

PLan: the Planning Action Network, Inc
PO Box 2513, Darwin, NT 0801
margaret.clinch@bigpond.com

INQUIRY INTO STELLA MARIS

**Submission by PLan: the Planning Action Network, Inc
prepared by M A CLINCH, Convener, 14 February, 2014.**

1. Introduction

We have already appeared and answered questions at the Inquiry on 13 February, 2014. This present submission is supplementary. Thank you for the extension until 17 February, 2014.

2. Preference for a fully emailed means we must use references and extracts from documentation which we would have attached as hard copy. Scanning and emailing a large quantity of documents is beyond the present resources of our voluntary community group. Nevertheless, we can produce the documents if required for authentication.

3. The Content of this Submission

The submission includes:

PLan: the Planning Action Network, Inc - Aim

The Present Context of PLan's work.

About Stella Maris Lot 5260, Town of Darwin

Issues about the future of Lot 5260.

Our Responses to specific points raised 13.2.2014 at the hearing:-

- (a) Have unions been long associated with Lot 5260 ?
- (b) Did PPlan enquire about the future of Lot 5260 ?

Our Recommendations re. Stella Maris Inquiry Terms of Reference, no.4-7, ie. the proper management and future disposal of NT Crown Lands.

4. PPlan: the Planning Action Network, Inc - Aim

Our apolitical voluntary organisation aims at balance in planning, for the community, through providing sustainability in terms of in terms of social, cultural, environmental, and long term economic outcomes. It has been operating for about twenty years. Our website is at 'planinc.org.au'.

5. The Present Context of PPlan's Work

The last fifteen years have seen an exponential growth of residential tower developments in Darwin, particularly in the Central Business District (CBD). Both Northern Territory Governments (NTG) have failed to match this growth with the provision, locally, of sufficient green open spaces and public facilities for the people living in these towers, and preserve places valued by Territorians.

In 2007 PPlan surveyed 412 people at various venues, with twenty one questions on their planning preferences. Questions 3, 4 and 19 are particularly pertinent. Percentages were recorded in terms of relative agreement with the statement in the following categories:

Strongly Disagree (SD); Disagree(D); No Opinion(NO); Agree(A); and Strongly Agree(SA).

Question 3 - There should be prescribed set areas of open space adjacent to new developments, on a scale proportional to the number of dwellings proposed.

Responses: SD= 2%; D=2%; NO=2% A=32% SA=62%

Question 4 - The NT Government should do more to preserve our heritage buildings and precincts using existing and strengthened legislation, providing some appropriate funding when necessary.

Responses: SD=1% D=2%; NO=3% A=24% SA=70%

Question 19 - inclusive public consultation is essential for effective planning in a democratic society, with open representative government.

Responses: SD=1% D=0%; NO=1% A=32% SA=66%

6. About Stella Maris Lot 5260, Town of Darwin

As some confusion results from referring just to Stella Maris, we will refer to the Stella Maris Lot 5260.

6.1 From Land Titles Office - Record of Administrative Interests and information. Printout 11.2.2014 at 15:39:01

History - Lot 05260 - Plan S79/103 - 1 MacMinn Street -2710sm- Apostleship of the Sea(Darwin) - Unimproved capital value \$2,000,000 on 1/7/2011.

Buildings - Repairs to Heritage House (Railway House):

HOSTEL (5 bedrooms) -17/7/1996

LICENSED CLUB AND ANCILLARY FEATURE 12/11/1991

Zoning – CB(Central Business) ; rezoned from CP(Community Purposes) and O1(Public Open Space) by Planning Scheme Amendment dated 13.03/1991, File No. 1991/0049.

Includes declared heritage place (Railway House).

S 79/103 Shows lot details 20/9/2012.

No current title issued.

6.2 From Land Titles Office - Crown Lease in Perpetuity 01640 Printout 11.2.2014 at 3:46:53

Lot 5260, Darwin. Apostleship of the Sea(Darwin) Inc
Commencement date 13/9/1996. Surrendered 11/12/2007. For Seafarers Centre. Annual Rent Nil.

6.3 From Land Titles Office. Printout 11.2.2014 at 15:02:47. – Crown Lease Term 897 granted to the Apostleship of the Sea(Darwin) Inc. All that land being Lot 5260, Darwin. For a seafarers centre, Rent nil. For ten years. Signed 5 December, 1990.

6.4 From Stella Maris Hostel, formerly North Australia Railway Employee House: Conservation Management Plan., prepared by Troppo Architects, 2006. Sections 2.1-2.3.

Section 2.1 States 'Lot 5260, excised from the former larger [Commonwealth Railway] Lot 4883 has an area of 2710m².' There is a scale map showing the size and relationship of the buildings, but not the true size of Lot 5260.

Section 2.2 States ‘ The whole of Lot 5260 is leased to the Apostleship of the Sea(Darwin) Inc (AOS), under a perpetual lease from the Northern Territory Government. The purpose of the lease is a Seafarers Centre.’

Section 2.3 tells us that, consistent with the lease, the Seafarers Centre operated in the old Railway House from 1979, with other buildings added for that purpose, on the lot from 1991. The old Railway House had continued to be used for administration and accommodation, being re roofed in 2009. It was added to the NT Heritage Register, by that time no longer being used for any seafarers function. Confusion continues to be caused by the use of the name Stella Maris for the Heritage listed Railway House.

7.1 We have been advised on good authority, that prior to being in the old Railway House, now Heritage listed, the Seafarers Centre function was located with the Workers Club in Cavenagh Street.

