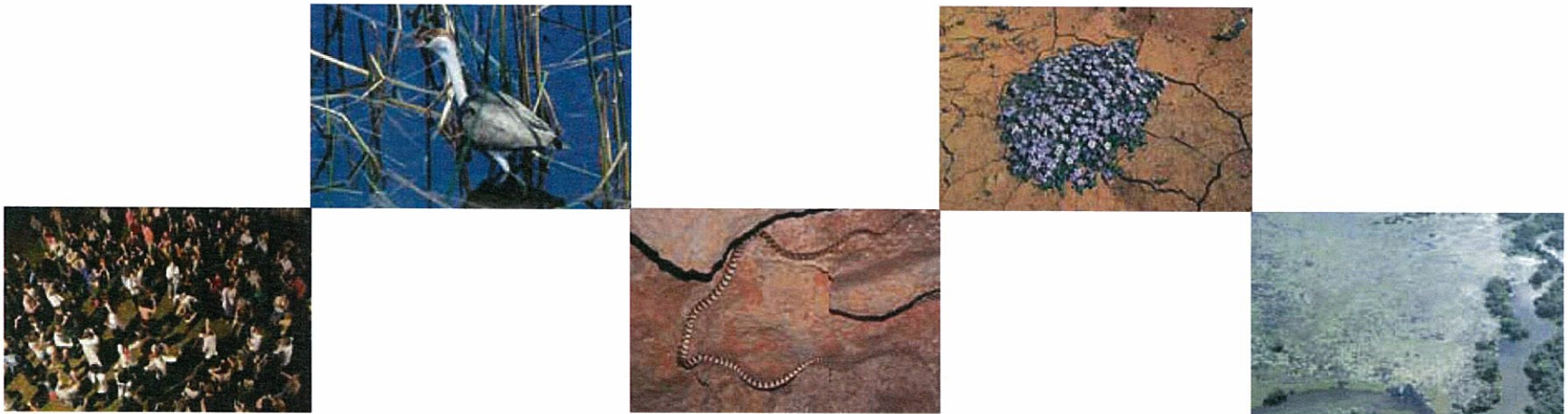


Resilience



Strategy for the development of Darwin's State Square Precinct

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Cover pictures: Tourism NT

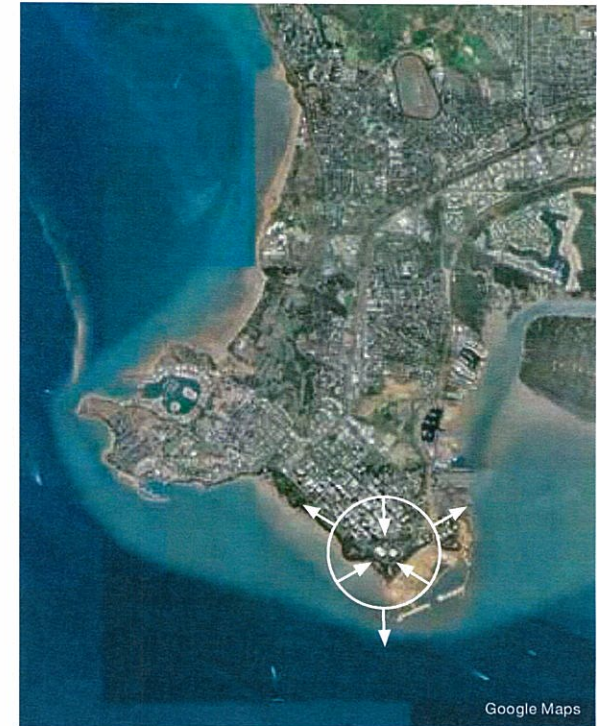
1. Executive Summary

This document describes a strategy called the Design Options Framework for the development of Darwin's State Square Precinct.

The Design Options Framework:

- integrates the celebration of the Precinct's unique heritage with the goal of building Darwin's future
- enables the government to reverse the risk of fragmentation presented by currently unrelated master planning initiatives, and
- ensures whole-of-community engagement with the development process.

The object of this report is to gain the Northern Territory Government's support for the appointment of a Designer Laureate charged to deliver the Design Options Framework.



2. Background

The State Square Precinct is the heart of Darwin. Its 15 hectares contains Parliament House, Government House, the Supreme Court, the Darwin City Council Chambers, Christchurch Cathedral and many other important and heritage buildings, and occupies a commanding position overlooking the harbour adjoining the Darwin CBD and the Waterfront Precinct. This Precinct comprises the areas known as Parliament Square, Heritage Square, Civic Square, Liberty Square and the proposed new State Square. With its striking 'sense of place', it has the potential to develop strong linkages with the adjoining CBD and Mall, the Waterfront Precinct, Esplanade and Damoe-Ra Park. The new State Square will create an entirely new formal square addressing the judicial, executive and administrative branches of government.

The overwhelming importance of the Precinct has yet to be fully captured in the presentation of the seat-of-government buildings. Magnificent, but dispersed, green spaces potentially create a unique inner city tropical garden but only when the connections between them are strengthened. The selected State Square Precinct Master Plan will identify a concept that lets an already wonderful site flower into a truly remarkable emblem of Darwin's resilience, drawing on a rich multicultural and environmental heritage to set the direction of Darwin's future as the capital of the Northern Territory and Australia's 'front door to the world'.

