



# 1981 Northern Territory Cabinet Records

Public release of the Cabinet Records



*Composition of the 1981 Cabinet, left to right Hon PAE Everingham, Hon MB Perron, Hon NM Dondas, Hon RM Steele, Hon IL Tuxworth and Hon JM Robertson (NTAS, Department of the Chief Minister NTRS 3354/P1 Item 4)*

**Strictly embargoed NOT for release until 1 January 2012**

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# Public release of the Cabinet records

Under the Northern Territory *Information Act*, public sector organisations are required to transfer their records to the Northern Territory Archives Service not later than 30 years after the record was created.

Most archived records enter an “open access period”, whereby they are available for public perusal 30 years after the record was created. This includes the Cabinet records. The original copies of all Northern Territory Cabinet submissions and decisions are filed by meeting date, and bound into books. These books are then transferred to the Northern Territory Archives Service for safekeeping and preservation.

Those Cabinet records created in 1981 will reach 30 years of age on 1 January 2012 and will be made available for public access.

## The Cabinet

The Northern Territory Cabinet consists of those elected members of the Legislative Assembly who have been appointed as Ministers by the Northern Territory Administrator.

The Cabinet generally meets on a weekly basis to make decisions on matters such as major policy issues, proposals with significant expenditure or employment implications, matters which involve important initiatives or departures from previous arrangements, proposals with implications for Australian, state and local government relations, legislation, and high level government appointments.

## Cabinet submissions

Most business comes before Cabinet by way of formal Cabinet submissions, each of which is allocated a consecutive number. Cabinet submissions generally follow a set format. Submissions are usually prepared by Government agencies at the direction of, or with the agreement of, the Minister responsible for that agency. Submissions may also include comments from other Northern Territory Government agencies which were consulted during the development of the submission.

## Cabinet decisions

Each decision made by Cabinet is formally recorded in a separate document known as a Cabinet decision. Like Cabinet submissions, each Cabinet decision is given its own consecutive number. Most Cabinet decisions will have a corresponding Cabinet submission, but Cabinet may also issue a Cabinet decision without a submission.

## Other Cabinet papers

Ministers may from time to time present memoranda to Cabinet, or table a document at a Cabinet meeting. These documents will generally be incorporated in the formal records of the Cabinet meeting. Such documents will usually result in a Cabinet decision, but not in every case.

# Composition of the Cabinet in 1981

## Fifth Everingham Ministry (1 July 1980 – 25 January 1982)

Paul A.E. Everingham	Chief Minister Attorney-General
Marshall B. Perron	Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Development Minister for Community Development
Ian L. Tuxworth	Minister for Health Minister for Mines and Energy
Jim M. Robertson	Minister for Education Minister for Lands and Housing
Roger M. Steele	Minister for Primary Production and Tourism Minister Assisting the Treasurer
Nicholas M. Dondas	Minister for Transport and Works Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation and Minister Assisting the Chief Minister (1 July 1980 – 31 December 1980)

# The year was 1981\*

## An historical overview of the Territory at the time

- In 1981, Malcolm Fraser was Australia's Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Ronald Reagan the President of the United States of America. Chairman Mao was still running the show in China. Lady Diana Spencer, Kindergarten teacher, was rumoured to be the girlfriend of Prince Charles.
- We were going to the movies to see "Smokey and the Bandit", starring Burt Reynolds, "Superman II", and Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now". We were watching the American soap opera "Dallas", and the Australian drama "Patrol Boat" on television.
- We were eating at the Rock Oyster Restaurant, then located in Cavenagh Street opposite the Casino at the Don Hotel, the Tai Hung Tol Chinese Restaurant at Parap or the Top of the Telford.
- In 1981, GPO Status was conferred on the Darwin Post Office, FM radio stations opened at Alice Springs (8CCC) and Darwin (8TOP), Kalymnos Island in Greece was offered sister city status with Darwin, and "We of the Never Never" was filmed on location at Elsey Station.
- A three bedroom 'post cyclone' elevated house in Nakara was on the market for \$70 000. The average weekly earnings in the NT was \$359 (for males), higher than the Australian average of \$304 per week.
- The Gurig National Park was declared after successful negotiations between Government and Traditional Owners of the Coburg Peninsula.
- Waterside workers were determining policy on the handling and loading of "Yellow Cake" (uranium oxide) at the Darwin Wharf and uranium mining and export was set to expand with negotiations happening between the French and Australian Governments.
- On 1 January 1981, Commodore Eric Johnston AM OBE RAN was appointed the Administrator of the Northern Territory.
- It was the International Year of the Disabled.
- The first months of the NT News headlines were dominated by the issue of service providers for domestic flights in and out of the Northern Territory, and on 6 February, the Northern Airlines closed.
- The township of Ti Tree was gazetted.
- With financial support from the Territory Government the first commercial Crocodile Farm commenced business (Crocodile Farms (NT) Pty Ltd), initially as a tourist venture and later as a commercial enterprise selling meat and skins.
- In March, Cyclone Max dumped 731 mm of rain on the North West Top End causing flooding.



