

# Sense and planning sensibilities on couch

**C**OULD the next appointment to the Territory Government's planning department be a psychiatrist or even an able psychologist, please?

Yes, I know it's a bit of an unusual area for head shrinkers or psyche probers, but it is sorely needed.

In what can only be described as a schizophrenic week or so, we've had a few proposals trotted out that suggest one side of the planning persona has been sensibly drinking camomile tea and the other has been indulging in substances that the heroes of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* could only dream of.

Who was the genius who came up with the proposal to abolish the existing varied height limits for buildings in Darwin's CBD?

To effectively throw away the ground rules that — while often flouted — were supposed to guide our visions for the future of Darwin?

And how the hell did you convince Planning Minister Delia Lawrie to air the idea without so much as a cringe or a blush on her part?

Or was this just the first of a series of death notices for our existing but already wobbly planning schemes?

Call in the stewards. Demand urine tests from planning's upper echelons. Check that the tea lady hasn't nobbled them with some hallucinatory cocktail.

Then, out of nowhere (well, the dim, distant past, anyway), we get a couple of sensible suggestions — at least in the light of declaring open season on the CBD.



**DIRT GAMES:** The pile of earth and rubble adjacent to Dick Ward Drive slowly continues to grow

The first was to revamp Frances Bay, the currently down-at-heel marina area containing the Duck Pond.

It is hardly a new idea, but a welcome one after a number of standoffs over the years.

A better marina, transport and ferry hub, a good fish market and some commercial and residential development is proposed.

If done well, it would be a cracker for the city. The area — including the adjacent stretch of land referred to scornfully as the "Gobi Desert" — has been both an eyesore and an anachronism for too long.

Claims by Arafura Harbour would-be co-developer Hans Vos

that the land is polluted by heavy metals is of little relevance — so was a fair slice of the Waterfront Development land.

In fact, I think you'll find that a few truckloads of that polluted soil now rests in the pile adjacent to Dick Ward Drive, on community land held by the Gwalwa Daraniki Association land near Fannie Bay.

That pile of earth is fenced off but left open to the elements — leached by rain and blown away as dust by wind — and without any trenches or other protective measures.

It stands behind some of the mangroves people have been trying to save from the Arafura Harbour

proposal, so it says something about someone's idea of a duty of care.

More of that another day.

This week, we got another blast from the past when Ms Lawrie confirmed that the Government was in talks with defence about a 66ha parcel of land at 11 Mile on the Stuart Highway.

The land was used, from 1965, as an RAAF radio transmitting station until it was decommissioned in 2005.

There were various plans for the land that didn't happen.

Then someone (obviously from the camomile tea set) came up with the brilliant idea of: "Hey, this could be the place for a suburb."



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The proposal is so blindingly obvious that we must wonder what took them so long.

The land, after all, is adjacent to a four-lane highway, is well placed for a commute to both Darwin and Palmerston, and developing it for housing makes sense.

Ah, that last bit — no wonder it took so long.

Yep, it is time for some of our best and brightest in planning to have a nice lie down on the couch and resolve any issues they may have had with mum, dad or bed wetting.