

CENTRAL ALICE SPRINGS AREA PLAN

STAGE 2 CONSULTATION REPORT



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Northern Territory Planning Commission launched Stage 2 community consultation on the Central Alice Springs Area Plan project on 5 July 2018 by releasing the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan along with a draft needs Assessment document.

Stage 2 consultation was an opportunity for the community to provide comment on the draft Area Plan, including planning principles, which had been informed by background investigations and community feedback received during the first stage of consultation.

The planning principles included in the draft Area Plan were structured around seven general themes and provide a policy background to guide future land use change identified on the Land Use Vision Plan. The Area Plan also included six Focus Areas, which provide specific planning principles to address localised issues.

This report provides a summary of the activities undertaken and the feedback received during consultation on the Draft Area Plan.

For a detailed review of Stage 1 consultation, please refer to the Stage 1 Consultation Report on the NT Planning Commissions' website at www.planningcommission.nt.gov.au

1.1 The Study Area

Alice Springs is the largest urban centre outside of Darwin and Palmerston and is an important hub in the southern region of the NT. Alice Springs also services remote areas of Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.

In July 2017 the population of Alice Springs was estimated at 26 823 people by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The number of people residing within the central Alice Springs study area is 300 residents (ABS 2016), with a projected need to accommodate 350 people in the near term and 1 200 towards the long term. This will generate demand for the construction of 500 new multiple dwellings (units, townhouses and apartments) in central Alice Springs in the long term.

The study area for Stage 2 consultation of the Central Alice Springs Area Plan was extended south to include Traeger Park and the Alice Springs Aquatic and Leisure Centre, ensuring these facilities are maintained as a sport and recreation hub. The study area is otherwise bounded by Schwarz Crescent to the north, the Todd River to the east, and the Stuart Highway, and the service commercial/industrial area to the west. The study area is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Central Alice Springs Study Area



1.2 The Draft Area Plan

The Central Alice Springs Area Plan 2018 will be a long term plan that will shape the future development of the area. The Area Plan will provide continued support and strategic direction to the CBD, which is the primary location for commercial and retail activity in Alice Springs. The Area Plan project seeks to promote an engaging and lively central Alice Springs that is a sought after destination to live, work and play.

The objectives of the Area Plan project are to develop an overarching framework for future population growth thresholds in the Alice Springs Region of 32 000 and 40 000, and to identify land to accommodate this growth in both the short and long term. The Alice Springs CBD will have a role in accommodating a share of the population growth.

A draft Needs Assessment document was also prepared. The Needs Assessment document contains a record of investigations and community feedback that informs the draft Area Plan. It provides background policy to be read in conjunction with the draft Area Plan. The Needs Assessment presents and summarises the findings that result from a broad range of investigations and consultation including:

- previous land use planning documents for Alice Springs and the studies that informed them;
- current supply and future demand for residential growth options in the CBD;
- how cultural, heritage and natural environment contribute to Alice Springs and need to be retained when considering new development;
- recreational and open space land needs, with options to accommodate these needs; and
- infrastructure including major infrastructure and headworks required to service existing and future growth.

