

September 2024

National Trust of Australia



Northern Territory

E Newsletter

The Build -up has arrived with a vengeance across North Australia, Mango trees have fruit and the Frangipani trees are flowering, time to start pruning and potting. The Temps are rising in the Centre and starting to heat up a reminder to all our members to take care when out in the Sun, and watch out for hot end of dry season fires., enjoy the still cool evenings with friends and Branch members before the humidity and storms arrive in time to start plantings both plants and ideas for events

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The dry season is well under way and the prediction is that the weather will transition from cool mornings to periods of extreme heat. While out camping and fossicking take care and keep the fluids up.

The dry season migration of tourists has started to wane as the weather heats up. I have had cause to travel to Pine Creek several times lately and the number of caravans and road trains on the road can be quite daunting. Patience and defensive driving are certainly the order of the day. Leave a little earlier than normal and wait for the overtaking lanes before passing and err on the side of caution. The number of people killed on the road this year is at a record level and quite staggering.

This year is the 50th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy and the remembrance ceremony has become mired in controversy. The ongoing debate has lowered the tone of expectations and the desire to become involved by some. We will however be including some not previously aired stories, in the next few newsletters, of Trust members who went through this traumatic experience.

The number of scams is on the rise from property management, post office parcel delivery, banking, funerals, insurance, online shopping etc, with even the Australian Taxation Office getting attention. The extent of scams Australia wide is now in the billions. The Trust has also experienced the lows of being scammed from the vendors and with a slight change in the recipient's bank account details. Westpac have suggested a few changes to thwart future incidents of scamming and these we have adopted.

Vandalism and anti-social behaviour continue to impact on our day-to-day business across the Territory. The cost over the last few years emotionally as well as financially has been quite considerable.

Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory (MGANT) have recently resumed support services for regional museums, and this is great news for us. We are the repository for collections in several regional areas including Borroloola, Pine Creek and Tennant Creek and we are developing proposals for Pine Creek Repeater Station and Borroloola Old Police Station Museum.

We acknowledge and thank the NT Government for the Community Benefit Grants that Allowed the NT National Trust to employ skilled trades people to undertake repair work on O "Keefe House in Katherine. NT Heritage Grants that have allowed work to be undertaken with repairs and replacement lines for Mines House Sewerage line, restoration work on Pine Creek Repeater Building, and Burnett House Concrete Stabilisation work.

Our admiration and heartfelt gratitude go out to those NT Trust volunteers that continue to maintain our buildings, look after our gardens and keep the doors open across the regions.

If you know some-one who is interested in Heritage or would like to get more involved with the NT Trust either at a Branch or Council level, please encourage them to come along and join a branch or property in your locality or alternatively, contact the NT Trust Office! We have some amazing properties across the NT and are always looking for Volunteers, people with skills in managing events, supporting & coordinating volunteers, cooking, gardening, caring/maintenance for properties, marketing, finance, publicity, media and management knowledge that can assist the running of NT Trust and its properties. All skills and contributions are appreciated as we are a voluntary driven organisation, and our greatest assets will always be our volunteers and their passion and dedication to preserving the Heritage of the Northern Territory.

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Thanks for your ongoing support

Eddie Webber director@nationaltrust.org.au

0490817552

REMEMBERING CYCLONE TRACY

Cyclone Tracy 1974-2024

Roddy Calvert

Well, it has been nearly fifty years but at times it only seems like yesterday. Cyclone Tracy was a force Darwin folk weren't really prepared for.

On 22nd December 1974 the bureau of met observed a tropical depression forming in the Arafura Sea about 700kms north of Darwin. The depression was moving slowly in a south-westerly direction. By late evening of the next day, it had intensified and wind speeds had increased to more than 63 kms per hour thus warranting the systems upgrade to the status of a cyclone the Bureau gave it the name Tracy, a category 4. A cyclone watch was issued commencing on the 21 December, in turn these were followed by a series of warnings between 22 and 24th December. Tracy continued to move in a south westerly direction, and while closely monitored it did not appear to pose a major threat as it was assumed that it would pass well to the north of Darwin.

