CONTENTS

1. Introduction 1
2. The Planning Journey 1
3. Regulatory and Policy Context 5
4. Demographic Context 8
5. Growth Considerations 10
6. Service Commercial and Industry 14
7. Movement and Transport 17
8. Physical Infrastructure 23
9. Social Infrastructure 25
10. Environment 29
11. Culture and Heritage 32
12. References 35
1. Introduction

The Northern Territory Planning Commission is responsible for the preparation of strategic land use plans to establish a framework to guide future development.

The area plan will provide a decision-making framework for future rezonings and development decisions to give guidance, certainty and confidence to residents, property owners and decision makers, and to help plan for the future.

1.1 Purpose

This document reassesses and updates the land use needs and land constraints of the Central Alice Springs area, and identifies future land use requirements to support economic growth.

This document brings together the results of:

- initial community engagement;
- previous planning work; and
- social infrastructure, reticulated services, and transport studies,


to inform the preparation of a draft Area Plan for Central Alice Springs.

1.2 The Study Area

The Alice Springs CBD area is centrally located within the town of Alice Springs. It is generally bounded by Anzac Hill to the north, the Todd River to the east, Traeger Park to the south, and the Stuart Highway and North Australia Railway line to the west. The study area also includes the Alice Springs Hospital, Billy Goat Hill, the heritage precinct, Totem Theatre Complex, and the Alice Springs Town Council administrative centre. This area is represented in Figure 1.

The NT Planning Scheme currently includes five area plans for localities within the study area. These are:

- Central Alice Springs Commercial Area Plan;
- ANZAC Hill / Todd River Area Plan;
- Todd Street Tourism Area Plan;
- Southern Area Plan; and
- Western Area Plan.

These five plans will be consolidated into a Central Alice Springs Area Plan.

1.3 Study Context

The Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan 2016 (ASRLUP) identifies threshold populations of 32,000 and 40,000 people to guide the identification of land required to accommodate growth in the short and longer term.

The Alice Springs CBD will have a role in accommodating a share of population growth expected within the Alice Springs region.

2. The Planning Journey

2.1 Expected Outcomes of the Central Alice Springs Area Plan

The draft Central Alice Springs Area Plan provides a detailed land use framework within the context of the strategic planning directions established by the ASRLUP. These policies guide progressive growth and development in central Alice Springs, and the draft Area Plan presents the characteristics and opportunities that will shape the future of the area to foster community understanding and consistent decision making.

The Area Plan as a framework for future growth will also inform investigations required to ensure that future essential infrastructure services can and are being provided commensurate to expected growth.

In summary the Alice Springs Area Plan will:

1. influence growth within the study area so providing guidance for development and therefore confidence for both developers and the wider community;
2. guide both public and private sector investment; and
3. provide a framework for the coordination of servicing infrastructure to match envisaged growth.
Figure 1: Central Alice Springs Study Area
2.2 Formulation of the Area Plan

The Central Alice Springs Area Plan is being prepared in accordance with the process outlined in Figure 2.

2.3 How this document works

This Needs Assessment presents information on feedback and investigations that relate to land use and development. The investigations that have informed this needs assessment, while dealing with the whole study area, have also identified considerations specific to individual localities. Within that context the Needs Assessment presents overarching considerations in a number of themes and considerations relevant to individual localities in a number of Focus Areas.

The key themes are:
- Demographic Context;
- Growth Considerations;
- Service Commercial and Industry;
- Movement and Transport;
- Physical Infrastructure;
- Social Infrastructure;
- Environment; and
- Culture and Heritage.

Focus Areas

There are localities within the study area where synergies associated with clustering land uses have evolved over time. The draft Area Plan identifies these areas and provides policy to protect and enhance them to support their growth.

A brief summary of each of the identified Focus Areas is provided below, and Figure 3 shows their location within the context of the study area.

A1: City Centre - Core: The City Centre Core is a key regional economic and administrative centre, and the CBD is the primary location of commercial and retail activity.

A2: City Centre – Meeting Place and Todd Mall: A focal point for a range of formal and informal social and cultural events and spaces that encourage daytime and evening activation in the heart of the CBD.

A3: City Centre – Cultural and Recreation Area: A locality that recognises existing and provides opportunity for future cultural and recreation development.

B: Stott Terrace Crossroads: Commercial and mixed use development that achieves a sense of arrival and transition to the CBD

C: Commercial / Mixed Use, Medical and Health Services: A concentration of medical and health services and supporting uses around the Alice Springs Hospital.

D: Traeger Park Sport and Recreation Area: A central premier sport and recreation hub that caters for regional, national and international competition.

Figure 2: NT Planning Commission Consultation

Stage 1
Information gathering and analysis. Includes community engagement and the assessment of study area character and infrastructure networks to identify options for accommodating growth.

Stage 2
Prepare a draft Area Plan in response to initial community feedback and other assessments in Stage 1.
Public engagement on the draft Area Plan.

Stage 3
Finalisation of the Area Plan by the NT Planning Commission and formal exhibition of the Area Plan to amend the NT Planning Scheme to include the Area Plan by the Minister.
3. Regulatory and Policy Context

The use and development of land in Alice Springs is regulated by the policies and documents discussed below.

3.1 The Northern Territory Planning Act

The Planning Act provides for appropriate and orderly planning and control of the use and development of land in the Northern Territory. The intended objects of the Act are to plan, and provide a framework of controls for, the orderly use and development of land. This is to be achieved by the strategic and sustainable use of land and resources, protection of the natural environment, and maximising the amenity of development for all stakeholders.

The Planning Act also establishes the Northern Territory Planning Commission as an independent body and identifies its functions. These functions include to consult with the community, and to prepare integrated strategic plans, guidelines and assessment criteria for inclusion in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme (NTPS). The Planning Commission does not have any decision making powers under the Act, and responsibility for the inclusion in the NTPS of plans, guidelines or criteria prepared by the Planning Commission remains with the Minister responsible for administering the Planning Act.

3.2 The Northern Territory Planning Scheme

The NT Planning Scheme contains provisions that include:

- statements about land use policy;
- development controls that allow, prohibit or put conditions on a use or development of land;
- instructions, guidelines and assessment criteria to help the consent authority to assess and decide on development applications;
- maps, plans, designs and diagrams.

Policy statements within the NT Planning Scheme including documents included in Schedule 2 establish the expected nature of future development and guide the interpretation of the zones and associated development provisions.

Area Plans are included in Part 8 of the NTPS and are also intended to assist the interpretation of the Scheme and the determinations of the Development Consent Authority.

A zoning map for the study area is at Figure 4.

3.3 Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan 2016

The inclusion of the ASRLUP as a policy document in the NT Planning Scheme establishes a strategic policy framework to guide the future growth and development of the wider Alice Springs region, including the CBD.

