

INNER SOUTH CANBERRA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Mr Andrew Barr
Chief Minister
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Barr

We are writing to you about the Manuka Oval precinct on behalf of the Inner South Canberra Community Council (ISCCC), the Kingston and Barton Residents Group (KBRG), and the Griffith-Narrabundah Community Association (GNCA).

There has obviously been much public interest in and, in some cases, significant disquiet, about recent ACT Government decisions affecting this precinct, especially the so-called Manuka land swap involving MOCCA and the Telopea Park School..

We appreciate that the Government is dealing with a range of competing interests and sensitivities in managing future use of an area involving sporting and recreational assets, in which there has been significant public investment, but which also serves as a residential area with significant heritage values.

We value our regular meetings with Ms Liz Clarke, General Manager – Territory venues, and her staff, in relation to upcoming events at, Manuka Oval. But this appears to be the only opportunity for local residents' representative groups to interact with the Government about the precinct and, by definition, these discussions focus on big events at the Oval rather than proposals for the whole of the Manuka area.

The Government's current thinking about the management and further development of the precinct seems to be driven by a 'Manuka Oval Master Plan', which clearly involves more than the Oval itself. However, we are not aware that this has been published in a form that enables local residents and businesses, or it seems any other interested bodies, to understand what is planned for this important part of inner south Canberra.

The Land Development Agency (LDA) website states that 'the ACT Government will undertake a Territory Plan Variation to enable the master plan. The variation will occur this year and further consultation will be undertaken as a part of the process.'

While the objectives of the Master Plan are briefly stated, the Plan itself appears inaccessible. A web-link to the Plan in fact points to a preliminary consultation document that has not been updated since 2009.

We are aware from information obtained through recent Freedom of Information requests that there has been considerable discussion within government for several years in relation to options for the development of the Manuka Oval precinct. These have been discussed at meetings by both the KBRG and the GNCA, which referred its deep concerns to the most recent meeting of the ISCCC Committee, which unanimously decided to write to you on this matter expressing their concerns before taking any further action.

The community groups were very conscious that these significant proposals have not been the subject of any real consultation with local residents and businesses and there are increasing concerns that more initiatives will 'pop out' such as occurred in relation to the Manuka land swap which, despite early assurances, had not been properly discussed with local stakeholders.

We ask that the Government, firstly, make public its current plans for the development of Manuka and, secondly, establish a mechanism to enable the local community to contribute from an informed perspective on these proposals.

We strongly urge that this consultation occur immediately before the release of any Territory Plan Draft Variation. From our perspective, the release of a Draft Variation at this time would represent an astonishing breach of trust with the electorate, and risk a repeat of past failures in process which are still causing problems today.

As an initial step we would seek a meeting with you or your officials to discuss the current plans and the form that this consultation might take. Noting the 2015/16 Land Release issued by the ACT Government identifies several blocks within the Manuka Oval precinct, we ask that the meeting occur this before the end of this calendar year.

The consultations undertaken by the Community Services Directorate in relation to the omnibus inner south Territory Plan Draft variations could serve as a model, with appropriate modifications. Similarly, the Brickworks Community Panel recently established by the LDA could also be considered as a potentially useful precedent.

Should you or your officers wish to discuss this matter, please contact Gary Kent on info@isccc.org.au or 0419 854 211.

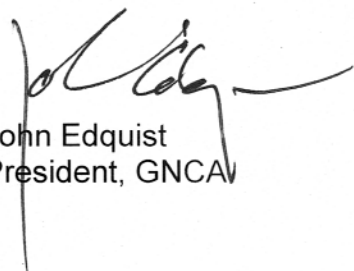
Yours sincerely



Gary Kent
Chair, ISCCC



Rebecca Scouller
President, KBRG



John Edquist
President, GNCA

19 November 2015