



## Australian Institute of Architects

9 November 2017

Central Alice Springs Area Plan  
NT Planning Commission  
GPO Box 1680  
Darwin, NT 0810

### **Re: Alice Springs Area Plan**

The Northern Territory Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Planning Commission's Discussion Paper, "Central Alice Springs Area Plan." The Planning Commission's review of the Area Plan offers a unique opportunity to establish a strong, meaningful and visionary planning framework for central Alice Springs. The Institute has identified a number of issues for your consideration as you move into the next phases of developing the Plan.

#### **1. Vision**

The Institute believes that a clear and well articulated vision for Alice Springs should be the starting point for a new Area Plan. An ambitious vision of an Alice Springs with a strong regional identity will encourage the community to champion the plan. Such a vision would include Alice Springs as an international exemplar of a sustainable town in an arid environment; Alice Springs as a model remote town expert in water sensitive urban design. With predicted rises in summer temperatures, Alice Springs could lead the way in best practice urban design responses, including continuous shading along commercial street frontages, increased tree canopies to mitigate the effects of heat gain within the town centre, and improved opportunities for shaded and active east/west arcades and other public spaces. Alice Solar City demonstrated a keen community interest in sustainable energy production. A visionary Area Plan could also establish targets for reductions in energy and water demand as well as reductions in resources used and waste produced.

#### **2. Scale**

Planning instruments should ultimately use as their measure, the human scale. The best intentions of planning can often be lost in the technical language of "zoning, infrastructure, parking metrics, growth forecasts, transport corridors." What do residents need to make their lives in Alice Springs more pleasant? How can a walk to the shops be enhanced? How can a cyclist ride to work more safely? How can visitors travelling by train feel a sense of arrival to this unique place, and more easily find their way into town? How can someone who works in the Western industrial area enjoy more shaded green space during a lunch break? How can public transport be improved to encourage ridership and eliminate the need for more car parking? Human aspirations should be at the centre of planning considerations, and the lens through which planning decisions are made.

#### **3. Social Inclusion**

Alice Springs is a culturally rich place, where diversity should be celebrated and encouraged to flourish. A visionary Area Plan might better foster genuine social inclusion through more public parks and multi-use spaces within the CBD. Instead of pushing visitors to the margins, a vibrant town would welcome all to its well resourced gathering spaces within the CBD. There is at present very little for young people to do in the town centre. The Area Plan could consider more safe spaces for young people to gather and feel part of the broader community. This could include more skateboarding opportunities or outdoor music venues integrated with other public activities. It might also include cycle friendly public spaces with ample room to walk and ride.

#### **4. Economics**

Not all challenges can be addressed by design alone. A vibrant and safe town is characterised by human activity on the street. With so many empty shops and street frontages in the CBD, an Area Plan might include incentives for property owners to ensure their buildings are occupied. Loading zones along street frontages clash with

pedestrian activity and detract from a street's vibrancy and character. Property owners might be encouraged to more meaningfully contribute to the public realm by minimising these areas, moving them away from public activity.

The Australian Institute of Architects applauds the Planning Commission's focus on the Central Alice Springs Area Plan. We welcome the opportunity to continue to work together in shaping a better and more visionary Area Plan for Alice Springs.

Yours sincerely,



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This submission was prepared with contributions from Andrew Broffman, Susan Dugdale, Deepika Mathur and Yash Srivastava.