

Generosity of traditional owners praised in parks hand back

"I want to offer my thanks to the traditional owners for their great generosity in agreeing to lease back their land so others can visit and share its beauty and significance."

The Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin was praising traditional owners during the hand back of parks and reserves in the East MacDonnell Ranges and south of Alice Springs.

The nine reserves and parks were handed back on the 12th of June.

Six of the parks and reserves involved in the hand back are Schedule One parks, which means that they are Aboriginal freehold land under the Land Rights Act. Three are Schedule Two parks, handed back as Park freehold land to be held by a park land trust on behalf of traditional owners under

Governments for the hand backs.

"This is another great moment for traditional land owners of these parks in the decades-long struggle to win their land back," CLC director David Ross said.

"I think many non-Aboriginal people can't fully appreciate what it means for traditional land owners to receive ownership of the land they had lost and to have a say in its future management.

The Central Land Council said the parks and reserves host many sites of cultural significance to traditional owners.

Under the lease agreement, the parks and reserves



care and protection," Mr Ross said.

Ms Macklin said the handovers are part of an historic 'Parks Deal' which covers a large number of parks and conservation areas across the NT.

"The Parks deal agreed between the NT Land Councils and the NT Government - formally titled "Frameworks for the Future" is significant for a number of reasons," she said.

"First, it represents a non-litigated, broad seek settlement of potential native title claims. Few people realise that the NT Government and NT Land Councils have led the nation in this regard.

"Second, it represents a win/win outcome which guarantees access to the Territory's parks for all Territorians - and indeed all Australians - for 99 years.

"Third, it guarantees a role in the ongoing management of these parks and reserves for traditional owners and their nominated organisations."

Ms Macklin said the parks deal represents a new pathway, which recognises and acknowledges Aboriginal ownership of country, but also the importance of finding ways to share country with non-Indigenous Australians.

The parks are: Trephi-



Northern Territory legislation.

All are subject to 99 year leases to the Northern Territory Government to continue to be used as national parks.

Park Freehold title is a new system of tenure in the Territory and means Schedule Two parks can only ever be used as a national park.

At the expiry of the leases over all the parks, traditional land owners and the Territory Government will need to negotiate a new lease.

The Central Land Council represented traditional land owners in negotiations with the Federal and Territory

will be jointly managed by the Northern Territory's Parks and Wildlife Service and traditional owners.

The joint management process started last year and is already bringing benefits to traditional owners. For example, under a flexible employment program, indigenous workers have cleared buffel grass from Ndhala Gorge to prevent wild fires damaging ancient petroglyphs.

"Non-Aboriginal people who have previously enjoyed access to these parks have nothing to fear from the hand back, but can be pleased that the custodians of these places now have a greater involvement in their



na Gorge Nature Park, Arltunga Historical Reserve, N'Dhala Gorge Nature Park, Corroboree Rock Conservation Reserve, Ewaninga Rock Carvings Conservation Reserve, Kuyunba Conservation Reserve, Native Gap Conservation Park, Dulcie Ranges National Park and Chambers Pillar Historical Reserve.

**Top: Chambers Pillar handback
Centre right: N'Dhala park handback
Bottom right: Ewaninga-park handback
Centre left: Dulcie Ranges park handback
left to right Robert Rieff, Michael Rieff, Alan Dempsey and Lindsay Bookie**