



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

ANNUAL **REPORT**

2016-2017



ANNUAL REPORT

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ISSN: 2208-6897

LETTER TO THE MINISTER



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

The Hon. Nicole Manison MLA
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File Ref: NTPC17/85

Dear Minister

2016-17 Annual Report – Northern Territory Planning Commission

I am pleased to present you with the annual report for the Northern Territory Planning Commission for the 2016-17 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 'David', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. David Ritchie
Chairman
NT Planning Commission

FOREWORD

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I joined the Northern Territory Planning Commission on 13 July 2017 as the new Chair and have the pleasure of reflecting upon and reporting on the great work the Planning Commission has done over the past year, and indeed since its inception in 2013.

The past year has continued to be productive, with many thanks to the foundations laid by the inaugural Chair, The Honourable Gary Nairn, and members of the Planning Commission. The significant work completed over the first five years of the Planning Commission has significantly updated and established new land use planning policy, putting the Northern Territory in a strong position to anticipate and guide development. It is with great pleasure that I thank Gary as I take the reins and continue to drive best practice land use planning for the benefit of all Territorians.

A special thank you to Brendan Dowd who completed his term as the Local Government Association NT representative this year, and most recently the additional role of interim Chair. I look forward to working with Brendan as he begins his new role as a member of the Planning Commission, bringing with him his intimate knowledge of projects and his balanced and well regarded approach.

The past year has been another productive year for the Planning Commission with substantial work completed across the Northern Territory. Of particular note, is the collaborative partnership with the Community Advisory Group established to progress the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre Area Plan. The team successfully progressed studies and meticulously worked through various options to develop a final area plan. The positive results have paved the way for other rural activity centre area plans, with Coolalinga/Freds Pass being the next to adopt this approach to work with the community on the local issues.

There has been a strong focus on central business districts with the next, more detailed, level of planning continuing after the introduction of regional land use plans, providing a tangible demonstration of top down, best practice land use planning. Background research has featured strongly on the work program with area plans for Central Alice Springs, Central Darwin and Central Palmerston guided by the key objectives established



in the regional land use plans. We have been busy compiling the foundation information to create a solid basis to begin talking with the community about preparing draft area plans for the central areas. It has been a valuable process that has given the Planning Commission a strong understanding of many of the issues that need to be balanced in establishing land use planning policy.

I look forward to what is shaping up to be another busy year ahead for the Planning Commission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Ritchie', written in a cursive style.

Dr David Ritchie
Chair
Northern Territory Planning Commission

2016-17 HIGHLIGHTS

The Planning Commission continued to prepare integrated strategic plans in consultation with the community in 2016-17 to guide the Northern Territory's long-term growth and provide certainty for the community and industry on future land uses.

The following work items were a focus for 2016-17:

- ▲ Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre Area Plan
- ▲ Coolalinga/Freds Pass Rural Activity Centre Area Plan
- ▲ Tennant Creek Land Use Plan
- ▲ Central Darwin Area Plan
- ▲ Central Palmerston Area Plan
- ▲ Central Alice Springs Area Plan
- ▲ Northern Territory Planning Scheme Performance Criteria Review.

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

CONSULTATION HIGHLIGHTS

Several stages of consultation were conducted for the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre Area Plan and Coolalinga Activity Centre, with several information sessions for the Palmerston Area Plan. Consultation achievements for these projects in 2016-17 included:

HOWARD SPRINGS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE AREA PLAN

- ▲ four presentations to the Litchfield Council and local Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)
- ▲ one community workshop attended by 31 residents

