

Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan Stage One: Community Consultation Report

December 2015

Prepared by Associated Advertising & Promotions and PR Button



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community consultation for the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan (LSLUP) commenced in September 2015 with the release of a consultation discussion guide and a calendar of community meetings and displays at which members of the public, special interests groups and key stakeholders could learn more about the planning process and concepts and provide valuable input into the development of the draft subregional land use plan.

The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan will provide detailed land use planning for the Litchfield municipality, particularly in the identified Rural Activity Centres (RACs) in Berry Springs, Coolalinga / Fred Pass, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo and the Pine Forest, and this was the primary focus of the community consultations.

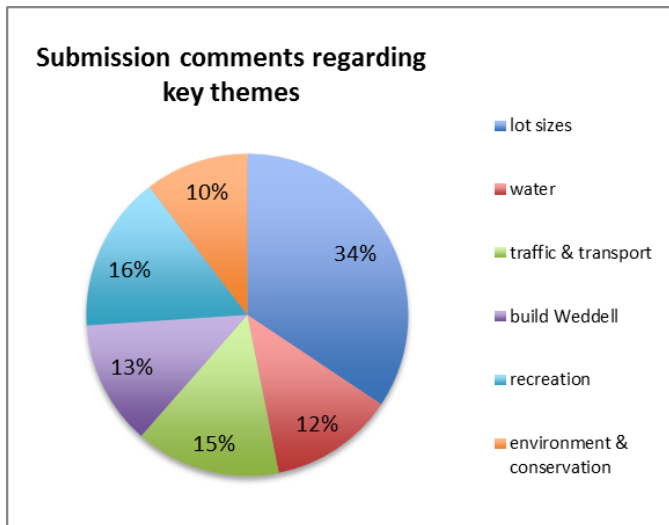
As the first stage in developing the plan, community engagement and consultation focused on growing awareness of the LSLUP discussion paper, gathering information and building an understanding of stakeholder issues and sensitivities. The NT Planning Commission wanted to ensure that there were sufficient consultation opportunities and a variety of feedback mechanisms to encourage and allow participation from all stakeholders.

The NT Planning Commission engaged Associated Advertising & Promotions, in partnership with PR Button, to develop and implement the community engagement strategy for Stage One, of the consultation to maximise opportunities for community input and consultation and to ensure that community concerns and issues were heard, recorded and considered as part of the planning process.

The two month consultation period took place during October and November 2015 and enabled the NT Planning Commission to:

- Engaged with more than 690 people at industry and special interest group meetings, shopping centres and community markets
- write to more than 7100 residents
- deliver flyers to 40 locations across Litchfield including local electorate offices, service stations, shopping centres and community shops
- meet with local MLAs; Mr Gerry Wood (Member for Nelson), Mr Gary Higgins (Member for Daly), and Ms Kezia Purick (Member for Goyder)
- advertise in the NT News and The Suns
- engage with print, radio and TV media
- hold a Community Workshop with 88 participants to discuss future land use requirements of the identified Rural Activity Centres and identify the characteristics and needs of the Litchfield municipality; and
- receive 66 submissions and 25 'Have Your Say' forms from a range of residents, interest groups, Government and stakeholders.

Throughout the consultation a number of recurring themes were identified;



Comments relating to these themes are expanded on as per below;

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Lot sizes | <p>Mixed views, however most are in favour of having a variety of lot sizes and the concept of 'life cycle' options were popular to accommodate first home buyers, families and retirees who all have different needs throughout their life, but all want to live in the rural area</p> <p>There needs to be an appropriate transition from smaller blocks in and around RACs, to larger RL and RR blocks in order to protect the rural lifestyle</p> <p>Some beliefs that smaller blocks are a threat to the rural lifestyle</p> <p>Smaller blocks need to be centralised around RACs and there needs to be an adequate buffer zone to ensure rural lifestyle and look and feel is preserved</p> <p>Smaller blocks will also allow retirees to remain in the area or young home owners to enter the market</p> <p>Different lot sizes will provide an opportunity for a variety of housing types</p> <p>Restrictions should be placed on subdividing and spot rezoning</p> <p>Don't want to see ad hoc and spot rezoning</p> |
| Water | <p>Usage and sustainability – drawing down further on current aquifers is not sustainable</p> <p>Access to town water and reticulated water needs to be a priority for growth to occur in the rural areas</p> <p>Impact of increased sewerage requirements and how this will be managed</p> <p>Use of grey water, recycling and rainwater tanks - would like to see subsidies here to make this feasible, or pressure on developers to provide these with any new developments</p> <p>Impact of development on natural waterways/ flow paths</p> <p>Water logging and flooding</p> <p>Need to ensure appropriate drainage</p> |
| Traffic and Transport | <p>Limited public transport is available, barely servicing current needs of population</p> <p>Roads are increasingly congested and not suitable for more population growth</p> <p>Road conditions are not safe for the variety of users</p> <p>Some local roads are already struggling with the pressure of increased population</p> |

| | |
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| | <p>Traffic around schools is particularly dangerous because of amount of traffic and congestion in peak periods</p> <p>Local roads are becoming increasingly busy causing problems for local residents (safety, noise etc)</p> |
| Services | <p>A growing population will increase demand on services</p> <p>More services are required for childcare, schools, maternal health and seniors</p> <p>There is no ambulance in the rural area or twenty-four hour emergency service, clinic or medical centre</p> <p>Smaller lots will require waste disposal services, a transfer station or landfill area</p> <p>Internet and communication services will need to be improved with a growing population</p> |
| Environment and Conservation | <p>Wildlife habitats need to be preserved</p> <p>Wildlife corridors need to be maintained and protected around growth areas</p> <p>Protect the eco-system, wetlands and river systems</p> <p>Thought needs to be given to environmental sustainability, alternative energy supplies and water tanks</p> <p>Maximum restrictions on clearing of native bush land on properties</p> <p>There needs to be dedicated conservation areas</p> <p>Increased traffic has seen an increase in road kill of native wildlife</p> |
| Recreation | <p>Bike paths, swimming pools and recreation centres (indoor and outdoor) are required across the rural area</p> <p>The Pine Forest currently provides a unique space for a wide range of users (mountain biking, walking, horse riding, quad bikes etc) supporting a national interest in outdoor activities and should be left as an open space for community recreation activities.</p> |
| New developments and proposals | <p>What is happening with Noonamah Ridge, Hughes and Weddell?</p> <p>What can't the Government just build a new town?</p> <p>What will be done about ad-hoc and spot re-zoning?</p> <p>If Weddell went ahead would there be a need to develop Rural Activity Centres?</p> <p>If the government can't build Weddell, why don't they invite a private developer to do it?</p> |

Community Engagement and Feedback

Generally speaking most people who engaged in the community consultation activities were open minded about growth in the rural area and positive about engaging in the consultation process.