The morning of 24th December began cloaked by heavy and low cloud, by noon on Christmas Eve the picture was clearer and alarming Tracy was 110 kms NW and was headed SE straight for the city. At 12.30 pm a severe warning was broadcast never the less I went about my business in the afternoon; checking the mail at the AI & AB office, last minute Christmas food shopping, I didn't really speak to anyone but was aware of a cyclone in the area. The day was really windy and I had recalled at the beginning of December that Cyclone Selma category 3 was predicted to impact Darwin but it dissipated before it impacted land. It came within 55 kilometres before turning away. So, nothing too alarming. I got back to the caravan park late in the afternoon and many vans were pulling out and leaving. I was totally mystified as to why this was so; I remember asking someone and was told because of the impending cyclone.

I will now mention I was nine months pregnant and was due supposedly around Christmas/New Year. I had come in from the station a week or so before, rented a caravan from Quan Sing and had it parked up at Mindil Beach Caravan Park (site of Darwin Casino today).

It is a common pattern in disasters; the near miss that causes complacency. Everyone was sick of talking about cyclones as besides Christmas was here. At Christmas parties the consensus was that Tracy would do what Selma had done, what every cyclone for decades had done veer away.

I was in my early twenties and what did I know really about cyclones, absolutely nothing. My internal instincts kicked in I guess so I tuned into the radio. I did all the things advised; container of water, torch and radio at the ready. No Christmas Eve parties for me.

What then unfolded was a slow building nightmare as evening drew into night I continued to listen to the radio, power was lost, the wind rose and kept rising and the torrential rain forced its way into one of my small caravan windows which had broken by this time. The radio had stopped broadcasting now. The magnitude of the storm became apparent, the caravan was more continuously rocking back and forth, the roof air vent was struggling to stay put. Apprehension and fear started to set in.

Wasn't brandy supposed to calm nerves? I poured a small shot. It didn't help. I had my pets, one Irish Red Setter and two cats and they too were petrified. I started to cry; I was about to the point of hysteria when a tree branch broke through the back main windows. That was the slap in the face that I needed.

By the time I had made all these runs an eerie stillness brought comfort I remember the sky was a hazy greenish colour there was still diffuse lightning flashes and I saw cars were sheltering along side the toilet block not far from me. Somehow there seemed comfort being near others so I drove my vehicle close by.

Naughty me then lit a cigarette but before I even finished it, the wind arrived head on like an express train all the more shocking after that relative silence. The wind was coming from a different direction. *Unbeknown to me at the time this had been the eye of the cyclone.*

A sheet of corrugated iron hit my window, it started to crack and then the iron was gone. I had lain down as best I could in the front seat and there I stayed till daybreak.

The Toyota rocked like hell, the wind was stronger, it felt a couple of times like it was airborne, kept thinking it was going to roll over, objects were hitting it, oh the noise, the noise. Every now and again when there seemed to be less sound, I gingerly peered up and out the side window (pure stupidity in hindsight), in a lightning flash I saw a caravan meters away go past disintegrating as it went. On other occasions I couldn't comprehend what I was seeing. *Apparently at 3.05 am the anemometer at Darwin airport registered wind speeds of 217 kms per hour before it broke unofficial estimate believe wind speed reached 300 per hour*

Was I naïve, all I kept thinking was everything will be alright once daylight comes? (Oh please, please hurry up and come) I was glad I had some towels I was cold maybe it was all that driving rain.