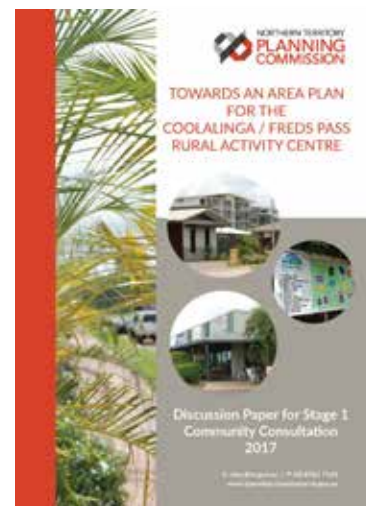
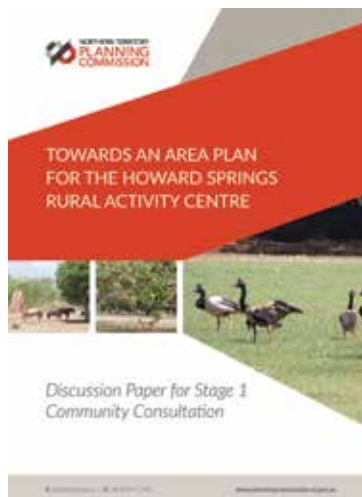
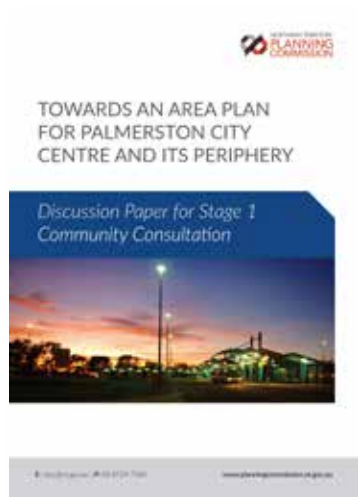
- ▲ more than 120 people visited pop-up stalls at Howard Springs Shops
- ▲ two community information sessions were attended by 45 people
- ▲ invited 1000 residents to provide input
- ▲ received 26 public submissions.

COOLALINGA/FREDS PASS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE AREA PLAN

- ▲ three presentations to Litchfield Council and local MLAs
- ▲ two community workshops were attended by 41 people
- ▲ three community information sessions were attended by 38 people
- ▲ more than 300 people visited pop-up stalls at local shopping centres and markets
- ▲ invited 7000 residents to provide input
- ▲ received 16 public submissions.

CENTRAL PALMERSTON AREA PLAN

- ▲ three presentations to the Palmerston Council and local MLAs
- ▲ three community information sessions
- ▲ received three public submissions.



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

- ▲ strategically planning land use and development for the sustainable use of resources
- ▲ strategically planning transport corridors and other public infrastructure
- ▲ effective controls and guidelines for the appropriate use of land, having regard to its capabilities and limitations
- ▲ controlling development to protect the natural environment, including by sustainably using land and water resources
- ▲ minimising adverse development impacts 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 to formulate and implement planning schemes
- ▲ fair and open decision-making and appeals processes.

ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

Under section 81E of the Act, the Chief Executive of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics provides the Planning Commission with staff and facilities to enable it to properly exercise its power and perform its functions.

Professional and technical support is provided by the department under the Planning Commission's direction. The Planning Commission accesses expertise throughout the department in areas such as strategic planning, demography, spatial information, commercial analysis, infrastructure planning and public engagement. The department also supports a Planning Commission Secretariat that manages the daily operations of the Planning Commission.

ABOUT THE PLANNING COMMISSION

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

The Planning Commission comprises:

- ▲ Chair
- ▲ Chairs of the Development Consent Authority, Northern Territory Heritage Council and Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA)
- ▲ a representative of the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
- ▲ up to five additional members (currently two) with appropriate qualifications and expertise appointed by the Minister.

The Planning Commission membership includes the Chairs of three bodies with statutory decision-making powers for development, providing for a greater shared understanding of the aspirations of the planning system to deliver outcomes.

On 31 January 2016, Gary Nairn's term as Chair of the Planning Commission finished. Brendan Dowd was appointed Chair of the Commission from 1 February 2017 to 10 July 2017.

The terms of Dr Bill Freeland (Chair of the NT EPA), Ken Johnson and Denys Stedman concluded during the 2016-17 financial year.

The Planning Commission is grateful to these members for their invaluable contribution to the Planning Commission. Each member has contributed to ensure each project maintained a balanced approach to meet the expectations of the community, economy, environment and industry best practice.

Their contribution has helped achieve a new level of consultative land use planning in the Northern Territory, and has seen a number of strategic plans and policies incorporated into the Northern Territory Planning Scheme.

OUR MEMBERS



Mr Brendan Dowd
Member
(appointed 9 April 2015)

Brendan is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the City of Darwin, the capital city of the Northern Territory of Australia. Brendan has over 30 years' experience in local government and prior to taking up the CEO's role nine years ago, he was the Director of Technical Services at the City of Darwin. Prior to moving to the Northern Territory 15 years ago, he held a range of senior executive positions in South Australia.

Brendan holds a degree in Civil Engineering, a Graduate Diploma in Municipal Engineering and a Master of Business Administration. He is also a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management and has recently been on a panel that reviewed the *Northern Territory Local Government Act*. Brendan also attended Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, Senior Executives in State and Local Government in July 2015.



