



National Trust

Northern Territory

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022



Unveiling of the Trevor Horman plaque at the Old Katherine Railway Station

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Presidents Report September - October 2022.

Preparation of the National Trust NT accounts and details for the audit and annual report has consumed a lot of energy with the audit of the finances being the most time consuming for the Treasurer and Finance Committee.

The Project to move the 100-year-old steam locomotive FNB 88 back to the Katherine Railway Station has now been completed. The collaborative project between Friends of North Australian Railways (FNAR), the National Trust and Katherine Town Council was something started by Trevor Horman in 2015. I was invited to speak at a morning tea on the morning of the 21st of August at the Katherine Railway Station. It provided an excellent opportunity to provide a run down on the history of the NAR, FNB88 and pay tribute to those involved in the project. A plaque commemorating the contribution of Trevor Horman to the preservation of the NAR was placed in the train station.

The Heritage Branch organised 150th anniversary of the joining the Overland Telegraph line at Frew Ponds in 1872 is now behind us. Despite a few tense moments (when the military exercise delayed the arrival of participating dignitaries) for the organiser Michael Wells, the event went off extremely well. The gathering was staged in two places, firstly at the Stuart Highway then at the joining pole of the OTL around 1.5km west in Hayfield Station.

Ted Egan and local traditional owner Harold Daly Waters, through the medium of song, entertained and educated the gathering with stories of historical and family connections to the region and the construction of the OTL. A nice touch was presenting local station and community children with one of the especially minted commemorative \$1 coins.at the joining point of the OTL.



Ted Egan at the joining point of the Overland Telegraph Line

Following this, a gathering of the 'Mates of the Murrniji' was convened at Jones Store for a presentation on the difficulties in maintaining heritage buildings in remote and regional areas. The gathering then convened at Junction Hotel for further presentation from Stuart Ord, Wayne Kraft and Peter Jones. Ted and Neris uplifted the proceedings with more songs of historical and cultural context. Approximately 80-100 Mates were in attendance.



'Mates of the Murrniji' gathering at the Junction Hotel

On the 23rd August I attended the National Trust Council meeting at Tennant Creek along with members from the McDouall Stuart and Tennant Creek Branches. This was followed by a book launch which was well attended by the local community with the local MLA undertaking the launch. The book by Jennifer M Reilly is on the life of Gunar Bekeris. Gunar was a former soldier displaced after World War 11 with the Russian invasion of Latvia. He spent twenty odd years working at Peko Mines in Tennant Creek, seeing the transformation from basically picks to excavators. He spent the following 32 years living at Barbara Cove on Vanderlin Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

All of these events were well attended with between 150 - 200 at Frew Ponds, 80 - 100 at Newcastle Waters and 40-50 at the book launch. There is a gradual reawakening of interest in regional history in the Northern Territory. It was also pleasing to see local parliamentarians at all of these events.



Wayne Green, Ian Mann, Eddie Webber and Bill Low, Tennant Creek 23 Aug 2022

Congratulations to the hard-working Katherine Branch for winning an award in the not-for-profit community and business engagement awards recently conducted in Katherine.

This was somewhat tempered by the trashing of O'Keeffe House and gardens by a group of children. Thankfully there was no structural damage to the buildings and the support from the local community was great in undertaking the initial clean-up.

On the Pine Creek front, I have been in discussion with the Vic Daly Shire on the management of the Railway Station and Locomotive Shed. The Trust manages the station building and the Vic Daly Shire has control of the locomotive shed. Without a branch representing the National Trust and interests of the community a number of issues in managing the site have emerged. This will hopefully be resolved in the near future.

The railway station has again been broken into causing further damage to the building. A grant application to fund repairs is presently before the Heritage Advisory Council for consideration.

In September I attended a meeting of the Pine Creek Heritage and Tourism Association by invitation to discuss the local heritage issues with the group. It was also an opportunity to gauge interest in re-establishing the Pine Creek Branch of the National Trust. The group agreed to consider the proposal. A number of other individuals in town and not associated with this group have been canvassed with mixed reactions.

