

Your local voice



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Minutes of the WCCC General Meeting Wednesday, 25 October 2017

1. Meeting opened

Chair Tom Anderson opened the meeting at 7.30pm. 22 people were present.

Tom welcomed Sergeant Harry Haines from Woden Police Station, Caroline LeCouteur, MLA for Murrumbidgee electorate, and Fiona Carrick of the Woden Valley Community Council. Apologies were received from Bec Cody, Pat McGinn, Janice Paull, Kristine Reithmiller.

Sergeant Haines spoke about matters of concern to the police in Woden and Weston Creek.

- He said that there were a number of derelict buildings in the Woden Town Centre and police were concerned that people were getting into some of the buildings and could be putting themselves in danger. The interiors of these buildings are not safe, with derelict staircases and hazards from falling materials. Police cannot be there 24/7, and the owners of these buildings are facing considerable civic risk.
- There has been a spike in aggravated robbery (armed robbery) rates.
- There has also been a spike in burglaries in Coombs. One offender has been arrested. Burglars are very mobile and very active. Police have sometimes been able to link offenders to particular burglaries through DNA evidence, and then able to lay charges.
- There was a robbery in Rivett just the other day.
- The ACT provides good pickings for criminals, but the ACT is one of the safest communities in the world and the amount of criminal activity is relatively small.
- ACT Police has a dedicated team for dealing with Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs (OMCGs). There has been an increase in the number of gangs in the ACT, perhaps as the result of more severe laws in other jurisdictions. A recent attack in Fisher was targeted.
 - Gangs are in it to make money. Police action aims to disrupt gang activities such as drug distribution and extortion, and other financial activities.
 - ACT Police have links with police in other jurisdictions, both domestic and international. They deal with the Border Force, checking for criminals who might enter Australia. The Comancheros, for example, is an international criminal organisation. (One gang member who had been in prison went to Malta when he got out, and his visa was revoked.)
 - The main money-making activity of most gangs is drugs, particularly methamphetamines and cocaine. Sgt Haines said, "They love cocaine."
 - OMCGs are well organised. They were started after World War II in the United States by former servicemen. Now the gangs use coded communications (the "dark web"), run drugs, launder money, and participate in many other criminal activities.

- There used to be one gang in the ACT, the Rebels, which meant there was no competition between gangs, and gang members mostly tried to keep under the radar. The Rebels have now disappeared because the Comancheros and Nomads have come to Canberra.
- One general observation is that new neighbourhoods attract criminals. Burglaries are usually done to support a drug habit, and such burglars are not usually part of a gang. They often leave DNA evidence because they are affected by drugs. Often such criminals do not have a fixed place of abode, and are therefore very difficult to trace. They frequently try to find car keys, because these days it is difficult to steal a car unless you have the keys.
- General advice from police to all Canberra residents is that you need to know your neighbourhood and your neighbours, so you know what is out of place. Do not hesitate to call the police if you see something out of place, something very odd.

Q: The most visible evidence of crime that we see around here is burnt-out cars.

A: When criminals torch a car, that destroys forensic evidence.

Q: There have been a few reports of racially-motivated violence at Woden Interchange.

A: This year there have been 67 incidents of various kinds reported to have occurred at Woden Interchange, including 3 assaults. CCTV has been upgraded, and this helps provide evidence for arrest that can be used in court. Police have regular meetings with Transport Canberra. With regard to racially-motivated incidents in Canberra, the murder of a young man outside Northbourne Flats earlier this year was racially motivated. On Monday of this week, a group of five persons was involved in a racially-motivated assault at Woden. The two main offenders were arrested outside Woden Police Station.

Q: There are not many activities available for young people.

A: Over 80 percent of young people never have any interaction with the police at all, but some kids are looking for something to do, and so they go up a derelict building and sit on top of the roof looking out, it gives them a thrill.

Q: Frequently there are hoons driving in Dixon Drive, Holder Oval. When we call the police, we may get the response that "Police cannot come right now, could you get the number of the car?"

A: Police numbers have not increased in proportion to the increase of the population. At present Woden has only enough to have two patrols with two officers and one sergeant at any one time. On occasion police will team up with vehicle inspectors on certain roads where hoons are active and go out to check every single car for road worthiness, as a way of controlling hoon activity.

- Police aim to have zero road fatalities. ACT Police work with NSW Police on roads such as Kings Highway and Monaro Highway to Cooma. Every month there is a monthly focus on one issue, e.g., speed.

Q: Young drivers seek thrills, and they need somewhere to be able to do that safely, such as the former Dragway, which has been closed down.

A: At Mitchell storage place, the police have three storage levels of cars that have been seized. If the owner wants the car back, he has to pay storage fees. Anyone caught doing burnouts will have their car seized.

Sergeant Haines concluded his talk and left.

Caroline LeCouteur gave a brief summary of recent matters in the Legislative Assembly.

- She said Steve Dozspot has told the Assembly that he has liver cancer after Type 2 diabetes, and he has resigned.
- The Opposition moved a motion of No Confidence against the Chief Minister, alleging that the Government has engaged in corrupt decisions. The Auditor-General is looking at a land-swap in Dickson, between the Government and the CFMEU, and also at land

deals over the City to Lake development (land near the casino). The Auditor-General will report next Tuesday and her report will be examined closely.

