocity and equivalence will be the guiding principle. The ‘sitting and talking’ together suggest a space of mutual respect, mutual understanding and trust, arising from the repeated, self-generating actions of sitting and talking. These in turn reveal what can be done as future, concrete actions:

"...for us, it’s going to the X (reserve’s name omitted) Management Committee meetings. We sit down with the rangers and we have an agenda. They tell us what’s been happening and we tell them our plans. We tell them about burning that needs to be done, or that we want our young people to go out and help the rangers burn. That’s joint management.” Traditional Owner, field notes, November 2003.

In this statement, Traditional Owners view the formality of committee meetings, including written agendas and decision-making processes, as an important part of joint management actions. This is not to say that the 'working together on country' aspect of joint management or the notion of 'being on country' is less viewed as a less important manifestation of joint management; rather that the formality of committee meetings and other 'talk work' invokes Aboriginal understandings of reciprocity and sociality. For Aboriginal people it is the mutuality of sitting together and talking, of telling and listening that equate to 'doing joint management'. The reciprocity experienced during ‘talk work’ by Aboriginal people can be said to envelop European notions governance and administration. For Traditional Owners, talk work is also an important part of making known to white PWS staff the 'right way' to make decisions. To make a decision, one needs to sit down and talk to the right people for each decision. Who the 'right people' are for each decision may vary from circumstance to circumstance:

Ranger at planning meeting: So X (Traditional Owner’s name omitted) how would you make a decision about whether to burn country or put up a camping ground, (Western Arrernte) way?

Traditional Owner: I’d have to talk to my family first. Talk to the right people. Get my brothers and my cousins (male cousins from mother’s side)...
kwertengwerle and we have to talk about it first. Just us, talking. Then we could talk to the rangers.

The importance of 'talk work' is further manifest in the unmistakable assertion within PWS and amongst some Traditional Owners that a particular form of talk-work, the joint management board or committee meeting, is structurally and politically the most important evidence of the existence of joint management above anything else. However, it should be noted that Traditional Owners' desire for formalised joint management committees and board meetings varies from group to group. Whilst some Aboriginal people overtly seek to establish and sit on joint management boards and committees -often to ensure that the interests of individual family groups are represented in such structures and secure access to the resources they offer- other Aboriginal people prefer less formalised ways of decision making, such as one-on-one discussion with familiar PWS or Land Council staff.

It is important to point out that ultimately, the weight and importance placed upon the formation of governance structures -joint management boards and committees- comes from governments, legislation and the organisations responsible for the facilitation of joint management initiatives rather than from the desires of Aboriginal people themselves. In this sense, such governance structures can be viewed as a function of the 'top down, legislatively driven' joint management common to First World nations. In other words, committees, boards and the meetings which they engage in are first and foremost direct outcomes of a particular politico-legislative regime, and, in turn, serve as both evidence of legislative 'success' and also reinforce the this form of protected area management.

**Seeing and Writing as Doing**

If 'talk work' is the initial generative part of the process of 'finding' the joint management program within PWS, then rendering these knowings seen - the process of creating organisational artefacts- is the next step in that process. Artefacts embody "...institutional arrangements, routines, cognitive frames and imageries..." (Gagliardi, 1990:14). Like the doubling necessary in Taussig’s mimesis, artefacts are both constitutive of and part of organisational culture, accounting for the behaviour of
actors embedded within such structures and their orientation towards certain actions or cultural forms (Gagliardi, ibid). Likewise, Diane Austin-Broos has written about the difference between Western Arrernte and ‘Whitefella’ understandings of the power of the written word to convey authority and define appropriate action in cross-cultural contexts. Austin-Broos suggests that amongst the Western Arrernte at Hermannsburg, pepe (paper, meaning formal written documents) constitutes a means of defining:

... personalized and confined social order – a highly institutionalized life- both opened up and closed down windows onto wider worlds for its participants ...(Austin-Broos, 2008:90).

Furthermore, within public sector organisations, corporations and business in general, there are accepted methods of formalising actions and intentions in such a way as to seek their legitimacy. Through these artefacts, the documentation of action as the written word, particularly via instruments such discussion papers, strategies, plans, policies, directives, reports, briefings and operations manuals, the informal is rendered formal; the unseen becomes the seen.

Within PWS, discounting the TPWCA, there are a number of ‘legitimate’ artefacts that give weight to action; that at times, seek to capture actions and justify their very doing, seek to create action or seek to ensure that action takes place in uniform and replicable ways. These artefacts include policies, strategies, plans of management and action plans. Less well known, but increasingly present within the agency are discussion papers, which circulate new ideas with the intent of gaining widespread acceptance and funding, and business plans, replete with key performance indicators, value statements and core objectives. From the mid-1980s onwards, the Northern Territory’s public sector has increasingly adopted economic rationalist management practices aimed at increasing predictability, openness, reducing the size of government and encouraging privatisation of services. Within the public sector, this has further given rise to sophisticated methods of planning, the notion or ‘risk assessment’ and management training, such as the Public Sector Management Program (PSMP), a post-graduate diploma, aimed at ensuring cultural uptake and fluency in such practices.
To this end, in late 2005, I was asked to ‘write up a joint management program’ that formalised the content of the many discussions between PWS staff that had taken place over the preceding eighteen months. The draft program was drawn from the activities we –meaning PWS and CLC staff- had been doing –the dotpoints and meeting notes discussed in the previous section- and something of a wish list of activities that we felt that we should be doing. This document was revised several times by Planning colleagues, and set out in a form that reflected ‘legitimate’ agency standards. By the middle of 2006, this draft program had become the basis for the joint management section in the Strategic Planning and Development Unit Annual Business Plan. The program had a number of ‘projects’ or categories of activity: Joint Management Planning, Employment, Training and Enterprise Development (ETE), Capacity Building, Cultural Heritage Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Joint Management Promotion (PWS, 2007). The program’s presentation within the SPDU’s – Annual Business Plan – represented the purposeful alignment of each ‘project’ within the joint management program with higher level departmental-wide (meaning NRETA) strategic goals, and even more specifically, with whole-of-NT Government priorities and policies. Furthermore, the program was a colourful and official document, and was readily sanctioned by Executive PWS staff. In this way, both my colleagues and myself formalised our thoughts about our activities as an organisational artefact, able to be seen and accepted across the entire agency –at least in written form- as evidence of a ‘joint management program’.

What is important about this documentation of joint management is its rendering in a legitimate form, an artefact that sought authority and was granted authority by the agency’s Executive through its endorsement. Although it was subsumed within the much larger and more organisationally coherent Planning program, nonetheless, it marked the formal cataloguing and documentation of agency-endorsed ‘legitimate’ activities associated with joint management rendered into text for all to see. An important part of this was also to demonstrate to the PWS Executive that not only did joint management have content, it was fiscally responsible. Monthly, we reported on key performance indicators and expenditure against our projects. Six monthly, we reported against milestones, and annually, reported against our targeted objectives and our actual outcomes in unit business plans.
A Sign of ‘Good Process’?

Without the creation of artefacts such as the Joint Management Program, funding for actions was unlikely to occur. However, simply rendering something visible as an artefact and gaining funding approval is no guarantee of its adoption as action within the agency. The following vignette demonstrates the manner in which artefacts, despite previous funding approval, could be rendered impotent through the rigorous application of ‘strategic priorities’:

In the final weeks of my employment with PWS, I participated in a whole-of-unit meeting, where joint management and planning staff from the Southern, Katherine and Darwin regions of the organisation, along with the joint management officers employed in the Northern and Central Land Councils gathered for two days in the conference room of the Tom Hare Building. The meeting was the third of a series held over a number of months to discuss projects to expend the largely unspent joint management budget. Our aim was cross-organisational agreement on the ‘strategic’ expenditure of the yet unspent money: a sum of around $180,000.

We gathered at the long table in conference room, each clutching our ‘wish lists’ of projects. One of the planners had argued long and hard for a portable three-dimensional model of the West MacDonnell National Park that could be taken from meeting to meeting – at a cost of $30,000. The Land Councils wanted money for staffing, Traditional Ecological Knowledge projects, and new community ranger groups – several hundred thousand dollars from the PWS’s coffers. Other planners wanted to know how much money could be spent on individual joint management plans.

The whiteboard was quickly filled with projects:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project:</th>
<th>Cost:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Employment Program</td>
<td>$51K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Macs Planning</td>
<td>$32K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Valley Joint Management Committee</td>
<td>$7K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Valley Governance Training</td>
<td>$5K etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the whiteboard was full, we began the task of eliminating projects. This was done by applying several criteria to each of the proposed projects: Did we have the time and human resources to undertake it? Did it fit with the agency’s strategic priorities? Were other agencies better placed to undertake the project?

This process took several hours of discussion and negotiation. I submitted two cultural heritage projects proposed by the Traditional Owners of Rainbow Valley: the creation of a new walking track around the Rainbow Valley claypan, to be built by the Traditional Owners, and including interpretative signage that told the story of Rainbow Valley as the Traditional Owners wished it to be told; and, a proposal for a bush tucker book by the Rainbow Valley women.

Both were rejected, despite support from land council colleagues and my own insistence that the projects had arisen from Rainbow Valley joint management planning process and we were bound to honour them. At the end of the day, we eliminated all but a few of the projects: Flexible Employment Program, plans of management and a Territory-wide joint management forum for Traditional Owners were all that remained. On the whiteboard, the figure of $220K was written up as still unspent. We had cut, slashed and burned, until we now had even MORE to spend than we had started off with.

I walked out of the meeting, astounded. What would I say to the Rainbow Valley mob when next I saw them? Sorry, you’re not core business? To one of my colleagues, I said: “That was a waste of time. We’ve ended up with more money to spend than we came in here with.”

He replied: “Oh no, it’s not a waste of time. It’s a sign of good process.”
Ironically, knowledge of strategic priorities, although set out clearly in artefacts such as business plans and other documents, constitutes only a partial knowledge. As Hummel (1987:259) has observed: "... the ultimate goals of bureaucratic organisations are held closely at the top...". The funding meetings discussed above were held across a period of six months, where it became evident that PWS's new director was placing increased pressure upon planners to complete new joint management plans in order to report progress in implementing joint management to higher levels of government. Initially, this was not openly communicated to staff; however, it was communicated quite forcefully to the Principal Planner—the person responsible for both convening and facilitating this series of meetings. The predictable result was that activities associated with joint management planning readily gained funding and were actioned as priorities over other programs.

Another related point to funding is accountability, in particular accountability through the creation of key performance indicators and monthly reporting on expenditure, both constitutive of contemporary bureaucratic process within all NT government agencies. Whilst monthly reporting on expenditure is readily justified in terms of dollars spent on material purchases or people's time, much of what is done in joint management—meetings, informal discussions, mimaetically rendering words into artefacts—is not directly reportable within PWS's accounting processes. In other words, PWS, like many government agencies, recognises numbers as indicators of positive action, yet much of what constitutes joint management—the 'cuppa tea' and 'sit down'-lacks any means of numeric measurement, and cannot be reported upon. This ontological blindness exists not just in relation in reporting or quantifying joint management actions, but is embedded as practice across all NT government departments. Indeed, as Riles (2006: 91) notes in her discussion of Japanese Central Bankers, this form of blindness is part of the technology of bureaucracy everywhere: quantitative, positivistic measurement constitutes the only legitimate means of measuring agency actions. Much of what is seen as meaningful and successful by those who participate in joint management cannot be reported because the NT Government lacks the ability to apprehend it.

A final point here relates to the recursive and generative nature of artefacts within PWS, and indeed, within the NT government. By recursive, I mean that the
reviewing, renewing or even superseding of artefacts becomes an end in itself, a means by which government can be seen to re-examine its own actions, and in the process of such re-examination—through disclosures of policy ‘failures’, revisions, or systemic problems—create further points of insertion for its own interventions (Lea, 2008:18; Riles, 2006: 87). In using the term ‘generative’, I point to the means by which such work both generates more of the same—the creation of new artefacts or processes for institutionally looking at artefacts—and the means for creating other embodied organisational actions.

The Flexible Employment Program

We’re not an employment agency ... I haven’t got enough time to do everything I’m supposed to do as part of my normal job, without running about all over the countryside after Blackfellas who don’t turn up to work... (Ranger, field notes, November 2003)

It is very noticeable that, of all the new jobs in Kowanyama, the role of the ranger is regarded as being the most ideal (Strang, 1997:105).

The interplay of interests between the groups involved in joint management, and the linkages to high level NT Government and NRETA strategic processes is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the conception and implementation of the Flexible Employment Program within the agency. Although PWS has long prided itself on employing a higher percentage of Aboriginal staff than any other NT Government agency (at the time of writing, 17% of PWS staff were Aboriginal), it had resisted any significant attempts to become involved in the broad scale training and employment of Aboriginal people. Most recruitment of Aboriginal people to PWS was limited to isolated individuals, took place via short term employment in construction or cleaning contracts, or occurred in tandem with NT Government traineeship or cadetship programs whose numbers were limited to a handful of positions each year across all government departments. Furthermore, as the words of the ranger quoted above suggest, there was a strong opposition to any suggestion that PWS should expand or seek higher numbers of Aboriginal staff; it was simply not viewed as being core business.
Anecdotally, the preference of Aboriginal people for work as rangers, and the status that such a position brings to Aboriginal people undertaking this work, is widely known. For example, Bauman and Smyth (2007:59), in discussing Aboriginal perceptions of employment at Nitmiluk National Park, state that: "...Working for the Commission (meaning PWCNT) is seen as prestigious, and a number of successfully trained Aboriginal rangers have moved onto other Parks or positions of authority within their communities." Furthermore, in some cases (i.e. Nitmiluk National Park), the employment of Aboriginal people was viewed as being an integral part of joint management. More widely within PWS, employment was viewed as ‘helping Aboriginal people out’ or as a form of sourcing external labour to complete specific projects, just as rangers might engage volunteers or paid contractors, rather than joint management. However, with the commencement of the joint management process following the decision in Ward, and the framing of Aboriginal economic opportunities on parks as a key ‘selling point’ in the NT Government’s public and internal policy statements about joint management, the agency came under increasing pressure to create new opportunities for Aboriginal economic development in park management. Despite the prevailing view within the agency about this, Aboriginal training and employment became a central part of joint management.

The agency’s initial response to this external political imperative was slow. At the beginning of 2004, there existed several high level directives emphasising Aboriginal employment. A new government initiative (indeed, one of many such initiatives created by successive NT governments over the years) aimed at increasing Indigenous employment within the public sector had been released in 2001 by the Office for the Commissioner of Public Employment (OCPE). Furthermore, a key part of the land councils’ acceptance of the joint management offer had been the government’s promise of money to create new jobs for Traditional Owners within joint management. Following this, several all-of-sector workshops were held in Alice Springs (October 2003 and February 2004), aimed at identifying needs and possible solutions for increasing Indigenous employment in joint management. For those in the PWS Executive, the message was that Aboriginal employment initiatives via joint management were important government policy directives against which the agency would be required to report.
By mid-2004, in the PWS Southern Region, a unique and defining response to the political imperative for Aboriginal employment in joint management was beginning to emerge: the Flexible Employment Program (FEP). The FEP was to become PWS's self-proclaimed 'centre piece' of joint management. Quite simply, the FEP enables Aboriginal people interested in 'ranger work' to undertake paid employment with rangers on parks in projects such as burning, fencing, weed spraying, infrastructure maintenance and visitor programs. Officially, the FEP is described as "...casual, period work and training opportunities Traditional Owners in joint management activities" (PWS 2005:2). There was little question of the program's success: by the end of 2007, the FEP had employed over 250 Traditional Owners in more than 150 projects on jointly managed parks in the Southern Region, gave rise to two new community ranger groups, and created a network of inter-organisational support links. At beginning, however, the FEP was neither well supported nor welcomed by the agency.

