

WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- Your Local Voice -

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Established 1991

Minutes Monthly Meeting 7.45pm 28th July 2004

Welcome

Ms Pat McGinn, Interim Chairperson, welcomed the guest speakers, WCCC Committee and residents to the meeting.

Ms McGinn indicated that Mr Peter Barendrecht from the Graffiti Hotline, at Canberra Urban Parks and Places in the Dept of Urban Services would speak, and then followed by Sgt Phil Noble, Officer in Charge, Woden Police Station. This arrangement would allow the meeting to focus on graffiti before moving on to more general community policing matters.

Ms McGinn indicated that she would provide an outline of the issues that the Committee were currently dealing with before handing over to the guest speakers.

Apologies

Mr Mike Hettinger, Mr Gary Caitcheon, Ms Karin McDonald MLA, Ms Katy Gallagher MLA, Mr Les Bienkiewicz and Mr Ed Wagg.

Current WCCC activities

Ms McGinn outlined the current activities of the Committee

- Stromlo Settlement – the draft variation is currently open for discussion and there is a very short time frame to make comments. The WCCC encourages interested attendees to make a submission on the draft variation for the Stromlo Settlement to ACTPLA.
- Bushfire Memorial – Members of the WCCC Committee, along with numerous other residents attended a workshop held by the consultants assisting Arts ACT in progressing the memorial concept. Ms McGinn indicated that she would follow up on the status of this consultation.

- Broadacre Estate Study, Weston – All is quiet and there has been no feedback from the ACT Land Development Agency. The Committee is trying to ascertain if a decision has been made or when a decision is likely on the agreed use of the land and if this will involve a change of land use to open up other possible options.
- Parking – There are 3 major issues with parking on which the Committee are working.
 - Rivett Primary School. This issue was raised and debated at the May 2004 WCCC regular monthly meeting which was attended by ACT Roads. The area has the Weston Creek Child-care [relocated after their building was damaged by fire] Rivett Primary School, Rivett Pre School and Noah's Ark. The Committee has consulted widely and is preparing a submission.
 - Eucumbene Drive/Hindmarsh Drive intersection. – This intersection at the top of Duffy has an issue with informal car parking for sporting activities on Narrabundah Hill behind Duffy. The area attracts running, orienteering, walks etc and damage to regrassed areas, traffic control and inconvenience to residents are the major issues.
 - Streeton Drive / Sheratt Place Stirling – this is the carpark for the Arawang Netball Association and the AFL. This is congested on Saturday mornings and ACT Roads has begun preliminary investigations. This follows several years of debate in respect of increasing the carpark size to reduce on-road parking. A submission is being prepared.
- Weston Creek Fair - The WCCC is working with communit@work for the Weston Creek Fair currently scheduled for 11 September 2004. [Editorial note: now 25th Sept].
- AGM – The WCCC AGM is on Wednesday 25th August. Nominations for the Committee are welcome. Please contact the WCCC if you are interested. There is also a need to have a range of contacts who are specialists in different subject material, eg education, health, roads, planning etc who can be called upon by the Committee to assist on an irregular basis. If you wish to help in this capacity please also contact the WCCC.
- September 22nd Meeting - This meeting will be 'Meet the Candidates' and will be an opportunity for residents to quiz candidates for the electorate of Molonglo on issues of concern in Weston Creek in the forthcoming ACT Legislative Assembly election.

Mr Peter Barendrecht

Graffiti Hotline, at Canberra Urban Parks and Places in the Dept of Urban Services

Mr Barendrecht advised the meeting that the ACT Government expends approximately \$1 M annually on graffiti cleanup. In assisting residents, as well as cleanup of public asset, fences adjacent to open land, eg back fences on roadways are also cleaned. Verbal agreement of the resident is required for the cleanup. Only open spaces or government assets are cleaned as it is the asset owner who needs to deal with graffiti on places such as commercial premises. All other agencies clean their own assets eg *ActewAGL*.

The places cleaned are road signs, bus stops, public toilets, light poles and underpasses. The worst graffiti is on bus stops because the vandalism has a higher visibility.

There are 3 firms under contract to the ACT Government and they are pro-active and go looking for sites to clean up - there is not an approach of waiting. Some agencies wait for the complaints before cleaning their assets.

There is a draft anti-graffiti strategy for the ACT and this is on the website at www.parksandplaces.act.gov.au

This strategy aims at *prevention* (eg build with rough surfaces, protective coatings); *removal* (ie cleaning and removing it fast), *diversion* (give other opportunities, stormwater drains, acceptable locations), *community awareness* (brochure, going into schools, unacceptable behaviour, media campaign, do-it-yourself cleaning, hotline to report also CrimeStoppers if persons are observed applying graffiti), and *legislation* (currently it is 'permission required' to clean up, will be amended to 'make a genuine effort to contact' then clean up).