1.3 The Consultation Process

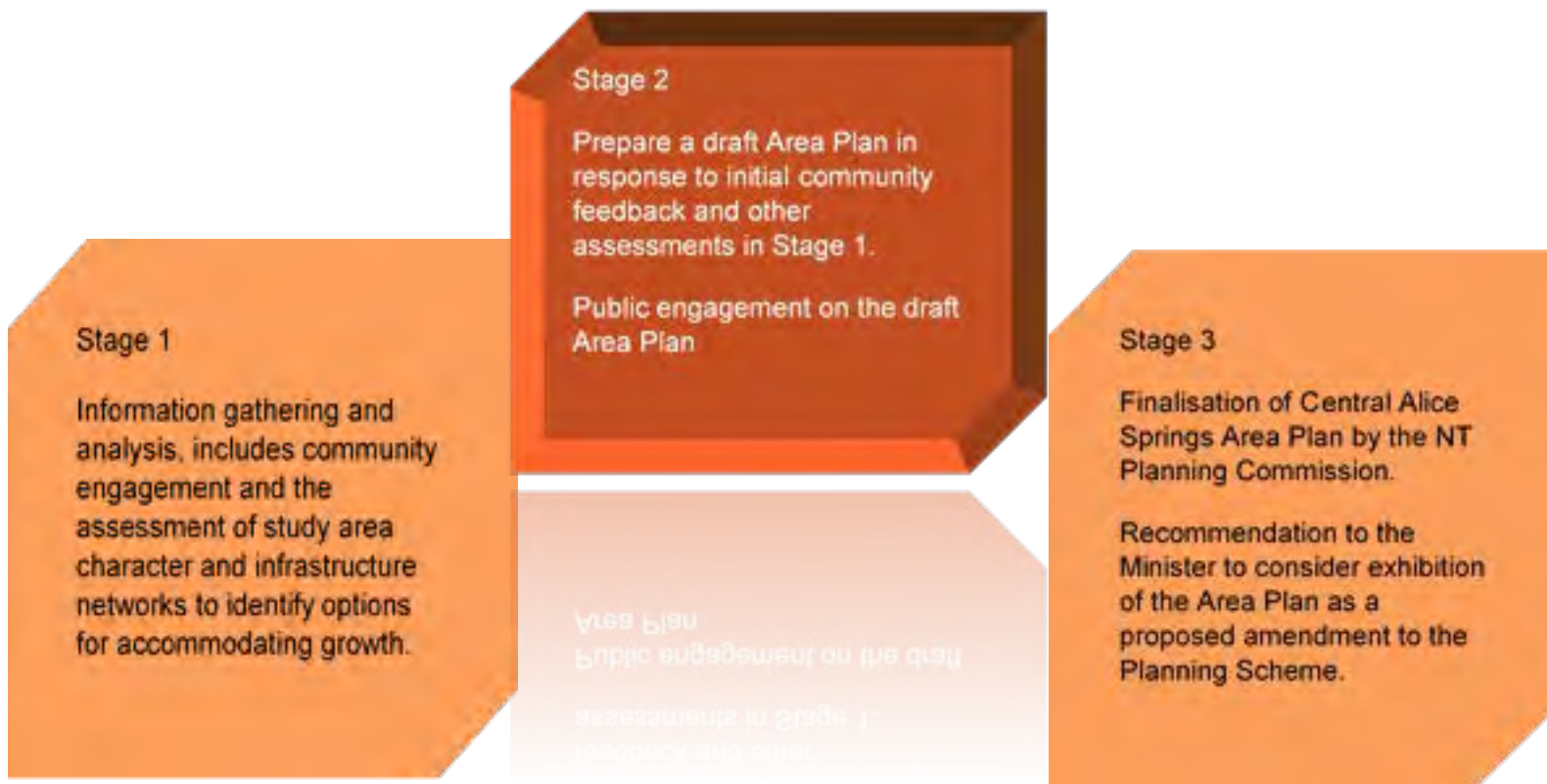
The Northern Territory Planning Commission has adopted a three-stage engagement approach to the consultation process.

Stage 1 of the consultation process was an opportunity for information gathering and analysis, including community engagement.

Stage 2 comprised the preparation and publication of a draft Area Plan, informed by initial community feedback and other information obtained during Stage 1.

Stage 3 will be the finalisation of the draft Area Plan, which will then be recommended to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics as a proposed Planning Scheme Amendment.

This report summarises the second stage of the consultation process and the key themes that were identified by the community, government agencies, and other stakeholder groups.



2. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The Stage 2 community consultation on the draft Central Alice Spring Area Plan was carried out by the Northern Territory Planning Commission from Thursday 5 July 2018 to Friday 10 August 2018. Stakeholders included:

- Alice Springs residents
- Local businesses
- Alice Springs Town Council
- Special interest groups and community groups
- Government agencies and departments
- Industry associations and representative bodies

2.1 Land Owners / Residents

The land owners and residents identified in the study area for central Alice Springs were mailed a flyer to inform them of the release of the draft Area Plan. The flyer invited comment via submission or by visiting one of the pop-up stalls at various locations around the CBD. The flyer provided an overview of the draft Area Plan, and highlighted the areas considered for change. A copy of the flyer is at [Appendix A](#).

