

Sheree Jeeves
Senior Community Engagement Officer
City of Darwin
Harry Chan Avenue,
GPO Box 84
Darwin NT 0801
08 8930 0197



PO Box 40694,
Casuarina NT 0811
ABN: 47 665 738 318
Phone: 08 89456
eo@afant.com.au

Dear Sheree,

Re: Nightcliff Jetty & Boat Ramp Car Park: Proposed earlier closing times

I thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the proposal to close the Nightcliff jetty and boat ramp car park earlier each night (from 11pm to 9pm). We also thank the City of Darwin for agreeing to meet with AFANT next week to further discuss this important matter. Please accept this submission from AFANT on behalf of the recreational fishers in the Northern Territory, particularly those in the Darwin area.

AFANT and the recreational fishing community are strongly opposed to any moves to further restrict access to the Nightcliff jetty and boat ramp car parks. It is our substantiated view (see Appendix A) that the current arrangements (being closed from 11pm - 4am) are already overly restrictive and unsatisfactory. While we understand the intention behind closing the car park at night is to balance the amenity of facility users with the peace of local residents, we contend that restricting access to legitimate users of taxpayer funded recreational fishing infrastructure, is neither a suitable or sustainable solution.

AFANT have consulted with our members and constituents, namely recreational fishers with an interest in the Nightcliff facilities. It should be noted that many of these people reside in the City of Darwin council area. In this submission to the official community consultation process, we will outline the rationale behind our strong objections to the proposal and provide results of our own community engagement on this matter.

Common ground – recreational fishers are not part of the problem

AFANT notes that the official reason given by the City of Darwin for the consideration of a more restrictive access regime is as follows; *(the) City of Darwin has received a request to consider closing the car parks earlier. This request is driven by some continued issues with noise and public disturbance at the site impacting on local residents.* Follow up by AFANT, and media reports on this matter have clarified that a small number of people in cars playing music and using their vehicles inappropriately appear be the major concerns of the residents cited. AFANT has spoken with City of Darwin staff and at no point has anyone suggested that fishers using the ramp or jetty are to be blamed for the noise or public disturbance.

There is common ground here between the residents and fishing infrastructure users, in that both groups believe that the issue of noise and public disturbance at night should be able to be dealt with. Legitimate users of this specialised infrastructure, do not want the actions of non-users to impact on local support or access, nor do they want the experience of their own legitimate activities to be impacted by excessive noise or public disturbance. AFANT and the recreational fishing community firmly believe that calling the police is the best way for residents and infrastructure users to have matters of public disturbance addressed.

Legitimate and necessary use – it is inappropriate to restrict access to these facilities

It is AFANT's position that restricting access to publicly funded recreational fishing infrastructure is not an appropriate course of action. In the case of Nightcliff jetty and especially the boat ramp, we do not believe that any night time restriction on the use of the car park is appropriate for the following reasons:



- a) The facility was originally a boat ramp. With the boat ramp and original (east) car park first built, followed by the rock groyne and jetty; for the purposes of providing recreational fishing opportunity.
- b) The boat ramp has been in place for over 50 years and it is therefore reasonable to suggest that current local residents have always known that they have chosen to reside in proximity to a significant piece of public infrastructure, often used during the day and night.
- c) The Northern Territory Government has in recent years funded upgrades to boat ramp, car park and jetty. The investment in these facilities has been significant and over a period of time.
- d) The ramp requires around a 3.5 - 4m tide height to be serviceable. Therefore, depending on the tide cycle, time restrictions on access to the carpark can be exacerbated, meaning that there are even longer periods when the ramp facility does not meet boat launching or retrieval demands.
- e) The Nightcliff boat ramp is a highly unique asset as it is the only public boat ramp along the Darwin foreshore with a rock groyne providing protection to the ramp from onshore wave action.
- f) The Nightcliff jetty is a unique asset in that it provides safe (Crocwise) access to land based fishers. This is of particular significance at night when the dangers of beach or rock fishing are increased. Furthermore, given that fishing on the jetty is dependent on tides, this factor drives demand for the jetty and can coincide with the late evening/early morning. Restricting reasonable access to the jetty may result in people choosing to fish in less safe locations.

The proposal to close the car parks at 9pm is not supported by legitimate users of the infrastructure

AFANT does not support the proposal to further restrict access to the Nightcliff jetty and boat ramp by closing the carpark earlier and for a longer period. Our primary objections are based upon this access regime being unsuitable and unfair for the legitimate users of the publicly funded infrastructure.