Analysis of the submissions received indicate that 74% were neutral or supportive of future development. Out of the 66 submissions that were received only two were blatantly negative and disparaging towards any sign of development in the rural area.

Visitors to the community displays demonstrated some initial hesitation to engage, however once it was understood that this was the first stage, and the information gathering stage of the development of the plan, they were willing to provide ideas and raise concerns about future development of the Litchfield area and how it might impact their respective RAC.

Having said this a number of concerns or questions remained unanswered throughout the process which may need to be addressed in Stage Two, in drafting the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan.

These include:

Confusion over scope of plan

The discussion guide, community display stands and the community workshop were primarily focused on gaining feedback on the Rural Activity Centres, as these were the areas identified in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan as the predominant area of where growth and change was likely to occur in future development. Stakeholders with interests beyond the Rural Activity Centres were concerned and wanted to know if the plan would cover their interests and, asked how other land uses, such as horticulture and mineral extraction, will be addressed in the draft land use plan. Many people also sought further information and clarification on proposed development sites such as Weddell, Noonamah Ridge and Hughes and wanted to know why they weren't being prioritised as development areas to accommodate future growth.

Lack of information regarding future proposed developments and sites.

Questions regarding Weddell and Noonamah Ridge were raised throughout the consultation. Planning documents indicate that these sites have been identified for future urban/peri-urban use and while it was understood that time and investment is required before the developments are realised, the question remained that if these sites were to go ahead would the development of Rural Activity Centres be required. Many residents and stakeholders were concerned that the focus of the consultation document to the rural activity centres placed a lesser weight to other future developments. Stakeholders are seeking more information on future developments in Litchfield.

Why the Pine Forest?

The Pine Forest was identified in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 (DLRUP) as a rural activity centre, recognising the potential of the site for future development to provide additional residential options in the rural area. The DLRUP acknowledges however that there has been only limited investigation or consideration of future opportunities at this site. Unlike other Rural Activity Centres, the Pine Forrest is undeveloped and absent of any commercial activity. Considering this, the community asked why a site that is favoured and highly valued for recreational and environmental activities even being considered for future development?

Government's commitment to the planning scheme

Many comments of frustration and cynicism were made with regards to "spot re-zoning" and the lack of trust in future planning schemes being followed. Small business owners commented that it was hard to get ahead and that the rules seemed to be constantly changing with regards to what land was being developed and why. In general, most people were keen to have their say and participate in the consultation process, however there was some perception that development in and around RACs is being driven by private developers. There was also strong feedback that whilst they were keen to be actively involved in the planning process, there was skepticism that comments and submissions received throughout the consultation process would be considered in the development of the plan.

Recommendations

We recommend;

- The draft plan take into consideration the key themes highlighted throughout the consultation process and endeavour to address the concerns as listed above.
- The NT Planning Commission continue to engage with stakeholders throughout all stages of the development of the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan.

INTRODUCTION

With the greater Darwin region expected to almost double in population over the next 40 to 50 years, the NT Planning Commission is in the first stage of developing a subregional land use plan for the Litchfield area that balances the needs of a growing population with the protection of the environment and preservation of rural lifestyle values. Whilst the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 sets the overarching guidelines for land use, structure and key principles, the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan will provide more specific details and understanding of future land use in the Litchfield municipality. Once approved, the plan will be included in the NT Planning Scheme and provide an important framework for future development in the Litchfield area.

The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan will provide detailed land use planning for the Litchfield municipality, particularly in the identified Rural Activity Centres (RACs) in Berry Springs, Coolalinga / Fred Pass, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo and the Pine Forest.

The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan will focus on identifying and protecting:

- natural resources, including ground water, extractive minerals and agricultural and horticultural soils
- land to support commercial and community uses, and a variety of residential options within rural activity centres, rural lifestyle areas, and urban/peri-urban areas
- an interconnected network of transport and utility corridors to enable the efficient movement of people and goods

