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SUBMISSION ON DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2030 & DRAFT MUNICIPAL PLAN 2026/27

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on these documents. Please find our comments in the tables below. *(Unfortunately the standard submission form link to template was not working when we drafted this submission, hence our submission is in this format.)*

Draft strategic plan 2026-2030

STRATEGIC PLAN	ISSUE	REQUEST
Mission and Vision	These should acknowledge Arrernte people's custodial interest and hence that decisions must be compatible with caring for Country and supported by the custodians.	Modify to reflect Arrernte peoples' custodial interest.
Pillar 1	Lack of recognition of sacred sites and custodians	Include an additional strategy to be guided by Arrernte custodians and ensure lands and sacred sites under ASTC's managed receive appropriate care.
Pillar 1 missing	Lack of a strategy for a healthy Lhere Mparntwe, Todd River and Anthelke Ulpaye, Charles River. The activity 'Pilot a buffel free Lhere Mparntwe' features in pillar 1 of the Municipal Plan but there is no corresponding strategy statement in Pillar 1 of the Strategic Plan. This is needed - Lhere Mparntwe and Anthelke Ulpaye are a natural social, physical and spiritual hub for Mparntwe ands large sections are under council management. Care of these offers immense cultural, amenity, economic and ecosystem benefits. It could be a source of community pride, education, employment and inspiration.	Include a strategy for a healthy Lhere Mparntwe, Todd River and Anthelke Ulpaye, Charles River. This should only be done with the support and oversight of the custodians.
Pillar 2 *Strengthen Council and community preparedness for emergencies and natural disasters to reduce*	In regards to flood mitigation, managing buffel and restoring healthy vegetation along the river corridor will create healthy river channels and can be expected to offer flood mitigation benefits.	Note this comment.

STRATEGIC PLAN	ISSUE	REQUEST
risk, minimise impacts and support recovery. • Support the resilience of Alice Springs to disasters • Advocate for investment in priority flood mitigation initiatives • Advocate for resources for effective control of fuel loads to better manage and prevent bushfires		
Pillar 2	Missing: Strategic firebreak network. There is an opportunity for ASTC to champion a major network of strategic firebreaks encircling the town comprising low flammability local plants. This could safeguard the town from the inevitable major fires (due to buffel grass and climate change) and also be an attraction and environmental asset.	New bullet point: Champion a major network of strategic firebreaks encircling the town comprising low flammability local plants.
Pillar 2 *Promote the safety and wellbeing of animals and the community by supporting responsible pet ownership, effective animal management and safe shared use of public spaces.*	The strategy - *Provide a modern, well-resourced animal shelter for the Alice Springs municipality* is strongly supported. To make rehoming efforts more effective we suggest a bullet point to promote choosing animals from the animal shelter first	Strongly supported. To make rehoming efforts more effective we suggest a bullet point to promote choosing animals from the animal shelter first
	Missing under this strategy: *Ensure Territory Day fireworks, and celebrations to minimise harm to pet and wild animals* - these events cause immense harm to wildlife and pets. There is an immense amount that can be done from stopping private fireworks sales, mitigating risks through by-laws as appropriate, education, location and celebrating in alternative ways. (refer case card: https://www.lettersfortheenvironment.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Residential-Fireworks-APRIL-2026.pdf)	Additional bullet point: Ensure Territory Day and other celebrations minimise harm to pet and wild animals.
	Missing under this strategy *Council activities and investments reflect best practice in the humane treatment of animals (as per RSPCA guidance).*	Additional bullet point: Council activities and investments reflect best practice in the humane

STRATEGIC PLAN	ISSUE	REQUEST
	Note activities like rodeos and 1080 poison are both regarded as inhumane by the RSPCA.	treatment of animals (as per RSPCA guidance).
Protect and strengthen local ecosystems and biodiversity through responsible environmental management and partnerships.	Engage with Traditional Owner and Native Title Holders to improve ecosystem management	Supported
	Bullet point *Advocate and work with the Northern Territory Government on key issues and opportunities that support the protection and enhancement of Alice Springs' natural environment and biodiversity* is insufficient and vague. 1. it will not encourage government partnerships as it fails to demonstrate ASTC's focus or commitment to *supporting the protection and enhancement of Alice Springs' natural environment and biodiversity* 2. It unacceptably obviates ASTC of its own responsibilities.	Modify this bullet point to specify ASTC's priorities. These should include: Healthy rivers, wetlands including Ankerre Ankerre, council managed open areas, sacred sites and invasive weeds.
	Missing Bullet Point: ASTC should specify its commitments to strengthening local ecosystems and biodiversity. As per above pursuing partnerships is not enough, this is ASTC's role, especially on land it manages. A strategy is needed which makes explicit commitments to strengthening local ecosystems and biodiversity. The key priorities in our view are • Healthy rivers, • wetlands including Ankerre Ankerre, • council managed open areas, • sacred sites • managing the spread of invasive weeds.	Specify ASTC's priorities and commitment including: Healthy rivers, wetlands including Ankerre Ankerre, council managed open areas, sacred sites
	Missing Bullet point: Council is fortunate to have enthusiastic staff working on its open areas and these efforts are noticed. There have however been multiple incidents where AAPA clearance conditions were not met and approaches taken were less than ideal. To address this, strategies to comply with AAPA sacred site clearance obligations and ongoing education are needed.	Comply with AAPA sacred site clearance obligations and staff receive ongoing education.
Strategy: Provide reliable, efficient and sustainable rubbish and recycling services that meet community expectations	Missing bullet point: We are concerned that the regional waste management facility is unacceptably impinging on Little Sisters town camp, iconic regional landscapes and environments.	Additional bullet point needed: *Regional waste facility does not impinge on Little Sisters and council proactively reviews soil, air,*

