

## Orana School Letterhead

The Molonglo Project Team,  
Planning Services Branch,  
ACT Planning and Land Authority,  
16 Challis St,  
Dickson, ACT

Dear Sirs,

**Comments on The Territory Plan Draft Variation No 281**

Please find attached a joint submission from The Bahai Community, The Sikh Community, Orana School, and the Weston Creek Community Council.

Our comments relate to proposed variations of the Territory Plan in the area known as North Weston.

We request the opportunity of a further consultative meeting, after the project team has reviewed this and other submissions and before any final decisions are taken.

We are preparing a graphic to illustrate our recommendations, and this will be forwarded to you as soon as it is complete.

We also take the opportunity to enclose a copy of the Orana School Master Plan for your information.

Yours Sincerely,

John Leech

23 November 2007.

**DRAFT VARIATION TO THE TERRITORY PLAN No. 281  
MOLONGLO AND NORTH WESTON**

**JOINT SUBMISSION**  
**FROM**  
**THE BAHAI COMMUNITY**  
**THE SIKH COMMUNITY**  
**ORANA SCHOOL**  
**THE WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**Introduction**

This joint submission is made on behalf of the many citizens in the Bahai, Sikh and Orana school communities and the leaseholders themselves who all utilise leases of land located between the Cotter Road and Unwin Place, Weston. The communities and school located in this area consider that the changes foreshadowed in Draft variation 281 will adversely impact on their leases and compromise their long standing activities undertaken in accordance with the terms of their leases.

The Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) has joined with the above parties in this submission. The WCCC's role is to represent not only the parties above but also all other current and future new residents in Weston Creek who have an interest or potential interest in the Government proposals to change the usage of the Weston land directly to the south of the Cotter road, to light and medium density residential.

It was decided to make a joint submission because the communities, school and the WCCC have already found that we have common concerns and needs in regard to the proposals contained in Draft Variation 281.

We believe that the new developments proposed for the land just south of the Cotter Road in Weston are further from the main Cooleman Court shopping centre (or any other shopping centre) than any other suburb in Weston Creek. We would hope that the Government does not allow a small shopping centre in the area of the kind that has proven to be so economically unviable and ugly in many other suburbs. Also, it would not be acceptable to have the residents on the southern side of the cotter road crossing a busy 4 plus lane Cotter highway to reach the shops.

At the time of preparing this report, the Government had not indicated its solution to this problem or to the proposed transportation arrangements for the new Weston residents travelling to Woden or the city.

**Background information on Orana School, the Bahai Community, and the Sikh Community. Their needs and concerns.**

**The Orana School**

Orana School is a co-educational school of approximately 650 students from KG to Class 12. It is expected to grow to 700 students by 2009. The school has about 50 members of staff.

The families of the staff and students form part of the Orana community, which totals some 2,000 people. Students come from all over Canberra, and from as far away as Braidwood, Yass and Michelago. Orana School is a Rudolf Steiner school.

### The Bahai Community

Since 1952 the ACT Bahá'í Community has grown with the city of Canberra. Like Canberra itself, much of the Community's character has resulted from the gradual settlement of people from other parts of Australia and the world in the city. Today the ACT Bahá'í Community comprises individuals of a wide diversity of origins. Reflecting Canberra's multicultural diversity, backgrounds represented in the community include American, Chinese, Croatian, Indian, Italian, German, Malaysian, Iranian, Philippino, South American and Sri Lankan. Bahá'ís believe that their experience of 'Unity in Diversity' can be a source of inspiration for all who share the vision of humanity as one global family, and the earth as one homeland.

In the ACT, the Bahá'í children's classes, devotional meetings and study circles are open to everyone. For more information please visit <http://www.act.bahai.org.au>

### The Sikh community

The Canberra Sikh Association (CSA) represents some 400 plus Sikhs living in the ACT. Sikh emigration to the ACT started with the initial 2 in 1965 and increased to 425 by 2006. The projected population by the year 2010 is expected to exceed 550. The community comprises mainly of emigrants from India, Malaysia, England, Fiji and Africa and are employed mainly by the Public Service. Sikhism is a relatively new Religion and was started some 500 years ago by Guru Nanak Dev ji and evolved into its present form 200 years later on 15 Nov 1807. Our usages of the site include Educational, Religious (including marriage ceremonies), Cultural, Sports, cooking and other service oriented activities.

