

INNER SOUTH CANBERRA COMMUNITY COUNCIL.

Public Forum 13 Feb 2018
7.00 pm Eastlake Football Club

Meeting Notes

1. Welcome and Apologies: Marea Fatseas, Chair ISCCC

The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land and noted apologies from Elizabeth Lee MLA (whose staff are here) and Candice Burch MLA. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Eastlake Football Club for providing the venue.

2. Introduction: Chair

We are very pleased to have Minister Gentleman here tonight to brief us on the HOUSING CHOICES DISCUSSION PAPER released in November last year. A chart from this paper (displayed) shows the Inner North and Inner South of the ACT have the biggest proportion of apartments and townhouses, while the other regions have bigger proportions of single dwellings.

Last December the ACT government released ACT'S CLIMATE STRATEGY TO A NET ZERO EMISSIONS TERRITORY DISCUSSION PAPER and we are also very pleased to have Minister Rattenbury here to brief us on this. We have invited both ministers tonight because the two discussions are interlinked. Both papers refer to building quality and to the importance of tree cover and gardens in reducing heat/emissions. Garden suburbs with a large tree canopy are up to 6 degrees cooler in summer than suburbs without such a canopy.

We ask that you keep questions for the Q&A session after the speakers. We have allowed an hour for this but have also put butchers paper on the wall so that if you do not get a chance to pose questions or have comments to make please write them on the butchers paper. (See ATTACHMENT 1 for consolidated list of comments)

3. Housing Choices: Mick Gentleman, Minister for Planning and Land Management

The Minister started with a video which set out the challenges: The ACT's population is growing rapidly while the number of residents per dwelling has dropped and land is limited.

The Housing Choices paper had its genesis in consultation for the Statement of Planning Intent. Twenty-six workshops with different demographic groups found not everybody wanted a single house on a large block and some wanted secondary dwellings. Want to retain the quality of built form and neighbourhoods. The desire for a variety of housing types is driven by younger and older residents. Downsizers want to stay in their community.

This fits with the government aim to develop a housing strategy – what types of houses do people want to live in? Need to consider the missing middle, i.e. medium density housing, as there is demand for something in between detached housing and large complexes of units. Canberra has one of the fastest ageing populations in Australia.

Demonstration housing sites are to be developed to show different medium density level housing with innovative design and construction. The Government is also considering changes to the Territory Plan. An aim is to maximise the use of existing infrastructure.

There are three stages to encourage strong debate in the community:

1. Discussion Paper and community information sessions. Inner South consultation is in Manuka on 27th Feb. Comments on the paper are due by 9th March.
2. Collaboration Hub Mar to May 2018 – a random group of ACT residents to be invited to participate. Call for EOIs to test possible changes to the Territory Plan.
3. Government review of ideas raised.

4. Towards Net Zero Emissions: Shane Rattenbury, Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability

The current strategy (AP2) targets “low hanging fruit”. We're on track to achieve the 2020 target of moving to 100% renewable electricity, which has not required community change. The next stage requires behavioural change so we need community engagement. There'll be a heavy focus on energy efficiency.

The ACT Climate Change Council has recommended a series of interim targets and interim plans and said that the net zero emissions target is achievable with current technology by 2045, 5 years early.

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More than half of actual emissions in 2016-7 were due to electricity then transport and for the first time land use was a contributor. After 2020 when electricity generation is zero, transport will be the largest GHG emitter at 61%, then gas heating and cooling 20%.

To reduce transport emissions the government aims to increase use of public transport and active travel which is also good for health by putting services closer to home and decarbonising public transport. Currently the Federal Government taxes on electric vehicles are high.

Waste contains methane so aim to increase recovery rates – burning waste is not a solution. Also looking at sewerage – technical solutions. Land use requires limiting clearing and reforestation as a sink for carbon. There has been a doubling of days over 35 degrees in the last 30 years and more people die in heat waves than disasters. Living infrastructure such as green roofs and walls, community gardens and less concrete contributes to cooling.

