

NORTHERN TERRITORY
PLANNING
COMMISSION

Annual Report 2014–2015



NORTHERN TERRITORY
PLANNING
COMMISSION

Contents

▲ Letter to the Minister	2
▲ Chairman's Foreword	3
▲ 2014–15 Highlights	4
▲ About the Planning Commission	5
▲ Our Organisation	6
▲ Our Members	8
▲ Meetings	11
▲ Work Program	13
▲ Our Strategic Plans	14
▲ 2014–17 Strategic Plan	15
▲ Community Engagement	23
▲ Engaging with the Community	24
▲ Case Studies	27
▲ Financial Performance	29
▲ Planning Commission Budget	31
▲ Operating Statement	32

Northern Territory Planning Commission

Level 5, Energy House

18–20 Cavenagh Street, Darwin

GPO Box 1680 DARWIN NT 0801

Phone: (08) 8924 7540

Email: ntpc@nt.gov.au

www.planningcommission@nt.gov.au



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

Letter to the Minister



Level 5, Energy House
18–20 Cavenagh Street, Darwin

GPO Box 1680
Darwin NT 0801

The Hon David Tollner MLA
Minister for Lands and Planning
Parliament House
DARWIN NT 0800

Dear Minister

2014–15 Annual Report – Northern Territory Planning Commission

I am pleased to present you with the annual report for the Northern Territory Planning Commission for the 2014–15 financial year.

Under section 81Y of the *Planning Act*, the Chairman must prepare and give to the Minister a report on the performance of the Planning Commission against its functions during each financial year. The report must be given to the Minister by 31 October following the end of the financial year and as responsible Minister, you are required to table a copy of the report in the Legislative Assembly within six sitting days of receiving the report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Nairn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Hon Gary Nairn AO
Chairman

30 October 2015

Chairman's Foreword



I am pleased to present the Planning Commission's third Annual Report.

It has been an interesting and challenging year for the Planning Commission. Our focus is on community engagement and the continuing conversation with Territorians about the need to plan land uses to meet the needs of current and future generations, and to address pressures associated with population growth across the NT.

We know that Territorians are passionate about their lifestyle and it is this deep and intelligent engagement that enables us to provide the best possible advice to government on planning issues.

The Planning Commission has increased its efforts to promote a new and better way of developing land use and area plans. A consultative approach in developing plans upfront with the community is critical in ensuring good planning outcomes for the Territory.

To facilitate this practice, the Commission updated its Community Engagement Policy, which can be viewed on our website. It provides the community with a clear understanding of our commitment to effective engagement, outlining when, and at what level, engagement will occur.

We held consultations on a range of plans covering the greater Darwin region and Alice Springs CBD. You can read more about our work in this report.

Our presentations and stalls at shopping centres and other venues were well attended. The feedback and detailed submissions we received from a wide range of stakeholders demonstrates the importance of engaging all parts of our community in planning the future development of the Territory.

In April, after two years of service to the Commission, the appointments of Stuart Duncan, Graham Bailey, David McHugh and Nicole Wheeler came to an end. I thank them for their valuable contributions to the work of the Commission in its first two years.

The Minister for Lands and Planning decided to streamline membership of the Commission, from 10 members to seven, noting that it would be appropriate to have the flexibility to ask suitably qualified people to work with the Commission on specific projects where their expertise would add value.

Brendan Dowd, Chief Executive of the City of Darwin, was appointed as the representative of the Local Government Association of NT for one year. Denys Stedman and Ken Johnson were both reappointed for one year.

My thanks go to the Planning Commission secretariat for their tireless work in managing our daily operations and coordinating expertise from within the department and across government. Special thanks to outgoing manager James Teh for his sterling service as the inaugural manager of the secretariat.

With an expanded work program, the year ahead will be a busy one for the Commission. I am confident the Secretariat is well resourced to manage the increased workload. I look forward to productive planning engagement for the Territory.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Nairn'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Hon Gary Nairn AO
Chairman

Northern Territory Planning Commission

2014–15 Highlights



View of the ranges around Alice Springs

Our achievements in guiding strategic planning for the Northern Territory

The Planning Commission develops strategic plans and planning policies. These plans were a focus in 2014–15:

- Darwin Regional Land Use Plan
- Darwin Inner Suburbs Area Plans
- Old Hospital Site and Flagstaff Park
- Berrimah North Area Plan
- NT Compact Urban Growth Policy
- Holtze Area Plan
- Alice Springs CBD Review of Planning Provisions

More information about the plans can be found in the Work Program and Community Engagement sections of the report.

Engaging with the community and industry

The Commission delivered presentations, workshops and information sessions, and received submissions and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders:

- 11 presentations delivered
- 150 submissions received on proposed strategic plans and planning policies
- 9 public workshops and information sessions held
- 2 reports summarising community feedback published

ABOUT THE PLANNING COMMISSION



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

Our Organisation

Who we are

The Planning Commission is an independent statutory authority that:

- develops strategic plans and planning policies
- advises on significant development proposals.

What we do

We perform our functions and exercise our powers independently, impartially and in the public interest, according to the *Planning Act*.

