



Australian Heritage Database

Places for Decision

Class : Indigenous

Item: 1

Identification

List: National Heritage List
Name of Place: Wave Hill Walk Off Route
Other Names:
Place ID: 105897
File No: 7/05/008/0001
Primary Nominator:
Nomination Date:
Principal Group: Places of significance to Aboriginal people

Status

Legal Status: 19/09/2005 - Assessment initiated by AHC
Admin Status: 05/07/2006 - Assessment by AHC completed

Assessment

Recommendation:
Assessor's Comments:
Other Assessments: :

Location

Nearest Town: Kalkarindji
Distance from town 2
(km):
Direction from town: E
Area (ha): 663
Address: Buchanan Hwy, Kalkarindji, NT 0852
LGA: Unincorporated NT NT

Location/Boundaries:

Area published for comment on 11 April 2006:

About 4,400ha, including an area of one kilometre radius around the former Wave Hill Station homestead of 1966 then extending to Kalkarindji and Daguragu. The area extends one kilometre either side of the track from old Wave Hill Station to where it meets the Buchanan Highway and continues with the Buchanan Highway as the approximate centre line, with the same width (ie. one kilometre from the centre line) until it meets the turnoff to Daguragu. From that point the centre line is direct to

Daguragu, and the area is one kilometre either side of the centre line. From Daguragu the area joins an area of one-kilometre radius from the centre of the settlement.

New proposed boundary is that to be listed by the NT Government in their heritage list which will reduce the area on either side of the route to a maximum of 150m.

Assessor's Summary of Significance:

The Wave Hill Walk-Off Route in the Northern Territory is important as the location of actions taken by Aboriginal pastoral workers who walked off Wave Hill Station on 22 August 1966. About 250 Aboriginal workers and their families walked off the station in response to the low rates of pay and poor living conditions of Aboriginal pastoral workers and their families on the remote cattle station. This action was initially characterised as a strike and efforts were made to resolve the matter as an industrial issue. A strike at Newcastle Waters earlier in 1966 had been resolved. The Gurindji action developed as a wholesale rejection of the governmental and industrial framework applying to Aboriginal pastoral populations and included a demand for the return of traditional lands.

When they left Wave Hill Station, the Gurindji walked to Wave Hill Welfare Settlement (now Kalkarinji) and established a camp nearby in the dry bed of the Victoria River. There they received assistance from the government officers and material and political support from unions and, in particular, from the author Frank Hardy. Their campaign drew public attention nationally and their demand for land rights was expressed through a petition to the Governor General. They moved to a second camp nearby on higher ground for the wet season.

In March 1967 the Gurindji decided to leave the Welfare Settlement to establish a new community at a place which had special significance for them under their traditions. This was the beginnings of the current Aboriginal settlement at Daguragu. Their plan was to establish a pastoral operation and community run under their own leadership, on their traditional lands, to be owned by them.

Through their actions, the Gurindji showed the vitality of Aboriginal aspirations to achieve a way of life that respected their Aboriginal identity, their traditions and their rights to their traditional lands. This model combining Aboriginal autonomy and land rights shaped Australian government policy following the 1967 referendum, which granted new powers to the Commonwealth Government to make laws for Aboriginal people. These policies were implemented in remote communities, particularly in the Northern Territory.

The Gurindji were the first Aboriginal community to have land returned to them by the Commonwealth Government. On the 15th August 1975, then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam transferred a lease for 3 236 square kilometres of land purchased from Wave Hill to the Gurindji. The significance of this precedent in Commonwealth relations with Aboriginal people was expressed by passing a handful of sand to Vincent Lingiari. This simple gesture communicated the new approach to Aboriginal policy based on a respectful recognition of Aboriginal identity and relationships to the land that the Gurindji had influenced by walking off Wave Hill Station and by establishing a new community at Daguragu.

The publicity of this event reinforced at a national level the case for Aboriginal land rights and for passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*. This was passed by the Coalition Government in the following year. In 1986, the Gurindji's traditional claims to their pastoral lease land were finally recognised with a grant of freehold title under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*.

Vincent Lingiari OAM is a unique figure in Australian history because of his leadership of the Wave Hill Walk-Off events, including the establishment of the new community at Daguragu. In 1977 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to his people. As an historical figure, Vincent Lingiari combined leadership on issues of workers' pay and conditions in a contemporary setting with high authority in Aboriginal tradition and his community. He has been the subject of popular songs testifying to his dignity and determination in impoverished circumstances and as exemplifying the Australian value of 'a fair go'.

The Wave Hill Walk-Off Route includes the location of key stages in the events led by Vincent Lingiari on 22 August 1966. These include the Wave Hill Station homestead area from which the Gurindji walked off, the fence line they followed and a remembered resting point on Gordy Creek; the camps near Wave Hill Welfare Settlement where many important meetings were held, a key place in the establishment of Daguragu in March 1967 and the site where Vincent Lingiari on behalf of the Gurindji received the historic handover of the title to Gurindji land.

Draft Values:

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Rating</i>
A Events, Processes	<p>The Wave Hill Walk-Off developed as a wholesale rejection of the governmental and industrial framework applying to Aboriginal pastoral workers. Conditions of Aboriginal pastoral workers and their families on remote cattle stations were well below those enjoyed and accepted by the vast majority of Australians. The Walk-Off was not resolved as an industrial matter. Instead, the Gurindji proceeded to establish an Aboriginal community on Aboriginal terms on their traditional lands at Daguragu. By taking this action, the Gurindji showed the vitality of Aboriginal aspirations to achieve a way of life that respected their Aboriginal identity, their traditions and their rights to their traditional lands. Their example, combining Aboriginal autonomy and land rights, influenced the direction of government policy following the 1967 referendum, which granted new powers to the Commonwealth Government to make laws for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>The Gurindji were the first Aboriginal community to have land returned to them by the Commonwealth Government. The ceremony of the handover was conducted in a manner to highlight this historic precedent in the relationship between the Commonwealth Government and Aboriginal people over land rights. The evident intent of then Prime Minister Gough</p>	AT

Whitlam was to communicate a new approach to Aboriginal policy based on a respectful recognition of the Aboriginal relationship to the land through a simple gesture of passing a handful of sand to Vincent Lingiari. The Gurindji hand over ceremony was the occasion for this message because the actions that the Gurindji initiated by walking off Wave Hill Station and by later establishing a new community at Daguragu led the way for this change of policy.

