



RAPID CREEK LANDCARE GROUP INC. DECEMBER 2014

**SUBMISSION TO:
PROPOSAL TO AMEND NT PLANNING SCHEME
PA2014/0922**

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 (RCLG) members look after Rapid Creek through working bees, by promoting awareness about the creek and by advocating for better management throughout the catchment. The lower part of the Rapid Creek catchment, including the creek's mouth, falls within the Casuarina Coastal Reserve (CCR). The members of RCLG consider the ongoing integrity of native vegetation throughout the CCR of utmost importance. The RCLG has a long-standing relationship with the Casuarina Coastal Reserve Landcare Group and the two groups support each other's activities. The proposal by Defence Housing Australia (DHA) to rezone Lot 4873 is of interest due to its proximity to the CCR, hence this submission.

CCR is known to be the most highly visited park in the Northern Territory. The Parks and Wildlife Commission NT website indicates that almost one million people visited in 2013. It is an extremely important natural resource within a capital city. The point where Lot 4873 abuts the CCR is one of the narrowest stretches of the CCR. The development proposed by DHA provides an opportunity to widen the CCR. This would provide a larger area to sustain the high visitor load and improved opportunities for wildlife preservation.

The RCLG considers that the western portion of Lot 4873 (identified in the Lee Point Area Plan by a dotted line and the words 'proposed coastal reserve boundary') should be transferred to the NT Government to be incorporated into the CCR and included in its tenure. Prior to handover the DHA should rehabilitate the portion back to a healthy natural state. This will include weed management, erosion management and other activities as appropriate. The Parks and Wildlife Commission NT should not be expected to take possession of land that is not in good condition. All areas of Lot 4873 that are to be retained and managed as native vegetation should be immediately rezoned to Conservation (CN) not Future Development (FD), this includes, but is not limited to, the area proposed for handover to the CCR.

In order to protect the new portion of CCR from urban threats such as weeds, rubbish, illegal dumping and erosion, it will be important to carefully manage the 'green' buffer proposed alongside the urban development. Within this 'green' buffer as much native vegetation as possible should be retained. Ongoing weed and native vegetation management, with carefully planned urban infrastructure such as walking paths, picnic grounds and playgrounds, could result in a natural community resource that will be highly valued and used. Careful consideration should also be given to the position of any paths through to the CCR and the beach. Expert ecological advice should be sought to ensure important habitat is not compromised or erosion issues created, both on the escarpment, in the monsoon forest, and on coastal areas frequented by migratory birds. Management of dogs should also be considered.