

WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- Your Local Voice -

Email: info@wccc.com.au

Website: www.wccc.com.au

Phone: (02) 6288 8975

Fax: (02) 6288 9179

ABN: 52 841 915 317

PO Box 3701 Weston Creek ACT 2611

Minutes Monthly Meeting

23rd July 2003

Welcome

Jeff Carl, Chairperson, WCCC welcomed the Committee, residents and guest speakers to the meeting. Mr Carl advised that the speakers were from ACT Planning and Land Authority (Kerry Browning and Joyce Rajasekaram), ACTION buses (Barbara Barrett and Craig Kelly) and ACT Forests (Tony Bartlett). Mr Carl advised that General Business would be after the guest speakers.

Apologies

Bob Sutherland, Gary Caitcheon, David O'Keeffe, Vicki Dunne MLA, Robyn Bryant, Helen Sinclair, Joe Baker Commissioner for the Environment, Bill Stefaniak MLA.

Community Facility Needs Assessment Study

Kerry Browning advised that the Planning Policy Section of ACTPLA was investigating community facilities land, where it was and what was located on land zoned as such. The background to the study is looking at what land is available, is it enough? will it meet future demands? is the land zoned community facilities where it is needed? An important consideration, and especially in Weston Creek, is the changing demographics.

The study underway is the second part, in that Central Canberra, Belconnen and Gungahlin have already been undertaken. This second stage covers Weston Creek, Tuggeranong and Woden Valley.

A range of government agencies are also being involved which include Health, Community Services, Education and Urban Services. A critical input is what the community considers important in the availability of land. The issues which have arisen include - what is the process in allocating community facilities land? what is the impact of changing demographics on the availability of community facilities land? and what type of community facilities are located on community facilities land? It was also indicated that other community facilities were being mapped to find out on what land they were operating from.

To assist information collection 2 workshops were being held in Weston Creek on 29th July and 31st July. A flyer is available at tonight's meeting on these workshops.

Joyce Rajasekaram continued with a PowerPoint presentation with some very useful information on the location of land zoned community facilities in Weston Creek as well as statistics on the demographics of Weston Creek.

Mr Carl asked for questions:

Q&A

- A resident asked of the use of community facilities land for aged care facilities? - Community facilities land can have supported housing if no other the appropriate uses are being considered but it is a restricted use.
- What is the definition of aged care? The definitions range from self help with no agency support to full hostel with continuous support in a retirement village. Mirinjani Retirement Village is an example of a mixed provider which has ageing in place as it captures those definitions with support.
- What is exact definition of supported care? The definition is that some agency is providing support to the residents.
- Should we be trying to attract interstate developers to build aged care facilities in Canberra? We are aware of a number of developers who are looking for appropriate land in the ACT and we are aware that there is limited suitable land based on the current demand for aged care beds.
- On the slides it showed a fall of population in 2001 to 2010 in Weston Creek. What is this based on? This community's an ageing community; there hasn't been land release and there is a significant decline in the size of families in each house. This trend is expected to continue, but the aftermath of the January bushfires might have some impact on this trend.
- There does not seem to be a choice of aged accommodation types of good quality in good locations? Perhaps we should be looking at a range of development that encourages adaptable housing and the task is to look at different models for aged care.
- A resident also indicated it was difficult to 'down size' and stay in Weston Creek, not everyone needs care but may want appropriate housing and the land to be available. Mr Carl replied that information from Mr Peter Johns of the Land Group in the Department of Urban Services was that the consultant for the Broadacre Study in Weston had not yet been appointed. The Broadacre Study was looking at unleased land which had the potential, and interested parties, to be used for aged care accommodation.
- A resident indicated that a portion of the current community could not wait for decisions to be made to help the 'baby boomers'? We are aware that aged care has a long waiting list in the ACT and efforts are being made to address the under supply of accommodation.
- It would appear obvious from other aged care accommodation in Canberra that the block of land needs to be big enough so as to be economical and commercially viable to attract developers, what is being done to either ensure that these big blocks are considered or

smaller adjacent blocks are joined? And secondly supported housing needs the services to match but the services are just not available that's why supported housing is not being built? -- Yes, we are aware that larger blocks are needed for viability but that there are few blocks and Jeff has referred to the large area in Weston. This study should identify those blocks. As for the lack of support services, perhaps it is the lack of land, the services providers would come into the market with appropriate land.