The ASRLUP integrates land use, transport and infrastructure planning to deliver more sustainable and cost-effective outcomes for the community while safeguarding natural resources for future generations. It will guide more detailed planning, including the preparation of Area Plans in consultation with the Alice Springs community.
Figure 4: Central Alice Springs Existing Land Use Zoning
3.4 Alice Springs and the Compact Urban Growth Policy

Compact Urban Growth facilitates the efficient use of land, services and infrastructure to create compact and mixed activity places that play a role in improving people’s lifestyle. The inclusion of the Compact Urban Growth Policy 2015 as a policy document in the NT Planning Scheme establishes a framework to guide the development of area plans and inform decisions on applications to rezone or for an exceptional development permit.

The Central Alice Springs draft Area Plan accords with the Compact Urban Growth Policy in that it is focused on creating a range of compact mixed use localities with the broader central area. These localities will provide a range of opportunities for people to work, rest and play supported by the required physical and social infrastructure.
4. **Demographic Context**

4.1 **Alice Springs Existing Population**

At the 2016 census, the Alice Springs Local Government Area comprised a population of 24,753 people. The Estimated Resident Population (ERP) of Alice Springs, released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in July 2017, was 26,823 people. Figure 5 is a map of the Alice Springs Local Government Area.

Fluctuations in the population of Alice Springs are associated with the transient nature of Aboriginal communities living in the wider Alice Springs region.

Table 1 compares the population of the Northern Territory and the population of Alice Springs based on the 2016 census. Notable differences in the characteristics of the Alice Springs population include:

- a lower proportion of younger adults between 20-34 years;
- a slightly higher proportion of older people in all age cohorts over 45 years creating a correspondingly higher median aged population of 35 years;
- a slightly lower proportion of family households and a correspondingly higher proportion of lone person households;
- a higher proportions living in semi-detached dwellings and a corresponding low proportion of flats and apartments;
- higher proportions of residents owning their own home; and
- a lower proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander residents.

4.2 **Expected Future Population**

The threshold populations of 32,000 and 40,000 which informed the ASRLUP generates an expected demand in the region for an additional 1,700 dwellings in the short term and a total of 5,100 additional dwellings in the far term.

The potential population to be accommodated in Central Alice Springs will be in the order of 350 people in the short term and 1,200 people in the far term. Based on this population projection, central Alice Springs is likely to experience a demand for 500 new dwellings in the far term. Providing these dwellings within central Alice Springs as multiple dwellings, such as units, apartments and townhouses, will account for a 30% contribution to the region’s far term forecast need for that housing type.
## Table 1: Selected population characteristics, 2016 ABS Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population number</th>
<th>Alice Springs</th>
<th>Northern Territory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-4 years</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
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<td>7.3</td>
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<td>25-29 years</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>30-34 years</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>35-39 years</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
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<td>40-44 years</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49 years</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>50-54 years</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>55-59 years</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-64 years</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-69 years</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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<td>70-74 years</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>75-79 years</td>
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<td>80-84 years</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple family with children</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple family without children</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>35.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single parent family</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family households</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (lone) person</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household size</td>
<td>2.6 persons</td>
<td>2.9 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median weekly household income</td>
<td>$1,937</td>
<td>$1,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate house</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-detached, townhouses etc</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat, or apartment</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Indigenous</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017
5. Growth Considerations

5.1 Introduction
The ASRLUP recognises the role of Alice Springs as a key regional economic and administrative centre. Central Alice Springs serves a broad regional catchment, offering higher order shopping, commerce, entertainment, health, education and community facilities. The CBD functions as both a civic and administrative centre.

The existing land use zoning of the CBD, Zone CB (Central Business), promotes a high level of mixed use development through the inclusion of residential and tourist accommodation combined with commercial development in the same building.

Most of the activity within the central area currently occurs within business hours, with limited activity at night or weekends. Observations show that only 50% of developable land in the CBD has a building on it, indicating there is space to grow. It was also noted that many buildings are more than 30 years old, and although still used, have redevelopment potential.

The distribution of growth across the centre needs to be carefully considered. Growth needs to be encouraged in locations that will contribute to the long term viability of the CBD and its primary role as a commercial and retail centre. This may mean limiting the expansion of commercial and retail in areas outside the CBD to help strengthen the city centre as a retail destination.

5.2 Context

Population and Housing
The previous section provides detailed information on the existing and projected population of the Alice Springs. Overall, the rate of population growth has slowed over the past 10 years, but it is expected to remain stable at an average of 1.69% growth through to 2026.

The population growth rate is impacted by a number of factors, including interstate and overseas migration, employment availability, and the transient nature of Aboriginal people who access services in Alice Springs.

The Area Plan will be supportive of increasing residential density within the central area, as an increased CBD population will stimulate economic activity within the central area, including greater retail and entertainment options throughout both the day and night.

Revised planning controls for building heights and building design in Central Alice Springs were introduced in 2016 as a mechanism to promote growth. Zone CB (Central Business) now provides for buildings of up to 8 storeys; however, residential development to this scale has not yet occurred.

Economic modelling suggests that development of this nature delivered by the private sector is unlikely without Government support and incentives; however, redevelopment of key sites within the central area is anticipated within the near to immediate term. Recent proposals at the old Melanka’s site on Todd Street, which is located within the study area but outside of the CBD, indicate a limited yet recent interest in medium density, mixed use development in the central area.

Commercial
Planning for population and employment growth will drive additional demand for commercial office space. The CBD currently has approximately 105 000 m² of office space. Based on a far term population horizon of 40 000 people, an economic assessment of Alice Springs estimates the requirement for additional commercial office space is 12 000 m².

Retail
There is currently an oversupply of general retail space that is likely to be sufficient in the near term, and an additional 10 000 m² will be required in the far term as the population grows.

The food and beverage, and bulky goods sectors are forecasted to be the key retail growth areas. The Todd Mall is a space that has opportunity to capitalise on increased population and commercial activity, by diversifying over time to create a restaurant, café, entertainment and recreation focus. The CBD is the focus for growth in the food and beverage sector, whilst bulky goods retailers are better situated in the service commercial area on the western side of the Stuart Highway.

The role of the CBD as the primary retail destination will be strengthened by promoting retail and commercial growth within the CBD. Limiting out-of-centre retail and commercial expansion outside of the CBD will support this.

Short Term Accommodation
As the economy of Alice Springs diversifies there will be a commensurate increase in demand for short-stay accommodation. An additional 1 500 rooms are estimated to be required across Alice Springs in the far term, and a significant proportion of this future supply should be provided in the central area.