From the FEP's inception in late 2004 until the employment of a specialist FEP Coordinator in early 2008, it was my role to develop and implement the FEP at the behest of my supervisor within the SPDU. It was my supervisor, PWS's Principal Planner, who conceived the program and was the author of most of its strategic documents. The facts and figures quoted in the section above mask the difficulties and resistance encountered both internally and externally in establishing the FEP within an agency whose staff viewed their roles through the lens of 'protecting of natural values in the landscape'. Many staff simply said to me: 'we're not an employment agency', or: '...great idea. But we don't have the time or the resources to do what we do now, let alone supervising and training Aboriginal people'. These criticisms of the program remained salient at the time of writing, despite the program's success. Another obstacle to establishing an agency-specific employment program was the fact that there were no structures in place within the organisation to support the broad scale employment of casual employees. Quite simply, every piece of the program needed to be created from new before a single Aboriginal person could be employed.

Two critical factors ensured the FEP's acceptance within the agency. The first was: forming partnerships with Indigenous organisations that could offer payroll services
to PWS and accredited training to Aboriginal people: and, securing legitimacy and funding from the PWS Executive. The process by which the program was promoted within the agency was critical to its acceptance and adoption. To begin with, the idea was introduced to all staff over several years via discussion papers, meetings and workshops, then, it was presented as a ‘business plan and strategy’ in order ‘sell’ the idea to Executive management. Finally, the program was purposely devised to ‘fit’ seamlessly into existing organisational practice and processes, such as the land management projects undertaken by rangers.

However, Aboriginal people were also responsible for the program’s eventual success. Aboriginal informants link joint management strongly with economic development, and in particular, with paid employment as rangers. The preference of Traditional Owners for ranger work has been well documented by authors such as Lawrence (1997:2) and Rose (1995:103) and especially Altman (2004). Strang (1997:105-106) explains this preference for ‘ranger jobs’ as a contemporary expression of traditional modes of relationship with the land: rangers travel around looking after country, protecting places, sharing, learning and teaching. Anecdotally, Traditional Owners expressed to me their preferences for ranger work in subtle and none too subtle ways. For example, one middle aged Kaytetye woman, whilst we were walking around the Devil’s Marbles during a break in a planning meeting, commented to me:

So when do we get the ranger uniforms? I want to be a ranger... I need one of those uniforms. She paused, thought for a moment, and then asked: What do rangers do?

Whilst this remark reveals a lack of understanding about park management and a rangers’ role, it also suggests something of the esteem in which rangers – and their uniforms - are held by Aboriginal people in Central Australia, and the desirability of being a ranger, even if one does not know what that fully entails! Furthermore, when I asked Traditional Owners what joint management was, a common response was in terms of employment:
It's also Parks picking up Traditional Owners and going out and working together. Get some Traditional Owners to go out and look after wildlife and bush tucker... Traditional Owner, field notes, November 2006.

It's young people going for training and work. Not enough opportunities for training and work. We never did sit down and talk amongst ourselves (meaning family), talk to young kids about this. Parks should sit down and talk to young kids about work and training and Land Council should sit down and talk about it, too. Traditional Owner, field notes May 2007.

Whilst Aboriginal people were overwhelmingly supportive of the FEP concept from early on, promoting the idea within PWS and securing Executive support were lengthy processes. Several discussion papers were internally circulated throughout 2004 and a number of informal staff workshops here held. Both the discussion papers and internal staff workshops (in the form of 'Joint Management Catch Ups) represent examples of what Lea (2002:43) has called ‘institutional texts’. Institutional texts constitute: “...a collective, factionalised and hierarchical process with its own highly specialised rules for choreographing members’ involvement, requiring careful parleying within and outside the organisation, to identify and include not only those with representational status or with substantive knowledge of the matter at hand, but also those who will confer testimonial authority on the final product” (ibid:63). As the need for an organisational response to the NTG policy directive of Indigenous employment outcomes from joint management had already been acknowledged, albeit, played down, and the call had again come from the Central Land Council for PWS to be seen to be doing something –and to provide funds to do so- the testimonial authority outside of the organisation was already in existence. The creation of institutional texts was aimed at securing testimonial authority from within.

At the same time the idea was being discussed with ranger staff, a formal FEP strategy comprising a business plan and a set of operational guidelines was being drafted. This strategy document was deliberately aimed at securing endorsement from the agency’s ‘testimonial authorities’, the PWS Executive. To add further weight to the FEP idea, this corporate strategy document was formulated within a highly
regarded external management training course, the *Public Sector Management Program* (PSM). The PSM is a postgraduate diploma for government sector employees seeking to become, or already acting as, managers. Within this course, each participant undertakes a major project that must be sanctioned by their department or agency, with the aim of being adopted as an organisational practice. Throughout the PSM course, the participant’s project is workshopped, peer reviewed, and most of all, presented as ‘best practice’ to their home organisation. The FEP’s strategy, and its implementation, arose directly out of the participation of a PWS staff member in the PSM – also the organisation’s Principal Planner and head of the SPDU – and the subsequent endorsement of a project plan by the PWS Executive. Following the endorsement, the PWS Executive allocated $50,000 from the joint management budget to undertake a trial of the FEP whilst the FEP strategy document was being finalised.

This document, the *Strategy for the Flexible Employment Program – Parks South* (PWS, 2005) eventually became the program’s business plan, setting out the risks (such as not being able to find partnership organisations), methods, objectives and outcomes for a program of project-based Aboriginal employment and training in jointly managed parks. The *Strategy* set out clear objectives for the FEP, whilst recognising both internal and external institutional imperatives:

- To reflect the interests and capacities of Traditional Owners, their families and communities,
- To progress park management programs,
- To be effective, efficient and sustainable over the longer-term (PWS, 2005:4).

In other words, the FEP sought to address some of the objectives of joint management (outlined in Chapters 3 and 6), and aimed to do so on a long term basis. It was also designed to address the external political imperatives of both the Land Councils and the broader NT Government.
Gaining Legitimacy

The first ‘pilot’ FEP project, a fencing maintenance job, was undertaken at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve (ASTS) in March 2005. I spent much of that week filling in paperwork such as contracts and tax forms, and liaising with Human Resources within the NTG, trying to figure out how to pay our eager participants. There was, at this stage, no simple way of paying FEP participants or covering their superannuation payments: the NT Government did not (and still does not) readily engage casual staff. I also spent much of the week organising food and protective clothing for participants. For many rangers it was an eye-opening experience to learn that many Aboriginal people in Central Australia often have no food in their houses, nor do they own work boots! Coming to work barefoot and empty stomached was a regular occurrence for FEP participants. Needless to say, protective clothing was quickly purchased, as was a supply of breakfast foods.

Despite these ‘problems’ the program thrived. Within a few weeks of the program’s inception, we had dozens of names of Aboriginal people who wished to ‘sign up for ranger work’. From the outset, the Central Land Council was overwhelmingly supportive of the program. The CLC was instrumental in publicising the program to Traditional Owners and introducing Traditional Owners expressing interest in the program to ranger staff. Rangers would then liaise with Traditional Owners to identify work teams and projects. FEP projects were selected by senior park rangers from core park management programs, such as fire, visitor or weed management.

Rangers, with some assistance from CLC and PWS joint management staff, would be responsible for getting participants to the work site, briefing participants on the nature of the project, supervising and assisting participants with filling in timesheets. It was my role to oversee all of this, and develop salary payment and recordkeeping systems for the program – these were done with the aid of a very patient Admin assistant and an Aboriginal joint management officer.

The FEP was soon operating in places as far apart as Watarrka and Tennant Creek, requiring constant project management on my behalf to ensure that it went as
smoothly as possible. Needless to say, things did not always run smoothly: payments were sometimes late, people lost their workboots or backpacks, rangers bent the rules and let FEP participants drive PWS vehicles, or Aboriginal people simply did not turn up for work.

By mid-2005, however, it became apparent that the administrative workload involved in the FEP was unsustainable. Yet unfulfilled was the strategic objective of linking paid work with accredited training, as was the provision of safety equipment and additional park resources to carry out projects. Furthermore, questions about the Workcover (worker’s compensation insurance) and superannuation remained unclear. In truth, we simply ignored the implications of such things, assuming that PWS was obliged to cover participants’ worker’s compensation; later, we were informed that this was a ‘grey area’. However, we took the view that we would just make the program happen and work everything out as we went along. Regardless of these issues, the trail phase of the program was an overwhelming success. By the time the three month pilot phase ended in June 2005, 35 projects had taken place on 14 parks, with 123 Traditional Owners registering for the program, and over seventy of them being employed.

In June 2005, a workshop was held to review the pilot program. Participants at this workshop included senior rangers, joint management and CLC staff. There was still significant resistance to the program from ranger staff. This was framed in terms of
the ‘increased workload and responsibility’ that conducting FEP projects placed upon them. Some rangers objected to having to ‘mother’ Aboriginal adults who had no idea of Whitefella work ethics and expectations. Others complained about resourcing: they already had too much to do, not enough time to do it in, and not enough staff or money to do it with.

After the 2005 review, the final FEP Strategy was drafted, outlining the aims, principles and strategic directions of the program. Action plans at a District level were also drafted and implemented, allowing for localised conditions, forward planning, and risk assessment. An FEP working group, comprising senior district rangers, CLC land management staff and PWS joint management staff, chaired by myself was also formed, meeting monthly to monitor and review the program. I developed a short training program for ranger staff, which outlined the administrative, project management, cross cultural considerations and occupational health and safety knowledge necessary for undertaking an FEP project.

Full endorsement for the program came from PWS’s Executive in September 2005. Along with endorsement came funding: for the 2005-2006 financial year, $120,000 was set aside from the joint management budget to fund FEP in Central Australia. Shortly after this, a large number of projects (61) were proposed by rangers via the mechanism of District FEP plans discussed above. In one district, the West MacDonnellls, most of the proposed projects were dedicated to assisting the creation of a Community Ranger Group at Hermannsburg. In addition, $20,000 of the total budget was also dedicated to the establishment of this group. This group would then be contracted to undertake land management projects, such as the construction of visitor facilities, feral animal eradication and weed control programs on both Aboriginal land as well as on parks and reserves. This group was later funded an additional $90,000 per annum by the NT Government, and was ultimately resourced by a partnership between CLC, PWS and the Tjuwanpa Outstations Resources Centre at Hermannsburg.

The most vexing issue for PWS—that of accessing Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) labour and outsourcing salary payments—began to be addressed in late 2005. CDEP is a Commonwealth Government-funded scheme where
Aboriginal participants undertake work on communities to receive an income equivalent to or slightly higher than welfare payments. The scheme is administered by a network of local Aboriginal organisations. In Central Australia, this mostly commonly Aboriginal Community Councils or Outstation Resource Centres (termed here ‘CDEP providers’), who receive additional funds for administration and the purchase of items such as vehicles, protective clothing and tools (Altman, Gray & Levitus, 2005: vii). It was the administrative ability of CDEP providers that PWS sought to access. The payment of wages to FEP participants was a time consuming and unwieldy process for PWS. We needed to find a CDEP provider who was willing to help us. In essence, this would entail trialling FEP projects as a CDEP ‘activities’ – something which had been done in the Darwin Region, but had never been attempted in Central Australia, nor had it been on a large scale. The idea was that the CDEP provider would add FEP (or work with PWS) as an activity for its participants, pay our salaries for us, and then invoice us for the monies paid at the end of each month.

Fortunately, a local Alice Springs CDEP provider, Ingkerreke Outstations Resource Centre, was being managed by a former PWS ranger, Scott McConnell. Scott agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with us, under which FEP employees could become CDEP participants within Ingkerreke, and Ingkerreke would –for a small administration fee- undertake all payroll, superannuation and worker’s compensation payments and obligations, invoicing PWS at the end of each month. By the end of June 2006, six MOUs with CDEP providers were in place, meaning that the processing of participant wages was no longer the task of PWS joint management staff (myself) and the grey areas associated with Workcover and superannuation had been eliminated.

During this period, a method for delivering accredited training was also negotiated through a local Indigenous tertiary institution, Batchelor College. Batchelor College were able to conduct remote training to FEP participants whilst they were undertaking paid work on FEP projects. The outcome of this was that a number of FEP participants were able to secure fulltime work, both within PWS and elsewhere. In early 2006, when four indigenous ranger traineeships were offered by the PWS to Aboriginal people all over Central Australia, FEP participants were able to win each of these positions after applying on a competitive basis.
However, administrative challenges did continue to arise. In mid-2007, the Howard Government introduced far-reaching changes to CDEP which affected both FEP and community ranger groups. Within a few months, we watched CDEP programs—which had provided a sustainable financial and administrative means of running FEP projects—downscale or in some cases, cease altogether. Prior to this, FEP money had come to act as a ‘top up’ of CDEP money, allowing participants to earn higher hourly rates whilst being employed on FEP projects, as well as permitting them the opportunity to work beyond the 30 hours per fortnight maximum set for CDEP. Not only did many CDEPs vanish, there was widespread confusion about what would replace CDEP, along with constant changes to programs and funding available. In the end, staff within the SPDU made the decision to keep the FEP going and to pay participants entirely from the FEP budget, resulting in fewer FEP projects for fewer participants. This was offset to some extent by Ingkerreke’s expansion of its community ranger program, but in other places, no similar organisation existed and FEP had to be paid for wholly from PWS funds.

 Nonetheless, the election of a new Federal government in November 2007 and its promise to reintroduce CDEP, as well as the pressing need to ‘take FEP to the next level’, convinced senior PWS management to create a dedicated FEP Coordinator’s position. The creation of a dedicated FEP Coordinator’s position, filled by an appropriate specialist, was seen as not only necessary to progress FEP beyond the scope of ‘casual, periodical work experience’, but as the ultimate sanctioning of the program by the agency’s executive. In January 2008, a former CLC community ranger group coordinator was employed in this position.

Legitimacy, Resistance and Capacity

The most resounding criticism of the FEP relates to its casual and sporadic nature, and to its limited employment outcomes. For example, participants might work three weeks in a row and then not work again for three months or more. Whilst this level of involvement suits some Traditional Owners, others are clearly seeking full time employment. The frequency and timing of FEP projects is directly influenced by the scheduling of FEP projects by senior park rangers around other park programs, the availability of ranger staff to undertake FEP projects and ultimately, the funding
available to run FEP projects. Another limiting factor relates to seasonal conditions; that is, burning is undertaken in winter in Central Australia, and weed spraying is conducted during periods directly following rain. Other projects, such as the re-oiling of park furniture or construction of new walking tracks are infrequent, and are also constrained by higher level budget and planning considerations.

Another related criticism of the program is that of the limited permanent employment opportunities open to successful FEP participants. Both within and outside of PWS it has been noted that, other than the twelve Territory wide Indigenous Ranger traineeships offered every eighteen months (also funded from the current joint management budget), FEP offers few pathways to full time employment for its participants. This is a fair criticism, and one highlighted when the second round of Indigenous traineeships was offered in early 2007. Both Traditional Owners and ranger staff expressed their frustration to me when a number of long term FEP participants missed out on traineeships because of their literacy and numeracy skills. As far as rangers were concerned, in the field, these participants were hardworking, skilled and reliable. They had demonstrated their loyalty to PWS and should have been rewarded with full time employment. Several of these participants became disillusioned and went on to find full time employment elsewhere. Although gaining work elsewhere does not equal a failure in terms of employment outcomes, it contradicts what I had been told repeatedly by Aboriginal people and rangers: wearing a PWS ranger’s uniform with the ‘eagle badge’ was what most long term FEP participants desired. It also –again- draws attention to the FEP’s biggest failings: it was casual and periodic and had limited itself to a narrow group of ‘park management’ activities.