In the mood for some wet season gardening?

"Friends of Milly Point National Trust Gardens" Darwin are calling upon you to ask if you can spare a few hours a week to come along to weed, prune, plant, rake, mow to your hearts content or just take away excess garden refuse if you have a trailer.

The Gardens of Audit House, Burnett House and Stahl Block are in need of a lot of TLC and green finger support as the weeds are flourishing and everything is rather shaggy!

You are most welcome to come along Tuesday and/or Thursday Mornings to enjoy and work in the gardens – Tea and Coffee will be available. Please bring a hat, gloves, water and your own tools if possible. We thank you for your support and assistance.

P.S. just let Suraksha in Audit house know that you have arrived.

BERNIE Burnett



Band at the Top

In the gardens of Mines House, Myilly Point Precinct, 10 September 2022

The Darwin Branch of the National Trust was thrilled to be asked to co-host this event with the Darwin City Brass Band who approached us after researching the history of the town bands of Darwin that had started in 1895. More research produced a series of key events as well as the evolution of playlists from 1895 until recent times. In addition, the Brass Band had commissioned a Melbourne composer to create a specific piece titled 2 to ten. This was to mark the first bomb that hit Darwin at 9.58am and its performance on the evening was in fact a world premiere. Now they just needed a venue to showcase their hard work.

The Band provided the commentary and the music. The Darwin Branch provided the venue, the set-up, the bar, arranged the caterer and provided the volunteers to assist with these.



On the night, the music was interspersed with a photographic history of the various people and events that shaped the band's progression. The band not only wanted to showcase their music and the band's evolution; they also thought it needed to be put into context in a relaxed historic setting, hence their approach to the Darwin Branch.

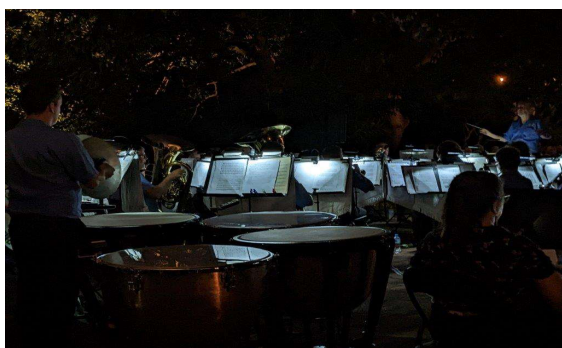
As the program started from 1895, naturally the first item was 'God Save the Queen', in honour of Queen Victoria of course. Some patrons were clearly a bit out of practice but gradually remembered that in 1895 one immediately sprung to one's feet when the National Anthem was played. In 2022 the response took a while. Later in the program Patrons also observed two minutes silence to remember Queen Victoria's, great, great granddaughter, the late Queen Elizabeth II.

A two-course dinner catered by Yogi's Way was enjoyed by all. The National Trust volunteers demonstrated their waitressing and bar tending skills, while the Brass Band kept everyone captivated with their well-chosen music as well as informative commentary.

A huge thankyou goes to all the members of the Darwin City Brass Band for putting such a great program together and producing such beautiful music, and to all our wonderful volunteers - the waitresses, the bar staff and those who set up and put everything away for the evening and also to our caterers, Yogi's Way.



The evening was an informative and delightful musical journey in a beautiful outdoor historic setting with food and beverages. Historic music in a heritage setting – what a perfect match.





Katherine Branch Report October 2022

Katherine Branch has had a very successful dry season. The combination of the new historical display installation, the rejuvenated gardens, the distribution of brochures and the activation of the O'Keeffe House Facebook page has contributed to the influx of visitors and locals to O'Keeffe House and Gardens. We have been run off our feet with the serving of Devonshire Teas, tours of O'Keeffe House and plant sales.