The Hon Denis Burke
Ex officio member
(appointed 1 August 2014)

Denis is the Chair of the Development Consent Authority, which is a statutory committee dealing with land and development applications throughout the Northern Territory.

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

He is a former politician, serving in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly from 1994-2005, including in various ministerial roles and as Chief Minister of the Northern Territory from 1999 to 2001.

He served in the Australian Army, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and commanding the 2nd Cavalry Regiment in Darwin before entering politics.



Dr Paul Vogel
Ex officio member (appointed 14 November 2016)

Dr Paul Vogel was appointed as the Chair of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) on 14 November 2016.

Now a non-executive board director and strategic consultant, Paul was Chair of Western Australia's Environmental Protection Authority from 2007 to 2015. Paul was the inaugural Chief Executive and Chair of the South Australian Environment Protection Authority from 2002 to 2007 and previously held senior executive positions in the WA Departments of the Premier and Cabinet and Environmental Protection.

Paul has a PhD in chemistry from the University of Western Australia and has extensive knowledge and experience across a broad range of environmental issues and sustainability, organisational and regulatory reform, and in delivering strategic environmental and business outcomes.

Paul is also:

- ▲ Chair of a national Cooperative Research Centre on Contamination and Remediation of the Environment (CRC CARE)
- ▲ Director of the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) Australian Research Impact Advisory Board
- ▲ Director of Global Aquatica (Australia)
- ▲ A member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

OUR MEMBERS CONTINUED



Mr Wayne Kraft
Ex officio member
(appointed 1 October 2015)

Wayne has been a resident of the Northern Territory since 1972. A long-term resident of Alice Springs, he has also lived in Tennant Creek, Darwin and Barrow Creek.

He was a founding Board Member of the NT TAB, a past Member and Chair of the Museums and Art Galleries Board of the NT, and is the current Chair of the Heritage Council, having been appointed in October 2015.

He was the long term owner of the Overlanders Steakhouse in Alice Springs and sold this business in early 2016, after 27 years.



The Hon Gary Nairn AO
Chairman (appointed 1 January 2013
to 31 January 2017)

Gary was the Chair of the Northern Territory Planning Commission and a Member of the Board of the NT Environment Protection Authority.

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.

During his parliamentary career he was the Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister Howard from 2004 to 2006 and Special Minister of State from 2006 to 2007. His responsibilities in these roles included water reform, e-Government, Commonwealth properties, the Australian Electoral Commission and five Government Business Enterprises.

Gary lived in the Northern Territory from 1980-1995 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 immediate past Chair of the Tasmanian Spatial Information Council (TASSIC) and is the immediate past Chair of the Spatial Industries Business Association (SIBA). Mr Nairn was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the June 2015 Queen's Birthday Honours.



Dr Bill Freeland
Ex officio member (appointed 1
January 2013 to 13 October 2016)

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 Northern Territory. He is a former academic, Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory, and Director of the Conversation 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 Environmental 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, ecologically sustainable development and tourism development.

OUR MEMBERS CONTINUED

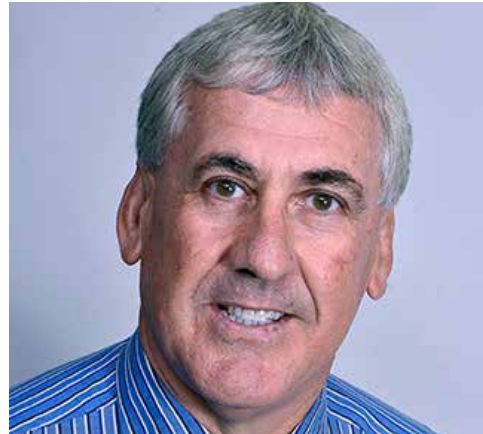


Dr Ken Johnson AM
Member (appointed 9 April 2013 to 12 May 2017)

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.

Ken received his Order of Australia Medal (AM) in the 2008 Queen's Birthday Honours List.



Mr Denys Stedman
Member (appointed 9 April 2013 to 12 May 2017)

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.

MEETING ATTENDANCE

THE PLANNING COMMISSION HELD FOUR MEETINGS IN 2016-17:

In accordance with the *Planning Act* (NT) the Planning Commission is to meet as often as necessary, however must meet at least four times per year.