AFANT has evidence of community sentiment, revealing significant community opposition to the proposal being considered by the Council. This evidence came to light through a survey ran by AFANT and made available to our members and supporters via our newsletter and on our Facebook page. We received 149 individual responses to our survey. Of this sample 73% identified as Nightcliff boat ramp users, 50% as Nightcliff jetty fishers, with 20% saying they intend to use either fishing facility. This suggests that the AFANT sample strongly represents legitimate infrastructure users.

Of those surveyed 96% did not support the proposal to close the car park earlier. Only 17% agreed that the current opening times were sufficient, with 76% of respondents saying the car parks should be open 24 hours a day. Fifty-eight percent of respondents also believed that having legitimate users present deterred antisocial behaviour of others in the area. The full survey results are provided in Appendix A.

Current access arrangements are not satisfactory for a major user group – recreational fishers

As by-product of the consultation on this proposal, it has come to AFANT's attention that the majority of recreational fishers who use the Nightcliff facilities are not satisfied with the current access and car parking arrangements. This has been substantiated by the calls, comments and survey responses received by AFANT. Many users have reported that the current closed period from 11pm - 4am has limited their legitimate use of the boat ramp. Furthermore, it has been revealed that fishing users, especially boat ramp users have regular trouble being able to park their boats exacerbated by cars without trailers, parking in the specifically marked boat car parks in the eastern car park.



The above sentiments have been captured in our online survey where 73% of respondents said that the car parks should be open 24 hours a day. Of particular concern to AFANT was the revelation that 47% of respondents reported issues with finding a parking spot to park their boat trailer, with 13% saying that not being able to park their boat trailer was usual. Parking issues were also cited by jetty fishers (see Appendix A).

Recommendations

1. The Council reject the proposal to close the car parks at the earlier time of 9pm
2. The Council consult with the community about opening at least the boat ramp car park, 24 hours a day
3. The City of Darwin introduce and enforce controls to ensure that only cars with boat trailers park in specifically marked parks in the eastern section of the car park (it may be sufficient to enforce this only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday).

We thank you for taking the time to consider AFANT's submission. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any more information about the views presented here, or anything further about recreational fishing at Nightcliff.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Ciaravolo", is positioned above the typed name.

David Ciaravolo
Executive Officer

5 May 2017

Appendix A

AFANT Your Say: Proposal to close Nightcliff Jetty and Boat Ramp Car parks at 9pm
Summary Report (149 responses)

Q1. Do you use the Jetty or Boat Ramp for fishing? (you can select more than one)

	%
I use the Jetty	50
I use the Boat Ramp	73
I intend to use the Jetty or Ramp	20
I do not use these facilities	4

Q2. Did you know that the car parks are currently closed between 11pm and 4am?

	%
Yes	63
No	37

Q3. Do you support the current proposal to close the car parks 2 hours earlier at 9pm?

	%
No	96
Yes	4

Q4. Do you think the current opening hours 4am - 11pm offer reasonable access to these publicly funded fishing facilities? (can select up to 2)

	%
Yes, the current opening hours are sufficient	17
No, the carparks should be open later	17
No, the car parks should re-open earlier	5
No, the car parks should be open 24 hours	76

Q5. Which of the following best fits your experiences of using the car parks when fishing from the Boat Ramp or Jetty? (can choose up to 2)

	%
Usually there are enough parks when I visit to fish from the jetty	19
Usually there are enough parks when I visit to use the boat ramp	31
It is sometimes not possible to find a park for my boat trailer	47
It is usually not possible to find a park for my boat trailer	13
It is sometimes not possible to find a park when I go fishing on the Jetty	12
It is usually not possible to find a park when I go fishing on the jetty	0
I don't go fishing here	6

Q6. Aside from fishing, when you visit the Jetty or Ramp what do you value? (choose as many as you like)

	%
I like the convenience of the location	74
I like the fish and chips	24
I like the food trucks	37
I only go here to go fishing	35

Q7. Please share your thoughts on noisy or anti-social behaviour in the car parks (can select multiple)

	%
I have not noticed noisy or anti-social behaviour in the car parks	45
I often observe noisy or anti-social behaviour in the car parks	3
I occasionally observe noisy or anti-social behaviour in the car parks	28
I think having legitimate users (like fishers) present deters poor behaviour	58