Events

In August we ran two very successful Heritage High Teas as part of Seniors Month. One in the gardens of O'Keeffe House and the other at the 1926 Railway Station, both events filled quickly and were well received. Thank you to Eddie Webber for his fine talk about the work of the FNAR, Katherine Railway Station and the late Trevor Horman. Thank you to the NT Government for their support through a Seniors Month grant.



O'Keeffe House High Tea



Railway Station High Tea

1926 Katherine Railway Precinct

The delay of tradies continues to hamper the progress of the 1926 Katherine Railway Precinct upgrade. The project is nearly complete with only the installation of the stairs to the train remaining. Despite the delay, the Railway Precinct looks amazing and will open to the public next dry season.



Awards

To add to our success this year, National Trust Katherine Branch won the Excellence in Business Community Collaboration for O'Keeffe House and Gardens and was nominated for Outstanding Customer Service – Not-for-profit category at the Chamber of Commerce NT Business Excellence Awards. We were thrilled to be nominated and the entire committee was able to attend the event in person.



Photo on Left: L-R Stephanie Hill, Merriel Lawrie, Nicky Anlezark, Katrina Lucas and Bess Hart

Break In

Our run of good luck came to an end with a break in at O'Keeffe House on the 1st October causing damage to our nursery (smashing pots and up ending plants, composite etc), trashing of the Sidney Williams Hut (thank goodness the new displays were unharmed) and minor damage to O'Keeffe House. Police were called; unfortunately, the offenders were under 10 years old so therefore there is slim hope of accountability. Many thanks to our volunteers who came along to clean up the mess.

AGM

The Katherine Branch AGM was held in September and the committee is unchanged with no new volunteers wishing to take on any positions. Like many National trust branches and other organisations, we continue to struggle to find volunteers to assist us with the serving of Devonshire Teas and Historical Tours. It would be lovely to open O'Keeffe House and Gardens more than two days a week, but our lack of volunteer base does not allow it. If you interested in volunteering, or know of someone who might be, please get in touch!

Season Closure and Christmas Lights Display

O'Keeffe House and Gardens are now closed for Historical Tours and Devonshire Teas. The nursery will continue to supply locals with their plant needs on Saturdays from 9am to 12noon.

Christmas is fast approaching and preparations for our annual Christmas Lights Display are well underway. The Sidney Williams Hut has been cleared in preparation for the display at O'Keeffe House and the lights on the 1892 Steam Train at the 1926 Katherine Railway Station are up. Those passing by the station early in October got a nice surprise as we tested them out. Many thanks to AusProjects NT for sponsoring the train lights.



Opening night is 26th November and runs each Friday and Saturday until the 17th December.

Katrina Lucas
Chair – National Trust Katherine Branch

Gulf Branch Update for September & October 2022.

The Branch had a morning visit recently from Robinson River school students, who came to learn a little bit more about the local history of the Gulf Region. Glen, our local historian guided them around the various displays including First Nations country boundary areas, resistance along the Gulf Track, European history, i.e. Borroloola, one of the earliest gazetted town in the NT in 1855, policing in the Gulf and mining, explaining some of exhibitions and giving an overview of the history of the Old Police Station / Welfare precinct.



We sadly say a goodbye to our Treasurer and Local Gulf Shire Manager, Virginia Boon who has moved on to Katherine Town Council, their gain and Gulf Branch's loss. Virginia was a very keen and proactive local member.

We thank and acknowledge Ted our Caretaker for keeping the doors opened and closed and helping ensure all presentable for our visitors. We have had the last Outback Tours bus for the season, as the weather heats up with only a trickle of visitors coming through the doors.

As always, we thank all our local members and supporters for keeping the doors open and supporting the Old Borroloola Police Station Museum.

The National Trust in Central Australia July – September 2022.

Over the past 3 months the McDouall Stuart Branch has been involved in several activities in Central Australia.

