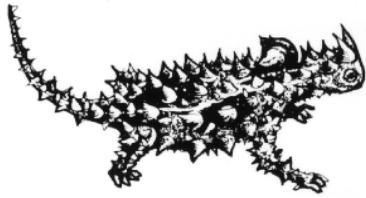


Arid Lands Environment Centre, Inc.



Office 90 Gap Rd, The Gap
PO Box 2796 Alice Springs
Mail NT 0871 Australia
Phone +61 (08) 8952 2497
Fax +61 (08) 8953 2988
E-mail info@alec.org.au
ABN 50 100 640 918

Central Alice Springs Area Plan: Arid Lands Environment Centre Submission

The Arid Lands Environment Centre (ALEC) is central Australia's peak environmental organisation that has been advocating for the protection of nature and ecologically sustainable development of arid lands since 1980.

ALEC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the finalisation of the Central Alice Springs Area Plan. Land use planning on this localised and fine scale is integral to facilitating space that provides for improved community wellbeing, prosperity and social cohesion. Notwithstanding the detail in the plan we submit that the effectiveness and equity of the plan could be improved:

1. Need to embed climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies as a key factor influencing the use and enjoyment of all zones. The climate in central Australia is already changing and the plan needs to be responsive to those changes.
2. Narrow and limited scope in the incorporation of "sustainable development". It needs to be embedded as *ecologically sustainable development* as an objective.
3. Exaggerated emphasis on the use of the CBD for commercial and economic purposes in zones that provide a multitude of informal social, leisure and environmental spaces. Community wellbeing is not guaranteed by increased commercial and retail spaces.

Commercial focus

The CBD performs other functions in addition to acting as one of the core economic zones. Commercial opportunity and retail services are vital to protecting the use of the region, but it also provides informal spaces for meeting, leisure and public amenity that should be given more priority.

"Fundamental to the long-term economic success of Alice Springs is the continued primacy of the CBD for commercial and retail activity"

The central area may be the primary region for retail and commercial uses but retail and commercial are not the primary or exclusive uses. The primacy of the CBD extends beyond economic and commercial functions. The non-commercial uses of the space should be given more priority, so those zones are better maintained. It is important that the plan can prevent the encroachment of commercial activity that may not always be appropriate as it could impact natural amenity.

The Todd River (Lhere Mparntwe) also plays a vital role in social and community space for the people who live in Alice and visit from other nearby communities. Designating the zone as conservation limits the ability of planning to provide amenity and facilities to people who use and enjoy the river for its ecological functions and diverse place making ability.

The various spaces within the CBD are essential for maintaining and improving community wellbeing and social cohesion. Community wellbeing should be included as a primary objective of the plan.

Climate Change and sustainable design

It is positive to see arid climate suitability design as an objective of the plan. However, the plan is weakened in its ability to be responsive to climate without acknowledging climate change as a key factor affecting the use of space in the central area. Climate change is already causing changes in arid climate and is a threat to the central area in terms of amenity, comfort and accessibility.

In recognising the impact of climate change, the plan could facilitate strategies that aim to improve resilience and reduce vulnerability such as prescribing a tree canopy target, installing more shade covers to improve pedestrian amenity and researching methods to reduce the heat island effect within the CBD.

Climatic changes will likely influence the movement of people through the area and how they spend their time. Shade and green spaces are going to become increasingly important. There could be scope for installing more water infrastructure such as bubblers and accessible showers. Adaptation planning should therefore be included as an objective within the plan to facilitate those projects.

The provision regarding sustainable development is vague and may therefore not be strong enough to influence development outcomes. Development needs to do more than respond to best practice sustainable design, it needs to embed the principles of ecologically sustainable development. This could facilitate the inclusion of mandatory efficient building design, linking active transport networks and giving greater priority and visibility to cycling infrastructure.

Overall the Central Alice Springs Area Plan provides a balanced, well considered and flexible blueprint to guide development in the most popular zones. However, it could be expanded to give greater priority for the need to respond to climate change, embed ecologically sustainable design as a key planning priority and introduce community wellbeing and social cohesion as key outcomes and objectives.