Mr Barendrecht indicated he would take questions.

Q&A

- How many graffiti criminal charges are there each year? Graffiti is a criminal act and there have been about 3 or 4 charges a year.
- There needs to be action taken on the vandalism by graffiti on the new fences on Hindmarsh Drive, this is soul destroying for those re-building after the bushfire? The fences on Hindmarsh Drive are treated as on open space and every effort is made to clean them as soon as possible.
- There needs to be more Police resources on this job and a sting operation? It is very difficult to watch for an event, the police resources are targeting the offender not the offence.
- You mentioned changing the surface to rough, how? This is generally only an option in new constructions and new fences.
- What chemicals remove it? The chemicals used by the 3 contractors are not hazardous and are environmentally friendly. They also use high pressure water jets.
- Can we get advice on the chemicals and their use? There is a two-week technical course on the graffiti removal and chemical handling. One of the three firms under contract does only graffiti removal and sells a graffiti removal kit.
- Graffiti has an impact on businesses, what is being done to help them? A major issue of such graffiti is that it occurs by youths at night, late at night or early hours of the morning. A concern is why are the parents not aware of where the teenagers are?
- Is it the law that spray cans cannot be sold to children? Yes, they cannot be sold, but possession is not against the law.

- Does graffiti need to be considered as inappropriate and bad? It is at the discretion of the building owner; however on public buildings it is removed. There are approximately 50 approved sites for graffiti in the ACT.
- What is the difference between graffiti and tagging? Tagging is vandalism.
- Does this mean you do not view graffiti as vandalism? Graffiti is removed if the site is unacceptable.
- Are there plans for more 'acceptable graffiti sites', where will they be? The sites will be in less obvious and low visibility sites, like the Callum Street stormwater drain.
- What is the determining factor to decide if graffiti is cleaned from private land? There is a difference between 'private leased assets', that is houses and fences, and commercial assets. Government assets in a commercial area are a focus of rapid clean up.
- At Coleman Court there is a need for commercial businesses and the government clean up contractors to work together to ensure the area is looked after, how can we work together? There is an agreement between the ACT government and the 3 clean up contractors, there would need to be separate agreement with business.

Ms McGinn called a halt to the questions and advised that Mr Barendrecht would be available after the meeting to take informal questions.

Sgt Phil Noble

Officer in Charge, Woden Police Station

Sgt Phil Noble advised that he is the new Officer-in-Charge of the Woden Station after Sgt Peter Budworth. Sgt Noble had been at the Tuggeranong Station for 4 years.

The patrol numbers in the South Canberra district are 3 cars each with two officers on each shift. This is considered a good combination which works well. The district is from Cotter to Oaks Estate from the Lake to Sulwood Drive.

The lessons learnt are that it is not effective to target the offence; the best approach is to target the offender. Targeting the offence has the impact of displacing the crime elsewhere in Canberra. The aim is to target the offender for the offence and incarcerate the offender for the crime.

The crime statistics for Weston Creek are:

	May	June	July
Assaults	5	4	6
Burglary	14	12	9
Disturbances	19	19	16
Property Damage	15	16	18
Stolen Motor Vehicles	3	4	9
Minor theft	23	38	16

Burglaries in June 04 are 12 and in June 03 they were 29- the person is known and in custody. Also property damage in June 04 is 16 but this compares with 27 in June 03. The numbers are coming down.

The stolen motor vehicles is 9 for July to date, one person is responsible for 8 of these in Rivett/Fisher.

As has been discussed earlier the Police do focus on graffiti as a criminal offence and are working with the whole-of-government approach to deal with causes and prevention. This includes the youth services, urban services and crime stoppers. Recognition software is being used to scan photos from the clean up contractors and match these according to locations, times and dates to build up a trend and pattern in activity so as to target the offender.

Self –regulation for the sale of spray cans to youths is in place in the ACT. The ACT Government decided not to go to tougher regulations on the sale of pressure pack cans to minors.

In a particular case graffiti was identified in a local area, the high school art teacher was contacted and the student detected through ‘drafts’ of the graffiti in an art book.

A resident asked of the photos and how they are helping. These are provided to police intelligence and the photos are used to build information and trends. A local example is WESTON BOYZ and recently WESTON GRILZ. There are two groups operating and those involved are known and being targeted.

An attendee asked should we be reporting all graffiti or does this just cause paperwork overload? Yes it is a balance between under-reporting and receiving multiple calls regarding the same graffiti. Information of interest is a trend or pattern of graffiti attacks.

