Historic Handover Of Gregory National Park

Parks and Wildlife Minister Karl Hampton today signed-off on an historic moment for Indigenous land management, as Gregory National Park was handed back to traditional owners in a ceremony as Jasper Gorge, near Timber Creek.

The Territory’s biggest, Gregory National Park was handed over to the Winan, Nalpinkak, Bilinarra-Jutpurra and Wambardi Aboriginal Land trusts in the presence of Governor-General Quentin Bryce, Minister for Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin, Minister for Indigenous health Warren Snowdon.

“Today is an historic event which bears testament to the enduring culture and perseverance of the Aboriginal people of the area, and marks the way forward for land management in Australia,” Mr Hampton said.

First established in 1984 by the acquisition of Bullita Station and portions of adjoining pastoral stations, in 1990 it was formally declared as Gregory National Park under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act.

In 1996 a further portion of Mount Sandford Station was included in the park, bringing the total area of the park to around 1.3 million hectares.

“Gregory National Park has priceless natural and historic values, and is a thriving cultural landscape for many groups of traditional owners who have deep and ongoing connections with the land,” Mr Hampton said.

“In 2005 agreement was reached between the Northern Territory Government, traditional owners and the Northern and Central Land Councils under the Parks and Reserves (Frameworks for the Future) Act to resolve the issues of Aboriginal Land Rights and Native Title claims over Gregory and other parks and reserves to transfer ownership back to indigenous people under joint management agreements.

“Since 2005 Frameworks for the Future has resulted in 1.4m hectares of parks, roughly the equivalent of another Kakadu, being handed back to joint control, with huge social, environmental and economic benefits.

“Today we see the culmination of years of hard work and co-operation between the NT and Federal Governments, traditional owners and land councils as this vast tract of country is officially handed back to indigenous control.
“Gregory Park is an example of the future of land management in the Territory and Australia; the magnificent gorges, escarpments and plains will now be joint-managed by aboriginal owners and rangers; looking after country together, two ways.

“The social, cultural and environmental assets will be conserved using the knowledge and skills of traditional owners for the benefit of their country, their community and the public.

“This will allow Aboriginal people to keep their culture strong while creating on-going economic opportunities for their children through conservation or tourism industries.”

Gregory National Park is integral in the Trans-Australia Eco-Link, a world-first wildlife corridor spanning the length of the continent.

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