The Wave Hill Walk-Off Route includes the location of key stages in these events, including the Station homestead area from which the Gurindji walked off on 22 August 1966, the fence line they followed and a remembered resting point, the camps near Wave Hill Welfare Settlement where many important meetings were held, a key place in the establishment of Daguragu in March 1967 and the site where Gurindji received the historic handover of the title to their land on 15 August 1975.

H Significant people

Vincent Lingiari OAM is an important figure in Australian history because of his role in the Wave Hill Walk-Off and subsequent events that contributed to the fundamental shift of Aboriginal policy following the 1967 referendum, towards Aboriginal self-determination and land rights. Vincent Lingiari combined leadership on industrial issues, with high authority in Aboriginal tradition, and dignity in impoverished circumstances to exemplify the Australian notion of 'a fair go'.

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In 1977, Vincent Lingiari was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to his people.

At every stage of the Route, Vincent Lingiari had a key leadership role. This includes his role in initiating the walk-off, in leading his people to Wave Hill Welfare Settlement, in the important meetings at the camps near Wave Hill Welfare Settlement, in the decision to establish the community at Daguragu and as the recipient of lands on behalf of the Gurindji, which took place at Daguragu.

Historic Themes:

Nominator's Summary of Significance:

Description:

The Wave Hill Walk-Off Route extends from old Wave Hill Station homestead to Kalkarinji and Daguragu approximately along the old Wave Hill Station track, the Buntine Highway and the route from the Highway to the Daguragu community. The area is up to 150 metres either side of this centre line. The heritage values of the following places are described as follows.

Jinparak (Old Wave Hill Station)

At the time of the walk-off, Wave Hill homestead consisted of at least twenty corrugated-iron-clad buildings as well as a number of bough sheds, a thatched meat house, several outside toilets (earth closets), fenced off areas, gardens, a fowl yard, small stockyards, and a bore. However, the site was abandoned in 1969, the useable buildings were removed and the remaining structures were bulldozed.

The site includes remains of the old station windmill, bore and tank, the foundations of the former homestead, store sheds and a clinic; and also, to the south of the former homestead, the former Aboriginal camp areas. The most extensive of these was the Gurindji camp. There is a very light surface scatter of metal objects in this area, but the principal site marker is re-growth of rubber trees. A second Aboriginal camp was occupied by Aboriginal visitors from the Mudbura, Warlpiri and Ngarinman language groups. Camps within this area are often marked by low semicircular stone arrangements, which were wind breaks. Concrete floor slabs are also to be seen in this vicinity, which mark former building sites.

Fence Line route

The fence that existed when the Gurindji walked off Wave Hill Station on 22 August 1966 appears to have been replaced, but apparently it still follows the original line. The fence line consists of three strand barbed wire with steel star picket posts and droppers. The fence stretches for approximately 6.5 kilometres from near the former Wave Hill Homestead to a fence line corner approximately 600 meters southeast of Junani (Gordy Creek waterhole). The Gurindji are said to have walked in a group within 50 metres of the fence, on the northern side of the fence.

Junani (Gordy Creek Waterhole /Crossing)

This place is a waterhole in the bed of Gordy Creek. The waterhole is located approximately half way between the former Wave Hill Station homestead (from where the walk-off began) and Kalkarinji. Junani waterhole only holds water during the wet season and for a short time afterwards. It can be a source of soakage water in the dry season.

Route from Junani to Lipanangu

The Gurindji followed a track from Junani on Gordy Creek to Lipanangu that has become partly obscured by the Buchanan Highway. However, the current Buchanan Highway does not follow exactly the route of the 1966 road. In some areas the original road deviated some distance from the walk-off route.

Lipanangu (Victoria River Camp)

This is a sandy stretch of the bed of the Victoria River below the downstream end of the waterhole that is now crossed by the Buchanan Highway. It was used as a camp site by approximately 250 Aboriginal people who walked off Wave Hill in August 1966 until the onset of the 1966-67 wet season.

Bottom Camp

This is a limestone ridge covered with sparse tussocky grass and few trees, on the north side of and adjacent to Wave Hill Welfare Station. The Gurindji constructed a number of 'humpies' there for rain protection for the 1966-7 wet season. Evidence of

their stay can still be seen in the form of broken glass and various metal objects (cans, car parts, wire etc).

From Bottom Camp to Daguragu

The current Buchanan Highway and the turnoff track to Daguragu approximate an old track that was used during the walk-off. There is no physical evidence remaining of the walk-off track.

Daguragu First Camp

It was at this place, from March 1967, that some of the Aboriginal people, who walked off the Wave Hill Station in August 1966, first established this camp (now known as Daguragu). The nutwood tree inside Lot 28 Daguragu on the western end of the settlement is believed to be the same tree that marked the founding camp site.

Daguragu Handover site

The commemorative plaque (memorial), which was unveiled during the handover ceremony on 16 August 1975, stands in Lot 48 Daguragu. Lot 48 is a small park in the centre of Daguragu. The memorial itself is located on a very flat area with several trees growing nearby.

Analysis:

CRITERION (a) *The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's cultural history*

The Wave Hill Walk-Off route includes a number of discrete areas and locations that mark a series of actions and events over several years that resulted in important changes to the political, economic and social status and aspirations of Indigenous Australians. The event developed as a wholesale rejection of the framework of Aboriginal employment in the pastoral industry and succeeded in fulfilling a demand for recognition of rights to traditional lands. The Gurindji were the first group to have land returned to them by the Commonwealth Government.