- Will this study find all community facilities? Not all community services operate from community facilities land, there are a range of types of land used for community services. The aim is to have the land adaptable to the needs of the community. People need to tell us of their priorities and the workshops have this aim.
- Are libraries considered community facilities? Yes libraries will be identified in the Study.
- We need a library in Weston Creek. The study is not determining what is needed but what you have and can it meet future expected demands of the local community.
- Disability access is of concern in some community facilities, how can this be changed? -- Yes accessibility is an issue in older community facility buildings.
- From what I understand supported housing is one of the restricted uses and is not allowed in a current facility? -- Supported housing is allowed if there are no other competing uses at that time.
- It is understood that a surplus school site is offered to a government department and if it is not wanted it is sold at auction through the land agency, in this case the new ACTPLA to achieve the highest bidder irrespective of the future building uses? ACTPLA relies on other portfolios to advise if an asset is not required and then takes appropriate actions.
- Can we please have an answer to the question? If the land is community land the preference is not to change its use but to keep it as community facilities land? -- I will follow up and provide a detailed answer through the Council.

Mr Carl advised the meeting that the under utilised community facility was the old Holder Primary School which was being used as government offices. It was able to be used as a fully functional school as a community facility. Operating government offices appears to contravene the lease. The Blue Gum School is interested in leasing this educational facility and use it for the purpose for which it was built.

- Could you please advise the timeframe for the study? It is expected that the study will be completed in November then community consultation on the draft will be undertaken.

Mr Carl asked that the community consultation not be undertaken in the December and January holidays.

- Will the timing of the review of Weston Creek be delayed if the others are not finished, like South Canberra? -- No, the review will not be delayed.

Mr Carl called an end to the questions as we have other speakers. He thanked Kerry Browning and Joyce Rajasekaram for their presentation and their answers to resident's questions.

Review of Non-urban areas impacted by bushfire

Mr Carl advised the meeting that the WCCC had agreed to host a meeting to discuss the review of the non-urban areas impacted by bushfire and George Tomlins of the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce will present the meeting on Wednesday 13th August at 7.30pm at Royals Rugby Club. In addition Mr Carl advised that after comments at the last monthly meeting on the number of unwieldily reviews and strategies being run by different Government agencies the WCCC has obtained copies of the diagram showing their interrelationship. These are available at the meeting tonight and attendees are encouraged to take extra and distribute them to people interested in the reviews.

Canberra Urban Parks and Places [CUPP's] – replanting urban areas in Weston Creek

Mr Carl advised that CUPP's extended the time period for the return of the survey forms on replanting distributed at the last regular monthly meeting of the WCCC to Monday 21st July. This has delayed the return of CUPP's. As WCCC meetings are booked several months in advance for guest speakers, CUPP's have arranged their own meeting on Wednesday 20th August at Royals. Mr Carl encouraged residents to attend. A flyer for the meeting is available at tonight's meeting.

ACTION Buses

Mr Carl introduced Barbara Barrett and Craig Kelly from ACTION who are raising with residents the proposal of ACTION to trial a service similar to the holiday nightrider in Weston Creek. Barbara advised residents that ACTION was concerned that evening services were using 12% of resources but only attracting 2% of customers. In March a survey of tickets was undertaken, which indicates where a person got on the bus, but not off the bus. The survey covered routes 26, 27 and 28 and found that 1060 people caught buses to Weston Creek from the Woden Interchange and 38 caught buses from Weston Creek to Woden in the evening.

The bus service may increase service frequencies after 8pm when a bus would leave Woden and attempt to drop the customer as close as possible to their home. The driver would not follow a normal route but determine the most suitable route. ACTION will consult with the community before the trial starts.