This Sikh Centre being in the National Capitol will be iconic in that it will be representative of the whole of the Australian Sikh Community.

### Needs and concerns of the Orana School and the Bahai and Sikh Communities

The Orana school, Bahai Community and the Sikh Community are three vibrant and growing communities which focus on spiritual and educational activities without adversely affecting any neighbours, and without being affected by neighbouring activity.

Should the amenity and seclusion of the area be undermined by the introduction of medium and high density residences on all the land around the Communities (and school) and should suburban traffic consequently adversely impact on the area, then the facilities will become dysfunctional and the leases will not be usable for the purposes for which they were granted. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the school and communities that already hold the leases will expand their activities in the future (either on their current sites or adjacent sites). In that event, the intrusion of the new housing proposed by the Government in terms of noise and traffic will be intolerable for all parties.

At the same time, increased development will bring significant problems relating to security, vandalism and public use of institutional property. These problems do not exist at present.

The parties to this report believe that residents of the new houses may, (once they have moved in and experienced the area), object to some of the activities of the school and the religious communities, especially in relation to their ceremonies, which generate significant traffic and loud music. Prior to acquiring the land at Weston, the Sikh community had experienced community opposition to their proposal to develop a centre in Mawson because of such concerns – so this is a real issue.

The leaseholders have a legitimate expectation and right to continue to use their leases as in the past. That right transcends the rights of potential residential lessees whose activities will interfere with the rights of existing lessees. Also, from the time of the initial leases the school, Bahai and Sikh parties had anticipated that their activities would expand and that some of the adjacent broadacre land might one day be made available to them - at a price.

The kindergarten precinct at Orana was relocated to the area adjacent to the ridge, following the 2003 bushfires, in order to provide the most secluded and restful space for the youngest students. The construction of the new kindergartens, to replace those destroyed by the fires and conversion of other classrooms to kindergartens in that precinct, has cost the school almost \$1,500,000. Decisions would almost certainly have been made differently if the school had been aware that there was any prospect of the ridge becoming housing.

Proposals to alleviate these concerns are contained in our recommendations.

### **The views of the Weston Creek Community Council**

The WCCC strongly supports the case of the above communities and school. As part of that support, the WCCC particularly advocates that the land on the ridge to the east of the communities and the school and some of the land to the east of the Horticultural Centre be made public open space. The wider Weston Creek community has strongly expressed its concerns to the WCCC about the Government plans to infill the vacant land with low and medium density residences.

This gently sloping ridge land around the ridge has a number of valuable recreational and environmental features and is particularly suitable for walking/jogging. It has some interesting patches of Yellow Box woodland and has panoramic views particularly to the west, north and east with the bonus of some wild life including quite a large population of Kangaroos. The loss of this land to residential housing is strongly opposed.

Furthermore, the WCCC strongly opposes the clearing of all of the trees and vegetation that have been cultivated at the Horticultural centre for the building of residences. The retention of some of this land as public open space is in keeping with the need for a quiet environment for the communities, the school nearby and current and future residents in the area.

We note that large areas of residential land are about to be released to the north of the Cotter Road. This being the case, there is no need for the Government to use all of the unleased land south of the Cotter road and now earmarked for residential development. Should the Government's intentions be realised, the majority of lease holders and Weston Creek residents will be excluded from its use forever.

This WCCC submission does not include the Weston land on the north side of the Cotter road in this submission. With its limited resources, the WCCC has decided to focus on the issues of the 2 primary school closures in Weston (a separate submission) and the land between Cotter Road, the Weston ridge, Heyson St and Streeton Drive (this submission).

Proposals for the preservation of the ridge are contained in our recommendations.

