



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Peter Cain MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development

Reference: Planning

Hearing: 18 February 2025

In relation to: Hawker Village and Woolworths Group Direct Sale Application

Question received: 19 February 2025

Answer Due: 26 February 2025

- (1) What stage is the direct sale application of government parcels of land to the Woolworths Group in the Hawker Group Centre currently at?
- (2) What assessments are currently underway of the Woolworths Group's direct sale application and when does the Territory Planning Authority expect to complete them?
- (3) Please explain how the application will be assessed to meet at least one grant objective in the Act or demonstrate that selling the land by other means is unlikely to meet the objective to the same extent as the direct sale?
- (4) Which specific objective in the Act is this application being assessed against?
- (5) What consultation has the ACT Government conducted with residents about the direct sale application and proposed redevelopment of the Hawker Group Centre?
- (6) Have you met specifically with the Belconnen Community Council, Friends of Hawker Village or other related community groups about this matter since the last election? If so, when did you last meet with them?
- (7) Do you trust the Woolworths Group's published consultation report?

Chris Steel MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) is assessing the application submitted by the Woolworths Group (Woolworths) for a direct sale of land at the Hawker Group Centre. EPSDD has advised Woolworths that the proposal does not meet the strategic objectives, policy setting or community benefit for key commercial group centres outlined through my Statement of Planning Priorities, District Strategies, and the Government's commitment to enable an additional 30,000 dwellings by 2030, including

more shop-top housing as part of centre revitalisation. Woolworths is currently considering this advice.

- (2) A range of information, including broader strategic planning considerations at the Hawker Group Centre and surrounds is required to inform the assessment of the application. Some of these studies have been completed. This includes a preliminary site investigation (referred to as a Stage 1 Site Investigation). This assessment is part of the implementation of District Strategies and provides a 'desktop review' of the site conditions. The outcomes of this investigation are being considered by EPSDD.
- (3) To be eligible for a direct sale, the applicant needs to meet at least one grant objective in the *Planning Act 2023* (Section 266 (4)) and demonstrate that selling the land by other means is unlikely to meet the objective to the same extent as the direct sale of the land (Section 266(2)(b)).

Assessment of the Direct Sale application is undertaken by EPSDD. Information provided by the applicant is assessed by the Directorate. Input across government is also used to determine if the application meets the requirements of the Act. The assessment process also considers existing planning strategies for the area and other strategies of the government. Relevant planning and technical studies are also utilised to inform the assessment.

The Directorate's assessment is provided to the Direct Sales Panel, comprising Senior Officials across government. The Panel then makes a recommendation which is provided for Cabinet's consideration through the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development.

- (4) The application is currently under assessment and a decision is yet to be made about the application. The assessment will include any further information Woolworths provides in response to the advice from EPSDD (see response to Question 1).
- (5) The ACT Government is aware of the community interest in the proposal by Woolworths and has encouraged Woolworths to continue to engage meaningfully with the local community about the direct sale application, including any responses that arise from the advice provided by EPSDD. Further opportunities for consultation around any future development will be conducted as part of the standard requirements of the development application process, should the Government agree to the direct sale.

In addition, EPSDD has met with and responded directly to residents regarding the Woolworths direct sale application.

- (6) No, I have not met with community groups in relation to the Hawker Group Centre since the 2024 ACT Election as the direct sale proposal has been under assessment.
- (7) EPSDD has encouraged the applicant to meaningfully consult the community about their proposal for the land in Hawker Group Centre. Information about the Woolworths proposal and community consultations by Woolworths, including a community engagement report can be found at <https://woolworthshawker.com.au/>.

OFFICIAL

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services

Signature: 

Date: 26/2/25

By the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development, Chris Steel MLA