Thankfully at last a grey dawn broke over Darwin. I looked to where my caravan was supposed to be but couldn't make out what I was looking at. Once light was better, I could see it had swang a one eighty and turned over and I was looking at the wheels and base. I had survived. *(I have a scar on my leg where I got a large gash that I think I got getting stuff to the vehicle because it was only some time after in the vehicle that I realised I was bleeding).*

I now had to pee. There was a sheet of corrugated iron wrapped right tight around my bull-bar and piles of debris stacked up against it. The toilet block had collapsed, bar the back wall, a small tinny boat jammed in there was the biggest item, and you couldn't get near the toilets for all the other stuff.

I squatted by the boat and peed on the floor, felt bad momentarily but realisation of the fact the storm had now faded to a drizzling rain this wasn't the time to be worrying about fitting behaviour.

The Park was flooded and the water quite deep in places. *a total of 255mm of rain had fallen just over 10 inches probably was a lot more but due to the fact the rain fell horizontally it didn't record as such.*

I looked in every direction, across to the Botanical Gardens, up towards the site of the old hospital, the Darwin High School on the hill in the opposite direction just all bare, debris everywhere oh dear, dear not a good look first thing in the morning. Darwin had in material terms almost ceased to exist. *As we now know the city's infrastructure was destroyed or immobilised every road way was blocked the airport runway unusable, the ports' wharves wrecked.*

Constant reoccurring thoughts that morning, where are all the people going to go? *Tracy killed 71 people caused A\$837 million in damage (1974) destroyed more than 70 percent of Darwin's buildings including 80% of houses Tracy left more than 41,000 out of 47,000 inhabitants of the city homeless prior to landfall and required the evacuation of 30,000 people*

Now nearly fifty years later that image of destruction and grey starkness on Christmas morning is as clear in my mind as if it were only yesterday

I tried to drive out of Darwin after a couple of hours but only got as far along the Stuart Highway as where the over pass bridge is now and Police turned me back and urged me to go back where I had come from. I tried to drive out to the northern suburbs (I had friends staying there) but was unsuccessful, just too much debris. Back at the Park men offered to help bring my caravan back on its wheels and I managed to retrieve some stuff though most was water damaged or covered in food substances.

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I only had a tin of sardines and a can of tomato juice that I consumed. I vomited not long after, probably due to shock perhaps.

Later in the afternoon via the city I went to the Airport Gates servo to get fuel, the lines where long and I ran out before making the pumps, thank goodness for men they pushed my vehicle the last few metres.

The stories that were shared in the waiting time of nearly two hours were so sad, some amazing miracles and others so uplifting (the house was blown away but the budgie was in his cage on the ground that morning and chirping away) still haunt me. I drove to Adelaide River before needing a little sleep after an hour or so made it to Hayes Creek in the early hours to leave my animals and possessions there with an acquaintance and organised with them to get word to the station about what was happening.

The failure of communications meant that it was several hours before word of the disaster even reached southern cities. Also made arrangements to retrieve my vehicle. I decided to drive back to Darwin even though they wanted me to stay. I didn't get far before I became so tired hence spent another night on the Toyota front bench seat the only difference was the company of a few zillion mossies.

I spent days following at the DAC (Darwin Aviation Club) I had found this out by mere chance when getting my fuel, the day before so was hoping I could stay there. As it turned out they could fit me in. There wasn't a large amount of people using this as a refuge but they sure looked after you. Army stretchers were set out as bedding. We sat around during the day talking about the Cyclone but not much else. You were constantly fed no doubt from all the food rescued from refrigerators and freezers, there was real ham off the bone, Christmas puddings etc it was all just so nice I thought. Their bar was open to any drinks you required and tea and coffee when ever. I remember helping with the washing and drying up of dishes.

Memory is a bit hazy on this but I believe there was a curfew time about 10pm for the lights to go out at night. You were given a half pint bucket full of water each time you went to the toilet for flushing and the same quantity each night for a little wash. They set up a vaccination centre here and luckily, we were seen to first. The next day virtually from dawn till dark the lines of people where so constant it was mind blowing. (I believe there was not many of these centres hence the amount of people) The children cried and were restless but generally people's patience was commendable. It was also a chance for folks to see someone they knew or find out about others.

