



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES
Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Chair), Miss Candice Burch MLA (Deputy Chair)
Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, Ms Nicole Lawder MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Nature in Our City

Submission Number: 21

Date Authorised for Publication: 8 August 2018

The Committee Secretary, Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services, Legislative Assembly for the ACT, GPO Box 1020, CANBERRA ACT 2601.

LACommitteeETCS@parliament.act.gov.au

Submission

Inquiry into the value of the natural environment to an urbanising Canberra

The Yarralumla Residents Association (YRA) is pleased to provide comments concerning this enquiry.

Yarralumla is blessed with its location adjacent to the lake and considerable open space, albeit much of this is Commonwealth designated land. This is also what makes Yarralumla a popular destination for tourists and visitors from outside of Yarralumla, whether that be to visit Weston Park, the Royal Australian Golf Club, the aquatic recreation facilities at Orana Bay and Yarralumla Bay or to play sport on one of the sports grounds.

In the 30 years since the Yarralumla Residents Association was founded we have been involved in extensive consultation with ACT and Commonwealth Government representatives about many of these aspects, and particularly in relation to proposed developments near the old Canberra Brickworks. This gives us reasonable confidence that we have a good understanding of the values appreciated by local residents and visitors to Yarralumla.

We comment as follows based on the terms of reference for this inquiry with a particular focus on matters that relate to Yarralumla.

1. The level of public support for and satisfaction with amount and quality nature and natural environment areas in Canberra, particularly in urban areas.

Our residents are pleased with the 'amount' of natural environment but remain concerned about the potential development on areas that are currently open spaces or forested areas. This is highlighted by the strong community opinion interest in any plans for development near the Canberra Brickworks and at Stirling Park.

The community appreciates the mix of formal and informal areas, but once again remain concerned about the potential for current informal areas such as the forest near the Canberra Brickworks to be destroyed or turned into formal areas.

Many of the concerns and suggestions concerning the natural environment and the possible negative impact from urbanization have been highlighted in discussions about the development of the Canberra Brickworks Precinct.

We have attached an extract from the objectives, parameter and perspectives (collectively, the “OPP”) that were formulated by the community and incorporated in the tender documents for the Canberra Brickworks Precinct. The YRA had considerable input into these OPP, which was the culmination of 30 years of consultation within our own community. **(See Appendix 1 – Canberra Brickworks Precinct)**

2. The types of nature and natural environmental areas within Canberra e.g. urban open spaces or bushland reserves and the existing or potential benefits and challenges they bring to Canberra’s social amenity, economic development, biodiversity and/or climate resilience

Yarralumla has a mix of formal and informal urban open spaces and bushland. We have areas of environmental significance with native temperate grasslands and Golden Sunmoth. We are concerned about the capacity of the ACT government to allocate sufficient funds to maintain urban open spaces and bushland reserves. We have recently been informed that minimal attention is being given to maintain the native temperate grasslands near Dudley Street in Yarralumla due to a lack of funds.

We draw your attention to a recent article in the Guardian¹ that comments on the benefits of having large areas of native vegetation alongside urban areas. Yarralumla currently enjoys such benefits with the land between Denman Street and Dudley Street (near the Canberra brickworks) and residents are strongly in favour of maintaining this area in its natural state. Yarralumla also has a series of pocket parks. These small parks contribute to the unique feature of our suburb but are potentially underused. To this end, the YRA has recently funded the installation of a park bench in one of the pocket parks and has submitted a proposal for the YRA to run a design competition for the pocket parks. The design competition is aimed at highlighting the valuable community assets and reinvigorating the use of such pocket parks. We are also very disturbed that a resident adjacent to one of those pocket parks has effectively taken over the park and the ACT Government is yet to fully enforce that resident to remove their private infrastructure and return the pocket park to a natural state that suggests open access to the public.

3. Opportunities for Blue (water) and or Green (natural) Infrastructure in Canberra

Yarralumla Bay has a master plan that is aimed at ensuring infrastructure in the area is for aquatic recreation. While your inquiry might bring about some great suggestions for Blue and Green infrastructure, we remain concerned about the ACT Government’s track record of enforcement of existing master plans and rulings when it comes to the lake’s infrastructure.

In December 2017, the ACT Government granted the YMCA yet another 12 months to rectify its breach of lease at Yarralumla Bay. The inaction on enforcement concerning this matter gives the community absolutely no confidence that the ACT Government will enforce its

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/chronic-inaction-call-for-planning-overhaul-as-population-growth-threatens-biodiversity>

own regulations and rulings. This in turn makes the community nervous about any ACT Government suggestions about additional infrastructure proposals for Lake Burley Griffin. **(See Appendix 1 – the YMCA Breach of Lease at Yarralumla Bay)**

4. Managing the interface between the natural environment and urban areas particularly in regards to conserved environmental areas.