### **Access and Roads**

The design and building of the Bahai and Sikh community centres has been predicated on access from the loop at the northern end of Hickey Court. The entire orientation of the Sikh building is based on entry from the loop. The extensive Bahai car park is located at the western end of their property, adjacent to the loop. It is essential to both communities that the loop be maintained as an access road.

We suggest that access to the loop could be provided via a new road running north along Orana's western boundary, connecting to the loop along the existing drainage easement between the Orana and Sikh properties.

The loop also has an important function as a car park for religious and cultural ceremonies attended by large numbers of people. On these occasions hundreds of cars must be accommodated, and the loop becomes an important overflow for the leaseholders own car parks. (We recall that when the leases were originally granted, it was envisaged that the loop would be terraced and paved to provide parking for visitors to the precinct. This was to be done during the initial development of the subdivision).

Access roads also need to be wide enough to accommodate parked cars on both sides of the road without restricting traffic, which may include coaches. We envisage that visitor numbers to these communities will significantly increase over time, noting trends in demographics, immigration, and tourism.

We are concerned about the construction of through roads in the precinct, for example a road linking Heysen Street to the Cotter Road at the Defence College. Through roads will quickly become used as short cuts for commuter traffic, will generate noise and air pollution, and will reduce safety and amenity. We request that no through roads should be constructed in the proposed sub-division.

The southern section of Hickey Court runs through Orana School, splitting the campus. This poses road safety hazards. It also hampers coherent development of the campus. Orana School would like Hickey Court to be closed, provided that an acceptable alternative access can be provided to the loop.

We note that a road along the north side of the precinct parallel to Cotter Road might be difficult to engineer owing to the steep nature of the terrain.

Finally, we support the statement in the Specific Policies regarding improvement of traffic and pedestrian safety at the intersection of Unwin Place and Streeton Drive.

Proposals concerning access and roads are contained in our recommendations.

## Recommendations

None of the parties to this submission support the proposals for residential infill of the land between the Cotter Road and Heyson St. However, if the Government is to proceed with its plans regardless, then we have identified in our recommendations below, those portions of land that we consider must be excluded from residential development.

We propose that the draft Specific Policies set out on pages 54 and 55 of the Draft Amendment be revised to reflect these recommendations:

1. Allow the proposed residential development of the area to the south of Unwin Place currently occupied by the AFP, CIT and others – except for the arboretum section of the Horticultural Centre, and the land between the Horticultural Centre and the ridge).
2. Not allow the residential development along the ridge to the north of Unwin Place down to the boundaries of the communities' leases.
3. Allow residential development of the land bordering the Cotter Road and Streeton Drive, after first offering adjacent lease holders an option to acquire (within 12 months) the land for future same use development on terms acceptable to the Government.
4. Require 50 metre wide buffer zones around the perimeters of the properties leased by the Bahai, Sikh and Orana School, in order to preserve the visual and low-noise amenities of these communities, and to safeguard the amenity of any future housing development. (The communities will contribute to the creation of green buffer zones).
5. Not allow new buildings or roads to be constructed within 50 metres of existing buildings on the Bahai, Sikh and Orana leases.
6. Provide access roads in accordance with the following guidelines
  - No through roads to be built in the area between Cotter Road and Unwin Place (to limit traffic noise and air pollution, and to ensure road safety.)
  - New access roads to be built in the area between Cotter Road and Unwin Place to provide convenient access to the existing entrances to the Sikh and Bahai centres.
  - Access roads to be wide enough to provide on-street parking for visitors' vehicles, including buses.
  - Consideration to be given to the closure of the southern section of Hickey Court, which bisects Orana School. A new road access to the northern section of Hickey Court (the loop) to be provided, to the west of Orana School.

**Signed**

For the Bahai Community.

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For the Sikh Community.

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For Orana School.