There were earlier strikes of Aboriginal pastoral workers in the Pilbara in 1946 (Pindan movement) and Newcastle Waters (May 1966) and subsequent strike action on other Vestey's stations followed. None of these followed the course of the Wave Hill walk-off from an initial response to industrial conditions to assert land rights and community self-determination.

The Newcastle Waters was the first strike promoted and supported by the North Australia Workers Union. These strikers also walked-off the station, to the nearby town of Elliot. The Newcastle Waters strike was eventually resolved and the Aboriginal workers returned to work. The Wave Hill walk-off was not resolved as an industrial matter. A contemporary observer (writing in 1967) of the events, C.D. Rowley noted aspects of both the Newcastle Waters and Wave Hill strikes that distinguished them from other instances of industrial actions:

The significance of these movements lies partly in the tenacity of adherence to Aboriginal tradition and culture and partly in the fact that the continuity of a tradition emphasises a group's moral claims to the status of a negotiating body, and its claim to

discussion with government as a prelude to agreed settlement. Such bodies stir white consciences. By their very existence and intransigence they demonstrate the need for a reconciliation between the representatives of two cultures. (Rowley, 1971: 337)

Four issues probably lessen the impact of the Newcastle Waters strike: first, the emphasis on industrial issues remained the central plank; secondly, Wave Hill diverted attention away from Newcastle Waters; thirdly, a focus on land rights was not publicly articulated and did not emerge as a key demand; and fourthly, the strike leader, Lupngagayari (Captain Major), left to join with his Gurindji countrymen in the Wave Hill Walk-Off. (Hardy 1968: 28-9; Rowley 1971: 338-41).

The Pindan Movement was a multidimensional protest event which led to the establishment of an economically and socially autonomous Aboriginal community and enterprise in the Pilbara of Western Australia. Biskup says the Pilbara strike of May 1946 'was without doubt the most important single event in the history of aboriginal affairs in Western Australia to that date' (1973: 219). Notwithstanding its importance, the Pindan movement did not develop a prominent land rights focus and was not of lasting importance for land rights (Brown 1976; Broome 1982: 138-40; Rowley 1971: 167-70).

The Wave Hill Walk-Off is one of two seminal courses of events influencing the national land rights campaign of the 1960 and 1970s and leading to the land rights policies of the Whitlam and Fraser Governments, which have been implemented in the Northern Territory in particular.

The other course of events was the Yolngu (north-east Arnhem Land Aboriginal) response and the campaign for land rights followed the granting of bauxite mining leases in north-eastern Arnhem Land in 1963. This included the Yirrkala bark petition in 1963, which might have in part inspired the Gurindji petition of 1967. In 1968, 13 Yolngu clans took their case against the mining company Nabalco Pty Ltd and the Commonwealth of Australia to the Northern Territory Supreme Court, on the basis that the clans held communal native title to the land. This first Australian native title case (the 'Gove Land Rights Case') failed on several grounds. In particular, Justice Blackburn found that the relationship between a clan and its land was not proprietary, but was of a strongly spiritual connection (*Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd* 1971). This judgement led the Whitlam Government to appoint Eric Woodward (counsel for the plaintiff clans) to report on Aboriginal land rights (Aboriginal Land Rights Commission 1974). The current land rights legislation in the Northern Territory followed. In this respect, the developments in north-east Arnhem Land had a more direct effect on the formation of Aboriginal land rights policies.

Despite their similarities in the history of land rights, the circumstances of the Wave Hill walk-off and the land rights movement in north-east Arnhem Land were very different. At Wave Hill, Aboriginal lands had already been appropriated under pastoral lease and the Gurindji and others were incorporated within the Station as dependent workers. By contrast, the Yolngu had enjoyed largely unfettered access to their traditional lands on the Arnhem Land Reserve until this was threatened by bauxite mining.

A Methodist mission was established at Yirrkala in 1935. Morphy (2003) describes

the relationship between the missionaries and the Yolngu as generally tolerant and that the missionaries fostered a dialogue with Yolngu over religious values. The Gurindji walk-off was triggered by the harsh, exploitative and humiliating conditions for the pastoral workers on Wave Hill Station; and it developed as a movement to establish a new community on Gurindji terms. When land rights emerged as an issue for the Gurindji, it was one important element in a more comprehensive set of issues that did not apply with equal force or urgency to the Yolngu situation.

Coombs (1978: 158-60) and Egan (1997: 250-52) both cite the importance of Wave Hill walk-off events for the development of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs Australia-wide policy initiative focused on Aboriginal self management and the recognition of traditional claims to land. The Wave Hill events constituted a defining, dramatic demonstration of Aboriginal desires for and the achievement of a community on traditional land. It was the prototype for later policies of self-determination of Aboriginal communities on Aboriginal lands.

The Wave Hill Walk-Off inspired the changes in the direction of Aboriginal policy towards self-determination and land rights at a time of change around the referendum held in May 1967. There had been preceding moves in this direction. For example, FCAATSI was one of the main lobby groups for the referendum (Coombs 1978: 72; Chesterman 2005: 89-91; Attwood and Marcus 1997). The Legislative Reform Committee was the most influential of FCAATSI's committees in the referendum campaign. It criticised assimilation policy and advocated instead the granting of land rights and self-government (Taffe 2005: 290). Gordon Bryant, a Labor MP and FCAATSI Vice president was campaign director for the 'Yes' case (Coombs 1978: 1).

The referendum was supported by over 90% of voters – reflecting a high level of public support for civil equality for Aborigines, and for their having a 'fair go'. The Wave Hill Walk-Off was a grass-roots demonstration of a new policy direction at this crucial time of change.

At a national level, the Wave Hill Walk-Off developed as a wholesale rejection of the framework under which Aboriginal populations were incorporated as marginalised labour on remote cattle stations, under conditions unacceptable to the vast majority of Australians, and demonstrated Aboriginal aspirations to achieve a way of life that respected their Aboriginal identity, their traditions and their rights to their traditional lands. The positive initiatives towards autonomy and community on Aboriginal terms on traditional lands had a profound influence on the post-1967 policies.

