

TOWARDS AN AREA PLAN FOR THE HUMPTY DOO RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE



Stage 1 Community Consultation Report

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1. Introduction

The Northern Territory Planning Commission is continuing the work of the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan by developing a detailed planning framework for the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre. To assist in the preparation of drafting options for the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre Area Plan, the Northern Territory Planning Commission endorsed a Community Engagement Strategy. The engagement strategy identified that the Area Plan would be prepared in three stages.



Stage 1 community consultation commenced on Tuesday 20 February 2018 and closed on Thursday 29 March 2018. Stage 1 was an opportunity for the community to participate in the planning process by contributing to the development of a vision to meet the future needs of Humpty Doo.

The purpose of this report is to summarise key themes that were identified by the community during consultation. The feedback received has assisted the NT Planning Commission in its consideration of drafting options for the Humpty Doo Area Plan.

The Study Area

The Humpty Doo study area as a whole has a population of 4 380 (ABS 2016) and lies within the surrounding localities of Howard Springs, Coolalinga, Bees Creek and Noonamah. The study area serves this population as a local commercial and community centre, while nearby Palmerston and Coolalinga provide for more specialist needs. A high degree of growth is not expected within the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre due to the proximity of these larger centres; however, there is an opportunity for a moderate increase in the range of local commercial and housing options supported by reticulated water and sewerage services.