*Commodore Johnston, Administrator of the Northern Territory and Mrs Jean Johnston<sup>1</sup>*

- In July, NORFORCE, Australia's North-West Mobile Force of approximately 320 army reserve personnel, was established and entrusted with surveillance of the north-west coastline of Australia.
- The NT News announced that Darwin City Council and the Territory Government had negotiated a deal to construct the multilevel carpark at Westlane behind the Vic Hotel, and later in 1981 the Territory's first road flyover, at the intersection of Bagot Road and the Stuart Highway was opened for traffic.



*Darwin residents sheltering at Dripstone High School during Cyclone Max<sup>2</sup>*

- Lake Mary Ann Dam at Tennant Creek was opened in April, and the Katherine Swimming Pool was officially opened in October. In July the \$7 million Alice Springs Country Club Casino was open.
- The purpose built Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences was opened at Bullocky Point in September, by Governor General Sir Zelman Cowen.



*Plaque commemorating opening of NT Museum<sup>3</sup>*

- Palmerston Development Authority formerly commenced planning for the new satellite city, to be developed on the 1973 Acquisition site.
- At the end of 1981, the Territory's population was estimated at 126 300 totalling 65 600 males and 57 300 females. In Australia, the population was over 15 million.
- The first baby born in the Territory for the year was baby Wade Maxwell Humm, delivered by Dr Mounsey at Darwin Hospital.
- Sweetheart the crocodile, was on display at Casuarina Shopping Square.
- The Territory was growing and new developments taking shape across the NT indicated this.
- The Northern Territory Tourist Commission was running full page advertisements in the NT News to promote the communities role in tourism, "Tell a tourist where to go" stating that "We'd be lost without our tourists, and they'd be lost without us... show them our legendary hospitality, hospitality brought about through pride in the Territory we love. There's more than enough magic in the Territory to go around. Share it with our tourists. Don't avoid them. Tell them where to go."

\*All information from this historical overview of the Northern Territory 1981 has been sourced from the following publications:

- NT News Newspapers 1981
- Northern Territory Chronicle 1974 -1998, NTU Print 1999
- Year Book Australia January 1982, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Photos

1. NTL Northern Territory Government Photographer Collection, PH0091/0010
2. NTL Northern Territory Government Photographer Collection, PH0107/0285
3. NTL Northern Territory Government Photographer Collection, PH0107/0367

# Cabinet highlights from 1981

## Education

### Two-semester school year

In October 1980, Cabinet had considered a proposal to replace the existing three-term school year with a two-semester school year. The submission noted that this matter had been a topic for discussion amongst teachers and parents in the Northern Territory for a number of years, and that some schools in Indigenous communities such as Maningrida had been operating a form of semester system since 1975.

Subsequently, members of the Education Advisory Council and the NT Council of Government Schools Organisation circulated and discussed the proposal throughout the community. The response from parents and teachers was reported as being greatly in favour of the proposal, and it was noted this structure was more in harmony with Northern Territory seasons and holiday patterns.

At the time, Cabinet had deferred consideration of the submission pending further consultation between interested departments and feedback from the public.