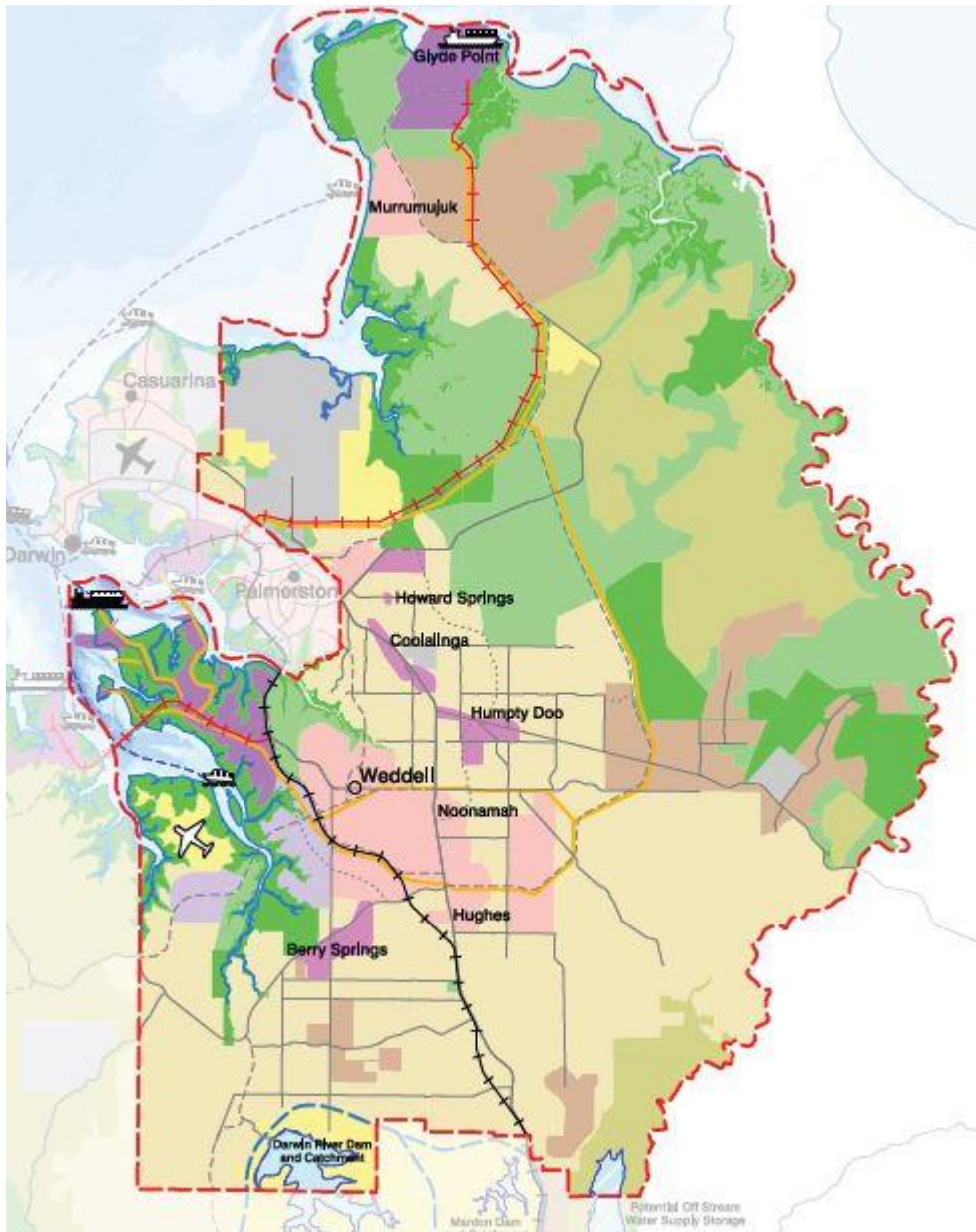
In developing the Subregional Land Use Plan, the Planning Commission will be guided and informed by the key principles of the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015, community consultation feedback as well as feasibility studies and other investigations.

Community input into the development of the plan is vital at all stages to ensure that the views of the whole community are taken into consideration. Fundamental to this is understanding key aspects of the Litchfield lifestyle and how the future growth and development of housing, jobs, community facilities, recreational areas and the environment will change as the community expands.

The NT Planning Commission engaged local consultants Associated Advertising & Promotions (AA&P), in partnership with PR Button, to develop and implement a community engagement strategy to maximize opportunities for community input and consultation and to ensure that community concerns and issues were heard, recorded and able to be considered as part of the planning process.

The study area

The Litchfield Municipality has a population of 22,123 living in 7539 dwellings (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015). Population growth projections indicate that over the next 40 to 50 years, the Darwin Region will almost double in population with an increase of approximately 120 000 residents. The Litchfield subregion will accommodate some of this growth, with estimates suggesting that an additional 500 dwellings will be required in the near term of 5 to 10 years, and a total of 17 500 dwellings in the longer term of 40 to 50 years (MacroPlan Dimasi 2013). Most of this growth is likely to occur in the urban/peri-urban areas of Holtze, Weddell, Noonamah, Hughes and Noonamah Ridge, and identified rural activity centres at Berry Springs, Coolalinga / Freds Pass, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo and the Pine Forest.



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES

Market Research into the Strategic Planning of Rural Darwin (MacGregor Tan study*), previous consultations, media reporting and MLAs commentary indicated that members of the Litchfield community were concerned about potential changes to their residential environment and protecting their rural lifestyle. They were cynical about future development changes and a perceived lack of consultation.

It was vital therefore, that community engagement regarding the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan addressed these concerns by genuinely engaging with key stakeholders over the consultation period.

Information and feedback mechanisms needed to be widely accessible across a variety of channels and provide transparency with regard to the consultation stage and how that feeds into the planning process.

The consultants set the following objectives for Stage One of the Community Engagement Strategy:

- To create awareness of the planning process and the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan
- Provide opportunities and a variety of feedback mechanisms to encourage comment from stakeholders
- Seek community and stakeholder input into the draft Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan
- Build an understanding of stakeholder issues and sensitivities

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

1. Create awareness of the planning process and the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan

Community consultation for the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan was launched on 29 September with the release of the consultation discussion guide at the Litchfield Council Chambers.

This was further supported by the following community engagement activities:

- a letter to residents mailed to over 7000 post office boxes in the area
- a two page flyer delivered to 40 locations across Litchfield including local electorate offices
- invitations to over 75 key stakeholders, interest groups, sporting clubs and community associations to get involved
- print advertising in the NT News and The Suns
- 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
- media interviews and coverage

The discussion guide was a detailed document designed to engage conversation and encourage submissions from key stakeholders, providing context, back ground information and a series of questions throughout the paper to evoke discussions and input into the development of the subregional plan.

2. Provide opportunities and a variety of feedback mechanisms to encourage comment from stakeholders

As the first stage in the development of the land use plan, 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;

- Litchfield residents
- Local businesses
- Litchfield MLAs
- Special interest groups and community groups (including sporting and lifestyle clubs)
- Industry Associations and representative bodies
- Ministers and Federal MPs
- Government Agencies and Departments
- Environmental groups
- Local Government
- Aboriginal Land Councils and associations
- The NT Community

The following feedback channels were available during the consultation period of October – November;

Website:

The dedicated Litchfield page of the NT Planning Commission website provided an online response form for people wishing to provide feedback. These responses were recorded with the submissions. The website also provided contact details such as email and phone to allow people to contact the NTPC with questions and also email through submissions. The website provided a list of dates and times where stakeholders could attend the community displays at shopping centres and markets and speak directly with planners.

