

Two-storey Mr Fluffy dual occupancies being forgotten

The Canberra Times November 28, 2015 [Matthew Raggatt](#)

A former president of the Yarralumla Residents Association has warned the neighbourhood character of Canberra suburbs could be destroyed because the government had failed to highlight how many opportunities existed for "on the street" homes on subdivided Mr Fluffy blocks.

Lynn Russell, 64, said Planning Minister Mick Gentleman had understated how rules allowing new buildings to retain a 50 per cent plot ratio for split blocks if built directly on the street would encourage a "1950s-style terraced type housing".

"If the community is not being told what they're going to get – they're being misinformed – what it means is we'll have less dual occupancies, the community will stop it," she said.

Mr Gentleman rejected the criticism, saying the changes from Variation 343, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on November 17, to introduce a 35 per cent plot ratio and single-storey limit when Fluffy blocks were divided into front and rear titles had always retained the higher density, two-storey option when blocks were side-by-side.

The impact of redevelopment would also be minimised by a design criterion which applied to all dual occupancies - regardless of orientation - and the government would be selling the original blocks in their current form, he said.

"The provisions applicable to dual occupancies that are 'side-by-side' in regards to plot ratio, building height and solar envelope are no different to those that apply to a single dwelling," he said.

"It will be up to the new owner to determine if they wish to develop a dual occupancy on the site and if so, how it is configured," he said.

The new rule will take effect from February if not disallowed. It applies only to residential blocks of 700 square metres or more surrendered under the buyback scheme, and excludes those provisionally or permanently part of a registered heritage place.

Prominent architect Philip Leeson, in a mid-year submission on the proposal, said most suburban blocks were about 20 metres wide, making it [very difficult to get direct street frontage for two dwellings](#), other than for a semi-detached pair of homes. The 35 per cent ratio leaves room for homes of only 104.5 square metres. Ms Russell said she supported more dual occupancies, but the community would object to them if they disliked how they looked.

Government Community and Expert Reference Group chairwoman Sue Packer said "nobody has a clue" yet how many blocks would be subdivided and how many former owners would take up their right of first refusal. "I think the discussion on this has only just started - further down the track these possible ramifications can be studied in some detail," she said.

Australian Institute of Architects ACT chapter president Andrew Wilson [recently criticised the restriction of plot ratios](#) to 35 per cent for dual occupancy as defying all logic when a single house on the same block could be built to a 50 per cent plot ratio.