

**Legislative Assembly for the ACT - Standing Committee on Planning and
Environment**
**Inquiry into Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281 – Molonglo and North
Weston**

Submission from:

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry. This submission should preferably be read in conjunction with my earlier submission to ACTPLA on DVP 281, which is attached.

The revised DVP 281 has not addressed any of the concerns I raised in that submission. My perception is that ACTPLA enters this type of public consultation process with the intention of proceeding with a pre-determined plan.

ACTPLA does not appear to enter the process in the spirit of negotiating an outcome that reflects the full range of stakeholder views put forward in consultation. Rather it identifies views with which it agrees and views with which it does not agree and the latter are completely discounted (see the document Molonglo Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281, Public Consultation – Issues Raised).

In being the arbiter of what will be deemed to be a key issue and what does not warrant this status, ACTPLA further disenfranchises people who do not support their agenda. In relation to my submission on DVP 281, this means that concerns expressed about the effect of this development on Weston Creek as a community do not even register on the radar. If we set aside the broader Molonglo development and look simply at the development proposed for North Weston and for the area between Cotter Road and the Molonglo River known as Deek's Forest Park, the process so far has almost totally ignored the views of Weston Creek residents who wish to retain the amenity and character of their neighbourhood.

The Government can produce, without a trace of irony, a 70 page document entitled *Building Our Community – The Canberra Social Plan*, while at the same time treating an existing community as if it is simply a collection of suburbs with road links to shopping centres and workplaces. Using the bushfires as a pretext for development, wiping Deek's Forest Park off the map, forcing the RSPCA off a site they have occupied for over thirty years, evicting Peter and Jenni Farrell, destroying the bushland character of the part of North Weston occupied by Orana School, the Sikh Temple and the Ba'hai Centre (including destruction of the habitat of the local mob of kangaroos, which too are a part of our community) is not in my opinion the action of a Government that has any appreciation of the word community.

Complaints about Canberra planning authorities not responding to community concerns are not new, but what is new is that ACT planning bodies no longer seem to see themselves as the guardians/custodians of the special character of Canberra summed up most readily in the terms Garden City and Bush Capital

I have enjoyed living in Weston Creek for the last thirty two years primarily because it embodies so many of Canberra's 'bush capital' qualities. I am deeply disappointed that planning for this area post the bushfires has not responded to the existing character of the area but simply treated it as a land bank owned by the Government and to be used to extract the maximum revenue through housing development.

Community members trying to put an alternative vision have an almost impossible task given the relative position of the community and the Government in respect of resources of time, money and information.

I have worked on the other side of this type of consultation process in a former life and I do appreciate how much work goes into it. However then, as now, the tendency was for bureaucrats to impose their agenda on the community rather than come up with an outcome that reflects a dialogue and a partnership.

The outcomes I would most like to see from this Inquiry would be:

- that Deeks Forest Park be incorporated into the Stromlo Forest Park and reserved for recreational use;
- that the rural character of the Cotter Road be retained; and
- that the bushland setting (with kangaroos) of that part of North Weston east of Cotter Road and north of Unwin Place be preserved.

I am happy to appear as a witness at a public hearing if required.

Celia Kneen

23 June 2008

Molonglo Project Team
Planning Services Branch
ACT Planning and Land Authority



Re: Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281 – Molonglo and North Weston

Submission from: Ms Celia Kneen

WESTON ACT 2611

Below are my comments on this draft variation. I have lived in Weston Creek at my current address since 1976.

My overriding concern with the whole planning process relating to Molonglo and North Weston is that it doesn't recognise Weston Creek as a long-established separate and distinct district and community with its own identity and special attributes that make it attractive to the people who live here.

In particular there is no recognition in the planning documents of the huge loss of amenity sustained by Weston Creek residents as a result of the 2003 bushfires. The destruction wrought by those fires has been used by the Government and planning agencies as a pretext for undertaking urban development where otherwise it would not have been contemplated. I'm not going to argue that no development should occur in the Molonglo Valley but I strongly think it should not be at the expense of the existing Weston Creek community who have already lost out pretty badly through the fires.

The current planning process treats the existing Weston Creek as a relatively minor appendage to a new mega-District, moreover one that will be a huge experiment in residential intensification on a scale not seen before in Canberra.

The main thing that I am asking is that, in this major change to Canberra planning, Weston Creek and Molonglo be treated as 'separate and distinct towns' (as referred to in the National Capital Plan).

To this end my preference would be that land in the current study area which the community of Weston Creek has always identified strongly with should be removed from the Molonglo planning process and subject to a separate planning study which focuses predominantly on consultation with residents/leaseholders of Weston Creek, who are the main stakeholders.

In my view the land in this category includes the whole of North Weston and the unleased land bounded by North Weston, the Molonglo River, the Cotter Road and Uriarra Road.

My specific comments on Variation 281 as it stands are as follows:

- The outstanding feature that distinguished and defined Weston Creek as a place to live up to January 2003 was the proximity to the Stromlo Forest and the associated views and recreational opportunities.
- I am asking that the land (formerly pine forest) bounded by Cotter Road, Uriarra Road, North Weston and the Molonglo River (excluding existing rural lease) be incorporated into Deek's Forest Park (prior to the fires this was the area identified by residents as Deek's drive/park).
- I am asking that the above area become the buffer zone separating Weston Creek from the proposed new town in the Molonglo Valley.
- I am asking that the same care that has been taken to visually screen new residential development from the Central National Area should be taken to visually screen new development from the existing Weston Creek.
- As a resident of Weston Creek for over thirty years another of the attributes of this area that has given me great pleasure has been the semi-rural/open space character of the Cotter Road. I believe this character has also added greatly to the experience of tourists using Cotter Road to access the Stromlo/Tidbinbilla tourists circuit and the mountains and bushlands south of Canberra. The drive along Cotter Road from Deakin to Stromlo really gives meaning to Canberra's 'bush capital' title.
- I am asking that this non-urban character of Cotter Road be preserved, in particular by not establishing residential development in North Weston or between the Molonglo River and Cotter Road east of Uriarra Road.
- I'm not fully across the detail of the proposed transport arrangements but the plans seem to indicate a significant directing of traffic from Molonglo through the centre of Weston Creek via Cotter Road and Streeton Drive. There seems to be a risk of Weston Creek simply to be turned into a transport corridor between Molonglo and Woden.
- Obviously there would need to be a Molonglo-Weston Creek intertown connection but I am seeking an assurance that it will not be carrying a significant proportion of traffic travelling between Belconnen/Molonglo and Woden.
- Finally, the RSPCA is an institution which has been part of the fabric of the Weston Creek community since the first urban development here. I regard it as one of the features which define this community's identity. I would like to see the RSPCA remain on its present site and consideration given to expanding that site on to vacant Broadacre land between the RSPCA and Cotter Road. This would also be consistent with keeping an open landscape character along Cotter Road.

In summary, re the proposed variation to Territory Plan land use policies I am asking that North Weston remain Broadacre and that Plantation Forestry land bounded by North Weston, Cotter Road, Uriarra Road and the Molonglo River be Hills, Ridges and Buffer Areas and/or River Corridor. As stated previously I think these areas could possibly be subject to a separate future planning study relating specifically to Weston Creek. My other main concern is that inter-town traffic is not channelled along Cotter Road and Streeton Drive.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft variation.

Celia Kneen

26 November 2007