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

- print advertising in the Centralian Advocate;
- a dedicated page on the NT Planning Commission website including times and dates of public displays, contact details to receive submissions and answer enquiries;
- the Planning Commission's stall at the Alice Springs Show which highlighted the Central Alice Springs Area Plan project; and
- pop-up stalls at the Todd Mall Markets and Yeperenye Shopping Centre.

2.2 Alice Springs Town Council

NT Planning Commission members Fran Kilgariff and Wayne Kraft, along with key Department staff, briefed Alice Springs Town Council and senior staff on the draft Area Plan on 25 June 2018. Council staff also participated in the Project Control Group informing the development of the draft documents for consultation.

2.3 Other

NT Government Departments, industry and community groups identified as stakeholders were provided with consultation materials and were invited to meet with the NT Planning Commission Chair.

NT Planning Commission member Fran Kilgariff and department staff met with Mr Andrew Broffman from Tangentyere Council on 9 July 2018.

3. SUBMISSIONS AND FEEDBACK

3.1 Land Owners / Residents

Consultation for Stage 2 provided a number of opportunities for the community to engage with the project team and Planning Commission members.

The NT Planning Commission stall at the Alice Springs show attracted a large number of visitors and the pop-up stalls held at the Todd Mall Markets and Yeperenye Shopping Centre were well attended.

At the conclusion of the consultation period, 11 written submissions from members of the community were received.

A snapshot of comments received from these engagement activities include:

- a desire to maintain green space and open space in new developments and not to impede on the natural amenities of the area;
- encouragement to recognise the Arrernte names and cultural sites within the Area Plan;
- aspirations for sustainable and environmentally friendly, flood resilient development that improves the street scape and gives community ownership;
- recognition that the Todd River contributes to the identity of Alice Springs; and
- suggestions that additional car parking is required across the CBD.

3.2 Special Interest and Community Groups

The following community groups, special interest groups, and local businesses provided comments with respect to the draft Area Plan and draft Needs Assessment:

- Lhere Mparntwe (Todd River) working group;
- The Uniting Church;
- Schulz Compton Project Planning;
- Arid Lands Environment Centre; and
- Australian Institute of Architects.

The submissions received were supportive of the area planning process, recognizing that the area plan will provided for appropriate development in Central Alice Springs and help to help the CBD to evolve further as a vibrant centre that maintains the natural environment of the area. Issues raised in the submissions included:

- recognising the Todd River as an 'iconic landmark' of Alice Springs, allowing visitors and residents to engage with and enjoy the natural amenity;
- enhancing the tourism facilities for visitors and link pathways with places of interest (walkable areas); and
- encouraging movement and activity within the CBD, particularly through shaded cycleways and foot paths that provide for active transport connections.

Overall feedback on the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan and draft Needs Assessment from special interest and community groups has been positive.

Comments from special interest and community groups have been collated, with the following broad themes emerging from the written submissions received.

Study Area

There was strong support to include the Todd River in the study area. Submissions asserted that recognising the Todd River as part of the Area Plan would provide opportunity for recreational activities and embrace the natural amenities of the river.

Other suggestions relating to the extent of the study area were to include Hele Crescent as a tourism opportunity 'gateway' into Alice Springs; and the railway corridor along the Stuart Highway to the west of the study area as it is considered by submitters as the logical location for any growth of the CBD.

Mixed Use and Residential

There was support for development in the central Alice Springs area with a blend of residential and mixed-use buildings to support activation of the CBD. That support however appeared to be conditional upon development to accommodate that growth being compatible with and not comprising visual connections with the surrounding environment of the Todd River, Anzac Hill and Billy Goat Hill.

Other ideas raised in submissions were:

- that building design should be appropriate to the local desert climate whilst embracing ecologically sustainable development principles;
- that future development should include a range of formal or informal social/cultural events and spaces that encourage activation throughout the day and into the evenings for all visitors to the CBD;
- to have buildings that are porous to pedestrian movement with shaded walking routes;
- for building design and heights to relate to the character of nearby heritage areas and not impede on the natural environment;
- for development to improve the pedestrian experience; and
- support for active street frontages that support and extend the existing characteristic of the CBD.