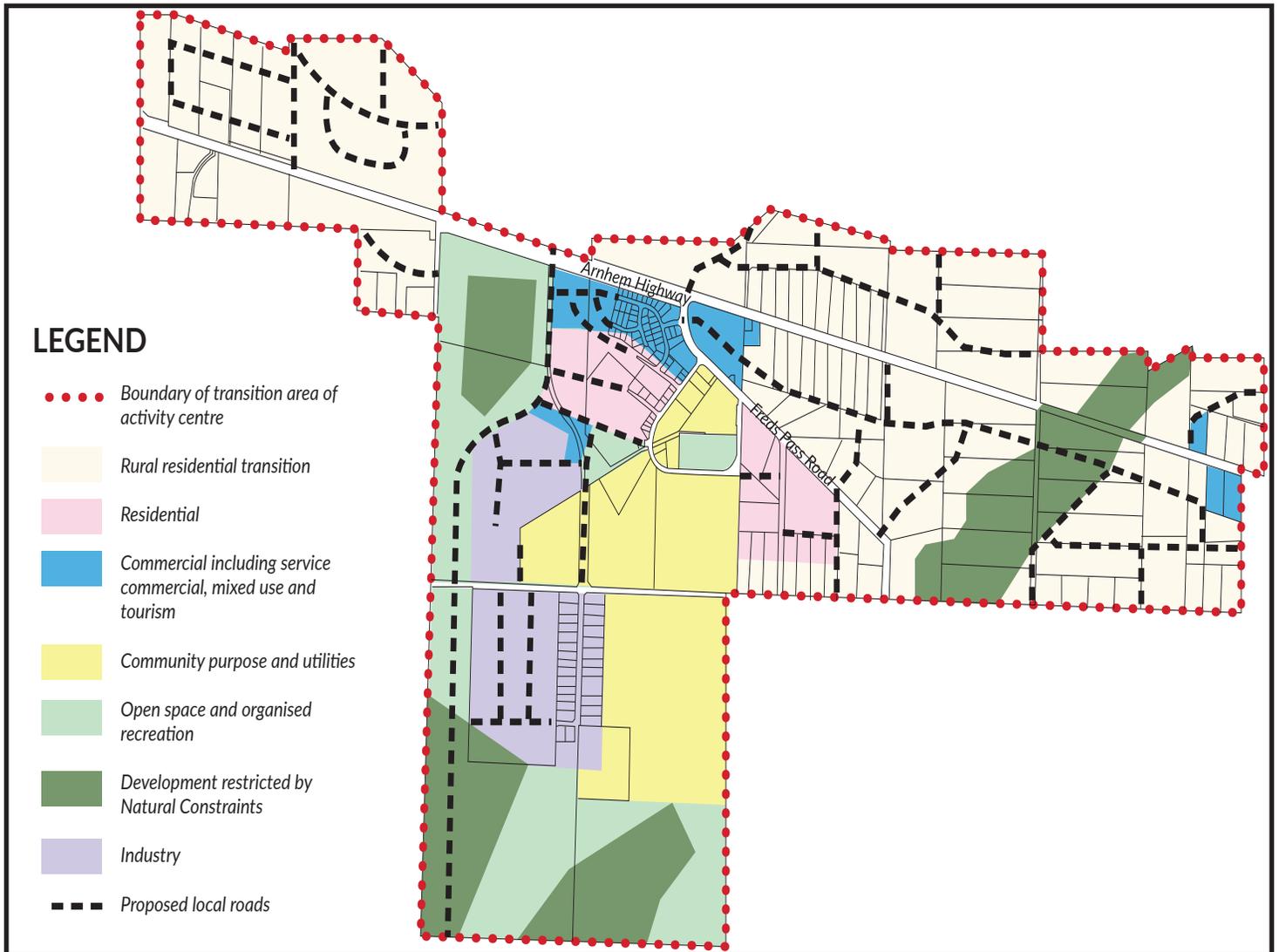


Figure 1 - Study Area

2. Consultation with Stakeholders

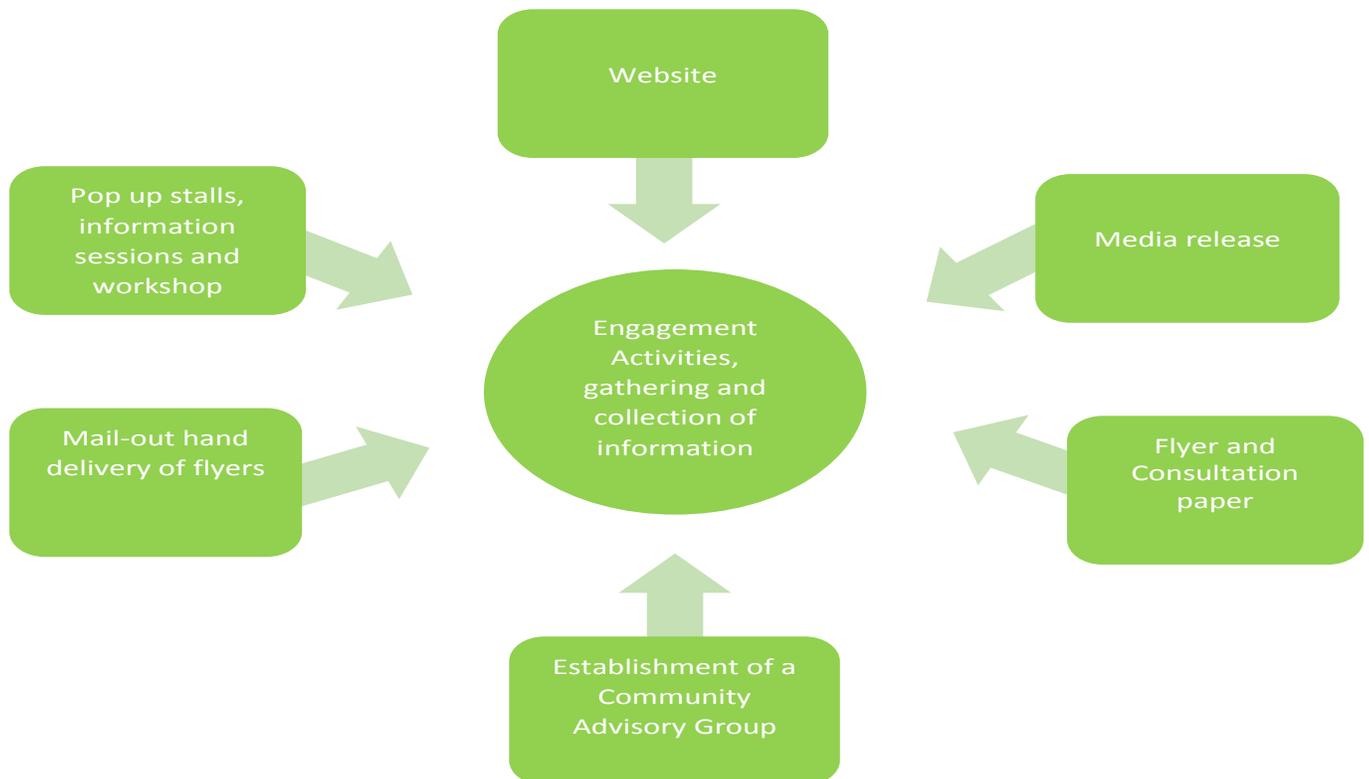
Stage 1 Community Consultation was undertaken by the Planning Commission over a six week period from Tuesday 20 February 2018 through to Thursday 29 March 2018.

