

Yarralumla Residents Association Inc.

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Will the Property Council contribute to Canberra Brickworks conservation?

The Yarralumla Residents Association (YRA) is not surprised by the recent enthusiastic response of the ACT Property Council's Catherine Carter to the proposed massive development at the junction of Cotter Road, Yarra Glen and Adelaide Avenue, near the Canberra Brickworks. After all, some Council members may reap huge financial benefits from the development.

It is good news that the ACT Government has increased funding for Brickworks conservation to \$5 million. This will focus on the most important heritage listed kilns and associated chimneys and fanhouses. However, Land Development Agency estimates in 2010 of the cost of Brickworks conservation and adaptive reuse were much higher than this and, in any case, much of the funding will not flow until stage 2 of the development, in 6-8 years or later.

So the realization of Catherine Carter's vision of "new offices, studios, galleries and community facilities" may be two electoral cycles into the future. Massive residential development will occur near Cotter Road and Adelaide Avenue before then, so who knows whether this enthusiasm for the Brickworks will be sustained, once the Government has sold the surrounding land, and developers have made their profits.

If the Property Council is really passionate about the future of the Brickworks, what about showing the Canberra community a concrete expression of that passion, such as a philanthropic trust to help support the Brickworks conservation and adaptive reuse? The Brickworks manufactured the bricks and tiles that built many of Canberra's older buildings such as the Old Parliament House, and are linked inextricably with the birth of Canberra's building industry.

It would be wonderful to see members of the Property Council, Master Builders Association and other building industry organisations show that they are willing to 'put back' to protect an important part of their industry's heritage, and of Canberra's heritage.

The Yarralumla Residents Association is seeking the views of Yarralumla residents on all aspects of the revised proposal for the Brickworks and environs, and will make a further media statement after those consultations.

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