MEETING	PRESENT	APOLOGY
23rd Meeting - 16/8/16	Gary Nairn Dr Bill Freeland Wayne Kraft Denis Burke Brendan Dowd Denys Stedman	Dr Ken Johnson
24th Meeting - 4/10/16	Gary Nairn Dr Bill Freeland Dr Ken Johnson Denis Burke Brendan Dowd Denys Stedman	Wayne Kraft
25th Meeting - 29/11/16	Gary Nairn Dr Ken Johnson Denys Stedman Wayne Kraft Denis Burke Brendan Dowd	Dr Paul Vogel
26th Meeting - 14/02/17	Brendan Dowd Dr Ken Johnson Denys Stedman Wayne Kraft Denis Burke Dr Paul Vogel	Nil

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Work Program



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

WORK PROGRAM

AT THE PLANNING COMMISSION WE:

- ▲ consult with the community to prepare integrated strategic plans, guidelines and assessment criteria
- ▲ review Northern Territory Planning Scheme matters at regular intervals
- ▲ advise on significant development proposals
- ▲ hold hearings on behalf of the Minister for Planning Scheme Amendments and Exceptional Development Permits

PLANNING PRIORITIES

We prepare strategic land use plans that anticipate growth and set frameworks 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 that are sensitive 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, 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, environment, open space and conservation.

During 2016–17, the Planning Commission made key achievements in guiding the Northern 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 Planning 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. Members finalised the 2014–17 Strategic Plan in early 2015 and it is available in this report and on our website.

An updated Strategic Plan is being developed to guide the Planning Commission's priorities and projects towards 2021.



STRATEGIC PLAN

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

GOALS

Develop integrated Strategic Plans, Guidelines and Assessment Criteria

Advise on Significant Development Proposals Criteria

Regularly Review NT Planning Scheme

Research on Planning Matters

PRIORITIES

Planning for Alice Springs

Planning for Darwin Region

Assist the Minister, as requested, to fulfil statutory duties in respect to consideration of significant development proposals

Assess and update planning provisions

Promote and stimulate discussion on planning priorities and approaches

RESULTS

- ▲ Complete an Alice Springs Land Use Plan
- ▲ Develop a Darwin Regional Land Use Plan as a policy document in the NT Planning Scheme
- ▲ Complete the Litchfield Sub-Regional Plan
- ▲ Guide proposed Area Plans that are referred to the Planning Commission

- ▲ Provide considered and timely significant development reports as required from time to time

- ▲ Recommend building design criteria, including built form, heights and interaction with public space

- ▲ Consider contemporary planning practices from international jurisdictions
- ▲ Foster the development of the NT planning profession in partnership with industry bodies
- ▲ Advise on advocacy and research papers from policy think-tanks and peak industry organisations



Stage 1 Howard Springs community workshop

HOWARD SPRINGS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE AREA PLAN

The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan was introduced into the Northern Territory Planning Scheme in July 2016. This was a major step towards providing an updated strategic land use framework for the Litchfield area. The Subregional Plan was a result of extensive consultation with the rural community about the importance of protecting the rural lifestyle, while planning for future population growth in the area. The Subregional Plan identified the four rural activity centres of Howard Springs, Coolalinga/Freds Pass, Humpty Doo and Berry Springs as locations to focus future housing options and to plan for transport and infrastructure services.

The Planning Commission began work on the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre Area Plan in August 2016. The area plan was developed over a 12 month period, in close consultation with all key stakeholders, including residents, business owners, service authorities, Litchfield Council and the Howard Springs Community Advisory Group.

Stage 1 community consultation started on 10 November 2016 and closed on 16 December 2016. Stage 1 gave the community an opportunity to participate in the planning process by contributing

to developing a vision to meet the future needs of Howard Springs. The Planning Commission wrote to more than 1000 residents to invite them to participate in the consultation. Over 100 residents visited the pop-up stalls at the Howard Springs Shopping Centre and information sessions at Howard Springs Reserve to contribute their ideas for the area. There was 31 residents, including members from the Howard Springs community advisory group, who also attended the community workshop held in December 2016.

Stage 2 consultation started in late February 2017, with the release of three options for a draft area plan. These options were developed from feedback obtained in Stage 1 and in consultation with the Community Advisory Group. Preliminary planning principles were prepared to accompany the draft options.

In consultation with the Community Advisory Group, feedback received during Stage 2 consultation was collated into a draft area plan. In June 2017, the Commission endorsed the draft area plan and recommended it to the Minister for public exhibition.



Stage 1 Coolalinga/Freds Pass community information session

COOLALINGA/FREDS PASS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE AREA PLAN

The Planning Commission began working on the Coolalinga/Freds Pass Rural Activity Centre Area Plan in August 2016, commissioning a report on key infrastructure.

