

Your local voice



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Minutes of the WCCC General Meeting Wednesday, 27 June 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 Gary Rake, Chief Executive, National Capital Authority.

2. Apologies: Caroline Le Couteur, Val Bland.

3. Presentation by Gary Rake, Chief Executive of the National Capital Authority

What Does the National Capital Authority Do?

The National Capital Authority (NCA) was established at the time self-government began in the ACT, under the *Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988*. The Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government (currently Simon Crean) is responsible for the NCA.

The Authority consists of a Chair, a Chief Executive and three other members, all of whom are appointed by the Governor-General. The Chief Executive is full-time while the other four members serve on a part-time basis. Ms Shelley Penn is the Chair; other members are Mr Peter Core and Ms Christine Storry, besides Gary Rake. One position is vacant, and the ACT Government has been invited to nominate a person to the Authority, to give a local perspective.

The functions of the NCA are:

- to prepare and administer the National Capital Plan;
- to keep the Plan under constant review;
- to commission works on behalf of the Commonwealth;
- to recommend works to enhance the character of the National Capital;
- to foster awareness of Canberra as the National Capital;
- with the approval of the Minister, to perform planning services for any person or body, whether within Australia or overseas;
- to manage National Land required for the special purposes of Canberra as the National Capital;
- to manage diplomatic estates.

This means that the NCA manages the Parliamentary Triangle, the central area of Canberra, Lake Burley-Griffin, and the inner hills of Canberra. The NCA operates the National Capital Exhibition at Regatta Point, Blundells Cottage and the National Carillon. Jointly with the ACT Government, the NCA manages Namadgi National Park and the river corridors within the ACT.

The NCA has two sources of funds: recurrent departmental funds (\$17.6 million at present), and a capital grant each year (\$9.8 million for 2012-2013). There are some other sources of revenue,

such as the Lobby Restaurant. On 8 May 2012, Regional Australia Minister Simon Crean announced that the National Capital Authority would receive \$11.9 million as part of the 2012-13 Budget to ensure financial sustainability and support heritage compliance and asset management.

Funds are expended for three main areas: planning, promotion, and estate management. The major project for the NCA at present is replacement of bolts on the Scrivener Dam wall, a matter of urgency that has taken priority over other projects. Next year, Mr Rake said, the NCA will tackle planning reform.

Mr Rake said there is some tension between the Commonwealth and ACT Governments over planning in Canberra, because each has different interests. The planning structure set up at the time of self-government gives the Commonwealth too much power. The Hawke Review has recommended that this needs reform because the structure does not recognise changes in the size of Canberra. The Hawke Review, which was presented in mid-2011, considered the future role of the NCA. It made 25 recommendations, of which about half relate to planning. The Government has accepted these.

Planning. The NCA is reviewing the National Capital Plan, especially what constitutes matters of 'national significance' and what are its principal areas of responsibility. The NCA aims to simplify and clarify shared responsibilities, to review 'Special Requirements', and the way it makes planning decisions. The NCA, for example, has responsibility for bus routes between town centres in Canberra. There are differences in standards between the NCA and the ACT Government, and ACT rules have to give way to NCA rules. Mr Rake said that NCA decisions are based on quality, and there are not as many set rules as ACT planning has.

Information and Education. The NCA is redefining its function to educate Australians and visitors about the significance and role of the National Capital. It is developing a five-year program of information and education activities. The exhibition at Regatta Point will be continued, and an on-line presence will be developed.

Asset and Heritage Management. The NCA aims to continue its high standard of asset management, including the implementation of a Heritage strategy. It plans to develop and review heritage management plans and implement heritage policies, to include conservation, interpretation, use, and future development.

Governance. The NCA will continue all its current community engagement, and is examining the application of a 'Public Participation Spectrum' for the Authority. It will continue to enhance accountability and transparency. Since 2009, the NCA has held one public forum a year. In addition, the NCA hosts a consultation website, 'Have Your Say', which allows Australians to talk about the way Canberra is developed and managed as the national capital. The NCA has two meetings each year with members of parliament.

