

# PREPARING AN AREA PLAN FOR KATHERINE EAST

## **Community Consultation *Stage 1 Report***

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## INTRODUCTION

On 9 November 2018 the Northern Territory Planning Commission commenced the first stage of public consultation on the Katherine East Area Plan. The Planning Commission is continuing the work of the Katherine Land Use Plan 2014 by developing a detailed planning framework for Katherine East. The Katherine Land Use Plan 2014 provides the Planning Commission broad policy direction to guide the preparation of an Area Plan for Katherine East.

To assist in the preparation of the draft Katherine East Area Plan, the Planning Commission endorsed a Community Engagement Strategy. The engagement strategy identified that the Area Plan would be prepared in three stages as shown in Figure 1.

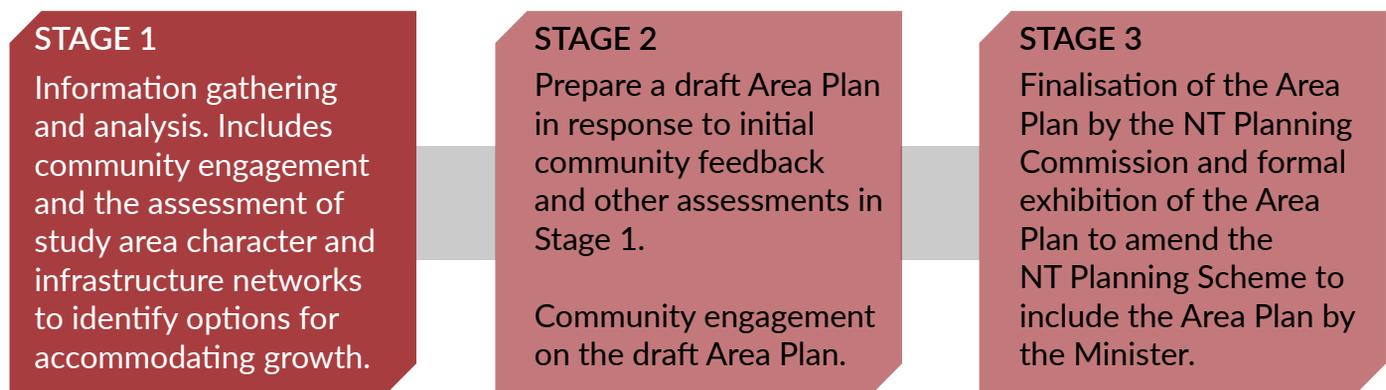
Stage 1 community consultation closed on Friday 14 December 2018. Stage 1 was an opportunity for the community to participate

in the planning process by contributing to the development of a vision to meet the future needs of the Katherine East community.

The purpose of this report is to summarise key themes that were identified by the community during consultation. The feedback received has assisted the Planning Commission in its preparation of developing the draft Katherine East Area Plan.

The Katherine East Area Plan will be informed by population predictions. These are informed by some of the regions largest employment generators such as tourism, agribusiness and defence sectors.

The Area Plan aims to accommodate future growth by providing an increase in both residential and commercial land in Katherine East, while having regard to the commercial viability of the Katherine Town Centre.



*Figure 1: Process for preparing the Katherine East Area Plan.*

## The Study Area

Katherine, the fourth largest settlement in the Northern Territory, is located 312 km south of Darwin on the Katherine River. In 2016, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated the residential population of the Katherine Local Government Area to be 9717.

The Katherine East study area comprises approximately 833 hectares of land within the Municipality of Katherine. It is located about 2½ kilometres east of the Katherine town centre.

Existing land uses in Katherine East are predominantly residential, community purpose and commercial north of the Stuart Highway; and industrial south of the Highway.

Katherine is central to the regions' tourism, agribusiness and defence sectors and sits at the junction of the Stuart and Victoria Highway linking north to south and to Western Australia. The study area is noted in Figure 2.