Service Commercial and Industry

The draft Area Plan suggested maintaining a separation between the CBD and service commercial and industrial areas. There were no submissions that opposed this suggestion.

Continue to encourage retail and commercial growth in the CBD and to allow this to occur the increase in building heights helps support this happening.

Movement and Transport

The movement of people through the CBD area, in particular the pedestrian and cycle connections, were of interest to many submitters.

Submissions suggested that options for pedestrian travel linking CBD streets with the Todd Mall did not need to be direct paths, but could incorporate places of interests along the pathways.

The wide streets of Alice Springs were considered to be an opportunity to improve the pedestrian experience.

Car parking within the CBD was also raised as an issue, with many stating:

- there are not enough car parks;
- there are limited shaded areas to protect cars from the heat;
- car parks should be located or designed to reduce negative impact on the street environment; and
- new developments could include car parking in a basement level with commercial space in ground floor and upper levels.

Further comments and submission in relation to movement and transport included:

- support for developing the site on the western side of Anzac Hill as a gateway to the town centre, with a pedestrian connection through the park to the CBD.
- a need to focus on east-west pedestrian connections;
- a desire for development to promote pedestrian flow with shaded walking routes.
- observations that reduced pedestrian shelter and increased walking distances related to numerous vacant lots in the central Alice Springs area are currently having a negative effect on the surrounding areas;
- acknowledgement of mature trees as an asset to streetscape amenity; and
- recognition that encouraging pedestrian movement will help create a vibrant CBD.

Social Infrastructure

There were many comments received on the vital role that the Todd River plays as a social, recreational and community space for both locals and visitors to Alice Springs.

There was support for the development of the vacant 'Shell' site at the base of Anzac Hill as an outdoor community meeting place or for recreational/tourism purposes.

The Uniting Church is seeking to develop a central meeting place or park space in the CBD for the purpose of bringing the community together.

Environment

Comments received from the community recognised the environmental significance of the Todd River.

There were a number of submission and comments received relating particularly to flooding and stormwater. Submissions encouraged consideration of the effect of flooding on the CBD, and ensuring that land use and development give consideration to stormwater runoff and possible impacts on the flood flow of the Todd River. Some submissions questioned why development is being encouraged in areas that are prone to flooding, and that there appeared to be no preventative measures put in place.

Focus Areas and Areas for Potential Change

The Anzac Hill locality was identified as an area of potential change in the draft Area Plan. Comments from the community were supportive of retaining the locality for recreational open space, particularly as it has been a place for sport and community enjoyment over many years.

The vacant 'Shell' site received positive feedback as a potential redevelopment site, with opportunity for tourism or a 'gateway' to the Alice Springs Central Business District.

The Medical and Health Services area identified surrounding the Alice Springs Hospital was recognised as performing an essential function for the local community and the broader Central Australian region. Submissions identified a strong desire for accommodation for patients and their families accessing health services close to the Hospital.

3.3 Alice Springs Town Council

Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC) provided comment in their capacity as a service authority.

ASTC acknowledged the role of the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan in identifying specific areas for potential change and noted that the Planning Commission was seeking further community feedback on a number of these areas through the consultation process. Council advised that specific comment cannot be provided on those areas requiring further community input until the proposed land uses have been determined.

3.4 Government Agencies

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

- Department of Treasury and Finance
- Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics - Transport
- Department of Education
- Police, Fire and Emergency Services
- Department of Housing and Community Services
- Department of Health
- Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
- Department of Tourism and Culture
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources

3.4.1 Department of Treasury and Finance

The Department advised of no formal comments in relation to the draft Area Plan for Central Alice Springs.

3.4.2 Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics - Transport

The Transport Planning Unit of the Department requested the following amendments to the draft Area Plan:

- acknowledgement that the pedestrian/cycle network shown on the Transport, Social Infrastructure and Physical Infrastructure map is in existence, and also show possible additions to the cycle network on that plan;
- amend the acceptable land use response to objective 4.1 to include cycling as well as walking, as the preferred modes of transport to priorities within the CBD.