The Wave Hill Walk-Off is of outstanding importance because it influenced the course of Australian history and was a catalyst for new policies that combined Aboriginal self-determination and land rights.

The Wave Hill Walk-Off Route includes the location of key stages in these events, including the Station from which the Gurindji walked off, and the fence line and resting point, the camps near Wave Hill Welfare Station where many important meetings were held, the establishment of Daguragu and the site where Gurindji received the historic handover of the title to their land. The continuity of these events reflected in the Wave Hill Walk-Off Route makes sense as a matter of Australian

history and especially as these events are reflected through the eyes of the Gurindji and their view of these historic events.

The Gurindji were the first Aboriginal community to have land returned to them by the Commonwealth Government. The ceremony of the handover is itself of historic importance because of the ceremonial manner in which it was conducted. The evident intent of the then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam passing a handful of sand to Vincent Lingiari was to highlight the significance of an Australian Government recognising the Aboriginal connection to the soil through a simple gesture transcending differences of culture and language and signifying a new approach to Aboriginal policy.

CRITERION (h) *The place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Australia's cultural history*

Vincent Lingiari OAM was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to his people in 1977. He is an important figure in Australian history because of his role in the Wave Hill Walk-Off and subsequent events that were the catalyst for a fundamental shift of Aboriginal policy following the 1967 referendum, towards Aboriginal self-determination and land rights.

Frank Hardy records Vincent Lingiari speaking of himself in *The Unlucky Australians*:

I am Vincent Lingiari from Wave Hill. That's my proper aboriginal name. Tom Pisher and that Bestey mob called me Tommy Bincent. My people are Gurindji. Who live in the Wave Hill area. That we country. They live here longa time before Cudeba [Whitemen]. I have had Gunabiba ceremony. Gunabiba is the mother of all the Gurindji people, and the corroboree dances tell the story of a man and him son spewed up by the rainbow snake near Wattie Creek in the Dreamtime. I am Kadijeri man of Gurindji people. But Betsy mob don't understand 'bout that. (Hardy 1968: 71).

This supports Rowley's observations about the importance of the distinctively Aboriginal tradition as underwriting the moral claims of the Gurindji as a negotiating body (Rowley, 1971: 337). Vincent Lingiari exemplified this kind of leadership at community or grass-roots level based on his traditional authority and moral authority.

As a historical figure, Vincent Lingiari combined leadership in industrial issues, with high authority in Aboriginal tradition, dignity in impoverished circumstances to exemplify the Australian values of 'a fair go', and the achievement of great results by determined efforts. His leadership role in the Wave Hill Walk-Off and subsequently in the new community at Daguragu was accomplished with other contemporary Aboriginal leaders of the Gurindji.

Lupngagayari (Captain Major) was an important union leader because of his leading role in the Newcastle Waters strike that preceded the Wave Hill Walk-Off and because of his involvement in the later stages of the Wave Hill Walk-Off. However, Lupngagayari later joined the Wattie Creek camp under Lingiari's leadership. Dexter

Daniels, whose traditional country was in south-eastern Arnhem Land, also was involved in both strikes, but he is principally remembered as a NAWU organiser who was influential in the Newcastle Waters and the Wave Hill strikes. As well as effective community or union leaders, all three of these men were grounded in Aboriginal traditions including sacred ceremonies that have remained strong in these parts of the Northern Territory.

Vincent Lingiari stands out from these contemporaries because of his leadership of the Gurindji community through the defining events in the protest for equal wages, the later demand for rights to traditional lands and as a determined community leader of the Gurindji on whose behalf he accepted the grant of title.

Vincent Lingiari is nationally recognised as the elder who accepted the handful of earth from then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, symbolising the hand-over of the Gurindji pastoral lease. Jeremy Long refers to a famous photograph of the handover:

Mervyn Bishop's photograph of Prime Minister Whitlam's symbolic gesture at the handover of the lease is likely to remain a popular illustration of texts on the land rights issue and to help to maintain the place of Wattie Creek and the Wave Hill walk-off in the history of the 'land rights' struggle (1996: 8).

This image of the two leaders from very different circumstances and the story of the walk-off from Wave Hill Station that eventually led to Daguragu, exemplifies for many Australians the value of 'a fair go' cutting across race, class and other lines of disadvantage and privilege. These sentiments are also captured in popular song by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody in 'From little things big things grow', and by Ted Egan and Galarrwuy Yunupingu in 'Gurindju Blues', recorded in 1971. Both songs celebrate Vincent Lingiari as a leader of the Gurindji in relation to the walk-off from Wave Hill Station.

Galarrwuy Yunupingu AM is another outstanding Aboriginal leader, particularly in respect of Aboriginal land rights. He is a member of one of the Yolngu clans in the Gove Land Rights case and has received public recognition for his contribution to the community particularly as Chairman of the Northern Land Council. However, Vincent Lingiari was a different kind of leader. He did not attain a position in an organisation like the Northern Land Council. His leadership lay in his immediate relationship with his community while in the public arena his moral authority derived from his Aboriginal tradition and his wide public appeal because of his dignity and determination in his actions.

The Wave Hill Walk-Off Route has a direct relationship to the historically important series of events through which Vincent Lingiari led his people. At every stage of the Route, Vincent Lingiari had a key leadership role. This includes his role in initiating the walk-off, in leading his people to Wave Hill Welfare Station, in the important meetings at Wave Hill Welfare Station, in the decision to establish the community at Daguragu, and as the recipient of lands on behalf of the Gurindji, which took place at Daguragu.

History:

Aboriginal Conditions in the pastoral industry

Indigenous expressions of discontent over remuneration and living conditions within the Northern Territory pastoral industry have a long history. The treatment of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory until the 1960s and 1970s was very much influenced by the early policies of the Commonwealth Government. These policies reflected the attitudes of the time toward Aboriginal people in Australia, attitudes that were remarkably slow to change. Before the 1967 referendum the Australian Constitution prevented the Australian Government enacting policies for Aboriginal people at a national level. Policies and approaches to Aboriginal legal status, employment and living conditions were implemented under different state and territory administrations without national coordination or national responsibility. This resulted in a pattern of neglect, dependency and marginalisation, where Aboriginal Australians were highly vulnerable to exploitation.