The first stage of consultation was focused on gathering information, building an understanding of stakeholder issues and sensitivities, and providing sufficient opportunities and a variety of feedback mechanisms to encourage and allow participation from all stakeholders. Stakeholders identified included:

- Residents
- Local Business
- Litchfield Council
- Local Members
- Special Interest and Community Groups
- LGovernment Agencies and Department
- Industry Associates and Representative Bodies

The activities described below were used to engage with stakeholders identified in the endorsed Community Engagement Strategy. Engagement activities sought to:

- provide clear, balanced and consistent consultation by delivering engagement opportunities and a variety of feedback mechanisms to encourage involvement from all stakeholders
- build upon the work of the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan to create a greater understanding of stakeholder issues and sensitivities, by seeking genuine community and key stakeholder input, into the Humpty Doo draft Area Plan, including collaborating with the Litchfield Council
- promote improved knowledge and understanding of the land use planning process and its role in the delivery of community aspirations for the future of the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre



Land Owners / Residents

Approximately 2 300 land owners in the Humpty Doo region were mailed out flyers informing them that work on the Area Plan had commenced and to encourage involvement in the area planning process.

Flyers were also delivered to people who lived on the roads that form part of the proposed subregional road connectors which involve Produce Road, Metcalf Road and Anglesey Road.

In addition to the flyer, land owners identified as being in the transition or core areas of the 2016 Subregional Plan's Land Use Concept Plan were sent a letter from the Chairman of the Planning Commission inviting them to attend the community information sessions and workshops. These were also hand delivered to residences and businesses in those core and transition areas.

A sample letter and a copy of the flyer are included at Attachment A.

Sharing of information and involvement of the community was also encouraged through the following community engagement activities:

- Print advertising in the NT News
- A dedicated page on the NT Planning Commission website including times and dates of public displays, contact details to receive submissions and answer enquiries, and an online feedback form
- School newsletters (within Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre area)
- Pop up stalls at Coolalinga Central, Woolworths Humpty Doo and Freds Pass Rural Markets
- Community Information Sessions
- Community Workshops

Community Advisory Group

The Humpty Doo Community Advisory Group (CAG) is a group of rural residents who were appointed by the Litchfield Council on 18 October 2017 as an independent group to represent the views of residents.

Departmental staff met with the CAG members on Thursday 8 February 2018 and briefed them about the project and their role in developing the Area Plan. In addition to attending one of the three information sessions, members attended and contributed to the community workshops on Saturday, 10 and 24 March 2018.

Litchfield Council

Humpty Doo is located within the municipality of Litchfield Council.

Representatives of the Planning Commission briefed Litchfield Council on Wednesday 7 February 2018 with regard to the stage 1 consultation process for the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre Area Plan. The Council and its staff are also represented on the Community Advisory Group.

A number of Councillors and Council representatives also attended the public Community Information and Workshop Sessions.

Project Control Group

A PCG was convened for this project late in 2017, and is due to come together again in mid-April.

Others

Government Departments, industry and community groups identified as stakeholders in the endorsed Community Engagement strategy were provided with the consultation materials, invited to attend one of the three information sessions and were invited to provide feedback or submissions on the project.

The Commission briefed the Member for Goyder, Kezia Purick MLA and the Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood MLA on Wednesday 14 February 2018 about the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre Area Plan project. The Leader of the Opposition, Gary Higgins MLA was provided with an opportunity for a briefing, was notified of the commencement of Stage 1 consultation and provided with the relevant documentation.



3. Submissions and Feedback

Humpty Doo land owners, residents and users of the activity centre had several opportunities to provide oral and written feedback to the Planning Commission.

Submissions and Feedback received from Pop up Stalls and Information Sessions

Over 180 people visited the pop up stalls at Woolworths Humpty Doo, Coolalinga Central Shopping Centre and the Freds Pass Rural Market to contribute their ideas for the activity centre.

