Mataranka
Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives
MATARANKA
PLANNING CONCEPTS
and
LAND USE OBJECTIVES
2001
MINISTER’S MESSAGE

Mataranka is the southern gateway to the Katherine Region and an increasingly important location of tourist activity. Its continued growth and development is dependent on a clear land use planning framework to guide and encourage development and associated infrastructure in appropriate locations.

The *Mataranka Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2001* are included in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme as land use objectives and incorporated documents. They provide the policy framework to guide the future development of Mataranka.

The planning concepts and land use objectives have been developed in consultation with the local community, including the Mataranka Community Government Council. I thank the community for their participation in the preparation of this document and look forward to their continuing involvement in the future development of the town.

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Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment
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1. INTRODUCTION
Mataranka is located approximately 100 km south of Katherine on the Stuart Highway, just north of the junction with the Roper Highway, as shown on Figure 1. The area received a significant increase in national awareness at the turn of the century following the publication of Jeannie Gunn’s *We of the Never Never*, the story of life on Elsey Station. The area was originally known as Bitter Springs, but was renamed by the Administrator, Dr J A Gilruth, in 1916 when he established the Mataranka Horse and Sheep Experimental Station.

The original Town of Mataranka was officially gazetted in 1928 with the arrival of the railway through the community. After a flurry of activity during World War II, the town has settled back to a role as a service centre for tourists visiting the nearby springs and other travellers on the “Track”.

2. PLANNING CONCEPTS AND LAND USE OBJECTIVES
The area covered by these planning concepts and land use objectives (“the policy area”) is shown on Figure 2. It includes the area within the Mataranka Community Government Council boundary and NT Portions 859, 2255, 3069 and 3960.

The Mataranka Community Government Council was created in 1985 under the Local Government Act to supplant the original Town. A range of services are provided within the Council area including the provision and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities, museum, cemetery, roads, Ginty Airstrip, tourist promotion, rubbish and litter collection.

A review of available information has been undertaken as a part of the preparation of the Mataranka Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2001. Issues identified in the course of this review and through consultation with the local community and various government agencies, provided the basis for developing the planning concepts and formulating the land use objectives. They include:

- identification of land for agriculture and horticultural uses;
- development of appropriate infrastructure to meet the needs of the community;
- improvement in the town’s appearance and amenity;
- improvement in commercial performance and community participation; and
- the need for greater appreciation of the landscape and environmental values of the region.

3. INTENDED OUTCOMES
Together, the planning concepts and land use objectives advance the following outcomes for land use in Mataranka:

- improved living conditions through a pattern of appropriately located land uses that show compatibility between activities, and the timely provision of serviced land;
- identification of opportunities for additional rural residential use;
- appropriately located intensive agriculture and industrial uses;
- identification and promotion of a town identity based on its historic settlement;
- enhancement of open space around the town through maintenance and improvement programs; and
- protection of places of cultural importance.

4. PLANNING CONCEPTS
The planning concepts shown at Figures 3a and 3b have been made as incorporated documents in accordance with section 27(1)(b) of the Planning Act.

The concepts illustrate recommended locations for major land uses to accommodate current needs and the future growth of the community. Some of the recommendations are current while others will only be achieved in the longer term. The concepts reflect a recommended land use pattern for Mataranka. These were formulated following inspection of the area, discussions with the community and Council, and consideration of land capability assessment and recent infrastructure development.
4.1. Residential Use
Adequate land for urban and rural residential purposes is available in the town area. Urban residential development should be concentrated along Stirling Street and a future extension of Gunn Street, south of Warloch Street. The area along Carew Road, south-west of the airstrip, has been designated for Rural Living. Further development of commercial horticulture in this area should be limited to avoid potential conflict between intensive agricultural practices and residential amenity.

4.2. Community Use
Existing community facilities within Mataranka are shown on the planning concepts as community uses. These include the school and library, the Council office, the airport, the borefield, the Health Clinic, and the Police Station and adjacent lands. Vacant Crown land on Carew Road is identified for future community uses.

4.3. Tourist/Commercial Use
Tourist and commercial uses are primarily focussed along Roper Terrace in the town. Apart from existing commercial development along Roper Terrace, additional tourist and commercial uses could be developed on vacant Crown land along Roper Terrace to Carew Road. Vacant Crown land north of the school (Lot 70) could be developed for tourist or commercial uses.

