

SUBMISSION FROM OAKS ESTATE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION ON THE ACT GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED EAST DISTRICT STRATEGY

My name is Fiona MacGregor and I am the President of the Oaks Estate Residents Association and this submission is made on behalf of the Oaks Estate Residents Association.

1. The Oaks Estate Residence Association is committed to represent the best interests of the residents of Oaks Estate through community consultation and public advocacy.
2. The Oaks Estate Residence Association will do this with a view to improving the lives of residents and the environment in which they live while acknowledging the unique and historic nature Oaks Estate.
3. The Oaks Estate Residents Association will aim to achieve this through the development of collaborative partnerships with community organisations, local businesses and with the ACT Government.

The Oaks Estate Residents Association is an active member of the Inner South Community Council and we consider Oaks Estate to be an integral part of the Inner South District of Canberra.

Background

Oaks Estate is an urban village located in the ACT on the border with NSW. Oaks Estate is the oldest settled area of the ACT and as such has significant heritage value for the whole of the ACT. Its location within the Molonglo River corridor means that it would have been a resource rich area for First Nations people prior to European settlement and as such has cultural significance to First Nations People of the Limestone Plains area

The East District Strategy

1. The Government bureaucrats that develop this Strategy purport that Oaks Estate Residents were consulted regarding this proposal which is not the case. Minister Gentleman has stated in correspondence to our Association that we can be considered in the consultation for the South Canberra District Strategy. This is not a tenable suggestion as the East District Strategy includes Oaks Estate and is not considered to be part of the Inner South Canberra District for the purpose of the Planning process.
2. Oaks Estate has no public transport provided by the ACT Government and limited access through Queanbeyan transport. This is not addressed in the Strategy. The proposed bus links in the Strategy end at the NSW boarder on Pialigo Avenue and Beard and neither location is accessible to pedestrians.
3. Oaks Estate has 34 % Public Housing the highest proportion of any suburb in the ACT. The Public Housing is not fit for purpose, is not energy efficient and is ageing. This is not addressed in the Strategy and there is no current ACT Government strategy to address the issues of Public Housing in Oaks Estate.
4. Rental stress in the East District is the highest in Canberra at 61%. There is no comment about this in the Strategy.
5. There is limited access to services in the ACT for Oaks Estate residents who are some of the most disadvantaged in Canberra. Access to services for many residents is constrained by the reliance on irregular bus services between Queanbeyan and Canberra. The East District Strategy states that Oaks Estate Residents have “access to many services provided by Queanbeyan-Pelerang Local

Government Area”. It is wrong to assume that there is an automatic entitlement or access to NSW services. For example, children in Oaks Estate do not have an entitlement to an enrolment in a Queanbeyan school. Another example is that there are no bulk billing General Medical practices in Queanbeyan. Also most specialist services are only available in the ACT.

6. There are 87 Public Housing dwellings in Oaks Estate. To date the ACT Government has not indicated any plan to redevelop these units or to demolish them and sell the land. The residents of the Public Housing units have complex needs that require a coordinated service response if they are to continue to live in the units long term. Currently the St Vincent de Paul Society is funded by the Commonwealth through the NDIS to provide a Community Inclusion Programs and service coordination for the Public Housing tenants of Oaks Estate. This program was initially funded for 2 years and has just been granted funding for the next 18 months. There needs to be permanent funding to support these tenants, many who have complex and multiple needs including mental ill-health, disability, poverty and substance abuse problems. There is a number of units earmarked specifically for adults exiting the AMC. There is no consideration in the East District Strategy that would indicate an understanding of the needs of such a vulnerable community.

7. Oaks Estate is often forgotten by the ACT Government and many people actually think it is in NSW. We understand that ours is a small community but we want to be treated equitably and be an intrinsic part of residential Canberra.

By locating Oaks Estate, a residential suburb in a district dominated by light industrial, commercial, transport and rural interests denies Oaks Estate residents connections to the rest of residential Canberra and further marginalizes our community and the unique problems and challenges our residents' experience. Our Association is a member of the ISCCC and we have been well supported by the Council. Oaks Estate residents want to be located in the Inner South District and our needs and aspirations for the ongoing planning and development of our suburb be properly included within the Strategy for that district.