

# Explanatory Document

Proposed Planning Scheme Amendment to facilitate  
group dwelling and multiple dwelling development

PA2024/0130



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# 1. Introduction

As part of the challenge to meet the Northern Territories future housing supply needs, the Department is proposing changes to the NT Planning Scheme 2020 (Planning Scheme) to encourage housing development and to contribute to housing supply, choice, and affordability across the Northern Territory.

Current requirements within the Planning Scheme generally focus on typical housing products without considering the dwelling's size or the number of people it can accommodate. This can make it harder and more expensive to construct certain types of housing. As a result, some types of housing are less likely to be developed or available to the housing market.

The proposed amendment aims to remove unnecessary barriers and make it easier to deliver more innovative housing solutions and a wider range of homes to suit different needs.

## 2. Details of proposed amendment

The proposed amendment applies to group dwelling<sup>1</sup> (more than one dwelling on a site not located above one another such as a duplex) and multiple dwelling<sup>2</sup> (more than one dwelling on a site located above one another such as an apartment) development.

Specifically, the proposed amendment seeks to:

- change the minimum density requirements for one bedroom dwellings<sup>3</sup> (either in the form of a group dwelling or multiple dwelling) from 1 per 300m<sup>2</sup> of site area, to 1 per 150m<sup>2</sup> of site area in Zone LMR (Low - Medium Density Residential);
- change the minimum number of car parking spaces required for one bedroom dwellings (either in the form of a group dwelling or a multiple dwelling) from two car parking spaces to one; and
- introduce new criteria to allow for a reduction to the number of car parking spaces required for group dwellings and multiple dwellings where the location is considered 'well-located' (i.e. has sufficient access to alternative transport options or is in close proximity of a commercial area), and where the development or dwelling is for social housing<sup>4</sup>.

The proposed amendment applies to Part 5 of the Planning Scheme (Development Requirements) shown at Appendix A.

While the proposal seeks to amend the associated Planning Scheme requirements, the requirements are a minimum, and developers or home builders will continue to have the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Group dwelling' refers to the defined use of **dwelling-group** within Schedule 2 of the Planning Scheme

<sup>2</sup> 'Multiple dwelling' refers to the defined use of **dwelling-multiple** within Schedule 2 of the Planning Scheme

<sup>3</sup> A 'one bedroom dwelling' may include a bed-sitter (i.e. studio) dwelling arrangement

<sup>4</sup> 'Social housing' refers to housing that is government subsidised for short and long term rental housing that is either managed by a not-for-profit organisation or is owned and managed by the NTG.

ability to provide for greater needs to suit market demand and/ or respond to neighbourhood character.

### 3. Merits of the proposed amendment

This amendment aims to support new and innovative types of housing by breaking down some barriers to residential development, and to increase the range of housing options available across the Northern Territory.

The proposed amendment includes the following 3 initiatives:

#### Initiative 1

##### **Change the density rules for one bedroom dwellings.**

- Reduce the area of land required to establish a one bedroom home in Zone LMR (Low - Medium Density Residential) from 300m<sup>2</sup> down to 150m<sup>2</sup>.

Current density requirements for dwellings in Zone LMR (Low-Medium Density Residential) are based on the number of houses on a site rather than the size of a dwelling or expected number of occupants. This can discourage developers or land owners from undertaking single bedroom housing development as every dwelling, regardless of the number of bedrooms, requires 300m<sup>2</sup> of site area, making it harder and less appealing to build smaller, more affordable homes.

Changing the density rates for one bedroom dwellings will provide an opportunity for more innovative housing products to be developed, a more efficient use of appropriately zoned land, and will contribute to the intent of Zone LMR to provide for a mix of dwellings.

##### *Key points:*

- *The proposed amendment applies to Zone LMR only;*
- *Subdivision requirements are not proposed to be amended and minimum lot sizes in Zone LMR remain at 300m<sup>2</sup> to ensure orderly spacing for vehicle crossovers;*
- *Development is still required to address all other Planning Scheme requirements (including car parking which is detailed in the next section);*
- *A dwelling with two or more bedrooms will still require 300m<sup>2</sup> of site area to be established; and*
- *The level of assessment required for dwelling-group or dwelling-multiple remains unchanged in Zone LMR.*

## Initiative 2

### Change the car parking requirements for one bedroom dwellings in group or multiple dwelling development.

- Reduce the required number of car parks for one bedroom homes (either in the form of a group dwelling or a multiple dwelling) from two spaces to one.

Current car parking requirements for group dwellings and multiple dwellings require two car parks for every dwelling, regardless of the expected number of occupants. This means that one bedroom homes that are likely to have fewer occupants, still need the same number of car parks as larger homes.

Changing the car parking rate for single bedroom dwellings will better match the actual needs for car parking in smaller homes and help reduce construction costs of one bedroom dwellings, making them more affordable and achieving a more efficient use of appropriately zoned land.