The Commission plans and provides a framework of controls for the orderly use and development of land. This is to be achieved by:

- strategic planning of land use and development, and for the sustainable use of resources
- strategic planning of transport corridors and other public infrastructure
- effective controls and guidelines for the appropriate use of land, having regard to its capabilities and limitations
- control of development to provide protection of the natural environment, including by sustainable use of land and water resources
- minimising adverse impacts of development on existing amenity and, wherever possible, ensuring that amenity is enhanced as a result of development
- ensuring, as far as possible, that planning reflects the wishes and needs of the community through appropriate public consultation and input in both the formulation and implementation of planning schemes
- fair and open decision-making and appeals processes.

Arrangements with the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment

The Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment provides the Planning Commission with staff and facilities to perform its functions. The Department also provides professional and technical support under the Planning Commission's direction.

The Planning Commission Secretariat:

- manages the daily operations of the Commission
- provides accurate and timely information to the Commission
- provides governance advice and expertise to members
- sets the annual schedule of meetings, and prepares agendas and meeting papers
- prepares reports from Commission meetings and their minutes
- facilitates workflow between the Commission and Department
- responds to public or stakeholder requests about the Commission
- manages projects identified in the Planning Commission work program.

About the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission has seven members who provide planning leadership and deliver professional, independent advice. The Commission strengthens links between the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority, Development Consent Authority, Heritage Council and Local Government Associations.

The Planning Commission comprises:

- Chairman
- Chairpersons of the Development Consent Authority, Heritage Council and NT Environment Protection Authority
- a representative of the Local Government Association
- up to five additional members (currently two) with appropriate qualifications and expertise appointed by the Minister, who hold office for up to two years.

The Commission membership includes the chairpersons of three bodies with statutory decision-making powers for development, providing for a greater shared understanding of the aspirations of the planning system in delivering outcomes.

In its first two years, the Commission comprised 10 members, which is the maximum number allowed under the *Planning Act*. Where required, the Commission can also second people on its subcommittees or engage external consultants.

In April 2015, the Minister for Lands and Planning decided to streamline membership, noting that it would be appropriate to ask suitably qualified people to work with the Commission on specific projects where their expertise would add value.

Brendan Dowd, Chief Executive of the City of Darwin, was appointed as the representative of the Local Government Association of NT for one year. Denys Stedman and Ken Johnson were both reappointed for one year.

After two years of service to the Commission, the appointments of Stuart Duncan, Graham Bailey, David McHugh and Nicole Wheeler expired on 8 April 2015. The Planning Commission is grateful to these outgoing members for their invaluable contributions to the Planning Commission in its first two years.

Our Members



The Hon Gary Nairn AO

Chairman (appointed 1 January 2013)

After a 25 year career as a surveyor in Australia, United Kingdom and Europe, including 13 years as managing director of his Darwin-based surveying and mapping consultancy, Gary served as the Federal Member for Eden-Monaro from 1996 to 2007. He was Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister Howard (2004 to 2006) and Special Minister of State (2006 to 2007). His responsibilities included water reform, e-Government, Commonwealth properties, Australian Electoral Commission and five Government Business Enterprises.

Gary lived in the Northern Territory from 1980 to 1995 and was involved in the planning, design and survey of many major developments including Palmerston, Cullen Bay, Bayview and Katherine East. He remains involved in the spatial industry, is chair of the Tasmanian Spatial Information Council (TASSIC) and is the immediate past chairman of the Spatial Industries Business Association (SIBA). Gary has a Bachelor of Surveying (UNSW) and he is also a Graduate of the Institute of Company Directors.

He was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in June 2015.



Dr Bill Freeland

Ex officio member (appointed 1 January 2013)

Bill became the inaugural Chair of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority on 1 January 2013. Earlier, he was an environmental consultant working with business and industry in environmental management in the NT. He is a former Director of the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT and Director of Conservation Strategy with the Queensland Government.

He has represented the Territory on national environmental groups, including the National Standing Committee for Water, Land and Biodiversity; Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and the Standing Committee to the Australian and New Zealand Environment Council.

He has a MSc (University of Queensland) and a PhD in Zoology (University of Michigan). He has published more than 50 scientific papers and consultancy reports in the fields of conservation management, environmental impacts, waste management and ecologically sustainable development and tourism development.



Dr Brian Reid

Ex officio member (appointed 1 January 2013)

Brian is the Chair of the Heritage Council and a long-term Darwin resident who has worked here for many years as a medical practitioner.

He is also a historian and a member of the Northern Territory branch of the Professional Historians' Association. He is a past President of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory.



The Hon Denis Burke

Ex officio member (appointed 1 August 2014)

Denis is the Chair of the Development Consent Authority, which is a committee dealing with land and development applications on behalf of the Minister for Land and Planning.

He is a former politician, serving in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly from 1994 to 2005, including in various ministerial roles and as Chief Minister from 1999 to 2001. Earlier, he served in the Australian Army, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and commanding the 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Darwin before entering politics.

From 2008 to 2012, he worked in Abu Dhabi as advisor to the Chair and Undersecretary of the Department of Municipal Affairs.



Brendan Dowd

Member (appointed 9 April 2015)

Brendan is the representative of the Local Government Association of the NT and the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Darwin, a role he has held for seven years. He has more than 30 years' experience in local government and is a past Director of Technical Services at the City of Darwin. Earlier, he held a range of senior executive positions in South Australia.