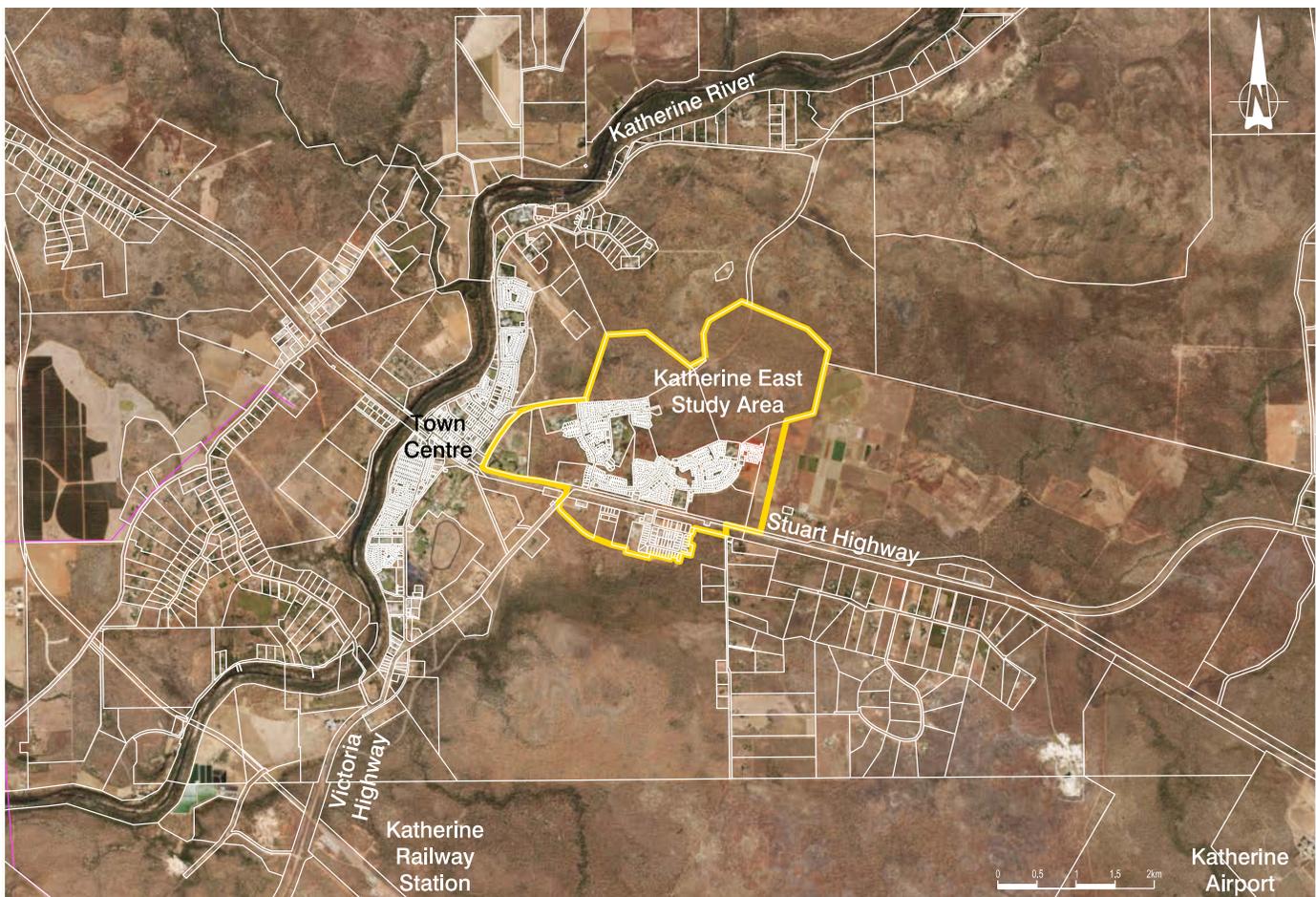


Figure 2: Katherine East Study Area

# CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Stage 1 consultation with the community was undertaken by the Planning Commission over a five week period from Friday 9 November 2018 to Friday 14 December 2018.

The first stage of consultation was focused on gathering information, building an understanding of stakeholder concerns and sensitivities, and providing opportunities through a variety of feedback mechanisms to encourage and enable participation from all stakeholders. Stakeholder groups engaged were:

- residents;
- local Businesses;
- local Members;
- Katherine Town Council;
- special interest and community groups;
- Government agencies and departments; and
- industry associates and representative bodies.

The activities shown in Figure 3 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; and
- 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 Katherine East Area Plan.



Figure 3: Consultation Methodology

## Consultation Activities

### Land Owners / Residents

Approximately 1900 post cards were mailed out to the residents of the Katherine region including surrounding areas. The post cards informed local residents that the Planning Commission had started work on the Area Plan for Katherine East and sought to encourage community involvement in the area planning process.

Awareness raising of the Planning Commission work was also promoted through the following activities:

- print advertising in the Katherine Times;
- a dedicated page on the NT Planning Commission website including times and dates of public displays, contact details to receive submissions, answer enquiries, and an online feedback form;
- pop-up stalls at the Katherine Central Shopping Centre and at the Big Arts and Crafts Market (YMCA); and
- community information sessions and workshop.

