

Veronica Strka j
Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Services
Office of the ACT Legislative Assembly

Dear Ms Strkalj,

Draft variation to the Territory Plan No. 308
Cooyong Street Urban Renewal Area

Height, Scale and Associated impacts of proposed redevelopment

I am writing this on the anniversary of the founding of the city of Canberra one hundred years ago. The celebrations and exhibitions which have taken place have made us all aware of the dreams and aspirations that were behind creating a unique city. Acknowledgement of the city's heritage has been much stressed and admired today.

Here is an opportunity to re-establish some of the ideals expressed by the early architects and landscape designers, a vision for maintaining 'its noble buildings, its broad avenues, its shaded parts and sheltered gardens.'(Lord Denman, 12/3/2013)

It is disappointing therefore to note that there were only minor changes made to the draft variation of the Territory plan No 308 after community consultation. The plan continues to show some 20 high rise buildings with two 15 storey 'landmark' buildings at the corner of Ainslie Ave and Cooyong Street. Although the majority of respondents accept that renovation of this area needs to be carried out, it appears that there could have been a more imaginative answer to densification than merely placing as many people as possible in one place. The **social implications** of this do not appear to have been considered.

The report noted that there will be no change in the placement of two 15 storey towers as they would create a 'visual marker for Ainslie Avenue at the city centre', as Ainslie Ave has a role as a symbolic 'Main Ave.' The report continues that this is 'an appropriate urban design solution'. Firstly, Ainslie Ave's role as a main avenue was severely curtailed when Canberra Centre was built across Ainslie Ave and the vista to and from City Hill henceforth destroyed. Two 15 storey tower blocks would now highlight the **not** attractive rear entrance to the shopping centre and cannot be considered an appropriate, let alone an aesthetically pleasing 'urban design solution'.

The two illustrations that supposedly indicate that views will be maintained do demonstrate that Mt Ainslie can still be viewed, however the landscape perspective would change making Mt Ainslie appear much less dominant. The proportion of the natural landscape to the built one would be altered with the mountains and hills taking secondary place to the buildings. This is already evident in City West where the views of Black Mountain have been obliterated by tall wide buildings both at the end of Alinga St and beside Parkes Way. The two towers on Ainslie Ave, visible above the trees, would create similar visual pollution especially from some parts of the heritage precincts of Reid and Braddon – areas respected as important markers in the development of early Canberra. The basic premise on which this city has been planned – to sit within the landscape - not rise above it, is being ignored. **The environmental and cultural implications** have not been taken into consideration.

I urge the committee to thoughtfully consider the social, environmental, heritage and aesthetic implications of approving these variations to the Territory plan No 308.

Yours sincerely
Sue Byrne