- Votes in the postal survey on Same Sex Marriage must be returned by the end of this week.
- There was a motion today in the Legislative Assembly that the ACT Government should look after trees better.
- The government has set up a Citizen Jury to advise on compulsory third-party insurance for cars. Caroline went along to the meetings of this groups. She said the participants are taking their role very seriously. The process is very open, and experts are giving information and expert advice.

Q: Is it true that the Government is considering reducing the number of traffic lanes on the bridges across Lake Burley Griffin in order to accommodate the light rail?

A: The National Capital Authority has planning control in the Parliamentary Triangle. The ACT Government is doing a huge amount of traffic studies at present. Because no overhead wires are allowed in the Parliamentary Triangle, the trams will need enough space to carry a large battery, to cope with the distance they will have to travel without wires.

Q: Fiona Carrick, chair of the Woden Valley Community Council (WVCC), asked Caroline about developments in Woden Town Centre. She said that Geocon want to develop 734 apartments per hectare, which is double what authorities in Sydney say is too many. Geocon will not come to a WVCC meeting but say they are prepared to consult with individuals.

A: Caroline said that the number of apartments depends a bit on what is around it. There is some fear that it may end up like the Trilogy development, where the building will have its own shop, cafe, and gym so residents may go out only for work and will not participate in the community.

Tom Anderson noted that, in regard to Commonwealth and Kings Avenue bridges, people do not know who has lodged submissions. The ACT Government is proposing to reduce Commonwealth Bridge to two lanes and cut the speed limit to 60kph. There will be six sets of traffic lights; the present loops to allow traffic to access the National Library will be removed; there will be building between Commonwealth Avenue and the National Library, and beside the Albert Hall.

General Business Meeting

Tom opened the business meeting. Minutes of the last public meeting were approved. (Moved: Jenny Adams; Seconded: Margaret Anderson)

The treasurer reported that the main business account has a balance of \$21,761.34, while the Fetherston Gardens account has a balance of \$5884.33.

1. Public Housing: Tom told the meeting that Development Applications (DAs) have been lodged for the public housing developments in Chapman and Wright.

- In Chapman, the number of dwellings has been reduced from 29 to 20; more trees have been kept at the northern end; all dwellings will be duplex townhouses, single level, with two bedrooms; there will be no access to the site from Percy Crescent, only from Darwinia Terrace; there will be parking on-site; and the bushfire escape route has been kept.

Tom said he thinks this is a reasonable outcome. He said that there are some negative issues with the site, in that it is a long way from the nearest shops in Rivett, and buses are not frequent.

- In Wright, the apartments will only be 2-storey; there will be 26 apartments in 2 buildings with communal entries; there will be no access of Diesendorf Street and all parking will be on-site; some land on the north side of the block will be left free.

Tom said that this development will not be near any shops because there are no shops in Wright. The nearest shops will be in Coombs.

He said the Wright community have said they want a commitment from the ACT Government for a medical centre on the community-zoned land.

- In Holder, the number of dwellings has been reduced from 30 to 16; access will be off Stapylton Street; the buildings will be placed further from existing residences than originally planned; all will be single storey; there will be more green space than originally intended.

The DAs for Chapman and Wright close for comments on 24 November.

Tom had asked the Public Housing Task Force to come to a public meeting of WCCC but that could not be organised in time.

Q: Why are there no solar panels on public housing?

A: It adds expenditure that the Government does not want to pay. In Denman Prospect, every house will have solar voltaic cells.

Q: In regard to curtains, the government does not usually supply curtains in public housing.

A: Tom replied that for the public housing in Holder, Chapman and Wright, the government has agreed to put curtains in two rooms at each place.

Caroline LeCouteur noted that it is costing more to build new public housing than the government is getting back from the sale of old public housing on Northbourne Avenue.

Link to DAs on website: There will be a link to the relevant DAs put up on the WCCC website.

2. Change of website address for WCCC: Tom told the meeting that WCCC has a new address for its website: www.westoncreek.org.au

3. 50th Anniversary of Weston Creek: WCCC wants to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of Weston Creek, and is liaising with the Community Centre and Mirvac on a program of events. WCCC intends to make a logo for the celebrations.

4. Demolition of former AFP site: A fence has been erected around the former AFP site at the corner of Streeton Drive and Heysen Street, and demolition will commence shortly. The developer will build medium-density housing. The first DA for this site was rejected, but WCCC presumes the developer has now got permission to go ahead.

5. Second Petrol Station: Tom has not heard if the DA has been approved.

One WCCC member asked (plaintively?) if we really need another MacDonaldis in Weston Creek at the second petrol station.

6. Other matters

- Local shops at Fisher, is there any program to improve Fisher shops?
- Parking at Cooleman Court has improved somewhat in recent months.
- When will shops be built at Coombs? They were due to be finished in 2015 but there have been delays because several DAs were not approved. It appears now that there is a problem finding a supermarket willing to become a tenant because the space is too small.
- It is possible the Snow Group might push for an early start on the Molonglo Group Centre.
- Master Plan for Weston Group Centre, Territory Plan Variation: Caroline reported that there have been only two submissions on the Variation, one from WCCC and one from Westfield (owners of Woden Plaza).
- Cemetery: WCCC has put in a submission to the Government to say that its preference is that a new cemetery be built on Long Gully Road, rather than expand Woden Cemetery.

Tom closed the meeting at 9.25.

Next public meeting will be on Wednesday, 29 November at 7.30pm.