



NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA, Northern Territory

Newsletter, September 2026



At the recent Darwin Deckchair Cinema Fundraiser



Check the Prize List!



More volunteers



Volunteers at Work

BRANCH & HERITAGE NEWS

Lots of photos

What's happened over the past three months



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President's Report

The **NT Trust Council** had a productive recent face to face Council meeting in Katherine on 26th June. Thank you again to the Katherine Branch for their hospitality, Stephanie Hill and family assisting with accommodation out at Manbulloo, and Merriel for hosting our visits to O'Keefe House with morning tea and a visit to the old Katherine railway station which was looking very impressive and ready for its 100th birthday celebrations. Thank you to Eddie for coordinating our visit to the Pine Creek Trust properties, and visits to various heritage sites along the highway. It was great to have a full council at the meeting, with members from Alice and Tennant Creek on line.

The question that was asked by Council / Branch Members was: as the fact is our members are aging and unable to volunteer, so

“What are we doing to future proof the NT Trust and how are we going to better support branches and make sure our properties are protected and saved for future generations”.

I still think it will not just be one person with a solution! Perhaps asking our younger friends / children / grandchildren the question:

What would attract you to become more involved with the Trust?

So, if you have ideas on how we can adapt or make the NT Trust more attractive to volunteers please speak to your local member or give the NT Trust office a call.

Congratulations to the Katherine Branch on a successful 100th Anniversary celebration.

The NT Trust acknowledges and thanks:

The NT Government for their continued support through Major and Minor Grants, Heritage grants,

The Community Benefit Fund for their minor grant to purchase the Perspex cube to protect and cover over the old switch board at the National Trust Pine Creek Repeater Museum.

The NT museums grant for Tennant Creek for white ant protection of their displays.

Katherine Town Council for their support to O'Keefe House and The old Katherine Railway station Heritage precinct.

Pine creek VDS for their support to the NT Trust Pine Creek Repeater Museum and Old Railway Heritage Precinct.

The NT Trust hosted the *Mates of the Murrniji* at **Jones Store** on the 10th of August after a major clean up the day before and on that morning. Our patron the Administrator of the Northern Territory, the Honourable David Connolly was in attendance.

The Annual Mates of the Murrniji Muster, celebrated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the township of Newcastle Waters and the arrival of Qantas Airways. Also in attendance were the Member for Barkly, Mr Stephen Eddington and Heritage minister Mr Josh Burgoyne with two Heritage reps. Hopefully they will have have gained a bit of understanding of the challenges for the NT Trust in maintaining and preserving some of our more remote properties, the distances, and challenges in getting tradespeople and materials to these regions. The Mates of the Murrniji are still lobbying to establish the precinct as a venue and a tribute to the early droving history of the stock routes, potentially a tourist attraction - still a long way to go I feel.

We are very appreciative of the work and support of the **Barkly work crew** for cleaning up the Newcastle Waters Heritage Precinct, and various heritage sites up and down the Stuart Highway. – It would be very challenging for the NT Trust to maintain the grounds of Jones Store without their assistance.



David Connolly (right): Administrator of the NT, and Patron of the National Trust (NT)

*Barry Coulter (left): Former Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and author of the book shown on the poster, *Mates of the Murrniji: An Unbreakable Bond*.*

Join National Trust (NT)

<https://app.joinit.com/o/nationaltrustnt>



We always appreciate the support from the Community Benefit Fund for their support with minor and major grants – recently a minor grant enabled the new perspex cube for the old Telephone exchange in the **Pine Creek Repeater Museum**. Hopefully this may help expel the perception that the repeater building relates to the Overland Telegraph Line Construction and subsequent operation.

Please with check online to see when the AGM is coming up for your Branch, we all have a variety of skills and abilities that could be a great asset to your region and an opportunity to make new friends and learn new skills.

A number of our properties will be closing as we approach the end of the dry season and tourist numbers drop off, with members away, so please ring the Trust office to check before you visit,

Thank you to all members of the Executive team especially **Wayne** and **Eddie** for your ongoing work and support despite many other commitments, **Ron** for our Newsletter, and **Suraksha** who keeps the organisation administration functioning on an even keel.

Kindest Regards

Janet Leather



Trust Council meeting at Katherine: (Photo c/- Ian Anderson)

Ian Anderson, Bron McTaggart, Ron Ninnis, Eddie Webber

Julie Mastin Janet Leather, Merriel Lawrie and Stephanie Hill

Darwin Branch

Bron McTaggart

The **Sunday Devonshire Teas** have been very popular. **Arminda** is now baking homemade scones, at Burnett House, rather than using bought ones. Our last one for the season will be on Fathers' Day the 6th of September. There will be lucky door prizes drawn, so some of the lucky Dads will get to go home with some good prizes.