He has a degree in civil engineering, Graduate Diploma in Municipal Engineering and a MBA. He is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and a Fellow of Engineers Australia. He has been appointed to a panel to review the *Northern Territory Local Government Act*.



Dr Ken Johnson AM

Member (appointed 9 April 2013)

Ken is Chair of Desert Knowledge Australia and the Conservation Land Corporation. A wildlife research scientist, he came to the Northern Territory in 1978 to work with traditional land owners to document the flora and fauna of Central Australia. As Parks and Wildlife Regional Director from 1991, he was responsible for the southern region of the Northern Territory, where he established the Desert Knowledge Precinct and Desert Wildlife Park. He has a Bachelor of Rural Science (Hons) and a PhD.



Denys Stedman

Member (appointed 9 April 2013)

Denys is a chartered accountant and managing partner of KPMG Darwin. Since coming to Darwin in 1979, he has advised many organisations regarding business planning and strategy development. He has extensive exposure through dealings with clients in the building and construction, pastoral, property and professional service industries.

He has a Bachelor of Business and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Fellow of the Taxation Institute of Australia, graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a Fellow of the Certified Practising Accountants Australia.

The following members completed their service during the reporting period:



Peter McQueen

9 April 2013 to 31 July 2014

Ex officio member. Chair of the Development Consent Authority.

Peter chaired the Development Consent Authority from 2006 to 31 July 2014. He arrived in the NT in the seventies and has practised as a solicitor in Darwin since 1980. He has been involved in the administration of various community organisations, including Larrakeyah Primary School Council, Darwin Rugby League, Darwin Turf Club and Darwin Festival.



Stuart Duncan

9 April 2013 to 8 April 2015

Representative of the Local Government Association of the NT.

Stuart has been Chief Executive Officer of the Victoria Daly Regional Council since 2012. Previously he was Chief Executive of the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council in Queensland. Stuart has worked in remote communities throughout his career. He was a member of the Queensland Local Government Grants Commission from 2011 to 2012.



Graham Bailey

9 April 2013 to 8 April 2015

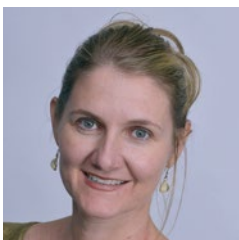
Graham brings extensive planning experience, particularly strategic planning throughout the Territory. He is a former senior planner with the NT Government, with most of his work focusing on concept and / or strategic land use planning. His projects were mainly in the Darwin region, but also included projects in all the larger NT urban centres and some of the smaller communities. He is a Life Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia.



David McHugh

9 April 2013 to 8 April 2015

David was appointed as Chief Executive of the Department of Infrastructure in October 2013. Earlier roles include as a project director with Thinc Projects and Chief Executive of the Department of Transport and Works. He has worked in the public sector on a wide range of projects, including infrastructure, subdivision developments and new wildlife parks. He represents the government on national committees and provides high level policy advice on transport and infrastructure issues relating to the Territory. He is a Chartered Professional Engineer.



Nicole Wheeler

9 April 2013 to 8 April 2015

Nicole is an interior designer with her own business specialising in interior design for commercial and residential projects. She was born and raised in the Territory.

She brings a strong understanding of the local culture and tropical environment, finding appropriate and sustainable solutions for clients to address their needs, and how to occupy their spaces. She has a degree in interior architecture

Meetings

The Planning Commission held six meetings in 2014-15:

DATE	PRESENT	NOT PRESENT
22 July 2014 Darwin	Gary Nairn, Brian Reid, Ken Johnson, Bill Freeland, Stuart Duncan, Nicole Wheeler, Graham Bailey, David McHugh, Denys Stedman	Peter McQueen
24 September 2014 Alice Springs	Gary Nairn, Ken Johnson, Bill Freeland, Stuart Duncan, Graham Bailey, David McHugh, Denys Stedman	Brian Reid, Nicole Wheeler, Denis Burke
2 December 2014 Darwin	Gary Nairn, Graham Bailey, Denis Burke, Stuart Duncan, Ken Johnson, David McHugh, Brian Reid, Denys Stedman, Nicole Wheeler	Bill Freeland
17 February 2015 Darwin	Gary Nairn, Graham Bailey, Denis Burke, Brian Reid, Ken Johnson, David McHugh, Denys Stedman, Nicole Wheeler, Bill Freeland	Stuart Duncan
14 April 2015 Darwin	Gary Nairn, Bill Freeland, Denis Burke, Brendan Dowd, Ken Johnson, Denys Stedman	Brian Reid
2 June 2015 Darwin	Gary Nairn, Bill Freeland, Denis Burke, Brendan Dowd, Ken Johnson, Brian Reid, Denys Stedman	-

WORK PROGRAM



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

Work program

At the Planning Commission we:

- prepare integrated strategic plans, guidelines and assessment criteria
- review NT Planning Scheme matters at regular intervals
- advise on significant development proposals.

Planning priorities

We prepare strategic land use plans that anticipate growth and set frameworks with which to manage development. We set 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.

The Planning Commission is committed to providing expert and independent advice to the Minister that contributes to economic growth and development, and values the protection of the environment and natural assets.