STRATEGIC PLAN	ISSUE	REQUEST
and support responsible waste management.	The tip is in an extremely important and sensitive place. The aim should not be compliance with NTG permit conditions at minimum cost. We request ASTC takes a proactive approach that recognises the sensitivity of the location and minimises harm.	*groundwater quality, civic amenity and landscape impacts and minimises these impacts.*
Pillar 4 A thriving and sustainable local economy	Missing: thriving Country is intertwined and essential to heathy culture and the economy. Our beautiful diverse plants, animals and ecosystems are immensely appealing for visitors and a source of sustainable employment, good health and income for locals. Similarly decaying environments, uncertainty and the danger created by fire hazards/buffel invasion, and the absences (e.g. missing plants and iconic animals) are a source of gloom and tarnish visitor experiences.	Include bullet point, *support thriving plants and animals and ecosystems as a an economic foundation* in Pillar 4.
Pillar 4 strategy: *Provide clear leadership and coordination to support sustainable economic development and long-term economic resilience*	No justification and immense risks associated with the strategy: *Advocate for the release of land for industrial and residential development*. Plans for expansion in Kilgariff and industrial expansion south of the Gap and on airport land create serious pollution risks for the Mereenie aquifer, from which Alice Springs's drinking water is obtained. Its recharge areas are currently poorly defined but known to include these areas. Creating avoidable land use contamination risks in this area is foolhardy. Instead ASTC should promote opportunities for consolidation within current residential and commercial footprint, as these areas in large need revitalisation. This will minimise travel distances. New industry should be directed to the Brewer Estate as this location was chosen because it posed a far lesser groundwater contamination risk. Alice Springs' population has been relatively stable over a long-time. Land supply should be based on realistic demand projections, not wasteful aspirations that just line the pockets of developers and create white elephant developments.	Remove strategy: *Advocate for the release of land for industrial and residential development* Suggested replacement strategy *Support land supply in accordance with demand projections. Land releases for residential and commercial uses should focus on infill existing areas and industrial use focused on Brewer Estate*.
Pillar 5	Missing: Explicit acknowledgement of unique place and arrangements with Arrernte/Central Arrernte people.	While measures in this Pillar are generally supported, an additional strategy to recognise the uniqueness and responsibilities to Arrernte custodians and need for specific arrangements is needed.

Draft Municipal Plan 2026/27 Comments

MUNICIPAL PLAN ELEMENT	ISSUE	REQUEST
Mission and Vision	Arrernte people have a custodial interest. Decisions need to be compatible with caring for Country and supported by the custodians.	Modify to reflect Arrernte peoples' custodial interest.
Budget highlights *Road and Footpath Infrastructure This year, Council will develop a three-year road reseal program (2026–2028) and begin year one works, alongside completing a CBD footpath survey to inform an accessibility-focused Footpath Upgrade Strategy*	We are concerned about the high embedded energy and lack of durability of the thick concrete footpaths that seem to be the design standard in Mparntwe. Specifications for bike path design should be reviewed to where suitable, specify low embedded energy materials for bike path construction (i.e. not concrete).	Specifications for bike path design should be reviewed to where suitable, specify low embedded energy materials for bike path construction (i.e. not concrete).
P32 Develop a master plan and phased landscaping schedule for Alice Springs cemeterys $120,000	We commend the work undertaken to establish weed free local grasslands at the Memorial Ave cemetery.	Supported. Encourage a focus on local plants and water efficiency.
Proactively seek advice from Weeds Branch on managing Buffel on Council land	We would like council to consider acquiring a Satusteam device and seed harvester to enhance its repertoire of environmentally friendly and effective tools to manage buffel grass. (More information available on request.)	Council consider acquiring a Satusteam device and seed harvester to enhance its repertoire of environmentally friendly and effective tools to manage buffel grass
P33 Establish a pilot buffel-free zone along Lhere Mparntwe in collaboration with Landcare	While intent of 'Pilot a buffel free Lhere Mparntwe' is supported it should be more holistic and done in concert with the custodians. As per Strategic Plan we propose that council reimagine this as a major collaborative initiative to treat Lhere Mparntwe, Todd River Anthelke Ulpaye, Charles River as a natural social, physical and spiritual hub. This offers immense cultural, amenity, economic and ecosystem benefits. It could be a source of community pride, education, employment and inspiration. Also, relying on community volunteering of landcare is shifting a core responsibility for land under ASTC management onto volunteers, who already have a huge job.	Include a strategy for healthy, (Lhere Mparntwe, Todd River and Anthelke Ulpaye, Charles River). This should only be done with the support and oversight of the custodians