The proposal was re-submitted in February 1981 at which time Cabinet endorsed the introduction of a two-semester school year, to commence in 1982.<sup>1</sup>

### Green Paper on Primary and Secondary Education in the Northern Territory – Directions for the 1980s

In February 1981, Cabinet considered a Green Paper submitted by the Minister for Education on the direction of primary and secondary education for the 1980s. At that time, the Northern Territory Government had been responsible for the delivery of educational services for Territorians for only 20 months. During this period, a core curriculum for all primary and secondary schools had been developed, technical and further education services had been expanded, regionalisation of the education system had been pursued in an effort to become more responsive to local needs, a Northern Territory Teaching Service was being created, a university was being planned and a new *Education Act* had been enacted.

The Green Paper noted there was still more to be done to develop a high quality, flexible, developmental system of education, geared to the needs of Territory students and conditions. The purpose of the Green Paper was to inform the public about what Government was doing in the field of education and invite input on possible directions for education in the 1980s.

Initiatives canvassed in the Green Paper included:

- changes in the year structure, including three streams of courses at senior secondary level (matriculation, Northern Territory Senior Secondary Studies Certificate and transition to work)
- incorporating Year 7 in high schools
- establishment of Senior Secondary Schools
- options for boarding facilities in Darwin

<sup>1</sup> Submission No. 1149 and Decision No. 1519 of 11 February 1981

- evaluation and accreditation of bilingual programs
- enhancements in Aboriginal teacher education
- expansion of secondary school programs in Aboriginal communities
- major reviews of primary and secondary core curricula
- alternative curricula for students with special needs
- expansion of in-service teacher training and development
- establishment of Advisory Councils on Special Education, Aboriginal Education and the Katherine Rural Education Centre.<sup>2</sup>



Chief Minister Mr Paul Everingham, opening Palarumpi (Garden Point) School, June 1981, with Cyril Rioli, Tiwi People leader (NTL, Tschirner collection, item PH0703/0162)

## National Parks

### Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Sanctuary Bill

In March 1981, Cabinet approved the *Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Sanctuary Bill* for introduction in the March Sittings of the Legislative Assembly. The *Bill* proposed the creation of the Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary, with national park status. The *Bill* provided for a joint board of management for the area, the membership of which gave the Traditional Owners the ultimate say in the policy for the sanctuary.

The Cabinet papers described the peninsula as supporting a rich and varied flora and fauna typical of the Top End of the Northern Territory in an area largely unaffected by European influences. The sanctuary's large size, geographical isolation and state of preservation gave it unique value, along with the cultural and spiritual importance of the area to the Indigenous people who lived there.

During the negotiations leading to the development of the *Bill*, the Traditional Owners agreed to the peninsula remaining as a wildlife sanctuary, with title to vest in a board of trustees consisting of Traditional Owners. The Minister's draft second reading speech noted that the Traditional Owners were enthusiastic about working with the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory to protect the land and preserve it for future generations of Australians.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>. Submission No. 1337 and Decision No. 1568 of 2 March 1981

<sup>3</sup>. Submission No. 1365 and Decision No. 1596 of 2 March 1981



## Kings Canyon National Park

In October 1981, Cabinet considered a proposal to create a national park over the Kings Canyon area on the western portion of Tempe Downs pastoral lease. The previous year, the Chief Minister had directed that Kings Canyon be acquired for a national park after extended negotiations with the pastoral lessee, Tempe Downs Pastoral Company, had proved unsuccessful. An offer to negotiate area and price was made by the Conservation Commission in June 1981, but the company failed to respond to this offer and the matter was brought back to Cabinet for further direction.

The intention was to acquire 1 000 km<sup>2</sup> of the 4 815 km<sup>2</sup> of the Tempe Downs Pastoral Lease. The Cabinet submission advised that the area within the proposed park boundaries had not been grazed for the past 20 years and possibly not since the 1920s. The proposed boundaries of the Park took into account the use of natural features to give control of watershed, feral animals and fire and minimised the requirements for fencing. The boundaries were considered practical for management purposes and optimised the potential for tourist development and maintenance of conservation values.

It was suggested that Kings Canyon would rank with Uluru in terms of visitor attraction and would form an important link in the tourist route between Alice Springs and Uluru.

The area was considered botanically the most important in Central Australia, containing a richer array of plants than either Uluru or Finke Gorge. This included a large number of rare and relict plant species, as well as plant communities of interest to the pastoral industry.

