

Combined Community Councils and PlanWise ACT Pre-election Planning Forum

22 September 2012

Forum summary: more work needed on ACT Planning!

The forum, sponsored by the ACT's Combined Community Councils and PlanWiseACT [PlanWise](#), focused on the question 'Is the ACT's planning system in good shape?'. Speakers were Environment and Sustainable Development Minister Simon Corbell and Greens planning spokesperson Caroline Le Couteur, who spoke of their respective parties' vision for Canberra's future. (The Canberra Liberals were invited to take part in the forum, but did not do so).

In introducing the forum, Jane Goffman, the founder of PlanWiseACT, said that non-compliance was rife, and often not picked up by the ACT Planning and Land Authority in its consideration of development applications. Draft Variation No. 306 to the Territory Plan, if enacted, would trigger a range of impacts that were neither properly tested nor well understood.

In their presentations, both Minister Corbell and Ms Le Couteur emphasised their commitment to a more compact and denser city, with heightened use of public transport, including light rail.

Minister Corbell, acknowledging widespread concern at poor quality development in the city, said that if re-elected, Labor would institute design competitions for major developments proposed to be constructed on land released by the ACT Government. Labor would also re-invigorate the Planning and Development Forum, an important venue for discussion between developers, ACTPLA and the community.

Ms Le Couteur said the Greens would commit \$300,000 over four years for better regulation and enforcement of building quality in the ACT and \$800,000 over four years to support community input into planning and development policy.

'Amidst the hype of the election build-up, it was pleasing to be able to discuss Canberra's planning problems in a reasoned and reasonable way', said Ewan Brown, Convenor of the Combined Community Councils. However, there were still many issues that needed attention.

Issues identified at the forum included:

- Problems with inner-city development, including insufficient parking, poor use of available land, and a lack of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom units;
- A planning system that promoted confrontation rather than collaboration;
- A planning strategy intensifying development along the length of transport corridors rather than at designated transport 'hubs';
- The need for a 'plain English' layperson's guide to decode the Territory Plan's development Codes;
- Improved consultative processes across government, as the activities of many agencies impacted citizens through building and development;
- Better coordination between the Economic Development Directorate and the Environment and Sustainability Directorate.

Whichever party forms government after the election on 20 October, the Combined Community Councils and PlanWise are keen to keep the debate going. Please let us have your feedback via your Community Council website, or via PlanWise!

Ewan Brown, Convenor, Combined Community Councils; Jane Goffman, PlanWise ACT

27 September 2012