

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**URGENT INTERVENTION REQUIRED – 145 HA UNIQUE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT AT THREAT**

Nick Kirlew, Convener of PLan: The Planning Action Network today released a letter to the NT Minister for Planning, the Federal Government Ministers for Defence, Finance and the Minister for Defence Personnel all of whom are listed as being responsible for the Defence Housing Authority. The letter calls for an immediate intervention over the imminent destruction of a 145ha unique coastal environment at Lee Point.

The background to this call is the following:

- The Northern Territory Development Consent Authority is due to consider this development on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2018. There were only two public submissions about this development which indicates a serious failing in the Defence Housing Authority's process of seeking public input over the development.
- There is a 1,200 page environment impact statement which is being assessed by the NT Environmental Protection Authority, that assessment is not complete.
- Both Darwin City Council and Power Water have expressed issues with the scale of the development and the lack of detail offered by the proponent.
- In an earlier stage of the Defence Housing Authority development in the area, the Commonwealth Government's Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PSCPW) consulted publicly with local people and stakeholders, including our organisation. Then, in its formally printed report to the Commonwealth Parliament, its Recommendations stressed that social infrastructure be provided at Muirhead. Their intention was clearly that there would be a publicly managed Community Centre, similar to the one provided for Lyons. Since then the Community Purpose (CP zoned) land was allowed to be sold by the Defence Housing Authority for private commercial development, and still stands vacant. No community centre has been provided.
- Lee Point, and the Casuarina Coastal Reserve are much favoured by the Darwin population for recreation. The Reserve is the most visited in the Northern Territory.
- A Compact Zoning scheme being used by the Defence Housing Authority has recently been imported to the Northern Territory by its previous government. This has a small lot/high density residential layout clearly inappropriate for our tropical environment. 40% of the blocks on these two developments will be less than 550sqm, we have recently seen development where the distance from the house to the back fence to the house is just 1m. This flies in the face of tropical housing design.
- The proposal includes a tourist precinct that will introduce 3-4 apartment towers of which two could be 12 storeys, and one in the reserve buffer zone. The calls for public comment by the Northern Territory Government for this important suburban development were held

over the 2017 Christmas season. This creates precedence by placing towers in suburban Darwin. Blight on the landscape and additional pressure on the fragile coastal strip.

- By zoning the entire development FU (Future Use) it is impossible for an interested party to comprehend the final layout of the development. This is not an open process.

Mr Kirlew went on to explain:

These massive DHA projects have a responsibility to communicate with the community to ensure that all stakeholders have had an opportunity to have their say. Consultation over the Lyons and Muirhead developments were held and the Lyon's Community Centre is an excellent example of DHA and stakeholders creating a better outcome.

There has been no public planning consultation by the Defence Housing Authority for several years. PPlan has been unable to get a response over this project in the last 10 months. The calls for comment were held during the 2017 Christmas season which is a difficult time for the public to attend to large development applications. At that same time there were multiple calls by the NTG for major HAVE YOUR SAY submissions both for the Planning Reform of legislation and process, and the document Planning for a Vibrant Future which covered the whole NT.

The environmental value of this area is not in dispute by any reasonable entities in the Territory. Landcare groups are very concerned about environmental impacts on the Casuarina Coastal Reserve, including protecting international migratory sea birds, land based endangered species like tree rats, and native birds, like bands of black cockatoos.

For more details see the PPlan website: <https://planinc.org.au> or call media contact Nick Kirlew 0447 499 794.

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