



JOHN FLYNN'S GRAVE HISTORICAL RESERVE

Plan of Management

September 2000



PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory
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Foreword

The John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve contains a memorial to, and the ashes of, the Reverend John Flynn. The ashes of Mrs Jean Flynn, John Flynn's wife, are also contained within the memorial.

John Flynn was a Presbyterian Minister of national renown due to his role in establishing the Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service in outback Australia.

The Reserve also serves as an interesting roadside stop for visitors travelling west from Alice Springs.

This plan sets guidelines for the future management of this Historical Reserve in order to conserve its cultural resources.

Management directions for the Reserve are:

- Continued management and maintenance of the Reserve, its facilities and values.
- Continued consultation with interest groups regarding management and maintenance of the Reserve.

Acknowledgments

The first draft of this Plan was prepared by Sean Campbell in a voluntary capacity. The Alice Springs Strategic Planning and Development Unit of the Parks and Wildlife Commission further developed the Plan of Management in conjunction with the Western District Park's staff.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

1.1 The Significance and History of the Reserve

John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve is located at the foot of Mount Gillen, 7km west of Alice Springs on the southern side of Larapinta Drive (see Figure 1). The area of the Reserve was surveyed as Lot 690, Town of Alice Springs in November 1956 and covers an area of 0.34 hectares.

The area was proclaimed as Reserve No. 995 on 21 March 1957 under Section 103 of the *Crown Lands Act* (Commonwealth Gazette 4 April 1957, NT Gazette 17 April 1957). Management of the Reserve became the responsibility of the NT Reserves Board on 14 May 1957 (NT Gazette, No. 22, 29 May 1957).

The area was proclaimed a Reserve under section 12 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* on 30 June 1978 (NT Gazette No. 26A).

Recorded sacred site number 5650-452, Alkate Hills, covers most of the Reserve and also includes a small hill to the west of the Historical Reserve.

The primary focus of the Reserve and its historical significance relates to the grave of Reverend John Flynn and to his achievements in establishing communication and medical services in the Northern Territory.

John Flynn was an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church at the age of 31. In 1912 he was sent by the Church to investigate the needs of men and women living in remote areas of inland Australia.

Travelling vast distances he found a complete lack of the services that city people took for granted. Communication was slow and difficult. Illness and injury often proved fatal.

Flynn's report challenged the Church to improve the life of outback people. The Australian Inland Mission (AIM) was established, with Flynn as its first superintendent.

With tremendous energy and enthusiasm Flynn set about implementing his dream of 'a mantle of safety' that would bring medical, social and religious services to isolated outback communities. The AIM quickly established a network of 'patrol padres' who travelled their vast parishes by horse or camel. It also began to provide nursing hostels, staffed by dedicated nurses, in remote places like Halls Creek (1918), Birdsville (1923) and Alice Springs (1926).

The AIM set up the first flying doctor base in 1928 in Cloncurry, western Queensland. Its success prompted the establishment of aerial medical services in other regions. Flynn knew that the AIM lacked the resources to fully develop the service, so he persuaded the Church to hand it over to a government subsidised citizens' organisation, and so the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) was born. His dream of 'a mantle of safety over the outback' was finally realised.

A man of great honour and achievement, his work is continued today by the RFDS, the Uniting Church Frontier Services and other institutions which provide care for people in isolated outback Australia.

John Flynn died in Sydney on 5 May 1951. His funeral was conducted in Sydney and in accordance with his wishes his ashes were flown to Alice Springs to be buried on or near Mt Gillen. On 23 May 1951 over 500 people from all walks of life gathered to pay tribute to Flynn and bury the urn containing his ashes at a provisional gravesite at the foot of Mt Gillen. This was a temporary resting place until the grave proper was built.

In August 1953 people gathered at what is now the John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve to pay a final tribute to the Reverend John Flynn. The urn containing his ashes was placed into the monument and cranes lifted the boulder onto the monument.

The rock which marked the grave of the Reverend John Flynn, was removed from the Devil's Marbles (Karlukarlu) 400 km north of Alice Springs and placed on the grave as a mark of honour.

