

Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in relation to Commonwealth developments through the Defence Housing Authority at Muirhead, NT, from PPlan: the Planning Action Network, Inc, 9.4.2010.

SUMMARY

1. PPlan: the Planning Action Network, Inc is an independent community group working for balance in development, so that community issues are addressed. Basically we aim at sustainable development covering social, cultural environmental and long term economic implications. We have over 15 years experience with Northern Territory planning issues.
2. Our submission is brief due to present time constraints. However we wish to submit at the Darwin hearing, and at that time provide illustrations. We submitted at the initial hearing on Lyons, and we have experienced its development from the very beginning.
3. Headings addressed here include:
 - Basic planning principles
 - Sustainable living in the tropics – architecture and constraints
 - Needs of defence families and community facilities
 - Heritage
 - Impact on the Darwin community and Darwin City Council
 - Experience from Lyons project

Managing actual outcomes for Muirhead

TEXT OF SUBMISSION

4. Basic planning principles – The Northern Territory Planning Scheme (NTPS) specifies that the minimum size for single dwelling lots is 800sm (NTPS11.1.1). Defence Housing Authority(DHA) has chosen to bypass this basic requirement through a Planning Scheme Amendment (no.82) of 28 October, 2009. This Specific Use document, numbered SD 26 allows for lots which ‘include a dominant size of between 500sm and 700sm’ with no lots below 450sm. Obviously this is a great lowering of standards, even from the average of 700sm used in Lyons. In addition, DHA is already asking the Development Consent Authority(DHA) for reduced front setbacks.

5. Sustainable living in the Tropics- architecture and constraints – Darwin has a climate with temperatures often over 30’ and humid.. The nearby Northern Suburbs were planned largely in the days of Commonwealth administration. A priority is given to natural through ventilation facilitated by lot size, good orientation, solar systems, overhangs, and large shade trees. Houses are often elevated. The contrast with the Lyons development which is so dependent on electrical air conditioning could not be greater.

We have photographs to illustrate these points for the hearing.

For sustainability Muirhead must adopt architectural star ratings that apply in the humid tropics, not in Canberra.

Muirhead has additional constraints because part of it adjoins the Leanyer swamp. Clause 4(f) seems inadequate in this regard. Potential buyers must be informed of danger from biting midges and mosquitoes, and dangers of soil saturation.

Sustainability implications must be addressed by DHA

6. Needs of Defence families and community facilities - Defence families are special people. They should not be sold cheap. They need lots big enough for gardens to play securely. Keeping a watchdog may make a wife feel more secure. Houses should not be too close together, for rest and privacy. A sense of community is important to people away from home, community centres should be close by. Public transport should be available, with streets wide enough to take it. Parks useable by energetic children playing together are essential. If internet is connected it should use fibre optic cable not copper. We think it wrong that smaller lots be reserved for defence families.
7. Heritage - In Lyons there was a very sad situation where it was decided not to preserve a small heritage site significant to Australia's defence history.
8. Impact on the community - We do not know what facilities will be in Muirhead. Initially, Lyons was almost all residential. When a community centre was initiated, it was the size of a house. Darwin City Council had to subsidise its doubling

in size for the people of Lyons.

Our own Council and Darwin ratepayers are presented with an unfair burden when developers, keen to promote appearances opt for extensive public landscaping rather than parks of useable size and spaces. This should be avoided in Muirhead.