Community information sessions were held on Tuesday 27 February, Saturday 3 March and Tuesday 6 March 2018 and were attended by 42 stakeholders. Twelve written submissions were received from the community. The comments received from these engagement activities are summarised below.

Growth within the Activity Centre and Transitions Areas

Most people who engaged were generally supportive of some growth within the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre. There was however a broad range of opinions about what an appropriate level of growth would be, including:

- To grow the commercial centre to support growth and develop on private land
- A focus on growth in the commercial centre and back towards the Stuart Highway
- A retirement village for people who live within the area so they can remain in a familiar community
- Changing the zone of the old dump site from Zone CN (Conservation) to Zone LI (Light Industry)

Some of the community members did state that there is limited opportunity for commercial or tourism growth as available land is scarce, but this issue needs to be considered in the context that Humpty Doo is an entry point to a number of National Parks and Reserves.

There was also a general concern in the submissions regarding how quickly growth or change might occur, and whether or not the current infrastructure, including the local road network, would be able to effectively manage this change.

Boundary Areas

The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan identifies a proposed boundary for the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre, including core and transition areas.

During consultation, most people engaged were generally supportive of this boundary, however there were some contrary opinions.

There was some support to increase the boundary of the activity centre to include Collard Road which is located west of the centre. There was also support to extend the boundary of the rural activity centre to reflect the provision of Power and Water infrastructure to the north.

Some stakeholders felt that the proposed boundary is too large and could encourage the establishment of smaller blocks. Others were concerned that an increase in smaller rural or urban lots might affect the rural feel of the area.

Lot Sizes

The Land Use Concept Plan included in the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan shows urban style residential lots surrounding the core of the rural activity centre with lots transitioning to a size consistent with Rural Residential (4 000m²).

There was general support from the community for urban SD (Single Dwelling) and MD (Multiple Dwelling) style lots adjacent to the commercial centre. The community were of the view that the provision of smaller lots closer to the activity centre would retain the rural ambiance for the location. Members of the community were supportive for lots of 800m² to 4 000m² to be limited to the transition zones. This would provide affordable options for young people who grew up in the area to stay in the locality, and also allow for existing residents to downsize. Furthermore, it was suggested that a retirement village could be supported close to the commercial centre.

There was some consensus from the community that the 2ha lots within the existing boundary of the Rural Residential area are too large, need to provide opportunity for 1ha lots, which will potentially provide opportunity to subdivide their land or downsize in the future.

A number of people did not specify their preferred minimum lot sizes but emphasised that any new development and subdivisions needs to be large enough to incorporate greenspace and avoid development where land is constrained.

Environment

A number of residents recognised the importance of the environment and the need to retain open space, native vegetation and wildlife corridors. There were also a number of suggestions by residents of retaining the native vegetation within the areas of Edwin Creek and Metcalfe Swamp, which are already constrained.

Groundwater availability

A number of community members were concerned with the possible impact the development might have on the natural environment and provided the following ideas for new developments or subdivisions:

- Environmentally sound sewerage systems (preserve the ground water)
- Mandatory water tanks
- Ensure surface flows are directed into natural areas in order to replenish the aquifer
- Design and locate open drainage channels to reduce flooding and direct the water flow to natural creeks
- Not impede those who currently rely on bore water

The community raised concerns about the negative impact of bores and water wastage on the level of the aquifer.

Stormwater

Concerns were raised that, with increasing the density around the Activity Centre, changes to the current landscape may have a negative impact on the environment and the natural flow of watercourses.

A number of stakeholders were particularly concerned that the development of new blocks or subdivisions has altered the natural drainage system of the area such as at Freds Pass Road, where soil has washed away onto neighbouring blocks.

It became evident during consultation that a number of the residents have concerns regarding stormwater. Most community members want the current stormwater catchment to be retained and to ensure that new development incorporates a requirement that stormwater runoff is monitored and maintained to safeguard neighbouring lots.

Infrastructure

There was a general interest in the provision of reticulated infrastructure, in particular sewerage and water infrastructure. Residents want assurance that new smaller lots are connected to the reticulated water sewerage networks.