Come late in the afternoon we were driven to the Darwin Airport (the old location) and with windows open we sat on this bus for about an hour. Someone said it was four thirty when we got there. Other buses were lined up as well. In that hour we were given a peach and later we all got milkshakes in paper cups. Once inside the airport the paper work got sorted – name, destination etc. I can remember being seated and Gough Whitlam came along amidst an entourage of journalists and TV crews and stopped by my seat to speak with them on his way out back to Alice Springs after his short tour around Darwin that day.

I was heading to Adelaide on a Hercules. I remember asking the one crew member what time it was and he said 7.30pm. *A priority system was established based on the principal women and children first. more than 25,000 people were evacuated on an aircraft 10,000 left by road -.*

As I was pregnant, I got special treatment and entered at the front of the plane hence had to whole front seat to myself in the flight deck. During the trip I needed to go to the toilet and only realised then the discomfort of all the other passengers (I didn't know the substance of Hercules planes then) many kids and women were sleeping on the floors. I was truly blessed. I was given extra drinks plus first choice of the sandwiches which I watched them make in the flight deck before they were taken to the other passengers.

I disembarked to a cold Adelaide night just before midnight and as I reached the bottom stairs a volunteer was there wrapping me in a grey woollen blanket before escorting me into the terminal. I carried with me a small plastic garbage bag. The only time in my life I have travelled so light. Thanks go to the many volunteers that night whose sympathy and

kindness was appreciated. First the name check, then cash money from Red Cross, plus received a two-week special benefits allowance of \$31.00 per week, next the clothes distribution area. I only asked for a cardigan but was thankful for toothpaste and brush.

A new person was then allocated to you and their job was to work out where you were going to stay. She called my Aunt and Uncle (my parents were overseas) took me to another spot where I got a coffee and sandwiches and then to a waiting to be released area. All very orderly Got to my Aunt's house about 2.45am

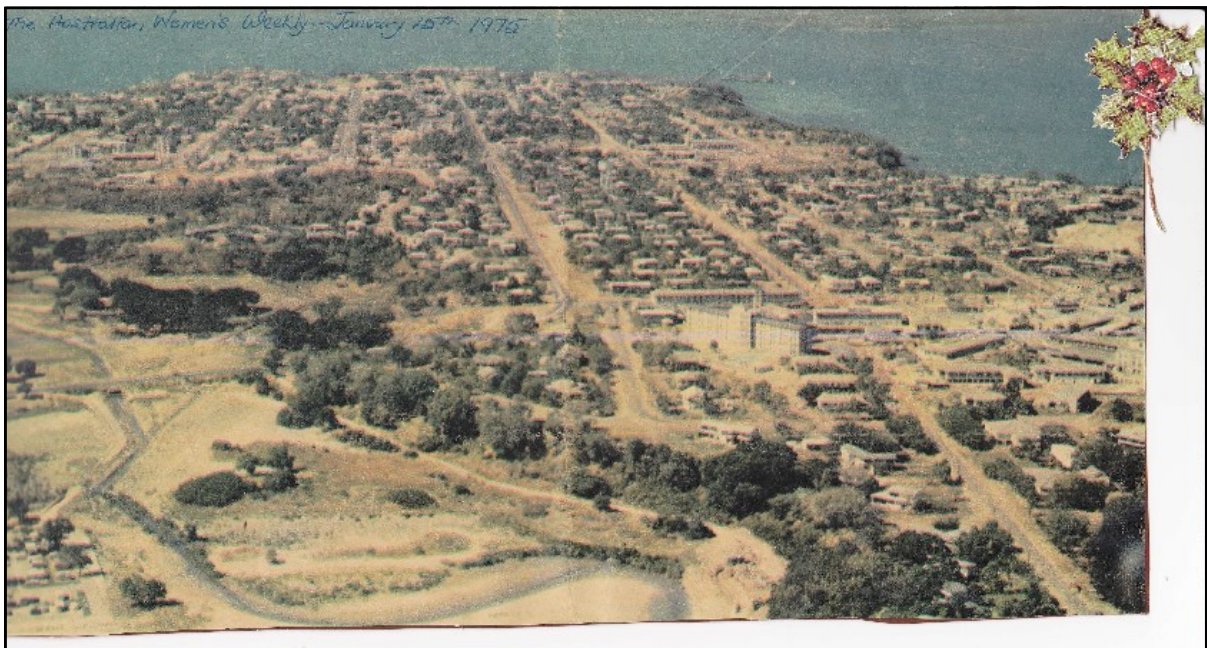
My daughter was born on 10th January 1975 and as soon as it was discovered in hospital, I was a refugee (not sure I am comfortable with that word-I prefer evacuee) I had so many visitors to my bedside all wanting to hear about it. We returned to Darwin late February 75. *Access into and out of city Darwin was regulated through a permit system which remained in place for the next six months*

