

# Wildlife Trade Operation Proposal- Harvesting and export of Australian Native bushfoods

## 1.0 Introduction

This Wildlife Trade Operation proposal is to facilitate the 2023 harvest of Kakadu Plum (*terminalia ferdinandiana*) by members of The Northern Australia Aboriginal Kakadu Plum Alliance Cooperative Limited (NAAKPA), for the export market. NAAKPA consists of six Aboriginal Corporations, across northern Western Australia and the Northern Territory harvesting and growing Kakadu Plum and other native Australian foods from private leasehold land, Aboriginal homelands and Indigenous Protected Areas.

It was deemed better for all NAAKPA members to submit a joint WTO proposal, rather than submit six individual applications. The advantages of making a submission under a NAAKPA framework will facilitate a more centralised and consistent approach to reporting, monitoring and developing harvest practices of Kakadu Plum and other bushfoods.

Relevant legislation spans the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conversation Act 1976 (NT) and the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA), as well as the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth) and the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Acts 1975. This proposal also includes ongoing permissions with the Northern Lands Council as well as respective Traditional owner groups from where Kakadu plum and other bushfoods are sourced.

The harvesting activity falls into two categories:

- a. Orchard or plantation based operations and;
- b. Wild harvests.

## 1.1 Species being harvested;

Kakadu Plum (*terminalia ferdinandiana*) is the main species harvested by all NAAKPA members. During the 2022-2023 harvest season approximately 25 tonnes of Kakadu plum fruit has and will be harvested annually by NAAKPA enterprises. There is a strong demand for Kakadu Plum internationally, and it is currently endemic only to Australia and NAAKPA members are keen to export Kakadu Plum extracts to meet the international demand.

Scientific name	Common name	Harvested part	Harvesting method	Threatened?	
				NT	WA
Terminalia Ferdinandiana	Kakadu Plum	Ripe fruit & leaves	By hand (wild harvest & orchard)	No	No

## 1.2 Location of harvest activities

All NAAKPA members have been harvesting Kakadu plum and other bushfoods for four or more years, and in some cases for more than ten years. Harvest locations are specific to each enterprise, and the table below provides details on each enterprise harvest locations. Further maps are available in the appendices to provide greater detail on harvest locations.

NAAKPA member	ABN	Location	Harvest area	Reference
Northern Australia Aboriginal Kakadu Plum Alliance Cooperative Limited (WA)	30 908 580 751	Registered Office: 640 Dora St, Broome	Supports harvesting activities of member enterprises	

Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation	58572395053	Maningrida, Northern Territory (Wild harvest)	Djelk Indigenous Protected Area (Code: 4361)	Appendix 1
Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation	782 801 486	Broome, Western Australia. (Fruit Farm Plantation/Orchard)	Fruit Farm: Lot 350 on deposited plan 75852 Crown Land Certificate Title Volume LR3163 Folio 732 and Lot 592 Deposited on Plan 71791 being the whole of the land contained in Crown land Certificate of Title Volume LR3161 Folio 627	Appendix 2
Mayi Harvest (Milari Aboriginal Corporation)	4 634 598 824	Broome Western Australia	Quongdong Point / James Price Point area- -17.5860434 122.1668406	Appendix 3
Mercedes Cove Aboriginal Corporation	35 933 282 193	Dampier Peninsula Western Australia	Beagle Bay Reserve 1012 Mercedes Cove (122°35'35"E , 16°46'0"S)	Appendix 4
Palngun Wurnangat Aboriginal Corporation and Thamarrurr Development Corporation	PWAC: 67353098819  TDC: 4 124789493	Wadeye, Northern Territory. Both trading as Thamarrurr Plums	Thamarrurr Council Region Boundary (Code: 4140). The Thamarrurr Region/Wadeye is part of the Daly River Port Keats Aboriginal Land Trust, which is owned by the Traditional Owners of the Region through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT) 1976. It is privately owned Aboriginal land, not Crown land or public land. The harvest occurs in the Thamarrurr region which is approximately 18,000 square kilometres in size. Traditional Owner's groups include, Rak Angileni, Rak Kirnmu, Rak Kubiyrri, Rak Kullingmirr, Rak Kungarlbarl, Rak Kuy, Rak Merrepen, Rak Nadirri, Rak Nemarluk,	Appendix 5