7.2 Jon Lamb in an article titled, ‘ The DPWC working to improve the lot of seafarers’ (Green Left Weekly, no. 67 dated 24/11/2004.) discusses limited provision at the new East Arm Port, and states that a Stella Maris Seafarers Centre had existed in central Darwin from 1957.

8. Issues about the future of Lot 5260

PLan has a long association with this historic corner of Darwin. The first issue we raised with the Development Consent Authority in about 1993 was the preservation of Travellers Walk. This historic walkway was being re-routed due to the building of Bridgeport.

This walkway, with its interpretative mural now composes LOT 6597, running between Bridgeport and L’Esperance on the one hand,

and Stella Maris on Lot 5260 on the other. It is already under the management of the City of Darwin Council.

9. Our Responses to specific points raised 13.2.2014 at the hearing:-

(a) Have unions been long associated with Lot 5260 ?

10. At first sight, it would have appeared that the unions themselves would have had a long association with Lot 5260 and Stella Maris with working centres being near the port. However, when the North Australia Railway ceased to run, railway union activities were focused on the Parap (Maintenance) Workshops [Ian Stevenson: 'The Line that led to Nowhere', pp 158-181]. The railway social club remains at Parap.

11. It also appears that once the specialized facility for Seafarers was established at Lot 5260 Stella Maris, there would be less direct association directly with the unions which had offices in central Darwin. When PJan met Brian Manning as the time of the closure, it was more like an exceptional situation. It was possibly a personal effort to keep the centre open, or to salvage what might legitimately be re-used at the sparse new facility at East Arm. Our impression from him in notes taken at the time are that there was another organization apart from the Apostleship of the Sea, named the ITF, adding support to seafarers.

12. It has now been realized that the 'mystery' phone call to me was from a person (a 'union' man) who had, at another time, spoken to

others about individually taking over the Stella Maris facilities as a 'Blue Collar Club'.

13. Did PPlan enquire about the future of Lot 5260 ?

It has already been proved at the inquiry that our organization has been making representations to planning authorities for the ultimate retention of Lot 5260 as public asset, since about 2003. The lot has a simple park with lawns and trees, the old club facilities, with a verandah, the accommodation building, and the heritage listed house.

14. We believe ongoing use by the public is preferable to sale as just another building site. The ultimate development of the old railway station site will inevitably bring more dense residential buildings into the immediate area.

15. If Lot 5260 is sold, a little Darwin jewel will be gone forever. It is an ideal place for a quiet family park, a community centre, and/or an interpretation centre for the railway and port. Both have played a pivotal role in the history of Darwin.

16. When we knew that the Stella Maris facility was to close, we also wrote to Darwin City Council asking them to ask manage it as a park and community centre. These letters were to Mayor Lambert 23/10/2007, CEO McGill 26/11/2007 and Mayor Sawyer, 19/4/2008. The response from Council was shown in the minutes of the meeting of 11 December, 2007, as follows:

18.2 'Use of Stella Maris Site for Community Purposes

Document No. 1287963 (23/10/07) Common 1287963
(Ald Moir /Collins)

THAT council support the submission to the Northern Territory Government contained in the letter, Document Number 1287963, received from PAn: the Planning Action Network, Incorporated, and that the Stella Maris facilities and land be retained for community use.

DECISION NO 19/5394 (11/12/07) Carried'

17. PAn also wrote a detailed letter about retaining Lot 5260 to Minister Chandler on 18 March, 2013, and spoke to CEO John Coleman personally about it in a mid year interview with him.

The best situation would appear to be either Council, or the NTG to manage the assets as a park either directly, or indirectly.

18. Our Recommendations re. Stella Maris Inquiry Terms of Reference, no.4-6, ie. the proper management and future disposal of NT Crown Lands.

For many years we have seen a serious lack of planning in terms of public facilities and useable green open space.

19. In the CBD green spaces are disappearing, and relevant clauses of Section 51 of the Planning Act not being applied to meet the needs of the public. In new suburbs, there are patterns of green open spaces based on drains, natural catchments destroyed, and we have seen developers rejecting the need for public facilities unless they are 'commercial'. Within the 'densification policy to avoid urban sprawl,

we expect community activity centres with public facilities within walkable distances. This is the international intention of 'densification'. In the NT we see existing green open spaces being swallowed up, and commercial facilities being substituted for public facilities.

20, We have pointed out to the authorities that, whilst there are procedures for approving developments, there are none for establishing public facilities, and local green open spaces are disappearing. Over the last twenty years we have promoted parks at Flagstaff Park, and Stella Maris. If the NTG or Council will not accept the responsibility for managing them, they will; never come into existence.

21. There is an extreme lack of genuine consultation by the NTG with the public on planning. Matters like the 'Fantasy Island' lease would never have occurred if the public had been consulted. Other routine processes, like planning scheme amendments, and the use of exceptional development permits can no longer be engaged with seriously by the public who have grown cynical and angry.

22. The public is in the dark about how Crown land is made available or sold. Expressions of Interest documents require a down payment. Crown lease terms, usually require a built component. We are unaware how community groups go about getting land for facilities. Sporting clubs have often done well, but what about other smaller groups ? Lack of green open spaces and community facilities ihas been shown to be costly in health and policing terms.

23. Recommendations

23.1 Our first recommendation that legitimate ways and means be found for the NTG to invest in keep Lot 5260, Town of Darwin in public hands and used to meet the public interest .

23.2 Our second recommendation is that the management of planning in general and crown land in particular, be open, transparent, and consultative.

M A CLINCH

Convener

PLan: the Planning Action Network, Inc

17.2.2014