



Information for Visitors to Maralinga Village

The Maralinga Tjarutja people welcome you to the historic Maralinga Village.

Please read the following for your information and safety.

Maralinga Village and surrounding areas are designated dry zones. We ask that you please respect this and refrain from consumption of alcohol during your visit to the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands.

For safety reasons it is not permitted for any person or persons to leave the immediate Village area unless accompanied by Maralinga Village staff.

Please be aware the failure to comply will result in your being escorted from the Village area. You will also be required to leave the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands.

- You are welcome to wander around within the Village confines, but please do not enter any area or buildings cordoned off and please observe all signage.
- As materials may not be safe or long-term exposure, please do not remove any plant life, rocks or sand fused glass (Trinitite) from anywhere within Section 400 or while on tour.
- Keep in mind that during the warmer months snake can be active in this area. Please let a staff member know if you encounter a snake so that a decision can be made to remove it if there is a safety risk.
- The Hospital building is the Village Caretaker's house and please feel welcome to knock at the door if any assistance is required. You are free to move around outside the building or request the use of the BBQ facilities.
- Building BQ 19 is open to all as a small museum. This is a place to view items collected around Sec.400, pictures and old cinema footage on a large screen.
- Do not remove items from display. Open 24hrs. CCTV in operation
- Should you have a **MEDICAL EMERGENCY PLEASE SEEK OUT STAFF FOR ASSISTANCE**. Our staff have first aid training and can request assistance from the Royal Flying Doctor Service if required.

We hope you enjoy your visit to The Maralinga Tjarutja Lands and that you find the tour enjoyable. Do not hesitate to ask us if you have any queries.

Welcome to Maralinga

Introducing Maralinga Tjarutja

Maralinga Tjarutja Inc. Board Directors, on behalf of the Traditional Owners welcome you to Maralinga Village. Maralinga Tjarutja (MT) is the Aboriginal Incorporation created by Act of Parliament - the Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act 1984 (the Act) – to own and manage the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands (the Lands). MT, which is governed by a Council of traditional owners, also performs a broader function in service delivery and supporting economic development on the Lands, including tourism.

In 2002, Maralinga Tjarutja Inc. engaged Ochre Consultants Pty Ltd to complete a Maralinga Village Feasibility Study which did not progress. In 2009, Maralinga Land and Environment Management Committee identified the potential for tourism development and support for this as an enterprise owned and managed by the Traditional Owners formed part of the hand back agreement.

The MT Lands extend from the WA border to the east and are located between the east -west railway line to the south and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands to the north. The MT Lands surround the Maralinga Village and the former nuclear test sites which are all located on Section 400.

MT was instrumental in negotiating with the South Australian, Commonwealth and British Governments to clean up the radioactive contamination at Maralinga and Emu and then to hand back Section 400 to Maralinga Tjarutja to hold on behalf of the traditional owners. The Handback, which was accompanied by appropriate indemnities from the Commonwealth and a Land Management Agreement between SA, the Commonwealth and MT was finalised in December 2009.

MT is headquartered in Ceduna but also operates another office at Oak Valley, to support essential services and funded programs for the benefit of traditional owners living at that location.

Section 400, the atomic tests briefly

Section 400 at Maralinga is a rectangular section of land, about 48 kilometres east to west and 65 kilometres north to south, which is located about 400 kilometres north-west of Ceduna, South Australia.

In the 1950s, the Australian Government gave the British Government permission to test nuclear devices on Section 400 at Maralinga. The British Government built permanent accommodation and work buildings at Maralinga for a staff of up to 2,000 people. Most of the buildings were at the southern end of the site, at Maralinga Village.

The British Government conducted atomic tests at the Maralinga Forward Area, about 30 km north of Maralinga Village, in the 1950s and 60s. Seven full scale atomic bomb tests (major trials) and many hundreds of smaller test explosions (minor trials) were conducted. The test areas were connected by an array of roads, many of which are still useable today.

Parts of the Forward Area were radioactively contaminated by the British tests. Most of the British departed the site in the early 1960s but returned in 1964, and in 1967 [codenamed Operation Brumby]to

conduct clean-ups of the contaminated sites. The goals of this operation were ‘to reduce the level of contamination and to perform such other operations’ as were considered necessary for closing the sites.

The British Government then reported that the testing sites were satisfactorily decontaminated. [erroneously]

After the British left

When the British departed, the buildings and assets were handed to the Australian Government in exchange for the Government taking all responsibility for the site. The Aboriginal Lands Trust of South Australia was granted salvage rights to the Maralinga village and in the period 1974-1980, the Yalata Community Incorporated removed and sold most of the Maralinga buildings.

All the buildings from the testing period were removed except about five of the more substantial and usable buildings which were left at the Maralinga Village and are still there today.

Except for a brief period in the 1970s, the Australian Government has always maintained an employee at Maralinga to ensure the security of the site. In the early 1980s, the Australian Government became concerned about radiation levels at Maralinga and appointed a Royal Commission to report on the effects of the British tests. The Royal Commission reported (1985), among other things, that the land was still dangerously radioactively contaminated and should be rehabilitated.

