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26 November 2009

Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works and Territory and Municipal Services
 GPO Box1908
 Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Committee Members

Re: Submission to Inquiry into RZ3 and RZ4 Residential Redevelopment Policies – Inner North Canberra

1. The merits of maintaining:

(a) the policies applying to the RZ4 areas north of Macarthur and Wakefield Avenues

Rule 21 which was introduced in 1999 has placed undue pressure on Turner and Braddon which have contributed the largest share of multi-unit development in the Inner North.

Recommendation: The restriction specified as Rule 21 of the Multi-Unit Housing Development Code of the Territory Plan on development north of Macarthur and Wakefield Avenues should be removed to ease the pressure of multi-storey development which has occurred in Turner and Braddon.

(b) the moratorium on redevelopment in Turner Section 47 and Part 63

Section 47 (together with sections 46 and 48) was the location of a streetscape study conducted by the National Trust of Australia in 2004. This study drew attention to the more open, wider streets of Turner as a planned form of post war suburban development. It contrasts with the more compact, village design of Reid. It would be a tragedy to lose this designed streetscape by incompatible development which replaces the bungalow style frontages with poor quality, modular blocks of flats. Secondly, the 2004 study revealed that these three sections of Turner were planned as a discrete community, which was fostered by the bungalow housing style in this part of Turner. This has become a genuine community which should not be lost.

Recommendation: That multi storey development be NOT permitted in Section 47 as the character of this area needs to be protected. All other redevelopment in this section be restricted to single storey bungalows as at present but permitting redevelopment in a style compatible with the heritage value of this section, including dual occupancy. The 7 metre rear setback should be preserved.

The special needs of transport to and from Turner School have already been raised by the Turner School Board which emphasise the necessity for restricted development on Part of Section 63.

Recommendation: That redevelopment in Turner Part of Section 63 be limited to single dwellings and or dual occupancy.

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2. Whether similar redevelopment policies should be extended to other areas surrounding Northbourne Avenue

Residents living in RZ3 and RZ4 in Turner have been subject to pressure to sell their houses since 1993, that is for 15 years to October 2008 (the date of ACTPLA's current report). Since 1993, 11.9 hectares of land in these 2 zones remain as single dwellings. This amounts to 51% of the number required under the policy of infill, specified by Rule 21. As at October 2008 there were 54 single dwellings remaining in Turner RZ3 and 73 single dwellings in RZ4. It is clear that these residents wish to remain in their houses in the suburb. *The pressure to which these people have been subject for the 15 year period of pressure amounts to a policy of the politicisation of anxiety.*

The sequence followed is that some residents are pressured to sell while others wait for higher prices. Their houses are demolished and 10 to 12 units per block are constructed in their place. The neighbours lose privacy as well as peace and quiet and they also sell. A domino effect is created. Three blocks are amalgamated and the flat dwellers, now numbering between 40 and 60 people, find it necessary to park their cars on the nature strips thus compacting the soil and damaging the street trees. The noise is excessive. The streetscape has been irrevocably altered. The community, which previously existed, is dispersed. The reality is that the remaining residents are distressed and the new residents, who are transient, know that their stay in Turner will be short.

Recommendation: The infill policy, as it affects Turner, be an orderly redevelopment of blocks within sections (objective g) of the **Inner North Precinct Code** of The Territory Plan. It should also create a safer, more secure environment (objective d of the Code). Further, it should conserve the garden city character of the area (objective a of the Code) and retain and enhance a healthy and attractive residential environment for existing and new residents to the area (objective c of the Code). Any such redevelopment should be strictly limited to the currently specified RZ3 and RZ4 zones for Turner with the exceptions of Section 47 and Part 63 as recommended under 1(b) above.

3. The Committee's view on higher density development along major transport corridors

The existing redevelopment is a three tiered policy. Residents in this part of RZ3 and RZ4 do not have privacy and Forbes and Macleay Streets are already under enormous transport pressure. The small scoping study commissioned by ACTPLA revealed that privacy is valued and that the residents of these multi-storey flats are unlikely to remain in Turner in the longer term. The newly developed flats are too small, the area is too congested and there is a lack of open space. These tenants do not form part of a community.

Recommendation: Any further expansion of this type of tiered redevelopment should not be permitted in Turner. Further redevelopment if needed should be spread along the major transport corridors and should be a mix of residential types separated by green space and provide adequate parking for occupants. Such redevelopment should meet RZ3 and RZ4 Zone Objectives of The Territory Plan, in particular, objective b which states 'ensure development respects and contributes to the neighbourhood and landscape character of residential areas whilst carefully managing change in suitable locations.'

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4. *The impact of higher density development on, capacity of transport, hydraulic networks, housing affordability, overall reduction of travel and impact on amenity of residents.*

Any redevelopment needs to be planned as an integrated whole in accord with the zone objectives of RZ3 and RZ4. It is inconsistent policy to encourage people to move into inner city suburbs like Turner so that better use can be made of public transport and then encourage the planning of commercial car parks by the alienation of open, green space.

Recommendation: Increased urban density to be by a variety of good quality housing, interspersed with open, public green space. Through traffic in the narrow suburban streets be discouraged as much as possible.

5. *Any other relevant matter.*

There is a need for research on the demographics and household structures of RZ3 and RZ4. This need is already identified by ACTPLA in its Residential Redevelopment Policy Report (page 25).

Recommendation: A study be commissioned by ACTPLA to identify the number of tenants/owners occupying the multi-dwelling units in RZ4 and RZ3 in the Inner North; the duration of tenancies; the green space available for each resident; the access to sunlight; the number of cars per unit and the residents, whether working or retired, usual mode of transport.

Current arrangements are that developers are permitted to lodge development applications that do not conform to the Territory Plan or Master Plans. Residents of Turner then find it necessary to object to the applications to require them to conform which is costly and time consuming.

Recommendation: It be mandatory to have all development applications certified by an architect who is a member of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects to the effect that plans are fully compliant with the Territory Plans and Master Plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute a Turner perspective to the work of the Standing Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Anne McMahon
President, TRA Inc.