The fauna was also of considerable scientific interest, representing an overlap between the fauna of the southern sandy deserts and the central ranges. The habitat of the area was suitable for the reintroduction of rare and endangered species, complementing breeding programs for bilbies and Western Hare wallabies.

The submission noted the area as a whole, and particularly the area north of Ochre Hill and in the Hope Valley, contained a considerable number of relics of Aboriginal occupation. Cabinet decided that steps should be initiated by the Minister for Lands to compulsorily acquire the Kings Canyon National Park area.<sup>4</sup>



*Sunset on Carmichael Crag at the western end of George Gill Range, Kings Canyon National Park. The Crag was named by Ernest Giles in 1872 in honour of Samuel Carmichael, a member of his expedition (NTAS, Department of the Chief Minister, NTRS 2575 Item 86A).*

<sup>4</sup> Submission No. 1670 and Decision No. 1981 of 29 October 1981

## Makarrata Agreement

Makarrata is a word in the Yolngu language meaning a coming together after a struggle, facing the facts of wrongs and living again in peace. The Commonwealth Government had previously agreed that the National Aboriginal Conference, a body established in 1977 to provide a forum for the expression of Indigenous people's views, should develop proposals for a treaty of commitment, or Makarrata. All Australian governments had agreed to enter into discussions about this matter with the National Aboriginal Conference. A treaty with Indigenous people was expected to have significant legal, constitutional, political and social implications for Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

It was in this context that an information paper on the Territory position on a Makarrata was considered by Cabinet in August 1981. One of the central issues for Cabinet was whether the Territory Government should develop a position in relation to a Makarrata for discussion with the National Aboriginal Conference and Commonwealth Government, or await the proposals being developed by the Conference.

The initial Makarrata proposals put forward were for a treaty, covenant or convention which could include provision for matters such as:

- the protection of Indigenous identity, language, law and culture;
- the recognition and restoration of rights to land;
- the conditions governing mining and exploration of natural resources on Indigenous land;
- compensation to Indigenous Australians for the loss of traditional lands and to their traditional way of life; and
- the right of Indigenous Australians to control their own affairs and to establish their own associations for this purpose.

Cabinet noted the issues for Makarrata and decided to await proposals from the National Aboriginal Conference which could be the subject of future discussions.<sup>5</sup>

## International Year of Disabled Persons

### Access and facilities for the physically disabled – Amendments to Building Regulations

In response to the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) in 1981, Cabinet considered two proposals during the year.

The first of these proposals put forward suggested amendments to the Building Regulations to ensure that access to and facilities within future buildings in the Northern Territory catered for the needs of disabled persons. The submission observed that disabled people were seldom seen in public places in the Northern Territory and noted the advice of the Handicapped Persons Association that the handicapped were discouraged from venturing into public activities, due to the lack of access and facilities.

<sup>5</sup> Submission No. 1574 and Decision no. 1863 of 11 August 1981

Existing building designs were seen as excluding disabled persons from everyday activities by restricting access to supermarkets and cinemas, places of employment and public toilet facilities. The amendments to the Building Regulations would improve access to buildings such as hotels, motels, offices, shops, cafes, service stations, warehouses, factories, hospitals, clinics, schools and cinemas.

In respect of public buildings, the amendments proposed access to fixed seating, space for wheelchairs, and door furniture and water taps to meet a required specification. One in every 100 car parking spaces was to be of sufficient size to permit wheelchair user access.

The changes would apply only to new, not existing, buildings. The submission calculated that the extra cost of construction to accommodate the new requirements was considered to be generally not more than 0.5 per cent of contract building costs and not likely to act as a deterrent to developers.

The submission noted the desirability of implementing the proposed changes as early as possible to demonstrate support for IYDP. Cabinet accepted the proposal and approved the drafting of amendments to the Building Manual on 29 April 1981.<sup>6</sup>