#### Key points:

- *The proposed amendment applies specifically to dwelling-group and dwelling-multiple uses, in every zone where the uses are not prohibited;*
- *The level of assessment required for dwelling-group or dwelling-multiple remains unchanged, in every zone where the uses are not prohibited;*
- *Car parking rates for dwellings with two bedrooms or more are not proposed to be amended; and*
- *Developers will still have the ability to provide more car parking than the minimum requirement to ensure development meets the needs of the market.*

## Initiative 3

### Car parking reductions for well-located development and social housing.

- introduce criteria to allow for a reduction to the number of car parking spaces required for group dwellings and multiple dwellings where the location is considered 'well-located' (i.e. has sufficient access to alternative transport options or is in close proximity of a commercial area), and where the development or dwelling is for social housing.

In 2020, requirements were introduced into the Planning Scheme to allow a reduction to the number of car parks required for development in Darwin CBD. This was based on a car parking study undertaken and the concept that car ownership rates are lower when residents have convenient access to services, employment and alternative means of transport. The same logic is considered just as relevant to other areas with good access to shops, jobs, and public transport (bus) or active transport (walking/ bicycle) options.

Research has also showed that statistically, households with lower incomes tend to own fewer cars. This is relevant to social housing which provides for people on lower incomes.

The following key principles are used to inform a proposed reduction in car parking rates:

- (a) people own fewer cars or are less reliant on cars when they have convenient access to public transport.
- (b) people own fewer cars or are less reliant on cars when they have convenient access to employment hubs and other daily urban amenities; and
- (c) people own fewer cars when their household income is lower.

Reducing car parking rates based on the above principles will better respond to actual generated demands and help reduce construction costs, contribute to greater housing affordability, and provide a more efficient use of appropriately zoned land.

*Key points:*

- *The proposed amendment applies specifically to group dwelling and multiple dwelling uses, where the location of the development meets the requirements outlined in the applicable table;*
- *Each reduction category can be applied separately and therefore the rates are considered cumulative; and*
- *The provisions do not apply to development that is not well-located (i.e. does not meet the criteria in the table for sufficient access to alternative transport options or to be in close proximity of a commercial area), or development that is not for social housing (managed by a registered provider/NT Government public housing).*

## 4. Consideration of Legislative Framework

### 4.1. Alignment with the *Planning Act 1999*

The proposed amendment is consistent with the purpose of the *Planning Act 1999* (the Act), which is to establish a system to facilitate planning for the orderly use and development of land. Proposed changes contribute to achieving the following objectives of the Act:

- (b) to ensure that strategic planning reflects the wishes and needs of the community;
- (c) to ensure that appropriate public consultation and input are included in the formulation of planning schemes and the making of decisions under planning schemes;
- (e) to promote the sustainable development of land; and
- (j) to promote the good design of buildings and other works that respects the amenity of the locality.

The amendment will help deliver more affordable, well-located housing options, as well as increase housing diversity and availability across the Northern Territory while ensuring that impacts of development are appropriately managed.

### 4.2. Alignment with the NT Planning Scheme 2020 Strategic Framework

The proposed amendment supports the development of group and multiple dwellings and aligns with the intent of the Compact Urban Growth Policy for the efficient use of land for urban residential development in close proximity to appropriate services and infrastructure.

## 5. Further information

For further information on the details of this proposed planning scheme amendment, please contact Lands Planning, Department of Lands, Planning and Environment.

- Phone: 08 8999 8963
- Email: [planning.ntg@nt.gov.au](mailto:planning.ntg@nt.gov.au)

Please quote application number PA2024/0130 to be directed to the Project Officer.

You may make a submission to the proposed amendment during the exhibition period through the following means:

- Online: [www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/planning-notices-online/notices#/](http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/planning-notices-online/notices#/)
- Email: [planning.ntg@nt.gov.au](mailto:planning.ntg@nt.gov.au)
- Post: NT Planning Commission, GPO Box 1680, DARWIN NT 0801
- Hand delivered: Level 1, Energy House, 18-20 Cavenagh Street, DARWIN NT 0800

All submissions must include the name, contact details and signature of the person making the submission to be considered valid.

The feedback received will inform the Minister's final consideration of the proposed amendment for inclusion into the NT Planning Scheme 2020.

## Appendix A – Proposed Planning Scheme amendment

- Blue indicates new policy
- Red text with a strikethrough indicates text that will be deleted

### Density provisions for one bedroom dwellings in Zone LMR (Low - Medium Density Residential)

#### 5.4.1 Residential Density

##### Requirements

2. The maximum number of **dwellings** that may be constructed on a **site** is to be determined in accordance with Table A, B, C or D (as the case requires) to this clause.

