



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL
Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair)
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Submission Cover Sheet

Engagement with Development Application Processes in the ACT

Submission Number: 009 - Better Renting

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To the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal,

Re: Inquiry into Engagement with Development Application Processes in the ACT

Better Renting is a community of renters working together for stable, affordable, and liveable homes. In addition to improved renting laws, we have an interest in enough dwellings being available in order to reduce rental competition and improve housing affordability for people who rent.

Our overall view is that Development Application processes are excessively weighted to engage and hear the voices of existing community members who may object to a DA compared with potential new community members who may benefit from a development.

To illustrate, where a development application would create a number of new dwellings, this means that more people can live in an area. The likely beneficiaries of this may be people who don't live in the area at present. These people may gain the opportunity to live in an area with greater amenity, at lower cost.

In contrast, for people already living in an area, additional dwellings may be seen as a disadvantage. As discussed by the Grattan Institute, this is due to the potential effect on property values and greater competition for existing infrastructure:

“Existing residents usually prefer their suburb to stay the same. Restricting development effectively increases the scarcity value of their property. And they worry that increased population will reduce the value to each of them of the current publicly provided infrastructure in their area such as roads and other amenities: existing residents are typically concerned that there will be more traffic congestion, more crowding on public transport, more noise and less ‘street appeal’¹

For these reasons, existing community members have a stake in opposing development.

We encourage the committee to take this dynamic into account and consider ways of strengthening the relative engagement of those who may not already live in the area where development is proposed.

As Niccolo Machiavelli wrote,

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order”.

Ultimately, there is a risk that development application processes may empower one subsection of the community to safeguard its own interest in the *status quo* at the expense of others who are denied the opportunity to live in a desirable area.

Regards,

Joel Dignam
Director
Better Renting

¹ Daley, J, B Coates, & T Wiltshire, *Housing affordability: re-imagining the Australian dream*. 2018.