

# FACT SHEET



## Property Purchasers and Sacred Sites

### What is a sacred site?

A sacred site might be a tree, a hill, a waterhole, a range of mountains, or any other natural feature of the landscape that is of significance according to Aboriginal tradition. Sacred sites are often identified in urban and town areas in the Northern Territory.

In the Territory, all Aboriginal sacred sites are protected under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*. The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) is the body established under the Act to be responsible for the protection of sacred sites throughout the Territory.

### How can I find out about sacred sites on land I wish to purchase?

To find out about the location of sacred sites within a given lot or portion number, a Register Inspection should be sought from the AAPA. Often, your conveyancer will obtain a Register Inspection on your behalf prior to the purchase of a property. For more information on Register Inspections, please contact the AAPA or download a **Register Inspection Fact Sheet** from our website at [www.aapant.org.au](http://www.aapant.org.au).

### There is a sacred site on land I wish to purchase. What now?

The existence of a sacred site does not necessarily mean that entry or works on or near the site are prohibited. An **Authority Certificate** can provide conditions, if any, for entry or works on or near a sacred site. The AAPA strongly encourages purchasers of land with sacred sites identified on them to seek an Authority Certificate. Your conveyancer may be able to assist you with applying for an Authority Certificate at the time of purchase.

### What about my rights as a landowner?

The *Sacred Sites Act* takes into account the proprietary rights of the owners of land. This means that a landowner may enter a sacred site on their land, remain on it and do anything for the normal enjoyment of the owner's proprietary interests in the land. However, right of entry and use may be subject to the conditions of an Authority Certificate.



## Should I seek an Authority Certificate?

If the land you intend to purchase has an identified sacred site on it, you should apply for an Authority Certificate.

An Authority Certificate is a legal document issued under the *Sacred Sites Act* and defines the boundaries of any sacred sites on a particular portion of land. It sets out clear conditions for using or carrying out works on any area of land and sea within the Territory and importantly, **indemnifies the holder against prosecution** under the Act for damage to sacred sites in the area of the Certificate, provided the work or use has been carried out in accordance with the conditions of the Authority Certificate.

For more information on Authority Certificates, please contact the AAPA or download an **Authority Certificate Fact Sheet** from the AAPA website at [www.aapant.org.au](http://www.aapant.org.au).