Table A to Clause 5.4.1: Dwelling Density in Certain Zones	
Zone	Dwelling Density
LR, RR, RL, R and for a <b>dwelling-single</b> in CL, CV and T	1 <b>dwelling-single</b> per lot
LMR	1 per 150m <sup>2</sup> for a 1 bedroom <b>dwelling</b> 1 per 300m <sup>2</sup> for a 2+ bedroom <b>dwelling</b>
<del>LMR and for</del> <b>Dwellings-group</b> in CL and T and <b>dwellings-multiple</b> in T	1 per 300m <sup>2</sup>
A and H	2 per lot
<b>Editor's Note: A study which is readily convertible to a bedroom is considered a bedroom for the purpose of this clause.</b>	

### Car parking rates for group dwellings and multiple dwellings

#### 5.2.4.1 Car Parking Spaces

##### Administration

1. This clause does not apply where alternative car parking space requirements are established under clause 5.9 (Location specific development requirements).
2. The consent authority may **consent** to use or development that is not in accordance with sub-clause 4 5 if it is satisfied a reduction in the number of **car parking spaces** is appropriate with regard to:
  - (a) the zoning of the land, the use or development or proposed use or development of the land, and the possible future use or development of the land;
  - (b) the provision of **car parking spaces** in the vicinity of the land;
  - (c) the availability of the public transport in the vicinity of the land; ~~and~~



- (d) the potential impact on the surrounding road network and the **amenity** of the locality and adjoining property; ~~or~~ and
  - (e) if the use or development relates to a **heritage place** and the Minister responsible for the administration of the *Heritage Act 2011* supports the reduced provision of **car parking spaces** in the interest of preserving the significance of the **heritage place**.
3. The consent authority may require the provision of **car parking spaces** for any **ancillary** use or development in addition to that specified for the **primary use** or development in the **relevant** table to this clause.
4. For the purposes of this clause:
- (a) the reductions in Table B only apply to uses specifically referenced within Table A and apply to the base car parking rates established in Table A;
  - (b) only one reduction percentage is permitted per category when applying Table B;
  - (c) a maximum 30% reduction applies to bed sitter and one bedroom **dwelling**s when applying Table B; and
  - (d) reductions in category 3 of Table B apply only to **dwelling**s used for social housing.

#### Requirements

5. Use and development is to include the minimum number of **car parking spaces** specified in the **relevant** table to this clause (rounded up to the next whole number).

**Editor's Note: Clause 5.2.4.4 provides for the design and layout of a car parking area.**

Table A to Clause 5.2.4.1: Minimum number of required parking spaces	
Use or Development	Minimum Number of Car Parking Spaces Required
Dwelling-group	1 per bed sitter and one bedroom <b>dwelling</b> 2 per <b>dwelling</b> with two or more bedrooms <u>Plus</u> any reductions in accordance with Table B (if the development meets the criteria)
Dwelling-multiple	1 per bed sitter and one bedroom <b>dwelling</b> 2 per <b>dwelling</b> with two or more bedrooms <u>Plus</u> any reductions in accordance with Table B (if the development meets the criteria)
<b>Editor's Notes:</b> (1) Clause 5.2.4.4 provides for the design and layout of a <b>car parking area</b> . (2) A study which is readily convertible to a bedroom is considered a bedroom for the purpose of this clause.	

**Table B to Clause 5.2.4.1: Reductions in car parking spaces for specific uses**

Category		Reduction permitted
1	Access to alternative transport options	
(a)	The development is located wholly within 200m walking distance of a public bus stop that provides <b>access</b> to: five or more bus routes; or a bus route with a minimum 15 minute frequency during morning and afternoon peak hours Monday to Friday.	15%
(b)	The development is located wholly within 400m walking distance of a public bus stop that provides <b>access</b> to: five or more bus routes; or a bus route with a minimum 15 minute frequency during morning and afternoon peak hours Monday to Friday.	10%
(c)	The development is located wholly within 400m riding distance of a dedicated off-road bicycle path or on-road bicycle lane.	5%
2	Proximity to commercial areas	
(a)	The development is located wholly within: a commercial zone; or 200m walking distance of a commercial zone.	15%
(b)	The development is located wholly within: a commercial zone; or 400m walking distance of a commercial zone.	10%
3	Social housing	
(a)	The development or dwelling is for: community housing to be managed by a registered provider under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH); or public housing owned and managed by the Northern Territory Government.	20%
<b>Editor's Notes:</b> (1) Where a reduction in car parking is sought across more than one category, the reduction percentages are combined, and the reduction is calculated cumulatively across all categories. (2) Morning and afternoon peak hours occur between 7am and 9am, and 4pm and 6pm Monday to Friday. (3) The boundary of a commercial area is defined by the extent of the land within a commercial zone in the relevant location. Commercial zones are identified in the Table to Clause 4.1. (4) Clause 5.2.9.11 and Clause 5.2.9.12 provide for car parking spaces specific to Darwin City Centre. The extent of Darwin City Centre is identified by the diagram to Clause 5.9.2. (5) NT community housing providers registered with the NRSCH are identified at <a href="https://dhlgcd.nt.gov.au/social-housing/community-housing">https://dhlgcd.nt.gov.au/social-housing/community-housing</a>		