As part of the **Heritage Festival** in July, we celebrated Open Day at Myilly Point. There was a Darwin Heritage car rally, a Heritage Quiz night, a Gardens Cemetery Picnic led by Balinda Mawby. Also the local ABC radio breakfast host **Jess Ong** was the speaker at the annual Barbara James Memorial Lecture.

Unfortunately, the Festival events were not well attended, which was disappointing for those who had put so much time and effort into organising them. For next year, we will be holding the activities earlier.

As part of the Heritage Festival, **Trevor Menzies** was due to lead two history walks around Darwin. Unfortunately, he suffered an accident, and broke his ankle and these walks had to be cancelled. We hope Trevor is on the mend and wish him well in his recovery.

A fundraiser was held on Sunday 16th August at the **Deckchair Cinema** with raffles and lots of homemade cakes at the cake stall, and we raised about \$3,000. This will help pay for ongoing maintenance issues at Burnett House.

Our Friday talks have been very successful, and our next one will be on Friday 18th of September. Derek Pugh will talk on hangings at Fannie Bay Gaol, after our A.G.M.

We need some community minded people to be a part of our Committee. Can you afford to donate an hour or so per week, and become a committee member?

We have a new Social Media account on **Instagram**. Go to *Burnett House Darwin*, to see what's on.

Quiz night prizes, many donated by local politicians



Deckchair Cinema Fundraiser, 16th August



Happy volunteer: Jacinta

The National Trust (NT) Darwin branch held their annual Deckchair Cinema Fundraiser on 16th August -

with plenty of cakes, and raffles. Next time, you could be a happy volunteer also!



This was a sell-out

Our delicious array of home-baked goods was a hit with all the cinema guests! From freshly baked cakes to pavlova, everything was generously prepared by our dedicated local branch members and volunteers.



Ros and Arminda



Happy volunteers: Maxina, Bron, Ros & Jacinta

VALE: Dr Albert Foreman OAM – 1931-2026

Albert was a long term National Trust Member, and only had just closed his ear, nose and throat practice in Brinkin, Darwin at the age of 95. He marked 50 years of medical practice and before that as a civil engineer in Central Australia and the Barkly. He wanted to spend his retirement writing a book.

After spending time working in Papua New Guinea and helping in hospitals, Albert decided in his forties to study medicine. He graduated in 1975 and went on to work in hospitals across PNG, Africa, Jerusalem, London and India.

Eventually, he returned to Australia and came back to Darwin, where he became an ENT specialist. He also met Jenny, a nurse he had first known at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. They married in 1983 and eventually made Darwin their home.

Even after retiring from hospital work in 1999, he continued seeing patients from his home practice for another twenty years. He finally retired in 2026. He always treated his patients with kindness, and was well respected in the community.

He passed in his sleep on Thursday 20 August. He will be missed at our Friday night talk. Thanks to Bev Phelts for a lot of the above, and to “Old Darwin” on Facebook.



Albert in his office, at home

Katherine Branch Report



Old Katherine Railway Station: stalls and balloons

The National Trust held events for Katherine's Centenary Celebrations.

A massive thank you to the following volunteers and organisations that have supported us this year.



O'Keefe House afternoon tea celebrations

Volunteers: Merriel Lawrie, Barb Haggard, Shirley Wilson, Jacquie Christie and Caroline De Marco.

Businesses: MAC Hire, Harry Renfree and the RPC crew, Manbulloo Homestead, John Forrest, Nick Castell (Katherine Carpentry and glazing).

O'Keefe House is closing this year. There is a shortage of volunteers. With the help of Katherine businesses, we maintain both the Railway and O'Keefe House.



Evening train experience

Volunteer week has gone, but we still want volunteers!

Volunteering is simply chipping in, to make a difference. To not just take from the world, but to give something back. The volunteer often says that they get more back than what they give. Like most things the hardest part is the beginning, so contact us today...

Tennant Creek Branch Report

Karl Herzog

The Tennant Creek Branch of the National Trust of Australia (NT) was awarded a \$27,846 NT Experience Grant from NT Tourism and Events and named **Winner of the Chamber of Commerce Award in the Not-for-Profit category.**

Museum operations commenced on May 1, opening three part-days per week during the tourist season, including free admission on ANZAC Day. **Visitor numbers** totalled 173 across paying visitors, members, and invited guests, reflecting broader cost-of-living and fuel price pressures. Advertising support was provided at no cost through Tourism Central Australia, regional roadhouse posters, and local newspaper coverage in Tennant Today.

