



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

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Submission No 4 -

Friends of Hawker

Village

Inquiry into DV 365 -

Housing Choices

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Inquiry into DV365: Housing Choices – Co-Housing and Boarding House

The Friends of Hawker Village (FoHV) was formed in 2010 to protect and enhance the residential, suburban and environmental qualities of the Hawker Group Centre and its four catchment suburbs of Hawker, Page, Scullin and Weetangera. In March 2020, we lodged a submission on DV365. This is available to the committee along with other submissions from that event. Recently, we made a submission on DV376 relating to a Demonstration Housing – Co-Housing application for 24 Angas Street, Ainslie. Accordingly, we wish to add further concerns to our previous submission on DV365.

The proposal

The current single house on a 1,090 sq.m. block will be replaced by four units, incorporating three private dwellings, each with two bedrooms, and one shared space, which will include the garaging, kitchen, laundry etc. There will be a two-car garage, with on-site capacity for additional uncovered parking. The project will be unit-titled, so that each dwelling is owned separately with the three unit owners responsible for maintenance of the common property, including the shared facilities.

Future considerations

The proponent “has planned a small co-housing community to support each other as they age in their community by sharing resources”. These are admirable sentiments and can most likely be achieved by a group of friends such as the proponents. The question arises as to what will happen in future once individual friends leave the complex, for one reason or another. Living in such close proximity can work well with long-term friends but not necessarily with new residents who are strangers with different experiences and needs.

Since the complex will be unit-titled, what controls will be available to ensure the continued harmonious conduct of such co-housing projects? Will current residents be able to vet potential purchasers of any



vacant unit? Once all of the original residents have departed, will the new residents have the same cooperative spirit? How will such a development work in a less-cooperative environment? Will small charitable groups be able to take over the entire property for supportive housing eventually? Will it be able to be used for B&B-type operations?

FoHV are particularly concerned by this significant change in the RZ1 planning system and how it might signify incremental changes that will destroy the RZ1 ethos. In particular, we note page 35 of the DV375 Planning Report for a manor house development, where the owners stated that the National Capital Design Review Committee “encouraged us to ‘push the planning rules’ further and enter the setback area in order to increase the communal foyer area”. This indicates the strong likelihood that further erosion of the current planning rules will inevitably occur in future in association with this type of redevelopment in RZ1.

Proposed Changes to Territory Plan

The implication that each individual proposal will require a variation to the Territory Plan as well as a development application is cumbersome and will inevitably lead to softening of the RZ1 provisions overall. This might well be the intention.

It is also proposed to amend the residential zones Multi Unit Housing Development Code to exclude ‘co-housing’ from dwelling replacement provisions which is necessary to allow more than a single main dwelling on an RZ1 block. It is highly likely that the wealthier parts of Canberra and the heritage-listed areas will, ultimately, be the only remnants of the current RZ1 vision - at least, the vision held by most people who are not planners or developers.

Other concerns

At present, RZ1 blocks are restricted to one house and a smaller secondary residence of the “granny flat” variety under one ownership. This co-housing proposal will undermine that principle by permitting unit-titling, as in RZ2. The size of the secondary residence has already been increased from a maximum of 75 sq.m. to 90 sq.m. so this proposal is taking the concept one step further – gradual death by a thousand cuts.

We note that earlier co-housing projects were developed in both Cook (Wybalena Grove) and Kambah (Urambi Village). These have been successful because they are on land designated for that purpose when the suburbs were being developed and involve independent townhouses in a community setting. They were experimental at the time but have not become a popular option, despite being appreciated by their residents. We doubt that the current proposal for infill in established suburbs will be more popular.



Colin Lyons,
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