Furthermore, despite the success of the FEP and the administrative hurdles overcome by myself and SPDU staff, ranger staff often resisted or even resented the program, stating that they were pressed for time and resources, and that Aboriginal people often did not turn up for work or showed no interest in ranger work, or were just ‘not around’ when rangers went to talk to them about work. The program, although highly successful in some locations, was barely functional in others even though it represented additional labour available to rangers to complete land management projects. Often, the success or otherwise of FEP in particular locations could be
attributed to an individual senior ranger’s acceptance of and aptitude for engaging Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, when such people were transferred elsewhere or left PWS, the FEP program would cease to run in that location for a period of time—or at all. In other cases, it was clear that rangers believed that the program was ‘too much work’ and not a priority in comparison to their regular duties. FEP projects included tasks such as visiting communities to discuss work, purchasing lunches and drinks for participants, picking up Aboriginal people for actual work projects, intense on-the-ground mentoring whilst undertaking work activities and commonly, the completion of timesheets and chasing up of pay on behalf of participants:

*We had it all worked out. The (name of Aboriginal Outstation) mob said: “Yes, we want to work. Come and pick us up tomorrow”. And when we went down there to pick them up, there’s no one. We knock on the door, and they’re still asleep. X (name of Aboriginal man) said: It’s too early. We’re not coming today...” So that’s why we can’t do FEP a lot of the time* (Senior PWS Ranger, August 2006).

*They (Aboriginal FEP participants) just don’t bring lunch. I mean, when I go to work, it’s my responsibility to bring my lunch to work or to buy it, but they just don’t have any concept of doing that. Which means we have to provide lunch for them, and it’s not my job to feed people, really. I mean, I don’t mind ... people can’t work all day without food, but they should be thinking about looking after themselves...* (Senior PWS Ranger, June 2005).

These internal criticisms of FEP raise several critical issues: the question of whose interests are represented by FEP; capacity (both of PWS staff and Aboriginal people); and, Aboriginal understandings of, and attitudes towards, work. The FEP program does not represent the interests of PWS as they are most commonly understood by those working within the agency. These interests are concerned with maintaining the agency’s autonomy, fulfilling its functions derived from legislation and with protecting the natural values present within the landscape. Creating employment for Aboriginal people, an aim of joint management contained within amendments to the *TWPCA*, remains outside of what is considered to be PWS’s main set of roles and
duties. What the FEP does represent however, is the combined interests of higher levels of government, staff in the SPDU, some Aboriginal people and the land councils, via the use of policy directives to secure the program’s funding and approval from PWS Executives. The careful integration of the FEP with high level government indigenous employment and training initiatives, its iteration as artefacts recognised by PWS’s Executive and its adaptation of pre-existing casual employment models were guided by SPDU staff skilled in such processes. These same staff also enjoyed ready access to the agency’s senior management. FEP could be made to happen from within despite it representing a set of interests external to the agency.

Another significant factor linked to FEP —indeed, linked to all parts of joint management— is that of capacity, meaning the ability of rangers to undertake FEP projects and of Aboriginal people to participate. Concerns about capacity are captured in the following statement by a former SPDU staff member:

I ... spent time with the Aboriginal rangers (name and location of FEP project), talking and learning about their experiences. I got an idea of the complexities of Aboriginal people working with white people and gender issues. It’s not all roses and the PWS management aren’t equipped to cope with this. I could foresee this becoming a big problem (PWS Joint Management Officer, May 2007).

Rangers’ contentions about FEP not being a core duty aside, assumptions about the capacity of ranger staff to undertake the intense, time consuming, and often frustrating tasks involved in Aboriginal engagement and training is something which is underestimated. Even though attempts were made via short courses on implementing FEP projects and on cross-cultural training to increase the confidence and ability of rangers to engage with Aboriginal people, a lack of time, cross-cultural awkwardness, and the nature of Aboriginal communities in Central Australia—such as remoteness from parks and high levels of Aboriginal mobility—continue to be a significant issue in running FEP projects. Indeed, the capacity of conservation agencies to undertake many aspects of joint management without specialist skills in Aboriginal engagement, employment and training, or without the agency choosing to employ such specialists is something which is rarely mentioned in the literature discussing joint
management. Quite simply, PWS does not have sufficient staff with these skills who are solely dedicated to such engagement. Where the agency does have these staff, they comprise a single officer ‘joint management facilitator’ located in a regional office that may be hundreds of kilometres away from parks which need them.

Even more critical is the lack of capacity amongst Aboriginal people to participate in initiatives like FEP, and indeed, in many other facets of joint management. Although Aboriginal people cite employment as the most important aspiration they have in regards to joint management, a lack of access to –or awareness of– the fundamental resources that give one ability to undertake a day of employment, such as owning work boots or being able to get oneself to work, are often limited or non-existent amongst Aboriginal people. Added to this is the nature of life in many Aboriginal communities: low literacy levels, obligations to kin, the dysfunctional nature of some communities and a lack of exposure to the expectations and assumptions inherent in fulltime employment (i.e. knowing to call your employer if you’re sick rather than simply not turning up). These factors combine to make it difficult to sustain interest in programs such as the FEP amongst Aboriginal people, and may even preclude many Aboriginal people from participating altogether. Furthermore, they are not issues which conservation agency staff are readily aware of (i.e. obligations to kin and the sharing on demand of hard-earned wages) or are able to address.

Another factor underlying the capacity to engage in paid employment is perceptions of, and attitudes towards, paid employment amongst Aboriginal people. Whilst many older Aboriginal people have a clear understanding of what paid employment entails due to work on pastoral properties, on missions or with government departments, many younger Aboriginal people do not. The desire of older Aboriginal people that younger people take up opportunities for employment on parks may not be shared or even wanted. Indeed, whilst many Aboriginal people state a preference for fulltime employment, many find it difficult to turn up to work every day due to a whole range of factors. Therefore, part time or casual work opportunities might be more preferable

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30 A strategic decision was made by the PWS Executive to prioritise the employment of joint management planners over other joint management staff. This is discussed in detail in the following chapters.
to some Aboriginal people; however, these are not always preferable or an option for employers such as PWS. Furthermore, perceptions of what work entails amongst Aboriginal people is also a significant issue. For example, the statement by several Aboriginal people about ranger work comprising the wearing of a uniform and driving around the country, checking on sites, suggests some dissonance with the reality of ranger work, which includes activities as diverse as cleaning toilets and running campfire talks for visitors, and may involve working ten day long shifts during peak tourist times. Whilst initiatives such as FEP serve to demonstrate to Aboriginal people what is involved in the day-to-day management of parks, the limited nature of these programs ensures that this information reaches only a select few. Again, the ability of PWS staff and their capacity to engage either community education or training programs is limited.

Continued Colonialism or Genuine Concern?

... the use of joint management regimes within the national park framework is allowing for the continued maintenance of Eurocentric practices, to the detriment of Australia’s indigenous peoples’ (Wearing & Huyskens, 2001:183).

Does the implementation of joint management on the ground represent a ‘black bums on seats’ approach to the practice, which critics such as Wearing and Huyskens (ibid) condemn as ‘Eurocentric’? (see also Craig, 1992:147; Strelein, 1993:ibid; Lawrence, 1997:2; and, Smyth, 2001:78:). I suggest that it does not, yet neither is it the happy marriage of conservation and Aboriginal interests purported by many others (Larritt, 1995:242; Nugent, 2002:88; Laudine, 2009: 122 &133-134). The assumptions made by some critics of joint management that governments—in the broad use of the term—and Aboriginal people do not necessarily want the same outcomes from joint management are incorrect. Whilst it is an underlying assumption of this thesis that joint management presupposes the handback of land to Aboriginal people and the leaseback of that land to governments to be managed as publicly accessible national parks, the suggestion that Aboriginal people do not view employment and training as
an important reason to engage in joint management – just as governments do – is wrong.

One of the key understandings that Aboriginal people hold about joint management is that it will offer employment opportunities to them. This can be interpreted as Aboriginal people’s aspirations for socio-economic development, as well as an expression of their desire to be involved in joint management as a means of expressing political power. The desire to improve Aboriginal socio-economic outcomes via joint management is a clearly stated aim of the NT Government (NRETA, 2005:83). Yet the reasons for the NT Government’s framing of joint management in terms of Aboriginal socio-economic development could be seen less as a ‘call to arms’ to take direct action on this difficult issue, and more as a political statement attempting to sell the potentially unpopular handback of 27 parks to Aboriginal people to its voting constituents. Even more cynically, it could be interpreted as an attempt by the NT Government to divert attention away from the vexed issue of handback, and alienate those who objected to the entire joint management offer via appeals to address Aboriginal disadvantage (Alice Springs News, 14 September, 2005).

Political cynicism aside, the implementation of joint management has resulted in increased employment opportunities for the Traditional Owners of the NT’s parks. This came through the Flexible Employment Program, as well as through an increased Indigenous Ranger Traineeship program within PWS, and the creation of new community ranger groups by the Central Land Council. It also came in spite of strong cultural resistance within PWS to create such a program, via the purposeful use of higher level government policies. Indeed, the creation of the FEP may be seen to inhibit and be antithetical to the dominant set of interests the PWS has in park management, diverting scarce time and human resources away from other land management programs. Clearly, one solution to this is for the agency to embrace its unwanted role as a preferred Aboriginal employer, and hire more specialist rangers and Aboriginal engagement staff – and perhaps to venture into the area of establishing community ranger groups on parks with resident or adjacent Aboriginal communities. However, neither the cultural nor political will do to so appear to be widely present within the agency.

251
This of course raises the question of why the land councils did not choose to become more involved in employment initiatives on parks given that many of them are now Aboriginal land trusts. This is not to say that the land councils do not support employment initiatives on parks—they do so strongly; in fact, one of the key reasons that the land councils agreed to the NT Government’s offer was *because* of the guarantee of employment opportunities to Traditional Owners. The answer to this—and it was a question that I and others put to CLC staff on numerous occasions—has never been entirely clear. The land councils appear to have chosen the creation of community ranger groups who operate mainly on Aboriginal land over other possible forms of employment provision, such as becoming a CDEP provider or having extensive involvement in FEP for internal reasons. One of these may relate to the need to secure funding to support the CLC’s land management section, which is much more readily available for the establishment of community ranger groups than it is for other land management programs. Another may be a lack of capacity—the CLC is first and foremost a representative body—not an employment and training specialist, even if they are perhaps better placed than any other agency to engage Aboriginal people.

Given this, it follows that *capacity to engage in joint management*, rather than a lack of congruity of interests or desire to improve Aboriginal socio-economic conditions by government, may be the most critical factor in the success or otherwise of joint management initiatives. As the discussion of FEP has shown, many Aboriginal people in Central Australia lack the fundamental resources and skills that would allow them to participate fully in employment and other aspects of joint management. Another related issue is that many Aboriginal people do not perceive or desire to work in the same way that most public sector employees do. Aboriginal people have many different understandings of work and aspirations towards it—such as need to balance family and cultural responsibilities with the demands of employers. Consequently, park rangers and park agencies may not be sympathetic to Aboriginal priorities and understandings about the nature of work, nor are they equipped to address issues such as illiteracy, or the lack of access to food and transport that characterise life on many Aboriginal communities. Thus *capacity* for all who participate in joint management would appear to be a crucial place for investment of time and human resources by governments and other groups with an interest in joint management.
Finally, there is the issue of the means by which the interests of higher levels of government and external interests, such as those of land councils, found their way into the strategic documents and eventually, the on-the-ground actions, of PWS and its staff, especially in relation to Aboriginal employment initiatives. These interests often conflicted or competed with the interests of PWS, primarily understood by its staff as being concerned with protecting the natural values of the environment. The ability to engage in ‘talk work’, to produce artefacts that could be ‘seen’ and granted legitimacy by the PWS Executive, and to align work unit or even personal goals with the higher level strategic aims, resulted in the implementation of projects such as the FEP, and the creation of a joint management program, which in reality, only assumed that it reflected the interests of rangers in joint management. The outcome, although reasonably successful in terms of Aboriginal employment, was an ongoing passive resistance to the FEP amongst rangers, or in some cases, avoidance of the program altogether at others.

Hummel (1987:79-80) has described this process in terms of a lack of understanding between administrators and workers, and at an even more fundamental level, of the difference between the physical world of workers and the quantitative world of high level bureaucrats. The tension between the qualitative worlds of rangers and Traditional Owners, and those planners and land council staff engaged in implementing joint management on the ground is a critical theme for understanding joint management.
Chapter 7: Joint Management Planning and Governance

More broadly, a concern for social equity in conservation covers a range of issues, from human rights to sustainable use of natural resources, from participation in civil society to gender fairness (Borrini-Feyerabend, Kothari & Oviedo, 2004: 5-6).

Western policy and management frameworks centred on joint management boards and agreements are technical and bureaucratic, thus inhibiting equitable co-management (Reid, 2006:263).

For many people at a national and international level, joint management is seen as a means of empowering Indigenous and local peoples whose lands are affected by the declaration of state-run conservation areas. Issues of social equity, poverty alleviation, inclusive decision making processes and guaranteed representation for Indigenous peoples are promoted as highly desirable principles underlying the idea of co-management (Lawrence, 1997:2; Goetze, 2004:5; Bauman & Smyth, 2007:5). Calls for the increased recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples at a global scale are also linked closely with international development and poverty alleviation projects. Not surprisingly, international development policy and theory have directly influenced agencies such as the IUCN in promoting notions such as participatory planning, participatory policy development and co-management partnerships through publications such as its Policy Matters and Parks journals. Furthermore, this has seen the publication of many ‘how-to’ manuals which focus on participatory planning within jointly management protected areas (e.g. Borrini-Feyerabend, Farvar, Nguinguiri & Ndangang, 2000; Borrini-Feyerabend et.al, 2004). Ultimately, these publications aim for the equitable participation in protected area management of via planning processes and governance structures, such as boards and committees, by Indigenous peoples.

However, as both Reid (ibid) and the previous chapters suggest, the highly formal and bureaucratic processes involved in establishing joint management arrangements, as well as differing understandings about joint management and hidden political
asymmetries amongst those involved, often mean that equal participation is difficult to realise or may not be achieved at all. Issues such as poor literacy, non-familiarity with bureaucratic process and the ability to have one’s interests recognised in politically salient circumstances are all important factors in the equitable joint management of protected areas. It is possible that the very factors for which Australian joint management arrangements are widely promoted as ‘best practice’ – guaranteed participation by Aboriginal people in park governance structures – may in some cases act to disempower, obscure and even frustrate attempts by Aboriginal people to have their voices heard.

In this chapter, then, I examine the implementation of planning and governance in joint management arrangements within in the Northern Territory. This chapter continues on from the last in exploring the dialectic between the interests of those involved in joint management and the cumulative effects of history, organisational culture and legislation. The first section of this chapter focuses on joint management planning, particularly on its conception as a participatory process within the PWS and CLC, as well as its ability to capture and reflect the interests of Aboriginal people. In the second part of the chapter, I turn to a discussion of governance within joint management, meaning the decision making processes and actual structures – joint management committees – established to ensure equitable participation in park management for the Aboriginal Traditional Owners of the NT’s reserves.

**Joint Management Planning**

As soon as practicable after a park or reserve has been declared, the Commission shall prepare a plan of management in respect of that park or reserve taking into account such public opinion as is known to it. TPWCA 18(1).

*Policy artefacts are not simply statements of logical intent. They are also fetish objects or magical relics that travel through time and space, often referring to each other and just as often ghost written, that are*
attributed great expressive power and controlling capacities; a power acquired through ritualistic production efforts, including the addition of special words and consecration by anointed reviewers (Lea, 2008: 20).

"Failing to plan is planning to fail..." Senior Park Planner, May 2007

In the minds of many PWS staff—and certainly in the minds and hearts of those with whom I worked directly—joint management planning marked the beginning of ‘real joint management.’ At a whole-of-government level, the gazetting of new joint management plans within the Territory’s Legislative Assembly signalled the agency’s fulfilment of its legal obligations. Within the agency, however, it was the creation of paper plans, often the culmination of months (or years) of otherwise hidden discussions, consultations, workshops, and reviews, that represented the ‘essence’ of joint management much more than the publicly celebrated (or denounced) transfers of title, enactments of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and signing of leases. In short, joint management planning, arising from established organisational processes and practices, created joint management plans, real and tangible evidence of the agreements reached between PWS and Traditional Owners.