3.4.3 Department of Education

The Department of Education's Planning and Design Branch noted agreement with the general premise that a population of 32 000 should be able to be accommodated within existing schools in the region, but that this does depend on where the population sits. Primary schools are traditionally within cycling or walking distance of residences.

The Department notes that Ross Park Primary school is close to capacity and has enrollment management in place. The allocation of Community Purpose (CP) land should be considered for a primary school if there is an increase in multiple dwellings in the central area.

3.4.4 Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services

The Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services (NTPFES) provided the below comments:

- NT Police will continue to work with the Safer Places Committee to maximise the effects of the CPTED Audit and ensure it is aligned with the draft Area Plan; and
- NTPFES encourages timely consideration for the future development of the old fueldepot site at Anzac Hill due to the surrounding anti-social behavior.

Additional comments noted the impacts of development within central Alice Springs on NTPFES operational needs. It was observed that changes to building height controls within the CBD, when realised through the development of eight storey buildings, will necessitate upgrading NTFRS appliances. NTPFES also noted that the existing railway link creates delays for emergency responders traveling east west and suggested the consideration of an emergency response under/overpass. These two matters are outside the scope of an Area Plan.

3.4.5 Department of Housing and Community Services

The Department informally advised that, given the availability of public transport and employment opportunities within the subject area, the provision of a diverse range of housing options should be key considerations for the future development of Central Alice Springs.

3.4.6 Department of Health

The Department provided the following comments in relation to the planning principles and Objectives of the draft Area Plan:

Mixed Use and Residential:

- Alice Springs Hospital (ASH) onsite accommodation units should not be affected by general planning principles and objectives relating to mixed use and residential development, as these accommodation units are not for public use;
- Offsite staff accommodation in very close proximity or adjacent to the ASH campus will need to consider the planning principles and objectives as relevant.

Service Commercial and Industry:

- Department of Health Alice Springs Stores may relocate to the Whittaker Street commercial zone in the future to complement services to ASH and Flynn Drive Renal. The planning principles and objectives will be considered as relevant to the relocated operations.

Movement and Transport:

- Offsite staff accommodation adjacent to the ASH campus will prioritise walking and cycling as the preferred mode of transport to and from work and into the CBD.

Physical Infrastructure:

- The ASH campus Master Plan will seek to ensure all infrastructure services are engineered and designed to meet the planning principle and objectives.

Social Infrastructure:

- Central Australia Health Service (CAHS) agrees that critical care and hospital services will need to remain centralised in the Alice Springs health precinct to maximise cost efficiencies and accessibility to the majority of the population.
- the Department of health considers expanding the hospital vertically rather than horizontally will be more efficient to deliver health services into the future.

Environment:

- ASH sits within the flood fringe depth of 0.0m - 0.15m and flood extent depth of 0.15m - 2.0m. ASH Master Plan will identify flood mitigation design strategies to address the 1% AEP floodway.
- The flood mitigation advisory committee report recommends long-term measures for highest risk properties are to either relocate outside of the flood zone or effect change in use of these properties. The Department notes that there will be financial, social and environmental risks associated with either solution.
- Riverine and stormwater flooding – In addition to considering measures to minimise the risk of severe flooding and to improve the level of flood immunity and resilience, further consideration and investment should be given to improving general drain maintenance after rain events. This maintenance would help to manage water pooling and stagnating which results in mosquito breeding and the potential for vector borne disease.

Culture and Heritage:

- the Department notes that the European heritage classification of several CAHS assets fronting the Simpson Street of the Alice Springs Hospital campus limits the use of valuable property space; and
- the operational costs to maintain these heritage listed properties as adaptive reuse buildings is not cost effective for the health service.

3.4.7 Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

In providing feedback on the draft Area Plan the Authority noted that:

- the description of advice provided by AAPA (in the Culture and Heritage section of the Area Plan) should be amended to refer to sacred sites;
- the Todd River should be included in the description of sacred sites; and
- the maps on page 7 (Transport, Social Infrastructure and Physical Infrastructure) and page 11 (Environment, Heritage and Connections) should include a note that explains that sacred sites are not shown on the maps.

