BORROLOOLA
PLANNING CONCEPTS
and
LAND USE OBJECTIVES
2001
Minister’s Message

Borroloola has a long and interesting history, going back as far as 1885. In the early days it witnessed the passage of pastoralists who overlanded cattle from Queensland to establish stations in the Gulf country as well as prospectors making their way to goldfields in the Territory and the Kimberley region. As a port, it provided entry to the area for other settlers and was a landing point for supplies and materials for the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line from Adelaide to Darwin.

The Borroloola of today is significantly different. It remains one of the most geographically isolated towns in the Northern Territory and in Australia. However, with the commencement of operations at the McArthur River Mine, the economy of the area has diversified and no longer depends solely on pastoralism as the dominant industry. As with other centres in the Territory tourism has also provided some benefits, with the nearby coast being a popular destination for recreational fishing. The town remains an important service centre to the region.

The Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives have been developed in consultation with the local community, including the Borroloola Community Government Council. They provide a policy framework, for the future development of the town in an orderly manner and in line with community expectations.

The Borroloola Land Use Objectives have been made under section 25(1)(b) of the Planning Act 1999. The Planning Concepts have been made as an incorporated document pursuant to section 27(1)(b) of the Planning Act 1999. Under the Planning Act 1999, these form part of the Northern Territory Planning Scheme, as does the existing Borroloola Town Plan 1984.

I thank the local community for its participation in this process and I look forward to its continuing involvement in the future.

TIM BALDWIN

Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment
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1. PLANNING CONCEPTS AND LAND USE OBJECTIVES

These Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives establish a policy framework to preserve and enhance the key attributes of the town. They also address current deficiencies and points of conflict, and provide for future town growth to occur in a coordinated and economic manner.

1.1. INTENDED OUTCOMES

Together, the Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives advance the following outcomes for land use in Borroloola:

- a strategic and performance based approach to land use and development decisions;
- improved living conditions through a pattern of appropriately located residential, commercial and industrial land uses that show compatibility between activities, and the timely provision of serviced land for these uses;
- protection of land and water resources;
- promotion of a town identity based on historic settlement and high quality open space;
- protection of vegetation and prevention of land degradation.

2. PLANNING CONCEPTS

Borroloola Planning Concepts 2001

The Planning Concepts for Borroloola (Figure 6), which is an incorporated document within the meaning of the Planning Act, illustrate the recommended locations for major land uses to accommodate current needs and the future growth of the community. The following commentary provides the rationale for the concepts.

2.1. RESIDENTIAL USE

Two primary areas are indicated for future residential use. One is the land surrounding the power station and the adjacent light industrial sites. The other is the land above the 1% AEP flood level which is located directly to the south of the New Town residential area. Layout and design of both of these areas would have to be cognisant of the topography and land capability. It should also be noted that most of the Yanyula Camp area is below the 1% AEP flood level. Any additional housing in this area should be flood-proofed or designed to avoid inundation.

2.2. COMMUNITY USE

The major community use areas include the airport, the museum, the Council office, the school and community education centre, the borefield, the power station, the health clinic, the police station and adjacent lands.

2.3. COMMERCIAL USE

This use is focused along Robinson Road, both in the Old Town and New Town areas. On the Planning Concepts, these areas are indicated for commercial use, however it is recognised that this land also has potential for residential, community, and tourist uses.

Commercial land could be further developed between Robinson Road and the airport in the short term, as surveyed lots are located in this area. Because of the proximity of this area to the airport, some attention may have to be given to dust and noise abatement measures to reduce the impact of aircraft movements.

2.4. INDUSTRY

The existing industrial uses, which are located on Robinson Road and in the New Town, could eventually be relocated to an indicated industrial area on land adjacent to the racecourse south of the Carpentaria Highway. This would provide land in the New Town for additional residential and commercial uses.

The truck service depot, Barkly Earthmovers and the Council depot which are all within the 1% AEP should eventually be relocated, to provide a more attractive “front door” to the town.

2.5. OPEN SPACE

This classification includes land for recreational pursuits and all land not proposed for other use (Figure 6). The racecourse and cricket grounds are so designated, as well as the school oval and the multi-purpose paved courts just north of the school.

An open space corridor will be provided along Rocky Creek directly to the south of the Yanyula living area. This corridor will serve to link the two existing open space zones indicated in the Borroloola Town Plan 1984. A Council swimming pool is proposed for Lot 826 on land indicated within the Planning Concepts as open space.
3. LAND USE OBJECTIVES

The Land Use Objectives should be read in conjunction with the Planning Concepts (Figure 6) and the supporting information in section 4 and in the context of the development provisions of the Northern Territory Planning Scheme contained within the Borroloola Town Plan 1981.