Although the TWPCA carries a legislative imperative for PWS to write joint management plans ‘as soon as practicable’, from the earliest of days of joint management, the urgency to write plans within the agency came not from the Act, but from two distinctive and equally imperious sources. The first of these is encapsulated by the term ‘fetish objects’ in the quote from Lea above. Put simply, park management plans once written and gazetted, like the policy documents of Territory Health described by Lea (ibid), become artefacts of power. They symbolise not only the hours of human interaction and labour required to create these documents, but also the trust, accountabilities, permissions and aspirations; the combined intent of PWS and Traditional Owners that, in essence, makes joint management real:

Without a joint management plan, there is no real joint management...
Senior PWS Manager, 2005.
While the completion of these plans should not inhibit joint management taking place on the ground, they (JMPs) are important documents that will demonstrate to the public and partners how joint management will take place at each particular park and reserve. Meeting agenda, March 2006.

Plans of management are the artefacts that prove that joint management exists. The need to have such an object for every park or reserve affected by the new joint management agenda was an organisational given. In this sense, despite the acceptance of the original NT Government offer by Traditional Owners or programs such as the Flexible Employment Program (FEP), until there was a paper plan to show to Traditional Owners, to rangers, to the government and the public, there could be no real joint management.

The second imperative arose from the desire within PWS to address the political asymmetry between the agency and the land councils, discussed in detail in Chapter Six. It was a common perception amongst many PWS staff that the land councils had assumed control of joint management – something greeted with irony and resentment by many agency staff given that legislatively, the joint management partners were defined as being Traditional Owners and the Parks and Wildlife Service. For some within PWS, joint management planning represented a strategic opportunity to wrest control of the process from the land councils and reassert the agency’s interests. Legislative responsibility for creating joint management plans, along with the allocation of resources and staff for doing so, rested not with the land councils, but with PWS. Therefore, in joint management planning, PWS had the undeniable -and irreproachable- weight of legislation on its side along with the unquestionable skills and resources to do so, and could at last ‘take the lead’, ensuring that the agency’s interests could indeed be represented.

When it became evident in the middle of 2004 that the Traditional Owners of all parks and reserves in Central Australia were going to accept the NT Government’s offer (nineteen of the twenty-seven parks affected by the offer are located in Central Australia), planning for joint management planning began in earnest within the organisation. Even before the official ‘sign off’ on the offer by Traditional Owners, discussion papers and informal conversations about the form that joint management
plans would take and the process for creating them began circulating inside the agency. The earliest of these written documents, aimed at promoting the related ideas of participatory planning and the incorporation of Aboriginal decision-making, cultural and ecological knowledge into European park management practice was circulated in early 2004. As Lea (2008:20) points out, these papers are often unauthored ‘ghost written’ documents, although within in an agency as small as the Northern Territory’s Parks and Wildlife Service, the author’s identity is often common knowledge.

Early in 2004 my notes record a number of informal discussions between CLC land management officers, PWS joint management staff and rangers about the potential shape of joint management plans and processes for creating them. One suggestion from a CLC land management officer was to create: “…large A3 sized, single sheet plans using icons, tables and tick boxes, to overcome the problem of low literacy levels amongst Traditional Owners…” (field notes, February, 2004). Several weeks later, PWS staff pointed out in a meeting with land council staff that such plans would not address the needs of rangers who sought much more prescriptive directions from management plans. The idea was discussed again and modified, with the A3 single sheet envisaged as an appendix to a standard plan of management that could be used to assist Traditional Owners in understanding plans. Conversations about commencing a participatory process involving Traditional Owners in planning were less well received; land council staff were hesitant to discuss –or hint at any commitment to planning processes when the NT Government offer had not yet been formally accepted.

An interagency planning workshop was held in September 2004, with planners, rangers, joint management staff, senior management staff and land council staff from across the Northern Territory in attendance. The purpose of this meeting was to establish principles for joint management planning and to discuss the potential format and layout of joint management plans. It was pointed out during this workshop that park management plans are generally seen as: “…a public document, explaining the objectives of the Park aside and its subsequent management …” or were viewed by rangers as: “…a guidebook for how to manage the park” (meeting notes, September 2004). Plans had generally been written in the past as either public-centric or ranger-
centric documents. Publicly-focussed plans tended to be colourful and descriptive documents, containing a significant amount of historical, cultural, biological and other background information at the expense of actual park management prescriptions. Ranger-centric plans tended to be shorter, prescriptive texts, with clear and often dot-pointed management objectives and key performance indicators, set against skeletal background information. In joint management plans, there was a desire that: "...the aspirations and needs of Traditional Owners also needed to be incorporated...” (meeting notes, September, 2004).

There were two major outcomes of this meeting. The first was inter-organisational agreement on general principles for joint management planning. Three general principles concerning the nature of joint management plans arose from this meeting, namely that JMPs must be:

- Publicly accountable documents
- Operational for rangers
- Incorporate Traditional Owners’ aspirations and needs.

The second outcome was a variation of the A3 single sheet plan mentioned above, called a Statement of Management Intent (SOMI). I discuss the SOMI here briefly, as the content set out during the workshop was to become the framework for later joint management plans. SOMIs were envisioned as simple documents which would: "...clearly state the intent of the Joint Management Partners...” (meeting notes, September, 2004) and would act as a means of accountability, defining what ‘business as usual’ meant on each park and reserve until formal joint management plans were gazetted.

Within the meeting, the need to define ‘business as usual’ was initially raised by CLC staff. The PWS and the CLC held differing ideas about the meaning of the term ‘business as usual’. During the September 2004 planning meeting, it became apparent that to the CLC, ‘business as usual’ remained a contentious issue as, under the (then) current interpretation of the term, PWS was free to manage its estate without recourse to the aspirations of Traditional Owners or to the proposed amendments of the TPWCA which gave the land councils a role in park management. The CLC put
forward SOMIs as means of addressing the vexing issue of ‘business as usual’ prior to the amendment of the TWPCA and the formal gazetting of individual joint management plans. With very little objection, the Executive and Senior managers of PWS accepted SOMIs as a means of addressing ‘business as usual’ and as a form of management plan-before-the-management-plan. Other PWS staff present at the meeting, notably Chief District Rangers and Senior Planners, were less enthusiastic about the idea, preferring that agency resources be used to create legislatively recognised joint management plans instead of creating the additional workload that SOMIs would require.

Following this workshop, SOMIs were ‘worked up’ almost exclusively by PWS Senior Planners in the Darwin and Katherine regions and largely ignored in Central Australia. Instead, they advanced the Flexible Employment Program as the region’s main priority, stating during meetings with the CLC that there were no human resources to devote to SOMIs. Very carefully, PWS staff suggested that the joint management budget could be better spent on writing ‘proper plans of management’ instead of doubling up on process to produce SOMIs. Land council staff agreed, and with their consent, planning for the Rainbow Valley Joint Management Plan commenced in earnest.

This discussion highlights an important point about the carriage of the joint management process within the agency: who in PWS was responsible for it, and whose interests (meaning interests within the agency) were perceived by agency staff as being represented within joint management, and especially within joint management planning. It was the SPDU and its staff who were given responsibility for guiding the implementation of the joint management process within PWS. From the moment that joint management planning commenced in earnest, joint management was lead first and foremost by SPDU staff rather than park management staff – rangers. This served to reveal several underlying tensions and political asymmetries within the agency. At the large inter-agency planning workshop held in September 2004 (described above), it became clear that there were divisions at higher levels within PWS between its park operations staff and planners. It should be noted that these relationships were not openly antagonistic, nor were they detrimental to ensuring that the agency’s overall interests in joint management were represented in
higher level negotiations. Rather, these divisions are interpreted here as a function of specific roles within the agency. However, the implications of this division within the agency was a perception amongst some staff that the interests and understandings of joint management held by a small, specialist group within the agency – planners - were more readily represented in some aspects of joint management than those of the dominant occupational group (rangers).

A Participatory Approach

When you are a helping bureau-professional, the compulsion to do something to fix the problems of target populations – those deemed as suffering from unequal and preventable conditions – exceeds all other impulses (Lea, 2008:16).

Section 25AE of the TWPCA contains detailed prescriptions for the contents of joint management plans. The most significant differences between a joint management plan (JMP) and a standard park plan of management (POM) include: the requirement for a codified joint-decision-making process and executive body, a description of the Traditional Owner group and discussion of employment and training opportunities available to Traditional Owners of the park or reserve. Other inclusions, such as zoning structures and statements about hunting and gathering by the Aboriginal owners of the park are contiguous with POMs in non-jointly-managed parks and reserves. Table 7.1 summarises the legislative requirements regarding the content of JMPs set out in the TWPCA.

From the outset, the notion that JMPs would be the products of a participatory planning process was one that was promoted by the NT Government and land councils. Here, the term ‘participatory planning’ is used to denote an idealised process where Traditional Owners and PWS staff would be equally involved in all aspects of creating new JMPs and ongoing park management. The underlying assumption was that the planning process would offer an opportunity for Aboriginal empowerment via joint management. Initially, the impetus for a participatory planning process arose out of the political discussions between the NT Government and land councils, which became the principleless and objectives of joint management set out in the TWPCA.
These ideas filtered into PWS not via rangers, but via its Director of Conservation Policy, Senior Park Planners and Central Land Council staff. The concept of participatory planning was supported by senior rangers insofar as it offered Traditional Owners a means of asserting their interests in park management — something which most ranger staff felt passionately about— and also as it provided rangers with the means to continue to manage the parks as they had always done, albeit with an additional layer of governance. This is an important point to consider briefly.

Joint management plans must contain:

- A description of the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve;
- Practicable ways for those owners to work with local conservation officers, including the establishment of executive and other committees where appropriate;
- Identifying the natural and cultural values of the park or reserve;
- Managing sites of Aboriginal spiritual or cultural significance in the park or reserve;
- Identifying visitor management issues and developing agreed procedures for dealing with those issues that reflect the interests of the traditional Aboriginal owners and of the other stakeholders in the park or reserve;
- Approving the siting of works and facilities in the park or reserve;
- Identifying management zones in, and management regimes for, the park or reserve;
- Developing relevant training and employment strategies in relation to the park or reserve;
- Establishing community living areas in or in close proximity to the park or reserve as an integral part of the natural and cultural resource management of the park or reserve;
- Dealing with commercial and infrastructure development in the park or reserve, giving preference to the traditional Aboriginal owners of the park or reserve;
- Resolving disputes about the management of the park or reserve at the local level and by means that are appropriate to the park or reserve;
- Providing for hunting and the use of other resources in the park or reserve by the traditional Aboriginal owners in a manner consistent with the effective management of the park or reserve;
- Considering proposals for the conduct of research in or about the park or reserve;
• Considering proposals for the expansion of the park or reserve.

Table 7-1 Contents of Joint Management Plans as set out in TPWCA

In Chapter Four, I argued that PWS has a 'ranger-centric' culture. At the commencement of the joint management planning process (September 2005), the PWS Executive was comprised mainly of ex-rangers, along with a planner, a scientist and the former Chief Executive Officer of the NT's sacred sites authority (an anthropologist). Not surprisingly, some members of this group viewed the creation of new management plans, joint management boards and committees as the main objectives of this process, seeing joint management as a way to remedy the decades-long mistrust between the land councils and the NT Government and create socio-economic benefits for Aboriginal people. However, it should be stated here that many other staff within PWS were sceptical of the agency's ability to deliver joint management effectively in terms of resources and outcomes for Aboriginal people as well as for conservation. At all levels within the agency, there were mixed and sometimes paradoxical views about joint management.

In contrast, for Senior Planners, CLC, other SPDU staff and a number of less senior rangers, the joint management planning process first and foremost represented an opportunity to address Traditional Owners' aspirations for socio-economic development and social justice via park management. This group of people (of which I was one) viewed themselves as the locus through which any such activity would take place, in much the same way that Lea's health professionals view themselves as people whose "...overall aim is to improve the dire state of Aboriginal Health" (Lea, 2008:58). For example, a Senior Planner described the purpose of joint management plans to Traditional Owners in these terms:

(JMPs) are about looking after what's important to people. A plan looks into the future, it's written by the joint management partners and says how they want to work together, how they want to look after country and culture, and talks about jobs, employment and training for Traditional Owners... (field notes, Ellery Creek, May, 2006).
In hindsight, much of the fragile hope held by this group of people that joint management planning would represent a positive change in Aboriginal lives was—and could only ever be—misplaced. The contents of JMPs were already prescribed in legislation, negotiated between high level bureaucrats and lawyers in the NT Government and the land councils, and as I have suggested, were based on assumptions about what Aboriginal people stood to gain from joint management beyond the handback of land. Although some of these assumptions paralleled what Aboriginal people stated that they wanted from joint management later on, it is important to remember that at the time of the NT Government’s announcement of the offer, there had been no wide scale consultation with Aboriginal people, and their real interests in joint management could only be assumed. Furthermore, the joint management planning methodology and process set out in the TWPCA further prescribed and reinforced existing Parks and Wildlife Service understandings about its roles and responsibilities, emphasising the protection of ‘natural values’ and carefully planned, rational management actions. Acting across multiple scales, ‘traditional’ park planning became the locus of both high level strategic agreements about the nature of joint management and the everyday practices of park management.

Here, it is useful to outline ‘traditional’ methods of park planning within PWS. In common with joint management plans, the contents of park plans of management are set out in the TWPCA and are similarly gazetted through a formal legislative process. Initially, a Senior Planner would be responsible for writing the POM, using the legislatively required content as a template. A small planning group, comprising the Senior Planner, Chief District Ranger, Senior District Ranger would be assembled and current management programs along with future plans, such as the creation of new visitor or park infrastructure, discussed. Where applicable, stakeholders such as biodiversity scientists, tour operators and Traditional Owners would be consulted in relation to plan content, providing park-specific information about endangered species management, Traditional Owner employment opportunities, or general information relating to the park’s values (reasons the park was set aside). The planner would then convert this data into the required content to meet legislative needs and park management requirements, and then draft a plan for internal circulation and comment. The plan would then be made available for public comment. Once public comments were received and addressed, the draft would go to the PWS Executive for
endorsement, before going to the Minister and eventually, being tabled in the Legislative Assembly. For the purpose of brevity, I have deliberately left out some of the formal processes required to move the plan into the Legislative Assembly and through the PWS Executive.

In contrast, joint management plans were conceptualised by Senior Park Planners as being inherently participatory. Participatory planning arose in the field of international development during the early 1970s, as a backlash against institutionally-based 'top down' planning methods. Proponents of participatory planning claimed that it: "... made the development processes more empowering, democratic, just and effective ..." (Christens and Speer, 2006:2). This approach emphasises power sharing between funding institutions and local peoples at all project stages, the incorporation of 'local knowledge' and perspectives, and a means to create local solutions to local problems. Over the space of three decades, the participatory approach has gained acceptance in international development.

Where joint management plans were concerned, it was envisaged that a participatory methodology would comprise a radical departure from the usual way in which plans of management were written, aiming to empower Aboriginal people through the identification and incorporation of cultural values within all aspects of park management (field notes, September 2004). The concept of participatory planning was further reinforced by the reading of numerous IUCN 'How-To' manuals and philosophical papers on participatory planning in an international context (Borrini-Feyerabend et al 2003; Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner & Heylings, 2003) by PWS Planners, as well as by land council staff trained in participatory planning methods. In early 2006, the employment of a discrete Joint Management Planner by PWS, whose experience included participatory planning in an international development context, served to further embed this participatory methodology firmly within the agency’s planning unit.

Planning Process

The objective (of the joint management planning process) is the effective participation of Traditional Owners in the preparation of an agreed
Officially, joint management planning commenced on 15 September 2005 at the Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve, approximately 100 kilometres south of Alice Springs (Figure 7-1). Over three days, a workshop was held ‘on country’, with over forty Traditional Owners, PWS and CLC staff in attendance. As an outcome of this workshop, a ‘joint management working group’ was created, comprising Traditional Owners and rangers. Following this, another five ‘working group’ meetings were held, culminating in the drafting of a new joint management plan containing an agreed ‘decision making’ process, and the establishment of an official ‘Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve Joint Management Committee’. Over the course of the next two and a half years, the planning process was repeated at the Devil’s Marbles Conservation Reserve, West MacDonnell National Park, Chamber’s Pillar Historical Reserve, Watarrka National Park, Corroboree Rock and N’Dhala Gorge Conservation Reserves, and Trephina Nature Park.