In advance of the Master Plan, it is proposed that a Design Options Framework is commissioned. The object is to ensure that the planning objectives of the Master Plan reflect the government's broader strategic planning goals. It is also to ensure that an overarching social, environmental and cultural vision informs, guides and inspires both the master plan and its progressive implementation. The Design Options Framework will be both a reference document and a practical aid to the raising of briefs for individual projects. It will be executed as a series of major and minor projects over the following decade and beyond.

The object of the Design Options Framework is to ensure that the planning objectives of the master plan reflect the broader strategic planning goals of the government.



3. What's New?

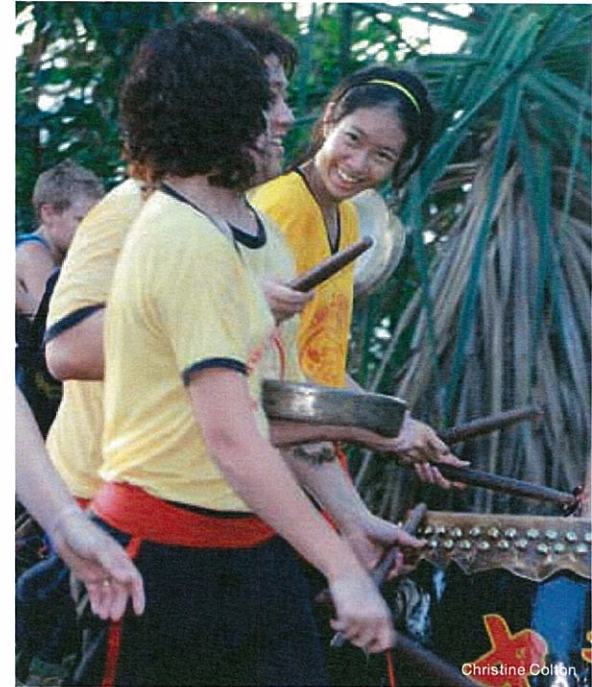
3.1. Building Darwin's Future

In a period of increased regional and global uncertainty, the Northern Territory Government recognises the need for visionary planning. However, long term goals have to be communicated if they are to gain public support. People need to be able to connect with change if they are to embrace it. Darwin has always been resilient, springing from adversity with renewed resolve and vigour. The same principle applies now – to leap forward, the Darwin community needs to be reminded of a past resilience.

The buildings, landscapes and institutions of the State Square Precinct are the open book of this collective heritage. The challenge of the State Square Precinct development is to make them readable for future generations – to interpret them so that Darwin's future sense of place is clearly identified with our attachment to this place and its stories. If this is done, Building Darwin's Future and the development of Australia's last great 'seat of government' public space will be two expressions of a single vision.

3.2. Reversing Fragmentation

There is a new energy in Darwin. Economic opportunity, regional leadership, demographic shifts and associated responsibilities to manage exponential growth in all sectors produce planning stress. Planning resources easily become fragmented and *ad hoc* responses are a risk. To avoid fragmentation in the provision of infrastructure, it is essential that a set of overarching design principles, or Design Options Framework, is put in place. These principles are the means through which the Building Darwin's Future vision is translated into world-class placemaking. They reverse the fragmentation that occurs when different agencies plan in isolation from one another.



Ahead of the development of the State Square Precinct, it is essential to establish design principles that forestall planning fragmentation. Current master planning initiatives that impact on the development include: the creation of a 'piazza' on Harry Chan Avenue, the siting of a new Police Memorial, the commissioning of a World War II Memorial, the completion of the Smith Street East covered walkway with its opportunities for public art commissions, a new master plan for the Smith Street Mall, new associations with the Darwin Festival, and the adaptive reuse of the Chan Building. All of these plans attest to the new energy afoot in Darwin, but without the principles that a Design Options Framework establishes, they risk undermining themselves, each other – and, most importantly, the future appeal of the Precinct.

3.3. Reclaiming Community

The State Square Precinct is not like other places. It is a talking place. The buildings, the monuments, the walkways all have stories to tell. These stories relate journeys from the past to the present. To retrace them is to find where we have come from. Retracing journeys also connects us to the world, the sea, the inland, other peoples and languages. The Precinct also harbours talk about the present and future, as the Legislature debates Darwin and the Territory's present challenges and future prospects, and the High Court implements its will.

The Precinct is potentially a buzz of voices ... yet at the moment it is sadly silent: few people go there except on business; car parking dominates the place internally; and externally the Precinct is ringed by traffic. This loss of community is due to planning decisions that have forgotten the symbolic importance of the Precinct. We have to arrest and change this, grasping a unique opportunity to create a Precinct where government and people reconnect, where new conversations and visions are proudly shared. The new Precinct fulfils its potential when landscapes, buildings and walkways are talking places. This is why a Design Options Framework places storytelling, cultural programming and public art at the heart of the development process.