The website also provided the discussion paper, 2 page flyer, FAQs, market research, Have Your Say forms and other important information available for download.

Have Your Say forms:

Have Your Say forms were provided online and at all events, meetings and public displays for people wishing to provide written comments on the spot. They could also take the forms and send them in later by email or post.

Public Displays:

Representatives of the NT Planning Commission, the Department of Lands and Planning and the consultants attended 8 public displays over the month of October, providing opportunities for local residents and businesses to receive information and share their concerns, general comments and feedback, all of which was recorded at these events.

The displays were held at the following locations:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Saturday 3 October | Fred’s Pass Markets |
| Tuesday 6 October | Humpty Doo Shopping Centre |
| Saturday 10 October | Fred’s Pass Markets |
| Tuesday 13 October | Berry Springs Shopping Village |
| Saturday 17 October | Fred’s Pass Markets |
| Tuesday 20 October | Howard Springs Shopping Centre |
| Sunday 25 October | Berry Springs Markets |
| Tuesday 27 October | Coolalinga Shopping Centre |

More than 630 people visited the public display stands over the 4 weeks.



Stakeholder and Special Interest Groups:

The NT Planning Commission met with a range of stakeholder and special interest groups, to explain the planning process, gather information and encourage submissions to the plan. Discussions with all stakeholder and special interest groups were minuted and circulated back to each group to be distributed to members. The groups were encouraged to provide submissions on behalf of their group/club/association, and also as individuals, understanding that issues and concerns raised would be different.

For the most part, issues raised from each of the groups shared common themes, as listed below in point 4 (page 13) of this report.

The meetings included:

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| Tuesday 6 October | Southern Districts Football Club |
| Monday 26 October | Industry briefing including Urban Development Institute of Australia NT, Property Council Australia NT, Chamber of Commerce NT, Housing Industry Association NT, Master Builders Association NT |
| Wednesday 28 October | Service Clubs Meeting: Litchfield Lions Club, Rotary Club, Country Women's Association, Kiwanis Club |
| Sunday 1 November | NT Polocrosse Association |
| Monday 9 November | Livingstone Reserve Recreation |
| Tuesday 17 November | Humpty Doo Village Green Management Board Fred's Pass Management Board |
| Thursday 19 November | Litchfield Council Meeting |
| Friday 20 November | Seniors Weekly Meeting at Taminmin Library |

Meetings with MLAs

NT Planning Commission Chairman Mr Gary Nairn met with local MLAs Mr Gerry Wood Member for Nelson, Mr Gary Higgins Member for Daly, and Ms Kezia Purick, Member for Goyder, throughout the consultation period. Each were invited to comment on the discussion paper and encourage submissions from their constituents. Copies of the discussion paper and flyer were also left at each of the MLA offices. Mr Wood was the only MLA to submit a formal submission.

Community Workshop – “World Café”

On Wednesday 18 November the NT Planning Commission hosted a community workshop focused on generating ideas and understanding concerns about growth and development of the Rural Activity Centres. The aim of the workshop was to provide a forum to discuss concepts, ideas and potential issues to be considered for the future planning of rural activity centres in Howard Springs, Humpty Doo, Pine Forest, Berry Springs and Coolalinga.

The workshop was styled on a “World Café” approach and saw 88 residents, local business and interest group representatives’ work in a facilitated environment to discuss guiding questions and receive feedback on each of the Rural Activity Centres. The World Café methodology aims to create a collaborative and open forum that encourages dialogue, idea sharing and constructive conversation.

The World Cafe event commenced with Mr Gary Nairn providing an overview of the consultation paper, and some information about community consultation that had taken place to date. Mr Nairn also provided context and information about the planning process, and specifically the planning considerations

for the future development of the Litchfield Region. A presentation on water resources in the Litchfield region was also delivered by a representative from the Department of Lands & Planning, discussing current and future anticipated water use and requirements.

Attendees were asked to select the Rural Activity Centre of most interest, and join a facilitated discussion. Discussion at each table was facilitated by a planning officer to provide technical information regarding the planning scheme, and accompanied by an independent observer and scribe provided by the consultants. There were multiple discussion groups for the larger RACs, such as Coolalinga, which had three groups, in order to ensure that as many people as possible were able to contribute to the discussion.

The World Café discussions were centered around three guiding questions;

1. What do you think are the main constraints and challenges for land use planning in your rural activity centre?
2. What community facilities (and where) need to be planned to support growth over the next 20 to 30 years?
3. How do you think rural activity centres should be developed to accommodate some population growth while protecting established lifestyle areas?

This was followed by an open discussion at the end of the World Café session, with Gary Nairn taking questions and comments from the floor. Many of these comments focused on questions around already proposed developments for Weddell and Noonamah.

Overall, there was a high level of positive engagement from attendees and the smaller groups enabled more people to contribute to the discussions and share their ideas and concerns, compared with traditional town hall style meetings especially with a group this size. Many attendees commented positively that a 'workshop' style event provided a good opportunity to discuss issues in greater detail and to hear a diversity of opinions and ideas. Conversely, some attendees did say that they felt that a facilitated discussion that focussed on three questions meant that open forum group conversation was somewhat restricted.

Submissions

All residents and stakeholders were invited to make a formal submission into the planning process by 30 November. Respondents were encouraged to use the consultation discussion guide, public displays and meetings to help inform their submissions. Members of the NT Planning Commission were also available to answer telephone enquiries and emails, as well as attend meetings as requested. A breakdown of key themes highlighted in the submissions received is provided below.