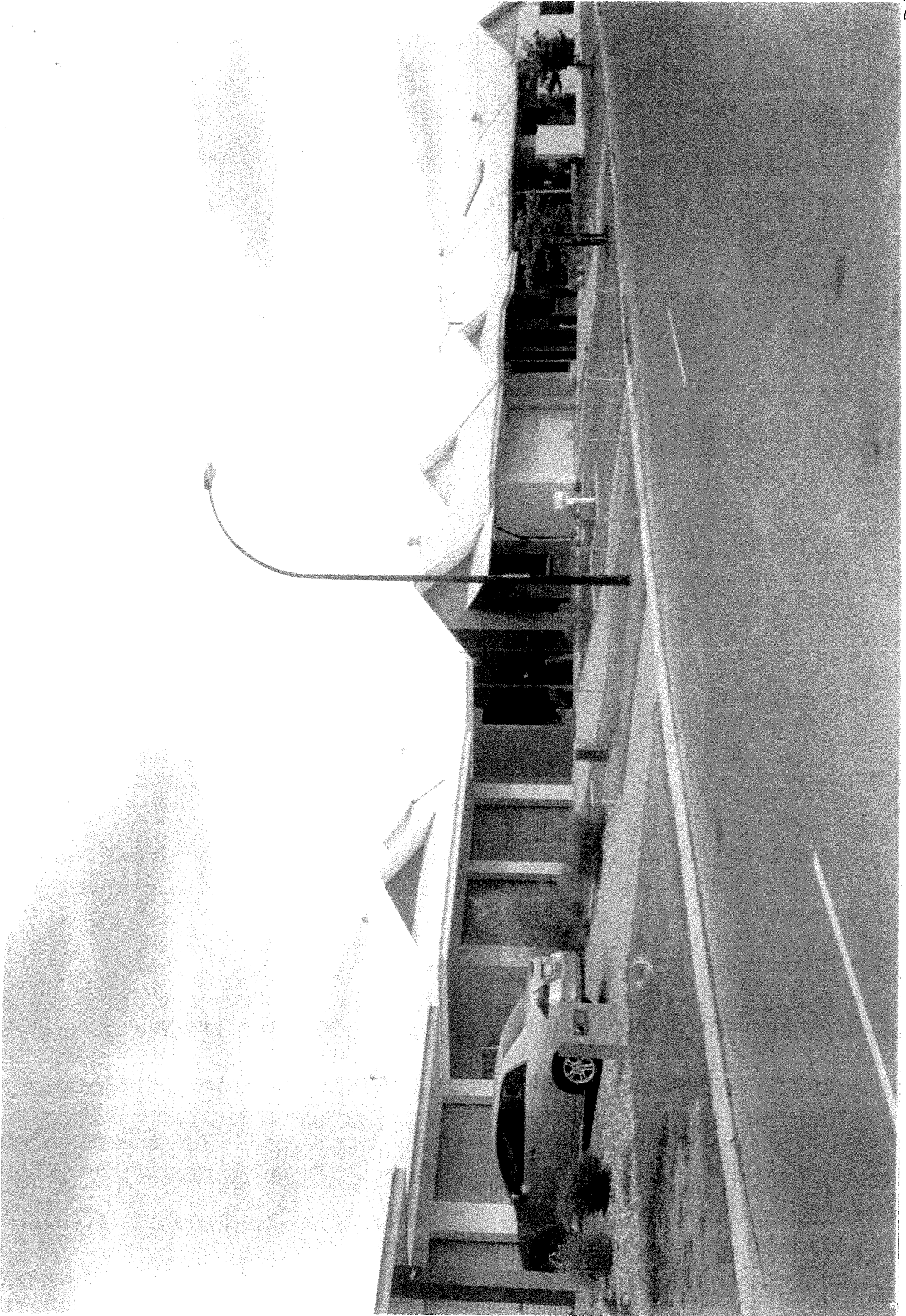
Natural spaces are welcomed for recreation.

9. Experience from the Lyons Project – Our organization was involved with the Lyons project from the outset, and like many people who comment to us are disappointed with its standards and outcomes in our tropical climate. The Productivity Commission in its report warns against ‘master communities’ being taken at face value, and we concur.

Much of what we have said so far illustrates that point.

10. Managing actual outcomes at Muirhead –We ask the Committee to find ways and means to ensure more appropriate and sustainable outcomes from the Muirhead project. We need better outcomes for defence families, and for our own Darwin community, including ongoing financial savings.

M A CLINCH



Illustrations for ASCEPW - Mainhead, NT (DHA)

Plan Submission

(M.A. Almer)

9.4.2010

Lyons Development

Front Streetscape.

Minimal Setbacks

Non-tropical design

Sameness

Landscaping instead of front gardens

Houses close together



Illustrations for PSCPWS - Murhead, NT (DHR)

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APPENDIX A

Lyons Development

Driveways

Short front setbacks

Minimum front garden (?)