In July we were represented at commemorations of the life and work of Hermannsburg Missionary Carl Strehlow and his wife Frieda. Pastor Strehlow died at Horseshoe Bend while being taken south for medical treatment 100 years ago this month. On Sunday 24th July he was remembered at a service in the Historic Precinct at Hermannsburg, one of only five National Heritage sites in the Northern Territory. Then the following Sunday another celebration was held at his grave at Horseshoe Bend Station on the lower Finke River.



Horseshoe Bend Station and the graves

On Saturday 13 August NT Parks and Wildlife promoted an open day at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station. In the morning a plaque was unveiled on Trig Hill at the Telegraph Station to honour surveyors who helped to open up the Northern Territory and in particular, Central Australia. This project was supported and encouraged by Mary Neck, a life member of the National Trust.



Surveyors, NT Parks and Wildlife staff and National Trust members at the Telegraph Station



National Trust member, Olga Radke guiding visitors at the Telegraph Station

The McDouall Stuart Branch, Adelaide House Museum and the Lutheran Old Church History Group presented an historic display including photographs, music and some of Alfred Traeger's early pedal radio equipment, during the Open Day. It was in the former telegraph Station schoolroom and proved very popular with visitors.



Traeger radio display

Recently the Branch has been advocating for a couple of Heritage Listed and potential Heritage sites in Alice Springs. In June Alex Nelson nominated the Wilkinson Cottage, the first cottage at the Old Timers Homes, erected in 1949, for preservation under the NT Heritage Act. It was designed by John Flynn and the first resident was George Edginton, a member of an exploring party to the Petermann Ranges in 1906. Last month the managers of Old Timers, Australian Remote and Regional Community Services almost commenced demolition of the cottage, still in good condition. It was saved by interventions on several fronts, until assessment by the Heritage Council is complete. This will hopefully deliver permanent protection.

The McDouall Stuart Branch was invited to nominate an observer to attend the NT Heritage Council meeting and inspections in Alice Springs on 29 – 30 September. Site Inspections included the 7 Mile aerodrome, Owen Aprings Reserve, Tnorala Gosses Bluff, Hermannsburg Heritage Precinct, the Ochre Pits, in the Western MacDonnell Ranges, Wilkinson Cottage, Pitchi Richi, St Marys mural and the Residency, then the meeting followed on Friday. Thanks is extended to the Heritage Branch for their hospitality.

Last week there was news of plans by the Anglican Church to sell the former St Marys Hostel complex just south of Alice Springs. Concerns were raised because a chapel on the site holds a Heritage Listed mural painted by a Hungarian artist, Robert Czako in 1958. For years, as part of Heritage Week, Jose Petrick, a Life Member of the National Trust has presented a talk on the history and meaning of the mural. Last year the Trust made a financial contribution, with the Heritage Branch, towards a painstaking restoration of the mural. This was carried out by a professional conservator and a group of keen volunteers.

Sadly, the Church has seen it necessary to divest itself of the St Marys complex. There is concern for future of the chapel and indeed for the mural. The Branch annual meeting on Sunday 9th October accepted a motion that:

‘The McDouall Stuart Branch of the National Trust expresses its deep concern over the Anglican Church’s decision to sell the St Marys site. We ask that the church take steps to ensure that the chapel housing the historic and Heritage Listed Robert Czako mural is preserved. Continuing access should be available to local people, visitors and in particular to former St Marys Hostel residents’.

The annual meeting saw an interesting discussion on the promotion of local tourism, led by President Bill Low and James Ackland from Tourism Central Australia. Volunteers continue to open the old Hartley Street School to visitors between 10.30am and 3.00pm, five days a week. The final activity of the year will be a Sunday lunch in early December, provided by the Branch to thank the band of volunteers who support the National Trust in Alice Springs.

Pine Creek

Pine Creek Museum was recently visited by Kathryn and Gabriel Cole, daughters of Tom Cole OAM who owned Esmeralda Station near Pine Creek in the late 1930s-early 1940s, running buffalo on the property before they were sent to the meatworks. The Museum's collection of photographs includes one with Tom Cole.