Developing strategic plans

Our primary role is to prepare integrated strategic plans in consultation with the community. These plans may also identify future transport corridors, utility corridors and sites for essential facilities including communication, water and power supply, gas and similar condensates, effluent treatment and regional waste, and public and social infrastructure.

The Planning Commission may provide guidance on where and how communities or urban areas should grow. Our plans can include maps, policy statements and objectives relating to housing, transport, economic development, the environment, open space and conservation.

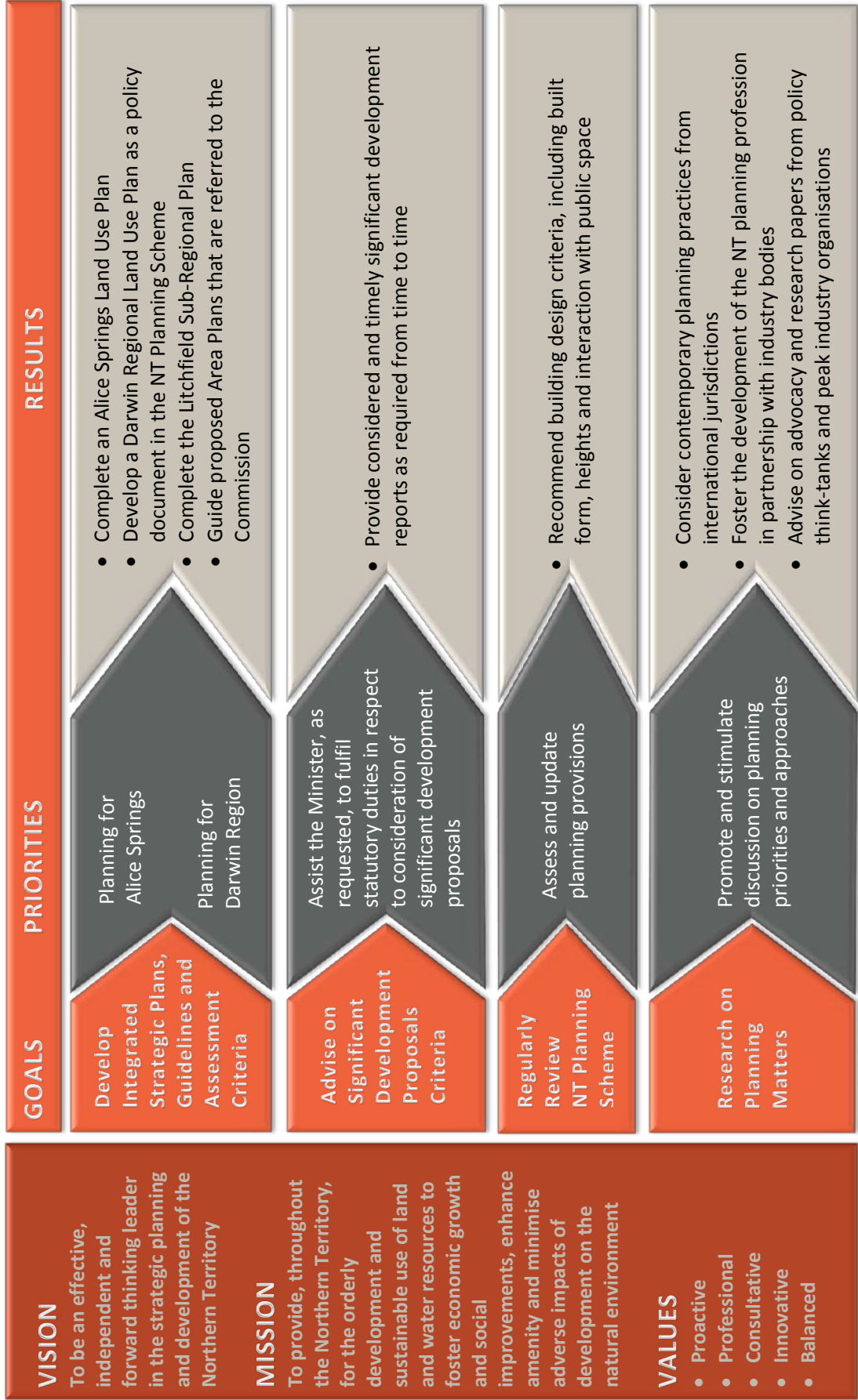
During 2014–15, the Planning Commission made key achievements in guiding the Territory's long-term growth, and providing confidence and certainty for the community and industry on future land uses.

2014–17 Strategic Plan

The 2014–17 Strategic Plan is a high level document that sets out the Commission's vision, mission, values, goals, priorities and projects over a three-year period. It is a flexible document whereby projects can be added as the need arises.

The plan was developed at a workshop with members in July 2014, followed by detailed discussions to ensure it reflects the work of the Commission. Members finalised the 2014–17 Strategic Plan in February 2015 and it is available here and on our website.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 - 2017



VISION

To be an effective, independent and forward thinking leader in the strategic planning and development of the Northern Territory

MISSION

To provide, throughout the Northern Territory, for the orderly development and sustainable use of land and water resources to foster economic growth and social improvements, enhance amenity and minimise adverse impacts of development on the natural environment

VALUES

- Proactive
- Professional
- Consultative
- Innovative
- Balanced

Darwin Regional Land Use Plan

The Darwin Region continues to be a major focus for the Planning Commission. As Darwin's population grows in step with continuing regional development, services will be expanded and business, trade and other opportunities increased, reinforcing the status and important role of the region and city on a national and global front. For Darwin, Australia's closest capital city to Asia, high quality regional planning is vital.

