



Inner South Canberra Community Council

ACT Government fails the pub test again with 'call-in' powers

The ACT Government has failed the pub test again with Minister Gentleman using call-in powers to fast track the media and broadcast centre for Manuka Oval. This is the second time the ACT Government has used call-in powers for Manuka Oval and it is setting an undesirable precedent for future development in the Manuka Precinct.

Ms Fatseas, Chair of the Inner South Canberra Community Council (ISCCC) said that “the community is still concerned about how the ACT Government managed the last effort to facilitate development at Manuka Oval which included a land swap deal and an ‘unsolicited bid’ proposal for up to 1,000 apartments. This latest use of call-in powers only raises further questions about the Government’s intentions for Canberra’s Manuka Oval.”

“The use of call-in powers for Government-managed projects erodes public faith in the integrity of planning regulation and public consultation,” said Ms Fatseas, “especially when the Government doesn’t have all of its own legislative requirements in place such as conservation and land management plans for the Manuka Oval Precinct”.

“If the Government had met these requirements years ago, we could have more confidence that what is being developed will respect Manuka Oval’s heritage values, add to the amenity of the area, minimise impacts on local residents and improve the AFL and cricket spectators’ experience at this boutique venue.”

“This current use of the Minister’s call in powers shows contempt for the legislation, contempt for the Legislative Assembly, and contempt for the community. The Government has consulted with community groups about the proposal, but has been unwilling to respond to community concerns about the extraordinary size of the media facility, and to doubts about the value for money it offers, as even with a cricket test match every year the building would only be used for its primary function a few days a year”.

This \$11.6 million dollar media and broadcast centre seems hard to justify under these circumstances. It is disappointing that the ACT Government did not seek a more innovative and future focussed solution to managing the International Cricket Committee (ICC) requirements to secure a Test Match.¹

It is curious that the tender for construction of the centre appears to have been awarded in September 2017 before the Minister used his call-in powers in December 2017. Clarification is needed too about the full cost of the media centre. The contractor’s website² indicates the contract value is \$13 million, not the \$11.6 million quoted in the Minister’s media release on 13 December 2017.

1. https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/barr/2017/canberra-and-adelaide-leading-the-nation-as-smart-cities

2. <http://www.kane.com.au/project/manuka-oval-media-and-broadcast-centre>

Optus Stadium in Perth has just been approved to host all three formats of international cricket³. It was described by elite ICC match referee Richie Richardson as surpassing “the required standards to host any international cricket match”⁴. Optus Stadium’s media centre caters for only 30 print journalists⁵, which appears at odds with the ACT Government indicating a media centre is required to host 75 print journalists.

Ms Fatseas said “the ACT Government needs to justify the scale of the Media Centre proposed for Manuka Oval when comparing this to other domestic and international stadiums. As Canberrans will ultimately be paying for this redevelopment through their (ever increasing) rates and land taxes, they have a right to expect due process and transparency in high profile planning decisions such as this.”

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³ <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2018/01/ICC-praises-Perths-new-home-of-international-cricket.aspx>

⁴ <https://thewest.com.au/news/wa/optus-stadium-gets-cricket-tick-of-approval-ng-b88710865z>

⁵ <https://www.pressreader.com/australia/the-west-australian/20180113/281578061064517>