

WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- Your Local Voice -

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2 December 2003

Mr. Ted Quinlan MLA
Deputy Chief Minister and Treasurer
ACT Legislative Assembly
London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

ATTENTION:

Fay Prowse
Budget Consultation
Department of Treasury
Financial and Budgetary Management Branch
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Deputy Chief Minister

2004-2005 Budget Consultation

Thank you for the letter of 10 October 2003 inviting the Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) to contribute to the consultation process for the ACT Government's 2004-2005 Budget.

The WCCC has contributed to the ACT Government Budget each year since our inception in 1991. We again submit on behalf of the residents of Weston Creek the attached submission for consideration and debate. Weston Creek residents have raised issues included in the submission either at our meetings through 2003 or during our *TAKING TO THE STREETS* initiative which involves visiting local shopping centres.

The WCCC is well aware of the impact of the 18 January 2003 bushfires on our local community through our shopping centre visits and our membership of the Community and Expert Reference Group (CERG) assisting the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce headed by Sandy Hollway. It is in this context that the WCCC has framed this submission which focuses on a balance of long-standing concerns regarding funding, as well as needs in the current situation to address critical issues in the short to medium term for Weston Creek.

We are conscious of the heavy ongoing impact that the bushfires will have on the ACT Government Budget and on the Canberra economy in general. We therefore give heightened importance to this year's annual submission by the WCCC and respectfully suggest that it be read in the context of being another source for Government to use to prioritise a number of critical spending initiatives.

Our submission is arranged by the different services delivered by the ACT Government. If you wish to discuss any of the issues included in our submission contact details are provided above.

Yours sincerely

(signed)

Jeff Carl
Chairperson
Weston Creek Community Council

Weston Creek Community Council

BUDGET SUBMISSION - 2004–2005

This submission is in a framework of ACT Government deliverables

Education

The Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) supports Government's initiatives to lower the **early childhood class sizes for Primary Schools** through efforts to reduce the student to teacher ratio in schools, especially at the younger ages. There is a need for funds to employ teacher's assistants at the younger grades. Also the accommodation needs of classes need to be considered. A straightforward increase in teacher numbers without increased teaching space will not achieve the desired outcome and overcrowding in schools will still occur.

In respect of **capital works**, all of Weston Creek's government Pre Schools, Primary Schools and solitary High School are now around 25-30 years of age and each has a range of significant defects affecting areas such as roofing, plumbing and sewerage, electrical/communications wiring and heating systems. By and large, these defects are beyond the usual range of maintenance activities normally scheduled by each school and each would constitute a **major refurbishment** of the affected area. Also there is a need to significantly upgrade the actual classrooms used for teaching so that the facilities are more closely attuned to the educational requirements of the twenty-first century rather than those of the 1970s. *The WCCC requests* that significant funding be made available to Weston Creek government schools so that major structural refurbishment and classroom refurbishment can occur as a matter of priority.

The **playground equipment** (such as climbing frames and monkey bars) for all government Primary Schools within Weston Creek also needs reviewing. In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to update and upgrade all playground equipment to ensure that it satisfies all of the latest legislative and safety requirements. However, the equipment installed as a result of these upgrades is largely suitable for children in years 3-6 and there is very little equipment available for use by the younger children in years K-2. *The WCCC requests* that funding be made available to Weston Creek government Primary Schools for the installation of playground equipment suitable for children in years K-2.

Accessible and relevant **Bushfire counselling in schools** in Weston Creek for children and their families is an ongoing need. The WCCC is aware of the traumatic impact this catastrophic event is continuing to have on a significant number of families. This is required not only for those children who have lost homes and have depressed parents but for other students who live in and walk through the areas being rebuilt to go to school. In-school counselling will continue to be a major priority for the Education portfolio and will need to be financed for at least a further 6 to 12 months.

The WCCC has been actively canvassing the idea of a **Weston Creek Community Library** which could be co-located at the Weston Campus of *The Canberra College*. The Weston Creek community envisages such a Library would primarily handle electronic books, with very few paper titles. The WCCC has held preliminary

discussions with *The Canberra College* School Board who are favourably disposed to this idea. *The WCCC requests* that funding be earmarked to allow formal investigation of this concept with a view to including such a Community Library within the refurbishment of this education facility.