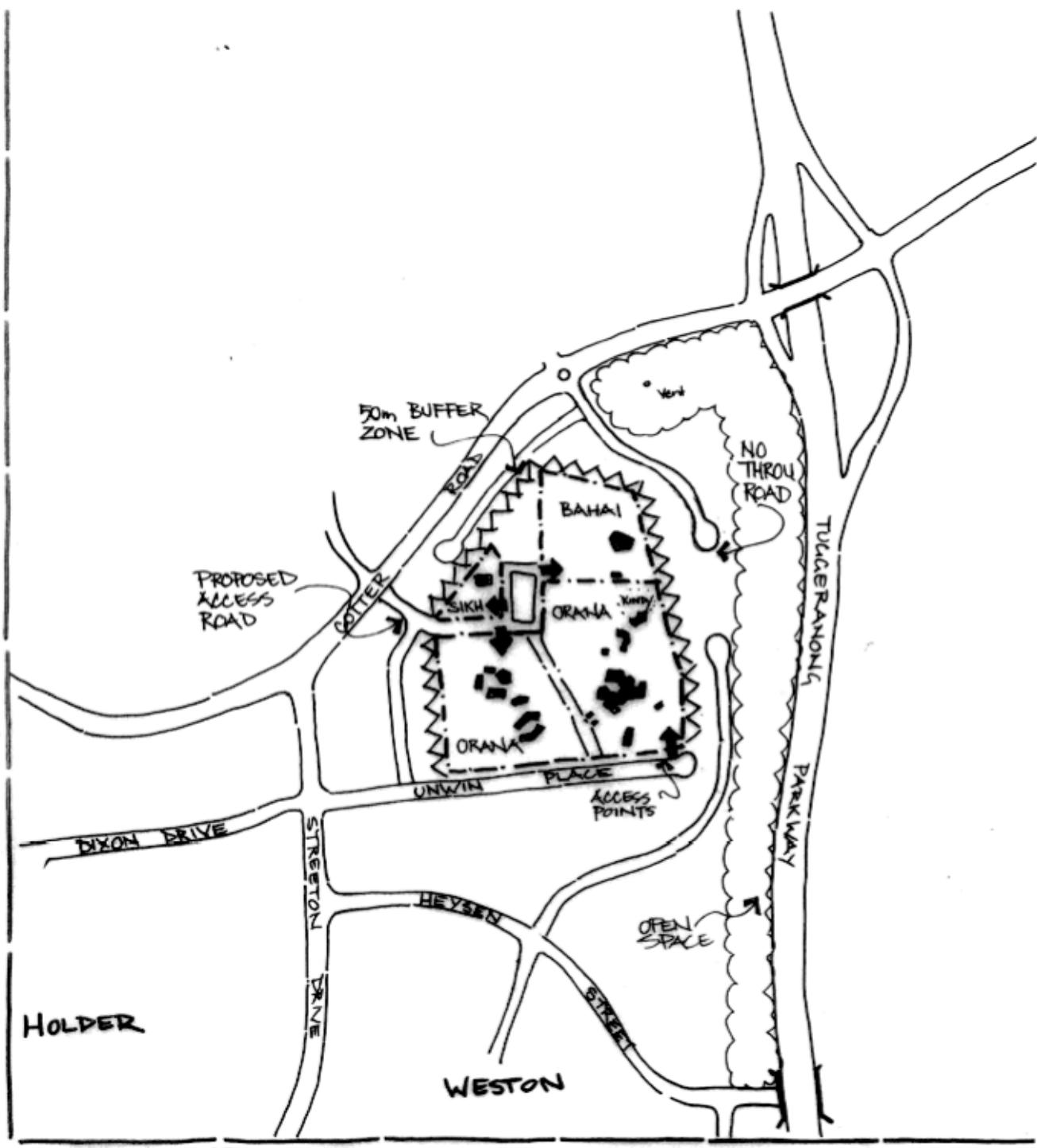
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For the Weston Creek Community Council.