The draft Darwin Regional Land Use Plan was released for public feedback in July 2014. About 530 stakeholders, including groups and individuals, were directly involved in the consultation, while 54 submissions provided feedback on the draft plan. The revised plan was submitted to the Minister on 16 October 2014.

The Minister made amendments and then exhibited the proposed Darwin Regional Land Use Plan as a formal amendment to the NT Planning Scheme from 18 November 2014 to 16 January 2015.

A reporting body hearing was held on 18 February 2015. It is anticipated that the Minister will approve an amendment to incorporate the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 as a policy document under the NT Planning Scheme in July 2015.



Draft Darwin Regional Land Use Plan

Darwin Inner Suburbs Area Plans

The Darwin region is expected to almost double in population over the next 40 to 50 years. As a result, the population of Darwin's inner suburbs, including Stuart Park, Parap, Fannie Bay, The Narrows, Woolner, Ludmilla, Bayview and The Gardens will also grow.

Land in inner Darwin is a limited commodity, so planning for the future is vital and public input important, especially at the early stages. The inner suburbs have abundant green space, iconic tropical homes, essential services, schools and lifestyle and work opportunities. Understanding the vision of residents for their neighbourhood is important and will assist with revitalising the area.

The Planning Commission is developing area plans that will determine land use in the inner suburbs over the near term (next 10 years) and long term (40 to 50 years). This includes residential, transport and traffic, infrastructure, services and community use. The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan flagged the need to identify opportunities in the inner suburbs to develop a minimum of 4500 dwellings and associated services.



Satellite map of Darwin's inner suburbs

The Darwin Inner Suburbs Area Plans consultations began on 25 June 2015 with a six week early input phase to provide information to the public about why we need area plans and the high level approach to land use planning in the area and invite their feedback. It included letter drops for local residents and landowners and information stands with a booklet and flyer at Parap Markets and Fannie Bay, Stuart Park and Winnellie shops. This is the first time an early consultation process has been used. Feedback will be incorporated in the preparation of the draft plan for further consultation. The final plans will be recommended to the Minister for public exhibition as a proposed Planning Scheme amendment.

Holtze Area Plan

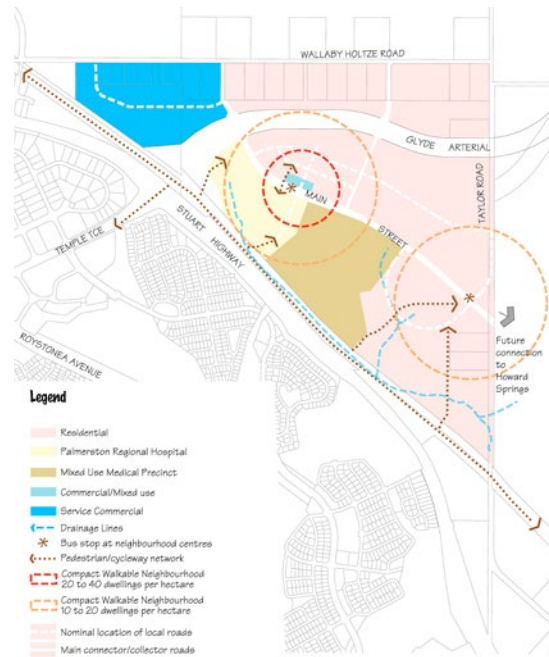
The locality of Holtze was identified in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 as suitable for future urban and peri-urban development. With planning for the Palmerston Regional Hospital underway, consideration needed to be given to the proposed land uses for the area adjacent to the hospital in more detail.

For this reason, and to provide certainty for future infrastructure needs in the area, the Commission held consultations with the community on a draft area plan and proposed planning principles for the area.

The draft plan was unveiled on 13 May 2015. It includes the land identified for the regional hospital, and a proposed medical precinct to support the hospital. It also proposes where commercial and residential land will be located to support the hospital and medical precinct.

Feedback was sought from residents, community and industry groups, with a special focus on residents along Wallaby Holtze and Taylor Roads including an onsite meeting with residents. Community engagement included information stands at the Freds Pass Show and Palmerston, Howard Springs and Coolalinga shopping centres.

Information received during the consultation period will inform a revised area plan and planning principles, which will be recommended to the Minister as a proposed Planning Scheme amendment.



Section of draft Holtze area urban plan

Old Hospital Site and Flagstaff Park

The Planning Commission produced a draft conceptual plan to guide the potential development of the Old Hospital Site and Myilly Point, including Flagstaff Park. These are iconic sites that require a development of high quality and significance, and something that is special to the community.

We highlighted important aspects in redeveloping these sites, such as engaging with key stakeholders and the community, and promoting innovative and creative design concepts. Community consultation took place in May and June 2014.

The Commission forwarded a report, including concept plan and recommendations, to the Minister in August 2014. The concept and design brief will inform an expression of interest process for developing the sites as part of a master plan that considers the consultation report and continues to consult with the public.