3. Seek community and stakeholder input into the draft Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan

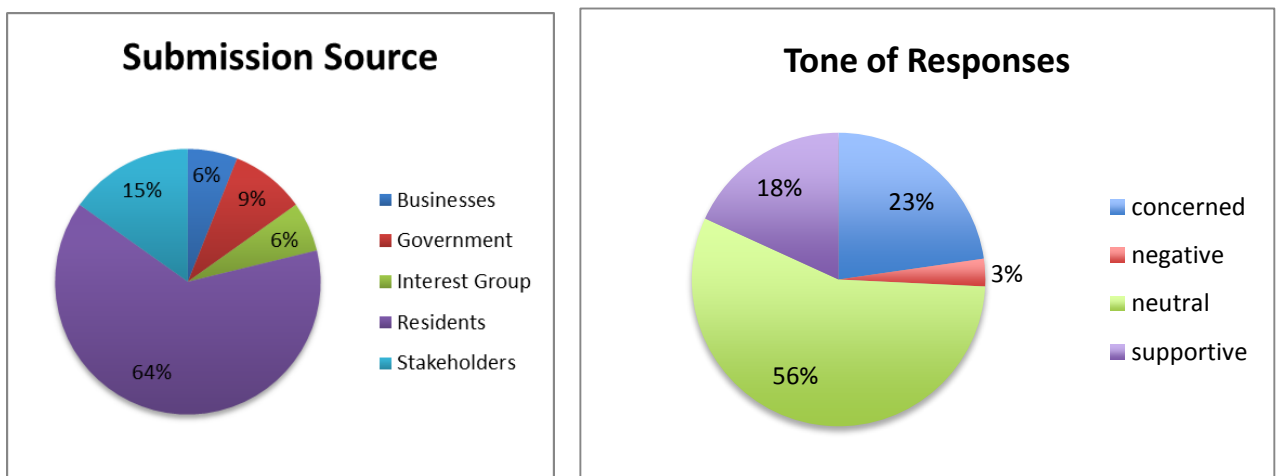
Community consultation for the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan ran from 29 September to 30 November. During that period the consultation team, consisting of representatives from the NT Planning Commission, Department of Lands and Planning and consultants AA&P and PR Button, achieved the following engagement outcomes:

- Engaged with more than 630 people at shopping centres and community markets
- held meetings with 9 industry/special interest groups, accounting for another 60 participants

- established a database of over 100 residents and stakeholders who wish to be kept informed of the planning process
- held a Community Workshop with 88 participants to discuss future land use requirements of the Rural Activity Centres and identify the characteristics and needs of the Litchfield municipality
- received 25 Have Your Say forms; and
- received 66 submissions from a range of residents, interest groups, Government departments and other stakeholders.

Visitors to the community displays demonstrated some initial hesitation to engage however once it was understood that this was the first stage, and the information gathering stage of the development of the plan, they were willing to provide ideas and raise concerns about future development of the Litchfield area and how it might impact their respective RAC.

Analysis of the submissions reveal that 64% of the submissions were received from residents, and 74% of all submissions were either supportive or neutral towards the planning process.



NB: Those classified as ‘neutral’ made submissions that were neither negative nor supportive, however wanted to provide additional information or commentary specific to their RAC, business or commercial activity, or lot size/zoning.

4. Build an understanding of stakeholder issues and sensitivities

Effective community consultation aims to gather feedback from a range of stakeholders to identify and understand the key issues that are important to them and that should be taken into consideration when planning and developing policy.

Throughout the community consultation a number of key themes and concerns were raised by participants. The top three most commented on themes related to Lot Sizes (34%), Water (12%) and traffic and transport (15%).

Comments relating to each of the key themes are summarised below;

Lot sizes

Mixed views, however most are in favour of having a variety of lot sizes and the concept of ‘life cycle’ options were popular to accommodate first home buyers, families and retirees who all have different needs throughout their life, but all want to live in the rural area

There needs to be an appropriate transition from smaller blocks in and around RACs, to larger RL and RR blocks in order to protect the rural lifestyle

| | |
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| | <p>Some beliefs that smaller blocks are a threat to the rural lifestyle</p> <p>Smaller blocks need to be centralised around RACs and there needs to be an adequate buffer zone to ensure rural lifestyle and look and feel is preserved</p> <p>Smaller blocks will also allow retirees to remain in the area or young home owners to enter the market</p> <p>Different lot sizes will provide an opportunity for a variety of housing types</p> <p>Restrictions should be placed on subdividing and spot rezoning</p> <p>Don't want to see ad hoc and spot rezoning</p> <p><i>"I support an increased local population within rural activity centres because it is an inevitable outcome of population growth" – Howard Springs Resident</i></p> |
| Water | <p>Usage and sustainability – drawing down further on current aquifers is not sustainable</p> <p>Access to town water and reticulated water needs to be a priority for growth to occur in the rural areas</p> <p>Impact of increased sewerage requirements and how this will be managed</p> <p>Use of grey water, recycling and rainwater tanks - would like to see subsidies here to make this feasible, or pressure on developers to provide these with any new developments</p> <p>Impact of development on natural waterways/ flow paths</p> <p>Water logging and flooding</p> <p>Need to ensure appropriate drainage</p> <p><i>"Water will be a problem – we don't have never ending water, the water table is under pressure from existing bores and bore fields"- Humpty Doo resident</i></p> |
| Traffic and Transport | <p>Limited public transport is available, barely servicing current needs of population</p> <p>Roads are increasingly congested and not suitable for more population growth</p> <p>Road conditions are not safe for the variety of users</p> <p>Some local roads are already struggling with the pressure of increased population</p> <p>Traffic around schools is particularly dangerous because of amount of traffic and congestion in peak periods</p> <p>Local roads are becoming increasingly busy causing problems for local residents (safety, noise etc)</p> <p><i>"Public transport needs to be increased, along with any increase in residents. It would be nice to catch a bus to work but when 25minutes in the car vs 1.5hrs in a bus – it's not rocket science to know what we will choose" – Coolalinga resident</i></p> |
| Services | <p>A growing population will increase demand on services</p> <p>More services are required for childcare, schools, maternal health and seniors</p> <p>There is no ambulance in the rural area or twenty-four hour emergency service, clinic or medical centre</p> <p>Smaller lots will require waste disposal services, a transfer station or landfill area</p> <p>Internet and communication services will need to be improved with a growing population</p> <p><i>"I would like to see some planning/development in this area. I would like to see the Village shops grow – I would like to see a high school in the area with a couple of ovals</i></p> |