Other tourist related uses include Territory Manor and the Mataranka Homestead. Additional tourist and commercial development could be located within the town along the future extension of Gunn Street through to Carew Road.

4.4. Industry
The only significant industrial activity in the area is a lime processing plant, located at the junction of the Roper and Stuart Highways. Other industrial uses could be encouraged to establish in this location given its existing activity and access to natural gas.

4.5. Agricultural/Pastoral
Preliminary investigations identify potential for horticultural activity in the Mataranka area. However, more detailed investigations are required to assess soil capability and water availability before specific suggestions can be made. Land potentially suitable for horticultural activity includes areas identified for agriculture/pastoral in Figures 4a and 4b. It should be noted that intensive agricultural activity could be in conflict with adjacent residential uses. Therefore, consideration should be given to the provision of buffers between such uses to avoid the reduction of rural residential amenity.

4.6. Open Space
There are two land use categories for open space in the planning concepts. ‘Open Space – Recreation’ relates to land used for recreational pursuits such as the racecourse and cricket ground and Stan Martin Park.

‘Open Space – Conservation’ relates to land used for conservation of the natural environment and land used as a natural or landscaped buffer. This includes Elsey National Park, the bed of Roper Creek, land around the airstrip and land along the Stuart Highway.

4.7. Transportation
Figure 3b indicates a possible alignment for a Stuart Highway bypass, as well as future local street extensions within the town. Existing accesses from Roper Terrace to Martin Road and the recreational reserve will need to be removed should the bypass be constructed. The realignment will include high level road connections onto Roper Terrace at either end.
5. LAND USE OBJECTIVES

The land use objectives are shown shaded. It is only those shaded words that are “made” by the Minister as land use objectives in accordance with section 25(1)(a) of the Planning Act.

The land use objectives should be read in conjunction with the proposed planning concepts at Figures 4a and 4b and the supporting information in Section 6.

5.1. KEY LAND USE OBJECTIVES

The key land use objectives for Mataranka are:
To encourage orderly and appropriate land use and development within the town;

To enhance the quality of life of Mataranka’s residents by encouraging the provision of appropriate services and community facilities;

To enhance the economic base of the town, by encouraging the establishment of recreational, tourism and agricultural facilities in the town and region;

To protect and enhance the natural, cultural and historical resources of the town for the benefit of residents and visitors; and

To optimise the use of existing services and infrastructure, and promote the efficient provision of services and infrastructure.

5.2. SPECIFIC LAND USE OBJECTIVES

Land use objectives specific to particular issues are identified below along with suggestions as to how they may be achieved.

5.2.1. Urban Structure and Design

To ensure an adequate supply of urban and rural residential land.
This can be achieved by encouraging the development of new residential areas in advance of demand.

To encourage the development of tourist-related facilities at strategic locations.
This can be achieved by implementing the Northern Territory Tourism Development Masterplan and the Mataranka component of the Katherine Regional Tourism Development Plan.

To provide an appropriate location for industrial activities.
This can be achieved by encouraging new industrial developments to locate near the existing lime processing plant.

5.2.2. Culture and Lifestyle

To increase the appeal of the town for residents and visitors.
This can be achieved by:

- providing facilities such as public toilets, rest areas, appropriate signage and shaded pedestrian links;
- developing parking areas for visitors with caravans; and
- developing day-use areas.

To continue with the development of visitor facilities and interpretation of the area in Mataranka.
This can be achieved by planning and developing picnic facilities and public toilets.

5.2.3. Environment and Conservation

To retain and enhance a significant area of vegetation on the approach to the town.

To protect the conservation, heritage and landscape values of Mataranka and the surrounding area.
This can be achieved by encouraging the:

- identification and retention of significant natural areas for conservation, including corridors between natural areas, to maintain landscape quality and amenity in the community; and
- conservation and enhancement of items, structures and places of historic, scientific or cultural significance, including Aboriginal relics and sites.

5.2.4. Transport and Infrastructure

To develop and maintain infrastructure that effectively meets the needs of the community.
This can be achieved by:

- efficient utilisation of the existing infrastructure;
- planning for the realignment of the Stuart Highway and connections from the town to the Highway and
- providing for the extension of the internal road network to service new land developments as required.
6. PLANNING CONTEXT AND EVALUATION

This section provides a discussion on the opportunities and constraints for land use and development in Mataranka.

6.1. POPULATION

The total population of Mataranka recorded at the 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census was 667 persons. This included 227 residents and 440 visitors.