### Community Advisory Group

The Katherine Town Council sought Expressions of Interest from community members interested in becoming part of the Community Advisory Group (CAG) to participate in the development of the Area Plan for Katherine East.

Departmental staff met with the CAG members on Tuesday 18 December 2018 and Thursday 17 January 2019. The members were briefed about the project and their role in developing the Area Plan as well as having an opportunity to provide comment on the Stage 1 Consultation Report.

### Katherine Town Council

The Katherine East Area Plan falls within the jurisdiction of the Katherine Town Council.

Representatives of the Planning Commission briefed Katherine Town Council on 23 October 2018 with regard to the Stage 1 consultation process for the Katherine East Area Plan. The Council and its staff are represented on the CAG.

## Project Advisory Group

The Project Advisory Group (PAG) is an advisory body with the purpose of providing strategic direction and specialist advice. The PAG comprises Government specialists and stakeholders.

On 19 September 2018 they reviewed the Discussion Paper for Stage 1. Feedback and comments received were taken into consideration in preparation of the Discussion Paper. A summary of the Planning Commission Stage 1 findings and a preliminary version of the draft Area Plan will be presented to the PAG in March 2019.

### Other

Government Departments, and industry identified as stakeholders in the endorsed Community Engagement Strategy were provided with the consultation materials. They were invited to attend one of the information sessions.

The Commission briefed the Member for Katherine, Sandra Nelson MLA on Thursday 25 October 2018 about the Katherine East Area Plan project.

### Pop-up Stalls and Information Sessions

The community of Katherine had several opportunities to be briefed on the project and provide verbal and written feedback to the Planning Commission at various pop-up stalls held around Katherine.

Over 175 people engaged with the pop-up stalls during the consultation period. Pop-up stalls were held at both the Katherine Central Shopping Centre and the Big Arts and Crafts Markets within the YMCA Hall.

Information sessions were held at the Government Centre and at Godinymayin Yijard Arts and Cultural Centre. Those that attended contributed ideas on how Katherine East should develop and what services should be provided in the neighbourhood centre.

### Workshop

A workshop was held on Saturday 1 December 2018 at the Town Council Chambers.

# SUBMISSIONS AND FEEDBACK

## Feedback Summary From Written Submissions

The Planning Commission received thirteen written submissions from the Katherine community. The comments received during the engagement activities are summarised below.

### **Neighbourhood Centre**

Many of the people who engaged with the Planning Commission were supportive of a new neighbourhood centre to the south of Katherine East and noted that it would help ease congestion within the current town centre. Feedback and submissions specifically focused on the services that a neighbourhood centre would provide. Suggestions on possible land uses included:

- a shopping centre;
- community centre;
- medical precinct; and
- housing choices including smaller residential lots surrounding the neighbourhood centre that are supported by open space facilities (parks).

### **Social Infrastructure**

The community is happy to see additional social infrastructure developed in Katherine East. Suggestions put forward by the community were:

- shaded park area;
- aged care facilities and supporting accommodation for independent living;
- bike tracks that connect back to the Katherine River bike path;
- a library;
- a community garden;
- educational facilities, including a primary school

### **Infrastructure**

The community of the Katherine region want assurances that there is water security and that new development will have access to reticulated water.

### **Roads and Transport**

The community supports a bus service within Katherine that links Katherine East, Katherine South, Katherine town centre and Nitmiluk Gorge.

A multi-use pedestrian and cycling network that incorporates the limestone outcrop areas was suggested through community feedback.

The proposed extension of Chambers Drive connecting to the future Hospital site and second neighbourhood centre was supported by the community. General comments were noted about the importance of road safety throughout Katherine East and the first neighbourhood centre proposed at the southern end of Katherine East.

### **General Feedback**

The Planning Commission received feedback from the community that can't be resolved by the Katherine East Area Plan. This feedback included:

- the lack of a postal delivery service with in Katherine East; and
- affordability of land outside of the flood zone.

## Feedback received from Workshop

A community workshop was held on 1 December 2018. Participants considered key topics including:

- Katherine East and its relationship with other land uses in the Katherine locality and the town centre;
- Subregional transport connections;
- Social Infrastructure; and
- Commercial centres.

Workshop participants were also asked to consider a 'Vision Statement' for the Katherine East Area Plan. Participants presented a statement that included the following; 'to live in a social, integrated, economically viable and environmentally sustainable community'.

Representatives from each group offered a summary of their discussions on the scenarios presented. It was observed that each group approached the scenarios from a different viewpoint of what they saw as important. However, the groups were consistent with wanting similar objectives for the neighbourhood centre and surrounding area in Katherine East, including a community centre or hall for all users to share and a mixed use centre incorporating both commercial and residential opportunities.

