

*Your local voice*



[www.wccc.com.au](http://www.wccc.com.au)  
[info@wccc.com.au](mailto:info@wccc.com.au)

PO Box 3701  
Weston Creek ACT 2611

Telephone (02) 6288 8975

## **Minutes of the WCCC General Meeting Wednesday, 30 May 2012**

### **1. Meeting opened**

Chair Tom Anderson opened the meeting at 7.40pm. About twenty persons were present. Tom welcomed WCCC members and guest speaker David Papps, Director General, Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government.

Tom also welcomed Caroline Le Couteur MLA, and Angie Drake, candidate for the ALP in the October elections.

### **2. Apologies:** Tim Dalton, Lance Williamson, John Burke, Simon Hearder, Shane Rattenbury.

### **3. Presentation:** David Papps, Director General, Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government

Mr Papps said the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (ESDD) incorporates sections of what was formerly known as the Department of Environment, Climate Change, Energy and Water (DECCEW), the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA), Transport planning, Heritage, Government Architect, and the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. Its functions include development assessment, leasing, construction, land use and utilities regulation, surveying and land information, the Government architect, heritage, transport planning and nature conservation. As Director General, Mr Papps is therefore the chief planning executive for the ACT, and he has been trying to speak to each community council about what ESDD does.

- On the one hand, ESDD carries out the government's broad vision of a sustainable prosperous city, based on the Griffin Plan, with an ambitious target that Canberra will be carbon-neutral by 2060. On the other hand, ESDD has day-to-day tasks, such as dealing with buses, new developments, the impact of new suburbs, etc.
- Mr Papps said ESDD acknowledges the role of the community and of community councils, which have a special place. ESDD wants to hear what community councils have to say about current community concerns. On the Master Plan for the Weston Group Centre, Mr Papps said ESDD had had good feedback from the community. The Preliminary Draft was expected to be ready in July-August, and ESDD would like to get more feedback before the final version is drawn up.
- Mr Papps said he is well aware that transport issues for Weston Creek have not yet been fully resolved. Bigger-picture issues will have flow-through effects, and in the next three to four months, ESDD will put out more detail about its plans, such as increased density along transport corridors (which will have a direct bearing on Weston Creek), and its commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability, which will impact on the planning for Molonglo.

Q: Are plans for some parts of Molonglo are in breach of environmental legislation?

A: Molonglo is covered by Commonwealth legislation as well as ACT legislation. Plans have been approved by the Commonwealth. The ACT Government is very mindful of the impact on endangered species such as the pink-tailed worm lizard. Conditions are attached to every endangered species, and the ACT Government is taking care to observe these conditions. Roads and bridges, for example, also have environmental impacts, and these have to be approved under Commonwealth legislation.

Q: I believe there are provisions in the Act about how any appeal will affect the group making a case to the Tribunal?

A: The Nature conservation Act is being reviewed, and some suggestions have been made about possible changes to the Act.

Q: The Eastern grey kangaroos has been driven to extinction in the ACT once already and had to be re-introduced. With present ACT Government policy, will this happen again?

Q: There used to be a limit on the number of dual occupancies per suburb. Now some sites are being re-developed (for example, at the former Waramanga service station site). Is there now a limit on the amount of medium-density building that is permitted?

A: For the RZ2 Zone in each suburb, the regulations have just been amended, to reduce the number of units per block. There has been a sharp reduction, so while there is still some capacity for medium-density building, there will be much less than before. This is a very tricky area of policy: ESDD thinks urban consolidation can be a very good thing IF it is designed well, and put in the right place. We need to improve sustainability outcomes, but do it in a way that does not detract from the suburb.

**Tom Anderson** commented that he thought the proposed changes would probably give a much better outcome than in the past.

Q: In Queanbeyan they have green waste bins and an on-demand recycling service for difficult items such as large items, metal items, etc. Will Canberra get similar services?

A: The government has just adopted a new waste strategy, but it does not include provision of green waste bins. Instead, the Government will build a new resource facility, but householders will have to drive to it.

ESDD could provide a speaker to talk about the Government's waste strategy. There is a financial case for a "Dirty Murphy" that collects all waste, burns some to produce energy. The government has a commitment to respond to the Assembly on this issue.

Q: Why are the politicians selling all the car parks? The bus system is NOT easy to use: for example, if you want to go from suburb to suburb, it may take several buses to get to where you need to go and then several more to get home again, not to mention how long that all takes. We understand that the Government has a strong commitment to making public transport good, but don't sell all the car parks just to try to force people on to buses.

Q: The ACT Government is inclined to run surveys and polls, but they seem phony, because often there is no visible outcome.

Q: A comment on the amount of consultation that the Government carries out: What is missing is feedback on why something is being done, or why a certain option has been chosen. For example, three options for the Master Plan were presented to the community, but although the main point at all consultations was parking, none of the three options deals with parking. There is no hint of sorting out the traffic mess around McDonalds, for example, or of dealing with the problem of the petrol station and queues up Brierley St.

With regard to the ACTPLA presentation on DV306, it is very complex, and we need to have some clear guidelines and explanation so that the public can understand what it all means.

No plans for the development to be built by Defence Housing Australia at the top of North Weston have been made public or put out for consultation.

And in relation to the replacement of single dwellings, is there any indication that planning regulation will go down the merit track, or whether it will be by impact or the code?