The Land Use Objectives are shown shaded and it is only those words which are “made” by the Minister as Land Use Objectives within the meaning of the Planning Act.

The land use objectives for Borroloola are:

- To encourage orderly and appropriate land use and development within the town.
- To enhance the quality of life of Borroloola’s residents by encouraging the provision of appropriate services and community facilities.
- To provide for appropriately located recreational and tourism development.
- To protect and enhance the natural, cultural and historical resources of the town for the benefit of residents and visitors.
- To optimise the use of existing services and infrastructure, and promote the efficient provision of services and infrastructure.
- Implementation of the Northern Territory Tourism Development Masterplan and the Borroloola component of the Katherine Regional Tourism Development Plan.
- Provision of adequate land suitable for tourist-related facilities within close proximity of Robinson Road (Figure 6).

To provide an appropriate location for industrial activities.

This can be achieved by encouraging the development of a new industrial area on land adjacent to the racecourse south of the Carpentaria Highway (Figure 6), and the relocation over time of industry to it.

Culture and Lifestyle

To increase the appeal of the town for residents and visitors through the provision of community services and recreational facilities.

Such facilities may include:
- public toilets, rest areas, appropriate signage and shaded pedestrian links;
- parking areas for visitors with caravans;
- day-use areas on the McArthur River adjacent to the boat ramps;
- a public swimming pool;
- visitor facilities; and
- an interconnected open space network within the town.

Environment and Conservation

To minimise the impact of development on water supply areas.

This can be achieved by:
- prohibiting all but low density residential development which use an appropriate sewerage system within the aquifer recharge area (Figure 3);
- ensuring that no development occurs within close proximity of the town bores to the west of the New Town residential subdivision (Figure 6).

To protect vegetation which has significant ecological or amenity value.

The removal of vegetation from land with a slope greater than 10% is discouraged. The formulation of land clearing guidelines and land use controls will assist in the protection of vegetation of land vulnerable to degradation.

To protect the conservation and heritage values of Borroloola and the region.
This can be achieved by encouraging the conservation and enhancement of items, structures and places of historical, ecological or cultural significance.

Transport and Infrastructure
To develop infrastructure that effectively meets the needs of the community. Future planned infrastructure may include:

- a town camp sewage disposal system to include all developments in the town;
- sealing the northern road to the cemetery, rubbish dump and Bing Bong Road; and
- upgrading of the Wollogorang Road and the Burketown crossing.
4. PLANNING CONTEXT AND EVALUATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In the 1800s, Borroloola was a crossroads for the legendary pastoralists who drove cattle from Queensland along the tracks pioneered by Leichhardt in 1845 and Gregory in 1856. Favourable reports on the suitability of the Gulf region for grazing led to the establishment of stations such as Wollogorang, Brunette Downs, McArthur River, Bauhinia and Glencoe. Prospectors also passed through en route to mineral deposits across the Territory and in the Kimberleys. Settlers also trickled into the area over this period, when Borroloola was a significant port at the head of tidal navigation on the McArthur River.

A police outpost was established at Borroloola in 1886 to control some of the more rowdy rogues who preyed on travelling prospectors and graziers. The region has continued to be noted for its characters. However, economic activity in the area clearly displays a cyclical theme, with periods of high expectation and optimistic projections followed by periods of decline and lethargy. The community languished somewhat once the track through Camooweal and the Barkly Tablelands became the preferred route into the Territory from the east in the early 1900s. But the Carpentaria Highway was eventually sealed to Borroloola in 1968 and the community has endured, celebrating its centenary in 1985.

The role of Borroloola as a service centre for the Gulf Region is now recognised. As shown on Figure 1, it is centrally located near the junction of roads north to Roper Bar, west to Daly Waters (Carpentaria Highway) and east through Wollogorang to Queensland. The community is approximately 50 km from the mouth of the McArthur River on the Gulf of Carpentaria. It has become a well-known destination for fishermen and an important service centre for Gulf Aboriginal communities, tourists and the mining and pastoral industries.

4.2. SCOPE, ADMINISTRATION AND ISSUES

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 Town of Borroloola, the Mara Aboriginal living area in the Narwinbi Aboriginal Land and NT Portions 3588 and 3589.