Although the broader joint management planning process was essentially a modified version of the ‘traditional’ planning process, the participatory, consultative manner in which the plan’s contents were elicited from and workshopped with Traditional Owners marked a radical departure from the usual method in which plans were written within agency. The shape that the participatory part of the process took was itself a hybrid: an adaptation of both the stakeholder consultations undertaken in ‘traditional’ park planning and another participatory planning program called Stepping Stones for Tourism. The Stepping Stones program was undertaken by the Traditional Owners of Rainbow Valley prior to the commencement of joint management planning, with the assistance of CLC staff. Stepping Stones provides a ten stage model for Aboriginal communities to plan and develop a cultural tourism enterprise, focussing heavily upon ‘visioning’ exercises, framed as questions such as: What do we want to share? and What is our vision for the future (http://www.stepwise.net.au/planning/steppingstones_tourism.php).
Drawing upon the participatory ‘steps’ outlined in the *Stepping Stones* model, a ten-stage participatory planning framework was outlined prior to the first Rainbow Valley Joint Management Planning Camp. The framework comprised ten focus questions that were to be answered by Traditional Owner and ranger participants at a series of workshops, with the aim of providing content for the new joint management plan:

1. What is joint management?
2. What do we expect from joint management?
3. What is a Joint Management Plan?
4. Why is this place special? (Identifying geographical location, physical properties, natural /cultural values/ Traditional Owner aspirations)
5. Who has an interest? (identifying non-Aboriginal stakeholders)
6. What are we worried about? (issues and concerns)
7. What do we want for X (name of park)?
8. What is important? (What are the principless and objectives we will aim for?)
9. What needs to be done? (What are the next actions?)
10. How will we work together? (Decision making process and management structure)

The staged process was later streamlined into three main workshops with a number of preparatory or concurrent workshop or consultative meetings taking place. Common to all joint management planning, however was a three day introductory camp held
‘on country’, with subsequent workshops alternating between field or office meetings in accordance with the season. The introductory camps involved all Traditional Owners, who were always ‘identified’ by and usually brought to the meeting by CLC staff. At these initial workshops, the focus was on defining what joint management was in terms of the TPWCA legislation, including its principles and objectives, asking participants to define what they thought joint management was, explaining in general terms what joint management plans were, and most importantly, establishing a representative ‘working group’ of Traditional Owners whose role would be to work with PWS and CLC staff in writing the new plan. Subsequent workshops dealt with eliciting Traditional Owner’s opinions, recommendations and aspirations relating to the management of flora and fauna, future infrastructure developments, visitor management, zoning schemes, cultural heritage, filming (and other) permits, employment and business development, and most importantly, determining a joint decision-making process and joint management governance (committee or board) structure.

Supporting these workshops was an exhaustive flurry of ‘behind-the-scenes’ collaborations between CLC Land Management and PWS Planning and Joint Management staff, as we scrambled to organise people, equipment, food and catering, workshop agendas, meeting notices for Traditional Owners, posters, big books and determine what our objectives were. Leading up to the first Rainbow Valley workshop in September 2005, my notes record three meetings in the preceding week alone: one mapping out the proposed agenda and logistics, another noting that there were contentions between Traditional Owner families concerning the workshop’s location on the Reserve, and a final meeting confirming that at least twenty Traditional Owners were attending, that there would be interpreters employed, and a lot of debate and changing of the workshop agenda.

Another aspect of the inter-organisational collaboration required by the planning process was the recognition that, in order to create the nineteen new JMPs required in Central Australia in a timely manner, it would be necessary to stage two or more joint management planning processes simultaneously. This demanded a level of interaction and coordination, and most importantly, trust, between PWS and CLC staff
previously unimagined. In essence, a ‘community of practice’ grew up around the activity of joint management planning, comprising a core group of CLC Land Management and PWS SPDU staff. Within this community of practice, organisational boundaries and tensions were overlooked in favour of the objective of creating JMPs, as it became imperative to coordinate the limited supply of human and other resources (such as funding, vehicles and equipment) with the scheduling of workshops, meetings and other work commitments. Initially, all land council and PWS joint management officers participated in every workshop and meeting; but as the community of joint management planning practice grew, a division of labour emerged, based upon skills, gender balance and availability, rather than organisational roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, via established internal agency networks, individual staff were able to attract additional assistance from other PWS and land council staff, and even from some Traditional Owners in assistance with workshop organisation, facilitation and logistics.

A final point of difference with ‘traditional’ park planning is that the shift to ‘participation’ required the development of a repertoire of participatory planning tools and exercises, such as demonstrations, roles plays, group exercises, visual displays and site planning visits previously not used in park management planning within PWS. These were developed via trial and error, from personal experience, or adapted from other participatory planning or development processes. We quickly discovered that not every ‘tool’ suited every group; some of our role plays and group exercises ‘fell flat’ with one group of West MacDonnell Traditional Owners, whilst other groups found them patronising or at worst, incomprehensible. For example, one of my contributions to the first Rainbow Valley Planning workshop, a session on understanding the role of culture in decision making, was shortened from a group discussion on how decisions were made followed by a ‘mock’ activity about whom should make decisions about the park using large photographs, to just the ‘mock’ activity using the photographs in subsequent parks where joint management planning was commenced.

Following the participatory planning sessions, the planner responsible for writing the plan would then draft the document’s contents, drawing upon the notes taken by multiple note takers at workshops, group decisions captured on whiteboards or
butcher's paper, and also from background information provided by biodiversity scientists or contained in previous plans. Once drafted, a long process of review was then undertaken, with the initial drafts being carefully reviewed by land council staff and senior rangers over a number of months, before being presented to the full Traditional Owner group for discussion and endorsement. When Traditional Owners and land council staff were satisfied with the draft plan, it was then sent to PWS's Executive for endorsement and then advertised as available for public comment. After a period of public comment, and any issues arising from public comments taken into account, the plan was sent to the Minister's office for tabling in the Legislative Assembly. After its tabling in the Legislative Assembly, the plan was considered to be 'in operation' for its allotted timeframe: 10 years in the case of most jointly managed reserves.

Failing to Plan = Planning to Fail?

*There's a focus on participation which is the end point in itself, which I don't see as joint management. Participation is just a point in the process. Participation is getting involved in activities, decisions etc. If it's not an equal keel, then it's not joint management.* (Senior ranger, field notes, May 2007).

There are two issues I will raise here in relation to joint management planning. The first is the nature of the 'participation' occurring within joint management planning and whose interests are represented within the planning process. As has been noted in recent critiques of participatory development, the participation of Indigenous and/or local people in these processes is often a means of ensuring compliance with and lending credibility to decisions already made by governments and other organisations (Gellar, 1985: 25; Christens and Speer, 2006: 3).

For example, in an edited volume, Cooke and Kothari (2001: 8), state that despite the intent to represent and promote the goals of local communities within development planning, participatory planning processes instead reproduce the formal and informal
agendas of the bureaucracies carrying out such processes. This happens in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways, such as limiting the range of projects which can be funded, or via the formalised tools of planning - corporate planning documents, the need for clear outcomes, the requirement for set timeframes - that may be antithetical or even incompatible to the community or culture in which such processes take place.

Another critique of participatory planning processes suggests that it is economics - the desire by bureaucracies to reduce transaction costs - which both drive the use of participatory planning and serve to reinforce top-down decision-making structures (Cleaver, 2001:48). A strong theme within development literature relates to the effectiveness of participation planning in reducing long term costs to donor agencies. One of the main methods cited as representative of such economic rationalism is through the creation of formal committees, associations and boards, where rules for business, agendas and outcomes relating to development are enforced. Participatory planning, when seen in this way, becomes another tool which centralises planning within the cultural habitus of large, Western bureaucracies.

Returning to the participatory process described in the sections above, where the aim was to elicit the aspirations and understandings of park or reserve management from Traditional Owners and then represent them as if this input had been wholly participatory, I will suggest here that they are not - and could never be - truly participatory. From the outset, the contents required for joint management plans were outlined in legislation. In this sense, the agency’s gaze and actions concerning joint management were already predetermined. Consequently, the kinds of questions asked of Traditional Owners throughout the participatory planning process were also predetermined, and focussed heavily upon addressing the needs of the legislation and park management programs. Not surprisingly, the outputs - the documents comprising joint management plans - are similar in content and layout to other plans of management produced by PWS. The exception here is the legislatively-prescribed sections on describing the Traditional Owners of the reserve, decision making and governance and training, employment and business development opportunities for Aboriginal people.
Furthermore, the planning process was controlled by the SPDU within the agency, it was widely perceived by rangers as reflecting the interests of planners rather than park management staff. In particular, some rangers perceived planners as being far more concerned with addressing the aims of the TWPCA and the agency’s higher level strategic aims, and with establishing good relationships with CLC staff, than with adequately consulting or representing rangers’ concerns:

*I haven’t even seen the draft plan yet… but you know, CLC have been sent a copy... I also found out X (name of planner) went and spoke to (name of scientist) for information about fauna and flora on the Park and didn’t even come to ask me about it* (Senior Ranger, field notes, May 2007).

These concerns may be interpreted as reflecting the higher level tensions which exist within the organisation, between its park operations and non-park operations sections, or simply differences in understanding between rangers and non-rangers. However, other rangers commented to me that the level of consultation and engagement they’d experienced during the planning process came down to the individual planner’s predisposition towards consulting them. This would appear to indicate that factors such as personality and personal relationships play an important part in the effectiveness of having one’s interests adequately represented.

The other issue I wish to raise here relates to the resourcing and investment in joint management planning in comparison with other joint management activities. Again, this relates to the issue of whose interests were given the space for representation within joint management planning. From 2006 onwards, the numbers of planning staff within the agency were doubled, and expenditure on joint management planning overtook expenditure on the Flexible Employment Program within the agency’s joint management budget. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the imperative for joint management planning arose both legislatively and from within the agency itself, the resourcing of joint management planning over other activities is not difficult to understand. The prioritisation and resourcing of joint management planning within the agency meant that, by default, the space for and ability of planners’ interests in joint management—concerned with addressing the planning imperatives set out in the
TWPCA and higher level NRETA strategic directions - to be represented more readily than those of other PWS staff.

Furthermore, as I have pointed out in Chapter Four, the agency has a strong orientation towards a 'planning culture' and values these skill sets. Planning, however, is a finite process aimed at producing a static document (or artefact) as an end in itself. The heavy investment of the agency in resources and skills aimed at supporting short term, limited processes is one that invokes questions such as: are other programs, such as capacity building, resourced adequately? Or the more instrumentally: does heavy investment in joint management planning bring equivalent returns for the joint management partnership? These questions are even more relevant when one considers internal understandings about joint management, which emphasise the importance of ongoing relationships and cross-cultural exchange (as discussed in Chapter Six). Although much was made out of the relationships and cross-cultural exchanges which took place between rangers and Traditional Owners during joint management planning workshops, equally, both groups stated to me that it was opportunities for ongoing structured and unstructured interaction that represented successful joint management. The incongruence between this perspective and the actions privileged, promoted and supported by the agency are the focus of the following section.

**Joint Management Governance**

* Governing bodies at different levels of power, with different levels of official recognition and often from various social and economic sectors, can claim jurisdiction (authority) to make and enforce their laws, policies and rules (Abrams, Borrini-Feyerabend, Gardner & Heylings, 2003:14).

The governance of jointly managed parks and reserves is seen by many people both outside and within the PWS, as evidence that joint management is a reality. The most critical factor for many people is the appointment of Aboriginal people to boards and committees, supported by a decision making structure which enables them to have their views and aspirations heard and acted upon. Yet as the section on planning has
suggested, despite the legislative imperatives of the **TWPCA**, the interests of Aboriginal people can be lost amongst established bureaucratic practices and the actions of agency staff in attending the requirements of the legislation—even that which purports to advance the interests of Traditional Owners. In some cases—such as that of cultural heritage management projects—Aboriginal voices are heard and noted, but are often stymied by other strategic aims. Despite this, during internal an monitoring and evaluation exercise conducted by the CLC and PWS, Traditional Owners reported a high level of satisfaction with joint management, and most especially, with the governance committees and decision making frameworks put in place to address their needs. It can only be assumed that this apparent satisfaction, reported at one park after only one year of joint management is an anomaly that may change over time as the 'honeymoon' phase of joint management fades.

The creation of the Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve (RVCR) joint management committee, that is, both the size and precise selection of committee members, arose out of the latter stages of the joint management planning process. During this process, responsibility for selecting the membership and the size of the committee’s Aboriginal component was left solely to the Traditional Owner families present at the planning working group meetings. Traditional Owners put forth several interesting ideas in relation to the RVCR’s committee’s composition:

- Members from all four of the Traditional Owner families should be present, but those living closest (some lived directly adjacent to the Reserve), should be given preference for nomination
- They wished to achieve equal gender representation
- They wished to have a mixture of young people and older people
- They stressed the need for governance training for committee members

Once family members had put forth these ideas, CLC staff undertook the process of discussing the committee’s composition further with Traditional Owners, and then reporting the proposed names for committee members to PWS planners and the Chief District Ranger who oversaw RVCR. PWS representation on the committee comprised only two staff members: the Chief District Ranger and the Senior Park
Ranger. In the case of RVCR, the CLC did not believe it was their role to be part of the joint management committee; this, they said, was solely for the joint management partners – Traditional Owners and PWS. Rather, CLC staff members acted as advisors to Traditional Owners and as overall facilitators, observers and support staff for both Traditional Owners and PWS staff. Most specifically, it was staff from the CLC’s Land Management section, with some limited involvement from anthropology staff, who assisted Traditional Owners with both the selection of and final decision regarding just who would sit on the committee. The final composition of the RVCR Joint Management Committee was eight Aboriginal members and two PWS staff.

In two other parks, I witnessed similar processes, with some specific variations. For example, at the Karlu Karlu (Devil’s Marbles) Conservation Reserve, Traditional Owners insisted that the selection of committee members should represent estate group ownership of the area, as well as connection to the dreaming stories which passed through the park. Traditional Owners also suggested that gender balance—an equal number of men and women—was desirable given that the Karlu Karlu are an important women’s sacred site. The composition of the Karlu Karlu Joint Management Committee is ten Traditional Owners and two PWS staff. At Watarrka (Kings Canyon National Park), Traditional Owners used a different method again to determine the composition of the management committee. They suggested that the committee should be comprised of two members from each of the four outstations located on (or bordering) the park, and from members of the Aboriginal communities—meaning places such as disparate as Hermannsburg, Areyonga and Mutijulu—whose residents had responsibility for the dreaming tracks which ran through the park. The composition of the joint management committee at Watarrka National Park is 18 Aboriginal members and two senior rangers. In the case of both Karlu Karlu and Watarrka, PWS membership of the committees was limited to the Chief District Ranger and the Senior Park Ranger, with the CLC carrying out its role as advisor to Traditional Owners and facilitators of meetings.

In each of the reserves discussed above, Joint Management Committees meet formally only once per year. This differs markedly with parks that possess board structures such as Gurig Ganak Barlu or Nitmiluk National Parks, which in accordance with their constitutions and park-specific legislation, must meet four times per year.
(Bauman & Smyth, 2007:43). This should not be interpreted to mean that additional joint management committee meetings do not—or cannot—occur if required. Indeed, the decision-making processes arising out of the planning workshops ensures that joint management plans set out clearly the circumstances under which additional committee meetings are required to occur. On each reserve there are particular factors (such as major construction developments or tourism initiatives) which trigger additional full committee meetings. Furthermore, particular processes—such as commercial filming permit applications—may require partial committee meetings or meetings of specialist sub-committees. These vary from reserve to reserve, and are determined by both Traditional Owners and PWS staff during the joint management planning process. However, this does raise the question of why a committee structure rather than a board structure was selected as the dominant form of governance in Central Australia.

