Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority opens new office in Darwin

Four prominent Aboriginal custodians have been honoured in the new Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority office by having rooms named after them.

The four custodians are Mrs Nellie Camfoo, Mr W Rubuntja, Mr Hammer (deceased), and Mr Harvey (deceased).

Indigenous Development Minister, Malarndirri McCarthy today opened the new offices in Darwin and said that the four custodians taught the general public about the importance of protecting sacred sites.

“I honour these four custodians – they are very important people – and they have made significant contributions to the Authority as Board members and they have improved the understanding of sacred sites by the broader community,” said Ms McCarthy.

“On behalf of the Northern Territory Government AAPA consults with Aboriginal custodians and issues Authority Certificates (sacred site clearances) to ensure that new developments can go ahead without causing damage to sacred sites.

“This includes protecting sacred sites from Alice Springs to Guratba in Jawoyn country in the 1980s, to major projects like the Alice to Darwin Railway and the Blacktip gas pipeline in the west; and coastal and sea sites.

“In the last few years the demand for AAPA’s services has increased by 160%, from 180 Authority Certificate applications per year to 500 applications a year.

“The Northern Territory Government has recognised that this is a massive increase, and I am pleased to say that in 2009-10, the Authority received increased funding of $700,000 to enable this demand for vitally important services to be met.

“For most of the past 20 years the Authority has been operating out of a much smaller office, in a building which had all the looks of a 1970s office – so much so that it was used in the recent film “Balibo”, set in 1975.

“In these new offices, the Authority is much better equipped to meet the demand for services, and to continue its historic work with custodians.”

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