5.3 Community Feedback

Vision for Alice Springs
Alice Springs is a unique location that can draw on its history of Aboriginal culture and European settlement to establish itself as Australia’s inland...
capital and an iconic desert metropolis. Alice Springs has the opportunity to present a cosmopolitan and vibrant CBD that is an international exemplar of sustainability in an arid environment. Development guided by the unique culture, environment and history will continue to support quirky events, such as the Henley on Todd Regatta and the Beanie Festival.

The built form of the CBD area should make it distinctly recognisable from the areas surrounding it, using and creating landmarks that allow people to navigate easily. A compact CBD will retain a walkable retail and commercial centre with a variety of services and facilities.

Residential

Strong support was received for encouraging more residential development in the CBD, with apartments, town houses and student accommodation all suggested as suitable options. Future residential development oriented towards the Todd River, and also located along the main roads leading into the CBD would maximise accessibility for residents and utilisation of amenity offered by the river. For a number of people, the cost of renting or purchasing would influence the decision to live in the CBD, with this cost being balanced by the ability to walk to services and facilities. A framework to encourage residential development in the central area will provide benefits for the residents, and more people living in the CBD will contribute to activation.

Stage 1 Consultation Survey Response: “What would be attractive about living in the CBD?”

Commercial and Retail

The community considered that commercial and retail land uses should be concentrated in the CBD, and not allowed to extend west of the Stuart Highway. The sentiment was also expressed that vacant retail space in the CBD could be used for interim uses, and it was suggested that land and building owners need incentives to motivate them to activate and/or redevelop their premises.

Activation of the CBD was identified as a method of minimising antisocial behaviour, and thereby making the CBD a more sought after location for business and social activity. This in turn would encourage business owners to consider establishing in the CBD rather than less expensive premises in other centres.

Stage 1 Consultation Survey Response: “What do you come to the CBD for?”

Feedback identified the most visited destination in the CBD to be the Yeperenye Shopping Centre (17%), followed equally by the Todd Mall and Post Office (14%). Popular destinations within the CBD are listed below:

Table 2: Most Popular Destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeperenye Shopping Centre</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd Mall</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coles Shopping Centre</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Office or Library</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Plaza</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NT Planning Commission, 2017
Todd Mall

The mall is acknowledged as the focal point for retail and social activity, with a high level of amenity due to the large, shady trees. The regular Todd Mall Markets are a significant drawcard for locals and tourists alike. Any new development should integrates sympathetically with the existing character and contributes to the pedestrian environment, as there was limited interest in re-opening the mall to vehicles.

Encouraging a diversity of businesses in and around the mall was seen as an opportunity to extend the period of daily activation in the CBD.

5.4 Discussion in Response

Community aspirations for a mix of dwellings can be met by providing for a diverse range of dwelling types that appeal to a broad market, including:

- investor products;
- owner occupiers;
- seniors living; and
- student accommodation.

The increased diversity will help create a vibrant city with increased activity within the CBD.

The existing zoning provides adequate land to support an introduction of diverse housing products in the long term. Infill growth around active and public transport networks, shops and social infrastructure accords with the broad policy established by the NT Compact Urban Growth Policy. All of these amenities are offered within the central area, and can easily be enhanced as the central area grows.

Residential Development

Zone CB (Central Business) provides for higher residential density proximate to commercial areas, as does Zone MR (Medium Density Residential) along the major transport corridor of the Stuart Highway.

The draft Area Plan reinforces this long standing development structure within the context of the NT Compact Urban Growth Policy. Higher density development in the central area also enhances the benefits of mixed use activity centres and the delineation of boundaries between mixed use and purely residential areas. This will provide development opportunities to meet demand for a diversity of dwellings over the longer term.

It is important that the necessary infrastructure can be provided to support development in accordance with the area plan. This includes physical infrastructure, movement and transport (including parking and accessibility), and social infrastructure.

Investigations have been undertaken to identify the extensions and upgrades required to support future development. The draft Area Plan identifies the required extensions and upgrades that will support population growth in the central area.

Retail

The food, liquor and grocery section of retail sector is currently trading strongly within the central area, with local supermarkets outside the central area trading modestly. There are two full line supermarkets within the central area. An economic assessment of Alice Springs undertaken to inform the draft Area Plan indicates opportunity for another full line supermarket within the broader Alice Springs catchment.

It is unlikely that a third, full line supermarket would establish in the central area, due to high operational costs and availability of custom. Locating an additional supermarket in a suburban locality instead would support existing local centres and provide ready access to the anticipated customer base.

Additional floor space for the expansion of the food and beverage sector, such as cafes, take away food outlets, and restaurants (including liquor consumed onsite), is unlikely to be required in the near term due to the current levels of vacancy within the central area. In the far term there is likely to be a demand for an additional 4 700 m² of floor space to provide expansion of these sectors. Demand for this additional floor space and a more diverse range of offerings in the food and beverage sector will depend on an increase of residential density within the central area.

General retail such as apparel, leisure, and retail services are oversupplied and likely to remain so in the far term. Additional requirements for floor space within the central area are not anticipate to be required.

Future growth and demand for service commercial and large scale retailing will continue to require sites and floor space over the near and far terms, and further discussion is provided in Section 6 Service Commercial and Industry).
Commercial

Expansion of the CBD is not considered necessary to provide for the anticipated retail and commercial growth, specifically the estimated 12,000m² of additional commercial space. Promoting the CBD as the primary locality for growth in residential, commercial and retail development is addressed in the draft Area Plan, specifically through Focus Area A1 (City Centre).
6. Service Commercial and Industry

6.1 Introduction

Service commercial and industrial land plays an important role in the overall function of Alice Springs. An adequate supply of affordable, appropriately zoned land of varied lot sizes, location and type provides employment opportunities for a growing labour force, ensures businesses have access to their clients, suppliers and the transport network, and provides flexibility for the growth and changing demands of the market.

Providing for service commercial (such as bulky goods) and industrial uses in close proximity to the CBD contributes to a diversity of land use in the central area, providing convenient access for those working and living in the CBD.

6.2 Context

There are several areas of industrial land located in Alice Springs, with a small area north of the railway yards around Whittaker Street and Stokes Street being included in the study area. This land is within Zones Li (Light Industry), Gi (General Industry), and SA3 (Specific Use Zone Number 3 Alice Springs). The Specific Use Zone provides for a range of commercial uses that rely on large parcels of land, including specific allowances for bulky goods retailing and vehicle sales, hire and repair.

Existing development in the vicinity is a mixture of warehouses, outdoor storage, manufacturing, and bulky goods showroom sales. The locality has a high level of visibility in addition to access to and from the Stuart Highway. The extent of existing service commercial and industrial land use zoning is shown in Figure 6.

