



Petition

Registration No.	45
Title	Request a scrutiny committee investigate the transfer of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct land back to the Darwin City Council
Presented on	24 March 2020
Presented by	Member for Nelson
Referred to	Minister for Tourism, Sport and culture and the Legislation Scrutiny Committee
Assembly debate	If the Committee recommends the Petition be debated it will appear on the Notice Paper
Date referred	24 March 2020
Response due	Within 12 meeting days
Response received	6 May 2020
Response presented	23 June 2020

Petition

DARWIN CITY REVITALISATION CAMPAIGN
DARWIN WATERFRONT PRECINCT (*2006 Darwin Waterfront Act*)

Verse

DARWIN CITY COUNCIL (*2008 Local Government Act*)

Dear Darwin Stakeholders (owners, residents, retail and commercial business owners, tourists?)

- Did you know?
- Residents of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct are not permitted to vote in the Darwin City Council (DCC) Elections; includes approximately 258 residential apartments
- Why? The Darwin Waterfront land is legislated as 'unincorporated' and managed by the Darwin Waterfront Corporation (DWC) board.
- Darwin Waterfront owners and residents believe this is 'undemocratic' as municipal levies are charged to DWC whilst Darwin town planning decisions directly affect the Waterfront community?

Please sign this petition: Signatures will be presented by a NT MLA during the 2019 NTG Parliamentary Sittings to request a scrutiny committee investigate the transfer of land back to the council; this will also help revitalise the Darwin CBD by initiating integrated management systems.

Response

Petition 45 as read in the Legislative Assembly on 24 March 2020 was redirected to me as the Minister responsible for the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

Pursuant to Standing Order 123, I provide the following response for presentation to the Assembly.

The Northern Territory (NT) Government does not support the concept of transferring management and control of the Waterfront to the City of Darwin (Council) at this point in the development life of that precinct.

The Darwin Waterfront Corporation was established through NT legislation to streamline and progress the development of the Waterfront. The decision to remove the Waterfront development land from the Council was made jointly by the NT Government and Council to provide:

- development and planning certainty;
- clear ownership and control of the project;
- funding commitment from the NT Government in the absence of a large rate-payer base; and
- skills based board to oversee development and ongoing governance, reporting to the Minister.

The Waterfront land was severed from the Municipality of Darwin on 1 July 2010 with the commencement of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation By-laws and regulations by gazette notice on that date. No objections were received from the DCC or other stakeholder groups to this proposed management and development method.

The Darwin Waterfront Corporation (DWC) was established to manage the ongoing operation of the Waterfront Precinct and undertakes the following on behalf of the Northern Territory Government:

- represents the Territory in relation to ongoing obligations under the TOGA Group Project Delivery Deeds for the management of the developed broader precinct, manages events and marketing of the Precinct and is the entity with principle responsibility for the development requirements and obligations around the undeveloped Fort Hill and Stokes Hill sites including the public infrastructure associated with the Luxury Hotel;
- holds the head-lease and manages Stokes Hill Wharf, maintains and manages all roadways and common areas, provides security and lifesaving services, and acts as the NT's agent for litigation and contractual matters in and around the Precinct;
- manages the Build, Own, Operate and Transfer Public-Private Partnership contract for the Darwin Convention and Exhibition Centre. This contract represents the majority of funding that the Waterfront Corporation receives annually from the NT Government, to cover the operational costs of the Darwin Convention Centre along with the Finance and original build costs.

To deliver the complete package of municipal services to Waterfront residents, the Darwin Waterfront Corporation entered into a formal Agreement for Services with the DCC on 11 December 2009. The agreement includes provisions for the now Council to collect rates, conduct dog management under the Darwin Waterfront Corporation's By-laws and provide Waterfront residents with access to Council libraries and the Shoal Bay dump as if they were residents of the municipality of Darwin.

Waterfront rates are collected by the Council as agents for the Darwin Waterfront Corporation. Pursuant to the Darwin Waterfront Corporation Act 2006, the rates are based on the same method of calculation as rates imposed by DCC in the Central Business District, plus an additional levy reflecting the very high level of amenity within the precinct.

Municipal incorporation was always intended to be revisited once full development of the Waterfront is achieved.

Voting rights for residents can also continue to be explored in consultation with the NT Electoral Commission.

The Darwin Waterfront Corporation management and Board is highly engaged with Waterfront residents and businesses. The management model is regularly referenced as best practice and the basis for the precinct maintaining high amenity, activation and safety.

The Darwin Waterfront Precinct attracts an estimated 1.2 million visits annually and in 2018-19, the Darwin Waterfront Corporation held 249 events attracting over 97 000 additional people to the Precinct. By any standard, this is an incredible achievement and testament to the focus on activation and collaboration between all stakeholders at the Waterfront.

Voting rights for residents will continue to be looked at; however, the original justification for creating the Waterfront Corporation management model has not changed and they have my full support as the Minister, on behalf of the NT Government, to continue the good work.