

The Standing Committee on
Planning and Environment

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

I have a number of issues I wish to raise in relation to the Draft Variation.

The ACTPLA pamphlet "Living near Molonglo and North Weston" states "Landscaped buffers would be provided to nearby existing residential areas and along major roads". According to ACTPLA draft (May 2008) a buffer strip "400-700m wide" will be provided along Dixon Drive, Holder and Warragamba Avenue Duffy, and extend north to the Cotter Road. An ACT Government land acquisition will expand the buffer zone and encompass the rebuilt semi-rural Stromlo Village.

ACTPLA has advocated residential infill from Heysen Street Weston to the Cotter Road. Why are Weston residents being denied the buffer space deemed appropriate for Duffy and Holder? The area bounded by the Tuggeranong Parkway, Cotter Road, Streeton Drive and Heysen Street Weston is geographically comparable to the proposed Duffy/Holder buffer strip and should be redesignated as a buffer zone.

"North Weston" surrounds the long-established Orana (Steiner) School and the Baha'i Centre. The Baha'i plan to develop further with extensive gardens and a meeting hall. The Sikhs have committed \$3 million and broken ground for a temple, cultural centre and school. These bodies chose to establish in that space specifically because it met their needs for private and peaceful perimeters. Other community groups with complimentary needs would be attracted to such environs (e.g. the Tibetan Buddhists have expressed interest.) It should remain a low-density, multi-functional, multi-denominational, multi-cultural precinct.

On 4 June I attended a meeting of the Weston Creek Community Council (WCCC) to hear a presentation by ACTPLA on Molonglo and North Weston. The audience was told the Sikh Community had originally hoped to build in an inner south suburb but had been blocked by vigorous opposition from local residents. (The Chairman of the WCCC commented he had seen some of the racist vitriol that had circulated.) The Orana, Sikh and Baha'i communities are deeply concerned that housing built up to their boundaries will inevitably provoke friction with future residents.

The CIT intends to move close its horticultural campus from North Weston. The substantial arboretum, the climate-change friendly Xeriscape garden and some of the buildings should be preserved within the Heysen Street buffer zone. There is rising demand in cities for "community gardens" from residents of nearby medium and high density housing. North Weston will shift the geographic centre of Weston Creek and the future population of "greater Weston" will need space to expand community facilities. I urge planners and politicians alike to take a longer term view.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to lodge my comments.

Heather Stewart
Weston 2611