



Belconnen Community Council Inc.

Building a stronger community

PO Box 1131, Belconnen ACT 2617

22 April 2014

The Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on PETAMS,
Legislative Assembly for the ACT,
GPO Box 1020,
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Inquiry into the Planning and Development (Project Facilitation) Amendment Bill 2014

The Belconnen Community Council Inc. recommends consultation on this important and far-ranging Bill is extended to 90 days, noting the current 11-day consultation period – inclusive of the Easter break – is entirely inappropriate, being inadequate to allow full analysis. In the limited time available to comment, Council's high-level concerns are:

- The intention of this amendment seems to be to facilitate certain projects by removing the protections and limiting the processes deemed desirable or essential for other projects.
- A slight economic downturn is given as the reason for these changes but the changes will be permanent not temporary.
- Compressing assessment of draft variations, environmental impact assessments and development applications into the one short time period will place extraordinary pressure on the planning staff with a likely decrease in quality of decision-making.
- Prioritising special projects will likely come at the expense of assessment delays for other projects unless more planning staff are employed.
- The language used in defining the basis of qualification for designation as special precinct area and project of major significance is value-laden and will require substantial value judgments on the part of the decision-makers. Such decisions will not be transparent.
- The introduction of special amendments and the proposed changes to technical amendments are highly sensitive changes that need in-depth consideration.
- These changes will make it easier for zoning areas to be changed and, therefore, for the erosion of community land and public open space to increase.
- Removal of third-party appeal rights is a sensitive step that reveals an anti-community bias.

While there are many desirable changes included in the Amendment Bill, the above features give cause for concern and deserve greater scrutiny.

Robyn Coghlan
Chairperson
Belconnen Community Council