Stage 1 community consultation started on 8 May 2017 and closed on 9 June 2017. Stage 1 gave the community an opportunity to participate in the planning process by contributing to developing a vision to meet the future needs of the Coolalinga/Freds Pass area. As Coolalinga services the rural area as a subregional hub, the Planning Commission wrote to more than 7000 Litchfield residents to invite them to participate in the consultation. Over 310 residents visited pop-up

stalls at Coolalinga Central, Woolworths Coolalinga, Freds Pass Markets and the Freds Pass Show to contribute their ideas and aspirations to staff members present.

Community information sessions held in May 2017 were attended by 38 residents, and 41 residents attended two community workshops. Members of the Coolalinga community advisory group attended each of these events.

In consultation with the Community Advisory Group, feedback received during Stage 1 consultation has been collated. The community advisory group will continue to work through community feedback as part of creating the area plan, which will continue into the 2017-18 financial year.

*Aerial of Tennant Creek*

TENNANT CREEK LAND USE PLAN

The Tennant Creek Land Use Plan will build on the five principles outlined in the Tennant Creek Regional Land Use Framework, introduced into the Northern Territory Planning Scheme in June 2013. These five principles are as follows:

- a. provide for orderly and appropriate land use and development catering for a growing population using development options including urban infill and subdivisions at Tennant Creek 'East' consistent with the Tennant Creek Regional Land Use Framework and any other area plans in Part 8 of the NT Planning Scheme applicable
- b. affirm the primacy of the existing business hub on Paterson Street with convenience shopping needs being supported by future neighbourhood facilities of limited floor space as required
- c. preserve the existing rural character of established small lot rural subdivisions south of the town
- d. provide appropriate areas for future industrial development to the west of the town, which includes access to arterial road and rail networks, while preserving and protecting natural drainage systems
- e. protect the Kelly Well and Cabbage Gum borefields from inappropriate land uses and development.

The Planning Commission has started preliminary work on the background investigation reports that will be used to inform the preparation of a discussion paper. The discussion paper will be the subject of stakeholder and community consultation, ahead of preparing the draft Tennant Creek Land Use Plan. Stage 1 community consultation is anticipated to begin in late 2017.



Aerial of Darwin Waterfront and City Centre

CENTRAL DARWIN AREA PLAN

Darwin is significant as the capital of northern Australia. Central Darwin contains many places important for the Northern Territory as a whole and for the growing inner city population and workforce.

The Planning Commission has started preliminary work on an area plan for the Central Darwin Area –covering Larrakeyah and Cullen Bay, through to the Darwin Waterfront, Frances Bay and all areas in between.

This project is an opportunity to focus on how land use planning can help shape a thriving, vibrant

city centre. It will give the community, industry, and decision-makers a degree of confidence and understanding about potential land uses into the future.

The project builds on, and brings together, previous studies, projects and consultation, such as the Darwin City Centre Master Plan, as well as current works and studies.

Stage 1 consultation on this project is expected to commence in late 2017.



Stage 1 Central Palmerston community information stall

CENTRAL PALMERSTON AREA PLAN

Over the past decade Palmerston has achieved growth rates substantially higher than the rest of the Darwin region. With the completion of its remaining eastern suburbs, Palmerston is likely to accommodate more than 40 000 people in the future.

The Planning Commission undertook a review of the Palmerston City Centre Planning Principles and Area Plan to provide the community with a more contemporary area plan that balances population growth with the lifestyle aspirations of the community.

In late 2016, the Planning Commission launched Stage 1 community consultation with the release of a discussion paper, an industry briefing and

presentations to Council and local MLA's, bringing together key stakeholders to discuss the needs and aspirations for the Palmerston central business district (CBD). Invitations to meet us at information sessions and pop-up stalls were sent to 14 000 homes. We spoke with over 150 people, and received submissions from the community, industry and government. Overall, the public supported the consultation process and a number of people expressed their appreciation for being involved.

Since Stage 1 was completed, the majority of work has centred on completing key infrastructure reports. It is anticipated that Stage 2 community consultation will occur during the 2017-18 financial year, after the key infrastructure reports are completed.

*Alice Springs CBD*

CENTRAL ALICE SPRINGS AREA PLAN

Alice Springs is the largest urban centre outside of Darwin and Palmerston and is seen as Australia's inland capital. Alice Springs has developed as a significant regional economic hub serving the remote areas of the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

In 2016, the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan was included in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme, evolving the direction of growth in the region. Amendments to the NT Planning Scheme have introduced design guidelines and created opportunity to grow the CBD to eight storeys, prompting a look at the 20 year old area plans.

