



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

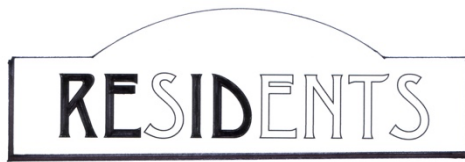
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES
Ms Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Mark Parton MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the Territory Plan and other associated documents

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REID RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION INC.

AO 1247

info@reid.northcanberra.org.au

Committee Secretariat

Standing Committee on Planning, Transport, and City Services

Inquiry into the Territory Plan and other associated documents

LACommitteePTCS@parliament.act.gov.au

1 February 2024

Dear Committee Members

The Reid Residents' Association Inc. (RRA) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to be able to provide further material to the Legislative Assembly's *Inquiry into the Territory Plan and other associated documents*.

In the Planning Institute of Australia's (PIA) discussion paper 'Role of Planning in adapting to a changing Climate' they cite (p. 2, please note that the PDF of this document is attached to this email) the major implications of a changing climate as:

- Urban heat
- Severe weather
- Bushfire
- Drought
- Flooding
- Exposure to disease
- Habitat loss & deterioration

The PIA espouses the following strategies to address these challenges (please note both that the emphasis is part of the original text and the introductory caveat 'Planners should note that land use planning strategies in isolation may not be an effective way of balancing natural and cultural values in response to climate change threats. Planning strategies should work alongside other incentives').

Planning strategies should:

- Test **changing hazard and risk profiles** in scenarios to inform strategic plans and address uncertainty – noting that historical projections are not always relevant in a changing climate.
- Test the **relevance of planning strategies** to more pervasive and gradual changes impacting the human and natural environment.
- Identify the **settlement planning parameters** for scenarios in a coherent and consistent way e.g. National Settlement Strategy and in State and Territory Regional Planning Frameworks and resilience strategies.
- Base planning parameters on **consistent assumptions for potential exposure** with regard to:
 - population and community vulnerability
 - acceptable risks for bushfire, sea level rise, flood and urban heat

- design life of housing, buildings and key infrastructure
 - infrastructure demand assumptions per capita.
- Set planning outcomes and supporting guidance at a landscape scale – and address the vulnerability of individual properties, buildings standards, access arrangements and infrastructure within this landscape context.
- Set strategic planning responses within **adaptive management plans** or pathways that are responsive to new information and threat reappraisal. Responses should not just be cost effective in achieving a single strategic planning outcome – but consider whether they promote a diversity of pathways that might assist adaption to evolving threats - or enable managed retreat/avoidance in the future (see *Figure 1: Characteristics of resilient systems* i.e. Adaptability, Redundancy, Modularity, Subsidiarity)
- Move **beyond the ‘approve and forget’ paradigm** and enable adaptive management. This includes promoting innovation in governance and collaboration among local communities, Indigenous peoples and across agencies to generate solutions that fall outside traditional silos – such as green infrastructure addressing flood and urban heat threats (including vegetation).
- Ensure consideration of climate risk occurs at **every level of Government** – and that adequate information and policy context (e.g. overlays) are available for the private sector and Government to manage risks accordingly and appreciate the dimensions of uncertainty.
- Give statutory effect to key **resilience strategies**, plans or guidelines.
- Integrate the **management of natural values and protection of biodiversity**

Please also see Appendix A: Land use planning principles for disaster resilient communities (AIDR) pp. 8-9 which is a salutary list of principles that should be used to underpin planning in the ACT. How well has the Planning Act and Territory Plan fulfilled these strategies and followed such principles? It would be excellent to have a critical assessment of the Act against each one.

Integration and Measuring Outcomes

The RRA made the following comments to the ACT Government on the ACT Planning System Review and Reform in March 2023:

Modelling, using publicly divulged assumptions, is required to frame a methodical and integrated approach to the complexity needed in planning for the future. What is the estimated carbon footprint of the anticipated building involved in the new Territory Plan? This and other projections are not manifest in these documents. Providing the information and estimations involved in the proposed changes to the planning regime would demonstrate transparency of decision making and assist in producing greater trust in the planning system. Estimates of Canberra’s future population are just one component of the complexity involved.

There are ways to assist with managing complexity and integrating the multiple components of the process particularly essential in such dynamic times.

Some 20 years ago researchers proposed the need to use tools such as matrixes to assist with the complexity of planning. In the Botequilha-Leitao and Ahern paper [‘Applying landscape ecological concepts and metrics in sustainable landscape planning’, 2002, *Landscape and Urban Planning* 59, \(p. 78\)](#) Table 4 sets out the role of landscape metrics in planning. The matrix on the vertical axis includes:

- Planning/themes/phases
- Water resources planning
- Mineral resources planning (NB. there are quarries in the ACT)

- Conservation planning
- Urban and suburban planning

Relevant questions/tasks under their respective heading are, for example:

- *is the landscape of today functioning at appropriate and acceptable levels?;*
- *which is the more efficient solution to protect water resources? (we note the inclusion of monitoring the spatial disruption of the drainage system);*
- *which is the scenario that minimises important habitat disruption?;*
- *which are the best places to propose wildlife corridors?*

See Botequilha-Leitao, A. & Ahern, J.

www.researchgate.net/profile/Jack-Ahern-3/publication/202094283_Appling_Landscape_Ecological_Concepts_and_Metrics_in_Sustainable_Landscape_Planning/links/59f348f4a6fdcc075ec33c30/Appling-Landscape-Ecological-Concepts-and-Metrics-in-Sustainable-Landscape-Planning.pdf

Research and models such as this would assist in integrating the complexity of planning in a holistic and relevant spaces/landscapes of this Act and the ACT. It would help to see how the District specifications, Zone specifications and Subdivisions specifications work juxtaposed with the Housing Design Guide, Urban Design Guide, City Centre Urban Design Guide and the Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design Guide as well as parks, transport and communication systems etc.