Within the town boundary, the Borroloola Community Government Council, created under the Local Government Act, provides a range of services, including the provision and maintenance of housing, parks and recreation facilities, roads and boat ramps, tourist promotion, rubbish and litter collection.

The Rrumbruriya Malandari Aboriginal Council administers the Yanyula, Mara and Garawa 1 Aboriginal living areas, and provides contract services in the town area. The Garawa 2 camp is self-administered with funds being channelled through the Borroloola Community Government Council.

Outside the southern boundary of the town, two lots: NT Portions 3588 and 3589 are held by the Borroloola Amateur Race Club Inc. and the Borroloola Cricket and Sporting Club, respectively, as Crown Leases in Perpetuity. The remainder of the land outside the town boundary is owned and administered by the Northern Land Council in trust.

The Borroloola Town Plan, gazetted in April 1984, established a control framework for developments within the town by setting out permitted and consent land uses. The Gulf Region Land Use and Development Study was declared in October 1991 and contains planning and development objectives for the larger region surrounding Borroloola.

This exercise has reviewed current needs of the community, prospects for development as well as ongoing activities, and the increasing tourist interest in the region. Issues identified through consultation with the public and various government agencies provided the basis for developing the Planning Concepts and formulating the Land Use Objectives.

4.3. POPULATION AND GROWTH

The Department of Local Government estimates the population of Borroloola including outstations and an annualised
measure of tourists to be approximately 900 persons as at June 2000.1

Commencement of operations at the McArthur River Mine has not made a large difference to the level of population or economic activity in the town, as the bulk of the mining workforce is flown directly to the minesite from Darwin. Some of the mine maintenance staff live in Borroloola. In addition, Hampton Transport Services, a Darwin-based firm, has contracted to haul concentrate from the mine to a marine shipping terminal on the coast north of Borroloola, and has established a truck service depot for their road trains in the southern section of the town, opposite the Council depot.

No major growth impetus is anticipated to impact Borroloola in the near future, although there could be some development resulting from increased tourism into the region.

4.4. EXISTING LAND USE

There are two distinct areas in the town: north of, and south of, Rocky Creek, which discharges into the McArthur River from the west. The “Old Town” area lies south of Rocky Creek and accommodates the Community Government Council offices, depot and residences, a Health clinic, the Borroloola Inn, the McArthur River Caravan Park, the historic Old Police Station, the Rrumburriya Malandari Council Aboriginal Corporation (RMAC) office, a service station and shop, and a number of industrial uses, including the service depot for the McArthur River Mine concentrate road trains. The aerodrome is also located here.

Borroloola’s primary residential area lies to the north of Rocky Creek in the “New Town”, along with the Yanyula Aboriginal living area, the school and community education centre, the health centre, Borroloola Holiday Village, the power station, police station, some industrial uses, shops and the post office. The town borefield adjoins the residential area (Figure 3). Currently, an Aboriginal women’s shelter is under construction on the portion of Lot 595 adjacent to the police station.

Two other Aboriginal living areas, Garawa 1 and Garawa 2, are found within the town, east of the McArthur River and a third, Mara, is located just outside the north-western boundary of the town. The racecourse and cricket grounds are immediately south of the Carpentaria Highway partially inside and outside the town boundary.

Industrial activity is established at both ends of the Town. On the southern approach, Hampton Transport’s truck service depot is located next to Barkly Earthmovers, across Robinson Road from the Council depot. H&R Developments’ yard is just north of the Council offices. At the north end of the community, near the power generation site are a couple of other industrial operations.

Developed, formal recreational open space in the community is limited, with Council multi-purpose courts located just north of the school. An oval is established on the school grounds, and the cricket club and racecourse are to be found on the south side of the Carpentaria Highway. Two boat ramps provide access to the McArthur River, at the mouth of Rocky Creek and behind the Council depot.

King Ash Bay (Batten Point) on the McArthur River, some 40 km north-east of Borroloola outside the policy area, is the site of major seasonal recreational fishing, with facilities provided and administered by the Borroloola Boat and Fishing Club. A half kilometre long strip on the north bank of the river accommodates up to 400 campers during the height of the Dry season.

4.5. LAND TENURE

The bulk of the land within the town boundary is vacant Crown land as shown on Figure 2. There is a good deal of disparity between current tenure and occupancy, with a number of licensed and unlicensed occupations on Crown land. The surveyed lot pattern in the Old Town is of little relevance for the most part, with the airport now occupying part of the area, and land erosion into Rocky Creek effectively removing those lots west and south of the Old Police Station.