At one level, the answer to this question is contained within the legislation: the TWPCA does not set out the form of governance structure that each reserve should have. At another level, the decision not to prescribe a particular form of governance structure relates to the number of reserves affected by the new joint management arrangements: twenty-seven. Central Australia contains 19 of the 27 parks and reserves included in the final version if NT Government’s joint management arrangements. Furthermore, within PWS’s regional structure, 16 of these parks and reserves are located within a single district. The resourcing and operation of joint management committees—in terms of time and staff available—as well as ongoing funding of these structures is a significant issue for PWS, and in particular, for Chief District Rangers who are charged with both representative and administrative responsibility for these committees and with managing district budgets. Another underlying rationale behind annual committee meetings relates to administrative efficiency. With respect to many of the day-to-day aspects of park management—and even in the case of matters such as filming permits—Traditional Owners felt it was better that rangers carry out their daily duties as they always had done without the

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31 Discussions with three different PWS staff members who were either current or former Chief District Rangers at Nitmiluk National Park confirmed that most of their role comprised preparing for board meetings or administering the outcomes and legislative requirements of these meetings.
need for approval by a committee. There was, as the Traditional Owners at Rainbow Valley suggested: *no need to ask for permission every time a ranger needed to clean the campground* (field notes, 15 September, 2005). Likewise, CLC staff were reluctant to encourage the creation of boards requiring three or more annual meetings per year, due to their own limited administrative and human resource capacities.

The preparation required to conduct a committee meeting even for a small reserve like Rainbow Valley is considerable. Within PWS, rangers are required to have finalised the previous year’s operational plans and to have prepared new operational plans for presentation to the Joint Management Committee for discussion and approval. Annual action plans discuss on-the-ground land management programs, such as weed control, detailing what is planned for the next twelve months, as well as reporting on what was done in the previous year. A single park may have up to four of such action plans. New works, such as campground redevelopment, or future plans, like proposed new walking tracks, are also required to be discussed at Joint Management Committee meetings, along with matters such as cultural heritage management and Aboriginal employment and training initiatives. Added to this are issues the CLC may need to discuss with the committee; for example, the distribution of income from campgrounds and lease payments or research projects. A number of preliminary meetings between PWS and CLC are required to determine the likely agenda of committee meetings. CLC staff also visit Aboriginal committee members in the months preceding committee meetings, to elicit agenda items from Traditional Owner families. These visits may require a great deal of travel for land management staff, as many Aboriginal people do not have regular telephone access and are highly mobile.

As with many other joint management activities, the role of talk work and the production of organisational artefacts features prominently in the functioning of joint management committees.

The agenda of the first Rainbow Valley AGM comprised the following topics:

- Introduction: Overview of park operations this year (2006-2007)
- Brief report back to Traditional Owners on park operational results
- Update on legislative process for the new joint management plan (JMP)
- Review main directions in the JMP and discuss timing of future AGMs
• Present existing operational plans and discuss status of all current park management projects
• Seek Traditional Owners’ input on each park management program
• Discuss the development of the Reserve’s Cultural Heritage Management Action Plan
• Discuss the program for monitoring and evaluation joint management at the Reserve and undertake survey
• Discuss progress on the development of a filming permit system and employment and training update for the Reserve
• Discuss commercial development/business development proposal by Traditional Owner family group
• General feedback
• Results of monitoring and evaluation surveys/interviews (field notes, March 2007).

The Rainbow Valley AGM took place over two days, which corresponds with joint management committee meetings on other reserves, also taking place over one or two days, depending on the size of the reserve and the number of items on the meeting agenda. The annual general meeting at Rainbow Valley was held on-site at Rainbow Valley, and required a day of physical preparation in terms of camp set up and dismantling, in addition to the conducting of the actual meeting. The meeting itself was facilitated by a CLC staff member, and attended by not only the management committee but any interested Traditional Owners and ranger staff who wished to attend. This had been suggested by Traditional Owners during the joint management planning process. A number of CLC staff also assisted in the logistics of running such a meeting, undertaking Traditional Owner pick ups, catering and note taking. Beyond this, the meeting was conducted formally and in accordance with the agenda above, with rangers presenting annual action plans for consideration, motions being passed and seconded, and a record taken of all decisions that had been passed. Discussions with PWS staff present at both the Karlu Karlu and Watarrka Joint Management committee annual general meetings report a similar meeting process, although it should be noted that both groups decided to hold meetings indoors rather than outside
where participants didn’t have to deal with extremes of heat or cold, flies, speak into microphones or—as in the case of Rainbow Valley—yell into a howling wind!

Following the Rainbow Valley AGM, both the meeting notes and an action list were compiled and circulated between PWS and land council staff for checking. Land council staff then met with individual Aboriginal committee members to distribute meeting notes and discuss the list of decisions that have been made, and seek clarification on any matters which may require further consideration by Traditional Owner families. For some issues, such as the development of the film permit process, land council staff also sought further clarification by lawyers, anthropologists or other staff within the land council, which they ultimately passed on to PWS staff and Traditional Owners involved in decision making. The action list became the basis for the direction of park management programs over the following year, and was later translated into textual form within specific park management action plans.

The Representation of Interests in Joint Management Governance

Many of the processes I have previously described in this thesis have denied access to or have minimised the direct input of park managers—rangers—and Traditional Owners into the decision making processes concerned with the creation and implementation of joint management. However, on the ground, committee meetings and decision making structures (such as the triggers for additional joint management committee meetings described within joint management plans) create the circumstances under which the joint management partners can have direct input into—and determine the nature of—joint management in individual parks. However, this process is not even, nor is it politically symmetrical. Rangers’ aspirations about park or joint management can be—and are—mediated by those of higher strategic aims within the agency and government. As indicated previously, access to funding for joint management projects—such as those proposed by Traditional Owners during committee meetings—may not occur when other tasks are given higher priority by senior agency staff. Furthermore, insufficient funding for land management programs at a government level and high staff turnover within PWS often result in actions being noted and approved, but remaining dormant as text within a document sitting on an office shelf. Even when rangers and Traditional Owners finally have the opportunity to represent their
interests in joint management, there is no guarantee that specific actions will take place.

The question of exactly what the interests are of rangers and other PWS staff in the on-the-ground governance of joint management is also pertinent here. Most of the agenda items and discussions that take place within joint management committee meetings arising from the participation of or input of rangers relate directly to core park management programs. In particular, these are programs that are specific to the individual park, and negotiated in terms of the locational specificity discussed in Chapter Five. That is, programs and issues discussed at one joint management committee meeting by rangers may be mentioned only in passing or given relatively little attention at another reserve:

It's important for us to keep working together on the buffel program here\(^{32}\) (Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve). We've worked together a lot over the past few years, and everyone understands how special this park is because it's weed-free. Rangers would like to keep doing this with the help of Traditional Owners (Senior ranger, May 2007).

This is not to say that programs such as the Flexible Employment Program (FEP) are not raised by rangers at joint management committee meetings - they are. Rather, this suggests that what is raised at joint management committee meetings by rangers is determined by the actual park management programs which take place on a given park and the formal agency reporting requirements set out in joint management plans. At Rainbow Valley, where the FEP has been a success and resulted in the direct employment of Traditional Owners as full-time rangers, senior rangers will report on and plan future FEP activities, whilst glossing over discussions about European cultural or historical heritage as there are no recorded European heritage sites on the reserve.

\(^{32}\) Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve is the only relatively weed-free reserve in Central Australia. A great deal of time is spent by ranger staff and Traditional Owners in walking over the entire park, every year, monitoring for outbreaks of Buffel Grass, an exotic species.
Ultimately, it is both locational specificity and the interconnected notion of protecting natural and cultural values present in the environment that inform the discussion of park management programs by rangers at joint management committee meetings. In other words, it is the underlying rationale behind the setting aside of a specific place combined with the imperatives of legislation – present within joint management plans – that determines the interests which rangers bring to joint management committee meetings. Thus, it is the protection and preservation of a specific value (or values) present in the landscape and the park management programs undertaken to maintain it which rangers mostly report on. This is further reinforced by both rangers and the PWS being attuned to seeing, describing and acting upon the management of these values – or the removal of threats to them – and the prioritisation of certain values over others. This last point – that of prioritisation – is something I will return to shortly. The interests of rangers as represented in joint committee meetings are linked to the agency’s understanding of its own core business, predisposed via training and organisational practice towards the recognition of values in the landscape and the actions required to preserve or protect them.

In contrast, the interests of Traditional Owners at joint management committee meetings are less connected to European understandings of land management – although in the case of Rainbow Valley, Traditional Owners were very concerned with maintaining the Reserve’s conservation values – and more oriented towards employment and training, socio-economic development and the concerns specific to particular families and individuals. After employment and training, many of the issues raised at joint management committee meetings by Aboriginal people are termed ‘cultural heritage management’ by the PWS. In particular, Traditional Owners often propose projects which enable family to ‘get out on country’, ask for help in organising camps where older people share knowledge with young people, want to create ‘bush tucker’ walks or books, oral histories, or establish commercial outlets where they can sell art and craft on parks. This raises the vexed issue of cultural heritage management within PWS and indeed, within Central Australia.

Initially when I entered PWS, I was perplexed by the lack of engagement or interest in cultural heritage management within the agency. It’s not our job, I was told by a number of staff, we usually flick it to Heritage or Sacred Sites. Ironically, the
Northern Territory Heritage Service in the Southern Region comprises a single senior Heritage officer, whose role is carry out the agency’s functions from Elliot to the South Australia border. Furthermore, the Northern Territory Heritage Conservation Act (HCA) is clear in stating that that the responsibility for maintaining, monitoring and protecting the Territory’s cultural heritage lies with the individual land owner or manager, except in the case of the protection of sacred sites, sacred objects and Aboriginal skeletal remains, where the Aboriginal Area Protection Authority (the ‘Sacred Sites Authority’) is the body responsible under NT law.

Indeed, where cultural heritage management was discussed and supported within PWS, my experience was that it was funded externally (even though it was ‘programmed’ within park management schedules), and that the funding was largely for restoration works on declared heritage sites, such as the Old Government Works at Arltunga Historical Reserve or repairs to the old homestead at Owen Springs Reserve. To my knowledge, only one park in the Southern Region, Watarrka National Park, had an active Cultural Heritage Management Action Plan, where staff undertook annual monitoring and recording of the park’s significant number of rock art sites. To this end, cultural heritage management, defined by my experience with PWS, could be framed as: managing European material culture and tourist infrastructure around man-made artefacts.

Another reason frequently cited by PWS staff for the agency’s lack of engagement with cultural heritage management was: managing culture isn’t our responsibility – it’s the role of Traditional Owners. This position –and indeed the problematising and co-opting of anything where the term ‘culture’ arose- was one supported and vehemently defended by the Central Land Council. It was not uncommon for PWS staff to be told in meetings with CLC staff that there was an inherent ‘danger’ in collecting cultural information from Traditional Owners. The kinds of information commonly collected by rangers from Traditional Owners included the names of places, plants and animals in language, and sometimes, the traditional stories about places for use on interpretive signage. However, the exact nature of the ‘danger’ present in the collection of such information was never rendered quite clear; rather, it remained couched in the following terms:
...It's the land council's role in the Parks and Wildlife Act to collect information from TOs...this involves recognising the complexity of cultural information, and the recognition that it cannot be interpreted in isolation of its broader context. It needs an anthropological approach.

Having the land council's anthropology staff do this reduces elements of risk to PWS...such as a PWS having a conflict of interests with TOs...

(Meeting notes, September, 2006).

The above statement represents a highly interpretative approach to the land council's role within the TWPCA, the same role it has pursued under its own broad scale interpretation of Section 23 of the ALR(NT)A – that the land councils and only the land councils can represent the interests of Aboriginal people in relation to land. There is no directive within the TWPCA for the land councils to 'collect and hold' information from Traditional Owners related to parks and reserves -especially information such as the language names of plants and animals which are freely available in the public domain.

The unfortunate result of both PWS and CLC's approach to cultural heritage management on parks and reserves is this: it does not often happen. Cultural heritage projects are few, and budget allocations -even for those suggested by Traditional Owners in joint management committee meetings and agreed to by both PWS and CLC staff- are discouraged by the problematisation of culture and its subsequent low prioritisation within the agency. Given that many cultural heritage projects offer not only opportunities for paid -at possibly ongoing- employment for Aboriginal people –such as rock art documentation and monitoring- as well as benefits such as the strengthening of relationships between rangers and Traditional Owners, opportunities for 'Two-Way' learning and for the maintenance of cultural traditions selected by and important to current generations of Aboriginal people, it is difficult to understand why cultural heritage management is not the centrepiece of joint management.

Another issue overlooked in relation to Aboriginal people's interests in joint management governance relates to the cultural appropriateness of committee meetings and other decision-making processes. Most of joint management committee meetings are large (meaning more than 10 people) and bring together the members of two or
more extended Traditional Owner family groups, as well as a number of rangers and land council staff. Here, the notions of *shame* and culturally appropriate behaviour as understood by Aboriginal people may act to prevent Traditional Owners from putting forth their views in forums such as joint management committee meetings—even in places where committee members have undertaken governance training. For example, speaking up in a large group is viewed as shameful or embarrassing and even rude by some Aboriginal people:

‘Shame’ is usually associated with the discomfort of being observed by others in the public domain, especially at being seen to do something which is poor etiquette, ill-mannered, or wrong (Myers, 1985:120).

Also:

‘Embarrassment’ often accompanies public occasions of speaking, as a means of avoiding egotism, self-assertion, or private wilfulness, and accepts identity with others as part of the self (ibid:121).

There may be very strong, unspoken cultural predispositions *not* to speak up at big meetings amongst Aboriginal people about which some European rangers or land council staff may not even be aware (Bain, 2006:33). Yet large meetings remain the staple manner in which many organisations and government departments consult with Aboriginal people in Central Australia.

The use of ‘*shame*’ or being shy about stating one’s needs or wishes is also used as a form of showing respect—which contrasts directly with the cultural practices of many contemporary European Australians, where one is encouraged to ‘speak up’ and be ‘frank’ from an early age (Myers,1985:123-124). Furthermore, senior men may not feel comfortable speaking up in the presence of women or vice versa, leaving younger people or people more accustomed to non-Aboriginal methods of communication to speak up at meetings. There is also the issue of intra and interfamily conflicts, which rangers and land council staff may not be aware of or if they are, may not know how to circumvent:
I can't go to that meeting, even though I'm the right one for that country. I'm not talking with that (name of outstation) mob there. I can't talk in front of them. And that (name of another Aboriginal man) he shouldn't been there. He got no right speaking up... Not his country, he just been put there... I just let him stay there, same as that (name of outstation) mob... (Traditional Owner, field notes, 2007).

My point is this: despite the strong emphasis on ensuring that Aboriginal peoples' interests are represented in joint management at all levels, large committee meetings may not be an appropriate manner in which to represent them, and indeed, may work against the expression of Aboriginal interests. This means that other more culturally appropriate methods for representing the interests of Traditional Owners, such as family group discussions or opportunities for smaller groups of Aboriginal committee members to directly interact with senior rangers and land council staff in isolation of others may represent more effective ways of ensuring that Aboriginal interests are heard.

**Participation, Prioritisation and Culture**

Both this chapter and the one preceding it have focussed upon the implementation of joint management on the ground, and the manner in which the interests of the groups involved in such initiatives are negotiated within the PWS’s joint management program. In this chapter, I have focussed upon joint management planning and governance, specifically in regard to the creation of joint management plans and the formation and operation of the joint management committees. Both structures are viewed by higher levels of government and those external to the process as legislative and symbolic ‘proof’ of joint management having been successfully implemented. Within this chapter, I have demonstrated that although joint management planning and governance marked the point in the joint management process where it was expected that PWS and Traditional Owners would be able to assert their interests most strongly, these interests were mediated and in some cases, negated by other sets competing of interests and political asymmetries. In particular, this discussion suggests that within a small organisation like PWS, there are competing sets of internal interests which act to shape the implementation and outcomes of joint
management on the ground. This occurred where the interests of park managers – rangers- were assumed to be congruent with those of other PWS staff such as senior planners.