The first attempt to regulate Aboriginal employment conditions by the Commonwealth Government in the Northern Territory occurred in 1933 when the Commonwealth exercised the power of prescribing Aboriginal wages and conditions of employment under the Aboriginals Ordinance of 1918, however, these regulations were rarely honoured (Kelly 1966: 172-3).

Anthropologists Catherine and Ronald Berndt surveyed Aboriginal labour on Vestey's pastoral leaseholds between 1944 and 1946. The survey was the first applied anthropology study in Australia and afforded a unique view of the conditions of Aborigines working in the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory. The Berndts documented appalling working conditions, squalor and poverty in many of the camps, and endemic malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. They reported widespread dissatisfaction and resentment of working and living conditions on pastoral stations. Indigenous accounts of ill usage, extremely limited life chances, degrading treatment, racial and sexual abuse were documented (Berndt & Berndt 1987).

It was not until after the Second World War that a significant shift in government policies occurred. In 1951, the Commonwealth parliament agreed to adopt a policy of assimilation through the repeal of restrictions in existing ordinances and to extend full citizenship rights to Aborigines. However, the introduction of the Wards Employment Ordinance of the Northern Territory saw Aboriginal stock workers receive less than 15% of the basic wage (Stevens 1974: 23). The new ordinance achieved little or nothing in advancing the welfare of Aborigines.

The immediate impetus to the Wave Hill walk-off was the March 1966 decision by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to delay the payment of award wages to male Indigenous workers in the cattle industry until 1968. In 1965 the North Australia Workers Unions (NAWU) applied to the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission for a variation in the award in order to give equal wages to male Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry. The Commission supported the Union's application; however, the payment of the award was to be delayed for three years. Furthermore, the 'slow worker' category of worker was to remain, a distinction whereby those workers considered by their employers to be relatively inefficient, would be exempt from the payment of award wages. This category of worker was applicable only to Aboriginal workers. At the April, 1966 meeting of Federal Council for the Advancement of

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), it was noted that the court decision left Aboriginal pastoral workers (citizens of Australia) earning less than the basic wage (Rowley 1971: 333).

Wave Hill Station

The Wave Hill pastoral lease was taken up and stocked in 1883 by W.F. Buchanan with cattle, brought over the Gulf stock route from Queensland (Hill 1977: 170). This was the earliest phases of pastoral settlement of the Victoria River and Kimberley Districts of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Wave Hill was one of the few Northern Territory stations to survive the depression of the 1890s. By 1910 it was well stocked, in a good trading position and had made significant land improvements for pastoral purposes (Duncan 1967: 98).

In the early 1910s the Administrator of Northern Territory, Dr. J.A. Gilruth, invited Vestey, the largest international meat producer in western world, to take up pastoral land (Kelly 1966: 2). The Vestey interests bought Wave Hill in 1914 as part of a major move into the Australian cattle industry. By 1916 Vestey had leased 27,670 square miles of pastoral land in the Northern Territory and had built an export meatworks in Darwin (Powell 1982: 152). The meatworks closed after a short time and the period after World War 1 was one of stagnation for the Northern Territory pastoral industry. The major Commonwealth inquiry of the industry by Payne and Fletcher in 1937 (see Riddett 1990: 42-4), while sympathetic to the Vestey interests, noted their stations 'were too large to be developed to their full capacity under one control and management' (quoted in Knightley 1981: 136).

The Vestey leases were renewed in 1954 for further 50 years. Kelly, who made an overall negative assessment of large absentee land holdings, notes that '... the Vestey stations ... are amongst the least developed in this category' (1966:144). The 1950s and 60s was a boom period where the Northern Territory benefited from a world wide beef shortage (Powell 1982: 220). Yet, the Vestey pastoral superintendent in Northern Australia, P.J.A. Morris, was a principal witness opposing award wages for Aboriginal stockmen at the Arbitration Commission hearings in 1965 (Kelly 1966: 142). Vestey's reduced their Northern Territory holdings during the 1970s and by 1981 retained only Wave Hill and Helen Springs stations (Knightley 1981: 152).

The Wave Hill Walk-Off

The Gurindji decision to walk-off Wave Hill Station was initiated after a meeting in early August 1966 between Dexter Daniels, an Aboriginal organiser from the NAWU, and Gurindji man Vincent Lingiari in Darwin, where Lingiari was receiving medical treatment. The two discussed the wages issues and the May 1966 pastoral workers strike at nearby Newcastle Waters Station. Daniels asked Lingiari what they wanted to do about their poor living conditions and wages on the station.

Mick Rangiri one of the younger leaders of the walk-off reflected on these early meetings:

When that old man [Lingiari] went to Darwin and he met a couple of fellows at the Bagot Reserve and those two fellows – Dexter Daniels and Bobby Tudawali and then Philip Roberts and another fellow Clancy Robertson, and spoke to them about it that afternoon.

They said ‘Well you’re out of hospital now. If you go back to Wave Hill, talk to your family. What about you can make a union strike?’

That old fellow [Lingiari] when he come back we were at Negri Crossing [for the races]. We came back, and as soon as he see that everybody back he said ‘We’ve gotta stop tomorrow. We gotta just walk out on the Vestey’s. We gotta make a move in the morning. No-one’s gonna go back – no women, no men are gonna go back to the station to do their work.’

‘But we all gotta walk into the office – the main office and talk to Tom Fisher [Vestey’s station manager] and we’ll walk out.

‘We’ll give him the story and he’ll know about it.’ (Rangiari 1997: 34-35)

Early in the morning of 22 August 1966, Vincent Lingiari met Tom Fisher, Vestey’s manager, requested a wage increase to \$25 a week and complained about the recent abuse of Aboriginal women. Fisher reportedly denied any knowledge of abuse and declined the wage rise. Lingiari then told Fisher that they are ‘walking off today’ (Hardy 1968: 73).