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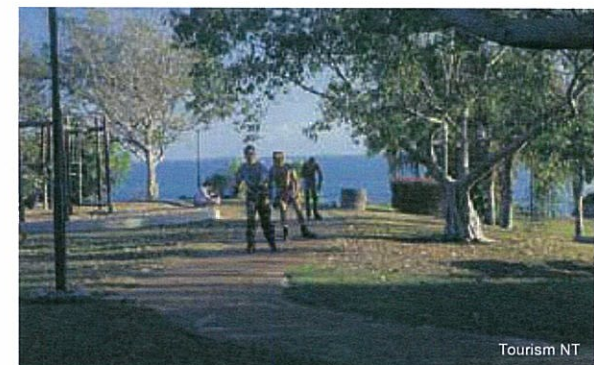
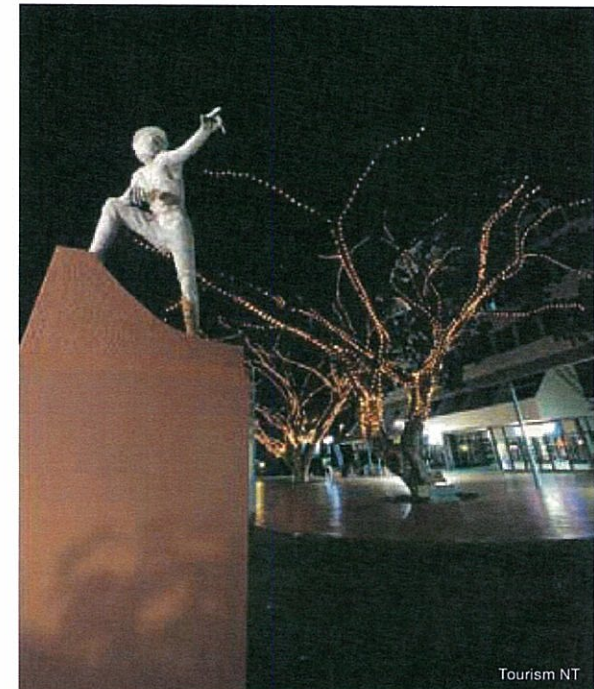
4. The Design Options Framework

The Design Options Framework ensures:

- that the development of the State Square Precinct both reflects and contributes to the evolution, communication and realisation of the Building Darwin's Future vision
- that all components of the development contribute to the Precinct's past, present and future 'sense of place', rather than risk its fragmentation
- that the development of the Precinct engages the community through the programming of events that communicate the heritage of the place, and by this and other means builds a new pride and identification with the Precinct's future development.

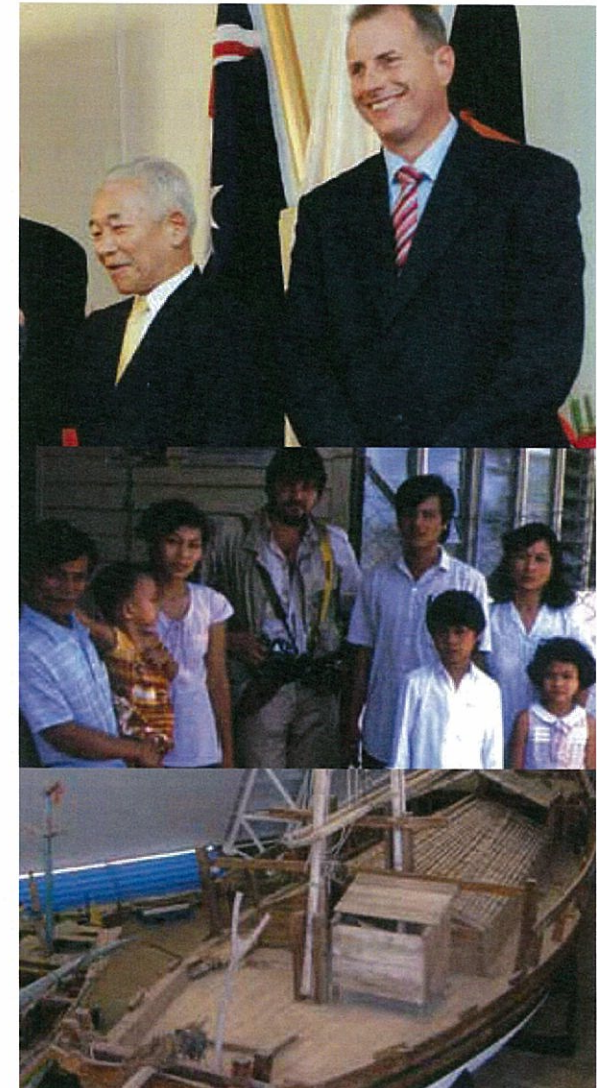
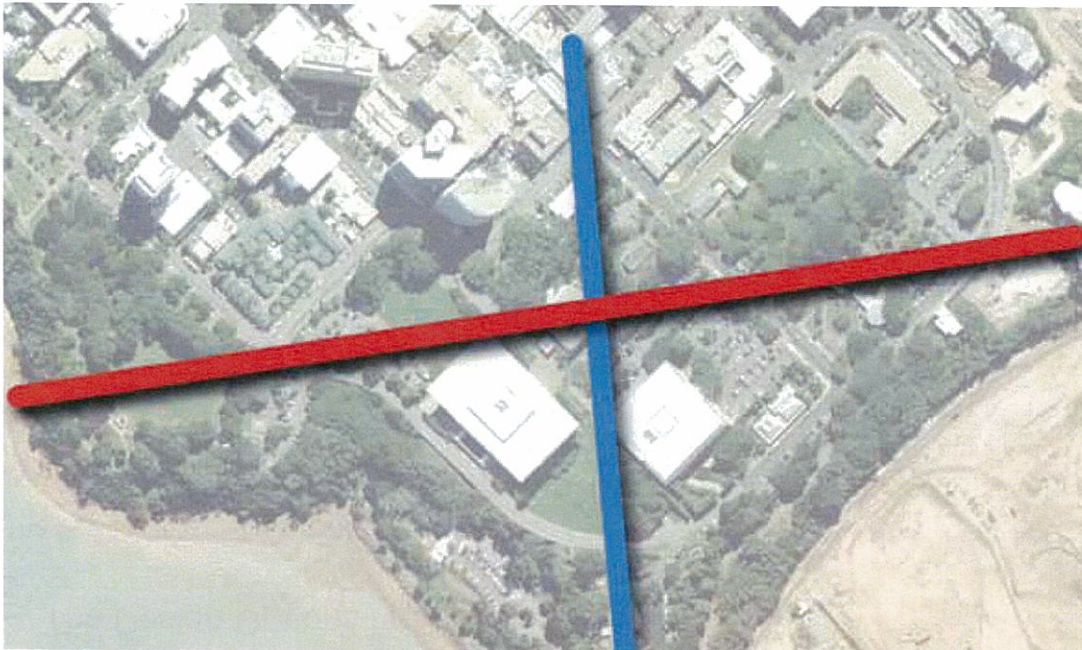
Key deliverables of the Design Options Framework will include:

