

To the Standing Committee on Planning,  
Environment and Territory and Municipal Services

**RE: Draft Variation 343 - Residential blocks surrendered under the  
'Mr Fluffy' Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme**

Further to the submission I made to the Department on this matter in May 2015 I wish to have registered and considered the following issues and concerns regarding the proposed planning variation to accommodate the buy-back of Mr Fluffy properties across the ACT, in particular areas where there are clusters of properties in single and adjoining building sections.

Firstly, I trust that this Standing Committee exercise is a genuine investigation and will give serious consideration to the legitimate concerns raised by people impacted by planning changes and not merely an expensive and time consuming attempt to '*appear*' to be consulting.

The apparent community complacency toward previous consultation on this matter is due, in my view, to this Government's reputation for *Claytons* Consultation and deliberately poor promotion of opportunities to comment. Canberra's concentration of people with close links to Government and public service processes (both ACT and Commonwealth) gives us direct insights into how these processes are undertaken and the sincerity in which they are approached.

The Chief Minister is certainly giving the impression that the decision on Mr Fluffy redevelopment has already been finalised and that anyone expressing a concern is an anti-progress, NIMBY. I wonder if he would feel the same if over 21% of his immediate neighbours' houses and gardens were demolished and replaced with high density boxes set in concrete driveways with no trees and vegetation.

**Draft Variation 343**

Draft Variation 343 suggests that the proposed amendment 'represents a modest increase in the development density potential of the surrendered blocks'...less than 1% of dwellings in the RZ1 suburban zone<sup>1</sup>

In Julius Street Pearce and several other locations there are pockets of grouped Mr Fluffy houses. Under Draft Variation 343 over **21 per cent of the homes in Julius street will be subject to high density redevelopment.** This is *significantly* higher than the 1% stated in the Draft Variation and also considerably higher than the density permitted under current dual occupancy guidelines for RZ1 zones. This can in no way be considered a 'modest' increase. It is grossly unfair for a small number of streets across Canberra to carry the full impact of the Government's Mr Fluffy solution.

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Variation to the Territory Plan no 343 – for public consultation April 2015 p 2 and p 8

- **Reduction of block size for dual occupancy development from 800m<sup>2</sup> to 700m<sup>2</sup>.**
- **Permit subdivision for unit titling of Dual occupancy development on affected blocks**

At least five of the eight (known) Mr Fluffy properties in Julius Street are on blocks of 702m<sup>2</sup> (ie at the margins of the proposed land size reduction) and are adjoining. Replacing five modest family homes and gardens with 10 dual occupancy dwellings in a row will have a significant impact on adjoining properties and the amenity and infrastructure of the street.

The current planning rules limit block sizes for RZ1 zone dual occupancies to 800m<sup>2</sup>, as well as limiting the number of dual occupancies permitted in a single building section.

These guidelines are no doubt based on well considered and highly debated levels of reasonable living density, impact on infrastructure, amenity, streetscape and the general liveability of suburban streets. Given this, how can you justify arbitrarily reducing the block size to 700m<sup>2</sup> (over 12 per cent reduction) and allowing a cluster of at least 8 dual occupancies in one section?

Further, Variation 343 does not appear to take into account the existing concentration of dual/multiple occupancy developments in Mr Fluffy affected streets and suburbs.

There has already been significant dual and multiple dwelling redevelopment in this immediate area. There are currently 5 non-Mr Fluffy dual occupancy redevelopments taking place within 300 metres of Julius Street and developers are snapping up whatever blocks become available for similar dual occupancy redevelopment.

- **Alter plot ratio to accommodate the reduction in block size.**

All of the blocks subject to the Mr Fluffy buy-back scheme in Julius Street have an East/West aspect. If the proposed variation is applied to these blocks (that is, cramming two dwellings on 700m<sup>2</sup> blocks) how can you ensure that each dwelling has optimal solar access to maximise the energy efficiency of the homes without overshadowing and overlooking neighbouring houses?

- **Other Issues**

Draft Variation 343 does not address environmental issues regarding preservation of existing trees and other plants in gardens established nearly half a century ago.

This vegetation may not meet the ACT Government's 'significant tree' guidelines but it nonetheless provides aesthetic and environmental benefits and has been specifically planted over many years to provide privacy between neighbouring blocks.

I note that the Territory Plan is committed to 'protecting the typically low density, garden city character of Canberra's Suburban areas.'<sup>2</sup> How can you reconcile this commitment with the potential impact of the proposed Variation 343?

- **Supply of family homes in walking distance to Marist College and Melrose High School**

Family sized homes are in high demand in Pearce and surrounding suburbs because of their proximity to Marist Christian College and Melrose High. Julius Street is approximately 400 to 600 meters walking distance from these schools.

There are around **136 family sized homes due to be demolished in suburbs within walking distance of these secondary schools** (Chifley, Pearce, Torrens, Farrer and Mawson) and even more within a reasonable bike ride away (Curtin, Lyons, Kambah and Wanniasa). The removal of this quantity of family-sized housing stock in this area is socially, economically and environmentally reckless and short sighted.

Studies show that home buyers are prepared to pay a 10-15 per cent premium for homes close to preferred schools. Marist is a unique and sought after south-side school. Replacing the substantial number of family sized Mr Fluffy homes in this area with smaller dwellings is an opportunity lost in this respect.

Further to this the traffic congestion in and around Marr Street with students being driven to school is already a nightmare which will need to be addressed before there is a serious accident - this will only get worse.

I ask the Committee to give genuine and serious consideration to the concerns and issues outlined in this submission and to recommend changes to the draft amendment to the Territory Plan accordingly.

Your sincerely

Gabrielle Sheen

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