			Rak Nganthawudi, RAK Nuthunthu, Rak Perrederr, Rak Thinti, Rak Wudipuli, Yek Diminin, Yek Maninh, Yek Nangu, Yek Ngudanimarn, Yek Wunh, Yek Yedderr.	
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### 1.3 Prior informed consent

NAAKPA’s membership consists of Aboriginal Corporations, and recognising the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a critical factor in all of their bushfood operations. Many of the NAAKPA’s member Corporations consists of multiple Traditional owner groups who are all consulted prior to harvest activities. Sometimes Traditional owners require a royalty, other times they require that only people from their clan groups harvests from their respective country, and these are critical considerations for NAAKPA enterprises.

### 1.4 Are the species listed in 1.1 protected under state, Territory and Commonwealth legislation?

The listed species in 1.1 are;

- a. Not listed as threatened under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- b. Not listed as threatened under the Threatened and Priority flora list- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Government of Western Australia;
- c. Not listed as threatened under the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976
- d. Not listed as threatened under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

## 2. General Aims and Goals

The aims of this WTO application are to facilitate and support NAAKPA members in their endeavours to export their produce from their traditional homelands. The objective is to generate economic outcomes for Aboriginal enterprises operating within these communities harvesting Kakadu Plum and other bushfoods (as listed in 1.1). Indigenous people protect about 80% of the world’s remaining biodiversity<sup>1</sup> and are amongst the poorest population economically in Australia, and this is particularly true for remote Aboriginal communities where most of our member enterprises are based.

Most of our NAAKPA members already work with local rangers to protect biodiversity on their homelands, and being able to harvest traditional foods for export markets to generate economic outcomes in a sustainable way is critical to the future viability of many of these communities and the livelihood of Traditional owners on country.

## 3. Harvest details

Locations of harvest activities are listed 1.2 and these are supported by additional documents in the Appendices.

Wild harvests require permits from either the Northern Territory Parks and wildlife or the Western Australia Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Further permits and permissions are also

<sup>1</sup> Indigenous people’s contribution to protecting biodiversity:  
<https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/climate/management/national-and-international-frameworks#-cli-21-figure-21-indigenous-peoples-and-the-environment>

required by Traditional owners groups as well as the Northern Lands Council, and Parks Australia, depending on their jurisdictions. The relevant permits will be attached to our application.

Each NAAKPA enterprise has established processes for applications for permits as well as consultations with Traditional owners. A pilot app has been developed for the Thamarrurr region (PWAC/TDC) to link harvesters with permissions from Traditional Owners and a similar app is being considered for other regions where wild harvesting is practiced.

NAAKPA takes seriously all regulatory requirements to protect Australia’s biodiversity and the requirement to utilise natural resources in a sustainable manner.

NAAKPA as an organisation and each individual NAAKPA member under this application is in regular communications with parks and biodiversity authorities to ensure compliance to current regulations.

### 3.2 Harvest volumes

Harvest volumes are indicated on each respective permit, and these vary based on the species being harvested.

NAAKPA’s objective is to support Aboriginal Corporations harvesting Kakadu Plum. Long-term this includes increasing annual harvest volumes and improving efficiencies and sustainability of the harvest to minimise damage to trees, and also to leave enough fruit in areas for both recruitment and for fauna.