- the establishment of two major axes through the Precinct
- the identification of the Chan Building as a key site for medium to long term adaptive reuse
- the utilisation of the Prospect axis to uncover connections between currently unrelated spaces and facilities
- the recognition and interpretation of the Precinct's hidden spaces;
- the development of the Smith Street east Walkway, and
- the extension of these design principles beyond the boundaries of the Precinct.



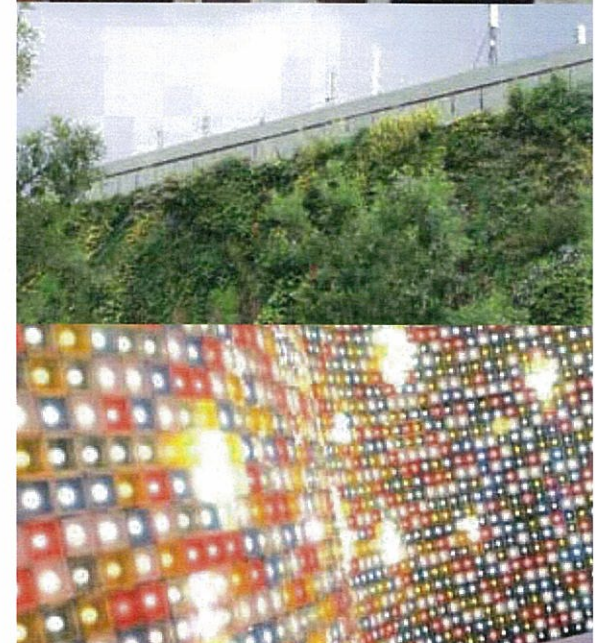
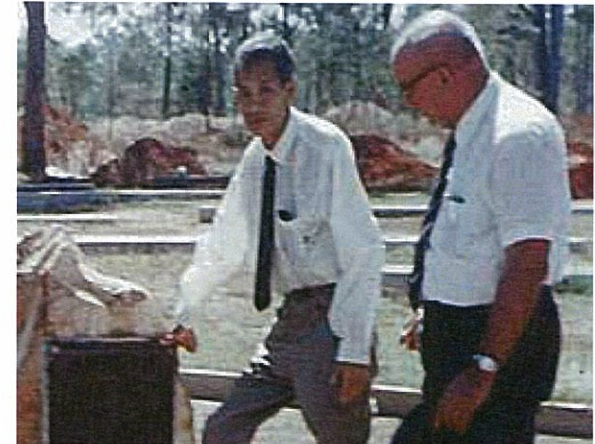
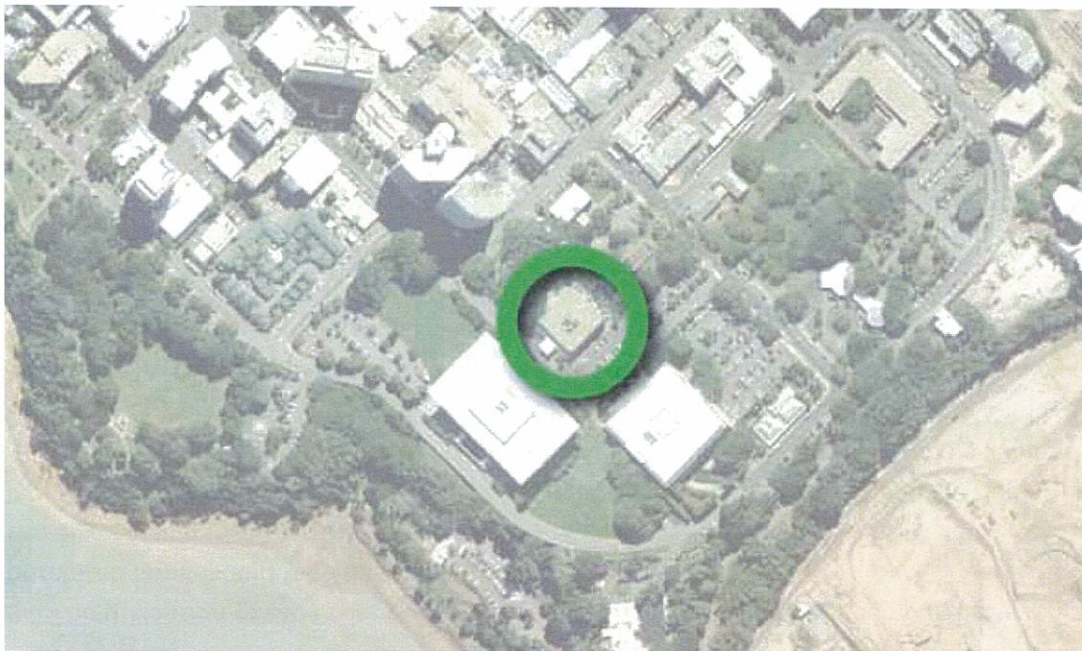
4.1 The establishment of two major axes through the Precinct

The establishment of Refuge and Prospect axes through the Precinct. These axes formalise two fundamental characteristics of the present landscape. Under the Design Options Framework they also serve to characterise Darwin's history, which has balanced the need for self-defence with a spirit of opportunism. The development of these axes will provide a framework for the location of key facilities – the proposed World War II Memorial and the proposed Police Commemorative Memorial are two examples.



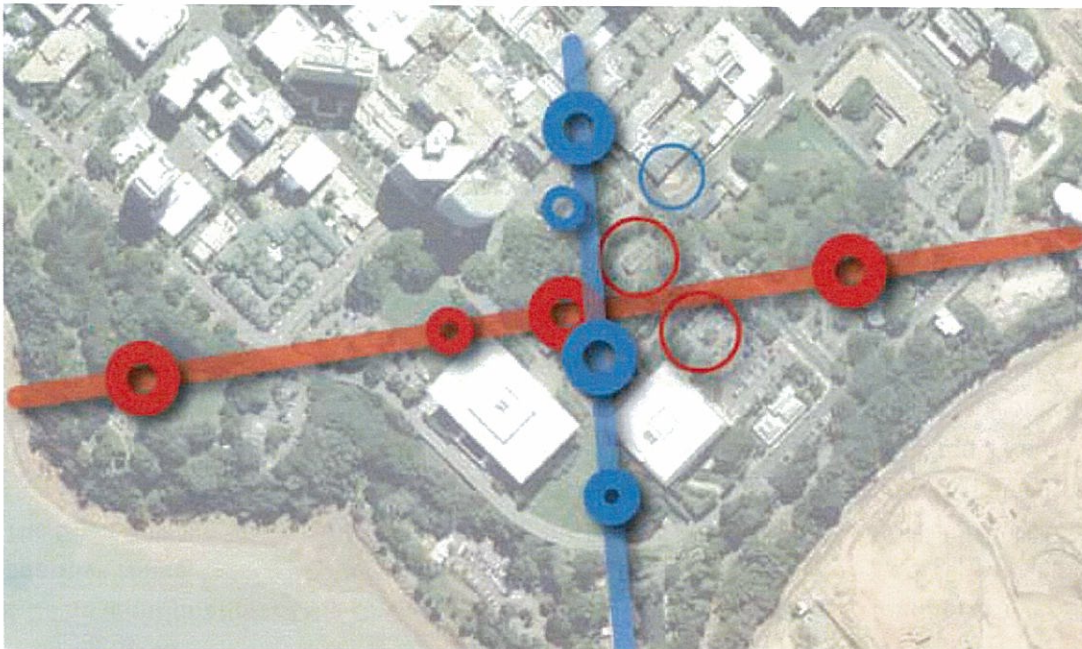
4.2 The identification of the Chan Building as a key site for medium to long term adaptive reuse

The Chan Building lies at the crossing point of the Refuge and Prospect axes. Historically, the Chan Building is associated with planning (it houses government records) and with protection (it is constructed to withstand bombing). By identifying the storylines that pass through the Chan Building, the Design Options Framework allows us to recognise the Chan as a pivotal place within the Precinct. As a place associated with planning, future options for its adaptive reuse can include turning it into a place of planning, a meeting place where all kinds of visions are projected, stored and shared.



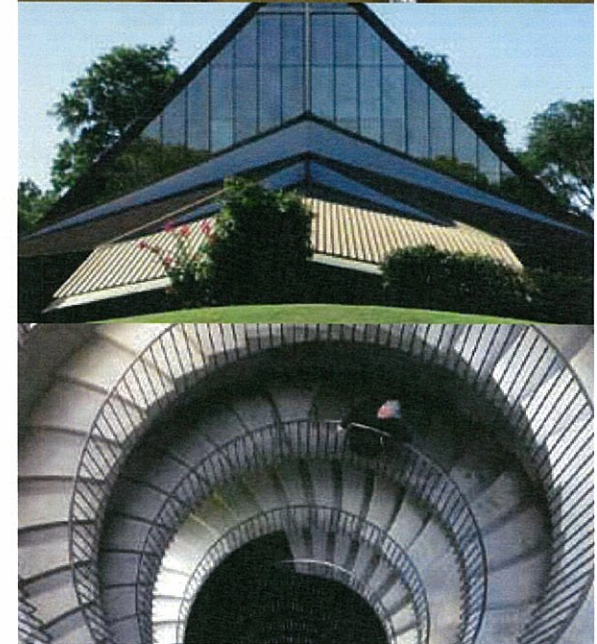
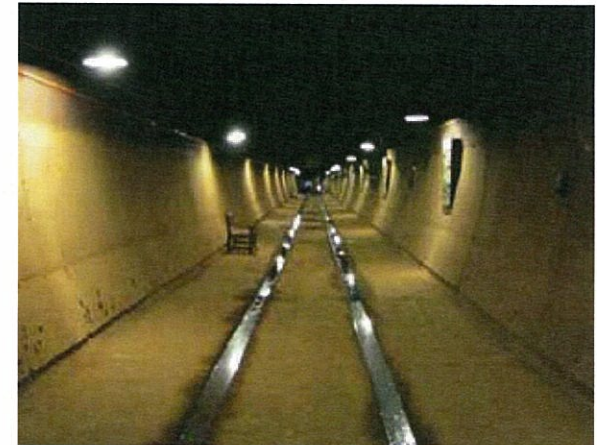
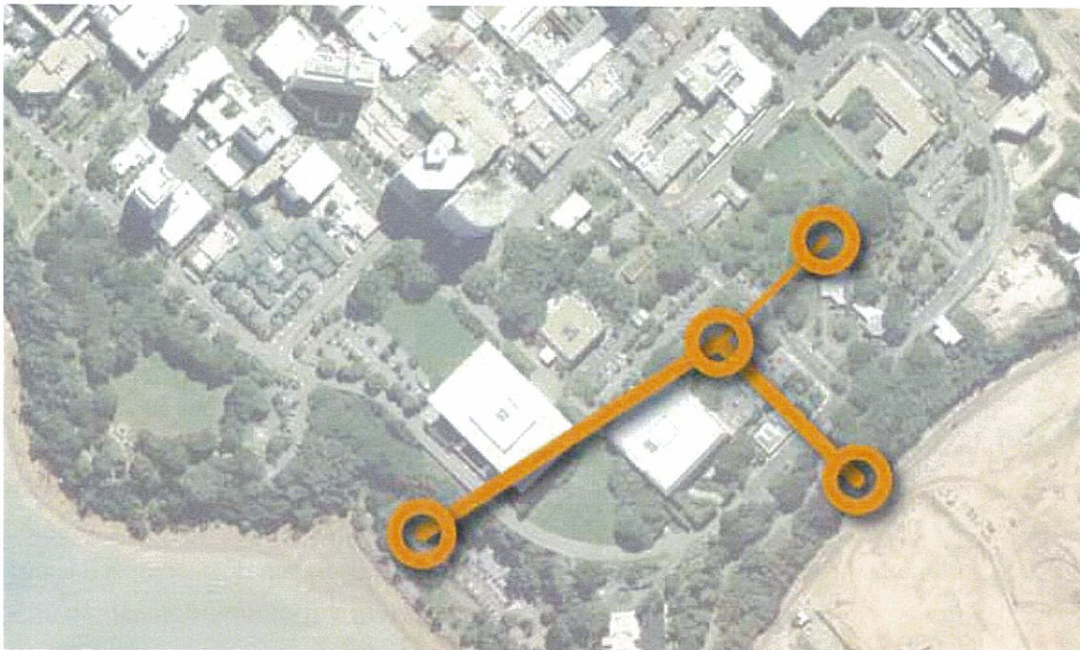
4.3 The utilisation of the Prospect axis to uncover connections between currently unrelated spaces and facilities

Key elements on the Prospect Axis are Liberty Square, the Old Reserve Bank/Tourist Information office, the Mall and the proposed Harry Chan Avenue piazza. Along the Refuge Axis lie the Cathedral and the Old Palmerston Town Hall. In future this axis may be enriched with new additions to our stories of refuge and resilience – the location of the World War II Memorial and the Police Commemorative Memorial along this axis are a natural consequence of developing and implementing the Design Options Framework.