In conclusion we need the community on board for change. We are funding some community groups to lead innovative projects. Submissions are due Monday 9 April – climatechange@act.gov.au or go to www.yoursay.act.gov.au/zero-emissions.

Q and A Discussion

Q: Regarding the missing middle, the townhouse developments I have seen are poorly designed. Will the quality of design be considered?

Minister Gentleman: The community needs to tell developers they want better.

Q: Will we see 200m blocks sub-divided from larger blocks? Will we see the garden city vision lost?

Minister Gentleman: The discussion here is what do you want to see. Don't want to see deforestation. Don't want to see poor housing developments. Recognise good canopy and tree growth a number 1 priority. Recognise that urban heat island effect an issue. This government has planted more trees than any other jurisdiction. If we are going to have dense housing need open areas for recreation.

Q: Re increasing recovery rates from mixed waste. Other states use their green bins for a wide range of organics matter. In the ACT simply for garden waste, but doesn't do much for the environment. Why can't the ACT do what SA and parts of NSW are doing?

Minister Gentleman: Agree that the amount of organics going into landfill problematic – methane and waste of a resource. Hope that there will be an answer in upcoming policies.

Q: Re the importance of medium density having good vegetation – there is a real gap: impermeable surfaces, poor vegetation outcomes. How can we change that for the future?

Minister Gentleman: need to change what we are doing here. Surrounding areas of Constitution Avenue – good example of what we can do going forward. This is some of the input that we want to see in response to the discussion paper.

Q: Do you have a population cap or expansion limit re going east and west?

Minister Rattenbury: The ACT population hit about 410,000 this year, an increase of 77,000. We don't have a cap – dispute within government on this. The challenge is that we have no control – we are a territory government, not the national government. And people commute in from surrounding NSW suburbs. More can be done to control the impact of the population rather than the size of the population.

Minister Gentleman: population growth is happening much faster than expected partly because young people are no longer leaving. We have to plan for population growth.

Q: Where is the plan for recharging electric cars? How many charge points and where?

Minister Gentleman: working that into the planning strategy for the future. Some manufacturers globally have made decisions to stop making internal combustion engines. Package deals for cars, batteries and panels. Need to ensure that we have that in the planning.

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Minister Rattenbury: currently putting together a strategy. Public charge points – question of whether they are needed – vehicles these days have good range. But recognise need some on major routes between CBR and SYD and the coast. We are also looking at making it mandatory for new dwellings, especially apartments.

Q: Would you favour a mandatory % area of permeable space where people can grow trees and shrubs?

Minister Gentleman: I have enjoyed living in the garden city. But important to listen to what others think.

Q: Why do you still want to put lots of housing along major transport routes?

Minister Gentleman: transport oriented design and planning has been successful in most jurisdictions. Close to the services need to get to work and recreation. But need to have good design.

Q: Re-planning design in town centres. Tuggeranong was designed with a certain colour palette and height. Coherent and consistent appearance. Now it appears to have been abandoned. New development is incompatible with that aesthetic. Becoming ugly, uncoordinated, etc extremely ugly town centres. Government needs to have guidelines.

Minister Gentleman: looks are a matter of opinion. Lots of the new development is selling well as people want to live there. Matter of building things where people want to live. The independent Planning Authority approved developments that meet the guidelines.

Q: Re hydroponics – a number of jurisdictions around the world have allowed the growing of food on floors, walls etc. in urban areas. What are you doing with respect to hydroponics?

Minister Gentleman: looked at other jurisdictions – Singapore is a good example. Seeing some in Canberra. But not driven into policy at this stage. Something we want to hear feedback on in the housing choices paper.

Q Deakin Residents Association: Re population and integration of different policies — Deakin is subject to ad hoc proposals and big influx of traffic. Projects seem to be approved without consideration of traffic implications. Can we have a master plan for Deakin against which we can assess new, ad hoc individual projects, particularly against transport implications?

Minister Gentleman: My directorate looks at traffic modelling when considering development approvals. Suburban larger roads are capable of much larger traffic volumes. Also looking at ways of incentivising people to use other methods of transport – public transport and walking e.g. providing better paths and cycle tracks.