A: Mr Papps said he did not know the answer to this last question. However, in relation to Questions 1 and 2, he agreed with the questioner that the lack of feedback is a problem. The community ought to be able to see its suggestions in the plan OR have an explanation of why not. He would like to try to improve the consultation process to a new level, so there could be joint crafting of plans.

As for DV306, the obscurity of planning legislation is a problem. "Plain English" is not plain enough. If difficult language is used, it inhibits community access to the real content of plans. Planning ought to trade on the deep interest that ordinary people have in the place where they live. We need to make legislation and legal instruments simpler.

**Caroline Le Couteur** said that at the last sitting of the Assembly, she introduced a bill about planning notification for deconcessionalization of certain sites and knock-down of dwellings. The Bill was not passed, but there was a good discussion with ACTPLA. For knock-down and rebuild cases, the neighbours will now be able to get plans of what is proposed. Exempt buildings are still exempt, but others must be subject to the rules. There has been no suggestion to use the merit track.

Q: Duffy Primary School had a meeting about the impact of Molonglo on the school, which is already close to capacity. The Kindergarten has gone from 65 to 80 this year, and the government says the school will have to use demountable classrooms. Shouldn't there have been more anticipation by the Government, given that they knew this was going to happen? Why was Weston Primary closed?

**Jeremy Hanson** said that schools were closed in order to save costs. The report used as the basis for the decision to close so many schools at once has been kept secret, and the Liberal Party has been unable to get access to it. The Costello Functional Review is still secret.

Tom Anderson said that until there are 350 children living in the Molonglo suburbs, no school will be built.

Q: Is there a plan to fix parking at Cooleman Court?

A: There is no plan as yet, but ESDD is working on it.

**Jeremy Hanson** said that he had moved a motion in the Assembly on the Master Plan precisely because of the parking issue. If the Master Plan does not address parking satisfactorily, the whole exercise will have been a waste of time.

Q: What is happening with the abandoned petrol stations in Duffy, Chapman and Rivett?

A: Mr Papps said that over the ACT there are sixteen sites that are a problem. All old service stations leaked petrol, so the soil beneath them is polluted and has to be remediated, which is very expensive. The government is trying to put a regulatory system to ensure that remediation happens in a more timely fashion than has been occurring till now. There are about five sites that have been remediated, such as Lyons, but where there are problems with finding investment, the Government is considering joint ventures. At some sites, the owners do not have any obligation to fix up the site within any time limit.

Q: Buses are an issue for Weston Creek. People want access to services that go directly to Civic and other destinations, NOT only through Woden.

A: ESDD has not settled on a solution, but we have heard these concerns. The government is wanting to promote Park and Ride as a way of improving access to buses. Mr Papps said he would be happy to get transport experts to come and speak to WCCC.

Q: How many empty houses are there in the ACT that people can't rent or buy?

A: Mr Papps said he was not sure how ESDD could do anything about this matter where private property was concerned. As far as Government-owned property is concerned, the government tries to avoid any “land-banking” by developers.

After the presentation there was a short break for tea and coffee.

#### **4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous public meeting (30 May 2012) were accepted as circulated. (Moved: Chris Wilson; Seconded: Margaret Anderson. Motion passed.)

#### **5. Treasurer’s Report**

The Treasurer was absent, so there was no report.

#### **6. General Business**

##### **1. Weston Group Centre Master Plan:** A Draft Master Plan is expected in July-August.

Tom Anderson said the Government has engaged Urbis to do a study on “Transitional Impacts of Molonglo on Community, Sport and Recreation Facilities”. The Government seems to have listened to some of our representations, but it is two years too late.

Tom said he had asked Urbis what facilities should a community of 22,000-30,000 be expected to have? A library? More than one petrol station? a swimming pool?, etc.

There is a meeting of the Stakeholders Reference Group next week.

**2. Fetherston Gardens:** A lot of work has been done, and TAMS is helping out. Trevor Wilson, Chair of the Fetherston Gardens Friends (FGF), said they would like the gardens to be open as soon as possible, and the first essential for that is to have toilets. These cannot be provided under the mowing and maintenance budget, so FGF is hoping the government will be able to provide funding to assist. Groups of workers from Corrections Services have come from time to time to work in the Gardens, and that has helped a lot.

Provision of water is a major problem. Defence Housing Australia has proposed to install water-harvesting on its site and will make the water available to the Gardens. There has also been a proposal in the past for water from North Weston ponds to be made available for the Gardens, as it will be for Stirling and Waramanga ovals.

##### **3. Combined Community Councils:** The regular meeting will be held on 16 June.

**4. Molonglo Stage 2 Group Centre Committee:** Tom Anderson attends meetings of this committee, and the next meeting will be in June. Building heights will be around four to six storeys. No government employment is proposed at present, so residents will have to leave the area to go to work. This means that there will be more traffic along the Cotter Road, at least until access to the north (William Hovell Drive) is improved. Tuggeranong Parkway will have more traffic, and since the two bridges between Cotter Road and Glenloch Interchange have no shoulders, if there should be any accidents at those places, there will be nowhere for a car to move off the road. This could cause chaos. The problem for the ACT is that land provides the only revenue base for the government. The ballot for the first land release in Coombs closed on 28 May.

The meeting closed at 9.35.

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, 27 June 2012, at 7.30pm**