Furthermore, participants in this process noted that reticulated infrastructure will deal with the impact septic systems have on the quality of ground water.

There was concern that the existing infrastructure may not support development for commercial and residential growth.

Social Infrastructure

Generally speaking, most people would be happy to see additional community facilities developed in the area. For example many stakeholders suggested that the vacant land opposite Woolworths has the potential to provide facilities for community meetings and seniors' recreational activities. Some members of the community also saw benefit in a large sporting oval within or around the vicinity of the schools.

Many residents requested more bike paths and greater pedestrian connectivity to encourage safe physical activity centred in the vicinity of the schools precinct. Additional community facilities which were requested included:

- Community centre / hall
- Pool
- Public oval
- Facilities for the elderly
- Recreational activities for children to utilise i.e. tennis courts, skate park

Additionally, open space in new residential areas and the retention of environmental features should be prioritised in order to protect the unique character of Humpty Doo.

Roads

The Arnhem Highway is the major arterial road connecting Humpty Doo to Palmerston and Darwin, however it divides the local road network that services the activity centre. Some believe that there is now a need to upgrade the road connection across the Arnhem Highway. The primary concerns raised by the community was the Arnhem Highway / Freds Pass Road intersection and access to the school precinct around Challoner Circuit.

During the consultation process for Stage 1, three options were presented to the community for comment regarding a subregional connector road. Comments were sought on how the road networks in the Humpty Doo area operates and what may be a workable outcome for residents.

Mixed results and additional options were put forward by the residents:

- Freds Pass Road north of Strangways Road to run directly north to the Arnhem Highway and connect to Anglesey Road

- Goode Road to connect through to the Stuart Highway which links to Jenkins Road through to Palmerston

General comments on the local traffic environment included the connection of Freds Pass Road onto Challoner Circuit and the implications that it has for traffic and road safety. The location of the Humpty Doo Bus Interchange (public) is of specific concern with the impact it has on traffic accessing the area during peak times and the safety of children attending the schools.

Suggestions raised by the community to ease the congestion on Freds Pass Road include:

- Strangways Road to be reopened at the Stuart Highway end to assist with traffic flow for residents from the southern end who currently use Freds Pass Road
- Divert traffic from the Humpty Doo primary school – with a road that passes alongside the water tank with a roundabout that joins into Challoner Circuit, Skewers Road and Freds Pass Road
- Spencely Road connection to the Arnhem Highway
- Goode Road through to the Stuart Highway connection Jenkins Road

It is considered that the surrounding area has significantly grown and the road infrastructure has reached capacity, resulting in the need for urgent upgrades. It was also stated that independent units and second dwellings within the area are not included in the population for the rural area and this hidden population is causing unanticipated traffic implications. Care needs to be given that any new road network does not bypass, cut off, or otherwise impact on local businesses.

Public Transport

The community expressed general support for more buses on the current route to Darwin. Many stated that this would be beneficial, particularly during off peak times, evening and weekends and may in turn encourage more employment participation.

Pedestrian and Cycle

There was general support from the community to have a cycle path to the bus interchange from all directions which will allow people to make use of the park and ride service to Palmerston and Darwin, easing the road congestion. It was also proposed to have a pedestrian network within the village area that is accessible for both cycling and walking paths, and extend it to Freds Pass Road and Kennedy Road which will give children an opportunity to ride to schools.

All written submissions received from the community are included at **Attachment B**.

Feedback received from Workshop

Community workshops were held on 10 March and 24 March 2018, and were attended by thirty nine people including members of the Community Advisory Group.

The workshops were opened with a brief background to the project before participants broke into small groups to consider a number of scenarios with relevance to the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre area. The scenarios that workshop participants considered were:

- Subregional connections - connecting the rural community to the 'village' and providing corridors for future public transport options
- Pipes drains and creeks - how do we best manage stormwater to not impact on the receiving environment
- Local interconnectivity - the village network of local roads, pedestrian corridors, cycleway and horse trails
- Social Infrastructure - what will the future community need - whereabouts and how big
- Boundary and transition - including what we mean by 'close proximity' to the Rural Activity Centre

The session on 10 March also included specific participation by children who undertook age-appropriate activities. The children's workshop was structured around their current experience of living in Humpty Doo, and what Humpty Doo could look like in the future. Their thoughts on the future of Humpty Doo were transposed onto a map, which was presented to the group.