National Trust member and Pine Creek volunteer, Rosemary Aiken showed Kathryn and Gabriel around and also arranged Eddie Ah Toy to meet the sisters and they were able to chat about a school photo on display containing their sister Mary as well as Eddie. Mary was unable to travel to Pine Creek but did visit Darwin with her sisters.



The Australian Dictionary of Biography has an article on Tom Cole <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cole-thomas-ernest-tom-23778>

Another visitor searching for family history was Gaynor Allwright and his wife who came to Pine Creek to locate the grave site of his great great grandfather who worked at Francis Creek Mine and died in 1880. His grave was marked with a cross on the side of the highway at Pine Creek.

Tennant Creek

In August, the Tennant Creek branch hosted the book launch of 'An Aussie Character and Patrotic Latvian' by Jennifer Reilly, former Tennant Creek resident. The book tells the story of Gunar Bekeris who lived in Tennant for many years.

In September the branch was part of the inaugural Tennant Creek Hospital Open Day, opening the doors of the former hospital, and now the home of the branch, to visitors at the community event.



Keep in touch with Tennant Creek branch at <https://www.facebook.com/TennantCreekBranchNationalTrustNT>

Overland Telegraph Line Sesquicentenary Celebrations

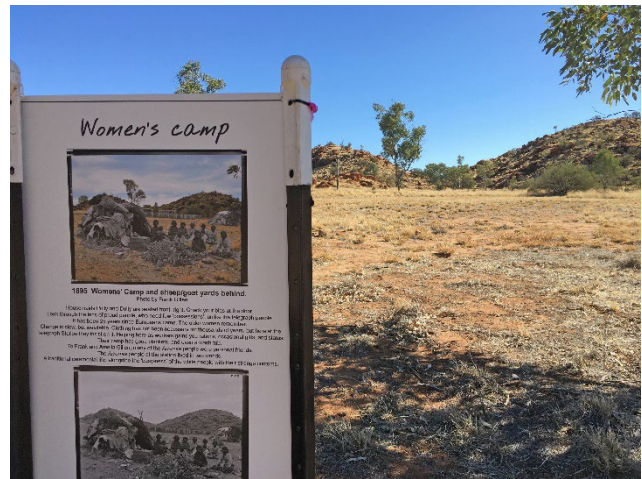
The following events were coordinated by NT Parks and Wildlife as part of the Parks Alive program.

Credit: Andrew Crouch for the images plus articles on Alice Springs and Barrow Creek.

Alice Springs Telegraph Station Open Day

We enjoyed a beautiful sunny and balmy Winter's day on 13 August for the celebratory '150 years Open Day' at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station, with about 500 locals and visitors attending. NT Parks, who manage the Station precinct, did a sterling job of organising the event, with assistance from many local and even interstate volunteer helpers.

Among the numerous displays and re-enactments on the day, highlights included 30 'then and now' photographic placards prepared by long-time local resident and historian Eugene Blom. Each of these was located in the exact spot in the Station grounds where the original was taken as far back as the 1890s by Frank Gillen and others.



Amongst other treasures, Alfred Traeger's very first pedal wireless transceiver was on show in the Station buildings.

A special event that was timed to coincide with the Open Day was the unveiling of a plaque on Trig Hill behind the Station to celebrate the many contributions made by the surveyors, ranging from John McDouall Stuart and the numerous OTL overseers, followed by Winnecke and Barclay and others through to the present day.



Above: Unveiling of the surveyors' commemorative plaque on Trig Hill, Chris Neck speaking

Below: L - Stuart Traynor speaking, R – Trig Hill Surveyors Commemorative plaque



Alice Springs showed proudly once again that it has the greatest collective concentration of knowledge in Australia of the 'on the ground' history of the Telegraph Line and the people and events that followed it.