What metrics will be used to judge outcomes? Those implementing the ACT Planning Act and the Territory Plan need to provide evidence on what metrics will be used to demonstrate how planning in the national capital of Australia is being measured, managed and adjusted – when necessary – to achieve the best ‘outcomes’ given the reality of climate change and commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, or for the ACT: an interim reduction of 65-75% by 2030. [Australian Government Climate Change commitments, policies and programs](#), 2022 p. 1.

Wellbeing

The OECD states ‘Risks across natural, economic and social systems threaten future well-being’. (OECD (2020), ‘Executive summary’, in *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9870c393-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/9870c393-en>)

Like most of Australia, Canberrans have contended with increasing intensity and frequency of weather events, epidemics (human), fire, smoke pollution, interrupted supply chains and logistics and reduction in locally produced food. Obviously, many of these crises and emergencies go beyond ACT borders.

However, how well do the proposed changes to the Planning system measure up to OECD’s Better Life index and would actually work to increase our levels of resilience? A well-designed and effectively managed planning system should go further than is currently set out in these documents. We need to plan future development that mitigate these risks and future-proof Canberra as well as current technology and science can provide. RRA comments to ACT Government, March 2023

It is not enough for planners to plan just to fit population projections. The well-being for the population is a key consideration for planners and should be integral in planning for day-to-day living not just for ‘beer and skittles’ events. This obviously entails easy access to services including transport, hospitals, parks and green space,

schools and government. How are we planning to manage water resources, to mitigate fire risks, reduce the effects of desiccating winds, ensure supply chains are secure? How well do the Planning Act and the Territory Plan address these needs? The answer would very much be open to conjecture.

Survival

The PIA gives the following synopsis of a changing climate:

The extent and severity of impacts is projected to vary across the continent and includes: more days of extreme heat, longer bushfire seasons, more regular drought, increases to flooding depths and extent, sea level rise (inundation, storm surge and erosion) and more intense storms and cyclones. In turn these are likely to impact on our biodiversity, food security, human settlements, wellbeing and economy.

The CSIRO states categorially that Australia has warmed, on average, by 1.47 ± 0.24 °C since national records began in 1910 and that there has been an increase in extreme heat events associated with the warming. See [Australia's Changing Climate](#)

The Planning Act does little to demonstrate that the impacts relevant to the national capital have been taken into account.

There is an urgent need to adapt building practices to design buildings and suburbs that can withstand and protect people from extreme heat. As Jeff Goodell states in his bestselling book 'The Heat Will Kill You First'.

Building materials and methodologies

Changing climate require better designed dwellings, houses, high-rise apartments and commercial buildings, constructed from long lasting materials concomitantly with changes in construction methodologies.

The United Nations Environment Programme [Building Materials and the Climate: Constructing a New Future](#) advocate the decarbonising of building materials by implementing strategies that:

1. Avoid unnecessary extraction and production.
2. Shift to regenerative materials.
3. Improve decarbonization of conventional materials.

Surely the ACT take the initiative with building materials and improve the National Construction Code.

Adaptive reuse

Cement, steel, glass and aluminium have a significant carbon footprint. Not only should we be turning to regenerative materials but the Planning Act should also be encouraging adaptive reuse of existing habitable buildings. The tendency of bulldozing such buildings and replacing them with the dreaded McMansions and loss of permeable surface is all too prevalent. This should be discouraged by imposing a tax on any such building's embodied energy. While it is good practice to recycle building materials this in no way can match the total construction, materials and resources cost of the original building.

Heritage

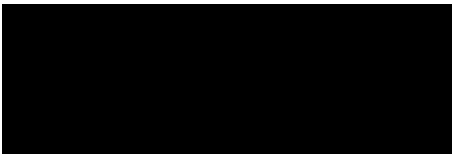
There is a lot of heritage, natural, Aboriginal and built form, in Canberra's Inner North. The references to heritage throughout the planning documents seems to be a scatter gun approach to these areas of intrinsic value.

The planning of Reid has resulted in a garden-city suburb that the [CSIRO Mapping surface urban heat in Canberra report](#) deems one of the coolest suburbs in Canberra. Ratios of building to permeable surface and thousands of trees with large canopies have been the contributing factors to the coolness and liveability of Reid. While any proposed infill of Reid could never solve Canberra's housing shortage, the lessons of ratio of built form to permeable surfaces (40%) and careful selection and establishment of trees in new suburbs prior to building could be regarded as vital lessons learned. Even then, if such practices were adopted, those trees will need water and time to grow before the cooling effect will be apparent. This needs to be considered as a necessary part of the infrastructure for would-be developers and the practice of clear-felling greenfield sites be modified to protect significant and wide canopied trees.

In such turbulent and challenging times, we wish you well in your deliberations on the planning of the Australian Capital Territory and Canberra.

Yours sincerely
Marianne

Marianne Albury-Colless
President
Reid Residents' Association Inc.



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| <p style="text-align: center;">RRA Committee Contact via: info@reid.northcanberra.org.au</p> <p style="text-align: center;">President: Marianne Albury-Colless, Secretary: Robyn Bergin Treasurer & Public Officer: Roy Jordan Committee: Anne Buttsworth, Sue Byrne, John Henderson, Molly Henman, Amanda Reynolds</p> |
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