Current NCA projects and issues

1. The biggest current project is to replace the anchor bolts of Scrivener Dam. An audit of engineering works is done every year, and in 2010 a new audit firm was engaged. This firm carried out a detailed inspection in its second year, and discovered that only 45% of the anchor bolts could be inspected, and that of this 45%, at least three-quarters were badly corroded. (The other 55% are hidden by structural steel or encased in concrete.) On 1 December 2011, the NCA announced that the level of Lake Burley Griffin would be lowered by half a metre, to reduce strain on the bolts. At first it was thought the NCA would have to replace all the bolts, which raised the question of how could the gates be removed and how could they be put back in afterwards. However, the gates were probably made in place, so could not be taken off because

they could not be replaced. It is now most likely that new braces will be added to the sides of the hinges. Fortunately, when it was originally built, the dam was over-engineered by one hundred percent, so it is not likely to collapse just yet. The NCA has investigated the possibility of an earthquake in Canberra, and a warning system has been installed at Coppins Crossing.

2. Improvements to the Centenary Walk and bike path near the National Gallery has been delayed till 2014, and will be carried out once the work on Scrivener Dam has been completed. The NCA is proceeding with getting Parliamentary approval in preparation for 2014.

3. Senator Doug Cameron has suggested building a National Workers Memorial near the Carillon. The NCA already has plans to build a playground and toilet block in that area, and that construction should start quite soon.

4. The planter beds in Anzac Parade are being refurbished, with half of the beds done before Anzac Day 2012 and the remainder to be finished before Remembrance Day in November. New Zealand hebes have been chosen to fill the middle planter beds, with Australian blue gums to be planted along the sides. The New Zealand High Commission assisted the NCA to choose a suitable type of hebe.

5. Proposed World War I and World War II memorials will NOT be on the lake, not taller than the existing trees, and may not dominate the landscape. New memorials are not allowed to duplicate the role of an existing memorial. The Government has not yet responded to a report about the proposed new memorials.

Q: At the War Memorial, access for disabled people is poor, for example, the car park underneath the Memorial has no lift for disabled people to use.

A: The NCA has regulatory power only, and cannot force developers to meet the building codes.

Among other tasks, the NCA has had to refurbish the Australian-American War Memorial, as the fastenings holding the sandstone panels on to the inner shaft were corroding. Fortunately the problem was picked up early, so there was no danger of stone falling off. Sandstone around the base of the Memorial also had to be replaced. The NCA pays all maintenance costs for these sorts of memorials, even if they were originally given as a gift to the Commonwealth. The NCA now has more assets to manage than before, but funding has been cut. As skilled workers are needed for such maintenance, the costs are high.

The NCA manages all flagpoles and memorials in the National Estate. It also manages all roads in the Parliamentary Triangle. The NCA took over management of these roads only in 2008; until then the NCA was responsible only for the bridges. Cooperation with the ACT Government on road management has improved.

The NCA also manages all of the open space in the Parliamentary Triangle, including the tree replacement program.

The NCA gives approvals for events on National Lands, such as for protests, weddings, events, bridge walks.

There have been some challenges with Lake Burley Griffin in recent years, including recovery from the floods of December 2010, blue-green algae blooms, and water-quality control. The NCA is hoping for useful results from research into viruses that might attack European carp.

Tom Anderson thanked Mr Rake. After the presentation there was a short break for tea and coffee.

4. Thanks to ACT Government for funding for Fetherston Gardens

Tom Anderson expressed thanks on behalf of the WCCC and residents of Weston Creek to

Chief Minister Katy Gallagher and the ACT Government for the allocation of \$500,000 for Fetherston Gardens. The funds will be used for upgrading infrastructure such as the irrigation system and pathways, with a view to opening the Gardens to the public in 2013.

5. 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.)

6. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that the bank balance is \$11,654.31. There are no bills for payment. The Festival account hold \$6599.49.

Motion: That the Treasurer's Report be accepted. (Moved: Chris Wilson; Seconded: Pat McGinn). Motion passed.