Q:Architect: disappointed by how the planning codes letting ACT down. Building codes have nothing to do with achieving high quality sustainable design. Currently tick the box approach which does not assure a good quality sustainable design outcome. Despite the rhetoric about improving choice, the biggest thing we don't have is actual choice on quality. 90-95% of housing stock needs to be upgraded to achieve design standards in energy design. Onus should be on ACTPLA not neighbours to highlight problems with building design.

Minister Gentleman: important question. That's why your input is important for the discussion paper. History of Canberra – grew up in a 2BR house in Reid, which was freezing cold in winter. Housing efficiency has got better, but there is a long way to go.

Q: Owners Corporation Network. Over the past 13 years people have been encouraged to move to using public transport and downsize into central areas. If you continue with both policies – will they then suffer from increased rates? Will those who leave bigger blocks for families then suffer as a result of policy changes?

Minister Gentleman: government transitioning from stamp duty (inefficient) to rates. This will make it more efficient and less burdensome to move houses going forward. The money we generate from rates is spent back on the community.

Minister Rattenbury: recognise the increase on rates, particularly on apartments. Apartment rates have been low and are still relatively low.

Q: Live in Pearce where a Mr Fluffy block net door cut down every single tree – dual occupancy. This is what is happening in tree-lined suburbs. The mix we are starting to see in older suburbs is starting to resemble Gunghalin – no space to grow trees. Cars parked all over the nature strip.

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Q: Why are Canberra's high rises going up and up? When a building is above 6-7 stories high, people in the building do not relate to each other or to the environment. So why is Canberra building them?

Minister Gentleman: high-rises are a response to what the community is asking for. Market. If we are going to have more density we will need more public amenity to ensure that people who live there can interact better. In relation to height there are restrictions 617m above sea level in central CBR. Woden community has said that they want height restrictions – listening to you.

Minister Rattenbury: we do need a more compact city as we are as big, geographically, as Sydney north to south now (70km). I have lived in Europe in 4-5 storey buildings. We have two extremes – RZ1 and then high density. If we had 3-5 storey properties across the suburbs, could argue fiercely against taller.

Q: Good design improving energy efficiency only benefits new housing. What is the government doing about retrofitting older housing stock, particularly public housing?

Minister Rattenbury: Government has an energy improvement efficiency scheme which is free for the householder. Largely changing over to LED lights – most efficient. It is coming to an end and a review is starting. Potential new program – move to more expensive and more impactful program which includes insulation. We should also legislate to ensure that rental properties have minimum energy ratings.

Q: The Inner South has higher densities (more dwellings) but we are seeing a withdrawal of services – eg bus stops are further away.

Minister Gentleman: Completion of Light Rail Stage 1 will free up buses for other routes.

Q: As the number of cars per household has gone up, we are seeing an increasing number of people parking on the nature strip. What will the government do to enforce the rule against this?

Minister Gentleman: Access Canberra does regulate people parking on nature strips when complaints are made. But they need people to contact them. The Access Canberra website is a very good source of information.

Q: Lots of talk about high rise. Many cities have height limits. Why don't we have a similar arrangement in Canberra? Developers find ways of fiddling the books and seem to be calling the shots.

Minister Gentleman: we do have height limits across the city that are enforced. There may be exceptions where developers come to the Directorate with compelling cases.

Comment from member of Woden Valley Community Council: People in Woden wanted height limits, but not 28 storeys. Woden has lost community facilities - nothing in the precinct plan. Quality of design in Canberra appalling, particularly new apartments. Need to revert back to independent building inspectors. Need to see the building act reformed. Retrofitting rental properties – need to be careful that you don't price landlords out of the market.

Q: Will the minister commit to removing the Ministerial call in powers – has broken faith with local community constituents who have no faith in the outcomes of the call in powers? Will you revoke them?

Minister Gentleman: powers used rarely – has used them once every year that he has been a minister (3 times). Can be used both ways. Can be used to refuse. The best outcome for the whole community is considered.

