

SUMMARY RECORD: ISCCC PUBLIC FORUM 8 OCTOBER 2019
7-9pm, Eastlake Football Club, 3 Oxley Street, Griffith

Apologies: Elizabeth Lee MLA, Leo Dobes, Rebecca Scouler

Attendance: About 47 people

Attached are presentations by:

1. Sally Barnes, CEO, National Capital Authority
2. Shane Rattenbury MLA, Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability
3. Peter Kanowski, Professor of Forestry, ANU

Duncan MacLennan, Project Manager, Landscape Policy and Development with the National Capital Authority, also spoke and participated in the Q&A session.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: Will any cedars be planted because I understand they are hard to grow?

A: Duncan - some cedars will be planted.

Q: Have you considered asphalt alternatives?

A: A lot of work can be done on redesign eg driveways do not need to be a continuous strip of asphalt/cement. In the past, many driveways used to include strips of green.

Q: Is there a chance of reviewing the list of pest trees? Also, with respect to the targets of 30 percent permeable surfaces and 30 percent tree canopy cover, why not go higher such as 40 percent or more?

A: Our climate will be more like Adelaide or Dubbo in the future, so we need trees that will grow. The 30 percent is a point of balance and negotiation between many stakeholders.

Q: Concern about flying foxes - concern that many trees are bare and flying foxes could die in the summer heat.

A: The NCA has been mapping the flying fox habitat in Commonwealth Park for 12 months to better manage the Park. The flying foxes were okay last summer.

Q: Comment about the expense of electric cars and the introduction of flying cars.

A: Noted

Q: Has there been systematic consideration of how natives and exotics best meet that canopy target? Also, can areas of parkland be allowed to go to seed rather than mowing everything – to provide places for insects and ground loving birds? Is there consideration of undergrowth?

A: NCA has Conservation Management Plans for grasslands. Also, there is a NCA project in collaboration with Questacon to move a bee hive into Questacon's premises. In future, we won't have birch trees. ANU has done work on trees for the future - a mix of exotic and native trees, including native deciduous white cedar. Lyneham wetlands have mix of understory plants and trees. Elms, ash trees are not well adapted to our future climate. There are alternatives, for example melliodora.

Q: The NCA has adopted a 40 percent canopy cover - why doesn't the ACT Government have a higher percentage of canopy cover required on big blocks to avoid McMansions on such blocks?

A: Simply having a permeability target is a win. Good, deep plantings have worked. Often different people have different views.

Q: On Canberra's north side, a specific plot ratio is mandated but not enforced. Education is very important to change attitudes re-vital importance of permeability for people's comfort.

Q: Concern was expressed about losing gas pipeline infrastructure under ACT Government plans to phase out gas usage eg could that pipeline infrastructure be used for hydrogen?

A: The ACT Government has not sought to preclude use of hydrogen. However, can't just put hydrogen into the gas network because different appliances can't use it. There is a high cost associated with putting in gas infrastructure in new suburbs. Want to proceed with best options now.

Q: Very few trees are left on blocks when those blocks are redeveloped. Signs are put up saying they are DA-exempt. Must stop this happening – there is an insidious loss of trees on private blocks. With respect to street trees, massive investment is needed but the ACT Budget says 3,000 new trees will be planted per year, but many don't survive more than one year. Need to carry the community with this program.

A: As part of the Living Infrastructure Strategy, there is a review of the Tree Protection Act - it deals with protection of trees, including enforcement. Re-streetscape it is more complex - losing 3,000 trees net per year. There is a perfect storm of tree senescence in the next two decades. Need more money from Government and need private incentives, community education and participation.

Q: There is a problem with parking under trees. It is reported to the bureaucracy but nothing happens. Need to link with other policies, which are making people walk further to catch buses, leading to more people using their cars (and hence more carparking under trees).

A: The Living Infrastructure Plan is a good plan but a lot of follow-up is needed. Constant effort is needed, including the community demanding better outcomes. Re: bus transport, research showed that people are prepared to walk further for more frequent services.

Q: It is disturbing that it is considered that trees over 80 years old have had it. Cedars have significant carbon capture and other value, but tree litter is removed and nutrients are not replenished. Should look at how to keep the old trees in a vigorous state.

A: The street environment is a dangerous place for trees and so there are trade-offs between life expectancy and cost of maintaining old trees. Agree we need to translate good ideas into outcomes.

Q: There needs to be a policy for government and developers with respect to responsibility for replacing trees they destroy.

A: Need to look at that - yes.