Vincent Lingiari then returned to the camp and told the families to prepare to leave the station. That morning some 250 Gurindji left their camp at Wave Hill Station (Jinparak) on foot with their few belongings (Barrkman 2000). They followed a fence line leading west and rested at a dry creek called Junani (Gordy Creek) where they rested and dug for water in the middle of the day. They continued to Lipanangu, a stretch of sandy ground in the bed of the Victoria River near Wave Hill Welfare Station (now the township of Kalkaringi).

They set up camp at Lipanangu and remained there until late December 1966, sustained by their own hunting and foraging and with some support from the welfare officer stationed at the Welfare Station, Bill Jeffrey. Jeffrey could provide food for school children and women who were breast feeding. He was sympathetic and commented to Frank Hardy ‘... there were a lot of lactating women around the camp. Some of them were men even’ (Hardy 1968: 78).

On 23 August 1966, Tom Fisher and a Vestey man from Sydney, Peter Morris, visited the camp to persuade the Aboriginal workers and their families to return to the station camp even if they remain on strike. Lingiari remained firm about staying where they were and even refused Fisher’s offer of a “killer” (a freshly killed beast) and reportedly stated: ‘No thanks, Tom, I don’t want killer. We don’t want nothing from you Vestey mob, no more’ (Hardy 1968: 74).

Six days after the initial walk-off members of the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights and NAWU organisers Brian Manning, Robert Tudawali and Dexter Daniels and FCAATSI members George Gibbs and Stan Davey arrived with supplies from Darwin. Brian Manning spoke to the community about giving support and arranging finances from the south. He also had discussions with Vincent Lingiari, Pincher Nyurmiyari, Long Johnny Kijngayari, Jack Deadwood and an unnamed camp cook and taped the talks for the circulation to the Union and others (Hardy

1968: 69). Manning's account of his first meeting with the Gurindji ends with him promising to 'stick' with them until they received the same award conditions as white men (in Hardy 1968: 81). Manning recounts that although he talked about wages and conditions to them the community's primary concern 'was the contempt in which they had always been held' (Hardy 1968: 80).

Stan Davey assisted the Aborigines to register and apply for the dole (Hardy 1968: 90). Their applications were initially rejected but eventually reversed, largely by the persistent efforts of George Gibbs and the campers were granted the dole (Hardy 1968: 91).

An ABC Four Corners crew arrived at about this time and recorded interviews with Dexter Daniels, Robert Tudawali, Vincent Lingiari and Stan Davey. The segment 'The Price of Equality' drew national attention to the situation of Aboriginal pastoral workers in Australia.

Author and activist Frank Hardy visited the camp first between 10 and 15 September 1966 where '... we saw more than two hundred men, women and children camped on the pebbly sand, clustered in kinship groups in the shade of bloodwood trees and giant trunks of trees petrified like rocks through the centuries.' (Hardy 1968: 86). Hardy records frequent talks with the Gurindji especially Vincent Lingiari, Long Johnny Kijngayari, Pincher Nyurmiyari and Gerry Ngarlgardji (a Warlpiri man) who he sees as 'tribal elders and strike leaders' (Hardy 1968: 106). He is told of Gurindji grievances, which he describes as 'a slow bitterness [that] had festered for decades...' (Hardy 1968: 89). Pincher told Hardy that Vestey treated them 'like dog', kept their workers for long hours without food, 'take lubra from camp' and failed to teach them new skills. Pincher also complained that Vestey thought they owned the country when it was Gurindji country in the first place. Hardy records Pincher as saying that the Vestey Company should all leave and that the Gurindji wanted the land for themselves (Hardy 1968: 101).

With the wet season approaching the Gurindji relocated the camp to a limestone ridge on higher ground that became known as Bottom Camp, about 250 metres behind the welfare officer's house. There they constructed tin huts for shelter and a 'high bough shelter' for meetings (Hardy 1968: 155). The Gurindji remained there during the wet season of 1966-7, initially receiving rations from the policeman and the welfare officer. The community resolutely refused to go back to Wave Hill Station, despite the food shortages during a particularly severe wet in which floods cut off anything other than radio contact to the Wave Hill area.

The Gurindji remained steadfast about receiving award wages, i.e. the same remuneration as white men. Their stance is significant as following months of negotiation between government, unions and pastoralists, new minimum rates were set and the regulations amended in November 1966 (Long 1992 : 152; Rowley 1971: 333). The walk-offs of Aboriginal workers, despite government denials to the contrary, encouraged such negotiations. Earlier, following the agreement on wages in September 1966, the ACTU advised NAWU, to make a Territory-wide announcement about the new negotiated accord on wages and conditions. The Darwin executive of the NAWU, however, decided that the strikers should only return under award rates and that unemployed Aborigines should apply for unemployment benefits (Rowley

1971: 333; Hardy 1968: 115).

Some of the stockmen had taken work at Camfield, Montejinni and Wave Hill Stations while some had gone to Darwin, leaving about thirty-five men and their dependents at the first walk-off camp. Undaunted, Lingiari says that he will visit all the stations and send word to Darwin so they will know to return to the Gurindji community so they will all be together in their own country (Hardy 1968: 159).

The move to Daguragu

During the period at Lipanangu, Lingiari told the Welfare Station officers that the Gurindji wanted to live at Wattie Creek in the Seal Gorge area. The Welfare Station officers had expected the Gurindji to live at the Welfare Station but Lingiari stated that it was too late, that Welfare hadn't helped them in the past and that now they didn't need Welfare Station. Both Vincent Lingiari and Lupngagayari (spelt Lupngagiari in Hardy – also known as Captain Major), who had led the Newcastle Waters strike in May 1966, had ties to Seal Gorge through their mothers (Hardy 1968: 142). Lupngagayari told Hardy about how they held corroborees years ago at Seal Gorge and that 'four miles away' there are caves with Gurindji paintings and bones of dead people (Hardy 1968: 143). Also, the Seal Gorge area was the country of one Sandy Moray, who is said to have met with the men who would lead the walk-off under a Nutwood tree near Daguragu, well before 1966, and exhorted them to leave working for the whiteman and to live separately on their own terms.