P37 Complete a CBD footpath survey and develop a CBD Footpath Upgrade Strategy with a focus on accessibility for all users		See previous comments about concrete footpaths and low embedded energy choices
P 37 Promote the safety and wellbeing of animals and the community by supporting responsible pet ownership, effective animal management and safe shared use of public spaces	See comments on Municipal Plan. Re fireworks in addition to comments on municipal plan ASTC in 2026/27 should instigate a rigorous, inclusive professional survey on attitudes to fireworks (based on access to sound information) to enable future evidence based planning. ASTC should not have fireworks at its events – instead migrating to cheaper more interesting alternatives like light shows.	Comments in municipal plan, regarding animal shelter and additional bullet points: • Ensure Territory Day and other celebrations minimise harm to pet and wild animals. • ASTC in 2026/27 should instigate a rigorous, inclusive professional survey on attitudes to fireworks (based on access to sound information) to enable future evidence based planning. • ASTC should not have fireworks at its events – instead migrating to cheaper more interesting alternatives like light shows. • Council activities and investments reflect best practice in the humane treatment of animals (as per RSPCA guidance).
P38 Strengthen Council and community preparedness for emergencies and natural disasters to reduce risk, minimise impacts and support recovery	We believe there is an opportunity for ASTC to champion a major network of strategic firebreaks comprise low flammability local plants which could safeguard the town and also be an attraction and environmental asset.	As per Municipal Plan we suggest ASTC champion a major network of strategic firebreaks comprise low flammability local plants which could safeguard the town and also be an attraction and environmental asset .
P38 Improve access to food and essential supports for people experiencing vulnerability	Food gardens should incorporate more native, low water use plants.	Food gardens should be encouraged to incorporate more native, low water use plants.
P41 Advocate and work with the Northern Territory Government on key issues and opportunities that support the protection and enhancement of Alice Springs' natural environment and biodiversity, including the Ilparpa Claypans	We are pleased to see explicit recognition of Ilparpa Claypans and a strategy for responsible cat ownership. However: 1. we are very concerned that protection and enhancement of natural environment on lands for	Advocacy for Ilparpa claypans is supported, as is cat management. Missing: 1. Refer comments on Municipal Plans council needs to invest in enhancing the environments for which it has responsibility including the rivers, wetlands including Ankerre Ankerre,

	which council is managing is being avoided. 2. ASTC could save money and bolster environmental and civic amenity by incentivising care of domestic verges by residents 3. In addition to buffel grass, invasive *Eragrostis trichophora* and Fountain grass are not being managed and being allowed to spread by ASTC either passively or weed hygiene practices. These weeds are becoming widespread in the CBD, on roadside verges, in ASTC's open areas and in drains.	council managed open areas, sacred sites 2. strategy to encourage care and maintenance of domestic verges by residents 3. Act on *Eragrostis trichophora* and Fountain grass urgently to avoid greater costs and environmental decline later.
P39 Improve the sustainability of waste, water and resource management systems to reduce environmental impact and support a circular economy	We are concerned about the practice of over irrigating Blatherskite Park to dispose of wastewater. This practice is wasteful and risks polluting underground water.	Comment for consideration.
P43 missing:	As per comments on Municipal Plan thriving Country is intertwined and essential to heathy culture. Our beautiful diverse plants, animals and ecosystems are immensely appealing for visitors and a source of sustainable employment, good health and income for locals. Similarly decaying environments, uncertainty and danger created by fire hazards/buffel invasion and the absences (e.g. missing plants and iconic animals) are a source of gloom and tarnish visitor experiences.	Include bullet point, to support thriving plants and animals and ecosystems in Pillar 4.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to make comment on these documents. We can see an immense amount of effort has gone into these documents. We think these suggestions could enhance the strategies already in place.

We welcome also the opportunity to discuss or expand upon these ideas.

Kind regards,

Adrian Tomlinson and Jacqueline Arnold