Sport & Recreation

The WCCC requests the **upgrade of the number 1 soccer playing field** at Waramanga Playing Fields through improved drainage and other rehabilitation. In addition the provision of seating is required at the oval.

There is still pressure for a **public swimming pool** in Weston Creek with residents regularly raising this issue at our meetings and during our shopping centre visits. The population of Weston Creek has an increasing proportion of older persons and we are also experiencing an increase in the numbers of primary school aged children. Both population groups would benefit from the presence of a swimming pool in Weston Creek with the older persons having ready access to hydrotherapy and the children having easier access to learn-to-swim classes. The WCCC is of the opinion that appropriate swimming facilities could be provided for a comparatively small cost and, certainly nowhere near the reported \$8-10 million spent on the new Belconnen leisure facility.

The WCCC would like to place on record its dismay at the rapidly deteriorating condition of many of our local district playing fields which is the direct result of the Government's decision to cease watering them under the current Stage 3 water restrictions. It is highly likely that the grassed areas of heavily-used playing fields such as those at Rivett and Waramanga will in such a poor condition that they will be unsafe and unusable for any sport for the 2004 winter season. Therefore, *the WCCC requests* that funds be allocated in the 2004-2005 Budget for the **relaying of grass on our heavily-used playing fields**.

Planning

The WCCC is well aware of the impact that the upcoming potential release of the Molonglo Valley (Stromlo) land will have on the portfolios of Mr. Simon Corbell (Planning) and Mr. Bill Wood (Urban Services). There is a need to ensure that appropriate and timely community consultations are undertaken before the proposed release in 2006 to ensure that the Government and the community can deal with the issues which arise in the debate. *The WCCC requests* that funds be allocated, and appropriately distributed, in 2004-2005 FY to bona vide community groups to **undertake land release consultations**.

The recently cleared tract of land known as **Deek's Forest Park** which extends along Cotter Road from about Forest Drive to the Uriarra Road intersection is the 'back door' of Weston Creek and is currently held by ACT Forests. The WCCC is aware that this tract of bushfire-affected land is earmarked as prime residential land under the Government's preferred "City of Choice" option set out in the draft Canberra Spatial Plan. We also understand that residential development is planned to commence within this tract from about 2006. *The WCCC requests* that the Government defer the release

of this tract of land for at least 5 years beyond 2006 to better gauge the view of the community on acceptable uses of the land. The WCCC is aware that a very large number of Weston Creek residents are not in favour of this particular tract of land being developed for any uses other than the former recreational uses. A significant number residents are also dissatisfied with the current public consultation processes which they believe have occurred too soon after the 18 January 2003 firestorms. This deferment will give the Weston Creek community as a whole a chance to rebuild following the firestorms before the community has to consider the impact of any new residential development on its backdoor step. The community does not have such strong views on the remaining land within the Molonglo Valley.

Urban Services

The WCCC requests that the highest priority be given to the **replanting of Narrabundah Hill and the landscaped buffer strip** of land bounded by Cotter Road, Eucumbene Drive, Warragamba Avenue, Dixon Drive and Streeton Drive which is adjacent to both Holder and Duffy. Both of these areas are part of the ACT Forests' estate and they have been cleared since the 18 January 2003 firestorms. The WCCC understands that both areas are not able to be developed for residential purposes, and our local community is very keen to have these areas restored so that they can recommence their former recreational pursuits such as walking their dog off its leash. Also any restoration will relieve the dreary "moonscape" vista that now so dominates the areas around Weston Creek and could provide much needed relief from the dust storms now blowing into the community from these areas.

It is requested that ActewAGL replace destroyed and damaged street lighting in Weston Creek with **yellow sodium lights not white light**. Although the Australian National University has indicated on previous occasions that it was reducing visual telescope research at Mount Stromlo and that it would use radio telescopes and lasers, yellow sodium lighting would assist in the use of the re-built historical optical telescopes.