Representatives from each group presented a summary of their discussions after considering each topic allocated to them.

Summary at **Attachment C**.



4. Feedback from Litchfield Council

The Litchfield Council appreciates being involved in developing a strategic plan for the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre Area Plan which is an important locality within their municipality.

In summary Litchfield Council has offered the following comments.

Protection of Rural Amenity

The commencement of the Arnhem Highway is the entrance to Kakadu National Park and many other tourist destinations. As such, it is a high traffic area with locals and tourists, and hence the need to preserve the natural rural environment along this road.

With the proposal of blocks along the highway moving from 2ha and larger parcels down to 4 000m². Council would put forward that properties with road frontage have landscaping.

Council is not supportive of development that would seek to turn this stretch of road into a suburban line of back fences.

Boundary Configuration

Council has concerns with the boundary for this Rural Activity Centre as it is more linear resulting in a strip of higher intensity activity from Virginia to the Humpty Doo Pub. There is opportunity to extend the centre instead to the north and south making it more akin to traditional radial or circular planning.

Council would be supportive of a reduced boundary on the east and west sides to allow for a walkable and connected community around the existing village.

Propose Alteration of Northern Boundary

The northern boundary is limited to the edge of the Arnhem Highway and does not include the area between Power Road and Kennedy Road.

Past discussions with the Northern Territory Government and Litchfield Council has reviewed the potential for development of this parcel as an opportunity to provide an alternative access to existing properties along Power Road.

Planned development of 215 Arnhem Highway could assist in resolving many of the drainage issues in this locality.

Power Road is not maintained and concerns have been raised with the four way intersection of Power Road, Arnhem Highway and Hayball Road in that it is unsafe. If development was to occur on Lot 215 it may provide an option for rear access to the properties on Power Road. Further investigation is required if Power Road was to be closed.

Council supports the revision of the current proposed boundary to include the area north of Arnhem Highway between (50) Power Road and (55) Kennedy Road to develop 4 000m² lots.

Regional Connections

Council is supportive of the connection of Goode Road through to Stuart Highway and to intersect with Jenkins Road, however do understand that there would be constraints with construction due to wet ground in that area. If the connection was to occur it would be logical that Spencely Road is extended to Goode Road which would provide an additional alternative access to the industrial area and the town centre. Council also supports the idea of a regional connection to Hicks Road and on to the Coolalinga/Howard Springs areas.

Village Centre Traffic

A more detail traffic study is required before an informed decision can be made on the proposed realignment of Freds Pass Road to the east of the water tower.

Council has planned upgrades to Freds Pass Road in mid 2018 which will occur in front of the primary school and this has not been considered by the consulting engineers the current design of this area.

Further funding has been sought by council to realign Freds Pass Road between Beaumont Road and Strangways Road. This design associated with this funding applications should be considered in the design of the Area Plan.

With the future development of the council owned land at 320 Arnhem Highway there will be a need to have pedestrian connectivity with the shopping centre; how this will occur requires more information.

Village Centre

It would be preferable that the bus interchange is relocated and/or realigned to improve the connection with the schools. Relocation of this bus interchange will allow better use of the land for community purposes. Community members are interested in using the bus interchange site to create more community space to hold community events as well as open space, which is supported by council. Council also suggests that the bus depot at 120 Challoner Circuit be relocated to the industrial area, which would allow this land to provide for uses more suitable in the centre of the village.

There is support to have urban size residential blocks in the area from Challoner Circuit, south to Strangways Road and Beaumont Road and in the long term this will make a connection with the 110 Freds Pass Road development. Strangways Road to be used as the boundary for planning zones.

Transition Areas

The transition of lot sizes radiating out from the centre is supported by Council, however no property to have more than two new properties bordering it. Further discussion needs to happen on the transitional boundary for 1ha lots that are outside of the planned boundary. Need to provide more detail information that has graphical representation of the future lot patterns with population growth so the community can make a more informed decision.

5. Feedback from Government Agencies

A number of Government agencies provided oral and written feedback to the Planning Commission during the consultation period.