In March 1967, the Gurindji moved to Daguragu on Wattie Creek. The move to Daguragu occurred in stages. Frank Hardy had returned to Wave Hill on 15 March 1967. The firm decision was made shortly after this at a meeting where Vincent Lingiari, Long Johnny Kijngayari, Pincher Nyurmiyari and Mick Rangiyari, and also Frank Hardy spoke. The following day about an advance group set off on foot with tools and rations to prepare living areas at Wattie Creek (Attwood 2003: 276). Hardy described the scene as they left:

At dawn on March 18, I watched as 18 men and 6 lubras quietly left the camp at Wave Hill Welfare Settlement (Bottom Camp). ... They carried rolls of wire netting, crowbars, augers and other tools and equipment. They were the advance party which was to begin building the 'homestead' for the Gurindji Mining Lease and Cattle Station. They had a long walk ahead of them. (in Middleton, 1979: 116)

Hardy described their efforts to establish the camp at Wattie Creek:

... some of the men were busy putting the wire netting and Spinifex grass roof on to the second building, others [were] digging post holes and cutting timber for the third. The buildings were perhaps twenty feet square and eight feet high. In front of one of the buildings was the sign prepared by Pincher and Hardy under instructions from the Gurindji. It read: 'GURINDJI MINING LEASE AND CATTLE STATION' (Hardy 1968: 193).

The main group of Gurindji moved to the new camp at Wattie Creek shortly afterwards during March 1967.

Land Rights

Although the walk-off and the subsequent rejection of Vestey's overtures for them to return show the Gurindji resolve to leave the station, it appears that the formulation of the Gurindji's demand as one for traditional land rights developed over a period

through their engagement with Frank Hardy. Lingiari reflected on Hardy's role during the March 1967 meetings at Bottom camp as follows:

We coming up good time now. Old Prank here listen to we. He listen. Them old Cudeba [whites] never listen. Prank listen what thinking, what we telling. We speak right word. We go right road, own Gurindji road and find way to Wattie Creek. That's the new word, the true word. (Hardy 1968 in Attwood 2003: 279)

Professor CA Gibb's 1971 report on 'The Situation of Aborigines on Pastoral Properties in the Northern Territory' states: 'It seems clear from all this evidence, including Mr Hardy's book, that the idea of claiming 'tribal lands' was his and that the Aborigines had earlier been thinking only in terms of seeking to have the Wave Hill lease transferred to them so they could own and manage the station on which they had long worked.' (Gibb 1971)

Hardy had a key role in the form and expression of the 19 April 1967 Gurindji petitioned to the Governor General. This asked that 1 295 square kilometres of land to be excised from Wave Hill pastoral lease in order that Gurindji could live on their own land independently of the pastoral company. Their petition was partly modelled on the 1963 the Yolngu bark petition opposing the grant of bauxite mining leases in north-east Arnhem Land, although the Gurindji petition did not include artwork.

After his September 1966 discussions with the Gurindji Hardy began seeking legal advice on the terms of such a petition. He sought advice from Labor lawyer and parliamentarian Lionel Murphy, among others. He also read widely on the anthropological issues, including a paper by Ronald Berndt on the north-east Arnhem Land land rights issues. In the course of finding the words and processes for the Gurindji to express their claims, Hardy joined the previously separate movements of the Gurindji and the Yolngu and articulated a claim to land rights based on Aboriginal tradition (Attwood 2003: 276-7).

Notwithstanding Hardy's contribution, Vestey and Government officials appear to have accepted the Gurindji resolve to break with their former life as dependents and workers on the station and to establish a community and cattle enterprise on their own terms – and on their own traditional land – as authentic and alarming (Bern and Larbelestier 2006).

The Gurindji petition was rejected a few months later. The Government made offers and proposals for smaller areas, mostly focused on the future development of Wave Hill Welfare Settlement as the major population centre. The Gurindji did not agree to these. Vestey had initially queried the Gurindji about their rights to build at Daguragu and there were concerns in government about the broad implications of these actions for property rights. However, neither the Company nor the government of the day chose to contest the Gurindji moves.

On the 15th August 1975, then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam transferred a lease for 3 236 square kilometres of land purchased from Wave Hill to the Gurindji. This event was symbolised by Whitlam placing a handful of sand in Vincent Lingiari's hand. The Gurindji attach great importance to this handover. The publicity of this event and the handover gesture reinforced at a national level the case for Aboriginal land rights

and for passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*. This was passed by the Coalition Government in the following year.

In 1986, the Gurindji's traditional claims to their pastoral lease land were recognised with a grant of freehold title under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976*.

Aboriginal views of the walk-off and the walk-off route

The Wave Hill walk-off was a defining event in the development of land rights and policies of self-determination which acknowledged the importance of Aboriginal traditions in the aspirations of Aboriginal people. Although Frank Hardy and many other people shaped these events and how they were received both politically and as a public issue, the walk-off route relates to the decisions made by Aboriginal cattle workers and their families to quit working at the station, to leave the station camp and, later, to establish a new community also away from the Welfare Station at a place that were of immediate significance to the Aboriginal people involved. Gurindji place great significance on these events and continue to tell the story in relation to the walk-off route.

Leaving Jinparrak

The first stage of the walk-off was the departure from the camp at Wave Hill. Mick Rangiarri described the departure this way:

And everybody was there. Vestey people you know, a lot of Vestey people sitting there, stockmen and all, and ah, that's the way we, we didn't say anything back. We bin just walk away. Just get back to camp and pack all our gear, and get down to the police station (Lipanangu)... Vestey not bin fair. Vesteys not bin fair, with our people, and we bin, even the woman say that some Vesteys people never bin fair. You know what's happen... Old Vincent Lingiari said 'Okay, we finish'. So we went back to camp. Pack all our gear, and he said to them, 'start walk'. (Mick Rangiarri, 20/4/06 in Rose and Lewis 2006)

Along with the able-bodied adults there were children and old people, although a few of the oldest had to be left behind to be picked up later.