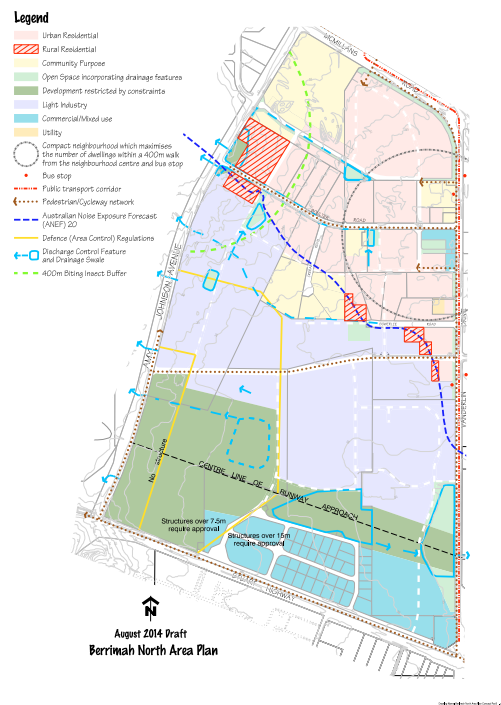
The concept plan and consultation report from the project is available on our website.

Berrimah North Area Plan

Berrimah North is the area west of Vanderlin Drive. The locality is strategically placed between the region's principal activity centres and offers the opportunity for commercial and light industrial development, employment and residential expansion adjacent to transport infrastructure.

The Planning Commission presented a draft Berrimah North Area Plan to the Minister in August 2014.

The Department formally exhibited the plan under the *Planning Act* from 22 August to 19 September 2014. After changes in response to submissions, the Minister incorporated an amended Berrimah North Area Plan into the Planning Scheme in December 2014. This will provide a framework to guide the continued development of the locality. Supporting information on storm water drainage has also been included.



Draft Berrimah North Area Plan

NT Compact Urban Growth Policy

The Northern Territory Compact Urban Growth Policy is aimed at encouraging the efficient use of land, and the efficient use of services and infrastructure that support land use. This policy will set in place a decision-making framework to assist with the creation of well-planned pockets of activity that play a role in improving people's lifestyle, while also creating sustainable communities.

The policy:

- identifies opportunities for the efficient use of land to accommodate population growth
- manages growth carefully to create livable urban areas that foster a successful economic and social exchange
- clarifies where urban densification can be expected
- allows for improved infrastructure planning and delivery
- clarifies that densification should not occur in random locations.

The Planning Commission reviewed the policy and associated changes to the NT Planning Principles in the NT Planning Scheme. The Commission provided general support for the policy as a tool for assessing rezoning proposals and preparing area plans for specific localities.

Between 16 January and 18 February 2015, the Minister for Lands and Planning publically exhibited a Planning Scheme Amendment which proposed to:

- include the NT Compact Urban Growth Policy within the NT Planning Scheme as a Reference to Policy document
- update the NT Planning Principles in the NT Planning Scheme to reflect the Compact Urban Growth Policy.

On 15 June 2015, the Minister approved the amendment, and it came into effect on 19 June 2015. The policy will assist in guiding current work such as development of the Darwin Inner Suburbs Area Plans.

Alice Springs CBD review of planning scheme provisions

The Commission recognised a need to review Alice Springs CBD, focusing on building criteria and how they may influence building form (including height restrictions), while recognising heritage and cultural values for the town. By establishing clear design guidelines for incorporation into the NT Planning Scheme, the Commission aims to improve confidence for both community and investors.

Earlier, several studies were commissioned to identify opportunities for future growth in the CBD. These included an urban design audit, car parking evaluation, residential capacity and built form guidelines. None of these studies resulted in changes to the NT Planning Scheme to guide direction for the town centre's future growth.

The Commission considered these previous studies and released a discussion paper and set of draft built form guidelines for the CBD in early November 2014 for community consultation for six weeks. During this time the Commission met with the Alice Springs Town Council, stakeholders and the community, holding several workshops on 3 to 4 December for interested people, as well as several information stalls in the CBD.

The community provided valuable feedback, highlighting the importance of retaining views to the surrounding ranges, protection of historic and heritage items and support for establishing guidelines to define and reinforce the character of the CBD. There was also much debate about increasing CBD height restrictions, with a range of views provided for consideration.



Information booth in Alice Springs shopping centre

The Commission made several amendments to the draft built form guidelines as a result of the feedback. Draft guidelines were provided to the Minister in June 2015 for exhibition as a proposed Planning Scheme amendment.

The year ahead

In 2015–16, the Commission will ensure its work program continues to produce strategic land use plans that cater for sustainable economic growth and provide certainty and confidence for the community and industry.

We will achieve this by working closely with Northern Territory Government agencies, industry and community in developing our strategic plans.

The Commission will develop land use plans for priority areas in Darwin, Litchfield and Alice Springs, including:

- Area Plans for Darwin Inner Suburbs (includes Stuart Park, the Gardens, Parap, Fannie Bay, Bayview, Woolner and the Narrows)
- Area Plans for Darwin Mid Suburbs (includes Ludmilla, Coconut Grove, Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Millner)
- Litchfield Sub-Regional Plan (includes review of the Litchfield Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2002) and more detailed plans for identified rural activity centres in Berry Springs, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo, Coolalinga/Freds Pass and the Pine Forest
- Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan.