Barrow Creek Telegraph Station Open Day

On August 16, The Barrow Creek Telegraph Station was opened for passers-by on the Stuart Highway to come in for a cuppa, morning tea and a chat with Alice Springs Parks Ranger Kelly Knights, Tennant Creek Parks Ranger Ujwal Minocha, Stuart Traynor and Andrew Crouch.

This week marked the 150th anniversary of the official opening of the Station by Charles Todd:

"Thursday 15th August. Fine day. Mr Todd opened the Station today. He gave us a short speech and expressed himself highly gratified with everything on our Station and was so much pleased that we were the Government men selected by him and proved ourselves the better of the two." (From the diary of Thomas Smith – one of the Station builders)

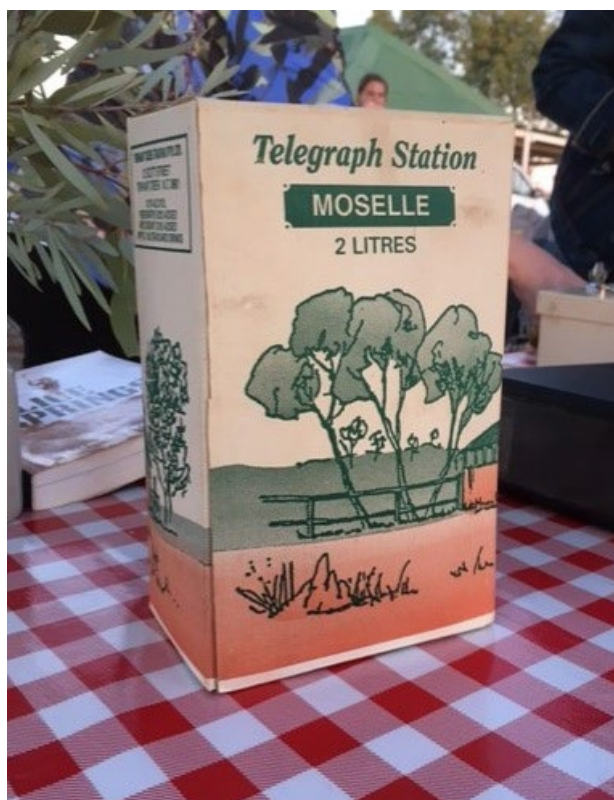
About 50 travellers including a group of school kids from nearby Aboriginal community Tara made the most of the opportunity.

The buildings in their picturesque and commanding highway location surrounded by tall mesa escarpments are quite atmospheric, and somewhat sobering given the incident early in the Station's history when an unfortunate confrontation occurred, resulting in the spearing deaths of two white men, and the deaths of some fifty local Aboriginal people in the following reprisals.

And as if to remind us of the inevitability of technological progress, a mobile phone tower dominates the nearby skyline.



Tennant Creek Telegraph Station Dinner Under the Stars



Diners were entertained by The John McDouall Stuart story told by Danny Gillies. Attendees included Margaret and David Hewitt of the Alice Springs National Trust branch (top right)