Bulky goods outlets generally cater for large scale retail businesses and services, such as household furniture and whitegoods retailers, that require a large floor area footprint and large vehicle access.

The current Area Plan identifies this locality as the long term option to expand the CBD. Subsequent amendments to the building height restrictions in Zone CB (Central Business) in Alice Springs have increased the vertical capacity of buildings within the CBD to provide retail, office and residential floor space. This increased capacity will capably cater for a regional population of 40 000 people without needing to expand westwards over the Stuart Highway.

An assessment of industrial land conducted for the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan 2016, along with a review of recent development activity has identified various attributes of this locality including:

- it strategic location on the Stuart Highway corridor and its contribution to the clustering of bulky goods outlets, which benefit from high traffic exposure and accessibility to road and rail networks;
- a range of lot sizes and zoning, providing a transition from benign service commercials activities, to light industry and to general industry; and
- the focus of recent development towards higher yield service commercial uses, including warehousing, showrooms sales and storage units.

An economic assessment of Alice Springs undertaken in 2017 identified that bulky goods retailing will be a key growth sector in the far term, with approximately 7 000 m² additional floorspace anticipated to be required for a population of 40 000 people.

A focus within and in proximity to the central area that discourages heavy and noxious industries, and promotes large scale retail, bulky goods and service commercial activity, will protect the area from conflicting land uses in the future as well as providing the highway visibility that these businesses rely upon.

6.3 Community Feedback

The industrial area that is proximate to the CBD functions well, particularly for bulky goods retailers like Harvey Norman, and this use should continue.

Mixed opinions were expressed about whether offices should be encouraged in the service commercial area, owing to affordability, car parking availability, and a perceived lower level of crime. On the other hand, the CBD should be consolidated and not allowed to expand in order to retain its commercial primacy. The existing land use pattern provides a good transition from service commercial to industrial land uses.

Some comments were received about the location and impact of the railway yards, and that one option would be to relocate the yards to Arumbera. This would allow for the land to be developed for other purposes.
6.4 Discussion in Response

The draft Area Plan supports the continued use of the existing service commercial and industrial area for that purpose. It recognises the importance of the high level of visibility in the locality in addition to access to and from the Stuart Highway for large scale retailers. Focusing these types of uses in this area will maintain the commercial and retail primacy of the CBD. Therefore, the existing service commercial and industrial area around Whittaker Street is no longer considered to be an appropriate location for the CBD to expand into.
Figure 6. Existing Central Alice Springs Service Commercial
7. Movement and Transport

7.1 Introduction

Movement and transport networks are vital in supporting economic and social activity and are particularly of benefit if they are effective and safe. The evolution of the road network over time to a multi-modal system providing for walking, cycling and public transport has the potential to contribute to a sustainable and liveable Alice Springs that meets the diverse needs of the growing population.

The Todd River presents a unique challenge to all aspects of the Alice Springs transport network. Several road and shared cycle paths cross the river at various points. After severe rain events either locally or further upstream in the catchment, the usually dry riverbed can rise suddenly and cut access at a number of these crossings. This influences the way that vehicles and pedestrians enter and exit the CBD, and can impact on the provision of public transport, as services need to deviate from their normal route.

7.2 Context

Road Networks

The Stuart Highway, the major national highway connecting Adelaide and Darwin, acts as a central spine to Alice Springs. The CBD lies to the east of the highway, and sub-arterial and local roads all connect through to the highway.

Arterial Roads

The Stuart Highway is a Territory controlled, multi-lane divided road and provides the primary access into Alice Springs. It provides critical linkages to the local road network and is used by a large variety of vehicles, ranging from small passenger vehicles to buses and road trains.

Local Roads

The local road network is vested in the Alice Springs Town Council. Local roads within the study area have various functions, including the distribution of residential and industrial traffic within local areas.

Within the central area Wills Terrace, Parsons Street and Stott Terrace provide the main east-west connections from the Stuart Highway through the CBD, while Todd Street provides the main access to facilities in the southern portion of the study area. Hartley Street provides the main vehicular access to the existing ANZAC Oval, and Smith Street and Whittaker Street serve the industrial and service commercial area in the west of the study area. Schwarz Crescent provides access to the northern extent of the study area.

Figure 9, an excerpt of the ASRLUP, indicates a number of intersections within central Alice Springs that will need to be upgraded to manage increases in traffic volumes. Four of the intersections are located on Stott Terrace within the CBD. The intersection of the Stuart Highway and Schwarz Crescent has been added, based on the work currently being undertaken by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Rail

Alice Springs is a major staging post on the Adelaide to Darwin railway, which is operated by AustralAsia Railway Corporation. The railway line accommodates freight, bulk product, and passenger services.

During 2014-15, twelve trains per week operated between Adelaide and Darwin, carrying more than 90% of all intermodal freight, totalling 860 000 tonnes of containerised general freight, automotive and specialised products.

The railway also carries millions of tonnes of bulk products each year, such as iron ore and other minerals, and liquid goods. New mining activities expected to commence in 2019-2020 are anticipated to export 14 000 tonnes of material on an annual basis, creating a significant demand for Alice Springs intermodal transport.

The Ghan passenger train operates one service weekly in each direction between Adelaide and Darwin. Patronage of premium cabins was expected to increase from 44 000 passengers in 2014 to 49 000 passengers in 2015.

The railway line runs parallel to the Stuart Highway when entering Alice Springs from the south. Level crossings adjacent to key intersections in the central area can cause traffic delays and create safety issues. The historical road network and limited access impact on the connectivity of the railyards and passengers to the CBD.

Public Transport

The Alice Springs Bus Interchange is located in the CBD on Railway Terrace (southbound), near Gregory Terrace. The eight bus routes that service Alice Springs originate and terminate at the interchange, as shown in Figure 7. The bus stop by the post office on Hartley Street has the highest patronage in the CBD, with all routes passing by this point for either pick up or set down.

Bus services are provided throughout the day, with more frequent services during the afternoon peak period of 4-6pm. Bus services do not currently operate on Sundays or public holidays.
The design of local roads in the central area restricts the movement of larger vehicles through the CBD. Most public transport routes include a left-turning loop through the CBD before arriving at the interchange, in order to avoid turning right over roundabouts and causing damage to road infrastructure.

**Cycling and Pedestrians**

Cycling and walking are popular modes of transportation in Alice Springs, and provide many health, social, environmental and economic benefits to cyclists and the community.

Annual bicycle counts consistently show high levels of cycling in Alice Springs compared with other regional centres around Australia. In 2015, 26.9% of people in regional NT had cycled in the week leading up to the National Cycling Participation Survey. This was the second-highest participation rate in Australia, behind regional Western Australia (31.7%), and in front of regional New South Wales (22.6%).