Another issue is that ACTION is contracted to provide services in both directions; but how do we find the 38 travellers going to Woden? There is a requirement to provide a service through the night until 12.30am Monday to Saturday.

Mr Carl asked for questions:

Q&A

- Would the night service still go to Coolamon Court? - Yes if customers wanted to go to Coolamon Court. There would be some normal routes going from Coolamon Court to the Woden Plaza.

- Is there any point in trying to get 38 people from Weston Creek to Woden? – Yes ACTION is contracted to provide the service.
- Perhaps phone calls to the call centre would be the approach? – Yes this could be considered but the call centre closes at 9pm not 12.30am. Similar trials have been held in Adelaide and in Sweden. In Sweden there were many ‘no-shows’ as the service is considered cheap. People ring and then don’t turn up at the place and time.
- A resident stated that they would use ACTION if the buses were accessible. – Yes of the 347 buses, 35 are accessible and all new buses would have low-floor accessibility. Routes 34 and 84 have to be wheelchair accessible.
- A resident indicated that they avoided bus travel a night due to safety concerns. – Yes safety is an issue and at the Woden Interchange evening services will operate from the bays closet to the supervisor’s office to increase safety and ensure that services were not near the ‘snake pit’.
- Perhaps a suggestion is that the driver has a mobile phone? -- ACTION buses are to be fitted with upgraded communications and when this is installed it could be investigated how this could be used for nightrider customers.
- What impact does increased frequency have in filling buses? -- Higher frequency means more people see the buses and consider using buses.
- In Weston Creek the buses always seem empty; could you use smaller buses feeding into Weston Creek? -- Surprisingly the servicing and road costs are lower for the larger standard buses than the midi bus. The midi buses are expensive to run and are not easy to maintain. They are not a ‘good use’ bus as they cannot cope with increased patrons and there is a need to shuffle schedules to get standard buses on their route. As well as cost-ineffective they can be unreliable. A comparison is that a SNT special-needs-transport bus costs from \$175,000 to \$200,000 and a standard bus costs \$250,000. Also a standard bus is better for the fleet because it can be used on any route and reduces spare parts requirements.
- You mentioned community consultation could you please avoid it in school holidays as this is something that ACTION is known for? Yes -- we will avoid school holidays.
- How can you help the visually impaired use buses? --We have bus driver training for 16 days and a topic covered is assisting customers with disabilities such as vision impaired. Also we have familiarisation tours for groups with disabilities. These organised tours familiarise customers with the layout of the bus, the feel of travelling in a bus and how to indicate when they wish to get off the bus. Carers can book these tours which are usually held at a depot.
- This is not in regarding the proposed trial but is a very relevant bus question; I’m from Alfred Deakin High P&C and would like to raise the issue of students travelling to and from Weston Creek. There is a need to sprint to the first bendy bus which leaves at 3.20pm (school finishes at 3.15pm) to get to the Plaza for the 3.28pm bus. Often this bus does not make it in time because of the problems getting out of Denison Street. Could this be looked at? --- Yes there is often a problem with scheduling school routes to match with normal routes and such unfortunate timings happen.

- We have written to ACTION about a month ago with no reply. From what we know, and the school records are more accurate, there are about 100 bus students from Weston Creek and the morning/afternoon split would be as high as 40/60, why can't a bus go directly to Weston Creek and not leave so many students to have the "interchange experience" every afternoon? -- Letters are usually responded to within 10 days, I will chase it up. As for a direct route other considerations need to be taken into account.
- The routes 26 and 27 need to be looked at. Those going north of Hindmarsh Drive appear ok as they leave the Plaza at 3.41pm? -- Can I get your details after the meeting?

Mr Carl called an end to the questions as we have other speakers. He thanked Barbara Barrett and Craig Kelly for their attendance and taking questions from residents.