The WCCC requests that consideration be given to **upgrading the Duffy local shopping centre**. The Duffy service station was destroyed and the gardens surrounding the shopping centre were devastated by the 18 January 2003 firestorm. The service station has not been rebuilt, and the WCCC is not aware of any plans to rebuild it. Furthermore, the WCCC understands that nearly all of the remaining shops within the centre are vacant. Therefore, the WCCC requests that funds be provided in the 2004/2005 FY to allow for the development of a Local Centre Master Plan for Duffy shops to be implemented during the 2005/2006 FY.

The WCCC requests a formal **traffic management plan** for the area of Weston bounded by Cotter Road - Streeton Drive - Unwin Place- Hickey Court. A number of leaseholders have raised the problem of traffic management and this is not being investigated by the current Broadacre Estate Study being managed by the Land Development Agency. There is significant congestion at the Australian Federal Police Complex and the Orana School. The Cotter Road needs an additional left turn slip lane, attention is needed to the Unwin Pl - Streeton Drive turn lane as well as the informal carpark in Hickey Ct. The WCCC will actively participate on this long-standing need which requires urgent attention given the fact that blocks within this section are being offered for development without the need for re-zoning.

It is requested that **Urban Services cover the cost of an additional 22 spaces** for the recently completed paved carpark located on the grounds of the Arawang Primary School. This would alleviate the pressure on the Waramanga Playing Fields carpark and relieve on-street and off-street parking congestion for patrons on weekends. The upgraded carpark will also relieve congestion for the nearby Scout Hall and Veterinary Surgery. Due to the carpark's dual uses, budgeting for this project needs to be drawn partly from Education and partly Urban Services. If this approach is not to be progressed, *the WCCC requests a doubling of the size of the Waramanga Playing Fields carpark* by Urban Services.

The WCCC also asks that capital works funds be provided the installation of an **on-road cycle path** on Streeon Drive. This cycle path would, ideally, extend from the Darwinia Terrace intersection to the Dixon Drive intersection and meet up with the Weston Creek to City cycle path that is already in place. There would need to be appropriate treatment of the Mulley Street intersection to make this dangerous intersection bicycle friendly and safe.

The public open spaces within the Cooleman Court precinct were significantly upgraded in works that were completed during 2000-2001 FY. However, very little maintenance has occurred in any of these areas (eg Trenerry Court) since. It is requested that **more funding be allocated for the maintenance of these public open spaces around Cooleman Court**.

For many years now the Weston Creek community, which has some 24,000 residents, has been asking for a library service. The WCCC notes that there are several districts in Canberra with populations of 12,000-20,000 residents, which have their own library. With the advent of the Internet and the development of electronic books, this library requirement can be satisfied by a comparatively small investment in a traditional stand-alone facility comprising two or three rooms with Internet/electronic facilities as well as traditional borrowings. Such facilities would provide effectively a "virtual library" and be integrated into the daily delivery service from other Canberra libraries. The facilities could be established at the Weston Campus of *The Canberra College* located in Stirling which has been already canvassed with the College Board. *The WCCC requests* that funds be provided to **establish a library** and Internet access at the Stirling Campus early in the 2004-2005 FY.

A further long-standing need is an up-grade to the traffic arrangements where traffic from Cotter Road feeds into the Tuggeranong Parkway. For many years now, there have been regular accidents in the area approaching the Molonglo River bridge where vehicles from Cotter Road are trying to merge into the in-bound lanes of the Parkway. Some of these accidents have completely blocked the Parkway during the morning peak period. Also, the traffic situation is so bad that ACTION buses are not encouraged to use this route to link Weston Creek to Civic. With further residential development planned for the Stromlo area, it is expected that there will be an increase in traffic movements through this junction. *The WCCC requests* that funds be provided to allow an early start to work to **widen the inbound bridge over the Molonglo River** to at least three lanes to allow better opportunities for vehicles from Cotter Road to merge into the in-bound lanes of the Parkway.