Figure 8 demonstrates that pedestrian and cycling activity is focused around Todd Mall with various links through to the Todd River, Hartley Street, and through the rest of the CBD. The footpath network in the CBD accommodates both pedestrians and cyclists, and provides connections to the extensive network of shared footpaths and cycleways, and mountain bike paths, that extend out to the suburbs.

There have been recent improvements to the pedestrian network, with the addition of a wombat crossing on Gregory Terrace, pedestrian islands along Bath Street, Gregory Terrace and Stott Terrace, and new roundabouts at the intersections of Gregory Terrace and Bath Street, and at Hartley Street and Gregory Terrace.

The lack of priority for cyclists and pedestrians is an issue where shared paths conflict with driveway crossovers and side road junctions, as well as pedestrian connectivity across roads. Additionally, there are no dedicated cycling lanes within the CBD, the width of pedestrian islands do not accommodate cyclists, and end of trip facilities such as secure bicycle storage, lockers, and showers, are limited.

Figure 7: Existing Alice Springs Public Bus Routes

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7.3 Community Feedback

**Road Network**

Several suggestions to improve the arterial and local road network were received in relation to better connecting the central area and making it easier to navigate. These included a bridge over the rail line at the intersection of the Stuart Highway and Larapinta Drive, and a heavy vehicle bypass to minimise the number of heavy vehicles and road trains travelling through the central area.

The availability of, and access to, appropriate car parking in the study area is a challenge. Congestion occurs around key locations such as the hospital, the Council car park, the court house, the Todd Mall, the post office, and banks. Additionally, better way finding signage is required to direct long vehicles such as coaches and caravans to the designated parking area on Telegraph Terrace, as they park in the bus interchange on Railway Terrace and disrupt public transport services.

The issue of future car parking in the CBD is a polarising one. Some consider that more parking is required in the CBD, perhaps in a multistorey facility, while others advocate for the provision of parking on the periphery of the CBD to minimise car dominance. Regardless, more shaded car parks are required throughout the CBD to keep vehicles cooler during the hotter months.

**Rail**

It is a unique feature of Alice Springs that the railway, and in particular the Ghan, is located on the periphery of the CBD. Feedback identified that the existing passenger terminal is not within a convenient walking distance to the CBD. Submissions suggested consideration should be given to a new passenger terminal that is closer to the CBD. One comment recommended that a new terminal could perhaps be developed into an integrated transport hub with buses and taxis, or a tourism precinct with an entry statement to the CBD.

Feedback received during consultation also identified that a new freight terminal south of the Gap, accompanied by a new track alignment through Honeymoon Gap, would remove the long and heavy freight trains from the town. This would address congestion experienced in the narrow transit corridor through the Gap.

**Public Transport**

Although there was appreciation for the provision of public transport services in Alice Springs, the need was identified for improved accessibility for tourists. A review of bus routes leading into the CBD was also suggested with a focus on meeting passenger needs and implementing the most efficient and effective routes.

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7.4 Discussion in Response

The draft Area Plan recognises the local road intersections in the CBD that have been identified for future upgrade, and requires that future development does not exacerbate any existing safety concerns.
Written submissions identified that caravan and tourist parking was an issue in the CBD. A caravan parking area is provided; however, it is neither well known nor easily found, and an additional parking area should be considered as part of promoting the CBD to tourists. The draft Area Plan includes provisions to improve way finding and pedestrian connectivity between the parking areas and CBD points of interest.

The draft Area Plan encourages a continuous visual connection to local landmarks and destinations when moving through the central area on foot, and ensuring that the physical pathways have a high level of personal and aesthetic amenity.

Cyclists are permitted to ride on footpaths within the CBD; however, observations confirmed that cyclists prefer to use the road carriageway.

There are no designated onroad cycle lanes within the CBD, despite a number of streets within the CBD having sufficient width to accommodate some form of treatment to enable safe cycling.

The draft Area Plan promotes development that prioritises active transport and which clearly delineates footpaths and cycle ways.

End of trip infrastructure (secure bike racks, showers, way finding signage and lockers), should be accommodated within new developments, particularly within the CBD. This is a broader issue shared across the Northern Territory, and a separate project will be required to review and address the provision of end of trip facilities.

The ASRLUP acknowledges the poor connectivity of the existing rail passenger terminal to the CBD, and envisages a new terminal and tourism precinct adjacent to the CBD, on the western corner of the Stuart Highway and Whittaker Street. A new intermodal freight terminal south of the township is also considered by the ASRLUP.
Figure 9: Existing Road Networks and Pedestrian Connections
8. Physical Infrastructure

8.1 Introduction

Physical infrastructure includes power, water supply, sewerage, stormwater, and telecommunication networks.

Land use planning plays a key role in the planning and provision of physical infrastructure, which relies on the projected population, dwelling yields and demand for services in order to design and construct appropriate infrastructure.

All services in the central area are reticulated and underground. Figure 10 shows components of the water and sewer networks in the central area.

8.2 Context

Power

The electrical feeders that supply power to the central area are nearing capacity, and future capacity availability will depend on the location of the overall expected growth in Alice Springs, not just what is expected to be accommodated within the central area. Existing feeders will need upgrading by developers as the need arises to support their developments. Sufficient space is available at the two existing substations to accommodate any new infrastructure; no new zone substations are anticipated to be required within the central area. Changes in customer behaviour, such as the installation of roof top solar panels and efficiency measures could help to reduce the peak demand for electricity.

Water Supply

Potable water is sourced from the Amadeus Basin, south of the Gap, and stored in tanks at Larapinta, Lovegrove and Sadadeen. Irrigation water for recreational spaces such as ANZAC Oval and Traeger Park is sourced from bores in the Todd River and at Traeger Park. No new water supply trunk infrastructure is anticipated within the central area.

Development exceeding a height of 10 m is responsible for its own internal water pressure, and any upgrades to trunk infrastructure to service new development will be the financial responsibility of the developer.

Sewerage

Alice Springs is predominately serviced by a gravity sewer main, with a sewer pumping station being located on the Todd River bank adjacent to the Schwarz Crescent crossing.

The Alice Springs Sewerage Treatment Plant is located south of the Gap, requiring all sewer infrastructure for the town to pass through the Gap. Currently the number of individual connections exceeds the theoretical maximum number; however, the actual volume of sewage carried is less than that maximum amount. No new trunk infrastructure is required within the central area at the moment; however, developers will be required to upgrade sections of the network as new development occurs.

Stormwater Drainage

Stormwater drainage in central Alice Springs is underground and contained within the road reserves, although it may exit the system in open, ground level drainage networks. Whilst no immediate upgrades are anticipated, it may be necessary to upgrade sections of the network as new development occurs, including reviewing existing outlet levels against the identified 1% AEP flood level.