The Authority notes that the Culture and Heritage section of the draft area Plan melds heritage and burial issues with sacred sites issues. The Authority suggests the separation of these matters. The Authority also recommends the inclusion of an objective that addresses obtaining sacred site advice from AAPA and, where appropriate, Authority Certificates prior to development

3.4.8 Department of Tourism and Cultural

The Department of Tourism and Culture (DTC) observed that many of the objectives and responses of the draft Area Plan were relevant to, or aligned with, the Department's 10 Year Infrastructure Plan. The Department also noted the alignment of the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan with the Alice Springs Town Council Arts and Cultural Policy and Arts and Cultural Plan 2017 -2024.

As the Department responsible for delivering and supporting the protection, conservation and management of the NT creative, cultural and heritage assets, and creating a thriving, imaginative and innovative creative economy, DTC is supportive of:

- the inclusion of the Culture and Heritage theme as a planning principle in the Area Plan;
- alignment with AAPA and the Heritage Act to protect and provide access to the Territory's cultural and heritage assets; and
- the inclusion of performing arts activities and the display of public art as an acceptable land use and development response in public space.

The Department advises that Alice Springs has a growing reputation as a mountain bike destination and encourages consideration of cycle-friendly initiatives to aid growth in this sector of the tourism market. How shared paths will also facilitate a growing demand in electric transport such as electric bikes and scooters is highlighted by DTC as requiring consideration into the future.

The Department recognises that the bulk of the Heritage Precinct is identified as a potential area for change and references the 1994 Conservation Management Plan (CMP). While acknowledging that the CMP is an important guidance tool, the Department suggests that the development of more contemporary guidance material should be considered.

3.4.9 Department of Environment and Natural Resources

The Department assessed the consultation material and provided the following general comments:

- the draft Area Plan's recognition of water resources as both a risk and an opportunity is supported, given Todd River (Lhere Mparntwe's) proximity to CBD;
- the Area Plan should include Todd River, Charles Creek (Antheke Uplage), and plans for land use and management within these river areas be established;
- the town water supply is finite and water efficiency measures are essential;
- ground water is also limited (shallow alluvial aquifer) and the Area Plan could recognize opportunities for water re-use; and planning choices including land uses, lot size built form, infrastructure and landscaping are substantive factors.

The Department also provided specific comments on matters throughout the consultation documents as noted below.

Specific Comments

- Ensure land use and design does not impede flood flow and or lead to an increase in the Q100 floodway to flood fringe
- Consider inclusion of the use of stored water for passive and evaporative cooling
- Encourage water re-use on site and maximise stormwater infiltration
- Consider second and third pipe opportunities including the possibility of re-use of treated wastewater (subject to cost)
- Include plans for the Todd River and Charles Creek in relation to planning principle 6.3
- Consider brown spaces and water efficient landscaping opportunities which assist in stormwater management as part of plans for public open space areas
- Identify and protect groundwater dependent vegetation
- Drainage management should include litter traps, maximise infiltration of appropriate quality water and minimise sediment transport (i.e. planning incentives to retrofit stormwater drains, which can be problematic for weeds and mosquito breeding).
- Pursue opportunities to incorporate stormwater drainage in the networks referred in (6.2)
- Adopt landscaping principles which encourage water efficiency e.g. minimising unshaded grass, low water use irrigation such as wicking beds, maximising use of stormwater.
- Promote and provide criteria for management of brown space areas
- (7.4) is strongly supported (legacy sites with ongoing soil contamination and groundwater contamination plumes)

Focus Area

- Pursue opportunities for passive cooling by retention of stormwater on site (A1, A2 and A3)
- Soil contamination is considered and managed (Shell Site)
- Protect and enhance the urban forest (C and D)
- Adopt WSUD principles
- Retain stormwater onsite
- Stormwater management to include litter traps, and to avoid permanent pooling of water to improve water quality
- Reinforce the requirements for efficient use of water in green spaces
- Maximise opportunities for water-efficient brown spaces.

Implementation

- The draft Area Plan recognises the opportunities to link the natural water resources of the area and establishes principles to facilitate good environmental outcomes.
- There is merit in developing specific information/regulations on design in Alice Springs for the local desert climate and building vernacular in order to give effect to the principles established in this document.

