



RAPID CREEK LANDCARE GROUP INC.

**SUBMISSION TO:
PROPOSAL TO AMEND NT PLANNING SCHEME PA2013/0989**

**REZONING SECTION 5695 HUNDRED OF BAGOT
(47 BOULTER ROAD, BERRIMAH)**

**FROM ZONE CP (COMMUNITY PURPOSES)
TO ZONE MD (MULTIPLE DWELLING RESIDENTIAL)**

FEBRUARY 2014



OVERVIEW

The Rapid Creek Landcare Group has written this submission to oppose the proposal to rezone Section 5695 (47 Boulter Road, Berrimah) from Community Purposes to Multiple Dwelling Residential.

We also raise our concerns about increasing development in the Boulter Road area. This development is encroaching on the important and sensitive wetland habitats in the upper Rapid Creek catchment and threatening the important hydrological function of the creek's headwaters.

We urge the Development Consent Authority, the Minister and the NT Government to reject any rezoning or development applications in this area until the new 'Berrimah North Area Plan' (including a storm water management plan) and the 'Rapid Creek Floodplain Management Action Plan' are complete.

RAPID CREEK LANDCARE GROUP INC.

Found in Darwin's northern suburbs, Rapid Creek and its catchment form the only significant freshwater system in Darwin's urban area and it is a valuable environmental and community asset.

The Rapid Creek Landcare Group's members look after Rapid Creek through regular working bees, by promoting awareness about the creek and by advocating for better management throughout the catchment. The group's website provides a summary (www.rapidcreek.org.au).

RAPID CREEK MANAGEMENT PLAN

One of the Rapid Creek Landcare Group objects is to 'promote the implementation of the broad concepts and principles outlined in the *Rapid Creek Management Plan, 1994*'.

The Landcare Group was represented on the Rapid Creek Catchment Advisory Committee (RCCAC) from its inception in 1996 until it was disbanded in late 2013. The RCCAC was formally established under Section 23 of the *Water Act*; it met regularly and was well attended by its members who represented community, industry and government stakeholders in the catchment. One of the RCCAC's Terms of Reference was 'To participate in the operation, progress and adoption of the resource management principles, policies and actions outlined in the *Rapid Creek Management Plan*.'

THE AREA

Section 5695 falls within the upper Rapid Creek catchment which includes the headwaters of Rapid Creek. The area is the subject of increasing development which is encroaching on the important wetland/swamp communities and is likely to be affecting the slow flow drainage characteristics of the upper catchment.

The *Rapid Creek Management Plan* states '... maintenance of the swamps ... is critical in providing flood attenuation downstream, and also to recharge ground water and maintain stream flows until late in the dry season' and the *Plan* has a high priority strategy for 'maintaining wetlands and slow flow areas in the upper catchment in the present undeveloped state'.

This strategy to maintain wetlands and low flow areas in the upper catchment was generally being achieved through the Community Purposes zoning that was applied to most of the blocks in this part of the upper catchment. The move towards Multiple Dwelling Residential zoning will increase infrastructure density, change the hydrology and is likely to have a detrimental impact on the important role of the upper catchment.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

In August 2013 the Rapid Creek Landcare Group prepared a submission to the *Discussion Paper Towards an Area Plan for the Knuckey and Ironstone Lagoons Locality*. We welcomed the discussion paper as the first step towards a sustainable approach to development in the area. We mentioned that the western part of that study area falls within the Rapid Creek catchment and we raised a number of concerns. The western part of that study area is the Boulter Road area central to this submission.

In November 2013 the Northern Territory Planning Commission's media release stated '... there was broad consensus on the environmental attributes of the Knuckey and Ironstone Lagoons area, and the need for a considered approach to development ... Following the submissions and community workshops and concerns raised as to the impact of further growth on storm water runoff and flooding, the Commission has determined not to proceed at this time with an Area Plan for Knuckey and Ironstone Lagoons ... However, the next steps for planning in this important locality will be the development of a draft Area Plan for the area west of Vanderlin Drive (Berrimah North).' We understand that this new Berrimah North Area Plan will include at least the area covered by the current 2010 *Berrimah North Area Plan*.

Given the increasing developmental pressure on this area it is imperative that the new Berrimah North Area Plan is completed prior to new development proposals or *NT Planning Scheme* amendments being approved. There needs to be community consultation and inclusion of all feedback from the Knuckey and Ironstone Lagoons study. A detailed storm water management plan needs to be included in the new Area Plan to ensure there will be no adverse affects from approved development on the function of Rapid Creek system.

The NT Government is also developing a Rapid Creek Floodplain Management Action Plan to address concerns about flooding issues in the Rapid Creek catchment. A discussion paper released as part of the Action Plan's development states 'planning measures be used to ensure development or re-development in other parts of the catchment is not of a type and extent that would worsen flooding'. It is imperative that the development of the new Berrimah North Area Plan and the Rapid Creek Floodplain Management Action Plan happen concurrently and that hydrological impacts of development in the upper catchment are considered by both.

Two large blocks on Boulter Road are currently for sale (Sections 5875 and 4106), both are completely covered with native vegetation; they have no development on them. A solid planning framework is needed before any decisions are made on such blocks to ensure development does not compromise the environmental values or hydrology of the area.

Of particular concern is Section 4106 which encompasses a paperbark wetland, transitional communities and eucalypt woodland. It is currently zoned Community Purposes and is not subdivided, however the sale advertisement implied it was subdivided into 5 lots. The *Land Clearing Guidelines* require buffers of 200 metres from the edge of a wetland. In the absence of a detailed storm water management plan, the protection to wetlands afforded by the *Land Clearing Guidelines* by a 200 metre buffer should be used. This means all of Section 4106 should be encompassed in a buffer. The 2010 *Berrimah North Area Plan* had a small strip on the western end of this Section proposed for Conservation zoning, we believe the whole of Section 4106 should be rezoned to Conservation in the new Area Plan.

We struggle to comprehend how the current developments on Sections 5602 and 5874 comply with the *NT Planning Scheme* requirements for Multiple Dwelling Residential zoning or the existing 2010 *Berrimah North Area Plan*. It would seem the developments are much more dense than the *NT Planning Scheme* guidelines allow. In addition to our environmental concerns, there are many important community services in the Boulter Road area and there is a strong risk that they will not be compatible with such dense urban developments. The new Berrimah North Area Plan needs to be completed before any further rezoning, subdivision, or development applications are approved.

The Rapid Creek Landcare Group believes planning controls are necessary to protect the undeveloped areas of native vegetation in the upper catchment and to ensure the hydrological and ecological functions of Rapid Creek are protected. The new Berrimah North Area Plan should consider increasing Conservation zoning on particularly sensitive areas, such as Section 4106, and to reverting other Multiple Dwelling Residential areas back to Community Purposes.

Rapid Creek Landcare Group

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