Key infrastructure improvements include the completion of a new rear veranda with roof guttering and fascias, replacement of front door and window glass.

The branch secured a 10-year license with the Department of Health for vacant land on the northern side of the property to expand outdoor displays. Recent collections were enriched by donations including a **1930s piano** from the Tennant Creek Memorial Club, **10 kg of historical copper slag** from the Peko smelter's first pour, and **specialized mining equipment** from the Tennant Mining Group.

Suzana Bishop CEO NT Tourism and Events visited the Museum after a meeting at Battery Hill where discussions included the **upcoming solar eclipse in 2028** and planning for the possible influx of 10,000 visitors for the event.

Tennant Creek Report Pics



Visiting the Museum: Danial Rochford (CEO Tourism Central Australia), Peter Dixon (NT Tennant Creek member), Karl Herzog, Susan Bishop (CEO NT Tourism and Events), and FRED

Presentation: Karl Herzog and Penny Cowan (Tennant Creek Treasurer and Secretary)



Barkly Work Camp sharing a joke with FRED after they did some weeding and cleaning up our outside display area.

How about a second cup? In Tennant Creek...

Karl Herzog

Tennant & District Times. Friday August 2nd 1985. Page 8.

"A great tribute was paid to the volunteers of the Country Women's Association, who worked nonstop during the war years about 1940, to provide refreshments to the fighting forces passing through Tennant Creek on their way North.

The canteen was hessian and iron and it catered for thousands of troops. It was all voluntary work and done in shifts, tea, coffee and hot scones were served. Clara Mill is the only one left in Tennant Creek today who assisted. One thousand scones and a thousand cakes were baked daily in the open on a fuel stove.

I was stopped in the street by a tourist, who asked where he could get a cup of coffee. I pointed out various places. He said

"I have just driven from New South Wales, and I passed through here in the war years on my way to Darwin and am retracing my journey although I was then travelling in an army truck.

The best cup of coffee I ever had during that journey was in this town at the C.W.A. stall, in this street", and looking up the street, said seriously "is it still there?"

I thought forty-five years was a long time to come back for a second cup. How wonderful after all those years to remember so vividly and praise the wonderful work done by this branch of volunteer C.W.A. ladies, but I can't help wondering what particular brand of coffee they used to make such a lasting impression."



Alice Springs Branch (McDouall Stuart Branch)

Hartley Street School has been busy with school children, and tourists. Joel has been acting as a teacher/ guide. Bruce is now retired and assisting.

The branch has an **AGM on October 16**, where **Mike Liddle** will give a presentation for the Doreen Braitling Talk. Contact Bill Lowe 8955 5222.

The branch desperately needs volunteers, and especially Committee members.

St Mary's Hostel, Alice Springs

Eddie Webber

The former St Mary's Hostel in Alice Springs has been short listed for heritage protection. The hostel was established by the Church of England in 1946 as a boarding facility for Aboriginal children from remote communities to enable them to attend school in Alice Springs.

The former Hostel is located south of Heavitree Gap and just north of the Alice Springs racecourse. It later became one of the four Northern Territory missions funded by the Commonwealth to implement policies aimed at assimilating Aboriginal children of mixed descent into a non-Aboriginal society.

In 2022 the Anglican Diocese announced plans to sell the property, which was subsequently acquired by the Northern Territory Government for further community housing estate. This was the catalyst for the St Mary's Stolen Generation Committee to push for the Chapel to become preserved and heritage listed.

Paintings within the Chapel by Robert Czako had previously been heritage listed largely due to the efforts of Josie Petrick (OAM).

The Chapel initially discussed as a site for preservation was expanded as the heritage assessment and public consultations brought to light a wealth of information and stories from people who had lived and worked at the mission.

The site has been expanded to 2.5 hectares and will include significant trees and buildings within the site.

A significant declaration for heritage in Central Australia.



St Marys Chapel



St Marys Hospital

Gulf Branch

Eddie Webber

Local member **Ted** maintains the grounds through mowing, watering, and weed management, while caretaker **Joan Pracy** oversees daily building operations and display upkeep. High temperatures ahead of the wet season build-up remain a concern, and quotes are being sought for an upgraded irrigation system and replica stockyard panels for the front fence.

Wall fans are running in the **Old Borroloola Police Station** to deter mould spores, worn doorway flooring is undergoing replacement, and slow-down signs were installed to petition the Roper Gulf Shire Council on road maintenance. Vandalism remains an issue, with windows smashed again at the **Pine Creek Railway Station** following recent repairs.