ACT Forests

Mr Carl introduced Tony Bartlett Director ACT Forests and, as requested at the last regular monthly meeting of the WCCC, this topic focuses on issues of concern to local residents rather than the complete and detailed information on the business case. Mr Carl advised that the WCCC Executive did meet with ACT Forests between our monthly meetings.

Tony Bartlett thanked Jeff and advised that he was interested in attending the special meeting to discuss the review of the non-urban areas impacted by bushfire and would talk to George Tomlins. Mr Bartlett indicated he would cover the topics of the clean up process, recreation issues, the Forest Depot and a little on the Business case.

Clean up - ACT Forests lost their Office and the bushfires have significantly impacted on normal operations. ACT Forests have worked with counterparts in NSW to bring machines into action in the ACT. The clean up needs a large amount of forest to be dealt with and there is not much experience in Australia in dealing with a cleanup of this magnitude. A lot of planning has gone into the processes and practices which need to be implemented, the first has been the recovery of sawlogs before they started to degrade. After 6 months most of the sawlogs are degrading and a few could still be harvested but not many. The properties of the timber change and they cannot be harvested as saw logs. The total area impacted in 1500 hectares and about 150 hectares has yielded 24,000 cubic meters of wood out of Stromlo. This is about half the usual yearly harvesting the ACT of 50,000 cubic metres. This activity has generated \$1.5M in revenue.

A major issue is how to deal with the rest of the wood. The small trees are relatively easy to deal with and sort out. Where there are big trees various options and different techniques have been tried.

The aim is to work backwards from the suburbs back into the forest. At present 80ha has been 'chipped' in the urban interface area and produced 45,000 cu m of chips which can be used as bio fuel. However there are lots of chips and only a limited market.

The planning of the cleanup of 1000ha is well underway. It is expected that this will be bulldozed and burnt to get rid of it. The cost per hectare and how long it will take are the main concerns. It has cost about \$650,000 for 80ha of chipping and at approximately \$8,500 per ha this is very expensive. The aim at the present is to bulldoze it into heaps and then burn it. This is operationally very difficult and may cause concern for some people. The timing is expected to be late spring, but the wood may not be dry enough. A publicity campaign will be in place to

advise people what is happening, and the clean up may not happen until autumn next year. Erosion of the soil is of concern and some seedlings previously purchased have been used to try and control soil erosion.

Recreation - As regards recreation, Deek's run is still officially closed but appears to have some users. Here are some large and dangerous trees which are being removed. A small sawlog operation is set up in the forest to deal with these on-site. The off cuts can be used as firewood for households later. The recreation areas in Stromlo have a higher priority than in Uriarra and Pierces Creek forests. It may be well into next year for the restoration of recreation amenities in Stromlo. There is no intention for significant facilities replacement but just to have the sites safe, accessible and useable as the final outcome and effort will be affected by the non-urban review.

The Council is very good at keeping us up to date on what is happening and those using Narrabundah Hill behind Duffy have reported damaged gates and fences. The main gate will be fixed next week and the fences after that, although they have only minor damage.

Depot - ACT Forests received approval in March to re-build their depot and have been searching for a site since that time. There are several sites as possible options and in the rebuilding effort the staff of ACT Forests are well aware of what residents who are rebuilding are going through as there are lots of complicating issues. Mr Bartlett advised that the preferred site is the vacant block next the Defence Forces College on Cotter Road. The site meets all necessary conditions with the added advantage that ACT Forests wants to stay in Weston Creek. To this Mr Bartlett received spontaneous applause from the meeting, when this abated Mr Bartlett advised that ACT Forests had a strong preference to stay in Weston Creek and locate equipment to enable rapid suppression strategies to be activated when needed.

Business case – The ACT Forests Business case has been prepared and is expected to be handed to the ACT Government shortly. It is not currently a public document. The report has had the contribution of many forestry experts outside the ACT and in general there is a strong business case for re-planting.

There is recognition that Stromlo Forest will change and there may be some type of urban forest with a mix of recreation, landscape and fire protection. The boundaries of such a forest would need to be considered. The report makes very interesting reading and I would encourage people to look at it when it is released.