Telecommunications

There are several telecommunications companies that provide services and infrastructure through the central area. All buildings within the study area have the ability to connect to the National Broadband Network (NBN) and coverage of mobile phone services is seen as acceptable through the area.

8.3 Community Feedback

Community feedback in relation to physical infrastructure was limited; however, interest was shown in encouraging and embracing alternative energy sources as well as suitable building and streetscape designs that respond to the local climate.

8.4 Discussion in Response

Existing trunk infrastructure has capacity to cater for incremental growth; however, the draft Area Plan recognises the need to integrate infrastructure planning in development to ensure the sequential and cost effective delivery of services. To this end, developers may need to upgrade / extend reticulated services as required by the relevant service authority.
Figure 10: Existing Physical Infrastructure
9. Social Infrastructure

9.1 Introduction
Social infrastructure includes community facilities, public open space and organised recreation spaces such as community health facilities, education facilities, community centres, public libraries and sporting facilities.

Social infrastructure contributes to healthy and sustainable communities. It ensures that a population is supported by a network of community facilities and services that are accessible, affordable and responsive to local needs. Figure 11 identifies the relevant sites within the study area that are currently used for social infrastructure.

Consideration of the needs for social infrastructure to support population growth in infill areas is a critical component of planning for such development, and a Social Infrastructure Assessment has been completed to inform planning for the Central Alice Springs Area Plan. This assessment is based on population thresholds of 32 000 and 40 000 people for short and far term growth within the context of facilities and services required across the whole municipality of Alice Springs. This is because central Alice Springs provides a wide range of social infrastructure that services both the immediate local community and the broader regional population. Where possible, only information that relates to the central area has been extrapolated from the assessment.

Aspects of social infrastructure considered as part of the assessment include:

- Health Services;
- Aged Care;
- Child Care Establishments;
- Educational Establishments;
- Civic and Community Facilities; and
- Open Space and Recreation.

9.2 Context

Health Services

The Alice Springs Hospital is located in the southern portion of the study area, and provides a range of services including emergency services, obstetrics, intensive care and palliative care. The hospital provides 186 beds.

Other health services available within the study area include the Bath Street Family Medical Centre, the Mall Medical Centre, Alice Dental Associates, Alice Springs Therapeutic Health Centre, and the Health Collective (chiropractic, podiatry).

The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) also provides services for Aboriginal people through its services at a clinic on Leichhardt Terrace, Headspace on Hartley Street, and the Alice Springs After Hours Clinic at the hospital.

General practitioners are available in the broader Alice Springs region to meet current demand. Anticipated needs in the broader region are for an additional 5 general practitioners in the near term, and a further 10 in the far term.

There is a current need for one additional dentist in the broader region with an anticipated need for an additional 3 in the near term, and a further 4 in the far term.

Even with expected population growth in the central area, it is likely that these demands will come from suburban areas and additional health practitioners will not be required in the study area.

The Department of Health and the CAAC are both focusing the provision of future everyday health services, such as general practice, dental surgeries and allied health practices, close to population catchments in suburban areas.

Critical care and hospital services will remain centralised in the central area to maximise cost efficiencies and accessibility to the majority of the population. This will also assist in maintaining the primacy of the hospital and further growing and formalising the existing health precinct. The Department of Health considers expanding the hospital vertically rather than horizontally to be a more efficient means of delivering health services, as it will minimise land requirements.

Aged Care

The Australian Government provides a benchmark figure for the provision of aged care, through home care packages and residential care. By 2021-2022, the targeted figure for residential care is 78 beds per 1 000 people aged 70 years and over. Theoretically, the existing availability of 148 beds in the Alice Springs region is more than sufficient to cater for existing needs as well as population growth up to and over the far term projections of 40 000 people. However, health conditions related to ageing often affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people earlier in life than other Australians, and the Northern Territory has a much higher proportion of Aboriginal Australians in residential aged care than any other state or territory.

When taking into account the needs of Aboriginal Australians aged 50-69 years, in addition to all those aged 70 years and over, the existing demand for residential aged care beds actually represents a gap of 9 beds, and indicates the need for an additional 22 beds in the near term, and an additional 47 in the far term.

25
The Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (ARRCS) is due to complete an extension of 20 beds by mid-2018 to one of its existing facilities, which will meet the immediate and near term requirements. The facilities run by ARRCS also have sufficient land to enable expansion to meet the far term needs of the broader Alice Springs region. It should be noted that none of the 3 facilities operated by ARRCS are located within the study area.

Child Care

Of the 12 long day child care centres established in the broader Alice Springs municipality, 2 are located within the central area and provide 81 of the 625 places available (approximately 13%). Family day care also operates in Alice Springs, and is administered through a central office in the CBD.

At the recommended ratio of 120 places per 10 000 people, the existing long day care places in the Alice Springs region should theoretically be more than sufficient to cater for existing needs as well as population growth up to and over the far term projections of 40 000. However, following a scoping study undertaken by the Alice Springs Town Council in 2015, the current demand for long day care places is estimated at 661, presenting an existing gap of 36 places. In the near term, an additional 96 places will be required, and in the far term, a further 190 places.

Options available to provide these additional places include constructing new facilities, expanding existing facilities, and co-locating with other infrastructure such as pre-schools, schools and community centres.

Education

There are currently no pre-schools or senior secondary schools located within the central area. Primary and middle school education in the central area is provided by Catholic Education across two campuses.

The central area is unlikely to need to support any new education establishments, with any population growth being able to be catered for in existing facilities that are either already within the study area or in close proximity.

There are no existing gaps in the availability of places in pre-, primary or secondary schools.

Although a small gap will arise in the short term for pre-school places, there is sufficient capacity in existing Government and non-Government primary and secondary schools across Alice Springs to cater for short term requirements. In the longer term, up to 120 additional pre-school places will be required, and two new Government primary schools. It is anticipated that the location of these facilities will be focused in growing population catchments in suburban areas.

Community Facilities

Libraries

The Alice Springs Town Council operates a public library from the site of its administration centre within the central area. The library currently operates at capacity, with Council planning for an expanded multi-level and multipurpose facility on the current site. There are no plans for additional library branches.

Community Meeting and Activity Spaces

Space for community groups to meet and for community activities and events to be held is an important element of social infrastructure for all communities.

There are currently 3 facilities within the study area that provide meeting spaces and facilities for the community. These include the Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre, the 50+ Community Centre, and the Totem Theatre. There is also the Alice Springs RSL Club; however, the future of this facility is uncertain.

The existing facilities within the study area and also within the broader regional area are considered sufficient to cater for the current population and any growth up to 40 000 people.

