

# Uluru being 'used as a toilet'

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Some people who climb Uluru are using it as a toilet, a tour operator in Alice Springs says.

The Federal Government is considering banning people from climbing the rock for cultural, environmental and safety reasons.

About 150 submissions have been sent to the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park about how the rock should be managed.

A final decision on the plan will be made by the Environment Minister, Peter Garrett.

Andrew Simpson, the general manager of a tour company run by Indigenous people in Alice Springs, says climbing should be outlawed because it is dangerous and people have been killed attempting it.

"And then there are the environmental issues of the rubbish and people defecating on top of the rock and polluting the waterholes around Uluru," Mr Simpson said.

"Basically it can take you quite a while to get up there and there are no facilities up there.

"So when nature calls you must do what nature needs you to do."

He says "that in itself is [a] big enough reason to consider closing the climb".

The Northern Territory Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, says he is disgusted by claims tourists are going to the toilet on top of Uluru.

But he says the Government is still against the proposal to close the climb entirely.

"The Government's position at this point in time, we think that a full closure of the rock is not the way to go," he said.

"But ultimately this is a consultation process.



"If the wishes of the traditional owners prevail that the full closure of the rock should progress in terms of climbing, we'll respect that."

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## Tourist faeces 'killed off rare Uluru shrimp'

**TOURISTS may have killed off a rare species of shrimp by relieving themselves on Australia's iconic Uluru, or Ayers Rock, according to a report.**

Biologist Brian Timms said his research had showed one species of small inland shrimp living in pools atop the monolith had become extinct while another had thrived.

"The people going up the rock somehow have affected the animals which live in the pools, possibly by peeing on the rock and pooing on the rock," Timms told state radio.

The *Branchinella latzi* species had not been seen on Uluru since the 1970s, and would have been susceptible to "enrichment" of the pool's water, he added.

"Certainly if (tourists) go up, they should be behaving themselves, not pooing on the rock," Timms said.

However, a species of fairy shrimp had survived, probably because it was "widespread and tough", according to Timms.

Australia is mulling a ban on tourists climbing the rock, which is a sacred part of Aboriginal tribes' creation mythology.

Tour operators claim visitors are often caught short on the arduous climb, and most had a "toilet roll tucked away" in case of emergency.

Park officials in July announced plans to end the popular climb on cultural and safety grounds, a stance endorsed by Peter Garrett, Australia's environment minister and former frontman of rock band Midnight Oil.



Signs at the site ask people not to climb the rock, out of respect for the Aboriginal community, but one-third of the 350,000 annual visitors still do so.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has said it would be “very sad” if tourists were kept off the desert icon, which was handed back to Aborigines in 1985 and is one of the nation's most recognisable landmarks.

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The two newspaper articles above are partially about the issue of Tourists not respecting the Aboriginal Culture, but also about the direct impact of their ignorance which creates large toll on the natural environment. By excreting faeces and urinating on the site, the effects have been enough to drive a species of shrimps from its natural habitat, the Uluru-Kata Tjuta. The factors contributing to the problem include the fact that the Uluru climb is open to everybody, and that there are no toilet facilities on top of the great rock itself.



These actions have enraged many, especially the Aborigines who are the Traditional Owners of the Land. Climbing Uluru itself is a great disrespect to the Anangu people, and so it is understandable that they are enraged at the fact that tourists have been using their sacred site as their restroom. This may start new campaign by groups all over Australia to obtain a new law banning the climbing of Uluru although this is unlikely as the government supports Uluru as a Tourism Icon of Australia.

Some actions have been started to protect Uluru from negative environmental and social impacts. A plan has been considered by the federal government about banning tourists from climbing Uluru. An advantage is banning tourists from climbing the rock would help strengthen the relationship between Australians and the Aborigines, and would also stunt further more damage inflicted upon to the environment, if not stop it. The only problem with this however, this is a major drawback which will directly impact upon the 350,000 tourists who visit the site every year to climb it. From the above articles, one cannot tell if the plan will be successful or not and can only hope it will.