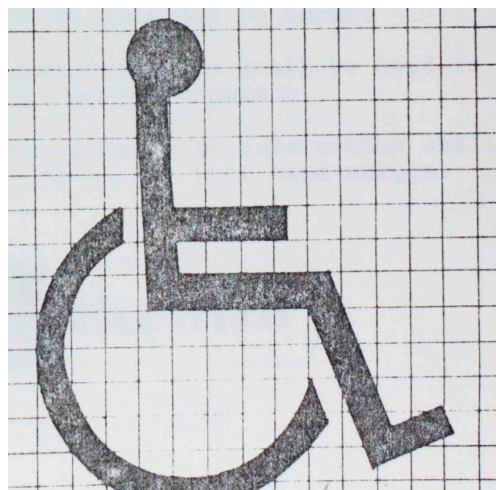
### Disabled Persons Bureau

Later in the year, Cabinet considered a submission for the establishment of a Disabled Persons Bureau within the Department of Community Development. At that time an estimated 5 100 disabled persons lived in the Northern Territory. Handicapped persons had raised concerns about finding appropriate services within government departments and favoured the availability of information and advice from a single source within government.

An IDYP unit had been established to undertake IDYP observance in the Northern Territory during 1981 and this had demonstrated the advantage of a focal point within government to assist disabled people and their families, with specialist knowledge and an advocacy role. The submission argued that a permanent bureau could continue this work.

Cabinet agreed and in December 1981 approved the establishment of a Disabled Persons Bureau to:

- consider all policy matters concerning the needs of the handicapped and disabled
- provide information and counselling services
- make recommendations on government grant and subsidy programs for the disabled
- undertake research related to providing services for the handicapped
- support advisory committees on the handicapped, and
- facilitate training for workers with the handicapped.<sup>7</sup>



1981 Disabled access/ facility logo (NTAS, Department of the Chief Minister NTRS 2575 Item 72A)

<sup>6</sup> Submission No. 1394 and Decision No. 1655 of 29 April 1981

<sup>7</sup> Submission No. 1789 and Decision No. 2116 of 21 December 1981

## Solar Rebate Scheme

In July 1981, Cabinet considered a submission from the Minister for Mines and Energy to establish a solar rebate scheme as an energy conservation initiative. The scheme would provide a 10 percent rebate on the new cost of solar hot water services and air-conditioners for householders and businesses. This was an election promise made during the 1980 General Election campaign.

The submission noted that a 10 per cent rebate level equated to approximately \$100 per system. In addition, it was estimated that households with a solar hot water system would save around \$107 per year in electricity costs, representing the value of the half tonne of fuel oil saved each year per installation.

An amount of \$75 000 was set aside in the 1980-81 Budget to finance the first year's operation of the scheme.

Cabinet agreed to the Solar Rebate Scheme and directed that the scheme be trialled for 12 months.<sup>8</sup>

## Arts and Culture

### Performing Arts Centre - Darwin

In 1979-80, the Territory Government funded the Darwin City Council to commission a feasibility study and planning brief for a performing arts centre and convention centre in Darwin. The study confirmed a need for these facilities and recommended their construction at an estimated cost of approximately \$7.5 million.

Around the same time, the Northern Territory Development Corporation (NTDC) commissioned a study on the feasibility of an international hotel in Darwin. Subsequent to these studies, and after an international promotional mission, the NTDC proposed the development of a hotel, convention centre and theatre as a joint venture between the Government, the Darwin City Council and a private developer, Burgundy Royale Investments Pty Ltd.

Cabinet endorsed this proposal, and approved a heads of agreement with Burgundy Royale Investments Pty Ltd and a memorandum of understanding with the Corporation of the City of Darwin for the joint development of a performing arts centre and international hotel in Darwin.

Features of the development included a 1 000 seat theatre, convention centre to seat 1 200 in lecture sessions or 600 at banquet functions, meeting rooms, a 200 room international hotel and car park for 300 cars. The plan required the company to purchase three lots of land, while the Territory Government and the Darwin City Council would make available four lots of land and close McLachlan Street between Mitchell Street and the Esplanade to accommodate the project. Financing involved a contribution by the company of \$2.17 million with the Territory Government providing \$4.34 million. It was agreed the Government would also provide \$250 000 for technical consultancy and facilities management services. Cabinet agreed that the Territory Government would meet cost over runs to a maximum of \$0.83 million, with any additional over runs to be met by the developer.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Submission No. 1519 and Decision No. 1790 of 2 July 1981