On 14 November 1976 the ashes of Mrs Jean Flynn (the wife of John Flynn) were also laid to rest within the same grave. Two stainless steel caskets were fabricated to contain the ashes of both John and Jean Flynn and these were embedded permanently, along with records, within the base of the grave.

On Saturday 4 September 1999 Aboriginal custodians, non-government organisations and church groups were among the many groups which gathered together for another moment in history at the John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve.

The Central Land Council representing Arrernte, Warumungu and Kaytetye traditional owners together with the Uniting Church, Frontier Services and the Reverend Fred McKay, Community Aid Abroad (Oxfam Australia), The Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority united in their support to the exchange the sacred rock at Flynn's Grave with another.

The Devil's Marbles area is a sacred place belonging to the Warumungu and Kaytetye people and the exchange of the Devil's Marble rock marked the end of a long period of negotiation between the relevant groups.

Following a service at the Grave the original rock was then taken back to its sacred place in the Devil's Marbles, where it was welcomed home by its custodians.

The rock to replace the original stone was selected by the Arrernte people in a significant gesture of reconciliation. It came from a registered sacred site, a place of great importance, in the Alice Springs area.

Aboriginal significance is not limited to the grave rock itself, but also includes the sacred site at the Historical Reserve and sites in the surrounding area.

1.2 The Values of the Reserve

Owing to the small size of the Reserve and its positioning within the Larapinta Drive road reserve, there are no **biological conservation values** for the Reserve.

The **historical values** of the Reserve relate to the history associated with the Reverend John Flynn.

The Aboriginal **cultural values** of the Reserve relate to the grave rock itself and recorded sacred site number 5650-452, Alkate Hills which covers most of the Reserve and also includes a small hill to the west of the Reserve.

The **recreational and tourism values** relate to the Reserve's use as an interesting roadside stop and a viewing point for Mt Gillen and the MacDonnell Ranges.

1.3 The Purpose of the Reserve

The main purpose of the Reserve is to maintain the historical and cultural values while providing a well-maintained roadside stop for visitors where they may reflect on the achievements of, and honour the Reverend John Flynn, who improved the lives of people in outback Australia.

1.4 The Intent of this Plan

The aim of this Plan is to ensure the protection and conservation of the values stated above.

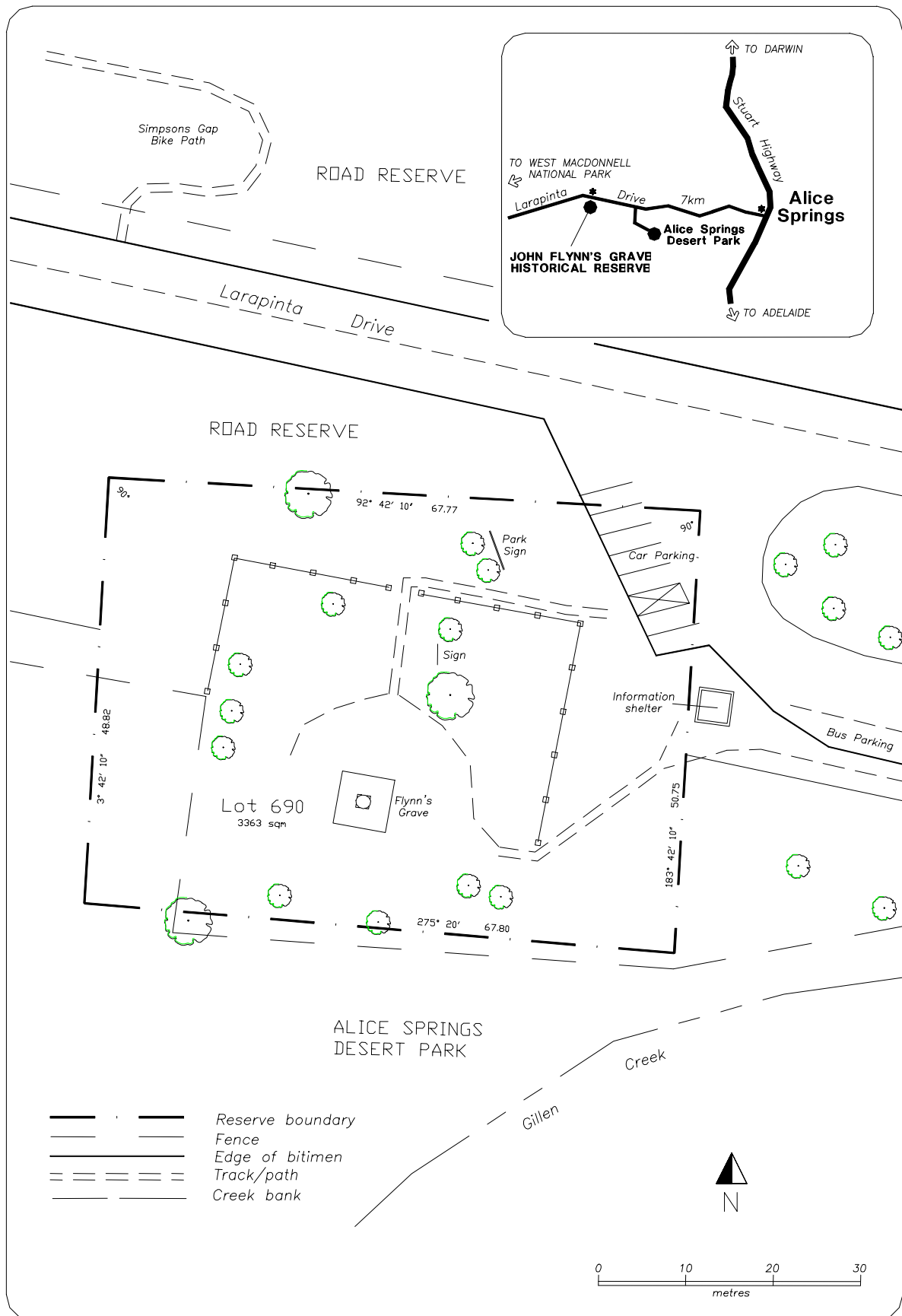
The Plan states the intent of the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory with respect to the management and conservation of the John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve. The Plan provides management objectives, addresses current management issues and proposes appropriate measures to guide future management and development of the Reserve.

