



ACT
Government

2018

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL REPORT NO. 4 - Draft Variation
to the Territory Plan No 329 Weston Group Centre: Zone Changes
and Amendments to the Weston Precinct Map and Code**

**Presented by
Mick Gentleman MLA
Minister for Planning and Land Management**

Introduction

The government thanks the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal for the recommendations put forward in Report 3 Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 329 Weston Group Centre: Zone changes and amendments to the Weston precinct map and code.

The recommendations provide useful feedback that the ACT Government has accepted and will incorporate, where appropriate, into future variations to assist the community in reviewing and providing comment on a range of variations.

The Weston Creek District population catchment is almost 23,000 as at 2016, and has grown by less than 950 people since 2006. The established suburban areas have actually seen a steady decrease in the number of people per household, which has been slightly offset by the increase in population entering the new development areas within the catchment. The neighbouring district of Molonglo, which currently relies on the Weston group centre for access to commercial services and retail, is increasing rapidly from approximately 15 residents in 2006 to around 4,600 in 2016. This has impacted on Weston through increased patronage to the centre and resultant increased demand for parking.

It is anticipated that release of land for the Molonglo commercial centre will commence in 2020-21, with the influx of Molonglo residents accessing the Weston group centre gradually easing as the Molonglo centre is developed. This is anticipated to reduce pressure on Weston group centre

While Weston Creek is in line with the ACT average of 24% of the population living in lone person households, Weston Creek has a higher proportion of lone person households living in single, detached dwellings at 62%, compared to the ACT average of 45%, while the percentage living in high density (apartments) is just 3.3%, compared to 28.2% generally in the ACT. This correlates with the limited availability of other forms of dwelling types in Weston Creek compared to the ACT generally.

In 2016, low density dwellings (separate houses) accounted for 65% of all private dwelling stock in the ACT, medium density (semi-detached terrace or townhouses) accounted for 18% and high density (apartments) 17%. In Weston, low density stock accounted for 81.3% of all private dwellings, medium density 16.5% and high density just 1.9%.

Increasing the building heights within the group centre will provide a modest increase in potential for apartment style developments. This will provide greater opportunities for people wishing to live closer to shops and services, particularly single person households seeking to downsize while remaining in the area.

Recommendations

No.	Recommendations
Recommendation 1	The Committee recommends that subject to the following recommendations, Draft Variation 329 be approved.
Recommendation 2	The Committee recommends that future draft variation documentation and the Territory Plan express minimum and maximum building heights in metres and that if surveyor measurements are to be used, an explanatory note or clear definition is provided as to what the surveyor measurement means.
Recommendation 3	The Committee recommends that Rule 35 of the Draft Variation is amended to include height limits specified in both storeys and metres.
Recommendation 4	The Committee recommends that where a draft variation to the Territory Plan proposes to amend a code, a 'side-by-side' comparison of the existing code, the proposed code and an explanatory statement of the differences between the two should be provided to facilitate public understanding of the draft variation.
Recommendation 5	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government finalises the development of territory plan draft variations, as soon as possible, following completion of the relevant master plan.
Recommendation 6	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government meet with Weston Creek Community Council to discuss issues raised in their submission.
Recommendation 7	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government finalises the development of master plans in a more timely fashion.
Recommendation 8	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a clear and accessible outline of the intent and purpose of planning documents within the ACT, including master plans, draft variations and precinct codes and how these interact with the Territory Plan.
Recommendation 9	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement the proposed height limits for buildings as detailed in the Draft Variation.
Recommendation 10	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver a new Weston Creek Community Centre, including a community hall, prior to the sale of the current community centre site.
Recommendation 11	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that the number of publicly accessible car parking spaces are maintained during and after any development activity on the current car parking areas situated at Section 88 and Section 84.

ACT Government Response to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal Report No. 4 - Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 329 Weston Group Centre: Zone Changes and Amendments to the Weston Precinct Map and Code

The following summarises the Government response to:

- 1. The Committee recommends that subject to the following recommendations, Draft Variation 329 be approved.**

Government Response: AGREED

- 2. The Committee recommends that future draft variation documentation and the Territory Plan express minimum and maximum building heights in metres and that if surveyor measurements are to be used, an explanatory note or clear definition is provided as to what the surveyor measurement means.**

Government Response: AGREED IN PART

Rationale:

Agree for non-common units, such as references to Australian Height Datum, as well as building heights generally to be described in metres and storeys where appropriate. It is preferable on occasion to use performance measures for height, particularly in mixed use areas as residential floor to floor heights differ from commercial floor to floor heights. Performance measures generally permit a measure of flexibility to design in appropriate areas.

