**Sin City safe for moment**

**DAN MCDONALD**

AFTER demolishing the run-down Kurrang Flat and Runge St blocks for big redevelopment returns, the Department of Housing says it has no plans to get rid of other notorious public housing sites like the “Sin City” complex in Gray.

The department’s policy is to reduce “densifications” of public housing — spreading homes across the community rather than in clusters.

The accepted wisdom across Australia is that big complexes, in vogue during the 60s and 70s, become breeding grounds for disadvantage and entrenched socio-economic problems across generations.

The Kurrang Flats, long known as Darwin’s worst address, are on their way to becoming a swanky development in the million-dollar suburb of Fannie Bay. Runge Street at Coconut Grove and Elliott St at the Narrows are both also in the hands of the private sector.

In the Department of Housing’s annual report from 2014-15, chief executive Leah Cliford said the department had “taken steps to reduce public housing densification through targeted redevelopment of assets, and undertaken preliminary projects to support new affordable and social housing.”

But clusters of public housing at Palmerston, and in less well-heeled suburbs of the Top End where redevelopment returns won’t be as lucrative, are not yet set for the bulldozer.

DOH spokeswoman Jenni-seckel said the department would not make any decisions while the Housing Strategy Consultation Draft is out for public comment.

“Currently there are no plans to undertake demolition on any medium or large complexes in Palmerston,” she said.

Sin City, the public housing block between Victoria Drive and Priest Crt at Gray, has had its fair share of the spotlight, including a high-profile siege last year.

Also last year police stormed the unit of the mother of Fabian Brock for drugs, just a matter of hours before Brock was fatally shot while driving through the northern suburbs of Darwin. In 2014, a man was stabbed to death in front of the housing estate.

A Victorian paper present-ed by the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute stated that public housing populations were frequently characterised by factors “strongly correlat-ed” with crime and anti-social behaviour.

Of significance to the tenants living in these estates, they were subjected to prop-erty crimes, physical violence, drug-related crime, environmental and social issues.

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**Finding Bowie by the road**

**ANDREA JOHNSTON**

“A PROPER Gentleman” is how Centralian musician Warren Williams described David Bowie, after a chance meeting with the late star in Hermannsburg.

“I was driving along one day, and I saw these two fellas by the side of the road I asked them if they were all right. Then I real-ised it was David Bowie,” Mr Williams said.

It was the early ’80s and Bowie was in Australia to re-cord the video for his hit single Let’s Dance.

Mr Williams said he didn’t know what Bowie was doing in Hermannsburg, but it’s been reported the pop idol had a lifelong fascination with Uluru. He was also fascinated by Aboriginal culture and Mr Williams said Bowie asked lots of questions about the community in a conversation he estimated lasted 25 minutes.

Bowie gave Mr Williams an address for his fan club, to which a letter was dutifully sent, eliciting a reply from the man himself. That letter de-tailed a phone number which Mr Williams called, to find Bowie on the end of the line.

“It was so unreal,” Mr Williams said, “even talking about it today I still can’t believe I met him.”

Bowie’s influence is felt in many ways across Central Australia.

At Ross River Resort, 12-year-old Ziggy is named in honour of the star’s alter-ego. Alice Springs photographer Rhett Hammerton was so dis-mayed by a housemate’s lack of exposure to Bowie, he de-cided to throw a party to illus-trate the man’s genius.

“We really pushed the cos-tume thing and we were so happy that everyone really got on board and went all out for their costumes. We basically had every era covered — from Ziggy Stardust to The Thin White Duke – and a surprising number of Goblin King,” Mr Hammerton said.

**Giles considers broad travel inquiry**

CHIEF Minister Adam Giles will consider invoking the In-quiries Act to look at govern-ment travel dating back as far as 2002.

He said if it did take place, the inquiry would be lengthy, and would be along similar lines to the Stella Maris In-quiry. “I’m just getting some advice now on how easy it will be for us to conduct an inquiry and go back until then but of course that’ll be a lengthy in-quiry,” he told ABC radio on Monday.

Mr Giles said he expected further police action against travel agents. But Labor’s Lau-ren Moss said an independent audit should take place into ministerial travel. “Any inde-pendent audit into ministerial travel should include all deal-ings with Latitude Travel in-cluding the previous Labor Government’s time in office.”

**Statement delays put charities at risk**

ALMOST 450 Northern Ter-ritory not-for-profit organ-isations are risking their charity status, as the due date draws near for 2015 Annual Infor-mation Statements.

Susan Pascoe, Commiss-ioner of the Australian Chariti-ies and Not-for-profits Commis-sion said the later org-annisations left it, the slower the online system would become.

“Charities are urged not to leave it until the last minute, as thousands trying to access the systems at the one time can slow submission,” she said. “More seriously, the ACNC has analysed the data and identified 1200 charities that are at immediate risk of losing their charity status for failing to submit their ... statement for two consecutive years.”

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