

15 October 2019

Department of Infrastructure,
Planning and Logistics
GPO Box 1680
DARWIN NT 0801

Attention: John Harrison

Dear Sir,

Darwin's Civic and State Square Master Plan

The Property Council of Australia is the peak body representing the property industry in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory Division collectively represents billions of dollars of commercial investment in the Northern Territory. The value of the property industry to the NT economy is second only to the resources sector.

The Property Council's membership draws together key players from property investment and development including owners of commercial office buildings and shopping centres, financial institutions, and construction companies. Our membership also extends to those engaged in professions, businesses and provision of services directly associated with the property industry.

As an industry, we not only have a keen interest, but also a financial investment in the future development of Darwin's Central Business District. We appreciate and take seriously the opportunity to provide comment on the latest Civic and State Square Master Plan.

Darwin City Deal

The Property Council (NT) is one of the strongest supporters of the City Deal's projects and the overall revitalisation of Darwin's central Business District. We congratulate the Department for the latest Civic and State Square Precinct Master Plan, a critical component of the City Deal agreement.

Master Plan

Overall, the Property Council (NT) supports the Civic and State Square Master Plan and the vision therein. We believe that this current version is best suited to ensuring Darwin becomes the Capital of the North and revitalises Darwin City.

Precinct Connectivity

The Property Council (NT) supports the additional connections from the Waterfront Precinct (Luxury hotel sky bridge and new stairway onto Smith Street) that will improve both precinct connectivity and the mass movement of people for future festivals and events in State Square.

The Property Council (NT) supports the conversion/closure of Smith Street from vehicle traffic to pedestrian traffic to facilitate future large scale events and festivals, pedestrian safety, cooling, shading and greening, and increasing trade and revitalisation of the Smith Street Mall.

The Property Council (NT) supports the relocation of the bus exchange terminal to the Education and Civic Precinct of Garramilla Boulevard to facilitate the future transport requirements of the Central Business district.

Art Gallery

The Property Council (NT) supports the proposed location for the new Art Gallery and believes that location will improve pedestrian traffic flows and overall connectivity between the Waterfront Precinct, Civic and State Square Precinct and the Central Business District. The Art Gallery in its own right will be a significant destination and attraction for visitors.

Events and Festivals Space

The Property Council (NT) supports the activation and use of the Civic and State Square for large scale events and festivals, however, care will be required to avoid unfair commercial competition against the private sector (existing retailers and property owners). The Property Council (NT), at this stage, reserves its comments with respects to the scale of any such commercial, retail and alfresco to be located in State Square by either the Northern Territory Government or City of Darwin.

Greening and Cooling

The Property Council (NT) supports the increased greening and cooling initiatives within the Master Plan on roads, bitumen car parks, Northern Territory Government and City of Darwin land. However, care will be required to ensure that visual corridors are properly provisioned and maintained of our critical Civic Buildings located within the precinct.

The Chan Building

The Property Council (NT) supports the demolition of the Chan building to facilitate open green space and areas for events and festivals in the State Square Precinct. We note that the tender for its demolition should be released shortly.

Shading and Weather Protection Structures

The Property Council (NT) supports installing shading and weather protection within the State Square Precinct to increase pedestrian movement. However, care will be required to ensure that artistic designs do no overrule practical design outcomes that would actually achieve its intended purpose (weather protection).

Implementation Timeframe

We are mindful that the Civic and State Square has had numerous prior master plans come and go over the past decades. We strongly suggest that an implementation timeframe for the area be made available to create business certainty for industry. We understand that the current priorities are for greening on top of the underground car park (2020) and the demolition of the Chan Building (2020). It would be of further assistance if the department could provide the Property Council with indicative timelines covering the items raised in the Chief Minister's 24 April 2017 press release:

"Three Darwin CDB transforming major projects have been earmarked as priorities – all will begin during this term of Government...

1) Finishing State Square (Stage 1)

This will include:

- *Freeing up space and reducing a major heat generation source by undergrounding 400 carparks near the Supreme Court – with construction expected to start in 2017-18;*
- *Demolishing the Chan Building and moving the NTG computer centre a three-year project which must be carefully handled to protect the Government major computer centre;*
- *Building a Fine Arts Gallery in the State Square;*
- *Moving the bus terminal;*
- *Refurbishing the Old Reserve Bank – which will include updating the building and road parking area for tourist bus and cruise ship connections..."*

Should you have any queries or require elaboration, please do not hesitate to contact me on rpalmer@propertycouncil.com.au or 0450 428 314.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Palmer
NT Executive Director