To cater for change and to keep up to date with current planning for Alice Springs, the Planning Commission has started preliminary work on an area plan for the Central Alice Springs Area, covering the CBD and surrounds.

Developing area plans include consultation with key stakeholders, land owners and the general public, ultimately to be included into the Northern Territory Planning Scheme as a policy document. The Central Alice Springs Area Plan project is an opportunity to build on and bring together previous studies, projects and consultation to cater for long-term population thresholds, and ensure the new Central Alice Springs Area Plan aligns with the updated strategic planning.



Image provided by Australian Institute of Architects: Performance Criteria Workshop

NORTHERN TERRITORY PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

Throughout our consultation on the Darwin inner and mid suburbs area plans in 2015, the issue of building design was raised many times by residents and industry stakeholders. Many expressed concerns that new residential developments, particularly apartment buildings, were visually unattractive, not conducive to the Northern Territory's tropical lifestyle, dependent on air conditioning and not properly landscaped, among other things.

Additionally, planning for the development of activity centres proved difficult as the Northern Territory Planning Scheme places significant constraints on achieving proper mixed use buildings in Zone C (Commercial).

This project responds to these concerns by reviewing performance criteria in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme, to improve building design outcomes in medium to high density residential buildings and facilitate improved mixed use buildings in Zone C.

In November 2015, the Planning Commission released the draft discussion paper 'Review of the NT Planning Scheme Performance Criteria'.

We have continued to work on this project throughout 2016–17, working with industry groups and local government to develop performance criteria to assist designers and developers to achieve improved outcomes for mixed use buildings in commercial zones and residential developments in higher density residential zones.

Work on this project, including further consultation, is expected to continue through 2017–18 to further refine possible changes to the NT Planning Scheme to:

- ▲ reduce building bulk in Zones MR (Medium Density Residential) and HR (High Density Residential)
- ▲ improve the interface of residential and commercial buildings with the street
- ▲ improve passive surveillance through design
- ▲ increase separation between buildings
- ▲ introduce measures for better transition between higher and lower density zones
- ▲ encourage better outcomes in mixed use developments/activity centres without the requirement for a specific use zone
- ▲ improve the functionality of Zone C (Commercial).

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

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:

- ▲ strategic planning of the Northern Territory
- ▲ natural environment or existing amenity
- ▲ 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 Planning Commission must consider the objects of the Planning 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 Northern Territory.

There were no significant development proposals referred to the Planning Commission in 2016–17.

PLANNING COMMISSION HEARINGS

In June 2016, an amendment was made to the Planning Act which resulted in the Planning Commission conducting hearings for Planning Scheme Amendments and Exceptional Development Permits exhibited after 28 July 2016.

If an application for a Planning Scheme Amendment or Exceptional Development Permit is lodged with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and submissions are received, the Planning Commission holds a hearing on the submissions received, on behalf of the Minister.

Once a Commission hearing is conducted, the Planning Commission gives a report to the Minister about all the issues raised at the hearing and in the submissions, and any other matters the Planning Commission thinks the Minister should take into account when making a decision about the application.

The Planning Commission does not make any decisions on Planning Scheme Amendments or Exceptional Development Permit applications. The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics

is the person who makes the final decision about those applications.

There were 9 Planning Commission hearings held in 2016–17.

THE YEAR AHEAD



Stage 1 Central Palmerston community information stall

In 2017–18, the Planning Commission will continue 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 departments, industry and the community to develop our strategic plans.

The Planning Commission will continue to work on the following land use plans:

- ▲ Tennant Creek Land Use Plan
- ▲ area plan for Central Darwin, including the CBD, Darwin Waterfront, Esplanade, Larrakeyah, Cullen Bay, Myilly Point, Frances Bay and the Old Tank Farm
- ▲ area plan for Palmerston City Centre and Periphery, including the employment hubs of the CBD, Yarrowonga, Gateway Retail Centre and Palmerston Medical Precinct
- ▲ area plans for the Coolalinga/Freds Pass, Humpty Doo and Berry Springs rural activity centres
- ▲ Central Alice Springs Area Plan to update the current plans.

We will continue to develop performance criteria to assist designers and developers to achieve improved outcomes for mixed use buildings in commercial zones and residential developments in higher density residential zones.