CHRISTMAS PARTY

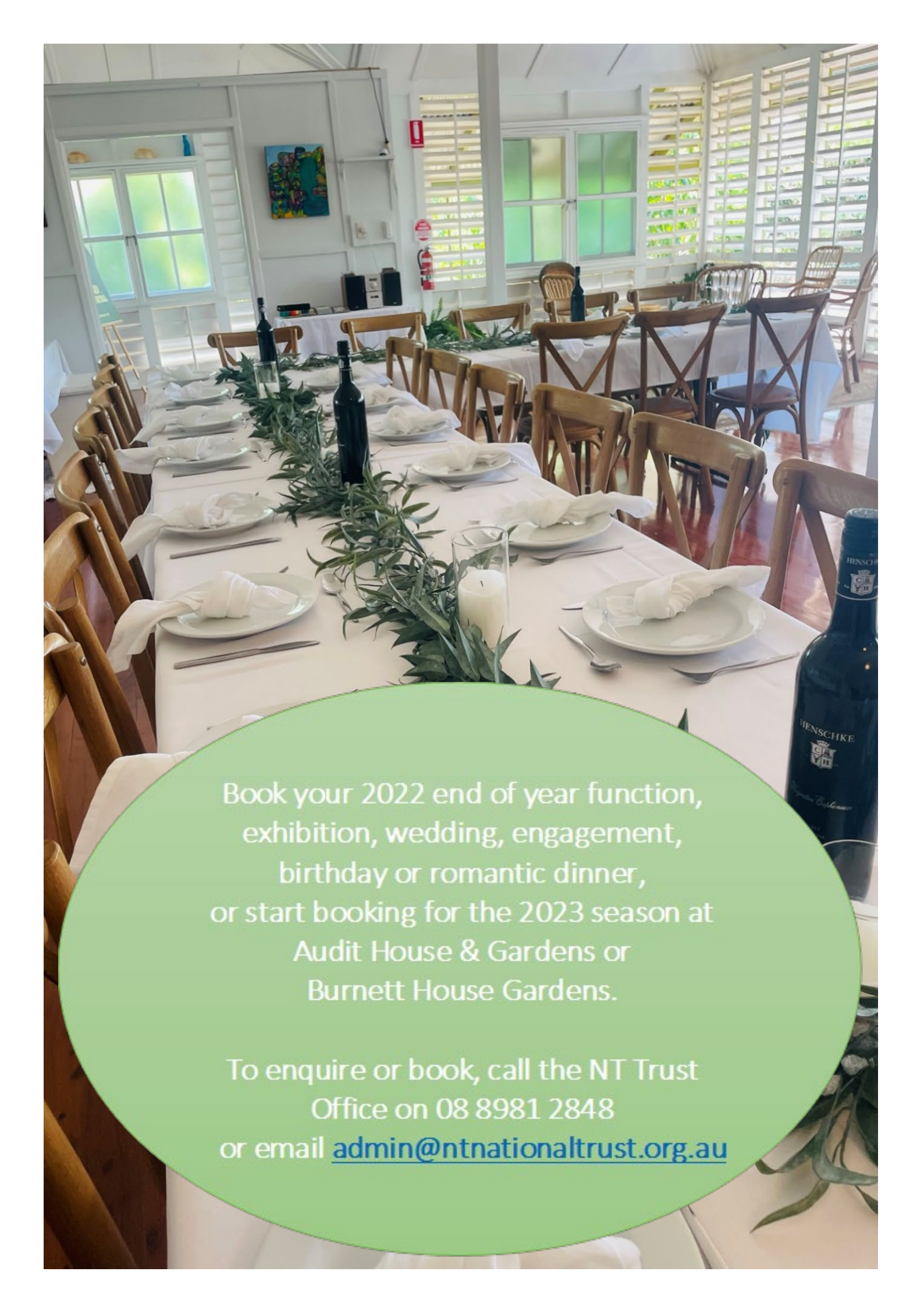


The Darwin Branch committee of the National Trust NT, invites all members and volunteers to the 2022 Christmas Party at Audit House, 2 Burnett Place, on Thursday 17th November at 5.30pm. This is an annual event where the committee say thankyou to those who have assisted in so many ways during the year.

For catering purposes we require the number of people attending, so please RSVP by 10th November to Julie on 0437391393 or Janet at tours@ntnationaltrust.org.au.

All Darwin region members and volunteers welcome.

We are also holding an End-of-Year sale in teh Gift Store so a great opportunity to pick up some Christmas gifts for family and friends.



Book your 2022 end of year function,
exhibition, wedding, engagement,
birthday or romantic dinner,
or start booking for the 2023 season at
Audit House & Gardens or
Burnett House Gardens.

To enquire or book, call the NT Trust
Office on 08 8981 2848
or email admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au