

WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- *Your Local Voice* -

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Spatial Plan Team
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To whom it may concern

Comments on the Draft Canberra Spatial Plan

The Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the document *The Draft Canberra Plan*. As stated in our previous submission (dated 19 September 2003), the WCCC has been actively involved in Weston Creek as a consultation conduit for the local community since 1991. Over the past 11 months we have discussed issues surrounding the recovery and rebuilding of Weston Creek after the 18 January fires.

In May and November 2003 the WCCC hosted large public meetings at which Ms Dorte Ekelund presented information on the Spatial Plan, particularly in the context of Weston Creek and the Stromlo Forest. These meetings attracted about 260 and 187 persons respectively.

The WCCC is a non-political, voluntary lobby group representing the residents of Weston Creek and is an informed, active and pragmatic contributor to public debates in Weston Creek. Our website (www.wccc.com.au) has further details about the WCCC.

In Weston Creek our community is very active in the affairs of the ACT Government and this has reflected in the degree of engagement in reviews and studies being carried out post 18 January 2003.

In relation to the Draft Canberra Spatial Plan, the WCCC would like to reiterate all of the comments that were contained in our previous submissions on the Spatial Plan, especially those made in reference to the document *Towards the Canberra Spatial Plan*.

In particular, we would like to emphasise the following points:

Land Release

The WCCC is well aware of the impact that the upcoming potential release of the Molonglo Valley (Stromlo) land will have on the residents of Weston Creek. There is a need to ensure that appropriate and timely community consultations are undertaken long 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 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 of land 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 for the land.

Residential Development

The WCCC is aware that a very large number of Weston Creek residents are not in favour of tracts of land within the Molonglo Valley being developed for any uses other than the former recreational uses. In addition the need for only around 8,000 houses in the Molonglo Valley over the next 30 years based on a population of 430,000 would, on an economic basis, negate the need for the use of 'green fields' in the Molonglo Valley since these houses could be accommodated elsewhere. Weston Creek residents are still to be convinced that the financial profits from developing the Molonglo Valley have not been a significant factor in deciding the current Government's "Preferred Direction". There also does not appear to have been any serious attempt to properly value the recreational and health aspects of the Molonglo Valley as compared to the potential profits from land sales.

Population Projections

The WCCC, along with a number of organisations has strong reservations on the formulas and assumptions used in the document for the population projections. We note with a measure of satisfaction that the population projections in the Draft Plan have been adjusted in the document *Towards the Canberra Spatial Plan* to cater for two possible scenarios - one for a population of 430,000 and the other for 500,000 people. However, even allowing for Queanbeyan and local areas of NSW, the lowest projection is still well in excess of the projection recently published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics which indicates that Canberra's population will peak at about 380,000 people in around 2030 before declining. The WCCC again believes that the Government's population projections should be revisited and reduced to more realistic levels. If the figures are more realistically portrayed, then it may not be necessary to place any residential developments in the Molonglo Valley, nor on the Kowen Plateau.

Consultation Process

A significant number of residents are also dissatisfied with the current public consultation processes which they believe have occurred too soon after the 18 January 2003 firestorms. Any deferment of residential development in Deek's Forest Park 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.

In addition there is a concern on when the 'Preferred Direction' decision was made and by whom since there is an apparent gross inconsistency in this decision because it is at odds with the public submissions on the future of Canberra.

Conclusion

The WCCC is presenting the above comments on the Draft Canberra Spatial Plan as a reflection of some of the concerns of residents and people of the Weston Creek district. We are aware that most if not all plans that impact on Weston Creek by developing the Molonglo Valley and the Stromlo area will require the National Capital Authority to be involved. The WCCC will provide detailed and extensive submissions to those consultation processes.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to comment and we would expect that the elected representatives of the residents of Canberra will take into account the views expressed to them by their constituents.

Yours sincerely

(signed)

Jeff Carl
Chairperson, Weston Creek Community Council