NAAKPA as a collective has harvested the following volumes over the last few years;

<b>NAAKPA Harvesting years</b>	<b>Total aggregate volume kg (Kakadu Plum only)</b>
2022	10,330
2021	15,450
2020	14,700
2019	20,700
2018	5,410
2017	9,400
2016	5,700

During the 2023 harvest season, the following volumes of Kakadu Plum were harvested:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Volume (kg)</b>
January	4,500
February	0
April	0
May	5,000
June	5,000 (anticipated)

The Kakadu Plum harvest plays a major role in Aboriginal communities on a number of different levels;

- a. Economic benefits: The Kakadu plum harvest represents one of the few economic activities that Aboriginal people can harness from country. For example Wadeye pays out more than \$150,000 to up to 200 people in a township of 3,000. Similarly in Maningrida, some 80-100 harvesters are paid out \$100,000 for Kakadu Plum harvests. This income generated has a multiplier effect in these small remote communities where unemployment dwarfs the number of employed community members.
- b. Social cohesion: The Kakadu Plum harvest is an event in which many different clans participate, and it brings people together in one activity. This is true for the Wadeye region and also Maningrida. In this way, the harvesting of Kakadu Plum and other bushfoods contributes to consolidating social cohesion within remote communities.

- c. Cultural connections and getting back out on country- For many wild harvesters, the harvesting activity is conducted within small family groups, and is an opportunity to people to go back out onto country. It involves people directly with activities on their country.

### 3.3 Harvest period

For Kakadu plum, the harvest season runs between six to eight weeks. In Western Australia, the season runs from January 1<sup>st</sup>, through to the end of February. In the Northern Territory it runs from April through to May.

### 3.4 Harvesting practice

A key concern for NAAKPA enterprises is ensuring that the harvest is sustainable and does not damage trees or the environment. The harvest in the Northern Territory is conducted immediately prior to the burning season for most NT NAAKPA enterprises and there is a great deal of awareness amongst harvesters of the need to harvest before burning.

Harvesters undergo an induction every harvest season prior to the harvest to encourage sustainable taking of fruit, ensuring that at least a quarter of the fruit on the tree is left for fauna (birds and climbing mammals) and minimum damage is done to trees.

NAAKPA is working with its enterprise members and traditional owners to improve communications directly to harvesters, through videos in language, and also looking at improving harvest technology. This involves exploring the application of different harvesting tools, from rakes, hooks and catch nets, through to exploring different designs for fruit carrying bags and equipment. These activities support the ongoing harvest and help ensure that harvest practices are sustainable and minimise damage to trees.

Other innovations include the introduction of Apps to manage harvester registrations, permissions to harvest on specific country and payments for harvested fruits. Working with groups across northern Australia, each of these innovations and experiences can be shared between harvesters to improve overall processes and levels of sustainability across a whole sector.

Harvesters pick fruit by hand and place them into shopping bags and carry them as they walk through country. Some harvesters walk five to fifteen kilometres to harvest fruit, depending on the areas they have had permission to harvest.

Fruit harvested from country is then brought into a centralised location (usually into town) and sorted, washed, packed into 10kg boxes and frozen.

NAAKPA provides support and training for its enterprises members around HACCP and food safety, and NAAKPA regularly runs capacity building activities to generate a greater awareness on food safety and food hygiene.

## 4. Impact of harvest on species being collected

In terms of Kakadu plum (*terminalia ferdinandiana*), studies on various homelands have indicated that harvest volumes are very small, less than 1% of available fruit in some areas<sup>2</sup>. NAAKPA is active in support enterprises to manage their available resources sustainably. Data about the impact of harvests on available stock is constantly being updated and reviewed, to ensure sustainable harvesting activities.

## 5. Monitoring and reporting

As a registered Cooperative, NAAKPA collects harvest information from its members and records these for industry development and research. Harvest innovations and issues are regularly tabled and discussed

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<sup>2</sup> Studies done by TDC/PWAC in Wadeye and GAC in Kakadu. These reports are available upon request.

through the NAAKPA Board, consisting of Directors from each of NAAKPA's member enterprises. Recommendations to improve the industry and practices are regularly filtered down to the harvester level.

