

Inquiry into Planning Bill 2022

Opening statement - Ian Elsum - President, Curtin Residents Association

I am here to present the experience of the Curtin Residents Association and the Curtin community.

Over the last 8 years we have engaged with multiple aspects of the current ACT planning system: Master planning, community consultation panels, translation of Master plans to Precinct codes in the Territory Plan and processes for development applications and assessment, including ACAT.

The result? Frustration arising from the sheer difficulty of meaningful engagement with the planning system and a sense that the voice of the community is effectively irrelevant in decision-making that affects their everyday living over long periods of time.

This has resulted in lack of confidence and trust in the current system. Lack of transparency is a major contributor to the low level of confidence and trust.

The role that effective engagement and consultation with the community can play was brought home to me during a talk that Gordon Harris, a prominent Canadian town planner, gave in Canberra in 2018 about the creation of a new city in British Columbia. He described engagement with the community to discuss how multi-storey developments enabled **more** open, green space resulted in their acceptance of higher buildings.

Such an open engagement and dialogue with the community was, and still is, totally absent in Canberra.

The Curtin Residents Association submission reflects the critical importance of community input and even more importantly the essential need for community trust.

A new planning system is an opportunity to design and implement processes that will increase clarity and transparency around information and decision-making and ensure that the community has an effective voice. This would enable the community's confidence and trust to be re-built.

Unfortunately, the Planning Bill will result in **decreased** clarity, transparency and consultation and hence community confidence and trust.

Meaningful engagement and consultation with the community **at all stages** of planning and development is essential. The Bill must mandate this and specifically on draft plans and pre-DA consultation.

Finally, the ACT Government is proposing to change the whole planning system. This is a complex system, with many interacting components. As for any complex system, it is not possible to assess a single component, such as the Planning Bill, in isolation. Rather, it is essential to understand the **details** of how the components interact.

These details are not yet known and understood by the community. To allow informed community input, the Bill should be put to one side until at least the second quarter of 2023 to allow consultations on the recently released draft Territory Plan Overview and District Strategies to be completed and assessed for their implications for the Planning Bill and vice-versa.