This Plan has been prepared and processed in pursuance of sections 18 and 19 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* and will fulfil the function of a Plan of Management.

The PWCNT is obliged under section 21 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* to manage the Reserve in accordance with this Plan once it has come into operation.

The Plan will be in force for a minimum of five years and a maximum of ten years, unless revoked by a new plan, or amended in accordance with section 20 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

Figure 1. John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve and Locality



2. MANAGEMENT OF THE RESERVE

Objectives

- To continue protect the historic and cultural values of the Reserve.
- To minimise the effects of erosion on the Reserve and, where needed, rehabilitate degraded areas.
- To maintain the facilities at the Reserve.
- To minimise the impacts of visitors on historical and other physical values and facilities in the Reserve.
- To improve access for the many visitors to the Reserve and to enhance visitor experience by ensuring well-presented and maintained facilities.

2.1 Soils

John Flynn's Grave and the access tracks leading to it are positioned on a small hill at the base of Mt. Gillen. The hill is subject to weathering and erosion by both water and the impact of thousands of people visiting the site annually.

In May 1999 the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, Alice Springs prepared a Land Assessment Record for the John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve. This document provides land rehabilitation and maintenance strategies for the area surrounding Flynn's Grave and for public access to the Grave.

Management actions

2.1.1 *Implement the rehabilitation strategies outlined in the 1999 Land Assessment Record for the Reserve which allow for:*

- *Closing the northern track and formalising the eastern track;*
- *Constructing erosion control structures and erosion diversion banks;*
- *Re-establishing native plants using appropriate methods;*
- *Placing suitable fill material around the monument to natural ground level;*
and
- *Rehabilitation of degraded areas.*

2.2 Native and Introduced Flora

The introduced Buffel Grass (*Chenchrus ciliaris*) dominates the majority of the Reserve area with very little native grasses remaining. Intense visitor use has ensured the area surrounding the Grave is denuded of vegetation. Away from the Grave itself, however, native trees, shrubs and grasses remain.

Management actions

2.2.1 Fence off areas using appropriate size bollard and drip-line barrier fence to restrict visitor access in the southern, western and eastern areas of the Reserve, to allow for natural regeneration of native flora (see Figure 2).