Q Yarralumla Residents Association: Planning – traffic affects Yarralumla too. When will the mint interchange be finalised? The Housing Choices paper implies that there will be more traffic, which is already a problem. Will a Precinct Code be developed for Yarralumla and will it be enforced? Enforcement of leases is an issue e.g. YMCA in Yarralumla Bay and empty block across the road from the Yarralumla shops.

Minister Gentleman: there is a planning overlay for Yarralumla shops so we would need to look at that. Could be raised in discussion paper. Revoking leases would be a dramatic step if the government started doing this. What would be the impact on the business community? How would a residential developer feel? A divisive question. Want to work closely with developers to get the best outcome.

Q: Encouraged to see the move to medium density. Is there scope or a mechanism to require developers to build larger apartments to allow for young families and others looking for more space?

Minister Gentleman: all comes down to the market – if there is a demand.

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Q: How might we imagine a Canberra of the future?

Minister Gentleman: rather than imagine, use reality. Vancouver a good example of where good public transport and public amenity has shown dramatic drop in car ownership. People are buying houses, doing different things to previous generations.

Minister Rattenbury: Generational change is happening. Young people are starting to reduce the reliance on cars – they can't use their phone when driving. Challenge for the government is to cater to the different demands that are out there. Light rail will drive different behaviour.

5. Wrap-up Marea Fatseas, Chair ISCCC

Thanks to all speakers for an interesting discussion and for helpers in organising the meeting. Thank you all for coming – we encourage you to comment.

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ATTACHMENT 1

ISCCC PUBLIC FORUM 13 FEBRUARY 2018

(comments on butcher's paper and post it notes)

1. What changes to zoning in your area would you support to improve housing choice?

- Greater RZ2 zoning eg km/distance from shops should be increased (900m)
- Blocks should be 800sqm +/- 5 sq m.
- Urban infill around shops
- No high rise – maximum 4-6 storeys
- Issue may be with zoning descriptions rather than changes to zoning
- None – keep heritage single dwelling.
- Leave as is. RZ2 is in all suburbs near local centres. The zoning strikes a balance between garden city and infill.
- Gradual approach and good quality (energy efficient, green spaces, beautiful, strong build quality) is a must!
- No increased density – no units, apartments in Griffith.
- RZ2 zoning should be extended along Stuart Street, Griffith, from Captain Cook Crescent to McIntyre Street. This model along major street systems in Inner South suburbs makes good sense to increase density and options for future housing options.
- I would like the government to get the current rules right before making changes. Enforce plot ratios.
- RZ2 greater than 1000 sq metres – alter the plot ratio. Secondary residence greater than 750 sq metres.
- None – keep
- How about changing the zoning boundaries for a start. Why is a big swathe of Griffith north of Canberra Avenue? We are IGNORED.

2. Would you like to see more townhouses, terrace houses and dual occupancies in your suburb?

- No
- No, absolutely not! Too many already.
- Yes – Griffith
- YES – urban infill is energy efficient - YES
- Very much
- Yes, in RZ2 only
- Not if it's going to depress the value of my free-standing house – that's why we bought it.
- Only if they are quality projects – make developers meet the standard, rein them in, even if you have to slow down!!
- Only if good quality and in appropriate sites.
- Only if transport issues are addressed at the same time.
- Yes, but needs better integration within streetscape, and good design.
- No, no room in Barton.
- More dual occupancies/triple occupancies in Griffith on blocks greater than 1,300 square metres.
- Only if more creative and well designed and solar.
- I live in Kingston – too late.
- Yes.
- I want to see rows of terrace townhouses located on a common green area, fences and safe for kids, meaning a balance of private and communal life.
- No, absolutely not. More building equals less trees and amenities.
- Yes, I live in the Griffith part of Kingston. Medium density is nice – see Currie Crescent townhouses. Disappointed at lakeside high rises (foreshore).

3. How can the Government incentivise better housing choices?

- Allow separate titles on dual occupancy
- Better quality equals more choices. Quantity without quality does not equal choice.