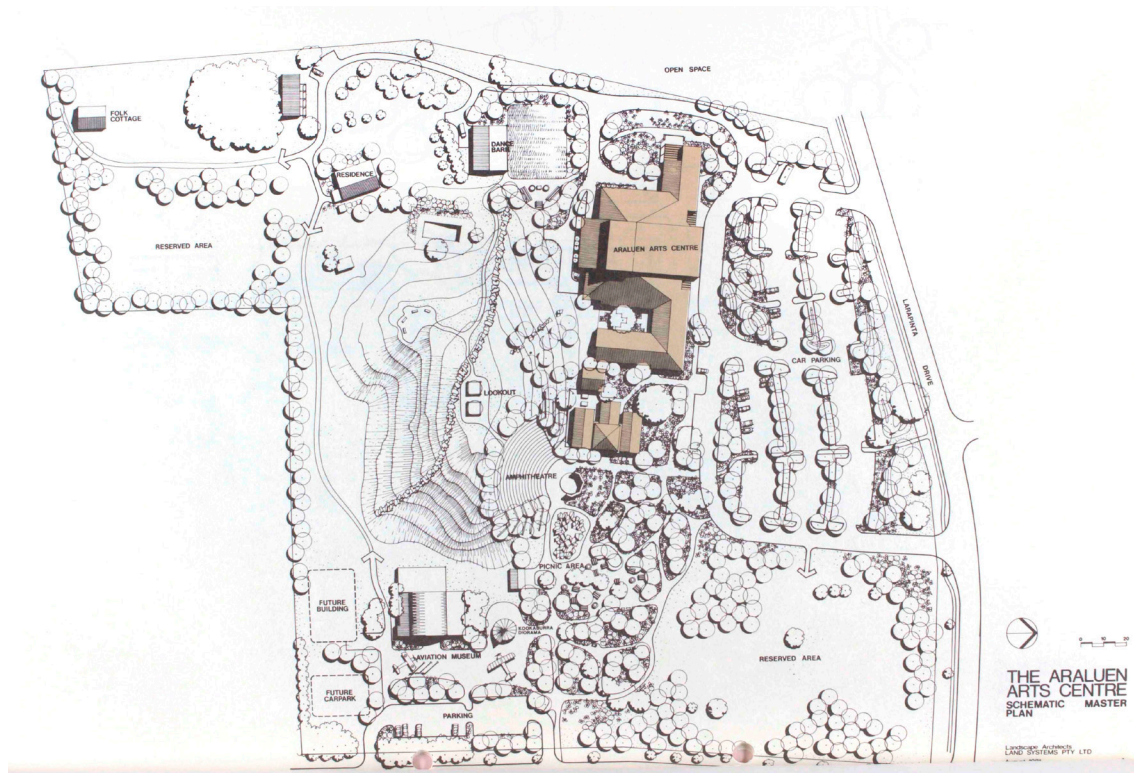
<sup>9</sup> Submission No. 1433 and Decision No. 1686 of 6 May 1981

## Araluen Centre

In September 1979, Cabinet approved the construction of the Araluen Cultural Centre in Alice Springs, to be funded by way of a grant to the Araluen Trust. The Trust commissioned a feasibility study and planning brief for the Centre, and later a design report providing for a theatre, rehearsal/meeting room, dressing rooms, a food and liquor facility, exhibition gallery, art gallery, outdoor sculpture area, art/craft studios and offices.

The Centre would be among the best in Australia for a city of comparable size. The submission warned the facility might be seen as being over-elaborate for the size of the Alice Springs population however it was agreed that the Centre would serve the needs of tourists as well as residents and the plans took into account the needs expressed by the local arts community.

Cabinet agreed to the proposed design and funding of \$4.77 million to construct the Centre over three years to 1983-84, which would coincide with the 50th anniversary of Alice Springs.<sup>10</sup>



*Araluen Arts Centre Schematic Master Plan (NTAS, Department of the Chief Minister NTRS 2575 Item 86C).*

<sup>10</sup> Submission No. 1690 and Decision No. 2001 of 29 October 1981

## Northern Territory Heritage Program

National estate matters transferred to the Northern Territory on 1 July 1978 and a formal agreement between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments was signed by the Minister for Community Development on 2 May 1980 for the administration of the Northern Territory National Estate Program.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Territory Government took primary responsibility for the establishment of priorities and the development of projects within the guidelines set by the Commonwealth. The guidelines provided for a balanced program of environmental and cultural projects, with priority given to those projects for which the relevant State/Territory provided matching funding.