- 3. The Committee recommends that Rule 35 of the Draft Variation is amended to include height limits specified in both storeys and metres.**

Government Response: AGREED

Rationale:

The heights specified in rule R35 will be amended to indicate storeys as well as metres.

- 4. The Committee recommends that where a draft variation to the Territory Plan proposes to amend a code, a 'side-by-side' comparison of the existing code, the proposed code and an explanatory statement of the differences between the two should be provided to facilitate public understanding of the draft variation.**

Government Response: AGREED

Rationale:

Future variations that amend existing sections of the Territory Plan will include additional material to clarify the changes with supporting statements outlining the differences.

- 5. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government finalises the development of territory plan draft variations, as soon as possible, following completion of the relevant master plan.**

Government Response: NOTED

Rationale:

Noted.

- 6. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government meet with Weston Creek Community Council to discuss issues raised in their submission.**

Government Response: AGREED

Rationale:

Representatives from EPSDD will arrange with the community council to discuss the issues raised in their submission to the inquiry on DV329.

- 7. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government finalises the development of master plans in a more timely fashion.**

Government Response: NOTED

Rationale:

There are three remaining master plans to be finalised, the Kippax and Curtin group centre master plans, and Tharwa village plan, which are currently being finalised. It is anticipated that these remaining strategic plans will be supported by Government and released in the third quarter 2018, with associated Territory Plan variations released concurrently or directly after the release of the master plans.

- 8. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide a clear and accessible outline of the intent and purpose of planning documents within the ACT, including master plans, draft variations and precinct codes and how these interact with the Territory Plan.**

Government Response: NOTED

Rationale:

It is noted that current Territory Plan variations include summaries of the planning framework within the ACT as well as information on the master planning process, where relevant. The current precinct codes also include information describing how they sit within the Territory Plan and how they interact with the other sections of the Territory Plan. In addition, general factsheets and other information relating to the planning process is available on the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development (EPSDD) website.

The documentation of future variations will be reviewed to determine what level of additional information would be of benefit in the way of background explanatory material to assist the community.

- 9. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement the proposed height limits for buildings as detailed in the Draft Variation.**

Government Response: AGREED

Rationale:

Agreed.

- 10. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government deliver a new Weston Creek Community Centre, including a community hall, prior to the sale of the current community centre site.**

Government Response: NOTED

Rationale:

There are currently no plans to sell the community centre site. The Government will consider community facilities through future budget processes.

- 11. The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that the number of publicly accessible car parking spaces are maintained during and after any development activity on the current car parking areas situated at Section 88 and Section 84.**

Government Response: NOTED

Rationale:

It is noted that the existing Weston precinct code contains a requirement for development of the main surface car parks to provide replacement public car parking as part of the works. This provision is being retained in the new precinct code. It would be anticipated that any replacement car parking would be provided in the form of a structured car park integrated into the development, either above ground in podium style parking or as basement car parking. Development of the surface car parks will lead to better parking conditions in the longer term through year round weather protection for car park users, along with the opportunity for implementation of an integrated parking management system.

In regards to replacement car parking during construction, this is currently not a requirement in any of the commercial centres within Canberra, with each development considered on its merits and with advice from relevant ACT Government Directorates. It is not disputed that redevelopment of either of the main surface car parks would be a significant undertaking, which during construction would impact on parking to the main shopping centre, but to single out Weston would most likely sterilise the sites for future development, which would be inconsistent with the recommendations of the master plan.

As with all other commercial centres with surface car parks, the impacts will need to be managed carefully to minimise disruption during construction, and will need to be resolved at the time a proposal is put forward with agreement from ACT Government Directorates.

As noted in the introduction, the population catchment of Weston Creek has not significantly increased in the last 10 years, with the most significant growth taking place in the neighbouring Molonglo district, which is yet to develop a commercial centre of its own. The initial land release for the Molonglo commercial area is intended to commence 2020 – 2021. The release of the main surface car parking sites within Weston group centre are currently not identified in the land release schedule in the short or medium term. This means that the surface car park sites will remain available for the foreseeable future, at least until the Molonglo commercial area development has commenced. It is noted that development of other local commercial centres in the Molonglo District have already commenced, including Coombs, Denman Prospect and Wright, with Whitlam anticipated to be released 2021-22.