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| | <i>and community hall too.” Berry Springs Resident</i> |
| Environment and Conservation | <p>Wildlife habitats need to be preserved Wildlife corridors need to be maintained and protected around growth areas Protect the eco-system, wetlands and river systems Thought needs to be given to environmental sustainability, alternative energy supplies and water tanks Maximum restrictions on clearing of native bush land on properties There needs to be dedicated conservation areas Increased traffic has seen an increase in road kill of native wildlife</p> <p><i>“I believe a clear statement of intent with regards to flora and fauna conservation is valid and highly important” – Darwin River Resident.</i></p> |
| Recreation | <p>Bike paths, a swimming pool and recreation centres (indoor and outdoor) are required across the rural area The Pine Forest currently provides a unique space for a wide range of users (mountain biking, walking, horse riding, quad bikes etc) supporting a national interest in outdoor activities and should be left as an open space for community recreation activities.</p> <p><i>“Mountain biking is growing in popularity – there is potential to consider and preserve Pine Forest as a base to build a profile for Darwin as a mountain biking destination” – Stakeholder submission</i></p> |
| New developments and proposals | <p>What is happening with Noonamah Ridge, Hughes and Weddell? What can't the Government just build a new town? What will be done about ad-hoc and spot re-zoning? If Weddell went ahead would there be a need to develop Rural Activity Centres? If the government can't build Weddell, why don't they invite a private developer to do it?</p> <p><i>“Although supportive in principle of rural activity centres, we believe there needs to be a larger township (such as Weddell) along the harbour as originally planned” – Bees Creek resident</i></p> |

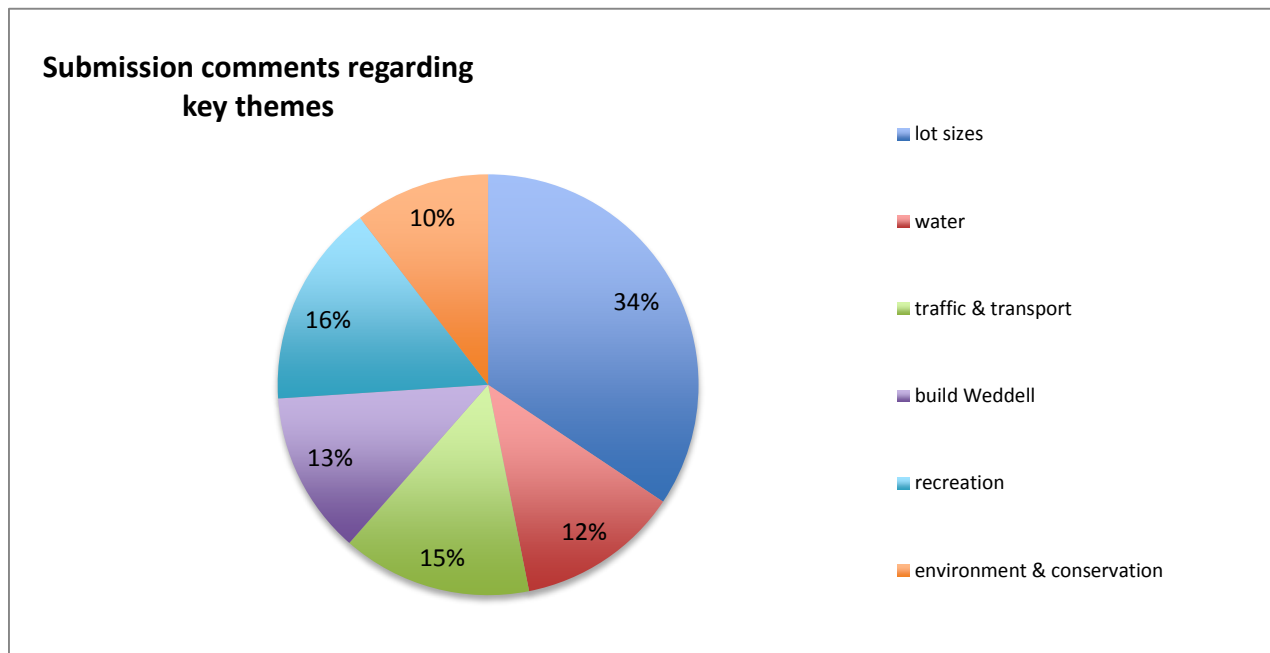
Submissions

Analysis of comments made in the submissions indicate that 'lot sizes' is the greatest concern.

Interestingly, the concerns regarding lot sizes are seemingly determined by the respondent's vested interests. For all of the comments about protecting the "rural lifestyle" there were a significant number of requests, 12 out of 28 comments regarding lot sizes, for residents' blocks to be included in future rezoning to allow them to subdivide into smaller lots.

Submissions which did not include comments regarding these themes were generally those received from non-community stakeholders and Government who offered information particular to their area of expertise. For example, these included submissions from The City of Darwin, Tourism NT and Water Services Business Unit (PWC), to name a few.

Submissions were also received specifically relating to farming, horticulture and extractive activities, from respective industry associations and companies with business holdings in the Litchfield area, seeking further information and recognition of how these activities are being considered and incorporated into the future development of the region.

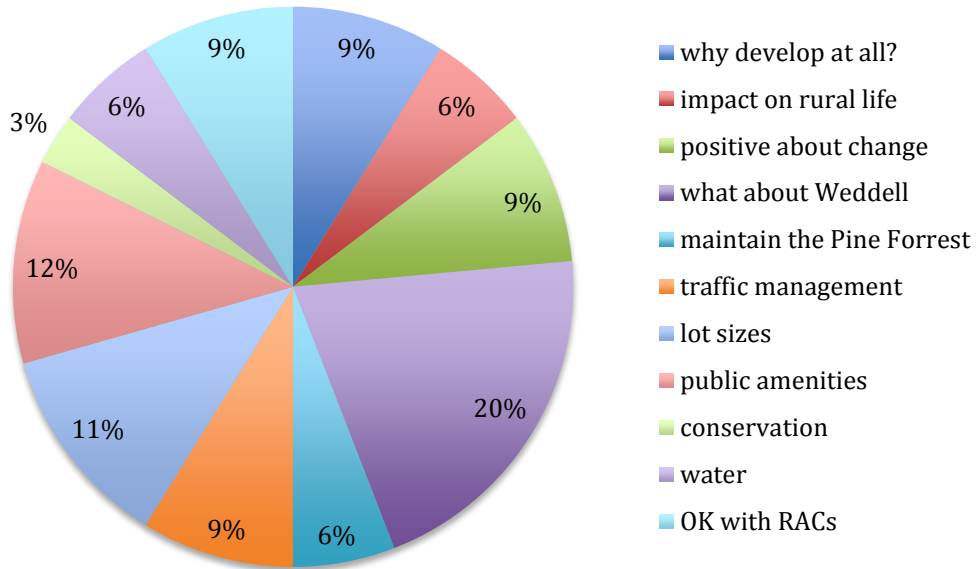


Have Your Say

Comments on the Have Your Say forms were much more informal and varied with concerns for more information on Weddell being the biggest issue raised.