Department of Housing and Community Development

The Department of Housing and Community Development advised they welcome the drafting of an Area Plan for the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre. The Department has an interest in ensuring a diversity of housing options that supports needs across the housing continuum, as well as securing opportunities for the inclusion of social and affordable within new developments. Given the availability of public transport and employment opportunities within the area, the provision of a diverse range of housing options should be key considerations for the development of the Humpty Doo RAC.

Department of Education

The Department of Education have partnered with Charles Darwin University to conduct a demographics study to understand student population and school enrolment forecasting methods and will be looking at the Greater Darwin region including the rural area. This work is expected to be finalised in 2018. The study will include the schools in Humpty Doo which are experiencing enrolment growth.

The Department of Education recognised that the Discussion Paper and eventual area plan will consider the requirements of public transport, cycle and pedestrian networks as there are benefits associated with active travel options and welcome the inclusion into the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre Area Plan.

Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

The Authority advise that there are two recorded sacred sites within the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre study area. The Authority recommends that any new development proposal includes a requirement to obtain an Authority Certificate.

6. Summary

Stage 1 consultation has allowed the Northern Territory Planning Commission to consult with the community on the future of the Humpty Doo Rural Activity Centre. This has occurred through a series of pop-up stalls, information sessions and two community workshops.

Support for the consultation process has been very positive, with the two community workshops a highlight. Stage 1 consultation also proved an opportunity to collaborate with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics in regards to the proposed options for sub-regional connections from Noonamah through to Howard Springs, which aims to reduce congestion on current roads.

Matters raised by the community through consultation include:

- maintaining the rural character and amenity of Humpty Doo,
- addressing the existing and potential of increased traffic and the capability of the local road network to support this, and
- an aspiration to increase community and active recreation facilities.

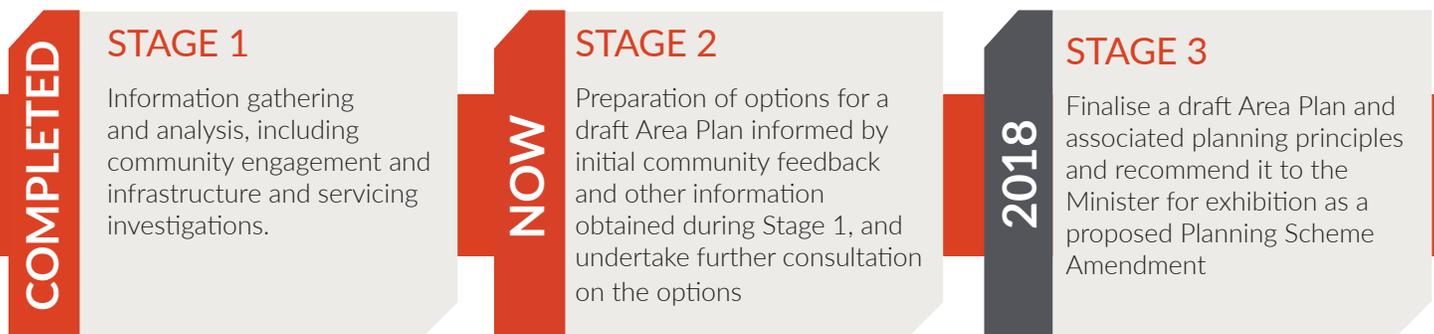
Concern was also identified in regard to the impact of stormwater from development on natural drainage and waterways.

Government agencies noted that Humpty Doo is a key area for growth, which will impact on the provision of a wide range of services, including schools and housing. Appropriate infrastructure to support this growth would need to be considered in this locality, particularly surrounding Humpty Doo.

The development of an Area Plan for Humpty Doo has largely been viewed as a positive initiative that will allow government agencies to plan for the future, and the local community to understand where new development might occur.

7. Next Steps

This report covers community consultation and engagement during Stage 1 which was the information gathering stage to development options for a draft Humpty Doo Area Plan. Stage 2 consultation is due to commence in October 2018 and will involve seeking comment on a draft plan and planning principles.





NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

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The Northern Territory Planning Commission is an independent and advisory statutory authority that prepares strategic land use plans to manage growth in anticipation rather than response.

The Planning Commission proactively sets the strategic framework for better integrated land use, transport and infrastructure planning, delivering more sustainable and cost-effective outcomes for the community, with sensitivity to environmental and heritage values.