In recent years, Anangu traditional owners have expressed concern about the commercialisation of Uluru and the impact it has on the sacred site.

"It appears that the federal government is yet again considering placing a total and permanent ban on climbing Uluru," he told Parliament.

"The first point to make about this ludicrous suggestion is that this should be a decision for Territorians, not for bureaucrats in Canberra... It says the climb will be permanently closed when less than 20 per cent of Uluru visitors climb the Rock. While there is no evidence that conditions have yet been met, it appears that outside forces are gathering to interfere."

The comments won conditional support from indigenous MLA Bess Price, but have been widely criticised. Traditional owner and chairman of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta board Sammy Wilson yesterday said: "We've been looking after that owner and chairman of the park for generations and generations. The money doesn't mean anything to us."

Many tourists come here with no intention to climb, regardless of the weather. "They ask that you don't," said a woman travelling with a group of about 20 family members, some from as far as India. "It's about showing respect."

Christine from Toomavali said her younger travelling companions climbed Uluru on Tuesday, when conditions were deemed suitable.

"There were other tourists there reading the sign and they were saying, 'Well, if we shouldn't climb it, why is there a chain going up? '" she said.

"You could just see their faces wondering what to do, because the major goal is to do that. I told my girls to climb it because it might be closed (later) and it will be the best thing you'll ever do... surely it doesn't hurt to have one part of it open for us philistines?"

IT doesn't take much to close the climb up Uluru: too hot, too windy, too rainy, too cloudy, ceremony, or all of the above.

Yesterday — a sunny, dry and mild April Red Centre day — it was rain. "Which is bullshit, because there was no rain," said Karl, a German living and travelling from Cairns.

"They don't want to officially close it because they'd lose 50 per cent of tourists, so they do it through the back door — saying there's too much rain or it's too windy."

Visitor numbers to Uluru have plummeted in the past decade and climbing the summit has again been thrust on to the political agenda.

Chief Minister Adam Giles, fresh from a visit to the Rock with golf and business superstar Greg Norman, has called with golf and business superstars.

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TO CLIMB OR NOT TO CLIMB ON AGENDA

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