



# MEDIA RELEASE

## The Hon Peter Garrett MP

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

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### **KAKADU FEES IN 2010**

Environment Minister Peter Garrett today said he had accepted the Director of National Parks recommendation to reinstate park use fees at Kakadu National Park from 1 April 2010, with a full exemption for Territorians.

Mr Garrett said the Howard Government had created a black hole in Kakadu's budget with its ill-considered decision on the eve of the 2004 election to abolish visitor fees.

"Kakadu is one of the world's spectacular natural environments, encompassing nearly 20,000 square kilometres and offering visitors a unique experience of our rich Australian landscape, wildlife and Indigenous culture.

"The previous Government's decision to abolish park fees created a \$4 million black hole that taxpayers then had to fill by supplementing the Kakadu budget so that park operations did not falter and the park's traditional owners were not disadvantaged.

"It is both irresponsible and unsustainable in the long term to expect taxpayers to continue to bear the full cost of managing Australia's largest national park and one of our great World Heritage Areas.

"I have therefore accepted the recommendation of the Director that visitors be asked to make a contribution to the maintenance of the tourism infrastructure and services they enjoy. Recovering some of these costs will help maintain Kakadu's spectacular environment."

Mr Garrett said charging entry fees for national parks with high visitation and associated high running costs is common practice around Australia and internationally.

The fee will be \$25 for each visitor 16 years and over, and cover a visit of up to 14 days. Visitors who want to stay longer will be able to do so at no extra charge. This is expected to generate \$4.5 million in net annual revenue, based on visitor numbers in 2007.

Mr Garrett said the Government did not believe the fee would discourage interstate or international visitors who make up more than 85 per cent of all visitors.

"However, by exempting Territorians from the fee we expect they will continue to be great champions for Kakadu. This park is in their backyard and we want them to come again and again – and to bring friends and visiting relatives.

"This is a view that has been strongly put to me by Senator Crossin, Member for Solomon, Damien Hale, and Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon, who have strongly advocated the interests of Territorians as the Government has considered future funding options for Kakadu."

Mr Garrett said the Government had made the announcement early to give the tourism industry plenty of time to plan pricing and marketing for the 2010 tourism season.

Under the park lease, 38.8 per cent of revenue will be passed on to the Aboriginal Land Trusts for traditional owners.