Other outcomes were:

- opportunity to cater for diversity of population in innovative ways (design of civic spaces);
- housing choices, a variety and socially appropriate;
- provisions of aged care facilities;
- a walkable neighbourhood;
- transition of users from the town centre to the Neighbourhood centre that doesn't detract from the town centre;
- existing town centre to refocus on tourism activity; and
- second neighbourhood centre that is community focused and is aligned to the future hospital location.

## Government Agencies

The following NT Government agencies and service authorities provided comments with respect to the Katherine East project:

- Department of the Attorney-General and Justice
- Department of Tourism and Culture
- Department of Health
- Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
- Department of Primary Industries and Resources
- Department of Education
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- Office of the Commissioner and Police and CEO of Fire and Emergency Services
- Power and Water Corporation

### ***Department of the Attorney-General and Justice***

The Commercial Division of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory noted that a significant proportion of the land within the Katherine East Area Plan study area is subject to two Native Title determination applications. It is therefore possible that determinations recognising Native Title rights and interests, including the right of exclusive possession, may be made over the land subject to the plan.

### ***Department of Tourism and Culture***

This Department noted that one of the actions articulated in Tourism Vision 2020 is to investigate opportunities in Katherine for the upgrade of existing properties or the development of new properties to increase hotel room inventory at the 4 star level.

This Department also suggested that the Katherine East Area Plan may wish to consider setting aside some commercial land use to enable development of new tourist commercial developments, such as a 4 star hotel/ motel development.

### ***Department of Health***

NT Health has no specific comment at this time.

### **Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA)**

The AAPA recommended that an Authority Certificate be obtained for any new work/project not yet covered by an Authority Certificate.

### **Department of Primary Industries and Resources**

The Department of Primary Industry and Resources (DPIR) supports the concept of an Area Plan for Katherine East to enable sites for future major infrastructure such as roads, open space, community infrastructure and a commercial centre to be planned out well in advance. A well-considered master plan should also provide confidence to private investors to contribute to the growth of the suburb.

In 2007, as part of a review of Katherine Research Station (KRS), the department offered to release a 27 hectare section of freehold land along the border of KRS with Katherine East. This section has been demarcated, but DPIR continues to manage this land until needed, as unmanaged land would be liable to weed infestation and fire. Up to now, release of that land has not been requested, but the Department accepts that the land may be needed for development within the next few years as residential development has now started to reach the KRS boundary.

### **Department of Education**

The Department has stated that there is sufficient capacity within the existing school sites to cater for the projected low population growth and has sufficient space on the existing sites to expand into the future. The department will continue to monitor this through the management of enrollment boundaries for each school.

The Department is currently reviewing options for the delivery of education to students with special needs in the Katherine region. The review is scheduled to be completed in mid 2019 and depending on the outcome, there maybe a need for a new special school site in Katherine.

The Department also see opportunities in creating public transport networks to include future school bus services for students in the area.

### **Department of Environment and Natural Resources**

The Department has assessed the information and provided the following comments:

#### Flora and Fauna

It is noted that the discussion paper acknowledges the natural environment as a great asset of the locality that must be considered in determining future distributions of land uses within the study area. It recognises that sinkholes occur in the locality and this presents a constraint to development in some parts of Katherine East.

The study area has gently sloping terrain, woodland and two rock outcrops. The potential biodiversity values of these area is not referenced in the discussion paper.

The Katherine East Area Plan should recognising the obligations to protect threatened species as a number of threaten species that may occur within or immediately adjacent study area. There is no threatened flora species. This Department supports the retention of rocky outcrops and the flood prone areas and that buffers should be implemented around the sinkholes.

#### Water Resources

Katherine East is within the Daly Roper Beetaloo Water Control District and the Katherine (Tindall Limestone Aquifer) Water Allocation Plan area. Developments requiring water use in terms of the Water Act, taken from the above water resource will be subject to water licensing.

#### Rangelands Division

Soil mapping and associate mapping should be incorporated into Map 9 (natural constraints) of the Discussion paper, as soil profiles may potentially influence any future area plans.

**Office of the Commissioner of Police and  
CEO of Fire and Emergency Service**

The Northern Territory (NT) Police, Fire and Emergency Services provides the following comments:

NT Fire and Rescue Service (NTFR)

- supportive of the future plan proposal given the construction of the new NT Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services complex (albeit on the opposite side of the highway) is in close proximity to the proposed growth area.

