

Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
Submission to its inquiring into Draft Variation to the Territory Plan
No. 281 – Molonglo and North Weston

I have three major concerns regarding the planned development of Molonglo and North Weston included in the Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281:

1. That urban development has been planned in areas that could be retained as green space.
2. Some planned capital works on road infrastructure is programmed so far in the future that the Molonglo population is bound to cause significant additional traffic congestion.
3. That the lip service paid to sustainable development may never eventuate in practice.

These concerns are explained below.

1. Retaining Green Space

ACTPLA documents say that The Canberra Spatial Plan recognises the importance of planning for high end population forecasts, and notes that if the Canberra population increases to 500,000 by 2032, some 90,000 additional dwellings would be required (Preliminary Assessment page 161). The Molonglo and North Weston proposed development will provide housing for a large portion of the additional population, with an estimated population of 43,500 by 2032 and possibly 73,000 by 2052 (Preliminary Assessment page 16). However, the ACT Population Projections 2002 – 2032 and beyond predicts that on current trends the population of Canberra will grow to approximately 389,000 by 2032 (Preliminary Assessment page 161).

There are questions regarding the probability and sustainability of a Canberra population of 500,000 that are outside the scope of this inquiry. However, given that the more moderate population estimate is 111,000 lower than the high-end estimate, care must be taken to ensure that urban development does not proceed on land that merits conserving in its current form for use as public amenity or environmental reasons. I urge the standing committee to recommend keeping at least the following areas free of urban development and retain as parks and open space for use by the public:

- The entire CIT Weston Campus School of Horticulture arboretum of mainly exotic trees (Weston section 96 block 4). This contains specimens of mature trees, a number of which are quite rare.
- The Xeriscape Garden in North Weston. This garden has taken years to establish in its current form, and has provided a popular amenity to the Canberra public.
- The North Weston area east of the Orana School and Bahai Centre extending to the Tuggeranong Parkway, running from Cotter Road in

the north and Heysen St in the south (Weston section 81 blocks 3 & 5, and Weston section 83 blocks 2 & 3). This area mostly consists of the endangered yellow box - red gum grassy woodland, and also houses a population of kangaroos and substantial bird life.

- Areas surrounding the Bahai and Sikh communities in North Weston (Weston section 83 block 12, 13 & 14). Any development in this area needs to be sympathetic to the terms of the original leases of the Bahai and Sikh properties, and retain the peaceful nature of the area.
- An area immediately north of Cotter Road, extending between the intersections of Cotter Road with Streeton Drive in the east and Cotter Road with Uriarra Road in the west, of at least 300m wide, and extending to the Molonglo River corridor in the east of this section. Part of this was formerly known as Deek's Forest. This area could provide a significant buffer zone between Weston Creek and Molonglo, similar to buffers between Canberra's other major areas.

These areas are currently marked as future urban areas in the Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281 and as development areas in the North Weston, Coombes and Wright Concept Plans.

The areas that are retained should also be given a land use classification, such as PRZ1 urban open space or NUZ3 hills ridges and buffer, that prevents subsequent governments from developing the land for any purpose without proper community consultation.

2. Road Infrastructure and Traffic

ACTPLA have indicated the scope and timings for proposed capital works for road infrastructure (Preliminary Assessment table 3.2 page 106-107). Additional lanes for Cotter Road are not proposed until 2017-2021 for the eastbound (when Molonglo population is estimated to be 35 000 people), and until at least 2032 for the westbound lanes and the Adelaide Avenue interchange (when Molonglo population is estimated to be 55 000 people).

The Cotter Road is already quite congested at peak hour, and this will cause more congestion plus significant amounts of additional traffic flow through suburban roads in Weston & Lyons (Heysen & Devonport Streets), Curtin (McCulloch and Carruthers Streets), and possibly Yarralumla (at the Novar Street and Kintore Avenue roundabout).

I believe that the timing of the above capital works needs to be brought considerably forward to at least within 5 years, to alleviate the traffic congestion that is already evident.

3. Sustainable Development

Many of the ACTPLA planning documents for DV281 repeatedly refer to sustainable development, and this pleases me. However, if the Government is serious about this, it needs to take measures to ensure that this sustainable development actually happens in practice, so at a minimum:

- street design results in solar passive (ie north facing) blocks,
- each residence is required to install a photovoltaic solar energy system,
- house design incorporates rain water collection and water recycling, and
- significant trees are maintained.

The achievement of this would be facilitated if the ACT environmental building standards were increased from the current standards, ideally to be the best in Australia, but at least to the standard enforced in other Australian states.

Also, the existing buildings in the CIT Weston Campus are in good condition. In principle reuse is more sustainable than demolishing and rebuilding, and alternative uses for these buildings should be seriously considered before development proceeds in this area.

Summary

My husband and I moved to Canberra from Adelaide 13 years ago for work purposes. We have seriously looked at moving back to Adelaide a number of times to be closer to our families, and the main reasons why we have not returned to Adelaide is the abundance of parks and bush in the Canberra metropolitan area, and that peak hour traffic in Canberra is relatively lighter. With Australia's historically low unemployment rates it is now much easier to gain employment in other urban centres, and I believe that the bush and light traffic is a strong reason for Canberrans to stay put, and would-be Canberrans to migrate here. I believe if you take away these positives then the probability of reaching a Canberra population of 500,000 in 2032 will be greatly reduced.

Please proceed with this development carefully so that it is in the best interests of the Canberra public in the longer term.

Regards

Mrs Julianne Louise Krassay
Weston ACT 2611

References:

Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No. 281 Molonglo and North Weston, April 2008

http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/8548/Revised_draft_variation_281.pdf

Preliminary Assessment of a Draft Variation to the Territory Plan (DV281) and Major Infrastructure associated with Urban Development at Molonglo and North Weston, August 2007

http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/6270/DV281PA.pdf

North Weston Concept Plan

http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/8554/North_Weston_Concept_Plan.pdf

Wright Concept Plan

http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/8556/Wright_Concept_Plan.pdf

Coombes Concept Plan

http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/8555/Coombs_Concept_Plan.pdf