COUNCILS sometimes have to walk a fine line. This week they’re under fire for plans to build a playground in Bicentennial Park along Darwin’s showpiece Esplanade. What you don’t see will be giving them flak for the lack of ways to keep kids entertained in the city. Damned if they do, damned if they don’t.

That line is especially fine when it comes to development in the city. For many years, as Darwin has developed, people have been relatively relaxed about the boom of high-rise buildings and housing estates. Especially compared with the sort of fierce opposition that building proposals receive interstate.

As open space becomes more scarce right across the city, we’ve also seen an increase in opposition to development.

Top Enders are particularly concerned when it comes to our growing usage of open outdoor areas. Anti-development sentiment tends to increase when we’re talking about those sorts of areas: think the Nightcliff Foreshore, the Botanic Gardens and now the Esplanade.

It’s a statement from Territorians that while we’re not opposed to development, and while we’re not opposed to change, we are also keen to make sure the things we love about this place remain undamaged by governments, councils, developers and others.

The truth is that sometimes we see good plans and sometimes we see bad ones. It’s becoming increasingly difficult to tell which is which, given that sometimes we see reasonable objections to development and other times it’s a couple of noisy neighbours.

In the case of the Bicentennial Park playground, surely this is a case where a compromise is easy to find. The result should be a good facility for our kids to use, and one that doesn’t ruin the amenity of our fantastic public space.

WHAT would you do if you won $3 million?

Three lucky people are living the dream after winning a share in the biggest lottery prize this year. The $3 million prize the world is your oyster and only your imagination is the limit.

You could do anything from buying a new house and car to taking a trip around the world.

To those lucky three punters... congratulations!

Our concrete city

RICHARDSON Park, Ludmilla
Rapid Creek, The Esplanade – it doesn’t seem to matter whether it is the NT Government or Darwin council, the power-brokers of the NT have no idea what community consultation means.

According to the Macquarie Dictionary, to consult means to have regard for a person’s interest, convenience etc in making plans. Note: consultation comes at the making plans stage, not when it is a fait accompli.

Putting out projects to tender before the public knows about them, selling land designated community use to developers before rezoning, reversing decisions made by previous governments and councils – all these practices are a travesty of community consultation. They are a deceit, a pretence, a sham, a confidence trick. The latest shocking example is the Darwin council proposed “Play Space” (actually the reverse of a space), a giant playground that will desecrate one of the last and much-used and treasured green spaces in an increasingly concrete city.

Community consultation does not mean erecting an unwanted structure, then asking the public the egalitarian of whether they would like it painted pink or blue or, in the case of the Play Space, whether they would like a skate-board-ramp ing rag or a whirly pig.

Genuine, authentic community consultation means consulting with constituents at the ideas stage and seeking endorsement to proceed. Why do voters and taxpayers tolerate our quality of life and the future of Darwin being so devas-

tatingly compromised?

Josephine Brownrigg, Stuart Park

Small way to go

WITH the Litchfield shire elections this weekend, the editor could do well to look at the McGregor Tan Research survey, which shows two thirds of the electors would prefer smaller blocks.

Peter Cavanagh, Howard Springs

A tasty treat

A GOOD deal of native Australians I know say the echidna is beautiful to eat, but pretty hard to find.

Indigenous Australians can pretty much eat a variety of foods such as goanna, turtle, dugong. One mate told me black cockatoo is his favourite.

Indigenous people have been eating these animals from day one. It is a tradition, and they are not breaking the law.

My only regret is the big old croc taste like crap, otherwise they would be harder to find and legally culled. One thing I am told is, if a croc becomes a danger to the people or ani-

mals in a community, they are not trapped and moved on, they are killed. Outright, done and dusted.

The indigenous have got it right, by what I am told.

PB, Nightcliff

Lack of planning

PLANNING has hit an absol-

tute bottom, with the concur-

rent application by Ministe
ter Tollner to rezone land zoned as Public Space in Reynolds Court, Coconut Grove, for resi-

dential purposes.

This PS land is for public recreational activity. Its pres-

cent area measures 3610sq m, of which 2442sq m is to be taken for eight residential units, and just 1168sq m left for public en-

joyment. The public space has been part of the amenity of the area since it was developed for medium density housing in the 1980s. This change is appar-

tly part of a secret “Land Re-

lease Agreement”, about which the public knows nothing. Res-

idents have not been consult-

ed. Consultation is apparently reserved for the use of the one third remnant public space, after the “deal” has been done.

This application is being justified by the controversial “Compact Urban Growth Pol-

icy”, which is proving more a development opportunity doc-

ument than a sustainable plan-

ing tool.

While the NT Government continues to ignore the need for planning, which includes providing community purpose land and protecting natural foreshores and catchments, it will fail to maintain a sustain-

able community with a grow-

ing, happy population.

This application is insensitive to the public and not in our in-

terest. It should be withdrawn.

M S Clinch, PLan, The Plannning Action Network

Piddle in ocean

SENATOR Nick Xenophon said it all for the overwhelming majority of Territorians re the sale of Darwin’s strategic port for $506 million over 99 years – little more than $5 million a year, a piddle in the ocean.

Nick Xenophon said, “I can’t imagine the Chinese Government would allow the strategic port of Shanghai to be taken over by a foreign company with strong links to its de-

fense forces... This seems to be a lazy grab for cash by the NT Government.”

Another sell off, another sell out by “deal-making prov-
inicial ministers from the NT”.

June Tapp, Katherine

Letters

WHAT: The Give Way sign on the corner of Lind Rd and Prosser St in Johnston is bent.

WHAT: Did you know of something in the Territory that needs fixing? Give The Fixer a call on 8944 9750, email thefixer@ntnews.com.au or follow on Twitter @NTNTheFixer

Letters to the editor should be kept to 175 words or less. Send your letters to GPO Box 1500, Darwin, NT, 0801; or email: ntnmail@ntnews.com.au You must include your name, home address or PO Box number. Name and address will be withheld on request. The Northern Territory News reserves the right to edit letters. Responsibility is taken by the Editor, NT News, GPO Box 1500, Darwin, NT, 0801

On this day

10 YEARS AGO: Doctors are warning of a blowout in surgery waiting times for people living in the bush, unless Federal and State governments boost funding for public hospitals in rural areas.

20 YEARS AGO: A Darwin alderman has called for a 24-hour program to clean up the city, because of people sleeping, drinking and camping in public areas. Alderman John Antella told last night’s monthly City Council meeting that at times there were up to 400 people in various public areas.

25 YEARS AGO: Chief Minister Marshall Perron said the NT Government would not sell off Darwin’s strategic port with Japan Air Lines for lending rights in Darwin. Mr Perron said Elcho Nakao, a Japanese politician, had spoken to him about the possibility of direct flights from Japan to Darwin.

What’s your say?

YOUR VOICE IN THE TERRITORY

The Fixer

WHAT: The Give Way sign on the corner of Lind Rd and Prosser St in Johnston is bent.

WHO’S RESPONSIBLE: City of Palmerston

CONTACT: Mark Spangenberg

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