## 6. Management and compliance

NAAKPA works to support each of its enterprise members in managing and complying to required regulations in relation to accessing and collecting native flora and fauna. As NAAKPA consists of a number of enterprises undertaking the similar activities, information about availability, risk to resource populations, as well as environmental factors are regularly shared, and management and monitoring strategies are usually agreed collectively and implemented across the member network.

## 7. Background Information

Indigenous people have been harvesting Kakadu Plum (*terminalia ferdiandiana*) and other bushfoods across northern Australia for between 65,000- 53,000 years<sup>3</sup>. Kakadu Plum is endemic to Australia and has been commercially harvested for 25-30 years, and the fruit has the international reputation of having the highest vitamin C content in the world. As a result, there is strong interest in Kakadu plum from the nutraceutical sector as well as the cosmetic sector and is sold primarily as extract on the export market. It is estimated that over 50 tonnes of Kakadu plum fruit are harvested annually in Australia (2019) and this volume is expected to double by 2025, given international interest and demand<sup>4</sup>. Aboriginal communities in northern Australia are also keen to participate in the export of this traditional fruit, and participate in international commercial supply chains.

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<sup>3</sup> Florin, S.A., Fairbairn, A.S., Nango, M. et al. The first Australian plant foods at Madjedbebe, 65,000–53,000 years ago. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-14723-0>

<sup>4</sup> Laurie, S. (2020). Australian native foods and botanicals – 2019/20 market study. ANFAB. [https://anfab.org.au/edit/research\\_projects/ANFAB\\_2020\\_Market%20Study.pdf](https://anfab.org.au/edit/research_projects/ANFAB_2020_Market%20Study.pdf)

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Appendix One: Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation harvest location



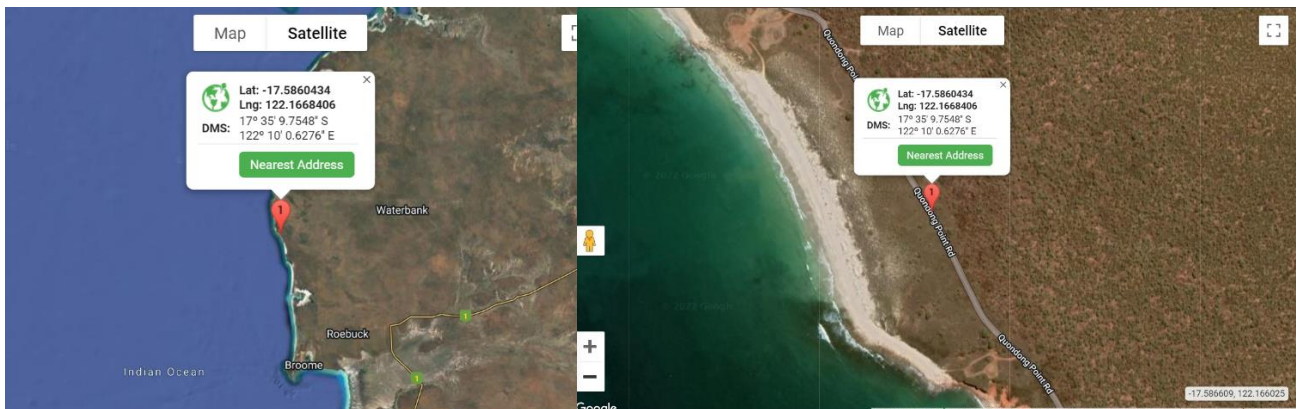
Appendix Two: Mamabulanjin Aboriginal Corporation Fruit Farm harvest location



