



PO Box 2513, Darwin, NT 0801

margaret.clinch@bigpond.com.au

Convener's Annual Report for 2011

This has been another intense year for our community organization.

In December, 2010, NRETAS suddenly ended the Environmental Hub in Shop 9 at the Rapid Creek Business Village. We had to vacate quickly, but once we found Shop 23, they gave us an operating grant, for leasing until the next funding round. With the computer, and basic furniture, which the Northern Territory Government (NTG) kindly deemed to us, we set up in May in a shopfront office. We have consolidated since then.

This space means we can supply information to those visitors, and people phoning on 0466997023, or 89271999, or emailing. An NTG Community Grant paid for the friendly expertise which built our new attractive interactive website at planinc.org.au.

Shop 23 has space for reception, computing, research, discussions, small workshops, displays, storage, and for monthly committee meetings. We open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 1-5pm, and some Sundays. We are all volunteers. With public liability insurance, we can now roster volunteers. Please contact us to join in, and get some in-service training. We need to open longer hours to better help the community.

PLan continued its regular routine work of improving community planning by responding to NT Planning Notices published in the NT News each Friday. We attended Development Consent Authority (DCA) meetings and hearings on development applications, proposed planning amendments, often for rezonings, etc. Concern grows on multiple Exceptional Development Permit (EDP) applications, and the current failure of the online system to deal with them. These are often major significant projects affecting the public.

A long track record shows that the DCA meetings, and the current appeals process fails to achieve balanced planning. The community needs. With the NTG's emphasis on development, there is no channel for

planning sustainable communities in terms of social, cultural, environmental and long-term economic impacts.

Over the years, perhaps most tragic has been the failure of hours of sincere verbal and excellent written submissions by concerned and advised community members, and the government's own experts given at DCA hearings, to be allowed to influence ministerial decisions on planning. We ask who really makes these decisions and for whom? Our nascent Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has a long way to go, before it can do its proper job of protecting us and our environment.

During 2010, with Palmerston development rushing ahead again, much work was done by PPlan, and particularly, by local resident Sue McKinnon, to re-awaken awareness of the special environmental character of the Mitchell Creek Catchment, as an urban catchment to be zoned CONSERVATION (CN), like the Ludmilla Creek and Rapid Creek Catchments.

This special status is already formally recognised in the Palmerston East Area Plan, a key part of the Northern Territory Planning Scheme (NTPS) as what the community is entitled to expect. This was based on a paid consultant's report to the Department of Planning. The Minister and some staff were part of organised visits to the catchment, and recently stated his pleasure to an NRM conference, mentioning Sue's work.

Early in 2011, we were thrilled to be told that the CONSERVATION (CN) zoning of the Mitchell Creek Catchment was now going ahead. We were devastated however to find that the zoning would be basically less than 100 metres wide and not replicate the broad coverage to the Roystonea Avenue shown in the Area Plan. This is basically a betrayal of the community. The Minister has since refused our requests to meet with him to discuss this with him. This WRONG MUST BE RIGHTED.

Of major impact on planning and thus, PPlan's work, was the new Greater Darwin Region Land Use Plan towards 2030: Consultation Paper, issued by the Department of Planning. This strategic plan is for all broad land uses in Greater Darwin mirroring projected growth in the economy and population. Most significant are the infill approach for Darwin itself, residential village centres and subdivisions in the rural area, and a satellite city at Weddell.

There was a public consultation. However we are unsure how the implications will be felt. The assumptions of community and developers

on this are quite different. Gerry Wood and Kesia Purick, parliamentarians in the rural area, have led off with an alternative response to the proposed rural villages. Their constituents are strongly defending their chosen way of life. Residents in the northern suburbs of Darwin will need to stay awake, or they will lose their green open spaces.

Most welcome is a exhibition of entries to two competitions run by the NTG on designs for Weddell - one for appropriate tropical green house design, and one about community design layouts – currently on display at the CDU Art Gallery in the new Chancellery building on campus. The Planning Minister, in opening it, commented that it could mean the end to block houses currently being built.