There were several comments made about ‘why develop at all?’ with some scepticism around the forecast growth projections and the evidenced based data supporting a need for additional housing in the rural area.

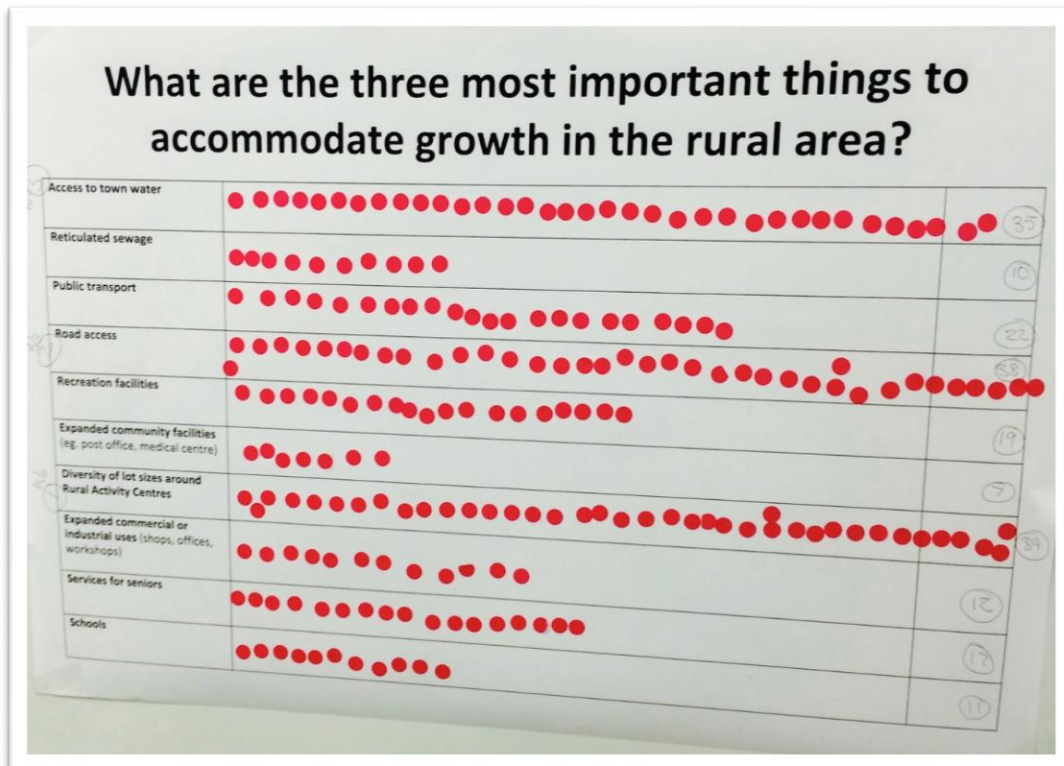
Have Your Say Responses



Dotmocracy

An interactive activity at the World Cafe community workshop also provided an easy way to straw poll what was most important to participants, in regards to accommodating growth in the rural area. The 'Dotmocracy' showed the top three issues on the night to be:

1. Diversity of lot sizes around Rural Activity Centres
2. Road access
3. Access to town water



MEDIA COVERAGE

Northern Territory media showed a keen and balanced interest in the Planning Commission consultations for the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan.

Around 13 print, broadcast stories and letters to editors were published/aired during the consultation process. The media reporting was a mix of Planning Commission updates and community information, as well as community and stakeholder led stories. Letters to the editor mentioning Litchfield tended to stray from consultation issues and discuss matters of interest to other authorities such as the council.

The launch of the consultation paper was covered by ABC TV and Channel NINE, as well as ABC Radio and the NT News. The issues were followed up in the Litchfield and Darwin Suns and in talkback radio sessions on the ABC and Territory FM featuring Gary Nairn.

Social media was led primarily by two pages “DORC – Darwin Off Road Cyclists” which mostly focused on the Pine Forest, and the “No Rural Suburbs” facebook page, both of which have provided regular updates on the consultation and encouraged their followers to have their say. There were few outwardly negative comments on either page.

The NT Planning Commission chose not to utilise their Facebook as a communication tool for engaging with the public about the LSLUP . The Planning Commission does not maintain a social media presence on Facebook or Twitter and would require a clear plan for monitoring and content if it chose to go down that path at some future date . This did limit engagement in this space and restricted the ability to respond to comments, concerns or queries made on social media.

Some examples of social media commentary are captured below;

Litchfield Council
29 September at 16:39 · 🌐

Litchfield Council welcomes the release of the Northern Territory Planning Commission's consultation paper on the Litchfield Sub Regional Land Use Plan.

Litchfield Council hosted the NT Planning Commission today at Council Chambers, where following an information sharing discussion with Council staff, Planning Commission chairman Gary Nairn spoke with the media about the process of developing the new land use plan, and consultation with the community.

