



Traditional owners to launch new Yeperenye trail

Traditional owners of the Yeperenye/Emily and Jessie Gaps Nature Park near Alice Springs will celebrate the official opening of their new public walking and cycling trail between Anthwerrke (Emily Gap) and Atherrke (Jessie Gap) on Wednesday, 28th July.

A smoking ceremony and dance at Anthwerrke [UN-door-kwa] at 10.30 am will be followed by an opportunity to experience the trail to Atherke [[ah-TER-ka] with families from the Amoonguna and Santa Teresa communities and lunch.

The \$364,000 trail is the biggest investment in public infrastructure by any Aboriginal group in Central Australia.

The traditional owners used the rent income they get for the jointly managed park to pay for the trail because they want to raise awareness of the cultural significance of the area and create employment in trail design, construction and tourism.

More than 30 Aboriginal workers built the 7.2 kilometre trail by hand, receiving one-the-job training by local company Tricky Tracks.

Cultural supervisors were on site during the construction to ensure important sites were respected and protected.

Traditional owners also helped to design the trail which follows the contours of the East MacDonnell Ranges and will feature interpretive signage at the trail heads.

“I’m feeling really proud of this trail launch. We waited six years to do it and now it’s finally here. The families are really excited,” traditional owner Lynette Ellis said.

“Tourists should experience the East MacDonnell Ranges as well as the West Macs,” Grant Wallace, from Amoonguna, said.

Mr Wallace is a member of the traditional owner group that planned and funded the project with the help of the CLC’s community development program.

He was one of the workers who built the trail using hand tools, which minimises erosion.

“It has been good learning new skills and being able to work hard and share this sacred place with everyone,” said Mr Wallace.

“I’m looking forward to using these skills for future trail work around here.”

Wheelchair users can access the dual usage trail at both the Emily Gap and Jessie Gap ends and there is seating at rest stops.

“It’s so the old people and those who aren’t mobile can also come to the site,” Ms Ellis said.



The park is home to significant dreamings, the place where the three caterpillar songlines Yeperenye [Yep-ah-RIN-ya], Ntyarlke [n-CHAYL-ka] and Utnerrengatye [OOT-ner-ung-utch] intersect.

“The trail is an act of generosity by the traditional owners that will not only benefit local tourism, but also create employment on country,” said Central Land Council chief executive Lesley Turner.

“They have so much more to teach us all about their country and visitors are crying out for those experiences.

“We will continue to support traditional owners who wish to invest their collective income in sustainable projects,” he said.

The NT Parks and Wildlife Services will provide the interpretive signage and repair and maintain the trail.

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