NT Emergency Service

- no new homes should be built in the flood extent area; and
- exit routes (roads) used for evacuation during a flood or for resupply purposes to be built above maximum flood extent height.

**Power and Water Corporation**

Water Services

Power and Water have several short-term water and sewer infrastructure plans within the Katherine East Area, such as the Katherine East residential subdivision. Areas currently considered longer term development opportunities, such the northern sector of the Katherine East Area, will require further investigation during the Area Plan process.

It has been identified that several sewer pump stations for the area may require upgrades, some which may require additional land. A new ground level water tank in the region has also been discussed. Further investigation is advised as the Area Plan continues to develop.

The current sewer ponds are considered to have significant capacity available for ongoing development, however it should be noted that increases in industrial load may trigger a need for a regional Trade Waste solution. There may be scope in the future to upgrade the Water Treatment Plant as development progresses into the future.

Power Services

Power Services need to work with NTPC/DIPL on the Area Plan as the staging of development occurs for potential development in Katherine area for the next 30 – 50 years.

This planning includes HV head works to supply power to the new developments. The future staging of the Area Plan will determine the best places to build the Zone Substations and other HV infrastructure as required in the future.

## SUMMARY

Stage 1 consultation has allowed the Northern Territory Planning Commission to consult with the community on the future of the Katherine East Area Plan. This has occurred through a series of pop-up stalls, information sessions and a community workshop.

There was a high level of positive support for the Katherine East Area Plan, however the community provided limited written feedback on what they would like to see in the Area Plan. It would be imperative that Stage 2 consultation provide a detailed visual focus on the proposed neighbourhood centre to stimulate an increased responses from the community.

The Planning Commission understands from feedback that the community is more interested in viewing a plan as it understands that Katherine East has always been set aside for development; this may explain the low number of written submissions.

Notwithstanding this the key matters raised by the community during consultation include:

- the provision of commercial, retail and social activity within the new neighbourhood centre;
- an aspiration to increase community and active facilities for pedestrians and cyclists;
- the emphasis on public amenity, particularly more shaded areas and open spaces; and
- creating a health services precinct around the proposed new hospital site.

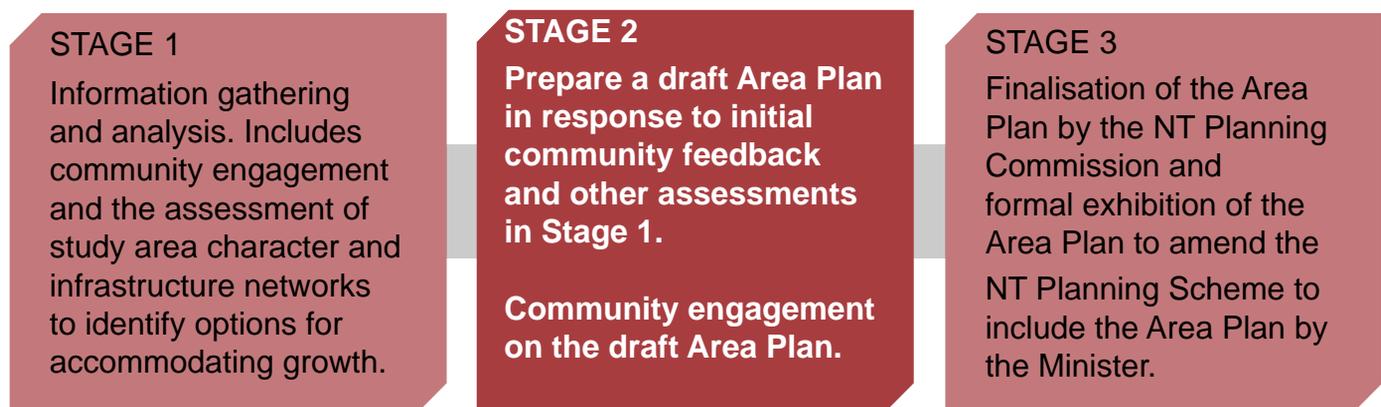
## NEXT STEPS

This report covers only community consultation and engagement during Stage 1, the information gathering stage of the development of options for a draft Area Plan for Katherine East

Next step are to prepare a draft Area Plan in response to the feedback received in Stage 1.

The draft Area Plan will be prepared by Planning Commission in consultation with the Community Advisory Group, and will be made available for public comment as part of Stage 2 community engagement as shown in Figure 4.

**Stage 2** community engagement is expected to commence in April 2019.



*Figure 4: Stages of engagement, showing Stage 2 as the next step for this project.*



**For more information**

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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 response.

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