Rezoning and development applications, including significant development proposals that may affect the existing amenity and natural environment, can then be assessed against these detailed land use and area plans.

The Commission will also have a reporting body role for Territory-wide Planning Scheme amendments.

Future role

The Minister for Lands and Planning has flagged an expanded role for the Commission in developing all strategic land use plans, including more detailed area plans and future amendments to those plans. In particular, the Minister has indicated that the Commission would become the decision-making body assessing planning scheme amendments that do not comply with applicable land use plans or planning policies.

This expanded role would require a transition period over a number of years involving legislative change. More information will be made available on our website.

Significant development proposals

What is a significant development proposal?

The secondary role of the Planning Commission is to advise the Minister on significant development proposals.

A significant development proposal is one that may significantly impact on:

- the strategic planning of the Territory
- the natural environment or existing amenity, and/or
- land, adjoining land or other areas of land.

The Minister may refer significant development proposals to the Planning Commission for assessment.

When assessing a significant development proposal, the Commission must consider the objects of the Act, and the significant development report must identify and give advice about the possible impacts of the proposal on future land use and development in the Territory.

There were no significant development proposals referred to the Commission in 2014–15.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

Engaging with the community

We seek community input and feedback to produce strategic plans that more accurately reflect the local view on land use in each region.

Consultation with the community is one of the primary functions of the Planning Commission. Under the *Planning Act*, the Commission must consult with the community before preparing strategic plans, guidelines and assessment criteria for inclusion in the NT Planning Scheme. The Commission decides the appropriate method and extent of the consultation, depending on the proposed integrated strategic plan, guidelines or assessment criteria being considered.

Community engagement policy

In 2015, the Commission developed a community engagement policy to provide the community with a clear understanding of our commitment to effective engagement. The policy outlines when, and at what level, engagement will occur. It guides our members and staff in the procedures for developing and managing engagement strategies for our projects and establishes criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the consultation.

The Commission engages with the community when developing:

- integrated strategic plans, including land use plans, sub regional plans and area plans
- planning policies, guidelines and proposals
- any other matter determined by the Commission, or as requested by the Minister for Lands and Planning.

Community engagement takes place as early in the planning process as possible to ensure the community has ample time to consider the information and provide feedback. Consultants are engaged as required and depending on the complexity of the work.

The policy was published on 14 April 2015 and is available on our website.

Key stakeholders

Our list of key stakeholders is updated regularly by the Commission. Key stakeholders include:

- local government
- members of the NT Legislative Assembly
- industry associations
- community groups
- environmental groups
- Aboriginal land councils
- traditional owners
- non-government organisations
- NT and Federal Government agencies
- consultants
- media

Residents are key stakeholders, but we do not include names of individual residents on our stakeholder lists for privacy reasons.



Stall at the Alice Springs Show

Raising awareness and listening to community

Show circuit

The Planning Commission held information stalls at the shows in Alice Springs and Darwin during July 2014. In Alice Springs, we highlighted the intention to review the CBD building guidelines. The Darwin Show coincided with the release of the draft Darwin Regional Land Use Plan for consultation.

Tennant Creek

From 23 to 25 February 2015, the Planning Commission visited Tennant Creek to learn from local stakeholders about the town's aspirations and potential opportunities. The Planning Commission chairman met with representatives from Barkly Regional Council, who canvassed issues such as building design in the town centre, house construction standards and alignment of the proposed heavy vehicle bypass.

The chairman also briefed the Tennant Creek Regional Economic Development Committee (REDC) on the role of the Commission and the Tennant Creek Land Use Framework. The REDC is actively pursuing a gas pipeline from Mount Isa to Tennant Creek and has subsequently asked the Commission to consider preparing a land use plan for Tennant Creek.

A visit to the Battery Hill Tourist Centre showed that it is positioning to become a focal point for the community and has recently launched a market.



Community members review the draft Holtze area plan at a shopping centre

Collaborating with the community and stakeholders

In 2014–15, the Planning Commission delivered 11 presentations to stakeholders. This included stakeholders such as the City of Darwin Council, Alice Springs Council and Tennant Creek Regional Economic Development Committee.

We also used a variety of consultation methods and processes in developing strategic plans. These methods can include but are not limited to:

- land use forums
- discussion papers
- public information displays
- letter drops and surveys

The Commission received 150 submissions in relation to developing strategic plans and policy.

Discussion papers and further information about our activities are available on our website.

CASE STUDY

Holtze Area Plan

In February 2014, Crown land was identified on the Stuart Highway, Holtze (opposite Temple Terrace) to develop the Palmerston Regional Hospital and an associated medical precinct.

As the hospital is developed and requires more services, specialised medical professions, businesses, trades and community health services will want to be positioned nearby. It is also appropriate to provide a mixed use/ commercial and residential component to encourage a vibrant community near the hospital.

The government was also finalising plans for the realignment of the Glyde Point Arterial Corridor, which is shown on the draft plan.