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Community Engagement



NORTHERN TERRITORY
PLANNING
COMMISSION

ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY

The Planning Commission seeks community input and feedback to produce strategic plans and policies 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 Planning Commission must consult with the community before preparing strategic plans, guidelines and assessment criteria to include in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme. The Planning 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 Planning 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 on the procedures for developing and managing engagement strategies for our projects and establishes criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the consultation.

The engagement policy is guided by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation.

The Planning 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 Planning Commission, or as requested by the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

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.

The Planning Commission's consultation process can be summarised by three stages:

Stage 1

Information gathering and analysis, including community engagement.

Stage 2

Prepare a draft plan/policy informed by initial community feedback and other information obtained during Stage 1, and under further consultation on the draft plan/policy.

Stage 3

Finalise the plan/policy and recommend it to the Minister for exhibition as a proposed Planning Scheme amendment.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

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

- ▲ community groups
- ▲ local government
- ▲ members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly
- ▲ industry associations
- ▲ environmental groups
- ▲ Aboriginal land councils
- ▲ traditional owners
- ▲ non-government organisations
- ▲ Northern Territory and Australian government departments
- ▲ consultants
- ▲ media.

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



Stage 1 Coolalinga/Freds Pass community information stall

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS

In 2016–17, the Planning Commission delivered 10 presentations to stakeholders.

This included stakeholders such as local government, industry groups, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and many others.

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

- ▲ media releases
- ▲ discussion papers
- ▲ mail-out to residents and landowners and distributing flyers in public spaces

- ▲ letter drops
- ▲ public information displays
- ▲ public information sessions
- ▲ workshops.

The Planning Commission spoke to more than 700 people and received 45 written submissions in relation to developing strategic plans and policy this financial year.

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



Stage 1 Central Palmerston community information stall

CASE STUDY

HOWARD SPRINGS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE

The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan 2016 anticipates the need for 500 new dwellings in Litchfield in the next five to 10 years, and approximately 20 000 dwellings in the longer term. To accommodate growth, the subregional plan identifies areas for further investigation and detailed planning, including greenfield sites at Holtze, Hughes/ Noonamah and Murrumujuk, and the existing rural activity centres of Howard Springs, Coolalinga/Freds Pass, Humpty Doo and Berry Springs. The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan includes land use concept plans for each rural activity centre, which are used as the starting point for technical investigations and community consultation.

Howard Springs is the first rural activity centre that the Planning Commission developed planning principles and an area plan for, to provide a more detailed planning framework for future development. Although Howard Springs is the smallest of the rural activity centres, the planning principles and area plan will help to clarify aspects for the other rural activity centres such as how lot sizes will transition from the commercial centre to the surrounding rural area.

Preparatory work included the appointment of Tonkin Consulting to undertake engineering studies, and discussions with Litchfield Council, Power and Water and relevant Northern Territory Government departments to identify high level opportunities and constraints for the rural activity centre. These stakeholders formed the Howard Springs Project Control Group.

Litchfield Council also sought nominations for Howard Springs residents who would commit to being part of the Howard Springs Community Advisory Group (CAG) for the project. The CAG played a central role in working with planners to distill public feedback at the end of each stage of consultation, draft area plan options and inform key features of the final area plan. The role of CAG members also included participation in information sessions and the community workshop, alongside other interested residents, throughout consultation.

On 10 November 2016, the Planning Commission launched the project for public consultation with the release of a discussion paper. Stage 1 was an opportunity for the community to participate in the planning process by contributing to developing a

vision to meet the future needs of Howard Springs. Stage 1 community consultation closed on 16 December 2016.

Stage 1 consultation focused on gathering information, building an understanding of stakeholder issues and sensitivities and providing sufficient opportunities for community feedback. Flyers were sent to all land owners in the Howard Springs post code to inform them that work on the area plan had started and to encourage community involvement in the area planning process. Land owners with land in the transition or core areas of the land use concept plan also received a letter from the Chair of the Northern Territory Planning Commission inviting them to attend the community workshop. Letters and flyers were hand delivered to residences and businesses within the transition and core areas of the land use concept plan to ensure people most affected received the information.

Distribution of information and involvement of the community was encouraged through the following community engagement activities:

- ▲ print advertising in the Northern Territory News and Sun Newspaper
- ▲ a dedicated page on the Northern Territory Planning Commission website, including times and dates of public displays, contact details to receive submissions and answer enquiries, and an online feedback form
- ▲ pop-up stalls at the Howard Springs Shopping Centre
- ▲ community information sessions at the Howard Park Reserve
- ▲ a community workshop at the Howard Park Reserve.