Sgt Noble provided the following information to the meeting on response times.

Priority 1 (armed robbery, violent domestic)	60%	8 minutes
	90%	10 minutes
Priority 2 (offender on premises, accident non-violent disturbance, serious but not life threatening)	60%	20 minutes
	90%	30 minutes
Priority 3 (burglary, offenders left , police to attend)	60%	2 hours
	90%	3-4 hours
Priority 4 (House burglary, when convenient to householder)		Within 24 hours

The patrols attend serious crime first, and then prioritise other actions.

The cost of 10 police and their support, cars etc is approximately \$1M. In the lead up to the election police, law and order will be an issue in regard to the resources available. As Mr Pratt is in the audience I understand that there are a variety of views on how resources should be deployed. Perhaps it is not a debate of more resources which is more ratepayers’ money.

Sgt Noble indicated he would take questions.

Q&A

- A resident asked how often are foot patrols undertaken, as a recent example at Cooleman Court where there were two officers on patrol and they were inundated with people talking to them? Yes, we do have foot patrols and surprisingly many are covert and so the public would not know they are happening.
- A resident asked of the effort to deal with the vandalism and stealing of white goods in homes rebuilding after the January 2003 bushfire? It is not only in Weston Creek, another target is Eastern Valley Rise. The effort has been to target the offender and take out the receiver. An example is the theft of very expensive hot water systems; this is a known problem in houses being rebuilt in Duffy. There is evidence on the offender and patience is needed to catch them in the act.
- In a small place like Canberra do you notice when a person stops being a criminal? 1% of the people commit 90% of the crime, can they be rehabilitated – many are repeat offenders and involved with drugs. An issue is not only the individual but generational crime.
- A previous approach of ACT police was to regularly attend community meetings, is it a lack of resources that this has discontinued? Attendance at public meetings is usually by invitation and we will continue to cooperate with the community in gaining information as well as providing feedback.
- A question on the assaults in the underpass to Rivett, this is the only safe crossing of Hindmarsh Drive, what is the progress? There is a need to have information on the offender and it is hoped that it is not a repeat offender. An example has been 11 assaults in 3 months in Tuggeranong and the offender is known. The Police need to have an avenue of continuous intelligence from the community to work with the community.
- Neighbourhood Watch does not appear to be receiving the support of the police which it had in the past, can this be improved? Crime Prevention is now a separate portfolio in the ACT Police and covers, CLASP, safety house, school education, Neighbourhood Watch and suburban crime prevention. These were previously spread through all police districts and each district had a varied approach. They have been brought together in a centralised approach in the City Police Station.
- Is there a permanent officer for Neighbourhood Watch for Weston Creek? Not that I am aware of, try Sgt Kylie Hemiek at crime prevention in the city station.
- Can we have a regular contact person for Weston Creek issues and to attend these meetings? Yes I will make the effort to attend.
- Mr Pratt MLA, who identified himself as the Shadow Police Minister, advised the meeting that there is a debate on police resources and this is not the venue for that debate, that debate occurs in a chamber elsewhere. However the message from this meeting is contact, information flows and feedback are critical in community policing in Canberra.

- Can you comment on repeat offenders, how is it now? Police interaction with the community and shopkeepers in providing intelligence is a two-way street and the information flow builds up patterns and trends of offences. Crime stoppers is a very valuable source of information, even snippets of information can be pieced together to analyse patterns and trends of offences. The number of repeat offenders is probably 1% in 300,000 populations. 3,000 is probably generous, perhaps 500 to 600 repeat offenders. There is probably standing room only at the Remand Centre. With special operations on since Christmas the trend has been down. Some repeat offenders are linked to drugs and some are of indigenous background. The rehabilitation approach in indigenous communities, which is quiet strong in other areas, does not appear to be as effective in Canberra.
- Are police resources enough; is there not a very high turnover of officers? There are contingents going overseas and those contingents draw police from all States and Territories including the ACT. There is a minor dip in resources; however when officers begin to cycle through the overseas contingents resources are re-balanced. Officers returning from the Solomon's, operation Ramsay, from Bali and from Cyprus have unique and valuable experience in police operations which can be quickly used.
- What is the real effect on police numbers? AFP are recruiting in advance for the impact of the overseas contingents, there are several groups undergoing training at present and approximately 40 officers will be operational before the next contingent leaves before Christmas.
- Why the AFP and not other states in the contingents? The Federal Government does use police from all States on international peace keeping operations. The Commonwealth pays the States to back fill officers on peace keeping operations.
- Most officers have less than 5 years experience, is this correct? There are a large percentage of officers with few years in the police force however they come with a wide range of life skills and educational backgrounds. They are not just 18 year old recruits, the recruits are from mid-20's to mid-40's who may have limited police skills, but their other skills are a valuable contribution to the police effort.
- There is a perception of safety concerns and law and order in the community, how can the police reassure the community of the real situation? There is a lot of hype on law and order in the lead up to an election. Assaults and other offences get front page, but when the crime is solved the coverage is non-existent, except perhaps buried in the court reports. There is an irrational response that to see police on the beat makes people feel happier and safer. This is not good use of police resources as police need to be targeting offenders. AC Neilson surveys people on law and order and in the lead up to an election there is a heightened concern that there is no law and order, probably from press coverage. However, the statistics are showing high clear up rates and a lowering of offences. It is just perception in the media not the reality of the situation.

