



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment
and Planning

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into DPA-B – Forrest Section 19 Blocks 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12

Submission number: 001

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Bruce Paine – Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning
Submission on Revised Draft Plan Amendment B – Forrest Section 19 Blocks
5,6,9,11,12 ('the proposal').

This submission focuses on 2 key issues:

- (1) Increasing the amount of publicly accessible green space (ie green space that available to all people, not just residents of a specific development) with good solar access, and ensuring good solar access to other areas of public use such as footpaths.
- (2) Ensuring that whatever buildings are constructed on s19 provide good residences for people in the section and do not detrimentally affect adjoining areas through reducing solar access.

Increasing the amount of publicly accessible open space with good solar access

I support increasing the number of people residing in inner areas of Canberra. However, I recommend that the proposal should not proceed without further amendment because the current proposal will materially increase the number of people living in the area:

- (a) without increasing the amount of publicly accessible green space that is available for existing and/or new residents; and
- (b) will decrease the solar access to existing footpaths making them less attractive and more dangerous to use for active travel.

In my view, the relevant planning authorities must take a medium to long term view to the stated policy of increasing residential density. Unless re-development makes an appropriate contribution towards increasing the amount of publicly accessible greenspace, amenity in the local area will decline over time for both existing and new residents.

Not to require each development to contribute towards increasing the amount of publicly accessible green space would be akin to progressively approving (without any park areas) a new suburb as residents moved in.

While the reduction in amenity may not be significant in the short term, the amount of infill that will occur in the short term would not meet the Plan's broader objectives of markedly increasing density so the process will not stop with the current proposal regarding Section 19.

It is perfectly understandable that proponent(s) of each redevelopment (including the current proposal) want 'their' amendment approved without them making any contribution towards increasing the amount of public open space. Each amendment separately may not have a large detrimental impact on amenity.

However, the cumulative impact of sequential re-development will be significantly detrimental unless each redevelopment is required to contribute towards ensuring sufficient publicly accessible green space for all of people who will eventually live in the area.

Not only is it necessary, but it is also equitable – since otherwise re-developments that occur first are likely to make little or no contribution while re-developments that occur later (after the problems are obvious) will have to make a relatively larger contribution.

There are ways to ensure appropriate additions to the current open green space, including:

- a. To require part of any re-zoned area above a certain threshold size (eg at or larger than a Section) to be set aside as green space for public use – akin to a suburban park. This option is relatively straight forward.**

The inner south already has at least one example of reasonable re-development that includes public open space within its immediate area ie ‘The Parks’ in Red Hill. ‘The Parks’ also provides a reasonable example of a mix of building heights etc.

However, a shortcoming with this option is that at least some re-development will occur at a small scale, for example at the Block level. It would be impractical, ineffective and inefficient to require part of a Block to be set aside for public use.

- b. For government to purchase existing residential site(s) and convert them to park(s).** Purchase could be conducted via a ‘reverse auction’ process – whereby the government makes it known that it wishes to purchase site(s) in a particular area and then accepts the lowest priced offer. These block(s) would then be converted to a park or similar.
- c. For government to compulsorily acquire site(s) – of course at fair market value, perhaps with a modest markup - and then convert them to a park or similar.** Experience with the Fluffy houses have outlined some of the issues with this option.

Similar issues arise with the current proposal’s detrimental impact on solar access to existing footpaths. These detrimental impacts are shown by the proponent’s shadow diagrams.

Currently, people (residents and other persons using the footpaths) are largely able to walk in the sun during winter. This increases their well-being including safety – for example, not slipping on frost and ice.

The proposal (by its own admission) will markedly increase shadowing of adjacent footpaths (indeed the footpath on the northern side of an adjoining street will not receive any sunlight in winter).

So, the proposal will markedly increase the number of people living the area but concurrently reduce the amenity of their local footpath. Clearly inconsistent, and detrimental to encouraging active travel, reduced use of private motor vehicles, etc.

I suggest the building heights be adjusted to ensure solar access to existing and prospective footpaths.

Ensuring all residents have good solar access

The re-zoning of section 19 should also ensure that all residents who live in that development and adjoining areas will have good solar access.

At present most people live in RZ1 zoning in free-standing houses. Most of these people have access to direct sunlight in winter somewhere in the house in which they live, the garden around the house, and the nearby streets, footpaths and parks.

The re-zoning of s19 is an excellent opportunity for the Assembly to show good re-development is possible, providing increased density and affordable comfortable and environmentally responsible residences.

I consider the re-zoning should guarantee solar access in winter in all: living spaces of all residences; private open spaces; communal open spaces; and public open areas including footpaths.

This can be achieved through various means including by:

- 1) careful specification of the 'solar building envelope angle for Multiunit housing' (see p9 of the booklet 'Missing Middle Housing Reform - Snapshot). This should be maintained at the sun's minimum elevation at midday in winter to reduce the risk of overshadowing
- 2) requiring all apartments in a development to meet the minimum access for solar access (rather than currently only 70% of apartments need to meet the minimum, and up to 15% of apartments can receive no sunlight – see ZS1 – Residential Zones Specifications section 15.2).

The current rules need to be re-worked to guarantee solar access to all apartments. Unless this occurs, the more needy in our community are more likely to continue to live in a cold or expensive to heat apartment.

The above should be seen as an example of the minimum requirement, and they also need to be in legally binding form rather than in a 'guide' or similar.

I am happy to discuss these matters with the Committee,

Bruce Paine