Illustrations for PSCPW - Muirhead, NT (DHA) Plan Submission 9.4.2010 Attachment
A-3

Lyons Development

Backyards

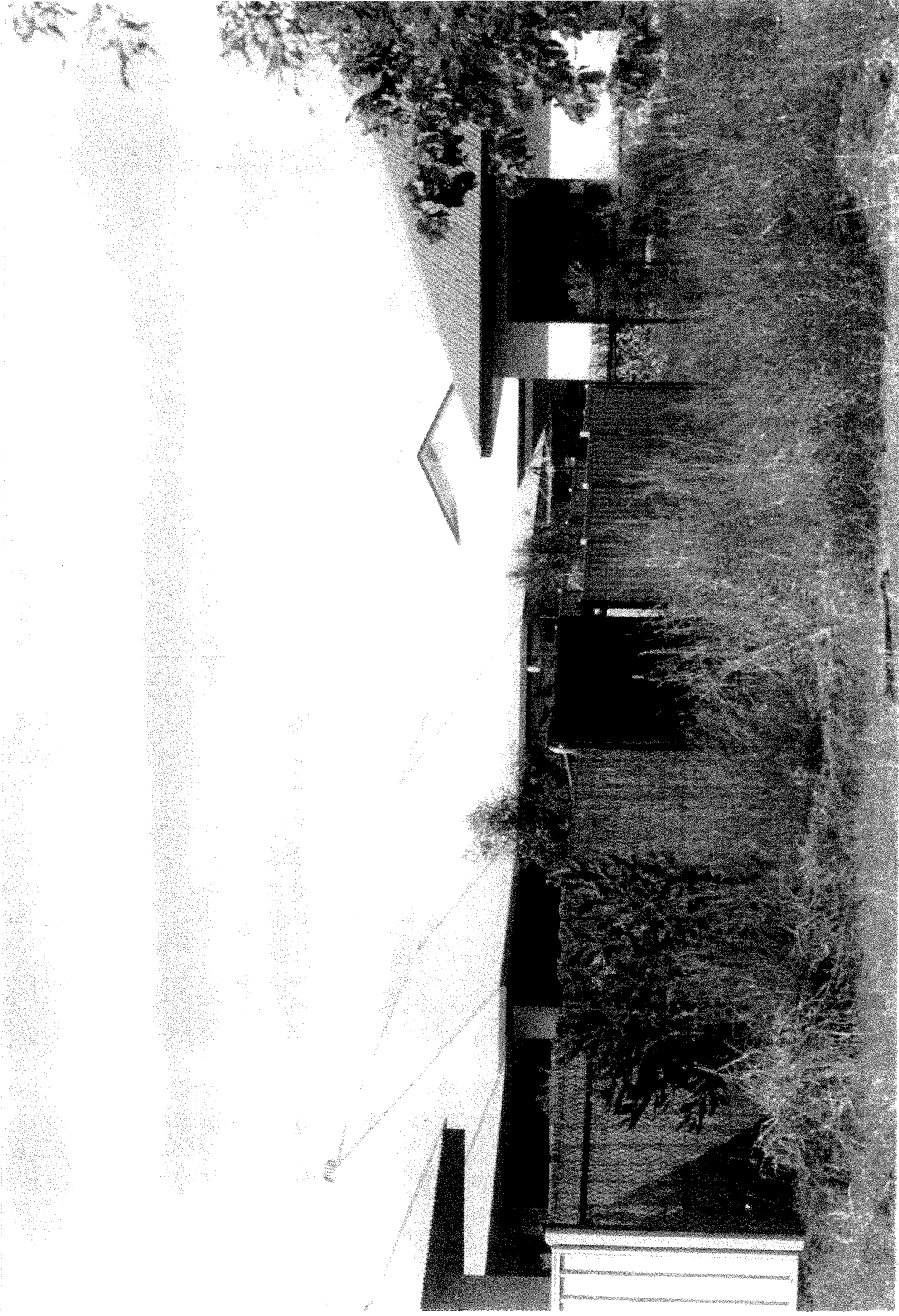
View of back yards showing limited space

Lack of Privacy

Air conditioner

Lack of tropical design

Sameness.



Illustrations for PS/CPW - Muirhead, NT (DHA) Plan Submission, 9.4.2010 A-4 ^H Attachment

Lyons Development

Fences

View at back of some houses

Houses too close to each other

Attempts by residents to create privacy results in blocking breeze.

Small back yards.

Almost continuous roofing

No room for watch dogs