The good rainfalls that have been received in the Canberra district during early spring have resulted in a proliferation of various weeds over all areas that were badly burnt by the 18 January bushfires. Weed growth around the Stromlo area and Narrabundah Hill has been unusually strong and *the WCCC requests* that **adequate funding for weed control programs** be made available to ACT Forests and Environment ACT to tackle this problem.

The WCCC noted and has written to Ministers in respect of the improved car parking for the Arawang Netball Courts in Streeton Drive Stirling. This was debated in the Economics Committee on 18 and 22 July 2002 (refer Hansard Transcript). The WCCC requests that the Government adhere to these commitments and doubles the size of the carpark to ensure a reduction of on-street carparking. Such improvement would also assist the car parking for Junior Australian Rules games held adjacent to the netball courts. *The WCCC requests* a doubling of the size of the **netball/AFL carpark** in Stirling in the 2004-2005 FY. The WCCC is participating in preliminary site investigations in this 2003-2004 FY with ACT Roads.

Environment

The WCCC is concerned that current arrangements for the various tree preservation policies of Environment ACT need re-visiting in respect of the 18 January bushfires which impacted Weston Creek. Most suburbs of Weston Creek have significant examples of the remnant open woodland habitat that exist throughout the region and residents have expressed their concerns that these remnants are not being adequately protected. However this needs to be balanced by the right of the leaseholder to manage the safety of their lease. *The WCCC requests* that the **Significant Tree Register** program and tree preservation policies be reviewed to balance tree preservation and community safety.

The recently released draft Canberra Spatial Plan proposes that the Stromlo area north of Weston Creek be redeveloped for housing estates commencing some time between 2006 and 2015. This is a significantly long horizon with no plans for revegetation. Our existing planning policies do not allow residential development on any of the hills and ridges, nor in any of the watercourses. *The WCCC requests* that these **parts of the Stromlo area be replanted with suitable trees now**, then in 5-10 years the replanted trees will have a positive impact on the landscape by forming windbreaks and reducing the amount of dust. This surely is much better than waiting 10-20 years for trees to grow around the proposed houses.

ACTION Buses

The WCCC is aware of the decreasing use of public transport by residents of Weston Creek. One of the major impediments is the lack of a through route on Streeton Drive north on the Tuggeranong Parkway to the City and south to the Tuggeranong Interchange. Such routes to office locations could increase patronage. This would also alleviate the need to change buses at Woden interchange – which is a major deterrent for bus use in Weston Creek. *The WCCC requests* that ACTION be provided with funds to undertake a **12 month trial** in 2004-2005 of a contiguous north - south route via Weston Creek from/to City- Tuggeranong.

The recent increase in the out-of-area high school and college enrolments from Weston Creek has brought about the need to re-visit direct school bus services to/from Weston Creek. It is requested that **ACTION undertake a review through liaison with appropriate schools** (Melrose / Alfred Deakin / Phillip College) to determine enrolments and the logistics for direct bus services which avoid the Woden Interchange as changes of 24 Nov 03 have not provided an upgraded service. The buses are full before they reach Melrose / Alfred Deakin / Phillip College and so are not usable by Weston Creek students at these sites.

Community

The WCCC is aware that there are **increasing demand for community facilities in Weston Creek** and that this demand has been growing for some years. A shortfall in facilities and programs for childcare, youth and the aged has challenged existing facilities. A similar shortfall exists for refugee support services and a succession of ad-hoc arrangements have been used to fill the most pressing gaps. This shortfall was dramatically underlined in the aftermath of the 18 January bushfires. Since then, the public discussion that development may expand to the north of Weston Creek has focussed attention on the fact that the Weston Creek area is under-serviced with community facilities.

We understand that Communities @ Work and Canberra Refugee Support Inc each has a need to occupy premises in the Weston Creek area and that they are proposing a joint project for a new Community Centre. The project envisages the Community Centre acting as a hub of community interaction in a rejuvenating Weston Creek region. The Centre would be an investment in the rejuvenation process, fostering social connections and community relationships and is consistent with the priorities and goals outlined in the document *Towards the Canberra Social Plan*. *The WCCC requests that **land for a new Community Centre*** be released during the 2004-2005 FY.

WCCC
Dec 2003