However, as the events described in the discussion on joint management planning suggest, this internal incongruence created the perception that in some instances, the interests of ranger staff were seen as not adequately represented in joint management plans. This perception was further reinforced by the overall control of the joint management planning process –and of the entire joint management program- by the SPDU. Furthermore, the planning process revealed internal tensions within PWS between park operational management and park planners across several levels within the agency. The outcome of this is that some park managers feel that the creation of joint management plans is less about addressing a park or reserve’s actual management needs, and more about addressing the needs of legislation and the strategic, department-wide (NRETA) aims.

Another issue raised in this chapter is that of the notion of participatory planning and its effectiveness at representing Aboriginal peoples’ interests. Although PWS and CLC staff went to great lengths to ensure that the interests of Traditional Owners were reflected in plans, and sought their comment and input at every stage of the planning process, the legislatively prescribed nature of joint management planning meant that the participatory planning which was undertaken could not be considered truly participatory. This is not to suggest that the interests of Traditional Owners are not represented within plans; rather, I am pointing out that the prescribed nature of the plans’ content serves to orient the gaze of PWS and CLC staff away from the interests of Traditional Owners as expressed by Traditional Owners themselves, towards a set of predetermined topics and questions derived from legislation. Although it was expressed to me that this issue would be addressed on the ground in both joint management committee meetings and within annual management program action plans, given the legislatively-driven nature of joint management and PWS, this organisational ‘blindness’ may continue to occur to the detriment of Traditional Owners’ interests. This parallels other examinations of participatory planning in development contexts, where such processes have been viewed by some critics as
being a means of ensuring compliance with decisions already made by governments and other organisations:

Many international agencies and funders justify participatory processes by noting the efficiency and productivity with which participatory methods advance the goals held by development organisations. In corporate parlance, participation saves on "transaction costs". So, despite the participatory rhetoric, the status quo of top-down planning is maintained (Christens & Speer, 2006: 2-3).

Linked to the idea of ‘advancing the goals held by development organisations’ suggested by Christens and Speer (ibid) is prioritisation. Prioritisation, or selecting one goal or value over another and dedicating organisational resources to achieve it reflects the manner in which the PWS joint management program was created and aligned to pursuit of higher-level strategic aims. A central understanding of strategic management within PWS is the ability to select and prioritise goals and align them with higher level organisational or government directives. Within the joint management program, the decision was made to prioritise and resource the creation of joint management plans over other joint management initiatives even though planning itself comprises a limited activity.

There is also the interconnected –although subtly masked– internal government imperative to report progress on and expenditure of funding in relation to joint management, along with the manner in which the strategic aims of joint management have been addressed by PWS. As I have suggested previously, the NT Government privileges numbers rather than talk work as its means of demonstrating progress to the public and itself in meeting its own strategic aims. A direct instruction from the PWS Executive Director was to: “...prioritise the creation of new joint management plans as they represent the only way in which the effectiveness of joint management can be currently reported upon...” (meeting notes, March 2007). The prioritisation of joint management plans here can be seen to represent a prioritising of the interests of the NT Government over the interests of other parties involved in joint management. It is through processes such as planning and the reporting structures to which PWS must
comply, that higher level NT Government interests are therefore reproduced in the implementation of joint management.

It is at the level of joint management governance on individual parks or reserves, that the interests of park managers and Traditional Owners are most effectively represented within joint management. Yet even here, these are mediated by rangers' understandings of core business—and its limitations in relation to joint management, such as in the matter of cultural heritage management—and by understandings of their own roles and responsibilities in terms of formal reporting requirements, again underpinned by higher level NT Government interests. For Traditional Owners, culturally-derived norms for communication and social etiquette also constitute a factor in whether their interests are able to be effectively represented. Whilst land council and PWS staff made every effort to ensure that Traditional Owners were comfortable and able to express their interests directly to PWS staff and have them acted upon, the format of joint management committee meetings—large, multi-group gatherings—may in some circumstances inhibit the ability of Aboriginal people to have their interests made known. Despite the efforts of governments, land councils and others across numerous scales within joint management to address the interests of Aboriginal people, cultural norms relating to shame, embarrassment and gender roles in face-to-face contact may play a significant factor in determining the effectiveness of joint management on individual reserves. However, this can be overcome by ‘offline’ consultation with Aboriginal individual committee members and their families by both CLC and PWS staff—provided adequate resources exist to undertake such activities.

This raises one final, yet critical issue here: that of resourcing. Resourcing appears to be a central factor in enabling the interests of Traditional Owners to be effectively represented and implemented in joint management initiatives. The ability to incorporate Aboriginal communication styles and preferences in joint management initiatives can be seen to rely directly on the availability of staff, time, vehicles and other resources to accommodate them. This requires not only an awareness of such differences in cross-cultural communication styles within the organisations involved in joint management, but also the internal political will to recognise the importance of enabling alternative forms of communication and prioritising resources to carry out
these functions. Whilst the land councils are best placed to undertake these kinds of interactions, they are not resourced to do so. Furthermore, even where Aboriginal interests are captured within joint management plans and committee meetings, internal political will within conservation agencies may ensure that Aboriginal interests compete with or do not match organisational priorities. Despite the best intent of rangers and land council staff involved in joint management governance, the aspirations of Traditional Owners may be frustrated or unintentionally ignored.
Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

I began this thesis with the assertion that joint management represents the ‘forced marriage’ of conservation and Aboriginal interests in protected areas. I argued that not only was this union ‘forced’, it also contained a number of assumptions about the interests of the groups involved in joint management, such as that of Aboriginal people being conservationists in the Western sense of the term, or of the willingness of governments to pursue such agreements. Furthermore, I pointed out that these groups and their actual interests were largely unproblematised within the literature discussing joint management. As a consequence, many discussions about joint management lump conservation agencies and ‘government’ together as a homogenous single entity, with little or no reference to the differences which may exist between such institutions, or make sweeping assumptions about what Aboriginal people want from joint management and their ability to attain it (e.g. Strelein, 1993).

In order to understand these issues, I set out to examine the multiple interests inherent in joint management agreements made between Aboriginal Traditional Owners and governments in the Northern Territory (NT). As conservation agencies are given primary operational responsibility for implementing these agreements, an examination of the interests, organisational culture, structures and practices of conservation agencies, and their dialectic with the interests of other groups involved in these arrangements was argued as being critical in seeking a greater understanding of joint management and its implementation. The NT’s government-run conservation agency, the Parks and Wildlife Service, was the main subject of this research. The central question I posed in this study was: What does joint management mean to conservation agencies and their staff in the NT?

Underlying this research was the theoretical assertion that conservation agencies can be viewed as complex adaptive systems which operate in dialectic with other similar complex adaptive systems, such as land councils or Aboriginal cultures. Crucial to this approach is the identification of elements within organisations that are resilient, self-organising, dynamic and non-linear. These elements are reproduced not only across multiple scales within the agency, but also in interactions with other groups.
involved in joint management. An examination of the normative cultural constructs underlying the conceptualisation and creation of conservation agencies - national parks, conservation, and conservation agencies - is important in understanding how the culture, structure and practices of the PWS function as a complex adaptive system, and in turn, act to influence the implementation of joint management on the ground.

Multiple Interests

At an abstract level, joint management agreements appear to be made between governments and the Aboriginal Traditional Owners of protected areas:

...joint management ... means the establishment of a legal partnership and management agreement structure that reflects the rights, interests and obligations of the Aboriginal owners of the park, as well as those of the relevant government... (Smyth, 2001:75).

In Chapter Three, I demonstrated that joint management agreements represent the interests of a number of parties, which may or may not be obvious to external observers. These parties include: a range of Aboriginal groups - from extended family groups, through estate or clan groups to different language groups; higher levels of government, including executive leadership and decision making groups, senior policy advisors and legal counsels; land councils, especially senior policy, land management and legal staff; and conservation agencies, including executive staff, policy and planning staff, and park management staff.

The interests of these parties in joint management arrangements varies, and is characterised by differences that can be described as both paradoxical and congruent, being neither mutually compatible nor mutually exclusive. For example, the interests of higher levels of the NT Government described in this research can be said to be concerned with creating politically palatable legal agreements that give certainty over park tenure as parks, as well as seeking to balance the interests of the general public in parks with those of other stakeholders, particularly those of Aboriginal people. Conversely, the interests of Aboriginal people in joint management are concerned with not only realising their rights in land, but equally with employment, training and
in some cases, business development—all socio-economic interests. Other significant factors in Aboriginal peoples’ participation in joint management include the maintenance of cultural heritage, and the securing of equitable roles in decision making structures and processes on parks. However, during the events described in this thesis, employment opportunities emerged as being the most important interest that Aboriginal people had in joint management.

The delivery of socio-economic benefits to Aboriginal people was also a central aim of the NT Government and the land councils in pursuing joint management. These groups framed Aboriginal socio-economic development in terms of the creation of new employment and training opportunities on parks for Aboriginal people, along with the establishment of Aboriginal-owned and operated businesses on parks. Employment opportunities—socio-economic development—then, can be said to be a significant interest for the majority of the groups involved in joint management. This was evident in the principles of joint management set out in the TPWCA, and in high level NT Government strategic documents. It was also evident in the provision of funding by the NT Government to expand the PWS’s intake of Indigenous Ranger Trainees and the creation of the Flexible Employment Program, as well as in the creation of new community ranger groups. In contrast, the conservation agency, PWS, was more concerned with biodiversity conservation and park management than with the development of Aboriginal employment programs, even though they achieved a degree of success in implementing one such program.

Although joint management agreements and the joint management partnership act to somewhat obscure the role of the two large NT land councils in joint management, the interests of these organisations play an important part in the creation and implementation of such initiatives. It is via the land councils that initial legal agreements are negotiated with governments, and through the land councils that Aboriginal people are consulted and their wishes communicated to other parties. Thus, understanding the interests of land councils in joint management is critical, and must be separated from the interests of Aboriginal people, rather than assumed as being the same.
The NT land councils are powerful, self-replicating bureaucracies, whose basis in legislation frames them as independent statutory representative bodies, answerable not to the NT Government, but to the Commonwealth Government. The interests of land councils in joint management can be characterised as being primarily concerned with carrying out their statutory functions as defined in the ALR(NT)A. In the case of the Central Land Council, these legislatively-driven interests are mediated by the organisation’s strong advocacy culture and by the interests of individual work units within the agency. At times throughout the implementation of the joint management arrangements described in this thesis, the interests of the CLC could be seen to conflict with the interests of the PWS, as well as with those of some—but not all—Aboriginal people. In most cases, the CLC was able to realise its interests over those of other parties in the agreements, the exception being in regards to accessing funding to carry out cultural heritage projects on parks. The ability of the CLC to secure its interests over those of other parties is a testament to the organisation’s political power and to its legislated role in the TPWCA, which ensures that its statutory functions apply over jointly managed parks and reserves.

Another implication of the changes made to the TWPCA—the legislation that both gives rise to the Parks and Wildlife Service and structures its operations—was the provision of specific principles, objectives and prescriptions for the implementation of joint management across the NT. Amendments to the TWPCA named the PWS, along with Aboriginal Traditional Owners, as joint management partners. Both responsibility for the implementation of joint management and a large budget allocation for doing so were granted to the agency by the NT Government. Therefore, the PWS had the ability to intimately shape joint management, as well as to reproduce the agency’s interests in its implementation of these arrangements. As foreshadowed above, the interests of the PWS can be characterised as being concerned primarily with protecting and maintaining the natural values of the environment. A secondary interest of the agency arises as a function of being a government institution: PWS is required to implement government policy and to meet the standard requirements of public sector accountability, administration and service delivery. Joint management, then, can be seen as an outcome of this secondary interest, rather than of being a concern of the agency’s primary interest. Some of the agency’s reluctance to carry out certain tasks—such as the creation of employment schemes or cultural heritage
management—could be seen to be a function of its interest in protecting and maintaining natural values in the environment.

However, PWS—like the ‘government’ and CLC—is not a homogenous whole. Within the agency different interests, understandings and normative cultural constructs derived from broader socio-cultural understandings about national parks (protected areas), conversation and conservation agencies operate across a number of scales. As the agency acts as the locus of implementation for joint management arrangements once legislation and other high level agreements are in place, the agency’s internal interests and understandings of itself act to shape on-the-ground joint management initiatives. In addition, the role of internally resilient, dynamic, self-organising and non-linear processes specific to the agency—such as autonomy and rangercentrism—also affect the implementation of joint management on the ground.

Organisational Culture as Lens and Mediator

In order to understand the effect of normative cultural constructs about protected areas, conservation and conservation agencies upon the PWS, in Chapter Two I examined the historical development of these concepts across NT, Australian and international scales. Within Australian society, national parks (protected areas) carry part of the moral conscience of the nation as a nation, and both generate and constitute part of what it means to be Australian. Historical and political struggles over land, and cultural beliefs about the nature of human/environmental relationships are embedded in the very idea of national parks, and are carried forward into the legislative processes which gave rise to the nation’s conservation agencies and its national parks.

Closely related to the idea of national parks is that of conservation, particularly as the protection of non-human species from humans, which is now interwoven with scientific paradigms such as ecosystem management, biodiversity conservation and ecological science. Added to this is the administration of national parks by government run conservation agencies, where they are co-opted into contemporary systems of rationalist management and bureaucratic process. In terms of complex adaptive systems, the legitimating presence of these normative cultural constructs
about *national parks, conservation, and conservation agencies*—which feed into and from each other—can be seen as a resilient and self-organising system which acts to subtly reproduce contemporary Western cultural tropes about scientific knowledge, modernity, management, and human/environmental relationships within the structures and practices of the PWS.

This reproduction occurs in several ways, and was discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Firstly, these constructs are embedded within organisational structure via the legislative mechanisms and instruments that set aside land as protected areas and also serve to create conservation agencies themselves. Legislation, and the ideas encoded within it, are then reproduced in the management programs undertaken by PWS staff, and are present in the clear, yet narrowly defined, sense of organisational identity and function, described as 'core business' by the agency's staff. Indeed, the legislatively-derived notion of 'core business' creates a feedback loop within the organisation, where the agency carries out its functions under the TPWCA, and in doing so, legitimates certain forms of *seeing, knowing and doing*—described as the practice of protected area or land management—requiring the employment of staff skilled in park or land management to carry out this seeing, knowing and doing.

Secondly—and at an even more foundational level—normative cultural constructs about *national parks, conservation and conservation agencies* operate in organisational culture via reference to scientifically and administratively legitimated ways of *knowing, seeing and doing*. In other words, dominant societal beliefs about the role of science and contemporary management inform the kinds of knowledge present within the agency, what should be done by the agency and dictate the ways in which it can be done. These ways of *knowing, seeing and doing* privilege the recognition of particular qualities in the landscape—termed here as 'values'—such as rare or endangered species, or aesthetics such as gorges, waterholes and geological monoliths, which are themselves derived from widely held socio-cultural beliefs discussed in Chapter Two. Structurally, these values require PWS to undertake rationally planned programs to 'scientifically' manage and protect them, further entailing the employment of specialist staff to carry out these management programs and actions. It follows then that values which *cannot* be seen according to internal organisational models of knowledge cannot be readily managed. In the PWS, *cultural*


*heritage* is an example of one such quality that is not readily ‘seen’ by existing organisational structures and practices, and therefore, is not widely or effectively managed.