Council will be particip... See More

2 Likes · 2 Comments · 2 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

2 people like this. Most Recent ▾

2 shares

 Jay Jukes How do we have our say? I brought rural for a reason, not to have an activity centre next door!
Like · Reply · 29 September at 17:56

 Jay Jukes Answered my own question since NTG released more details...
The Northern Territory Government has welcomed the release of a consultation paper inviting the community to contribute to the development of a subregional land use plan for Litchfield... See More

 **Northern Territory Planning Commission**
Northern Territory Planning Commission, Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment, Northern...
PLANNINGCOMMISSION.NT.GOV.AU | BY NORTHERN ...
Like · Reply · 29 September at 18:01

 Write a comment... 🗨️

 **DORC - Darwin Off Road Cyclists**
November 10 · 🌐

Hey remember way back when we submitted the petition to save the Pine Forest. Well all that hard work may have resulted in the attached. It's not over the line just yet but if you want to have input to keeping the Pine Forest or expanding MTBing into Litchfield then have a look at the attached.

Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan aka "Pine Forest"

Ok so we've had the NT MTB Master Plan where we had input into the whole of the NT. Well now we need to focus down a little on to one region in our great big backyard, Litchfield (check it out it's...

DORC.COM.AU

Like · Comment · Share

9 people like this.

1 share

Letters

LETTER OF THE DAY

Painful reality of subdivision

I AM an older rural resident and am finding it increasingly difficult to maintain my 5-acre block in the condition I want it to be.

I have recently been diagnosed with cancer which could mean great expense later on (if indeed there is a later on for me). I have a beautiful cleared lot and would dearly love to subdivide into two lots for the afore mentioned reasons.

My wife and I wish to remain in our home which we built some years ago but it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so.

I wonder how many of the people against subdivision now, will reverse their opinion as age and illness creeps up on them.

At the moment in the rural area we are seeing many people putting several demounta-

ble type dwellings on their blocks and renting them out to their mates with the obvious problems to nearby residents.

Driving around the Howard Springs area we see people living in old buses, caravans, dongas etc, all OK, but woe betide any one who wants to sell 1 hectare to a family who wish to build a beautiful house. That is out of the question.

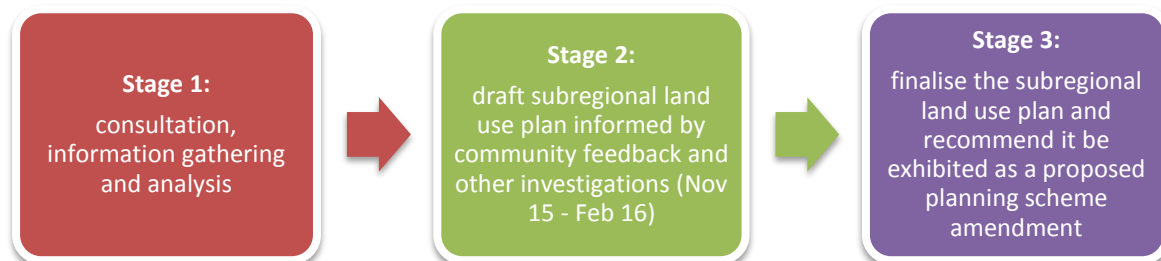
Every city in the world is expanding and that includes Darwin but alas not Howard Springs.

It puzzles me greatly to see a 5 acre block less than a kilometre from me being subdivided into 750 sq m lots and yet I am unable to subdivide 1 hectare. If it is a zoning problem then please rezone the whole Howard Springs area.

**Geoff Cole,
Howard Springs**

NEXT STEPS

This report covers community consultation and engagement during Stage One, the information gathering stage of the development of the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan.



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the outset of the community consultation, the consultants identified that members of the Litchfield community were concerned about potential changes to their residential environment and protecting their rural lifestyle. They were also potentially cynical about the benefits of future development changes and alleged lack of consultation that had taken place historically.

The consultation period over October and November delivered a variety of opportunities to address questions, concerns and explain the planning process. Bearing in mind that this is Stage One and focussed on providing opportunities for stakeholders to be engaged and gather as much information as possible from multiple sources and studies, the consultants feel that a number of concerns or questions remain unanswered and may need to be addressed at Stage Two, in drafting the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan.

Confusion over scope of plan

The discussion guide, community display stand and the community workshop were primarily focused on gaining feedback on the Rural Activity Centres, as these were the areas identified in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan as where the predominant area of change was likely to occur in future development. Stakeholders with interests beyond the Rural Activity Centres were concerned however, if the plan would cover their interests and asked how other land uses, such as horticulture and mineral extraction, will be addressed in the draft land use plan. Many people also sought further information on proposed development sites such as Weddell, Noonamah Ridge and Hughes and wanted to know why they weren't being prioritised as development areas to accommodate future growth.

Lack of information regarding future proposed developments and sites

Questions regarding Weddell and Noonamah Ridge were raised throughout the consultation. Planning documents indicate that these sites have been identified for future urban/peri-urban use and while it was understood that time and investment is required before the developments are realised, the question remained that if these sites were to go ahead would the development of Rural Activity Centres be required. Many residents and stakeholders were concerned that the focus of the consultation document to the rural activity centres placed a lesser weight to other future developments. Stakeholders are seeking more information on future developments in Litchfield.

Why the Pine Forest?

The Pine Forest was identified in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 (DLRUP) as a rural activity centre, recognising the potential of the site for future development to provide additional residential options in the rural area. The DLRUP acknowledges however that there has been only limited investigation or consideration of future opportunities. However, unlike other Rural Activity Centres it is undeveloped and absent of any commercial activity. Considering this, the community asked why a site that is favoured and highly valued for recreational and environmental activities even being considered for future development?

Government's commitment to the planning scheme

Many comments of frustration and cynicism were made with regards to "spot re-zoning" and the lack of trust in future planning schemes being followed. Small business owners commented that it was hard to get ahead and that the rules seemed to be constantly changing with regards to what land was being developed and why. In general, most people were keen to have their say and participate in the consultation process, however there was some perception that development in and around RACs is being driven by private developers. There was also strong feedback that whilst they were keen to be actively involved in the planning process, there was skepticism that comments and submissions received throughout the consultation process would be considered in the development of the plan.

Recommendations:

We recommend;

- The draft plan take into consideration the key themes highlighted throughout the consultation process and endeavour to address the concerns as listed above.
- The NT Planning Commission continue to engage with stakeholders throughout all stages of the development of the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan.