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The Good Oil

with Barry Doyle

Courtesy and reality crash on sea wall

THE last time I saw Even Lynne, I said to him I was not hunting developers but that I had a serious problem with the planning process in the Territory, specifically in Darwin.

The encounter, in mid-December, with the man who is the force behind the proposed \$1 billion Arafura Harbour development was friendly and lasted just seconds.

I'd already been briefed in a clear and totally frank manner on some planning matters I was interested in by Bernie O'Connell, an associate of Lynne's Gwelo Developments.

Last week, I wrote that the Arafura Harbour proposal was further proof that the "planning process in the NT is a joke" and "the public is being kept in the dark".

Lynne, understandably, took umbrage, responding in yesterday's *Northern Territory News*: "Barry is picking up on a vibe that will be shared by anyone who does not see merit in the proposal."

Wrong. I think the idea is a great one — I'd even go along with Dave Tollner's description of it as "visionary".

I just fear what it may become as various interests buy in to it.

But that's something we can all talk about after the plans go on show to the public later this week, and models of the development arrive a week or so later.

In the meantime, it is worth taking a trip back through time and looking at the land that is crucial to the proposed Arafura Development — the Kulaluk crown lease in



TOUGH AT TOP: Even Lynne (furthest from camera) at the opening of Mantra Pandanus tower last year

perpetuity, granted as the Gwalwa Daraniki claim.

The area covers 301ha and the lease was formalised in 1979.

Anthropologist Bill Day, now living in Western Australia, was something of a force of nature for his 18 years in Darwin.

He did a year of field work at Fish Camp on the Kulaluk lease and lived there between 1979 and 1985.

During that time, he saw a few cyclones and a few development proposals similar to, if more modest than, the Arafura Harbour idea.

In November last year, Bill Day wrote a letter to Dave Tollner, the newly elected MLA for the seat of Fong Lim (Kulaluk area).

"Congratulations on your election," Day wrote. "Did you know that in your electorate there remains the best example of original monsoon forest surviving in the Darwin city boundaries?"

I have not been able to source any response from "visionary" Dave.

It was also in November that the first "insiders" learned of the Arafura Harbour plan.

Yesterday, Gwelo Developments chief Lynne wrote about the late-breaking (April Fool's Day) Arafura Harbour proposal that: "We decided that it was not worth doing anything unless the Gwalwa Daraniki Association (leaseholders of the Kulaluk land), the Darwin City Council, the

NT Government and other landholders (mainly the owners of Spot On Marine boatyard) were asked for an initial reaction."

That sounds reasonable. But the nature of crown leases, in perpetuity or otherwise, is that any changes involved in the use of the land is in the hands of the "Crown" — read government.

So, if the Gwalwa Daraniki Association agreed, even just in principle, to the Gwelo Developments proposal, it must first have been given a nod by government insiders.

And that is very definitely the stage when the matter should have been made public.

This would be a significant

Territory moments

TRAFFIC around East Point, Coconut Grove and Nightcliff was unusually heavy last weekend as groups of the curious attempted to check out the area earmarked for the proposed \$1 billion Arafura Harbour and sea wall development.

People turned up in dead-end streets, fought their way through to mangroves and isolated stands of rainforest, and the local bloodthirsty insects had a feast.

There were also isolated reports of people being stung for a few bucks by some of the locals who made much of the fact that the visitors just weren't supposed to be there.

The forces of nature and free enterprise were not to be denied.

change to the use of an important area of land at Darwin's very heart.

That should have been debated before any proposals for a \$1 billion marina, residential and commercial development were trotted out — be they "concepts" or not.

Meanwhile, bring out the plans and the models, and let some very spirited debate begin.

But let's have no nonsense about being "courteous and sensible".

It's my shout if you want to talk more about it, Even.