2.2.2 Control of Buffel Grass and other introduced plant species within the Reserve will be by slashing or spraying with herbicide and physically removing the plants. Due to its small size and location adjacent to the road and the Alice Springs Desert Park, control burning will not be utilised as a management tool within the Reserve.

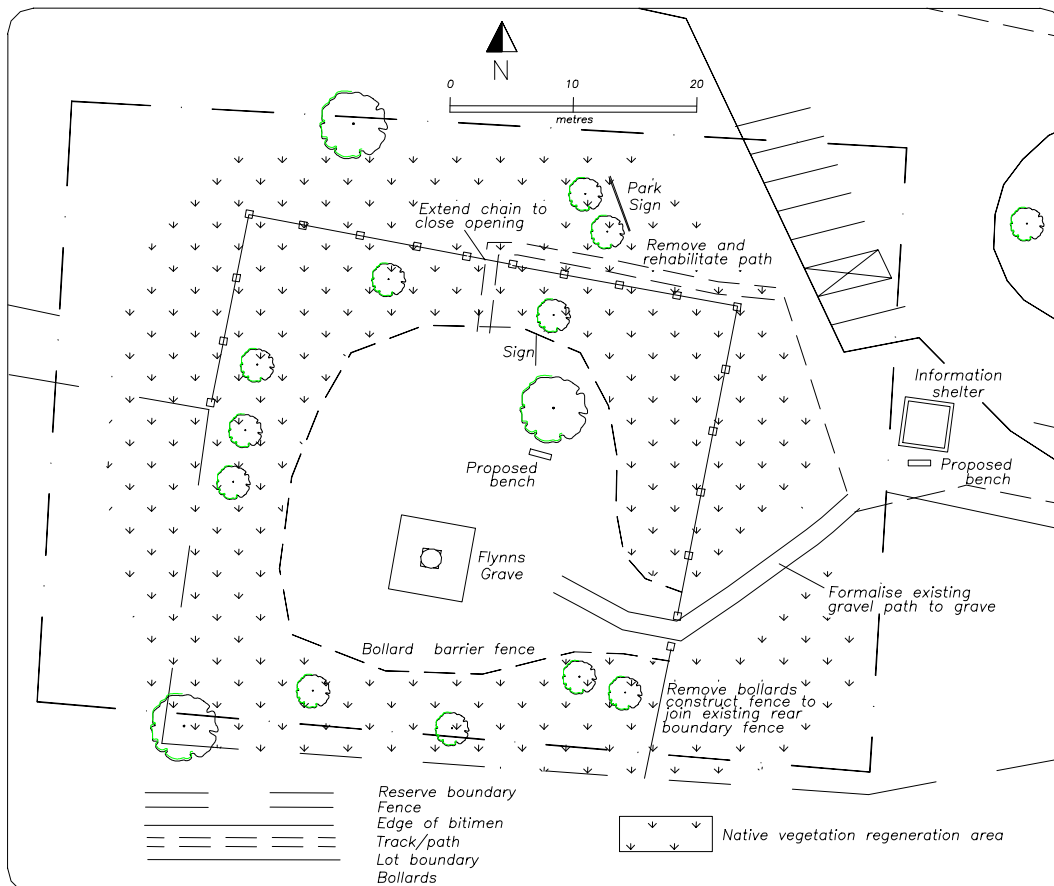
2.3 Use and Control of Fire

As stated previously burning within the Reserve will not be utilised as an option due to the small size of the Reserve and its location. Physical and chemical methods (2.2.2) will be used to reduce any build up of fuel (Buffel Grass) within, and immediately surrounding, the Reserve.

Management actions

2.3.1 Include the Reserve within the Western District Fire Management Strategy. This Strategy will state that control burning will not be utilised in the Reserve and the build up of fuel loads will removed be by physical or chemical methods.

Figure 2. Proposed Upgrading of the Reserve



3. MANAGEMENT OF VISITORS

Objectives

- To offer visitors recreational opportunities relevant to the Reserve's historical values.
- To provide visitors with facilities to enable them to enjoy the Reserve and be informed through information and interpretation.
- To manage and keep the impact of visitors on the Reserve within acceptable limits.

3.1 Visitor Access

A sealed bus and car park provides parking facilities for visitors and is located adjacent to the Reserve on the southern side of Larapinta Drive.