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- Call the shots with developers – only accept quality proposals.
- Why bother – just continue to ABUSE your call-in powers.
- FOLLOW the legislation for zoning.
- Mr Fluffy has significantly increased opportunities for unit-titled dual occupancies in RZ1. There are plenty of sites for dual occupancies, including RZ2 everywhere and Mr Fluffys (these blocks not selling much now). Make it financially viable.
- Lower entry threshold/charges for change of lease from single to dual/triple occupancy housing on larger blocks greater than 1300 sq m.
- Get engineers registered.
- Call-in powers a coward's punch.
- ENFORCE building quality and environmental improvements.
- Govt has lots of levers!!! Point is they don't have the guts to use them. Issue with doffing caps to developers.

4. How can we ensure future developments minimize energy use, pollution and waste?

- Have food waste bags on top of green bins as apartments can't do compost bins.
- Get producers of goods to take back their packaging by law.
- Yellow bin collection each week instead of fortnightly.
- Source separation of high quality waste can be re-used by new businesses.
- Acquire adjoining detached housing for apartment buildings. Reduce heritage restrictions.
- Make it easy for body corporates to install solar panels on apartment buildings.
- Solar rebate + long term loans high quality stock.
- Mandate minimum requirements in building code approvals – much cheaper to put in at the beginning than retrofit later.
- Again, fix up the building code, control developers.
- Follow up on Chas' recommendations and findings on "The War On Waste" (ABC TV).
- Remove the government mandate on the no. of garbage bins (landfill) that large apartment complexes must have. My complex wanted to get one removed but request rejected. Govt must encourage not discourage waste reduction.
- Compliance costs – rebate for solar panels, H2O tanks, greywater after 3 years/timeframe to be determined.
- High standards for energy efficiency and living infrastructure (ensure plot ratios incorporate trees).
- Green roofs and/or solar panels on all new rooftops.
- Organic waste collection (see Swiss and German model).
- Design quality standards enforced.
- Not just future but provide subsidies for existing complexes. My complex is looking at complex-wide double-glazing, water tanks and worm farms. Subsidies or off-set costs would be welcome.
- Can we have suburban micro-grids, or intra-suburban micro-grids. Insist that developers install solar panels and batteries.
- Can we do something about waste water in in unit developments so the water is used to irrigate urban forests?
- Transport options - Add "GoGet" or similar car-sharing bays in new complexes or on the street. Stop others using that space – have a look at the City of Port Phillip (Vic) plan. People then can use a car WHEN necessary, not every day.

5. How could design and build quality be improved to ensure adequate housing options?

- Enforce your planning regulations even occasionally would be nice.
- Amend Building Act to have inspections by independent certifiers, not ones who want to please builders, not residents.
- Rather easily if you had building standards of the right calibre and that you enforced.
- Enforce existing rules – trust is undermined when rules are constantly broken.
- Critical review of private certifiers – often undermining good design and quality of construction.
- Take developers in hand – change the building code – listen to Stan the architect!!!

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- All housing options require good design.
- Audit energy raters – Alter final payment system for all contracts – goes into a govt trust and released upon completion of job decided by certifier/checked by ACTPLA 1 out of 5 jobs.
- Enforce more appropriate building guidelines re-insulation, solar access, reform the education system and encourage “intelligent” builders, designers and so on. Needs to come back to the education system and more experienced industry people, including those in ACTPLA, definite shortfall in HIA, MBA, CIT and schools. Encourage the industry in a better light from education at early ages.
- Certifiers must not be paid by builders or developers.
- Independent certification.
- Government inspectors must do their job.
- Separate approvals through a Sustainable Development Unit staffed by experts (similar to Heritage Unit approvals).
- ACTPLA needs to be able to reject DAs on the basis of unacceptably poor sustainable, energy efficient design.

6. How can we ensure energy efficiency standards and better build quality that will stand the test of time

- Some post occupancy evaluation would be great to learn from what we are doing.
- The Territory Plan’s Design and Siting Codes for dwellings and multi-units need to change to integrate best practice solar passive principles for achieving more sustainable energy efficient design.
- You are the Government – you enforce it.
- We have the materials and the knowledge of design – enforce much higher standards.
- We need independent building inspectors.
- Look to better practice and technology/practice in European and Scandinavian countries – more sustainable, longer lasting, more eco-friendly and low energy use.
- Call builders to account for the quality of their buildings.
- Educate the population that this costs money – time and technology – just like anything – the Hyatt/Ibis?
- Better regulation and oversight!!
- See example of Smart City Strategy Vienna – all housing to be built to passive housing standards.
- Architects are construction design professionals that must be registered. Builders, building assessors, surveyors etc must be licensed. Yet “drafting businesses” who do the majority of the multi-unit developments and are responsible for the vast majority of poor quality design are neither registered or licensed.
- Revise the Energy Rating process:
 - Employ qualified reviewers;
 - Get CSIRO involved (the ones who created the ratings but who recently said “most 6 star properties would fail if they rated them”)
 - Independent assessors
 - Builders MUST pay a bond into a Govt trust fund – refunded after 10 years if no legal challenges against them (per complex)
*Majority of complexes in Kingston/Cr Ave suing their developer – who then phoenix their companies and don’t pay.

7. How might greater housing density be reconciled with flourishing green spaces?

- It can’t – leave the inner south alone. We do not want a KINGSTON.
- It can’t be. That’s why Labor started RZ1 and RZ2 when in Opposition in 2000. Before that, much of the community in inner areas MOST upset.
- Create a complete Canberra plan so that we can see the big picture and deliberately protect our urban open spaces instead of continually picking them off bit by bit.
- Create an overarching plan that we can all see.
- Make sure developers leave more room for trees on blocks.
- Retain all existing green spaces, parklands in central residential areas. Important to retain parks, circles like centre sections of Bannister Gardens, Wills Gardens, Ball Gardens etc as these cannot be replaced and will

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be more sought after as an amenity/recreation facility into the future. The ACT Government is not building any new parks in inner south!

- Change the Building Code to avoid “tick the boxes”, crumby development. Stan the architect is right!!
- Mandate area that is not hard stand to allow water infiltration.
- Ensure green areas are mandated in gardens and nature strips and parks (plus rain gardens and native plantings).
- Hydroponics on/in houses/apartment buildings.
- Are houses/units built for a 5 year life span or a 100 year life span?
- Design whole precincts, including infill areas.
- On the bar chart we saw tonight (Fig 4?), I'd like to see an additional bar that covers the amount of usable green space over 500 sq m. It seems to me that Inner North/South are having developments crammed in parks, open space, sports area etc which degrades urban character. However for new suburbs that have no such existing facilities, they don't suffer as much.

8. What options should we consider for reducing household waste and diverting organic waste from landfill?

- Not an incinerator.
- All options should be on the table. Not good enough to separate waste and then not consider what happens then.
- Cook the organic waste and turn it into fuel.
- No dump in Fyshwick.
- Source separation of all waste.
- Do not burn organic waste – axe any incinerator proposal, go for composting and anaerobic digestion. See Munich.
- Implement all recommendations and suggestions from “The War on Waste” - ABC TV.
- Introduce packaging legislation so it's degradable quickly.
- Not incineration, especially of food. Where's the waste feasibility study? Don't move Mugga dump to inner south, Fyshwick. If there has to be a waste transfer station put it at Hume.
- Introduce a FOGO collection for food and green organics – a combined 3 bin collection.
- Provide subsidies/off-set grants to large complexes that want to double glaze, water harvest, and add worm farms but find it cost-prohibitive.
- See Swiss and German models for household organic waste collection.
- Ban single use plastic. Graphic warning labels on plastic bags (of environmental harm).
- More community gardens so people can compost en masse.
- Get rid of extra packaging.
- Introduce EPR extended producer responsibility, compostable packaging.
- Source separation of FOGO at households and commercial premises.
- Don't move the dump within 300 m of proposed East Lake residential.