The Aboriginal living areas within the town are held under Crown Lease in Perpetuity. The Rrumbuuriya Malandari Housing

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1 NT Grants Commission 3 year average 1998/2001
Association also has freehold title over eight other lots within the town, which are developed for residential use, and one under Perpetual Lease for office use.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities
Water supply to the town is provided by PAWA from 5 bores located just west of the New Town residential subdivision. Three of these are inside the town boundary (Figure 3), and two are outside. Water is pumped to a storage tank on Trig Hill where it is treated. Water supply does not appear to pose a significant constraint to additional development in the town.

Water is reticulated to the developed areas of the town on the west side of the McArthur River and to the Mara Aboriginal living area. A bore water supply serves the Garawa 1 and 2 camp areas. The aquifer recharge area is located to the north of the town (Figure 3). To adequately protect this resource, only low density residential developments which use appropriate sewerage systems should be permitted within the aquifer recharge area. Industrial and higher density developments should only be located outside the recharge area. Sewage is presently disposed of through individual septic tanks and transpiration beds on each block. The primary New Town residential area north of Rocky Creek has a shallow soil cover which poses problems for normal septic tank disposal. ATSIC has undertaken to construct treatment works for effluent from the camps. In February 2000, sewage from Yanyula and the two Garawa camps was connected to a lagoon system on land south of the racecourse outside the town. The second stage of this system will extend the trunk main to the Mara camp, and also pick up non-Aboriginal residential and commercial areas north of Rocky Creek.

FLOODING

Parts of the Town of Borroloola are located in areas subject to flooding from the McArthur River and Rocky Creek. Figure 4 illustrates the extent of anticipated flooding from a 1% AEP flood event (1 in 100 Annual Exceedance Probability = the likelihood of occurrence of a flood of this magnitude or larger in any one year, expressed as a percentage). Although the extent of the Maximum Probable Flood has yet to be determined, it should be noted that developments above the 1% AEP flood level, but below the level of the Maximum Probable Flood could also be inundated.

The minimum floor level for habitable rooms within dwellings in this area is 300 mm above the level of the 1% AEP flood as required by the Northern Territory Building Regulations 1993. All emergency and essential services should be located outside the level of the 1% AEP flood. All other proposed developments in the area which would be inundated by a 1% AEP flood should take steps to protect against floodwaters, by building up the site, and/or other relevant flood proofing measures. The latter could include the use of piers or split-level/two storey construction, with ancillary, less essential, activities at the lower level, or the use of construction methods and materials, which would exclude flood waters from entering a building, or which resist deterioration during inundation.

Existing residential uses, essential services, service stations and fuel depots, which are below the 1% AEP flood level can remain where and as they are, but relocation or flood-proofing is recommended and encouraged.

LAND RESOURCES

The mapping of soils, vegetation and landform characteristics are presented as land units, which provide a guide to the capability of land to support various land uses, and as an indication of where degradation may occur as a result of inappropriate land use (Figure 5). Soil, vegetation and landform characteristics pose a significant constraint to additional development in the town. This is particularly true in southern areas of the town (including Old Town), which possess relatively large areas of eroding, cracking, and flood plain soils that are not desirable for residential development.

TRANSPORTATION

Borroloola is located on the Carpentaria Highway, which crosses the southern portion of the town to the McArthur River. This road is sealed one lane wide from Daly Waters to the McArthur River mine, and two lanes wide from the mine to Borroloola. Causeways provide access across the McArthur River channels to the eastern portion of the town and the
Wollogorang Road carries on east from there to Queensland. The Department of Transport and Works maintains these roads. No plans are current for upgrading these roads, although investigations have been carried out for eventually bridging the river at or near the present crossing.

All other roads within the town are the responsibility of the Council. An unsealed gravel road leads north out of the town off Searcy Street to the rubbish dump and cemetery, and on towards the Bing Bong Road and King Ash Bay (Batten Point) on the McArthur River. The two-lane sealed Bing Bong Road bypasses the town on the west, providing access from the McArthur River mine to the port and concentrate loading facility on the Gulf coast, west of the Sir Edward Pelley Islands.

Within the town, the principal collector, Robinson Road, runs north from the Carpentaria Highway approximately four kilometres to the Mara Camp, crossing Rocky Creek at about the 2.4 km point. Several local streets provide access off Robinson Road to residential, service and industrial areas.

The 1300 m sealed airstrip in the Old Town area provides daylight access to the community by air with a scheduled service to/from Darwin.