44 projects were nominated for endorsement.

The projects approved by Cabinet subject to normal budgetary considerations included:

- restoration of the Fannie Bay Gaol, Darwin;
- Wildman River Catchment Area study;
- Pine Creek railway station and repeater station conservation work;
- archaeological sites documentation (Aboriginal sites of National Estate significance including Macassan sites);
- Northern Territory military sites survey;
- emergency restoration work of historic landmarks at Victoria and Port Essington;
- Old Police Station and Courthouse/Naval Headquarters, Darwin;
- Springvale Homestead, Katherine;



*Giles, Springvale Homestead, with people, ca1890-1891 (NTAS, Northern Territory Archives Service Giles Family, NTRS 234, Item CP828).*

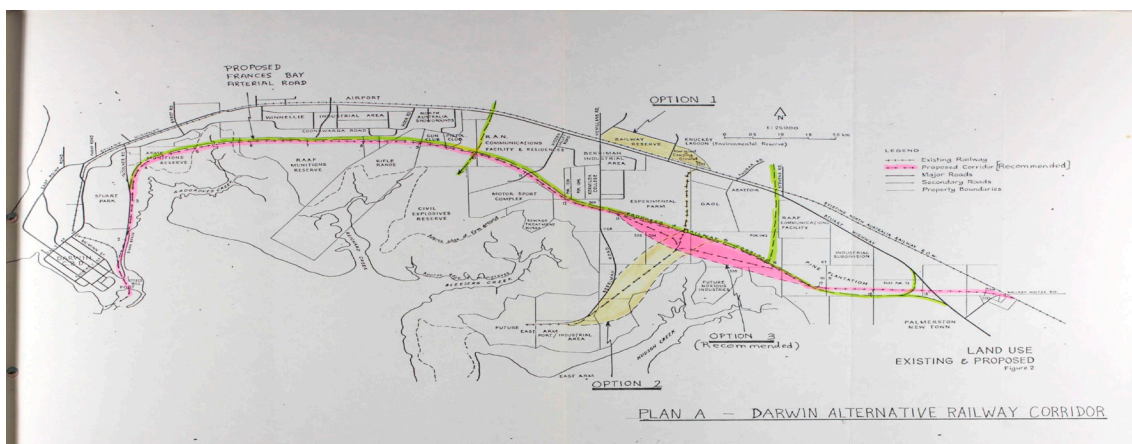
- restoration of a Flying Doctor aircraft and a Wackett aircraft for the Central Australian Aviation Museum;
- restoration of the Borroloola police station and cell blocks;
- Alice Springs Telegraph Station National Park;
- Hermannsburg Mission Buildings;
- Daly River Copper Mines and Graves;
- Old Elsey Homestead, Mataranka;
- Adelaide House, Alice Springs (first hospital in Alice Springs, associated with the Flying Doctor System and with “Flynn of the Inland”); and
- “Sandfly” historic engine – return from Port Augusta in South Australia.<sup>11</sup>

### Alternative Transport Corridor

In July 1981, Cabinet approved in principle a transport corridor from Darwin Port along the Frances Bay/Stuart Park foreshore area, through Winnellie, Coonawarra and Berrimah to the existing railway line near Palmerston.

This followed a consultancy report which recommended such a corridor replace the existing corridor which ran near the (then) Darwin Airport entrance, Salonika Crossing and Daly Street in the city. The estimated cost of the 20 km of track and marshalling yard was \$21.2 million.

The Cabinet submission noted the proposed corridor was compatible with plans for the Alice Springs to Darwin railway line and development of the Darwin port. Cabinet’s approval was subject to a further report after preliminary negotiations in relation to transfer of land to the Northern Territory.<sup>12</sup>



Plan A, Darwin Alternative Railway Corridor (NTAS, Department of the Chief Minister NTRS 2575 Item 79)

<sup>11</sup> Submission No. 1443 and Decision No. 1752 of 16 June 1981

<sup>12</sup> Submission No. 1518 and Decision No. 1796 of 9 July 1981

**CD Contains:**

- Cabinet Highlights of 1981
- Index of 1981 Cabinet Decisions
- Selected Images