



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment
and Planning

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into DPA-04 – Missing Middle Housing Reforms

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Submitter: Australian Multicultural Action Network

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Mr Ravi Krishnamurthy JP
PRESIDENT

Submission by the Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)

In response to the Draft Major Plan Amendment 04 (DPA-04): Missing Middle Housing Reform

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1. Introduction

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Major Plan Amendment 04 (DPA-04) relating to the Missing Middle Housing Reform.

As a peak multicultural organisation advocating for inclusion, equity, and accessibility across the ACT, AMAN recognises that housing policy reform must reflect the realities of an increasingly diverse community - one that includes migrants, seniors, young families, people with disabilities, and multi-generational households.

We commend the ACT Government's proactive steps to modernise the Territory Plan and to respond to population growth and affordability challenges. The ACT's multicultural population exceeds 30% of residents, many of whom come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and face unique barriers to housing access, design, and ownership. This submission therefore focuses on how DPA-04 can more inclusively address the needs of these groups, while achieving sustainable growth and liveability goals.

2. Support for the Objectives of DPA-04

AMAN supports the intent of DPA-04 to:

- Enable diverse and affordable housing options within the existing urban footprint;
- Encourage co-housing, multi-occupancy dwellings, and townhouses suitable for varying life stages and family structures;
- Minimise urban sprawl while ensuring neighbourhoods remain vibrant and inclusive;
- Promote a compact and sustainable city consistent with the ACT Planning Strategy 2018.



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We particularly welcome the inclusion of co-housing and the removal of restrictive block size and subdivision barriers that have historically limited innovative community housing models. These reforms have potential to support multi-generational CALD families, inter-cultural shared housing, and senior-friendly arrangements that foster mutual support and social cohesion.

3. Key Observations and Recommendations

3.1. Equity and Cultural Inclusion in Housing Design

While DPA-04 and the accompanying Missing Middle Housing Design Guide (MMHDG) offer strong design and density reforms, there is limited emphasis on cultural inclusion and social design principles that meet the needs of CALD households.

Recommendations:

- Incorporate community engagement protocols requiring culturally responsive consultation at the design and implementation phases.
- Include design considerations in the MMHDG such as flexible internal layouts, extended family accommodation zones, and outdoor cooking or social spaces commonly valued in CALD communities.
- Encourage accessible information in multiple languages through YourSay and ACT Planning platforms, ensuring meaningful participation in future development discussions.

3.2. Affordability and Ownership Pathways

Many migrant and refugee households experience systemic barriers to home ownership, including limited financial literacy, informal employment, and unfamiliarity with planning systems.

While DPA-04 increases supply and choice, affordability outcomes will depend on how new housing products are priced and marketed.

Recommendations:

- Prioritise affordable ownership models such as co-operative housing, shared equity schemes, or land rent options for CALD and lower-income households.
- Establish partnerships with community housing providers that work with multicultural and senior residents to co-develop Missing Middle pilot projects.



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- Monitor affordability metrics over time, particularly in RZ1 and RZ2 zones, to ensure these reforms don't inadvertently displace existing low-income renters.

3.3. Accessibility and Universal Design

The ACT's population is ageing, and disability prevalence among CALD seniors is increasing. Missing Middle housing must therefore embrace universal design and age-friendly principles to allow residents to age in place.

Recommendations:

- Require a minimum proportion of new dwellings to meet Gold or Platinum Liveable Housing Standards, ensuring step-free access, wider corridors, and adaptable bathrooms.
- Incentivise dual-key dwellings or modular arrangements that allow inter-generational living - supporting seniors who wish to remain within family environments.
- Ensure planning assessments consider mobility, hearing, and sensory accessibility (important for CALD seniors with conditions such as sensorineural hearing loss).

3.4. Community Infrastructure and Social Cohesion

Increased density must be balanced with adequate community infrastructure - such as open spaces, local meeting halls, and cultural activity hubs. CALD communities often rely on informal community spaces to hold religious or cultural gatherings.

Recommendations:

- Require District and Subdivision Policies under DPA-04 to include provisions for community meeting places, shared gardens, or small halls as part of new medium-density developments.
- Incorporate social cohesion impact assessments for large-scale redevelopments to evaluate effects on neighbourhood diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure school, transport, and healthcare access are proportionally planned alongside density increases.

3.5. Environmental Sustainability



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AMAN acknowledges the importance of maintaining urban canopy cover, green infrastructure, and climate resilience in Missing Middle developments. Culturally diverse communities often express strong environmental values but may lack access to information or resources to integrate these practices in rental or compact housing.

Recommendations:

- Maintain the 45–55% site coverage limits as proposed while ensuring tree canopy and solar access provisions are not compromised.
- Introduce community education programs in multiple languages to promote sustainable living practices (e.g., waste separation, rooftop solar, and water-efficient landscaping).
- Encourage the use of local materials and passive solar design to reduce carbon impact.

4. Consultation and Ongoing Engagement

AMAN appreciates the extensive consultation process undertaken - with 689 submissions and 18 community events - but notes that participation from CALD residents remains proportionally low. Future planning reforms should embed multicultural engagement strategies, including partnerships with peak organisations like AMAN to co-host forums in community languages.

We propose:

- Establishment of a Multicultural Planning Advisory Reference Group to advise the ACT Planning Authority on ongoing reforms.
- Inclusion of multicultural representation in Standing Committee hearings where community impacts are discussed.
- Publication of plain-language summaries of future amendments to ensure accessibility.

5. Conclusion

DPA-04 represents a progressive and necessary reform for the ACT's housing future. Its success, however, will depend on how well it balances density with diversity, and growth with inclusion.

By embedding multicultural perspectives, universal design principles, and affordability safeguards, this reform can become a model of socially inclusive urban planning for the nation.



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AMAN stands ready to collaborate with the ACT Planning Authority, the Minister's Office, and community housing partners to translate these principles into action.

Kind regards,
Ravi Krishnamurthy

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