

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 7.7.2016

SUBJECT: Amendment to the Planning Act

1. The Amendment to the Planning Act was one of the multiple bills passed hurriedly by the government on the last day of Parliament (27.6.2016)

2. The amendment reduces the effect of local and public input into planning. It diverts the 'reporting' process in dealing with Planning Scheme amendments, from local panels of the Development Consent Authority(DCA), to one member of the NT Planning Commission reporting to the Minister. This lack of relevant local impact is an insult to the public.

The 'reporting' is to the Minister for his decision.

3. This amendment to the Planning Act was made without any consultation with the public.

The still existing Planning Act states in the Objects (Clause 2A) the following:

Sub clause (f-g)

'Ensuring as far, as possible, that planning reflects the wishes and needs of the community through appropriate public consultation and input in both

formulation and implementation of planning schemes, and

fair and open decision making and appeals processes.'

4. Local governments, each formerly with members on local DCA panels, were given two days to comment. We are aware that Darwin, Palmerston, and Litchfield Councils rejected the amendment for obvious reasons, but the government did not change the amendment.

5. We cannot agree with the Minister's and Commissioner's media statements that the Commission's style of consultation on Area Plans is an acceptable alternative to local DCA panels. The public has already commented that 'consultation' as superficial, but the Commissioner has not listened and accepted this..

6. The Commission was established for long term strategic planning, not day to day approvals matters. It has nearly completed its legitimate role, and does not need to be a permanent body.

7. The amendment was arranged in secret from the public.

8. At a similar time, two senior and very experienced planners were removed 'upstairs' from their positions. Each had been responsible for one of the two streams in the 'planning process', ie.

development assessment, and amendments to the planning scheme.

9. The 'proposed' changes were communicated to councils, over the signature of an officer ex an entirely different departmental section, but not the signature of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department, Mr Rod Applegate.

10. How can this rushed Amendment to the Planning Act, put together without public consultation, be accepted as in the public interest ?

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Note:

I will be out of contact on the afternoon of 7.7.2016