Stage 1 Howard Springs Community Consultation workshop

HOWARD SPRINGS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE

The engagement activities undertaken by the Planning Commission sought to:

- ▲ provide clear, balanced and consistent consultation by delivering a range of different engagement opportunities to encourage involvement for all stakeholders
- ▲ build on the work of the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan to create a greater understanding of stakeholder issues and sensitivities
- ▲ promote improved knowledge and understanding of the land use planning process and its role in delivering community aspirations for the future of the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre.

During Stage 1 consultation, 10 written submissions were received from the public in addition to submissions from Northern Territory Government departments and service authorities. In addition, 64 residents spoke with Commission staff at the pop-up stalls at the Howard Springs Shopping Centre to contribute their ideas for the area. A total of 45 residents and affected stakeholders attended the community information sessions held on 29 November 2016 and 30 November 2016.

A total of 31 residents, including members from the CAG, attended the community workshop on 3 December 2016, which was held on a Saturday to make it easier to attend. The community workshop presented a number of scenarios to participants who recommended acceptable responses with the support of planners and other experts. The scenario themes were “aging in place”, “mosquito management”, “traffic management”, “vision for the rural activity centre” and “extent of the rural activity centre”.

In response to feedback from Stage 1, planners worked with the Howard Springs CAG and Litchfield Council staff to produce three draft area plan options. Preliminary planning principles were also prepared.

Stage 2 community consultation was launched on 27 February 2017. During this consultation, the Planning Commission actively consulted with stakeholders and the community, with submissions requested before 31 March 2017. Stage 2 was an opportunity for the community to provide comment on the three draft area plan options and planning principles.

Like Stage 1, Howard Springs land owners and residents had various opportunities to provide verbal and written feedback to the Planning Commission. During Stage 2 consultation, approximately 170 people provided feedback. Of those, 127 people provided comment at pop-up stalls, 23 people at open days and 20 through written submissions.

Following Stage 2 consultation, the Howard Springs CAG, planners, and Litchfield Council staff discussed the public submissions received in Stage 2, reviewed the draft planning principles and incorporated public feedback into a draft area plan. The Howard Springs CAG agreed to the following key points and these were incorporated into the proposed planning principles and area plan:

- ▲ no Zone MD (Multiple Dwelling Residential) to be included in the area plan but allow Zone MD density for the development of a retirement village
- ▲ Zone SD (Single Dwelling Residential) should be kept to a defined area with a minimum lot size of 800 m²
- ▲ acceptance of the Transition Area, including the minimum 0.4 hectare lot size, with a minor extension of the transition area to include all lots within 400 metres of the commercial centre
- ▲ identify Madsen Road as the priority road with a connector road to Smyth Road.

The Planning Commission recommended the planning principles and an area plan for the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics on 16 June 2017.

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Financial Performance



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

PLANNING COMMISSION

BUDGET

The Planning Commission is financially supported by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

The Northern Territory Government allocated \$522 000 to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to fund the Planning Commission to develop strategic plans and planning policy, and to advise on significant development proposals. From 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, the Planning Commission expended about \$293 000 or 56 per cent of the budget.

The total expenditure of \$293 000 includes \$16 000 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 \$16 000 in notional income.

The Planning Commission came well under its allocated budget for 2016–17 due to the Lands and Planning Branch of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics performing a number of planning studies.

OPERATING STATEMENT

The annual operating statement has been prepared from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics' accounts to reflect the financial activity of the Planning Commission.

PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL OPERATING STATEMENT

	2016-17	2015-16
	\$'000	\$'000
INCOME		
Appropriation	506	507
Goods and services received free of charge	16	82
TOTAL INCOME	522	589
EXPENSES		
Commissioner		
Employees	172	221
General	105	115
Secretariat		
Employees		33
Purchase of goods and services		35
Goods and services received free of charge	16	82
TOTAL EXPENSES	293	487
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	229	102

PLANNING COMMISSION BUDGET 2015-16 TO 2016-17

2015-16

BUDGET \$,000	ESTIMATE \$,000	% CHANGE BETWEEN BUDGET AND ESTIMATE	ACTUAL \$,000	% CHANGE BETWEEN ACTUAL AND ESTIMATE
624	589	5.61%	487	17.32%

2016-17

BUDGET \$,000	ESTIMATE \$,000	% CHANGE BETWEEN BUDGET AND ESTIMATE	ACTUAL \$,000	% CHANGE BETWEEN ACTUAL AND ESTIMATE
540	522	3.34%	293	43.87%



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