I have never fully told my story though I spoke at the twenty years Amphitheatre Function when Ted Egan was the Administrator but only voiced what happened after at the refugee DAC club and my evacuation day as others had relayed the general consensus, I wanted to cover something different. I must say and always will to all those folks who ever they were that looked after us on the days following, my thanks go out to you.

I understand so many others went through harrowing, terrifying experiences and sad losses however I thought mine may give a different perspective as being in a caravan and nine



Mindal Beach Caravan Park after the Cyclone with
Roddys vehicle at the in foreground



Mindal Beach—Darwin Image

Gulf Branch Update for August 2024

Local Gulf Branch Members are very grateful to our volunteers especially Ted our caretaker and Sharon who have been very busy since the start of the dry season restocking saleable items, cleaning displays and setting up chairs etc with weekly bus tours dropping into the Old Borroloola Police Station.

The roads are challenging coming from Burketown and passable now by both 4-wheel drive buses and cars which are getting through.

Gulf Branch Members recently had a nasty shock dealing with one of our invoices after it had been scammed for a payment for the design and artwork for Book 3 of Borroloola Stories. The Branch is very grateful to the funding support we received, initially from NT Government Community Grants and then after the “Scam” at a council meeting. Regional branches from the Katherine, McDouall Stuart Branches, and the NT Trust Council kindly contributed to enable the Gulf Branch to pay the account so that the supplier wasn’t penalised. Westpac advised that they were unable to recover the Monies. The Branch was hoping to print book 3 shortly but the cost of printing has increased dramatically, and our resources are depleted due to the scam. We have contacted a number of printers (6). Due to the scam, we are short even though grant funding has been received, from the Roper Shire. A lot more fund raising will need to be undertaken for the book to become an eventuality.

Branch members have been busy doing work down at Pine Creek Railway station – stabilising the old goods shed foundation, which was undermined due to a burst watermain, cleaning and tidying up displays in both the railway station and the Old Pine Creek Repeater building.

We would like to express our condolences to Barb, and the family of the late Elliot McAdam AM. Elliot had been the Member for Barkly and a vocal and passionate supporter to the Gulf Branch of National Trust and history in the Gulf and Barkly Region for a considerable number of years. Whether you met Elliot in Parliament House or Jones Store, he was always willing to pull up and have a yarn. His presence and phone calls, out of the blue to discuss something he was working on will be sorely missed.



The old Tattersall's hotel /post office before it finally completely collapsed – up at Tamarind Park near the new Borroloola Airstrip. (Pattermore Family -Collection)

DARWIN BRANCH UPDATE

The ability to offer delightful events and experiences for both locals and visitors to Darwin has been the highlight of this Dry season 2024. Following on from the 2024 Darwin Heritage Festival in May, the Darwin Branch volunteers have been very busy with event management.

