The Country Liberals have released a discussion paper designed to breathe new life into Darwin's moribund strategic planning process.

Opposition Leader, Terry Mills, said the Country Liberals’ plan examines all aspects of future growth in Greater Darwin and lays a solid foundation for sensible, sustainable development that meets the needs of a growing population.

“Planning For Greater Darwin – A Dynamic Harbour City – provides a comprehensive overview of the course planners will need to chart in the years and decades ahead and we saw a very real need to produce this for the long term benefit of the Territory,” Mr Mills said.

“The Darwin region’s increasing population will create enormous challenges for governments, planners and engineers to ensure the city’s land and infrastructure needs are adequately met.

“The Henderson Government’s failure to plan has resulted in a Territory-wide housing crisis that could have been avoided if Labor had developed a strategic vision for the future.

“Chief Ministers Martin and Henderson took their eye off the ball, leading to enormous pressure on the city’s housing stock.

“When Clare Martin belatedly announced plans to develop Bellamack in Palmerston, Territorians watched open-mouthed as a procession of ministers churned out a succession of media releases while not a single house was built.

“Three years and 15 media releases since Bellamack was announced, Territorians are still waiting to see a home completed.

“The same lack of foresight contributed to the recent bacterial outbreaks in Darwin Harbour.

“Labor had a decade to develop the infrastructure to protect the Harbour, but only acted once images of the Larrakeyah outfall pumping raw sewerage into the ocean near The Esplanade made it onto the nightly news.

“Wherever I turn, there is Government incompetence. There’s the failure to release land, inability to identify sites for heavy industry and there are extensive delays in the release of its environment policy.

“Conversely, Planning for Greater Darwin provides a roadmap for the future.

“The document correctly states:
The Northern Territory has lost its way in terms of leadership direction, order, organization and the responsible consideration of big picture strategic planning.

This Government follows a path of reactive knee-jerk planning moves and policies founded purely on expediency. This disturbing, piecemeal approach has a negative impact on Darwin, its people and their ability to pursue the kind of lifestyle they deserve.

Planning for Greater Darwin continues the great tradition of the Country Liberals planning the Territory’s strategic direction.

It was the Country Liberals that initiated and developed Palmerston.

Weddell, too, was first put on the drawing board by the Country Liberals. The pity is that it has taken this long for the Labor Government to even start thinking about Weddell.

This discussion paper contains a vision of satellite cities linked by an integrated transport system.

It foreshadows the construction of new road and rail linkages, resulting eventually in a spur line from the main rail line from Berrimah into the CBD and light rail services.

Water transport will play a key role, including ferries for commuters travelling to and from their homes in Weddell, Palmerston and the Cox Peninsula.

It outlines a vision for heavy industrial development at Glyde Point, serviced by the construction of a new town at Murrumujuk.

It looks at the water, energy, health, educational and recreational needs as the Darwin region’s population grows, and identifies a second airport for general and commercial aviation.

It casts a critical eye over our non-built environment, with a focus on mitigating the impacts of natural hazards such as crocodiles, mosquitoes, tropical weather systems and climate change.

It offers options for the Weddell development – either to the edge of the Elizabeth River or retention of a mangrove buffer between the city and the water.

As I said, the document is comprehensive. It can be seen in its entirety on our website: www.countryliberals.org.au.

Planning for Greater Darwin has taken many months to compile and tapped into the expertise of some of the Territory’s most respected master planners.

Unlike the Government’s approach which describes what needs to be done, our plan outlines how it will be done.

It underlines the importance of our policy to establish a Northern Territory Planning Commission that unlike the Development Consent Authority, will focus on important long term strategic planning.

I commend the document and anticipate it will be the source of considerable discussion today and into the future.

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594