



# HANDBACK

### The land is taken

Explorer Ernest Giles travelled through the area in 1872 and gave Kata Tjuta the name Mount Olga. The year after, in 1873, William Gosse was the first European to sight Uluru, naming it after the Chief Secretary of South Australia Sir Henry Ayers. Giles was the first European to climb Uluru along with an Afghan camel driver named Khamran.

In the early 1900s, the land around Uluru and Kata Tjuta was declared an Aboriginal Reserve. Senior traditional owners still talk about being herded into the reserve. By 1948 an access road was provided to encourage tourism and Uluru was extracted from the reserve and declared Ayers Rock National Park in 1950. In 1958 Kata Tjuta was added to form Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park. Title was vested in the Director of Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service although from 1978 until 1985 the park was run by the Northern Territory Government.

### The birth of Aboriginal land rights

In 1971 meetings were held in Ernabella by the Office of Aboriginal Affairs where traditional owners for Uluru expressed their concerns about pastoralism, mining, desecration of sites and tourism pressures on their land. To keep the land as a national park after the introduction of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 the land had to be excluded from the Act. The park was therefore re-declared and named Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in 1977. The Pitjantjatjara Council and Central Land Council lobbied against this exclusion – wanting the Commonwealth Government to amend the Act so that they could make a claim on the national park area.

There were offers and counter offers from the Commonwealth Government and the Northern Territory Government. The stalemate continued until the Hawke Government announced in November 1983 that it would amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and return the title to the traditional owners. The land was to be leased back to the Australian Parks and Wildlife Service and run under a system of joint management with a Board of Management represented by a majority of *Anangu* traditional owners.

### The land is handed back

The handover of Uluru in 1985 was a symbolic highpoint for land rights. On 26 October hundreds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people attended the ceremony when Governor General Sir Ninian Stephen handed over the title deeds to *Anangu* traditional owners. *Anangu* then signed an agreement leasing the land back to the Australian Parks and Wildlife Service (now the Director of National Parks) for 99 years.

This occasion formally acknowledged *Anangu* ownership of the park while at the same time recognising the value of their land as a park of national significance. The first Board chairman was Yami Lester - a former land rights campaigner and an executive member of the Pitjantjatjara Council.

### Together we celebrate

Each year we celebrate handback on 26 October. We celebrate the joint management of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park since 1985. We celebrate keeping land and culture strong. Traditional owners can now live on their land and teach their children and grandchildren as they were taught.

