1 October 2026

NT Local Government Representation Review Committee
submissions@lgrr2026.com.au

Dear Sir/Madam

NT Local Government Representation Review – Litchfield Council Submission

Litchfield Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Local Government Representation Review Committee as part of the 2026 Local Government Representation Review.

Council's submission is that the existing external boundary of Litchfield Council, including ward boundaries, should be retained in its current form.

Council is aware of other local government areas who wish to incorporate areas of Litchfield Council into their municipalities. Council is concerned about the potential impacts of this proposal on our ongoing financial sustainability, the future development of the Greater Holtze area and our community.

Provided below are our rationale and evidence in support of our submission.

Financial Sustainability and Future Growth

Council wishes to highlight the financial and operational impacts of its current revenue base and municipal boundaries.

More than 70% of Council's total income in generated from rates. However, this income is not spread evenly across the municipality. For example, Middle Arm provides around 30% of Council's total rates income. Emerging urban areas such as Holtze and Kowandi will also become increasingly important sources of rates revenue as development continues.

Litchfield is a growing municipality and is an important growth corridor for the Northern Territory. It also provides key road and infrastructure connections between developing areas and other parts of the Territory. As development increases, so does the need for roads, drainage, open spaces, community facilities and other services. Much of this growth also connects with, or supports, infrastructure and development led by the Northern Territory Government and neighbouring councils.

Council already manages a large area of almost 3,000km², including more than 700 kilometres of sealed and unsealed roads, recreation reserves, community facilities, waste transfer stations and Thorak Regional Cemetery. These assets are spread across a large and growing municipality and require ongoing funding to maintain, renew and keep them safe.

Council therefore needs a strong and sustainable revenue base to support both its existing responsibilities and the growth that is occurring across Litchfield. Without sufficient revenue, there is a real question about how Council can continue to support this growth, maintain its existing services and infrastructure, and meet the increasing demands placed on it.

Any change to the municipal boundaries needs to consider the impact on Council's long-term financial position and its ability to provide these services. Losing areas that are expected to provide future rates revenue could reduce Council's ability to maintain its existing assets while also investing in the infrastructure needed to support future growth.

Council remains committed to managing its finances responsibly, finding efficiencies, increasing other sources of income where possible and working with the Northern Territory Government and other stakeholders. However, Council considers that its financial position, its role in supporting growth across the region and the size of its existing responsibilities should be taken into account when considering any changes to its municipal boundaries.

Asche and Greater Holtze – Infrastructure, Land Use and Community of Interest

The Greater Holtze area is an important consideration in assessing the future representation arrangements for Litchfield Council. The Greater Holtze Area Plan identifies the area as being wholly within the Litchfield Municipality and provides for the progressive transition of a predominantly undeveloped area to a significant new urban community.

The Area Plan recognises that future development will need to appropriately integrate with existing private residences within Litchfield, particularly those along Wallaby Holtze Road and Taylor Road. It also identifies the need for appropriate buffers and transition areas between future urban development and the established rural community. The planning process for Greater Holtze therefore recognised the relationship between the emerging urban areas and the existing Litchfield community.

The development of Asche provides a practical example of this transition now occurring. Asche is no longer solely a future planning concept. Residential development is progressing, with Council having undertaken significant technical and infrastructure-related work associated with the subdivision. Council has reviewed designs for 9 of the proposed 18 stages, cleared designs for Stages 1 to 6 and accepted handover of the constructed infrastructure associated with Stages 1 to 4.

Council has made arrangements for the provision of ongoing municipal services to the emerging urban community. In particular, Council has awarded a kerbside waste collection contract that provides for the servicing of the new residential development. In accordance with Council's Dog Management By-laws, Council has also implemented a Dog Restriction Area to manage the number of dogs that can be kept on any one property. This represents a transition from Council's role in assessing and accepting subdivision infrastructure to the direct provision of an ongoing municipal service to residents of the emerging community.

Roads, drainage, waste management, open space, community infrastructure and other municipal services do not operate independently of the surrounding established community. As the development progresses, the residents of Asche will increasingly rely upon and interact with the same local government infrastructure, services and elected representation as other residents of the Litchfield Municipality.

From an infrastructure and land use perspective, Asche should therefore be considered in the context of the broader Greater Holtze area and its relationship with the existing Litchfield community. The area is being developed as part of a planned expansion of the Greater Darwin urban area, but within the geographic and functional context of the Litchfield Municipality.

Any consideration of changes to the external boundary of Litchfield Council should recognise this existing and emerging community of interest. In particular, consideration should be given to whether separating Asche from Litchfield would maintain the same level of functional, infrastructure and community connection between the new residential community and the surrounding Litchfield communities.

Council's substantial involvement in the planning, assessment, construction handover and ongoing service provision associated with Asche is relevant evidence of the established relationship between the development and Litchfield Council. While Council's historical investment should not, of itself, determine the future local government boundary, it demonstrates the practical consequences of the development occurring within the Litchfield Municipality and the role Council has already undertaken in supporting the emerging community.

The Representation Review should therefore consider not only population and geographic boundaries, but also the functional relationships created by land use, infrastructure networks, service delivery and the progressive establishment of communities. In the case of Asche, these factors demonstrate a developing relationship with the Litchfield Municipality that should be taken into account in determining arrangements that provide fair and effective local government representation.