Mr Carl asked for questions:

Q&A

- The entrance to Weston Creek down Cotter Road is very depressing, when is this being replanted? -- The land on the left when entering Weston Creek is ACT Forests land which had the forest damaged in a wind storm and was cleared. This is the subject of the Broadacre Study mentioned by Jeff. The land on the right is controlled by PALM, now ACT Land & Planning. The use of the land has not yet been determined so replanting is not happening at this time. The road verges are controlled by CUPP's.
- What does the business case cover in regard to ANU using parts of Stromlo Forest? – The business case was asked to prepare ideas and was not undertaken as community

consultation. The community consultation is being undertaken through the review of non-urban areas impacted by bushfire.

- You mentioned erosion control, why can't the damaged trees be left down and not burnt so as to control erosion? – The aim is to minimise soil movement and a few options have been tried in some areas and leaving damaged trees is not seen as a viable control, either standing or fallen trees are not active in binding soil
- What is being done to control weed growth? – All would know that weed growth is a significant problem, especially in the larger open damaged forest areas. It is planned to have a large program of concerted effort in spring. The whole of the burnt area of Uriarra and Pierces Creek forests need to be considered. There will be a lot of effort in weed control this year to minimise the impact of weeds.
- Could community volunteers assist, it would help in the recovery of the forest and the recovery of the people? – How could this happen, we could look at this to see if it is feasible.
- There is significant regrowth of acacias how will these be protected? -- This is a good example of the complexity of the issue of weed control. We need to target weeds and not the preferred re-growth.
- You will have learnt from the weed control problems on Narrabundah Hill? -- Yes aerial spraying will not be used.
- It will be unfortunate if the native regrowth is damaged – Yes , if people identify where it is and let ACT Forest's know we can look at recreation uses in some areas.
- Could Canberra Urban Parks use it in the replanting in Weston Creek which they talked about here last month? -- It is very difficult to re-locate native re-growth and for it to continue growing in a new location.
- I noticed that in walks in damaged forest areas the pyracantha are not re-shooting –Not re-shooting, that is a positive sign.
- Why haven't you considered rebuilding the new depot on the old depot site? -- That was not considered acceptable and it was not one of the sites offered for re building.
- Does the business case consider the difference between softwood and hardwood plantations? It is not possible as yet to debate the options in the business case.
- What date will the report be released? It is hoped that this will be timed with the report on the review of non-urban areas impacted by bushfire which is understood to be released at the end of July/ early August. The executive report is 30 pages and the main report is 150 pages. It is hoped to make some available through shopfront's and libraries.
- Is Narrabundah Hill open for recreation? -- Technically no, it is closed for logging but there are a number of recreational users in the area.

- Has CSIRO been involved in the business case? -- Yes CSIRO have contributed significantly to the business case.

Mr Carl called an end to the questions. He thanked Tony Bartlett for his attendance and taking questions from residents.

General Business

Maureen Hartung and Corri Hakaraia from the Blue Gum School asked to address the meeting. They advised that they were meeting with staff in Minister's Offices but the reception is mixed. It is becoming apparent that the ACT Government wishes to sell an educational facility to the highest bidder. Holder Primary needs to be re-visited in terms of its potential to be used again as an educational facility and the ACTPLA study could not possibly ignore buildings on land zoned community facilities.

Mr Carl reminded the meeting of the special meeting on Wednesday 13th August to discuss the review of the non-urban areas impacted by bushfire, here in the Royals at 7.30pm

The meeting was advised that Canberra Urban Parks and Places have arranged their own meeting on Wednesday 20th August at Royals. Mr Carl encouraged residents to attend.

AGM

Mr Carl advised residents that the AGM will be on 27th August and to contact the WCCC if residents were interested.

Mr Carl made a final call any other business, as there was none forthcoming he closed the meeting and thanked residents and speakers for their attendance. The speakers were all available to take informal questions after the meeting.

Meeting closed 9.50pm

Next Regular Meeting:
Wednesday 27th August 2003