

30 September 2010

The Chairperson
Standing Committee on Planning, Public Works,
& Territory and Municipal Services.
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Email to committees@act.gov.au

Dear Ms Porter

**DRAFT VARIATION TO THE TERRITORY PLAN NO. 298 – STRUCTURE PLAN-
CONCEPT PLAN AND ZONE CHANGES - HOLT SECTION 99 PART BLOCK 11
BELCONNEN GOLF COURSE**

I am writing as to support the proposal to permit portions of the above-mentioned Golf Course, specifically the former 19th to 27th holes, to be used for housing.

As the Committee may be aware the Real Estate Institute of the ACT (REI ACT) is the professional body representing real estate agents in the Territory. However, we do comment on other public interest issues where we see that our knowledge and understanding of the market conditions and market forces provides us with a unique perspective.

One of the changing market features that we commented on recently at an industry Roundtable Meeting with the Chief Minister was the growth of the medium and high density content of the housing stock. One phenomenon has been to see rental prices achieved for 2 bedroom units match or surpass those achieved for 3 bedroom homes. This indicates a growing preference among some market segments for high-rise living. However, despite articles in the paper of “Boomers” who have downsized into units, the reality is that they are reluctant high-rise dwellers, preferring in fact to live in accommodation that provides single level living with access to some yard space.

However, for all the talk of product diversity in the market, and in this regard I refer to comment from both Government and the private sector, the fact is that diversity can only occur within the planning constraints that we all must adhere to. In this regard I am referring to the fact that when land is sold by the LDA to the private sector for townhouse projects, it is virtually impossible to produce anything other than 2 storey premises. The cost of the land and the development rights and conditions means that there is no other viable option but to erect two storey dwellings. In fact in many of the cases the planning controls mandate 2 storey dwellings.

In presenting the above data I am not saying that it is either good or bad, but it is just an outcome that seems to have been overlooked when people discuss the issue of providing diversity of accommodation for an ageing population. The planning response for dealing with the reality of an ageing population is to have a certain number of *Adaptable Housing Designs*, I believe it is 10%, incorporated into all new projects. I was intrigued with this concept when it

was first presented to me as it seems that we are institutionalising the fact that, as you get older and/or less mobile, you are to somehow find it acceptable to be confined to one section of the your residence. I feel that a better response is more diversity of product.

My understanding of the proposed project is that it is to be comprised totally of **single level dwellings** and as such will provide an appropriate housing choice for an increasing number of those that from part of Canberra's ageing population. From work that I did some 20 years ago in the area of retirement villages, there were three issues that I recall as of some significance:

1. There was a desire by both the market and the Government for people to live in their own "Self Care" accommodation for as long as possible;
2. While there were strong commercial/community groups who wished to suggest that a retirement village option was the best way to "experience" your ageing accommodation needs, there were many who wished to live independently and did not see this as meaning they had to live with all those "old" people in an "*old persons home*".
3. There was a reluctance to move from their existing residence until they found accommodation that suited their needs.

Given the fact that I am of the understating that a significant portion of this project will be targeted at providing affordable accommodation, then I see that there should be little objection to a project such as this being allowed to proceed. As I understand it, the original use for the land was appropriate at one time but the reality of the development of a city such as Canberra is that things change. This being so it would seem entirely appropriate that the site be used to add the diversity that I suggest is lacking.

I would commend the project to the committee members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Wellmore', with a long, sweeping horizontal line underneath.

Michael Wellmore
President