Pedestrian access from the carpark to the Grave site is currently via two loose gravel tracks. These tracks are worn and eroded due to the effects of weathering and the impact of visitors. The area surrounding the Grave was, in the past, covered with white quartzite chips of which only a minimal amount currently remains. As the eastern access track will become the main entry point to the Reserve, work will need to be completed to improve the aesthetics from this side.

Management actions

Note: An Authority Clearance under section 20 of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, providing clearance for any actions, works and visitation is required within this area.

3.1.1 *Formalise the existing eastern walking track from the carpark to the grave (see Figure 2).*

3.1.2 *Close the northern access track and rehabilitate.*

3.1.3 *Resurface the area surrounding the grave with suitable material.*

3.1.4 *Remove existing bollards (eastern boundary) and extend pillar and chain fence to the south-eastern corner of the Reserve.*

3.1.5 *Install bollards near the interpretation shelter to prevent vehicles from driving into the shelter.*

3.2 Visitors Facilities

Visitor facilities provided at the Reserve are centred on the existing interpretation shelter located at the western end of the carpark. Provided in the shelter are information/interpretation boards and bench seats. The bus/car parking area is located

almost entirely within the road reserve and is maintained by the Department of Transport and Works.

Many visitors require seating especially older visitors. Seating at the Reserve is limited to two benches at the interpretation shelter. If this seating is occupied then other visitors requiring seating either sit on the bollards or return to their coaches.

Vandalism of facilities such as defacing of interpretive material and littering is a problem that is difficult to address. The carpark is a popular night meeting spot for young locals. The Grave has been painted with graffiti several times in the past requiring the boulder to be sand blasted or chemically cleaned.

Management actions

3.2.1 *Install two benches in addition to the existing interpretation shelter seating*

3.2.2 *Discuss with appropriate authorities the possibility of night security patrols.*

3.2.3 *Ranger staff will keep the site clean of rubbish and remove graffiti as soon as possible.*

3.3 Information and Interpretation

The interpretive signage at the John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve aims to inform and educate visitors about the achievements of John Flynn, the first superintendent of the AIM.

Additions to the interpretive signage are currently proposed including information regarding the exchanging of the 'marble' on top of the grave and the co-operation of organisations to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

The Simpsons Gap Bicycle Path that begins opposite the Historical Reserve may again be promoted at the interpretive shelter. Previous signage promoting the Bicycle Path and the Alice Springs Desert Park was vandalised and consequently removed.

Walkers accessing the informal walk to the summit of Mt Gillen use the Reserve as a starting point and vehicle parking area. Interpretation signage promoting the walk may in the future be included at the Reserve if and when the track is developed. New developments such as this walk, and use, first require an Authority clearance obtainable from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Pre-visit information has not been produced for the Reserve.

Management actions

3.3.1 *Information will be included on interpretive signage regarding the original Devils Marble that was placed on the grave and the recent involvement of the Central Land Council representing the Warumungu, Kaytetye and Arrernte Aboriginal people in conjunction with the Uniting Church, Frontier Services and the Reverend Fred McKay, Community Aid Abroad (Oxfam Australia),*

Royal Flying Doctor Service, Aboriginal Areas protection Authority and the PWCNT to return the 'Marble' back to its original site and replace it with a boulder from a registered sacred site near Alice Springs.

3.3.2 *Particular care should be taken as to the accuracy of interpretive material dealing with events leading up to and including the exchange of the boulders.*

3.3.3 *Thoroughly consult with the traditional custodians, through the CLC, over the development of such interpretive material.*

3.4 Visitor Monitoring

The John Flynn Historical Reserve receives large numbers of visitors annually. Most visitors to the West MacDonnell National Park stop briefly at the Reserve and many coach tours include the Reserve on their itinerary. Due to the small area of the Reserve, and its lack of environmental conservation values, it is not necessary to conduct visitor monitoring at this stage.

3.5 Visitor Safety

Older visitors especially need to be aware that at present, the loose gravel track surfaces and protruding quartzite rock veins could pose a danger if care is not taken while walking along these tracks to the grave.

