

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Higgins to the Minister for Health:

#### Springvale Homestead

1. What is the Government doing to ensure that the Springvale Homestead can be made available to tourists as soon as possible?
2. Why has no solution been reached on the issue of waste water storage on the Katherine River floodplain?
3. Is there consideration for the fact that this property predates modern public health standards?

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1. The Department of Health has issued a wastewater works design approval to the Travel North Group on 2 October 2017 for an upgraded wastewater treatment system providing secondary treatment that would service all the property's sanitary facilities and address the following issues:
    - Safe management of a commercial quantity of wastewater (up to 38 000 litres/day) in an environmentally sensitive area
    - Decommissioning of all existing septic tank systems that were failing and located within the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood zone (i.e. 1 in 100 year flood zone)
    - The ability to utilise land within the 1% AEP flood zone for the disposal of higher quality treated effluent from the eight FujiClean aerated wastewater treatment systems. Avoiding an expensive upgrade to the property's existing power supply which is of insufficient capacity to pump primary treated effluent from conventional septic tank systems to an area above the 1% AEP flood zone
    - Utilising land within the 1% AEP flood zone that is more conducive for the disposal of effluent than the land above the 1% AEP flood zone.

The Travel North Group has not submitted any alternative proposals for on-site wastewater management to the system application approved by the Department in October 2017.

To expedite the reopening of Springvale Homestead, it is recommended that the Travel North Group re-engage their hydraulic consultant to investigate cost saving measures that still achieve secondary treatment for on-site wastewater management.

2. With respect to the installation of on-site wastewater systems at Springvale Homestead, the Code of Practice for On-site Wastewater Management adopted under the *NT Public and Environmental Health Regulations* states that the site assessment criteria requires that each site should not be within the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood zone.

A concession was given to the Travel North Group to dispose of treated effluent within this area by utilising a series of alternative septic tank systems (i.e. aerated wastewater treatment systems) which provide a higher quality effluent in lieu of only primary treated effluent through conventional septic tank systems (as per existing systems).

3. The specification and standards to which the existing septic tank systems were installed is unknown and cannot be applied to any sewage upgrades. With the history of failed septic tank systems, it is apparent that Springvale Homestead's sewage infrastructure is no longer fit for purpose and needs to comply with current Standards. This includes Plumbing Standards and the Code of Practice for On-site Wastewater Management.

All reports provided by the Travel North Group's consultants refer to a wastewater system providing secondary treatment.

The Department of Health has serious concerns about the potential commercial quantity of effluent generated on-site; the extent of the property located within the flood zone; and the property's proximity to sensitive environmental areas including heritage listed trees. It is for these reasons that the only option acceptable to the Department of Health for wastewater management at Springvale Homestead is by a wastewater system providing secondary treatment.