Another very positive move, given the current housing shortage, was the November, 2011 Territory 2030 Conference: a Balanced Housing Market, chaired by Vicki O’Halloran. It presented a packed program of practical ways to supply a range of housing, affordable to different market categories. Experience showed was that **basic to success is real consultation with community at the very beginning of the process.**

We are not satisfied by Defence Housing Australia(DHA)’s decision to ignore the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works’ formal recommendation that it engage a social planner in laying out Muirhead, and from that, Investas’ decision not to include any community purpose or commercial lots in the total of about 1000 lots being laid for the NTG by DHA. Neither are we impressed with the DCA’s present response.

There has been no response on any proposal to use the unoccupied RAAF houses at Winnellie as temporary stop gap accommodation.

Following our representations to David Ritchie, the CEO Planning in 2010, our working relationships with some staff are better, with the unfortunate exception of the Mitchell Creek Catchment issue in Johnston. We have also been included in more invitations, and this makes for better relationships. What is disappointing is lack of direct access this year to Minister Gerry McCarthy and Minister Karl Hampton on vitally important matters such as the Mitchell Creek Catchment.

PLan continues to be concerned about the future of Little Mindil. Minister Gerry McCarthy has refused to release a copy of the land title agreement between Sky City Casino and the NT Government. We regard this as a public document. What is there to hide ?

PLan supports on local issues all over the NT, wherever possible.

Congratulations to Friends of Namarluk at Ludmilla on their achievements, particularly keeping their Community Purposes' zoned lot, and their recent public opening of their 'state of the art' land care walk for the Ludmilla CreKarama residents appealed unsuccessfully against the approval of a long four/three storey apartment complex where adjoining residences are one and two levels high. Residents were also disappointed when technically well informed opposition to a telecommunications facility at the shopping centre, was dismissed.

In Alawa, long term residents were first kept in the dark, and then seriously ignored over the movement of Ludmilla Special School onto the school precinct, being told they had no right to object. In Nightcliff, residents met over the impact of an apartment development on the corner of Nightcliff and Ryland Roads. In Fitzmaurice Drive residents are fighting for their bushland buffer. There are also issues at Bayview.

In Palmerston we have been concerned about the use COMMUNITY PURPOSES(CP) land given to CDU for educational purposes, as a residential housing estate. Residents of adjoining Durack have been dissatisfied over lack of response in consultation with developers CIC.

The building of the INPEX plant at Blaydin Point will put to test all the promises made in EIS documents. We remain concerned for the dugongs, dolphins and Catalina wrecks in the dredging process. Spillage at the East Arm port has been a Darwin Harbour problem in 2011. We hope this is over.

In Alice Springs, there have been big planning changes of concern to residents. The [Alice Springs News](#) (on line) reflects this. They ask they be consulted **before** fundamental changes are made from Darwin.

Subdivision applications for smaller lots occur often in the rural area. Full assessment for land capability, effect on significant natural environments, water and sewerage infrastructure, conflict with agricultural/horticultural use, useable lot sizes, seasonal inundation, all weather access, unencumbered house sites, and other special factors is essential.

One thing 'out of the box' was when PLan was recognised by the Convener being given a TRIBUTE award by the NT Government, on the occasion of the 100th International Women's Year. All enjoyed the lunch.

New Objectives for 2012

Going forward, we will hold small workshops to help people respond effectively in the planning process, including densification.

Moving on, we plan to use other venues for larger public workshops, on such topics as community planning, housing choice, heritage preservation, green open spaces, tropical energy ratings, storm surge, environmental management, sometimes in combination with other groups and agencies.

Preparing ourselves to support such activities has been a major purpose behind our consolidation efforts this year.

New Members

We need now to be sure people have the know how to achieve better planning for the community.

More members and supporters are needed to do this, You would meet nice people and learn a lot..

Please join if you are not already a member.

Nominate for the PPlan Committee if you can.

And to our loyal committee members

–Thank You, Thank You, Thank You

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Convener.