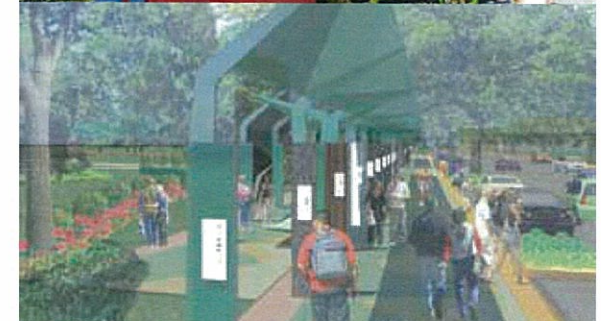
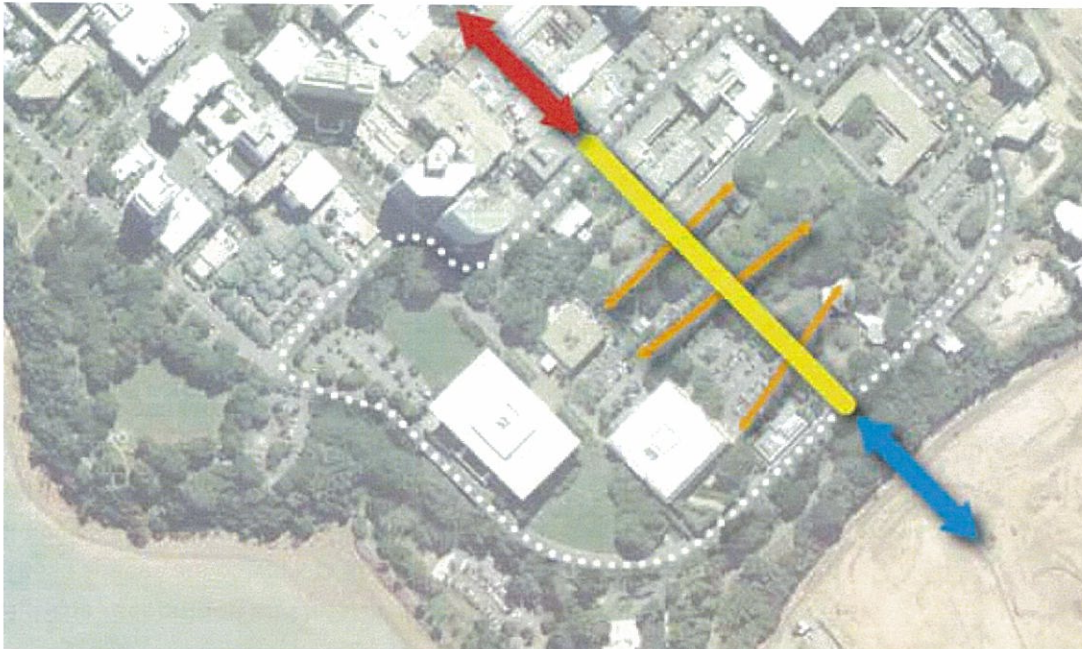
4.4 The recognition and interpretation of the Precinct's hidden spaces.

These spaces are of two kinds. The first is the underground, comprising the World War II tunnels that burrow under the Precinct. The second is the 'labyrinth', a term used to characterise the informal planting arrangements that are a feature of the Civic Park landscape in the environs of Christ Church Cathedral. These spaces are potentially related to important Larrakia Dreaming Stories for the peninsula. The incorporation of these zones into the system of walkways will integrate walking, reading and storytelling in unique ways, and provides the rationale for a variety of temporary and permanent installations, exhibitions and performances.



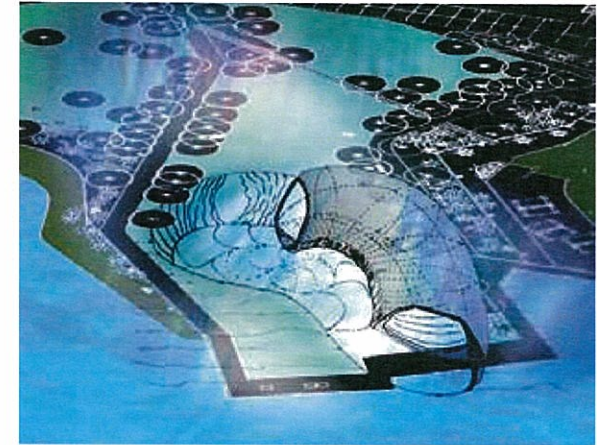
4.5 The development of the Smith Street East Walkway

The aim is to develop the Walkway as a key physical experience relating (without homogenising) the two major zones of the present State Square Precinct. This goal is already explicit in the terms of reference for the design of the Walkway (now in construction) and the associated public artwork, Zipcode. In addition, by responding creatively and collaboratively to the present and future master planning initiatives in the Mall and the Waterfront, the Walkway serves to connect these zones both visually and programmatically.

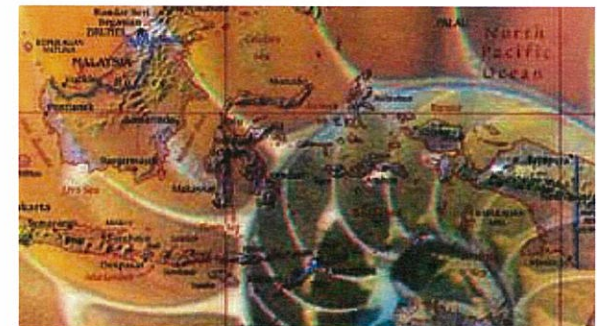


4.6 The extension of these design principles beyond the boundaries of the Precinct

A coordinated pattern of interconnected places, stories and monuments sets the creative template for planning beyond the Precinct. Once the Design Options Framework is finalised, there will be scope to influence a range of design and programming decisions in the adjacent Waterfront and CBD. A first step has been taken with the commissioning of 'Pearl Shell', a new public facility to be sited in the Waterfront development. The brief stipulates that the facility will be an integral part of the development of the State Square Precinct. This recognises that the 'Pearl Shell' captures one of many stories that form the Precinct's creative heritage.