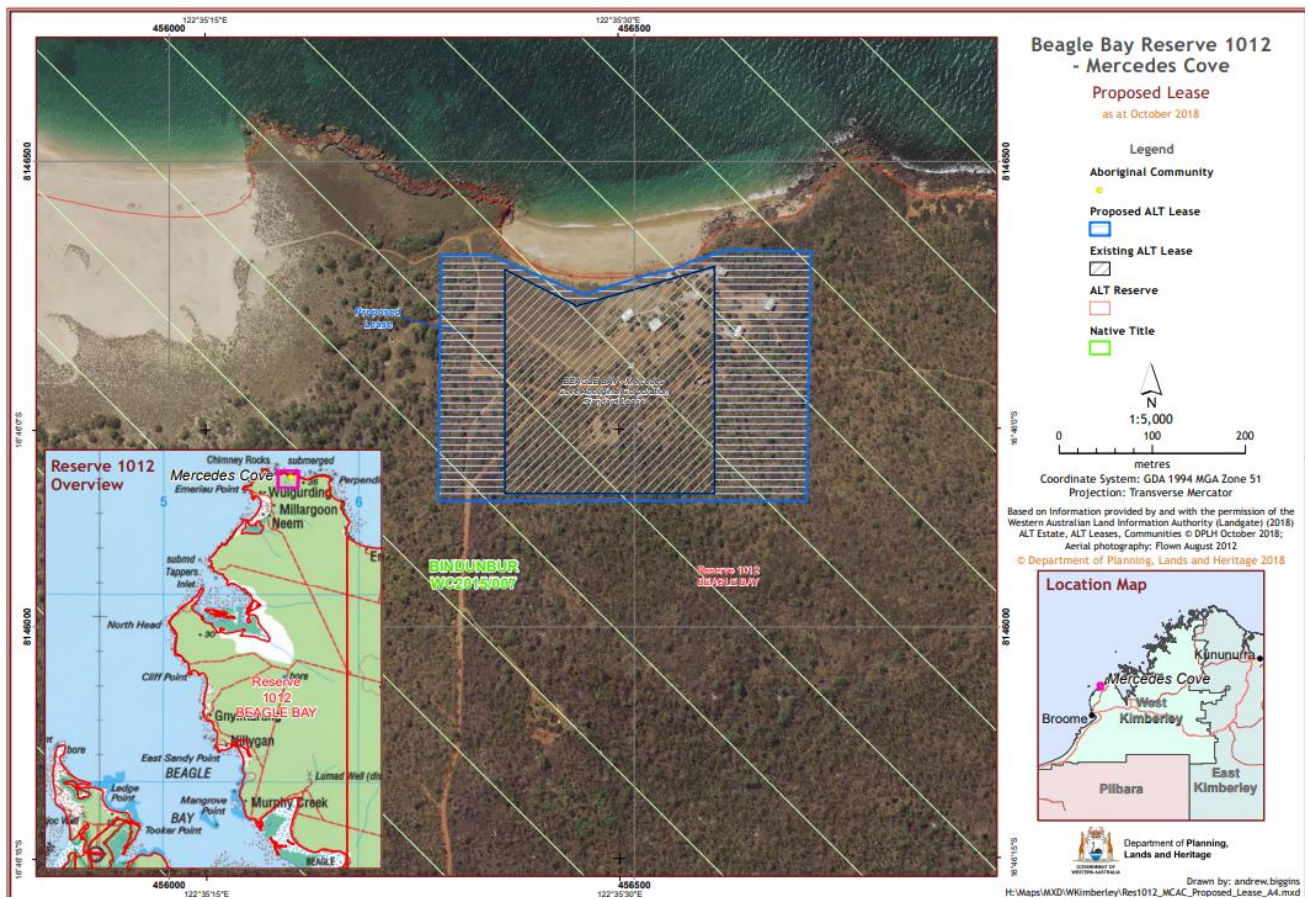


### Appendix Three: Mayi Harvest (Milari Aboriginal Corporation) harvest location

Area around Quondong Point and James Price Point, north of Broome on the Dampier Peninsula. Ngumbarl Jabirr Jabirr Lands.



### Appendix Four: Mercedes Cove Aboriginal Corporation Harvest Location



Appendix Five: Palngun Wurnangat Aboriginal Corporation and Thamarrurr Development Corporation: Wadeye harvest location