3.5 Feedback outside the Scope of the Project

This second stage of consultation on the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan provided some feedback from stakeholders that was found to be outside the scope of this project for various reasons. The issues discussed and written comments which could not be included in the Area Plan fall into this category include:

- the location of the NT Government's proposed National Aboriginal Art Gallery;
- opening up the Todd Mall as a one way street;
- operating days and time of Cafe and tourist attractions; and
- encouraging tourism, including stopping direct flights from major centres to Yulara.

Also raised by some members of the community was the issue of building heights in the CBD Zone. Although development controls in the NT Planning Scheme relating to building heights were amended in early 2016, there appears to still be some disagreement about the merits of taller buildings. It is noted that most comment on this matter appears to be a concern for maintaining viewlines both into and out of the CBD to surrounding natural features.

4. Summary

Feedback for Stage 2 community consultation on the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan was generally constructive, although not always within the scope of the project.

The Planning Commission's consultation period coincided with a three-month consultation period for the NT Government's National Aboriginal Art Gallery proposal. This issue was front of mind for many people in the community, and consultation materials and events endeavored to address the issue with sensitivity. There was however broad support for maintaining the Anzac Hill precinct for public and community sports and recreation uses in a way that recognises and respects the cultural importance of the site.

Key elements of the draft Area Plan which have gained broad support are:

- creating a mixed use and allied health services precinct around the Alice Springs Hospital;
- focusing commercial, retail and social activity within the CBD, while focusing service commercial and light industry on the western side of the Stuart Highway; and
- the emphasis on public amenity, particularly creating a more comfortable and safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

A number of submissions raised the suggestion that the Area Plan and Needs Assessment should include the Aboriginal names for landscape features, such as the Todd River.

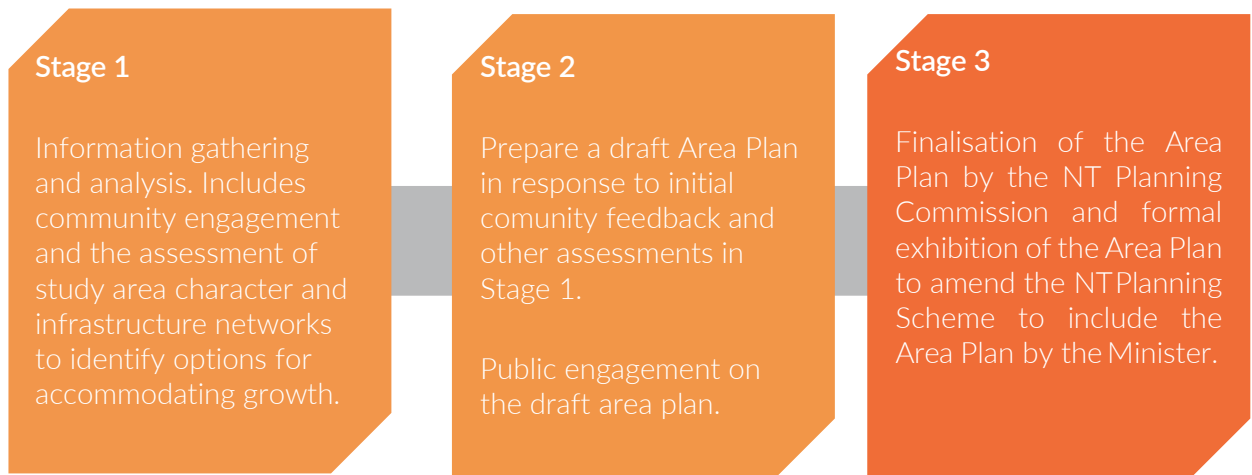
Submissions also recommended extending the study area part way into the Todd River as the existing area plans currently do, or all the way to the eastern bank.

5. Next Steps

This report covers Stage 2 community consultation of the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan.

Stage 3 is anticipated to be undertaken in late 2018 and involves the finalisation of the draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan and accompanying Needs Assessment by the Commission.

The Commission will recommend to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to consider the Central Alice Springs Area Plan as a proposed amendment to the Planning Scheme.





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 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.