Inspecting the draft Holtze area plan display

Development of the Holtze urban area responds to the natural topography, environmental constraints and drainage features, with particular regard for the Mitchell Creek catchment. It includes a 16 hectare site for the regional hospital and 28 hectares for the mixed use precinct.

There will be compact and walkable neighbourhoods with higher density homes close to shops and public transport. Inter-connected local roads will distribute rather than concentrate traffic and facilitate access for pedestrians and cyclists. A commercial services precinct will minimise impact on adjacent residential land.

The Commission provided a range of opportunities for community consultation and feedback on the draft plan and planning principles. From 13 May to 26 June 2015, there were consultations with local residents, stakeholders and the wider community. Residents along Wallaby Holtze and Taylor Roads were a special focus.

An information stall was set up at the Freds Pass Show on 16–17 May 2015, and information stalls were also held at shopping centres in Palmerston and Howard Springs and markets at Coolalinga. More than 420 people visited the stalls to learn more about the plan and provide feedback.

A total of 57 formal submissions were received and it became clear that while there was strong support for the proposed hospital and medical precinct, as well as the adjacent commercial area, a number of aspects of the exhibited plan were of concern to the community.

The plan will be revised to reflect community needs and concerns. The proposed Glyde arterial corridor is a strong planning boundary and therefore no land use changes are proposed for the land to its north. A large buffer will be created between the corridor and existing lots fronting Wallaby Holtze Road to provide about 150 metres separation.

The proposed changes represent a successful outcome for local residents and the broader community and show the value of community consultation.

Information received during the consultation period will inform a revised area plan and planning principles, which will be recommended to the Minister as a proposed Planning Scheme amendment.

CASE STUDY

Darwin Regional Land Use Plan

The draft Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2014 was launched on 23 July 2014 for public feedback until 1 September 2014. During that period, Commission chairman Gary Nairn provided more than 25 briefings to key stakeholders, Territory politicians, government agencies and community members. The team travelled to Palmerston, Batchelor, Wagait Beach and Bees Creek to brief local councils as well as briefing City of Darwin councillors.



Discussing the draft Darwin Regional Land Use Plan at Palmerston, August 2014.

The consultation aimed to build strong awareness of the plan and encourage the broadest range of people to provide feedback. The Commission wanted to make it clear that feedback would be carefully considered and to show how it contributed to any changes to the plan.

Regular public notices were placed in the NT News, Darwin Sun, Palmerston Sun, Litchfield Sun, Wagaitear and Territory Regional Weekly, outlining how people could access copies of the plan and provide feedback. Public notices were sent to schools in the rural area for inclusion on parent information websites and in school newsletters. A fact sheet providing a summary of the key elements of the plan was available at stalls and on our website.

Those who had previously made submissions or indicated an interest in the progress of the regional land use plan were emailed the draft plan and a link to our website. People could make electronic submissions, email or call the consultants, Michels Warren Munday.

The plan was exhibited at the Darwin Show, with Commissioner members and staff available to answer questions. Consultations were held in suburban and rural areas, including stalls at shopping centres in Casuarina, Palmerston, Howard Springs and Humpty Doo. The Chairman (or a representative) attended the stalls, along with staff from the Commission and from the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment.

More than 450 people visited the various information displays and feedback was generally positive. There was some confusion about the difference between a land use plan and a more detailed area plan, and evident cynicism about the planning process and related consultations. While there was general support for infill development, views were polarised on issues such as Glyde Point, the timing of the Weddell sub-division and the potential for damming the Elizabeth River.

Stakeholder values were mapped as part of this consultation, showing that rural lifestyle, the environment, transport access, heritage and culture and amenity were the key values that people wanted to protect.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

Financial performance

The Planning Commission is financially supported by the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment.

The Northern Territory Government allocated \$914 000 to the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment to fund the Planning Commission to develop strategic plans and planning policy, and to advise on significant development proposals.

From 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, the Planning Commission expended around \$853 885 or 93% of the budget. The total expenditure of \$853 885 includes \$90 000 worth of notional charging which represents goods and services received free of charge from the Department of Corporate and Information Services and is fully offset by \$90 000 in notional income.

The Planning Commission came in slightly under its allocated budget for 2014–15.

PLANNING COMMISSION BUDGET 2013–14 TO 2014–15

	2013–14 Budget \$000	2013–14 Estimate \$000	% Change	2013–14 Actuals \$000	% Change To Estimate
--	----------------------------	------------------------------	----------	-----------------------------	-------------------------

2013–14

	801	813	1.50%	877	7.90%
--	-----	-----	-------	-----	-------

2015–15

	812	914	12.6%	878	3.94%
--	-----	-----	-------	-----	-------

The Planning Commission also uses departmental funds for consultancies to provide advice on strategic plans and conducting community consultations.

The annual operating statement has been prepared from the department's accounts to reflect the financial activity of the Planning Commission.

PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL OPERATING STATEMENT

	2014–15 \$000	2013–14 \$000
INCOME		
Appropriation	800	801
Goods and services received free of charge	90	44
TOTAL INCOME	890	845
EXPENSES		
Commissioner		
Employees	218	222
General	187	315
Secretariat		
Employees	292	271
Purchase of goods and service	67	25
Goods and services received free of charge	90	44
TOTAL EXPENSES	854	877
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	36	(32)