In tandem with the operation of socio-cultural constructs relating to *national parks, conservation and conservation agencies* within PWS, in Chapter Four I also identified several locally-derived, but equally influential ideas which shaped the organisation’s culture: *autonomy* and *rangercentrism*. These concepts, although unique to PWS, are closely linked with the normative cultural constructs discussed above. For example, the agency’s sense of autonomy derives not only from its well defined legislative functions and previous political independence as a statutory body, but also from the nature of the organisation’s core business: managing large, nationally and culturally symbolic areas of land for the purpose of biodiversity conservation and human recreation to the exclusion of any other agency. The agency’s sense of autonomy, however, does serve to make it resistant to both change and the direct imposition of external interests into its day-to-day operations and programs, such as those represented by land councils or Traditional Owners.

Furthermore, the agency’s structural orientation towards the management of values inherent in the landscape feeds back into the idea of *seeing, knowing and doing* described above. In terms of agency structure, this requires a group of specialist staff to recognise, manage and administer such values –*rangers*. Given that the agency’s ‘core business’ is of managing and protecting values in the landscape, the creation of organisational programs and practices strongly oriented towards the needs of rangers –specialists in these skills- is readily explained. Rangers, as an occupational group, receive tertiary and on-the-job-training in the identification of values, regimes for their management and in supporting administrative processes. As rangers comprise over half of PWS staff, the agency’s understandings of its ‘core business’ are dominated by, and negotiated through, the understandings, knowledge and practices of this occupational group, creating an agency that can be characterised as *rangercentric*.

**Implementation and Interests**
The PWS, via legislation and the provision of NT Government funding, is the main agency responsible for the implementation of joint management. As a consequence, the implementation of joint management takes place both through, and in interaction with, its organisational culture. Furthermore, the agency’s implementation of joint management engages in a series of interactions with the interests, understandings and aspirations of other groups involved in these initiatives. In Chapters Five through Seven, I examined the implementation of specific joint management programs with regard to the dialectic of interests between the groups involved in them. The centrality of PWS in implementing these arrangements has significant implications for the long term success of joint management, the kinds of programs that take place, and in addressing the political asymmetries in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships in the NT.

Several issues arise from the analysis of PWS’s implementation of joint management in dialectic with both internal and external interests. The first point is this: where the interests of others correspond with those of the agency, especially with internally-referenced notions of ‘core business’, these interests are able to be readily realised and are supported by PWS and its staff. For example, the interests of higher levels of government present in the TWPCA as the content of joint management plans and prescriptions for decision making (governance) structures, were prioritised by the agency and used to strategically pursue and protect its own interests over those of external parties, especially land councils. Furthermore, the interests of PWS in the implementation of these programs also reflects the pre-existing skills and processes within the agency, as well as the ability of staff to draw upon previous models of joint management to inform current actions.

However, where the interests of other groups did not correspond closely with the agency’s primary interests, two outcomes were possible. In the first case, where the interests of external groups who were more politically powerful than the PWS, such as higher levels of government or the land councils, came into competition with those of the agency, these groups were able to pursue—and most often, realise—their interests over those of the agency. For example, the Flexible Employment Program was created and implemented by staff within the Strategic Planning and Development Unit (SPDU), despite some internal resistance within PWS to an Aboriginal
employment program. The existence of higher level government policy directives about Aboriginal employment, and the explicit inclusion of Aboriginal employment opportunities on parks as a central aim of joint management within the TWPCA that was pursued by the land councils, ensured that the agency implemented a program that was, by internal cultural definition, not part of ‘core business’.

Conversely, where no strong pressure from politically powerful external interests existed, and the interests of other groups still differed from those of PWS, the agency was more likely to realise its own interests and priorities in regards to joint management. The examples here are cultural heritage management and the interests of Traditional Owners as elicited during planning and governance meetings. Where Traditional Owners put forth projects related to cultural heritage or family interests — and despite PWS ranger staff supporting them— these interests were unlikely to be realised, as they competed with higher level organisational and political priorities, such as ‘signing off’ on new joint management plans for parks and reserves. Senior staff within PWS were able to invoke the TPWCA, the agency’s strategic plan and policy directives from the Chief Minister’s Department as reasons for channelling funds, time and human resources into planning activities at the expense of actions suggested by Traditional Owners. Another subtle, yet detrimental, factor here is the political complexities and difficulties surrounding the ‘management’ of Aboriginal cultural heritage on parks and reserves in the NT. The land councils defend Aboriginal cultural heritage as being their ‘territory’ and strongly discourage other agencies from taking a lead role in Aboriginal cultural heritage initiatives; many within PWS are reluctant to pursue such projects. Unfortunately, the outcome is that where interests of specific groups of Traditional Owners in relation to specific parks or reserves differs with higher level PWS priorities these are less likely to be realised.

**Different Understandings and Capacity**

Two critical issues emerge from Chapters Five, Six and Seven which underpin the ultimate success or otherwise of joint management initiatives. The first is that different understandings about joint management —i.e. what the term ‘joint management’ means and what its outcomes are— exist and operate between the groups involved in its implementation. The second factor is that of capacity: the ability of
those who engage in joint management to participate in it. Although both PWS staff and Aboriginal Traditional Owners both define joint management as ‘working together’ significant cross-cultural differences in the interpretation of this term exist. Both groups view joint management as highly relational, implying intense, ongoing face-to-face contact between Aboriginal people and PWS staff. However, rangers view ‘working together’ in terms of incorporating Aboriginal cultural interests and understandings into existing park management programs to improve the management of values in the landscape. Aboriginal people, on the other hand, view working together in joint management in terms of ‘looking after’ or ‘holding’, invoking Central Australian Aboriginal notions of sociality, such as demand sharing of resources, aid and assistance to family and the testing the strength of relationships by asking for material resources or money (Musharbash, 2008:142-145). Other significant cross-cultural differences identified in Chapters Five and Six related to Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal notions of employment and land management.

Such divergent understandings about joint management foreshadow frustrations, misunderstandings and difficulties between groups with the potential to undermine the long term success of joint management. Amongst the daily jostling of internal PWS priorities, political pressures to complete management plans and the dialectic of external interests, the apprehension of subtle cultural differences between groups involved in joint management is rarely contemplated. The use of large group meetings as a standard means of enacting governance in joint management, and a lack of awareness of Aboriginal notions relating to shame and etiquette in public gatherings on behalf of non-Aboriginal people, limit the ability of Aboriginal peoples’ interests to be represented, just as Aboriginal understandings about what employment as a ranger means serve to frustrate PWS staff wishing to employ Aboriginal people.

This suggests a strong link to the inherently relational understandings about joint management held by both PWS staff and Aboriginal people. Yet it is here, in the face-to-face awkwardness and novelty of intercultural communication that a solution to this problem exists: ‘cuppa tea’ time, travelling over country together, camping out together are all relationally based means of increasing cross-cultural understandings about joint management. However, these activities are not supported readily by governments as they are not able to be quantified in accounting and reporting.
structures – but it is these simple actions more than the creation of either plans or governance structures that may represent the means for ensuring that joint management initiatives are successful in the long term.

Of course, the provision of time to undertake these forms of unstructured relationship building is closely related to capacity: the capacity of individuals to engage in joint management, and the capacity of organisations or Aboriginal people to support it. More than anything else, it is the lack of capacity amongst Aboriginal people in Central Australia to participate fully in joint management which limits the success of these initiatives. Capacity here denotes issues of mobility, language, poverty, education, health and even culture which prevent Aboriginal people from fully participating in—or at times, participating at all—in joint management. This is not to blame Aboriginal people for this situation—it is simply a statement of reality. Aboriginal people find it difficult to participate in joint management without material, physical and financial support from organisations like CLC and PWS.

Likewise, the capacity of PWS staff to fully apprehend cross-cultural nuances without long term exposure to Aboriginal communities, to have the time or resources to devote to joint management or even to visit Traditional Owners is limited. This is constrained by imperatives to respond to internal processes and priorities that lay beyond the ability of individual staff to alter, and by the high levels of staff turnover endemic to the organisation, and indeed, to the NT Government. At a higher scale, the capacity of a conservation agency to deliver broad scale socio-economic benefits to Aboriginal people in remote locations—as envisaged by higher levels of government—is also questionable, if not impossible. The skills, resources and knowledge required to address problems of literacy, poor health or even put food in the mouths of Traditional Owners lies well outside the capacity of the PWS. To effect such changes would require sustained, long term investment and coordination across all levels of government, non-government organisations and Aboriginal communities. The aim of addressing wide scale Aboriginal socio-economic disadvantage via joint management would seem misplaced.

However, within the PWS’s capacity is the ability to prioritise resources towards specific joint management projects with long term beneficial outcomes for both the
agency and Aboriginal people—such as employment initiatives and projects put forward by Traditional Owners—in addition to and at the same time as pursuing those which aim to satisfy shorter term political agendas, such as the urgent ‘signing off’ on all new joint management plans. This would require an adjustment of time frames relating to the creation of joint management plans and the redirection of resources to long term relationship and capacity building programs, such as employment and training, as well as the implementation of outreach programs with specific Aboriginal communities. At another more fundamental level, there is the need to both apprehend and incorporate the understandings of PWS staff and Traditional Owners about what joint management means into park management programs and higher level strategic aims. The value of investing in face-to-face, long term relationships between Aboriginal Traditional Owners and PWS staff—the ‘cuppa tea’ that is so difficult to justify and quantify within organisational reporting structures—would seem to have obvious benefits, such as exposing cross-cultural differences in understanding and avoiding conflicts, resulting in more effective, successful and cost-efficient joint management initiatives.

**Limitations and Future Research**

One of the limitations of this research is concerned with the depth of analysis of the interests of land councils in joint management. Although it was not the intent of this research to examine the internal organisational culture of the land councils, it is evident that the land councils have a significant impact upon the implementation of joint management. Most of the discussion relating to the land councils within this thesis arose from informal conversations with land council staff, participant observation in activities where land council staff were present and from written sources. Future research could include a critical analysis of the land council’s organisational culture and its interests in joint management via participant observation from within the agency. This would enable a broader understanding of the interests of land councils in joint management.

Another limitation of the study relates to the number and diversity of Aboriginal viewpoints represented within the thesis. Discussions with Aboriginal people regarding joint management were opportunistic and limited to either those actively
involved in particular joint management processes (such as planning workshops or joint management camps) or groups with whom strong PWS relationships were already established (such as with Western Arrernte and Pertame people). Given the number of reserves represented in the joint management arrangements described in this research (19), it was not possible to include members of all Aboriginal groups. This was especially true of reserves where little or no engagement with Aboriginal people had taken place. Understandings of some Aboriginal people about joint management may differ to those represented here. Although this limitation is countered somewhat by anecdotal evidence reported by CLC staff about the expectations that Aboriginal people had about joint management, diversity of opinion and understanding amongst Aboriginal people in Central Australia is a factor that needs to be taken into account.

There are two final limitations of the study that I wish to acknowledge. The first relates to the interests of higher levels of government within joint management. Access to members of the NT Government negotiation team was limited and the documents discussing the negotiations between the NT Government and the land councils were confidential. The implications of this are that the interests of this group were discerned from legislation, information briefs and publicly available discussion papers. These sources potentially mask a number of internal political interests, conflicts and difficulties, as well as obscuring the processes by which the interests of different groups were represented, negotiated and translated into legislation and other agreements. Whilst access to high levels of government and documents might be considered both difficult and politically sensitive, the analysis of high level government decision-making processes and cross-organisational negotiations would add further understanding to the ways in which governments understand joint management and furthermore, seek to balance the interests of all stakeholders in such agreements.

A final limitation of this study relates to the relatively short time period covered within this thesis and the ongoing effectiveness of joint management arrangements. This research has focussed upon the initial implementation of broad scale joint management, rather than on the long-term outcomes. However, joint management should be viewed as a process of continual adjustment and adaptation, rather than a
sequence of legislatively-driven ‘check boxes’. Therefore, a longitudinal study over a five or ten year period would enable an analysis of the effectiveness of the joint management arrangements discussed in this thesis.

Practical Recommendations

Joint management agreements and their implementation must be seen as a series of competing and conflicting interests vested in the management of protected areas. As conservation agencies are the lens through which these interests are negotiated, then the need for these organisations to be intimately aware of the interests of other groups involved in joint management—especially those of Aboriginal people—is critical. Despite well-meaning legislation and other agreements, internal organisational culture, strategic directives and political asymmetries between groups often combine to frustrate the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples’ interests when operationalised. Here, it is not only critical but surely a pre-requisite for any successful joint management initiative, that conservation agencies entering into such agreements integrate the interests of Traditional Owners and joint management objectives with existing operational systems in addition to those prescribed at the level of policy and legislation. This necessitates a sustained and strategically planned internal focus on long term goals such as capacity building, cultural heritage management and on-ground programs, rather than simply on the creation of joint management plans, governance and regulation structures.

A key part of rethinking the implementation of joint management on the ground is the strategic allocation of resources to build capacity within the agency and amongst Aboriginal people from the outset. Critical to this approach would be the employment of specialist joint management facilitation staff at a district level within the agency, rather than their centralisation within an often distant regional office. Capacity building activities implemented by the agency could then involve intense community education about biodiversity conservation for Aboriginal people, the externally unhindered incorporation of localised Aboriginal interests and cultural heritage into
operational programs, and regular, unstructured contact between Aboriginal people and PWS staff. One question raised during my time within the agency, and in the years since my departure, that remains unanswered is why the PWS does not seek responsibility or resources for the creation, funding and operation of Aboriginal community ranger groups. It would seem that conservation agencies—much more than land councils—are best placed to operate these groups, and the creation of a program of regional community ranger groups linked to jointly managed parks and reserves, would serve as a means of both building capacity, integrating Aboriginal interests and exposing the semantic and cultural differences that exist between groups.

Yet here—and again, fundamentally critical to the success of long term joint management—is that the creation of this form of Aboriginal community ranger groups, capacity building or other such initiatives would need to come from within and be lead by agency staff in order for them to be integrated within agency structures and practices. The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the external imposition of the interests of competing agencies, such as land councils, has strongly discouraged the PWS from embracing or even contemplating such changes. It is perhaps more appropriate for land councils to monitor the operationalisation of joint management, and to encourage and support far-reaching cultural change within the organisation, rather than to simply exclude PWS from taking part in critical aspects of joint management—such as cultural heritage management or unstructured relationship building.

Another critical factor in the successful long term implementation of joint management is the need for a ‘whole-of-government approach’, which first and foremost recognises that conservation agencies should not and cannot carry the full responsibility for the implementation of these initiatives. The sustained involvement of other government agencies (and non-government agencies) within joint management initiatives is required over decades rather than sporadically, in workshop-type situations. Such an approach would link joint management with education, health, and the provision of infrastructure within Aboriginal communities, via the formation of meaningful communities of practice whose members would bring not only skills and knowledge but additional funding to implement on-the-ground projects.
This thesis has demonstrated that agencies such as PWS are first and foremost skilled and resourced as *protected area management specialists*. They lack the capacity to tackle issues such as deeply-entrenched illiteracy and poverty in remote Aboriginal communities, which act as detriments to the successful implementation of joint management. However, the small gains shown via the *Flexible Employment Program*, the success of participatory planning initiatives, and the high esteem in which Aboriginal people in Central Australia generally hold rangers and the PWS, suggest that conservation agencies are uniquely placed to act as a focal points for the delivery of wider socio-economic benefits via joint management. This is provided that long term, integrated and holistic participation and support is shared with other sectors of government, non-government and Aboriginal communities. Quite simply, conservation agencies cannot ‘do joint management’ alone: it is the responsibility of all groups involved to do so.
Appendix 1: Structured Interview Questions

Q.1 What is a protected area?

Q.2 What is protected area management?

Q.3 What activities comprise protected area management?

Q.4 How did you learn about protected area management?

Q.5 What is joint management?

Q.6 How do you do joint management/ what are joint management activities?

Q.7 What are the differences between JM parks and non-JM parks?

Q.8 How did you learn about JM?

Q.9 How do Aboriginal people manage land?

Q.10 How does Aboriginal land management fit with park management?

Q.11 How did you learn about Aboriginal land management?
References


*Policy Matters* (14), 155-169.