Places of Worship

The central area hosts 5 places of worship, serving a number of faiths. These land uses are often comprised of a number of rooms and/or buildings that are multipurpose in nature and provide for a variety of uses.

There is no standard or commonly agreed upon ratio of providing places of worship per head of population. The Alice Springs population is increasingly multicultural and multi-faith and may require additional facilities into the future, but it is difficult to predict.

Open Space and Recreation

Within the central area there are several local and neighbourhood level parks and areas of open space for informal and organised recreation, as well as key sporting facilities for the broader region that support high level competition. Open space and recreation land is typically within Zone PS (Public Open Space) or Zone OR (Organised Recreation). Land within Zone CN (Conservation), like Billy Goat Hill
and the Todd River, also provide opportunity for passive and informal recreational pursuits. Future residents, workers and visitors to Central Alice Springs would benefit as much from these spaces as from other public open space.

The level of parks, open spaces and recreation facilities available in Alice Springs generally are in excess of what would be expected of a town of its size, but are commensurate with the regional role that it plays.

There is no existing gap or indication of future demand for more facilities within the central area to cater for any anticipated growth; any new facilities should be located where the need is demonstrated.

9.3 Community Feedback

Alice Springs is considered by the community as a service hub for the many remote communities, with a corresponding need for short term accommodation, recreation, education facilities, and other social infrastructure that supports people moving between centres.

There was general support to the concept of establishing a dedicated health precinct surrounding the Alice Springs Hospital. The area is already heading in this direction and additional medical uses in the area would support this. A child care facility in the vicinity of the hospital would be beneficial to those who work in the precinct.

Traeger Park, the aquatic centre, and ANZAC Oval were all identified as community facilities that play a significant role in bringing people to the central area. There were many ideas around different facilities that could promote activation of the city centre, including:

- a dog park around the caravan parking area, so that locals and tourists have a place to exercise pets;
- a water park / play area in the CBD for children;
- more grassed areas and public toilets;
- developing the Todd River bank adjacent to the CBD as a boulevard with parks, picnic facilities, and cafes;
- more indoor play spaces for kids
- outdoor spaces targeted at the needs of residents of the central area; and
- an event space for performances and entertainment.

Feedback also suggested that central Alice Springs would benefit from a ‘town square’ like space; a multi-purpose space that brings people together to socialise informally, that provides a performance space, and which provides the opportunity and amenity to enjoy a coffee or a meal.

9.4 Discussion in Response

The inclusion of child care facilities in mixed used developments throughout the study area is encouraged by the draft Area Plan, such as within the CBD and in proximity to the Alice Springs Hospital. All other aspects of social infrastructure are generally well catered for in suburban areas. Additional facilities and public open space are therefore not contemplated by the draft Area Plan; however, it does advocate for no net loss of public open space, improving existing spaces to increase their amenity, and ensuring visual and pedestrian connections are maintained between areas of interest.

Focus Area A3 (City Centre – Cultural and Recreation Area) provides a specific focus on promoting opportunities for community facilities and public open space that forms a community hub, including providing for suitable facilities for large community events and festivals.

Focus Area D (Commercial/Mixed Use, Medical and Health Services) provides a specific focus on providing for the medical and health needs for Alice Springs, particularly the co-location of allied health services and supporting uses around the Alice Springs Hospital.
Figure 11: Existing Social Infrastructure
10. Environment

10.1 Introduction

The natural environment of Alice Springs can be one of extremes – hot and dry for long periods of time, until significant rainfall in the Todd River catchment causes the usually dry river bed to flow from bank to bank. The Defined Flood Area of the Todd River extends into the central area.

Other features of the natural environment, within and surrounding the study area, include Anzac Hill, Billy Goat Hill, Annie Myers Hill, the Charles River, and the MacDonnell Ranges. These features offer opportunity for informal recreation and for residents and visitors to enjoy the surrounding natural habitat for native and protected flora and fauna.

Successfully integrating the natural environment with the built environment as a way of enabling people to interact with both will contribute to the increased liveability of Alice Springs.

10.2 Context

Climate

Alice Springs is hot during the summer months with average daily temperatures above 30 degrees, and cool during the winter, with average daily temperatures around 20 degrees. During winter, overnight temperatures are around 3 degrees, but it is not unusual for sub-zero temperatures. The hot summer temperatures particularly influence the way people move through the central area, the activities they undertake, and what time of the day they do them.

Physical Environment

The central Alice Springs area is generally flat, which makes it convenient to walk and cycle. Anzac Hill and Billy Goat Hill are local landmarks, and provide opportunities to view the central and surrounding areas from a higher ground level. The Todd River is also a landmark, and forms the eastern boundary of the study area. Although not within the study area, the MacDonnell Ranges are an impressive natural feature and are visible from throughout the central area.

The majority of the central area is otherwise developed to provide services to the regional population.

Riverine and Stormwater Flooding

Central Alice Springs is subject to riverine flooding from the Todd River, and associated localised flooding as a result of overflows from stormwater drainage systems. Figure 12 shows the 1% AEP flood level for the Todd River in Alice Springs.

Since a flow gauging station was installed at Wills Terrace in 1953, the biggest flood event recorded was in 1988, with a peak of 3.99 m. This is considered to be a 1 in 50 year flood event.

The Alice Springs Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee was established in February 2016. A report provided to Government in June 2017 featured a number of recommendations to address future flooding events.

A key theme in the list of recommendations is the implementation of non-structural mitigation measures, such as flood resilience through education, early warning systems and appropriately located emergency shelters, appropriate land use controls, support measures through grant funding and a review of relevant policies, and the establishment of a Todd River Health Management Committee.

Land use planning and building controls provide a mechanism through which land use activities are regulated in areas that may be prone to flooding. Such controls in the Northern Territory require new homes (or substantial renovations) to construct habitable rooms at least 300 mm above the 1% AEP flood level for the site. This is reflected in the NT Planning Scheme.

The NT Planning Scheme currently requires consent for all development that is within a Defined Flood Area, except for extensions to existing dwellings and ancillary structures, and to extensions to existing commercial and industrial buildings, that would otherwise be permitted.

The report notes that flood risk should be considered as early as possible in the planning and development process, and planning decisions affecting flood affected land should take into account the best available flood information. Any changes to land use planning controls and building controls for affected areas will need to be based on the outcomes of revised modelling and mapping for structural mitigation options.

In regards to structural mitigation options, the report identifies measures that will assist in addressing the flooding experienced by Alice Springs through the construction of targeted infrastructure. This may include detention structures in the upper catchment, improvements to the drainage network associated with the road network, and implementation of an ongoing maintenance plan.

