

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

The Recommended Final Variation
No244
Duffy part Block 2 Section 56 Stromlo Settlement

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to the inquiry into the Recommended Final Variation No244 (Duffy part Block 2 Section 56 Stromlo Settlement).

As a former resident of the Stromlo Forestry Settlement I am delighted that the Recommended Final Variation is before your committee for consideration. As you will be aware from the 'Shaping our Territory – Sustainability Study- Stromlo Settlement', many of the Stromlo residents have a strong desire to return home. I feel that the sustainability study accurately portrays the thoughts and wishes of the Stromlo residents. As the ACT Government has agreed in principal to redevelop the settlement and that the people whose houses were burnt will have the opportunity to return, we are keen to see this commence as soon as possible.

Stromlo provided a rural environment for the people, who lived there, the rewards of which were immeasurable. Being able to live in a rural settlement, which for all intents and purposes was in the middle of town (ie 12kms from Belconnen, 7kms from Woden, and 3kms from Cooleman Court) was indeed remarkable. It certainly met the Canberra Spatial Plan aims to provide social and environment sustainability and will continue to do so. The expansion of twenty more houses will encourage diversity of lifestyle preferences for ACT residents and make the settlement sustainable economically.

I am pleased to see recommendations that the village character be preserved with new blocks a similar size to existing blocks, existing buildings/roads being preserved, connecting pedestrian movement, low fencing. As well as grey water, rain tanks, a policy to protect the landscape setting and natural resources, low energy lighting and heating systems, a buffer zone, and appropriate street lighting. The settlement always had bushfire protection as a high priority so I am keen to see that the guidelines on bushfire risk assessment is incorporated into the planning and construction as mentioned.

Many of the Stromlo residents were involved in the 'Shaping our Territory Study' meeting with the Chair, Mr Sandy Hollway and we were pleased to be able to have a voice in the preparation of that document. As a community we feel strongly that our voice made a significant difference to the outcome of what would happen to the settlement. I am sure that we all wish to be as involved in the continuing process of the re-establishment of our homes as we were then.

I would add that the redevelopment of the Stromlo Settlement will effectively reduce the long term effects on the health and well being of the people returning to a lifestyle that meet their needs before the fires destroyed their homes and will continue to after its redevelopment. It will also ensure that the future of these families can be maintained to the same level as urban families who lost their homes on 18 January 2003.

My only concern with the Variation is that the proposed development will be accommodated entirely on Territory Land preventing residents who lived on Commonwealth Land to return to their original block. We were hoping that the Commonwealth would negotiate with the ACT Government to allow the site of those previous six houses to be included in the site redevelopment. As it is, there is still one property of Heritage significance standing after the fire on this Commonwealth Land that will be retained and is tenanted at present anyway. The other matter, which is of equal importance, is that of the site on which our neighbour Dolly died. This too is on this parcel of land and we had hoped to have it as a memorial site in her honour. We have had

memorial services on the site on 18 January 2004 and 2005 and have planted a tree on the site in her remembrance. So it is with heavy heart that I note Block 5 Section 55 has been excluded from the Recommended Final Variation.

The outline Plan at Figure 2.2 attempts to preserve the village character. Although we would originally have liked the settlement to be returned just as it was, we have become accustomed to the upper limit of forty and believe this will protect what was so valued at the settlement, namely it's village environment.

I ask this committee to examine the inquiry into the Draft Plan Variation No244 Duffy in a positive light and give approval to the variation amendment of the existing Plantation Forestry Policy to a Residential Policy to provide for the residential development on the Stromlo site.

Once again I thank you for this opportunity to comment on the variation paper, and I look forward to our future.

Yours sincerely

Christina Merry
23 March 2005

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