Junani

The resting here is often mentioned when Gurindji tell the story:

We settle down there. Get a water, dig for water, get some water little bit. It was real dirty, but we drank it. (Michael George, 19/4/06 in Rose and Lewis 2006)

Lipanangu

This was the focus of support for the strikers and reaction to the strike:

All the piccaninny dawns come up. All the suns rise plenty times, all the moons look down. All the rains fall and we wait. I listen to the rain and worry in me head, maybe we not go to Wattie Creek, maybe nobody come from Darwin, maybe they all forget about we, maybe them young fellas not listen to old men any more. We know how to wait. But what we wait for? – that the trouble. (Lingiari in Hardy 1968: 159)

That Tom Fisher wanted us to go to Wave Hill again. We been camping there

[Lipanangu] for a while. The Vestey brought beef down to the river to get us back to Wave Hill. We been starving but old fella [Lingiari] he strong, so we shifted to near the Wave Hill Settlement. (Pincher Nyurrimiyari (Numiari) 1975: 11)

Frank said 'you got to start thinking about what you mob gonna do. That's it. So we, we bin start thinking about 'Oh, we don't gotta go back. We gotta go, we gotta talking about this land thing, you know, talk about where we can live.... We bin stubborn now. Everything bin alright, from that day ... Vestey bin come down, trying to get us back to the station, take us back to the Wave Hill station, but we said 'No. We not going back no more.' (Mick Rangiari, 20/4/06 in Rose and Lewis 2006)

We bin live there, sit down. Alright, Frank Hardy come, all the Waterside Workers, union mob, all our friends. (Violet Donald 20/4/06 in Rose and Lewis 2006)

Daguragu

And [Lingiari] told the people they would have to stay there forever and live in that place. So the people did. They went hunting out bush and collected bush tucker... went fishing down the river and caught fish, turtle, and crocodile and ... collected crocodile eggs. They were very happy in that place called Daguragu. They lived there for a long time until the houses were built for them... today the people are still there. They never move out from Daguragu. (Gordon in Riddett 1990: 171)

Well just live away from *kartiya* [white people] place, we move. ... We don't want to live there long that settlement, stay here out from station, out from settlement. Here. We left from there and stay here. (Peanut Panjayari, 19/4/06 in Rose and Lewis 2006)

Sandy Moray, discussed in Hardy (1968) and Rose (1991), is considered by some to have proposed that Gurindji leave the stations and set up on their own terms well before the walk-off. Moray's country was the Seale Gorge area upstream from Daguragu. According to Jimmy Manngayari, he attended the meeting along with Vincent Lingiari, Peanut Panjayari's father, and a man named Bob Warriyawun. In Manngayari's words, Sandy Moray told them:

What's for we work'n langa *kartiya*? We wanna fight the *kartiya*. Get the country back! Don't worry about it. You gotta [will get] land, no worry. You gotta land, you gotta station, you gotta horse, you gotta *buluki* [bullock], you gotta *motika* [car] (Rose 1991 in Rose and Lewis 2006: 22).

Hardy met Sandy Moray and described him as 'ancient thin man' (Hardy 1968: 161). Hardy does not report him having any prominent role in the strike. Moray was senior to Vincent Lingiari and the other strike leaders of the time and may have provided them with the traditional authority to embark on the walk-off and for the decision to move from Wave Hill Welfare Station to Daguragu.

The anthropologist Minoru Hokari has suggested that in choosing Daguragu as the place for the new settlement the Gurindji were returning to site where the inspiration and plans for making this change were first discussed and agreed. Making a settlement there brought the story home to its origins, embedding into place a story that had travelled all over Gurindji country and beyond (see Rose 1991: 226), had coalesced into a walk-off at Wave Hill, had brought people through hardship and

enticements, and had firmed itself into complete determination. The new life for Gurindji people would be built where the dream of a new life had first been articulated (Rose and Lewis 2006).

The nutwood tree in Lot 28 at Daguragu is remembered as the site of the early meeting with Sandy Mora and important meetings in 1967 when the Gurindji moved to Daguragu. The Gurindji attach great importance to the handover memorial that commemorates the handover of the pastoral lease to Vincent Lingiari on 16 August 1975.

Condition:

Jinparak (Old Wave Hill Station)

Since it was abandoned, there has been considerable increase in vegetation cover at the Old Station Site. This thickening has occurred to a greater or lesser degree along most of the walk-off route, but is particularly evident on and around the homestead site. It includes native vegetation such as Eucalypts, Nutwood trees and Turpentine scrub and introduced plants such as Rubber Bush (*Calitopus ricara*) and *Sesbania cannabina*.

Fence Line route

An existing fence follows the location of the fence line which the Gurindji followed in August 1966. The original fence has been replaced and there are no remaining artefacts of the walk-off, which occurred within 50 metres north of the original fence.

Junani (Gordy Creek Waterhole /Crossing)

Gordy Creek is regularly flooded in the wet seasons and contains no physical remains of the Gurindji walk-off.

Route from Junani to Lipanangu

The current Buchanan Highway has been built over the 1966 track which the Gurindji generally followed. The exact route historically taken is not physically evident and there are no physical remains of the Gurindji walk-off.

Lipanangu (Victoria River Camp)

Lipanangu is a natural feature, with no remaining evidence of the 1966 camp. Annual floods scour the beds and banks of these waterholes and deposit new material.

Bottom Camp

This area of limestone ridge includes scattered remnants of the camp in 1966-7 wet season including broken glass and various metal objects (cans, car parts, wire etc).

From Bottom Camp to Daguragu

The exact route historically taken is not physically evident and there are no physical remains of the Gurindji walk-off. The current Buchanan Highway and the turnoff track have been maintained over the older track that was used during the walk-off.

Daguragu First Camp and Handover site

The nutwood tree in Lot 28 Daguragu is in good condition.

Daguragu Handover site

The commemorative plaque (memorial) dates from 16 August 1975 and is in good condition.

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