Members continue documenting **local graves** and advocating for Borroloola cemetery marking under new legislation, alongside ongoing work on the Barkly Graves project, Mallapunyah records, and Pine Creek display repairs. The **Chinese immigration historical project** is near completion, local federal representatives were contacted to replace the illegible Burrundie Massacre sign, and members participated in **Limmen National Park** archaeological excavations with Flinders University and Marra rangers.

Branch membership currently stands at 6 financial members following the addition of Joan Pracy. The branch desperately needs volunteers/ members!

The Long Road. Chinese migration NT to Queensland at the turn of the century

Eddie Webber

The Northern Territory was governed by the South Australian Government from 1863 until 1911 when the Commonwealth Government assumed responsibility for administration.

Following the discovery of Gold at Ballarat and Bendigo in Victoria there was by 1855, approximately 17,000 Chinese in Australia. In 1871, gold was discovered near Pine Creek, during the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line.

In 1874, the Government Resident called for the introduction of cheap Asian Labour. Bloomfield Douglas was dispatched to Singapore to recruit Chinese labourers of which 186 indentured labourers were consigned to Palmerston (Darwin).

1883 Millar Brothers imported cheaper indentured labour from Singapore and Hong Kong for the construction of the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway. At its peak it employed 3,000 Chinese and Tamil labourers with 369 Europeans (mostly supervisors and tradesmen).

1885: The Victorian Government passed “An Act to Make Provision for Certain Immigrants” to limit the number of Chinese passengers disembarking in the colony.

1889 saw the completion of the Railway to Pine Creek and the indentured Chinese and Tamil labourers were repatriated. The locally employed Chinese who stayed in the Territory becoming mainly storekeepers, merchants and market gardeners.

1895: the South Australian Government amended legislation to restrict ownership of mining tenements by Chinese and others of Asian descent.

During the 1890s, the Territory economy was in a downward spiral as was most of the world. The mining industry was in decline, and red-water fever had decimated the large herds of Northern Australia and the cattle industry.

With the economic downturn many sought to immigrate to the Eastern states. Cost of fare and the entrance tax imposed on shipping was prohibitive to many of the near destitute Chinese.

Walking to Queensland was the only option with the two main routes being the Gulf Track through Borroloola and across the Barkly Tableland to Camooweal and or Urandangi. Both routes entailed hardship, perils and potential death from starvation, thirst, and disorientation across the Barkly along with a myriad of dangers associated with the Gulf including death by hostile tribesmen, disease, wet season flooding and crocodile infested stream crossings.

Many set off with just rudimentary information on the routes they chose, and how many perished in their quest to immigrate along with the number of those who were successful in their attempts to immigrate is not known.

In 1910 the Chinese population had steadily reduced to 1302 while the European population remained static.

Police officers were stationed at remote camps along the QLD – NT border to deter immigration. The Police officers charged with administering the legislation did so with a sense of commitment. The tenacity of both the migrants and police in face of oppressive physical conditions, legal restrictions and endemic racism is remarkable, as is the fact that this aspect of Australian colonial history is so little known.



Opening Times for NT Trust Properties 2026

(Current September 2026)

Darwin (Instagram:Burnett House Darwin)	Burnett House	Monday to Saturday. 10am to 1pm 0418 928163
	Audit House	Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm 89812848
	Roadmasters House Museum	10 am to 1 pm, Tuesday to Thursday
Alice Springs	Hartley Street School:	Open
	Stuart town Gaol: Bill Low Joel	Open (keys from school) 0417870868 0432826185 for tours
Borroloola	Contact locals: Ted	0484589510
	or NT Trust Secretariat Old Borroloola Police Station	89812848 all year
Jones Store	NewCastle Waters Station	All year-round pending road conditions Contact NT Trust Secretariat 89812848
Katherine (Facebook: okeeffehouse)	O'Keefe House	CLOSED for the rest of the year
	Old Railway Station	CLOSED for the rest of the year
Pine Creek	Repeater Building/ Library	Tuesday to Thursday 9 - 1 pending volunteers' availability
	Railway Heritage Precinct	Opening Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10-1 pending tourist numbers
Tennant Creek (FaceBook: TennantCreekBranchNationalTrustNT)	Tuxworth Fullwood House	Contact Karl Herzog 0417 834 447 or Pennie Cowan 0457 818 94 Until 31st October 2026: Mondays 2 pm to 6 pm, Wednesday to 2 pm, Saturday 2 pm to 4 pm

More Information: Trust NT Website (nationaltrust.org.au/nt) and Branch Facebook/ Instagram
OR Phone: NT Trust Secretariat 89812848 OR Email admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au