6.2. EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use in the policy area is shown on Figures 4a and 4b.

Tourist/commercial uses are found primarily on the south-west side of the Stuart Highway, with a few dwellings in the streets behind and on the rural allotments further south-west along Carew Road. Formal recreational open space in the community is limited. Ovals are established on the school grounds, and adjacent to the racecourse. Community uses include the primary school and library, the Council Offices and Museum, a Police Station, Health Clinic, water supply infrastructure, cemetery, power plant and a telephone microwave facility. The 900 m Ginty airstrip is a legacy of World War II activity in the area.

The Territory Manor resort and Mataranka Cabins (Bitter Springs), located north-east of the town, and the Mataranka Homestead resort on Homestead Road, capitalises on the hot springs on the Waterhouse River in Elsey National Park. The Park provides a number of walking trails leading to the Roper and Waterhouse Rivers.

Two Aboriginal living areas administered by the Mataranka Aboriginal Land Trust are located between the original townsit and Roper Creek. A town camp area is owned by the Guyangan Aboriginal Corporation.

A lime processing plant is situated at the junction of the Roper and Stuart Highways south of town, with a connection to the gas pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin. The rest of the policy area is largely devoted to pastoral activities.

6.3. LAND TENURE

Current land tenure is shown on Figures 5a and 5b. Large areas of land within the policy area are held by the NT Land Corporation and the Conservation Land Corporation.

Parts of NT Portion 2255 were subject to land claims at the time of this report, and therefore are not available for alternative use until the land claims are resolved. Cave Creek Station, in the north-east of the policy area, is a Crown Lease Term, while NT Portion 5623 is in freehold title.

The Mataranka Aboriginal Land Trust is the registered freehold owner of the two Aboriginal Living Areas to the east of the town. In the town itself, a number of urban and rural-sized blocks are vacant Crown land.

6.4. INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Water supply is reticulated to the town area by the Power and Water Authority (PAWA) from two bores located at the junction of Martin Road and the Stuart Highway, within the old railway reserve. Both ground level storage and elevated storage are established at this location. Additional bores will be required if the demand for water increases significantly, and the storage facilities and reticulation main may also require upgrading. Water availability does not appear to pose a constraint to additional development in Mataranka.

Sewage is presently disposed of through individual septic tanks and transpiration beds on each block.

Electricity to the town is provided by PAWA on a 22 kV line from the gas turbine generating plant in Katherine. A 420 kW diesel generator is located south of town to cater for Wet season and other planned and unplanned supply interruptions.

Natural gas from the Amadeus Basin flows through a pipeline to the west of town, with a branch line across to the lime processing plant. No service is provided into the town itself.

6.5. TOPOGRAPHY AND FLOODING

Parts of the policy area may be subject to flooding from the Roper Creek and the...
Waterhouse River. However, no comprehensive study of the flood potential of the town has been made and it is difficult to accurately determine flood levels for events of 1% AEP (Annual Exceedance Probability). In the absence of suitable flood mapping and data, land development proposals should demonstrate that the potential for flooding is minimal.

The northern part of the policy area, east of the Stuart Highway adjacent to Roper Creek, is generally low-lying with black soil flats and subject to Wet season flooding.

6.6. LAND CAPABILITY

Land which is potentially suitable for irrigated horticulture or cropping is located within the Tindal aquifer boundary. These land units are characterised by sloping plains, sandy red earths and tall open woodland.

6.7. TRANSPORTATION

The Stuart Highway bisects the Mataranka policy area from north-west to south, providing excellent road access to the town. The Stuart Highway runs past the townsit on the north-eastern side. The Department of Transport and Works is responsible for the care and management of the Stuart Highway, Roper Terrace, John Hauser Drive and Martin Road. All other roads within the town are the responsibility of the Council.

In order to improve safety for visitors to Mataranka, the Department of Transport and Works plan to realign the Highway in a parallel corridor approximately 150 m north-east of the present alignment. The details of this proposal have not been finalised, but an indicative alignment is shown on Figure 3b. The proposed realignment of the Highway provides the opportunity for redevelopment of the land between Roper Terrace and the new Highway alignment for an integrated tourist rest stop and parkland.

The 900 m unsealed Ginty Airstrip provides daylight access by air to the community. Although the now abandoned North Australian Railway between Darwin and Larrimah ran through Mataranka alongside the Stuart Highway, no rail service will be provided to the community by the Australasia Railway (NT Corridor) which will be constructed to the west of the policy area.