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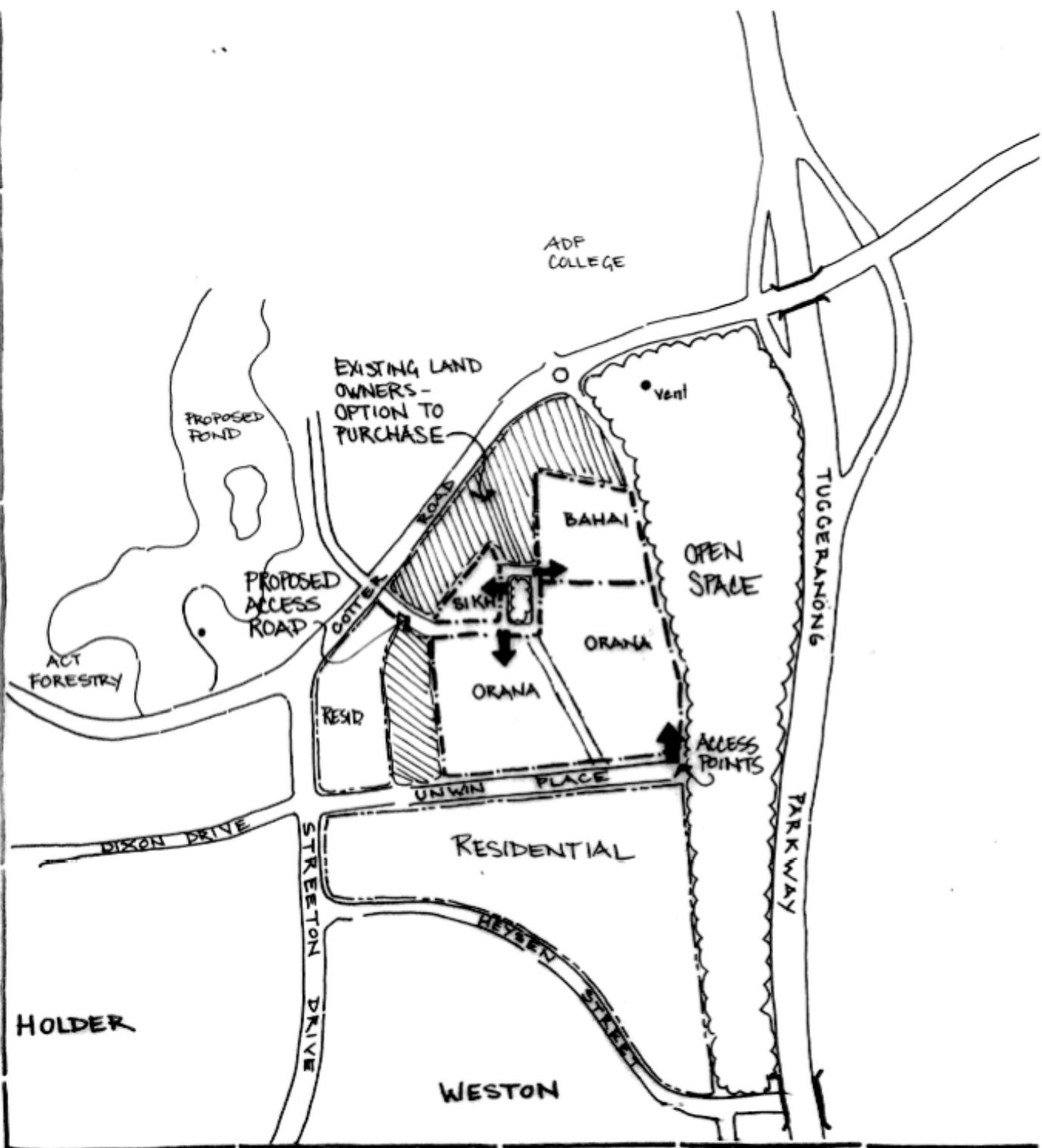
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**ACTPLA  
DRAFT VARIATION TO THE TERRITORY PLAN No 281  
MOLONGLO AND NORTH WESTON**

JOINT SUBMISSION FROM: THE BAHAI COMMUNITY, THE SIKH COMMUNITY,  
ORANA SCHOOL, THE WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL



**NATIONAL CAPITAL PLAN  
DRAFT AMENDMENT No 63  
MOLONGLO AND NORTH WESTON**

JOINT SUBMISSION FROM: THE BAHAI COMMUNITY, THE SIKH COMMUNITY,  
ORANA SCHOOL, THE WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL