



Inner South Canberra Community Council

Inner South Community Council Submission concerning the Disaster Resilience Strategy of the ACT

1. The Inner South Community Council (ISCCC) submits that this strategy should include community organisations, properly address climate change in urban planning and consider the transport needs of our community in responding to disaster challenges.
2. The ISCCC is a voluntary, not for profit, community-based association operating in the inner south area of Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The ISCCC's objective is to preserve and improve the social, cultural, economic, and environmental well-being of Inner South Canberra and the Inner South Canberra community. Eight inner south community groups participate in ISCCC activities.
3. The ISCCC welcomes the ACT government's plan to develop a disaster resilience strategy for the ACT providing an overarching policy approach to the evolution of emergency management activities in the ACT.
4. During the last decades, climate change has significantly increased the devastating losses faced by Australian communities due to natural disasters. The ISCCC therefore fully supports the government's declaration made in the announcement of this Have Your Say topic that:
"The challenges that the ACT potentially faces into the future requires significant investment in developing a disaster resilience capability that strengthens the ACT community, government, infrastructure, and environment to cope and recover from the challenges that climate change, national and international security situations and emerging hazards and threats will expose us to."
5. ACT Climate Change Resilience is an extremely broad and complex topic and community organisations are seldom invited to engage in dialogue on how our community might respond to it so we welcome this opportunity.

A Community organisations engagement

6. The ISCCC has regard to the 2011 COAG Disaster Relief Strategy that encourages shared responsibility for resilience. Community organisations play a role in building communities that function well under stress, adapt successfully, are self-reliant and have social capacity. A resilient local community can help form a resilient Territory community.
7. To fulfill their role community organisations need, among other things:
 - Information, especially about potential risks and risk mitigation plans. They can assist their communities to find relevant information.
 - Consultation and open lines of communication. For example, they are a valuable source of information about potential local challenges that can be addressed.
 - A sense of unity and shared purpose i.e. avoidance of the perception that one group or section of the Territory is favoured over another.

B Disaster relief in urban planning

8. Scientists are united in warning that the Urban Heat Island effect caused by the rising temperatures of climate change is one of the greatest threats to the physical and financial well-being of city populations.

9. It is therefore a matter of concern that, for all their reassuring words, the ACT Government does not seem to be doing much to build resilient communities, particularly in regard to

*“Residential and commercial building strategies prioritise climate impacts through careful evaluation of site design, use of hazard resistant building materials, and risk-aware landscape management.”
Resilient Communities Framework – Minderoo Foundation June 2022.*

The recently completed ‘Planning system review and reform project’ does not seem to have added any value to the ACT planning system in these respects.

10. The ISCCC refers to the Declaration de Chaillot of 8 March 2024 from the United Nations Environment Program’s Building and Climate Global Forum. Australia has endorsed the Declaration and we urge our ACT government to adopt the best practice measures in the Declaration. The ACT could lead Australia.

11. The planning authority has recently released its first ‘Draft Plan Amendment’ to the new Territory Plan, the first Stage of the new East Lake project – A. The Causeway Housing Area. We note the following:

1. Residential densities and building heights

12. DPA-A sets no density controls or targets for total number of dwellings. However, the accompanying ‘Economic and Scenario Analysis’ report suggests total dwellings from 1,001 to 1,315 in this precinct. Given that ‘Figure 16B’ shows building height of up to 8 storeys, we suggest that this probably reflects the ‘High Density’ scenario. We would prefer to see lower building heights and encouragement for lower density, innovative housing types, such as having generous shared courtyards/ communal open space with substantial tree cover. These aspects would, in our view, contribute significantly to building resilient communities.

2. Living Infrastructure

13. We note the following statement, on page 22 of the ‘Supporting Report’ to DPA-A: *“Guided by the technical report of the Sustainability and Living Infrastructure Guidelines, East Lake is committed to surpassing the benchmarks established in the Living Infrastructure Plan, specifically targeting a canopy cover and permeable surface that exceeds the mandated 30%.”* However, we could find no specific requirements in DPA-A in this regard.

14. The only, possibly related but extremely vague, statement was: ‘Assessment Outcome’ “10. Promote development which incorporates **climate-wise measures**”. There are several ‘**climate-wise measures**’ listed under para. 9.1 of ‘DS4 – Inner South District Specifications’, but of course these are not in the Territory Plan and advisory only. In any case they are not ‘measures’ but rather, vague aims, eg.: 9.1 a) *“increased tree canopy cover and total quantity of green infrastructure to mitigate urban heat effects and contribute to the ACT’s tree canopy cover target”*.

15. Contrast this with the precise wording in Criterion 24 of the *Fyshwick Precinct Code (Dairy Road)* which states: "*Development demonstrates that there is no net gain of urban heat. Compliance with this criterion is demonstrated by a **microclimate assessment report** by a qualified professional which details building and place design and use of mitigating measures including:*

- a) low thermal mass, high albedo and or emissivity building materials and/or finishes*
- b) inclusion of canopy trees to achieve an overall minimum of 30% shade across the precinct*
- c) use of permeable surfaces*
- d) use of water features*
- e) appropriate location of open space and buildings*
- f) other types of cooling measures such as green roofs, vertical gardens and shade structures."*

16. Why can't this clear, concise and meaningful wording also be used in DPA-A? And where is the Microclimate Assessment Guide which the Living Infrastructure policy requires the government to produce?

17. The 'Supporting Report', on page 22, in relation to the '**ACT Wellbeing Framework**', contains this statement: "*East Lake, through its multifaceted initiatives in creating a sustainable exemplar precinct, champions the advancement of health, accessibility, connectivity, elevated living standards, enhanced safety, and the establishment of a more robust foundation for community engagement and connection.*" We can find nothing in DVA-A that supports those lofty ideals.

C Disaster Resilience in Road Construction and Public Transport.

18. Our community learned from the Canberra bushfires of 2003. For example, we now know about appropriate building, preparing our homes and being alert. We also know about the need for road access for our highly valued emergency services and ourselves if we need to evacuate quickly.

19. The decentralized urban plan of the ACT provides a road system on which emergency vehicles can reach most areas speedily which we need in an emergency. The ISCCC hopes that the plan accepts their advice about their needs.

20. The ISCCC expects that, as light rail planning proceeds, regard will be had to disaster relief. For example, it would be disastrous if a disruption in the light rail occurred at the same time as a need for evacuation or the light rail caused a disaster emergency.

21. There are many people in Canberra who rely on public transport and the ISCCC suggests that consideration be given to how we help them in emergencies.

Yours faithfully

Colin Walters

President

Inner South Canberra Community Council

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