7. General Business

1. Master Plan for Weston Group Centre

The Draft Plan should be ready at the end of July. At the last meeting of the Stakeholder Reference Group there was discussion about what provision had been made for increased parking space, as well as about the height of buildings proposed for construction on what is now the car park in front of the Woolworth's entrance to Cooleman Court. The Master Plan provides for buildings of between 3 and 6 storeys for that location, but some stakeholders have objected. Tom said he is not sure what the final outcome will be.

2. Fetherston Gardens

On 12 June the Chief Minister announced that the ACT Government would provide \$500,000 for Fetherston Gardens, to enable it to be opened to the public in 2013.

3. Combined Community Councils (CCC) meeting

The combined community councils agreed to meet three times per year. Five sub-committees have been formed. Tom is Chair of the Municipal Sub-Committee.

4. ACT Assembly Enquiry into DV306

Tom and Pat will appear before the committee that is holding the enquiry, as will representatives of other community councils, on Wednesday, 11 July.

- The appeals process is one issue; the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal handles appeals against planning decisions, and as many parties to disputes use lawyers to represent them, the process has become very expensive - prohibitively expensive for ordinary people who may have a dispute with a developer.
- Another issue relates to transparency of planning legislation, since planning is a complex matter and the language used is legalistic and extremely difficult for the lay person to understand.

For these reasons the Combined Community Councils want the ACT government to provide an advocate to represent ordinary people when they appear before the Tribunal.

5. Survey of WCCC members

A questionnaire will be sent to WCCC members and people on our email list to ask what they think are the most important issues for Weston Creek at present. WCCC would like to know what residents are concerned about, and since there will be an election for the ACT Assembly

in October, WCCC would like to convey these concerns to candidates and politicians and find out what they might do to address the issues.

Lance will send the survey out during the week starting on 9 July, and will ask for responses by 23 July.

6. EnergySmart Workshops

Workshops will be held in Woden on Friday, 29 June.

7. Duffy Primary School

Duffy Primary School was allocated \$2.8 million in the ACT Budget for temporary classrooms to cater for increasing student numbers as Wright and Coombs are developed. Duffy P&C Association thought the structures were to be permanent buildings, but it turns out they will only be temporary.

8. Cycle networks in the ACT

Pat went to a meeting about cycle networks, and said she got the impression that the ACT Government is listening to what cyclists are saying. The meeting was very productive. The focus was on the overall structure of the off-road network for the whole ACT. The government's aim is to have 7% of commuters to be on bikes.

9. Reviews in process

- Community Gardens
- DA exemptions for schools - should the exemption that was granted for schools to use the economic stimulus money granted in 2008-09 be continued?

10. Bill Kennedy Memorial Park

WCCC has supported a request made by residents of Stapylton St, Holder to the ACT Government for work to turn a disused car park back into parkland.

11. Airport Consultation Group meeting

The next meeting of this group will be 26 July. Tom usually goes.

12. Parking spaces behind garden shop

Simon reported that 10 parking spaces have been marked out behind the garden shop at Weston.

13. Cooleman Court car park

The surface of the car park on the north side of Cooleman Court (Woolies entrance) is badly eroded, and needs repair. Some potholes have been repaired, but the surface is so bad that it is difficult to wheel a trolley from the shops to the car.

14. Centenary exhibition at Mt Stromlo and Tenth Anniversary of 2003 bushfires

Simone Hunter from the cafe at the top of Mt Stromlo told members she is organising an exhibition to be held at the observatory as part of Canberra's centenary celebrations. The exhibition will show the past, present and future of Mt Stromlo. She would like the local community to be involved, and would like to get photos, stories, and items related to the 2003 fires.

Tom said that WCCC could put up her request on the WCCC website.

15. Vote of Commendation

Committee members commended Chair Tom Anderson on his representation of the interests of Weston Creek residents when he was interviewed for the ABC's 7.30 Canberra program on 22 June.

The meeting closed at 9.40.