Smith Street Mall - Future Directions 2008



5. Next Step

The NT Government recognises that the development of the State Square Precinct will change the nature of this Capital City. No other single infrastructure planning decision is likely to have as much effect on the nature of the City as this one. It will also capture the essential character of the City heart for a very long time and will be a major legacy that today's Territorians will hand down to future generations. The principal objective must therefore be that future generations will look back on the outcome of this decision as wise, well informed and visionary.

The immediate objectives of the Design Options Framework are that:

- we fully understand all of the opportunities offered by the creation of the State Square Precinct
- we have a creative template that is flexible, evolutionary and durable so that it will be hailed as inspirational 25 years from now
- this template is progressively materialised through master planning processes that can confidently secure Darwin's future vision, and
- the Framework seamlessly radiates to connect and interact with all relevant infrastructural initiatives impacting on Darwin's future vision.

It is in this context that we recommend the commissioning of a Design Options Framework to secure the foundations of the master planning process.

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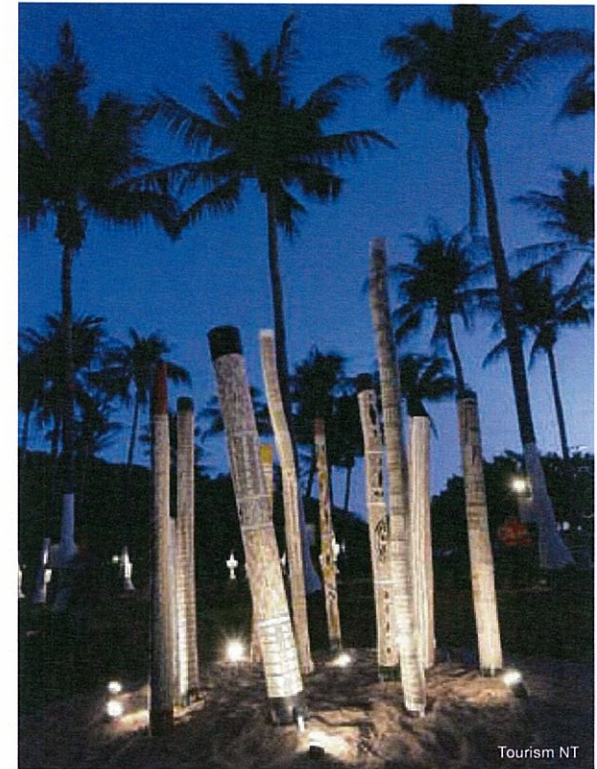


6. Endorsement

The development of the Design Options Framework requires an unusual set of skills. The consultant retained to deliver it needs:

- a good knowledge of the present planning regulatory environment
- an excellent theoretical and working knowledge of contemporary landscape design
- practical understanding of the relationship between public space vitality, community engagement and the creative economies
- demonstrated professional experience in the interpretation of cross- and inter-cultural heritage
- an outstanding track record of collaborative placemaking across all relevant media, including the design and installation of high profile public domain projects
- exceptional communication skills, with an ability to explain the Framework clearly and inspiringly to a wide range of professional and non-professional communities
- the ability to understand the culture of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, and to have a history of working with the Department that allows the consultant's track record to be securely evaluated, and
- to enjoy superior prestige in the academy and the creative industries – the capacity to foster cultural partnerships and attract federal research funding are both strategically important in securing the prestige and resourcing of the projects that flow from the Framework.

We consider that the unique combination of talents listed here justify the special title of Designer Laureate.



The Northern Territory Department of Planning and Infrastructure believes that all these criteria are met by Professor Paul Carter, who (through his studio Material Thinking) is currently working with the Department on projects in Darwin and Alice Springs.

The Northern Territory Department of Planning and Infrastructure became aware of Professor Carter in late 2006 when he was invited to work with the Alice Springs community on CBD revitalisation. His comprehensive *Red Ways: Alice Springs CBD Revitalisation, Design Options Framework* was delivered to the Department in October 2008 and the first projects recommended there will begin unrolling in mid 2009. Professor Carter has also made an exceptional contribution to the design of the Smith Street East Walkway, where his studio will supply the public artwork, Zipcode.

Professor Paul Carter is the author of 14 books, many internationally acclaimed artworks in a variety of media, including the design of the plaza pattern and ground writing at Federation Square. He has recently completed a five year professorial appointment within the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning (University of Melbourne), and retains his strong links to the research sector through Honorary professorial appointments to three Australian universities.

Ken Hawkins
Director Major Projects – Master Planning
Department of Planning and Infrastructure