In 1993, the Australian Government made a decision to proceed with a \$108 million-dollar clean-up of the radioactive contamination at Maralinga, the Maralinga Rehabilitation Project. The project commenced in 1995 and finished in 2000. The project was supervised by a committee of six scientists with Australian and overseas radiation management expertise, the Maralinga Rehabilitation Technical Advisory Committee (MARTAC). At the end of the project, MARTAC wrote a detailed scientific report, “Rehabilitation of Former Nuclear Test Sites at Emu and Maralinga (Australia)”.

Following the Maralinga Rehabilitation Project, the Australian Government’s independent radiation regulator, the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), conducted detailed radiation surveys of the rehabilitated site and declared that all of site was safe for unrestricted use except for two areas where the only restriction is that people not camp permanently.

As a consequence of the handback of Section 400 to MT in 2009, management of Section 400 was transferred to MT from the Commonwealth and responsibility for regulatory oversight of the MT land was passed from the Commonwealth to the South Australian Environment Protection Authority (“EPA”).

Ongoing Management of Section 400

Maralinga Tjarutja is responsible for discharging obligations under the Maralinga Land Environment Management Plan which include:

- Control visitor access to Section 400 and the forward area by refusing access to persons who do not have a Permit under the Act and permitting persons with a Permit to have access under supervision.

- Ensure that no person who is permitted to enter Section 400 travels outside Maralinga Village on Section 400 unless accompanied by a caretaker.
- Monitor and record any unauthorised access to Section 400 and to notify MT.
- Report any suspicion of significant radioactive, chemical or physical hazard to the South Australian Environmental Protection Authority (“EPA”) and to cooperate with the EPA and taking temporary measures to deal with any such hazard.
- Maintain the signs at the Watson and Emu barriers, Taranaki and Maralinga Village which give contingency advice.
- Monitor on a six-monthly basis, all burial trench boundary markers and debris pits.
- Undertake the radiation boundary sign inspection at the Taranaki site every 2 months.
- Assist and facilitate all representatives of MT, the State and Commonwealth who are performing duties under the Maralinga Hand Bank Deed and Maralinga Land and Environment Management Plan and
- Remove physical debris and hazards which may be dangerous to visitors to Section 400.

When the British government built Maralinga, one of the more substantial buildings was the Maralinga Village Hospital. After the British left, the Hospital building was used as living quarters and office space by the Commonwealth Police officers who patrolled the site until it was staffed by a contracted site manager who now calls the building “home”.

Currently, Maralinga Tjarutja Inc engage Roger and Priscilla Petersen as Caretakers. They bring many skills and support tourism along with the day to day management and obligations at the Village. We also engage a Tour Guide contractor – Robin Matthews to provide and support Tourists. Robin has been deeply involved at Maralinga over the years and is committed to Maralinga Tourism. Robin was a previous Caretaker and is also contracted to remediate the debris pits annually.

Since Section 400 was handed back to MT the infrastructure has been maintained as previously by Site Managers who have;

- Maintained and improved the infrastructure on Section 400, at the Maralinga Village and the airstrip
- Hosted visitors (approved by MT), scientists and government representatives
- Fulfilled the obligations of MT under the Maralinga Land Management Agreement
- Assisted the MT Council develop an innovative and successful tourism enterprise that offers visitors access to the Village campground and a guided tour of the nuclear test sites
- Developed a strong working relationship with MT, the Maralinga traditional owners and the Maralinga Piling Trust which holds moneys on trust for the maintenance of the Maralinga Village and Section 400.

Mail and supplies are freighted in once a week.

The Atomic Testing Period

Between 1953 and 1963, the United Kingdom conducted a programme of nuclear weapons development trials at Maralinga and Emu in South Australia. In all, nine major nuclear trials involving atomic explosions, and several hundred smaller scale experiments ('minor trials ') which dispersed radioactive materials over small areas, were performed at the two locations. The sites of these trials are shown on the accompanying maps. As well, three major nuclear trials were performed at the Monte Bello Islands in Western Australia in 1952 and 1956.

MAJOR TRIALS

In 1956 at Maralinga, four major nuclear trials of code-names One Tree, Marcoo, Kite and Breakaway were carried out in Operation Buffalo, and in 1957 three trials code-named Tadge, Biak and Taranaki were carried out in Operation Antler. The smallest of these were Tadge and Marcoo, each of about one kiloton yield, and the largest was Taranaki of 27 kiloton. All of the ground zeros are now marked with concrete plinths.

All nuclear devices at Maralinga and Emu were exploded on 31 m towers, with the exception of Marcoo (ground level), Kite (an airdrop at 150 m) and Taranaki (balloon-borne at 300 m).

MINOR TRIALS

Five minor trials were performed at Emu in 1953, and several hundred were performed at Maralinga over the years 1955 to 1963 as part of the UK atomic weapons development programme. These minor trials were essentially developmental experiments designed to investigate the performances of various components of a nuclear device, separately and in combination, and almost all involved radioactive materials with conventional high explosives. The four main types of minor trials were code-named:

Kittens, performed at Emu and on the Kittens lanes at Naya, Rats, performed on the Rats lanes at Naya, north of TM100, and at Dobo, Tims, performed at Kuli, TM2 at Naya, TM50, TM100 and TM101, and Vixen, performed at Wewak and Taranaki.



Map of Maralinga Trial sites