Management actions

3.5.1 *The walking track from the information shelter near the carpark to the grave area (eastern track) will be upgraded to A class if possible.*

3.5.2 *The northern track will be closed and rehabilitated.*

4. RESERVE ADMINISTRATION

Objectives

- To ensure that management procedures and practices achieve the objectives of this plan by following the management actions.
- To administer the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*, its By-Laws and other relevant legislation.
- To ensure developments on Reserve adhere to the requirement of protecting and maintaining the historical structures and visitor facilities relevant to the Reserve.
- To co-operate with Transport and Works and the Alice Springs Desert Park regarding management of the Reserve.
- To provide sufficient resources for the efficient management of the Reserve.

4.1 Staffing and Management

Ranger staff based at Simpsons Gap in the West MacDonnell National Park currently patrol the Reserve to monitor facilities and remove rubbish.

A contractor engaged by T&W carries out maintenance of the road reserve including slashing / spraying roadside weeds and rubbish removal.

Interested organisations such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Uniting Church and students from St Phillips College have expressed an interest to assist with the ongoing management of the Reserve.

The CLC have advised that traditional custodians have an interest in the ongoing management of the boulder. Management would include removal and repair of graffiti damage.

Ongoing management of the Reserve may be provided by a private contractor or Correctional Services.

Management actions

4.1.1 *The frequency of patrols to the Reserve is adequate at present however Ranger Staff should continue to monitor the condition of the site while travelling to and from Simpsons Gap. This will ensure rubbish is removed on an ongoing basis and through this, vandalism may be reduced.*

4.1.2 *Continue consultation with interest groups regarding the ongoing management and maintenance of the Reserve and PWCNT to investigate the formalisation of a group to help manage the Reserve such as a board of trustees or friends of the Reserve group.*

4.1.3 *The PWCNT will consult with traditional custodians through the CLC regarding the ongoing management of the boulder.*

4.1.4 *The PWCNT will also explore the options of a private contractor and/or external groups such as Correctional Services or students from St Phillips College to provide ongoing management of the Reserve.*

4.2 Liaison with Neighbouring Landholders

John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve protrudes into the Larapinta Drive Road Reserve, managed by the Department of Transport and Works and is adjacent to the Alice Springs Desert Park.

Management actions

4.2.1 *Liaison will be maintained with the Department of Transport and Works, regarding traffic and car parking issues as well as removal of rubbish from the carpark and road verge.*

4.2.2 *Liaison will also continue with the management staff of the Alice Springs Desert Park regarding any management activities that might affect the Alice Springs Desert Park and to seek advice regarding re-establishing native plants on the John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve.*

4.3 Legal Requirements

The Parks and Wildlife Commission is obliged, under section 21 of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* to manage the Reserve in accordance with this Plan once it has been gazetted and is operational.

The management of the Reserve will follow the guidelines outlined in this Plan. The Plan may be amended at any time in accordance with the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*.

In May 2000 the Federal Court determined that Native Title rights existed over areas of Alice Springs including the Alice Springs Desert Park. These rights excluded areas of public works as defined in section 253 of the *Native Title Act 1993*. Although there has been no determination of native title over the John Flynn's Grave Historical Reserve and the Reserve is not subject to a native title application, the NT Attorney General's Department have advised that it should be assumed that native title rights exist over the Reserve.

Management actions

4.3.1 *The Reserve's ongoing management will be periodically reviewed to ensure that it complies with the management actions outlined in this Plan.*

4.3.2 *The management actions of this Plan will be periodically reviewed to ensure the most appropriate management is provided and the relevant issues addressed.*

4.3.3 *The Reserve is mostly covered by Recorded sacred site number 5650-452. This requires that the PWCNT obtain an Authority Clearance under section 20 of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, providing clearance for any actions, works and visitation within this area. To prevent the necessity for repeated requests to the AAPA for clearances, AAPA will be approached to provide an Authority Certificate endorsing the proposed use, management and development of the Reserve as set out in this Plan. This clearance would also enable visitors to continue entering the sacred site without first obtaining an Authority Certificate. Management will ensure that use of the Park complies with any conditions set down in the Authority Certificate.*

4.3.4 *Any developments in the Reserve, or any other “act” for the purposes of the Native Title Act, done in the Reserve, will comply with the Native Title Act.*

4.4 Performance Audit

This Plan of Management recognises the increasing tendency towards accountability in the planning and management of parks and thus pays due attention to performance management. Indicators which are identified as Management Actions below, are provided as a yardstick against which progress in achieving the objectives of the Plan can be gauged. They are not a complete measure of success, nor the only measure. Nevertheless, their constant monitoring will enable the Parks and Wildlife Commission to monitor any difficulties or undesirable trends and to keep management on track to achieve the key objectives of the Plan.