Entirely removing the risk associated with the most severe flood events within the flood zone is not possible. A sustainable strategy that provides for the implementation of a combination of short, medium and long term measures that would continuously improve the level of flood immunity and resilience for the Alice Springs community is the key outcome.
10.3 Community Feedback

The community feedback received recognised the environmental and intrinsic value of the Todd River, and considered it to be an underutilised asset. Feedback also suggested that there is scope to use the river as public open space, and opportunity to develop flood resilient buildings and spaces along the river banks.

The ability to seek refuge from the sun and heat is important to those who use the central area, as is the creation of a pleasant and inviting place to be. Suggestions on how to address this included:

• retention of trees and creation of green spaces;
• use of deciduous plants;
• smart orientation of shade structures;
• more cool spaces and walkways;
• minimise large expanses of concrete, which create heat basins; and
• the creation of permanent bodies of water.

Responses also identified the opportunity for the built environment to better respond to and utilise the natural environment, such as through the integration of alternative energies, and the promotion of breeze circulation by allowing space between buildings.

10.4 Discussion in Response

Recognising and promoting people’s interaction with and experience of the natural environment, and how this is integrated with development, is addressed throughout the draft Area Plan. This includes through the promotion of natural features in enhancing public amenity and promoting development that responds to sustainability principles for an arid climate.

Any development or use of land within the Defined Flood Area of the Todd River is still required to adhere to the provisions of the NT Planning Scheme in relation. Additionally, to further reduce the risk to people, damage to property and costs to the general community caused by flooding, proposed development will need to respond to any identified mitigation approach, such as structural design elements and early warning systems.
Figure 12: Existing Defined Flood Area, Central Alice Springs
11. Cultural and Heritage

11.1 Introduction

Places of cultural and historical significance contribute to a sense of belonging, and represent the region’s rich and colourful past. They connect people with others, with history and with landscapes. Sites of cultural and heritage value in the study area range from Aboriginal sacred sites, to European settlement, and to natural features.

Alice Springs is culturally and spiritually significant to the Aboriginal population and also appreciated and valued by residents and visitors across the region for its intrinsic historic, cultural and recreational values. Spaces that provide for and encourage visual and performing arts create opportunities for the sharing of culture with locals and visitors alike.

Community engagement with culture and heritage is important to the economic well-being of Alice Springs, as the scenic and recreational values support tourism and local business.

Being able to visually connect with these sites and landmarks, either at ground level through clear view lines or from view scapes at higher ground levels aids in orientating oneself within the central area. It is also an important factor in understanding and appreciating the culture and heritage of Alice Springs.

11.2 Context

Aboriginal Culture

There are a number of registered and recorded sacred sites and areas within central Alice Springs, protected by the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act. These include Billy Goat Hill, ANZAC Hill, and the Todd River. These sites represent significant and formally protected Aboriginal cultural history. The existing zoning of these sites under the NT Planning Scheme as Zone CN (Conservation), as well as other performance criteria for sacred and heritage sites, works to ensure that development on and adjacent to these sites is appropriate and responds to cultural and historical values.

Heritage Places

The Alice Springs central area includes many heritage and archaeological places protected by the Heritage Act. The NT Heritage Register identifies 19 declared heritage sites and the Alice Springs Heritage Precinct. Notable heritage sites include the Old Hartley Street School, Old Courthouse, The Residency, Town Gaol, Totem Theatre Complex and Former Telegraph Repeater Station.

The Alice Springs Heritage Precinct is a unique example of the planned development of the town as an administration centre in the late 1930s. It contains buildings for health, law and order, remote area services, and dwellings that demonstrate an architectural solution to the arid climate. The precinct has links to the pioneering settlers and spiritual associations through the Aboriginal sacred site, Billy Goat Hill.

Adaptive reuse of heritage sites provides for their continued use and active maintenance while respecting the significant associations, meanings and activities of the past. For example, parts of the Old Hartley Street School function as offices and a museum, while a heritage listed dwelling has been repurposed as a restaurant.

11.3 Community Feedback

Feedback from the community identified that the Aboriginal culture of Alice Springs and the surrounding region is a unique characteristic of the town and that it should be enhanced and embraced. The built environment can provide experiences that allow people to connect with the culture. At the same time, development should be respectful to sacred sites in their form and how they address sites.

It was noted that the opportunity to purchase artwork direct from Aboriginal artists is an experience that can connect a person to the Aboriginal people and culture of the town. Further, more of the town’s identity could focus on Aboriginal culture, including a large presence in an integrated tourism and information hub.

Further suggestions also included that the heritage elements of the central area should continue to be used and developed appropriately to preserve them as assets. This includes new development adjacent to heritage sites and buildings having regard and responding to any identified heritage value.

The successful adaptive reuse of several heritage buildings was identified in feedback from the community; however, the feedback also noted that locating these buildings and learning about their history is more of a challenge. Improved signage and interpretation material would greatly assist in actively promoting the Heritage Precinct in the CBD.

Cultural activities could contribute to improved activation of the CBD particularly at night time. Spaces for performing and visual arts in the Todd Mall could be one way to achieve this.
11.4 Discussion in Response

The draft Area Plan identifies all European heritage sites within the study area, and provides associated responses to protect buildings and encourage adaptive reuse. Figure 13 identifies these sites. Whilst individual Aboriginal sacred sites are not identified for cultural purposes, the draft Area Plan recognises and promotes recognition and protection of such sites, including integration with the built environment where appropriate. This also extends to encouraging the appropriate incorporation of Aboriginal storytelling and interpretative information in public spaces.

The Northern Territory Government is currently creating an Indigenous Arts Trail throughout the Northern Territory, to position the Territory as a world-class cultural and tourist destination. A significant contributor to this arts trail will be the development of a National Aboriginal Art Gallery (NAAG) in Alice Springs. In March 2018 the NT Government announced that its preferred site for the NAAG is the Anzac Hill Precinct, at the northern end of the study area. The site incorporates Anzac Oval and the old Anzac Hill High School.

The draft Area Plan recognises the entire Anzac Hill locality for its cultural and recreation importance and opportunities, which is reflected in the Focus Area A3 (City Centre: Cultural and Recreation Area). The draft Area Plan identifies that the locality provides opportunities for iconic cultural and recreation development that would extend the cultural and social functions of the CBD.

The importance of maintaining visual connections throughout the central area to sites of cultural significance, such as Anzac Hill, Billy Goat Hill, and the Todd River, and landmarks of historical value, such as the John Flynn Memorial Church, the Old Hartley Street School, and the Totem Theatre, is captured throughout the draft Area Plan. Interpretative signage and increased wayfinding is also encouraged to direct people to areas of cultural and historic significance and to assist in orientation from view scapes from high points surrounding the central area.
Figure 13: Existing Central Alice Springs Cultural and Heritage
References


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.