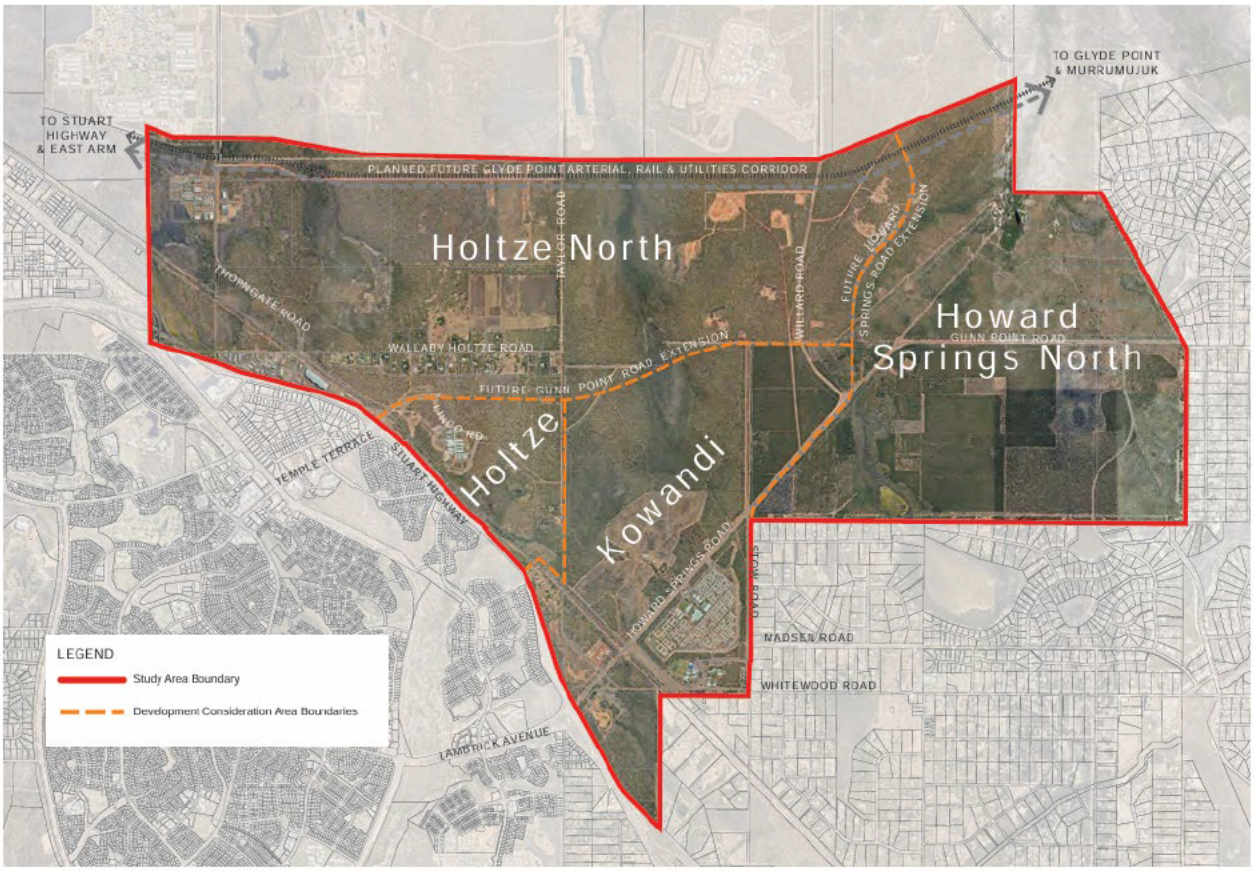

Figure 1: Localities of Greater Holtze

Impact on existing residents

Any change to Council's existing boundaries would also have a significant impact on long-term residents of the Litchfield Municipality.

Many residents have established strong connections to their local community and have lived within the municipality for many years. They have developed a strong connection to the rural character of Litchfield, its services and existing local government representation arrangements. The proposed change would therefore not simply alter a boundary on a map. It would affect an established community and the local government arrangements through which those residents engage with and receive services from Council.

Conclusion

Council considers that retaining Holtze and Kowandi within the Litchfield Municipality is important to the long-term financial sustainability of Council and the community it serves. Litchfield is a growing municipality with significant existing infrastructure and service responsibilities. The future rates revenue from emerging urban areas will be important in helping Council meet these responsibilities and support the continued growth of the municipality.

Any modification to the municipal boundaries would not only affect Council's future revenue. It would also have an impact on existing residents, who rely on Council to maintain roads, reserves, community facilities and other essential services across the municipality. A smaller rates base would place greater pressure on the remaining ratepayers and could reduce Council's ability to maintain existing services while also responding to future growth.

Council has also already made a significant investment in planning for and supporting the development of Holtze. Council has worked closely with developers and the Northern Territory Government on infrastructure and subdivision matters and has already undertaken substantial technical and assessment work as development progresses. This work has been undertaken on the basis that Holtze forms part of the Litchfield Municipality and that Council will have an ongoing role in supporting the community as it develops.

Holtze and Kowandi are therefore not simply areas of future development. They form an important part of Litchfield's future and its ability to remain financially sustainable while continuing to provide services to both existing and future residents.

For these reasons, Council respectfully requests that the existing municipal boundaries be retained.

Should you require any further information or wish to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me on [redacted].

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Stephen Hoyne
Chief Executive Officer