Ms McGinn called a halt to the questions and advised that Sgt Noble would be available after the meeting to take informal questions. Ms McGinn thanked Sgt Noble for his open approach to answering the variety of questions raised and invited him to attend future WCCC monthly meetings when he was available.

Any Other Business

Ms McGinn called for other business

Arawang Netball

An attendee identified himself as Mr Tony Patterson, the President of the Arawang Netball Association. He advised the meeting that he had been contacted by a consultant to ACT Roads in respect of traffic investigations of the car parking in Streeton Drive. Mr Patterson indicated that his number was given to the consultant by the Council.

He advised the meeting that he was aware of the traffic situation and why was the Council getting ACT Traffic involved in a survey? There was not much to do about it and what was the problem after all these years? He did arrange to meet with the consultant and this happened last Saturday at their agreed time.

Ms Barbara Brinton, a WCCC Committee member responded indicating that the WCCC was one of the organisations whom the consultant wished to meet on-site and yes, Arawang Netball contact details were given to the consultant to arrange a time to meet them. Ms Brinton also advised the meeting that the WCCC Committee members did attend at the agreed time for the WCCC and the consultant was not able to be located. A number of issues in respect of traffic management became immediately apparent in terms of the number of available parking spaces and the hazardous exit from the carpark with poor line of sight. There are a number of short term solutions but these involved using other carparks in the area.

Mr Patterson indicated that those other carparks are not used by parents as they are too far away, also why was there a focus on this now after it being like this for many years? Ms McGinn asked the Secretary to provide the background. The Secretary indicated that in 2001 Mr Ted Quinlan MLA made an election commitment, during the active debate on the construction in Stirling of 50 Defence houses, to double the size of the netball/AFL carpark. This was to alleviate the situation which would be created when the Defence Housing Estate was completed as it this was built on an informal carpark. There was speculation that on-street car parking problems would escalate. In addition driveways from the Defence Houses onto Streeton Drive would also exacerbate the problem - these driveways were realigned in the final design and directed inwards away from Streeton Drive.

The WCCC has in the last two financial years Budget submissions to the ACT Government raised the issue of car-parking and an effective long term solution. The WCCC was advised at the end of 2003 that surveys would be undertaken in May 2004 to measure the impact of traffic. In addition a number of Committee members of Arawang Netball Association were kept up to date on the lack of progress.

Mr Patterson also commented on the Council submission on the website regarding lease renewal and why was the Council stating the leaseholder had to fix the traffic problems and why didn't the Council give Arawang a copy of the correspondence.

The Secretary responded indicating that the WCCC understood that it was one of a number of organisations invited by ACT Land Development Agency to comment on the lease renewal. The submission actually states that the ACT Government should bring the facility up to standard before renewing the lease. Mr Patterson indicated that that is not how the document reads and

that the Council thinks the Netball Association should fix the problem. Also the Netball Association does not have a copy of the letter. The Secretary advised that the information provided from the Land Development Agency was that all submissions relating to the lease would be given to the Association. The Council had no problems with that approach, even putting it on the website for wider reading.

Mr Patterson advised that he believed that it was unlikely that a larger carpark would be constructed, however other solutions may be considered

Community and Expert Reference Group.

Mr Jeff Carl advised the meeting that the CERG (Community and Expert Reference Group) was continuing – although with many different community members - and that he was nominated by the Council Executive to remain as the Weston Creek community member of the Group.

CERG meets at the Weston Community Centre on the 4th Thursday of each month, the day after the Council meetings. The public are welcome to attend from 7.00-7.30pm, but they should notify the Bushfire Support Unit (ph 6205 5733) first.

Ms McGinn called for further business. As there was none forthcoming Ms McGinn closed the meeting and thanked the guest speakers and residents for their attendance.

Meeting closed 9.50pm

Next meeting

Wed 25th August 2004 AGM