The aim in this Plan is to work towards a measurement system which satisfies the following criteria:

results-oriented	- focuses primarily on outcomes and outputs;
selective	- concentrates on the most important indicators of performance;
useful	- provides information of value to the Commission;
accessible	- provides periodic information about results; and
reliable	- provides accurate, consistent information over time.

Management Actions

4.4.1 *All management actions in this Plan will be reviewed on at least an annual basis.*

4.4.2 *The proportion of management actions implemented will be reported.*

5. MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Listed below are Management actions stated in earlier sections of the Plan which are to be implemented systematically as Management Programs. Actions in these Programs are referred back to the Management actions by page numbers.

Priorities are assigned as follows:

- High** - imperative to achieve the Plan's stated objectives;
- Medium** - very important to achieve the Plan's stated objectives but subject to the availability of resources;
- Low** - desirable but will be undertaken only if necessary resources are available or other conditions stated in the Management actions are fulfilled; and
- Ongoing** - must be implemented on an ongoing basis in order to achieve the objectives of the Plan.

Action	Page	Priority
2.1 Soils	8	
2.1.1 Implement Land Assessment Record strategies	8	High
2.2 Native and Introduced Flora	8	
2.2.1 Fencing to allow regeneration of native species	9	High
2.2.2 Slashing or removal of Buffel Grass	9	Ongoing
2.3 Use and Control of Fire	9	
2.3.1 Incorporate Reserve into the Western District Fire Management Strategy.	9	Low
3.1 Visitor Access	10	
3.1.1, 3.5.1 Upgrade eastern path	10	High
3.1.2 Close and rehabilitate northern track	10	High
3.1.3 Resurface area surrounding grave	10	High
3.1.4 Remove bollards and extend pillar and chain fence	10	High
3.1.5 Install bollards near interpretation shelter	10	High
3.2 Visitor Facilities	10	
3.2.1 Install two new benches	11	Low
3.2.2 Discuss possibility of night security patrols	11	High
3.2.3 Ranger staff to remove graffiti as soon as possible	11	High

3.3 Information and Interpretation	11	
3.3.1 Include information regarding the co-operative involvement in the exchange of boulders.	11	High
3.3.2 Care with Accuracy of interpretive material re exchange of boulders	12	High
3.3.3 Consult with custodians re interpretive material	12	High
3.5 Visitor Safety	12	
3.5.1,3.1.1 Upgrade eastern path	12	High
3.5.2 Close and rehabilitate northern path	12	High
4.1 Staffing and Management	12	
4.1.1 Increase awareness of the Reserve	13	Ongoing
4.1.2 Continue consultation with interest groups	13	Ongoing
4.1.3 Consult with traditional custodians re ongoing management of the boulder	14	Ongoing
4.1.4 PWCNT to explore management options	14	Medium
4.2 Liaison with Neighbouring Landholders	14	
4.2.1 Liaison with Department of Transport & Works	14	Ongoing
4.2.2 Liaison with AS Desert Park Management	14	Ongoing
4.3 Legal Requirements	14	
4.3.1 Review Reserve management	14	Ongoing
4.3.2 Review management actions in this Plan	14	Ongoing
4.3.3 Request AAPA clearances for actions, development and use as outlined in this Plan	15	High
4.3.4 Any developments in the Reserve will comply with the <i>Native Title Act</i>	15	High
4.4 Performance Audit	15	
4.4.1 Review management actions annually	15	Ongoing
4.4.2 Management actions implemented to be reported	15	Ongoing

5. SOURCES AND REFERENCES

McKenzie, M. (1985) *Flynn's Last Camp*, Brisbane Qld.,Boolarong Publications.
 Strong, B. (1997) *Flynn's Grave*, fact sheet for the National Trust of Australia (NT).
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