Our fortnightly Devonshire teas held in the grounds of Burnett House have been fully booked out every time and we generally have a waiting list of those wishing to purchase tickets. We limit the afternoon to 60 participants but it often runs to more than this number.

In between these events we have had many requests for morning or afternoon tea during the week. The Dementia Australia Darwin group held their Memory Lane Café at Burnett House in June and participants and their carers really enjoyed the individual attention we gave them as we served their morning tea. There were 47 participants that day. A more recent example was the attendance of 27 members of

the Ionian Club to Burnett House for morning tea. On the same day we welcomed 18 participants from Academy Travel for a tour of Burnett House. This interest by tour companies to tour the House as a planned event has been gaining popularity as well this year. Our Branch members are flexible in terms of fitting in with the itinerary of the tours. A recent visit by the tour company Botanica Group resulted in participants enjoying afternoon tea, a tour of Burnett House and a leisurely stroll through the garden. On a Sunday in mid-June, we opened Burnett House to celebrate Sustainable House Day and volunteer Andrew Spiers gave tours of the House and explained the architectural principles on which the architect Beni Burnett based the house design, ensuring that it keeps cool and comfortable for visitors.

We have received very good feedback from our visitors. These events are held in addition to Burnett House being open six mornings a week, capably managed by local volunteers.

Three Cheers for our Volunteers!



Three Cheers for our Volunteers!

Volunteers at work at the Deckchair cinema



Fay Gurr getting ready for recent Devonshire Tea



TRUST HOUSES CLOSING AND OPENING DATES

Alice Springs (McDouall Stuart Branch)

Best contact Joel 0432 826 185 for tours.

Hartley Street school: 10.30 - 2.30pm Monday to Friday and 1 - 5pm Sundays

Stuart town Goal: 10.30 - 2pm Monday to Friday



Darwin Branch

Best contact Helen 0417 828 449

Burnett House: 10 - 1pm Monday to Saturday

Sunday Devonshire Teas – held regularly during the dry season. Details on Trybookings

Monthly Speaker's Nights - usually on Friday night - advertised on Facebook.

Borrooloola (Gulf Branch)

Best contact Janet 0429 625 832

Old Borrooloola Police Station: 7am - 5pm all year round

Katherine Branch

Best contact Merriel 0429 807 491

O'Keeffe House: 9 - 12noon Saturdays plant sales , entry \$5 per adult

Available for event hire

Katherine Railway Precinct open Saturday mornings 9-122pm

Available for event hire

Pine Creek

Pine Creek Repeater building/library: 9 - 12 noon Monday to Friday

Pine Creek Railway Heritage Precinct: 11-3 otherwise give Barry a call 0411046274

Roadmasters House in Darwin closed till 2025 due to road works.

Best contact Trevor Menzies 0418 892 897

Tennant Creek Branch

Best contact : Karl Herzog - 0417834447

Tuxworth Fullwood House: Open Monday evenings or by appointment

Please note: days and times may change pending volunteers availability

Katherine Branch Report

August already and our volunteers have been amazing. Our team has Katrina in Brisbane who keeps our Facebook page current, fills in the necessary forms for whatever we have decided, spreads the word when we are open, when we are closed and most importantly, has her phone linked to the security cameras in the O'Keeffe complex. Then there is Caroline – an avid gardener – who does all those messy garden things like fertilizing, weeding, planting, shifting pots, mowing, whipper snipping and blowing down which keeps the complex looking good. Sadly, a part of the garden which had been heavily mulched was lit and burned some plants and irrigation. Caroline recently won 2nd place in the Katherine Show Garden competition although the card said O'Keeffe House. Late July the grounds were hired to photograph dogs for a coffee table book. The Devonshire teas – very popular. No, you don't have to be over 80 to keep pace with them. Merriel and Bess have a few reliable volunteers turn up Saturdays and Wednesday mornings to help serve and clean-up which is much easier since the installation of a new kitchen. Merriel also sells the plants. These stayers are the backbone of Katherine branch.

As for branch doings. We have an NT Govt Community Grant to cover the cost of the repairs to the old O'Keeffe house. The builder will start work soon and then we will not be open to the public. On 2nd August the Katherine Town Council hosted a morning tea for approx. 40 seniors outside in the garden.

The Railway Station needs some carpentry repairs but is in good condition for a building 98 years old. We also have Jade who opens up Saturdays and Kelly who mows and rakes the grounds regularly. 2 windows were recently broken and have now been replaced with Perspex.

For anyone interested in volunteering – please message Katrina at O'Keeffe House Facebook page. Even an occasional extra pair of hands helps. We love meeting new people and introducing them to early local history.

Stephanie Hill – Chairman, Katherine Branch of the National Trust.

Beautiful O'Keeffe House Garden!



Tennant Creek Branch

It has been a challenging year with low tourist and local visitor numbers. This has given us the opportunity to streamline and improve the visitor experiences by improving our displays this is shown in our visitor book with comments such as “what a blast from the past” “it’s wonderful to see a small museum surviving in Tasmania we have lost quite a few” “so much history wonderful” we also have visitors that were treated or born in the old hospital they are quite nostalgic of their time living in Tennant Creek.

As always, we were open for ANZAC Day and had a good turnout of locals.

In the past 12 months we have also received numerous additions for our displays and archives from ex-Tennantites, our document and pictorial archives are gradually being digitised though this will take many years to complete. With all new items needing to be entered onto the archives/assets register.

We have also been working on the room 4 display, the hope is that the Police, Fire and Emergency display will be open by the end of October for visitors with the other displays covering, organisations such CWA, Lion Int, sports and schools being progressively setup.

Looking to the future we need to be more proactive in the various social media option available for us especially when it comes to tourists, they plan their trips and time spent in the various locations, if they know that we are here there is a greater likelihood that they will visit.

One of the biggest issues we all face is volunteers, we have a lot of financial members but not enough volunteers to assist in opening times and general work that needs to be done, if anyone has a strategy please share.

Tennant Creek would like to thank the other Branches and HQ for your support over the past few years, since reforming a new committee it has been quite a steep learning curve.



Venue Hire

Some ~~National Trust NT properties~~ *National Trust NT properties* can be hired for functions and other activities such as workshops and meetings. If you would like to know more, please contact Suraksha at the Audit House office on 08 8981 2848 or email admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au and we will put you in contact with the appropriate branch. In Darwin, the location and ambience of Myilly Point Heritage Precinct, you can hire Audit house and Grounds, or the grounds of Burnett House has drawn many events over the years including art and photography exhibitions, talks, seminars, music and theatre events, weddings, birthday parties, baby showers, bridal showers and Darwin Festival events.



Don't be disappointed - book your functions for 2024/2025 now!
The current venue hire brochure for Myilly Point Heritage Precinct is found at: [https://
www.nationaltrustntstore.com/venue-hire](https://www.nationaltrustntstore.com/venue-hire)

Contact to Suraksha via call on 08 8981 2848 or send an email with any membership or property enquires at amin@ntnationaltrust.org.au



NT Heritage Register

[http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/heritageregister/f?
p=103:300:16760495551689:](http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/heritageregister/f?p=103:300:16760495551689:)

Library & Archives NT

<https://lant.nt.gov.au/>

Darwin City Geotrail

[https://storymaps.arcgis.com/
stories/525ddf2f92d34edfb8e4792fde889681](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/525ddf2f92d34edfb8e4792fde889681)

Pine Creek Miners park and Geo Trail

Membership:

*Individual Membership options from \$40
and Household options from \$80 - annual-
ly.*

*This includes free entry to all our NT sites
and National Trust Properties across Aus-
tralia*

*If you have articles you'd like to contribute to the newsletter, or
National Trust events you would like to publicise, please send
them to admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au or
tours@ntnationaltrust.org.au*