Yarralumla also enjoys a green buffer to the west provided by Dunrossil Drive and the forested area adjacent to the Canberra Brickworks that provides a wind break and natural separation from the Woden Valley. This forested area is also home to a large population of the endangered Golden Sunmoth and native temperate grasslands. To the north is Stirling Park and of course there is the natural edge that has been maintained for the most part between Alexandrina Drive and the lake.

We do not believe the ACT Government has a good track record for such management. We draw your attention to the current ACT Government plans to upgrade Dudley Street, Yarralumla which is considered by the community to be (1) a waste of taxpayers' money and (2) destroying the habitat for endangered species when alternative solutions are available. We also reiterate the ACT Government's current inability to fund the management of the native temperate grasslands in this area.

The environmentally sensitive Stirling Park (Commonwealth land), on the other hand, is being maintained by a group of volunteers led by Friends of Grassland (FOG), which also receives a grant from the NCA. Many Yarralumla residents assist FOG.

We have also been aware of a lack of funding within the ACT Government that has meant minimum upkeep and maintenance of many parks and open spaces owned by the ACT Government. To this end, the YRA entered into an MOU with TCCS in late 2017 and a group of YRA volunteers has been conducting regular working bees to do tree maintenance across Yarralumla. While this arrangement has been working very well, some question why a group of volunteers needs to do what is expected to be a service of government.

It appears that the ACT Government can only manage these natural environments with support from the community and we encourage the ACT Government to investigate ways on how to facilitate and expand these volunteer programmes.

5. Current policy or regulatory settings that impede the integration of the natural environment within optimal urban development and design.

We are concerned about the current and prospective changes to zoning rules that allow for construction of houses, including but no limited to dual occupancy developments, that leave little room for permeable areas on residential blocks for trees, which help to reduce the heat island effect and also maintain the current feel of Yarralumla.

6. Any other relevant matter

Another matter we would like to register is the increase in noise pollution, which has a negative impact on the enjoyment of the natural environment. We are fielding a growing

number of complaints about the traffic noise from Adelaide Avenue and even from Parkes Way across the lake. This noise will of course be exacerbated by Light Rail Stage 2. We presume there are technical solutions such as the type of road surface used that could mitigate the noise pollution and believe that this is an area that should be investigated with experts as part of your enquiry.

Regards

David Harvey
President, Yarralumla Residents Association
8 June 2018

Appendix 1. Canberra Brickworks Precinct

Extracts from the ACT Government's Canberra Brickworks Precinct Request for Tender (and Request for Proposal) Documents 2016 and 2017.

Objective 2f.

Plan development to minimise disturbance to the Precinct's current terrain, soil structure and hydrology, and to ensure protection of critically endangered Golden Sunmoth and temperate grasslands nearby.

Objective 3.

Development in the Precinct harmonises with the character of the Brickworks, Canberra's Garden City Principles and the context of broader planning for Canberra:

- (a) Harmonise new buildings with the Precinct's and surrounding built form, landscape and streetscape (through selection of materials, wide verges and large street trees);
- (b) Minimise disturbance to the current terrain, geological features and landscape scale assets and enhance the woodlands as significant assets and as a windbreak and sound barrier;
- (c) Ensure the development minimises visible impact from the south or west of the ridgeline that runs from Denman Street to Dunrossil Drive.

Objective 4a.

Integrate Precinct open space, active travel and recreation connections and facilities into existing networks:

- (a) Retain and improve the continuous woodland loop, part of which is the Old Uriarra Track, in its natural state with mature trees and groundcover and without requiring people who are walking, cycling or using other active travel and recreation to cross a primary access road.

Parameter 3. Quarry Gardens

Canberra was created as a Garden City and Yarralumla was one of the first Garden Suburbs. The quarry is heritage listed and has considerable geological value. It could be developed as a large public garden to complement other adaptive reuses for the site. Involve the Geological Society of Australia and local geologists in the processes of planning and developing the CBP. Include the Railway Remnants registered area and core space of the Quarry as publicly accessible parklands.

| Parameter | Rationale |
|--|---|
| Maintain Quarry Park as an open space public recreation area with no housing inside the Quarry Park and no through-road to Bentham Street. | The quarry is an intrinsic element in the heritage and history of the Brickworks and has important aesthetic value within the overall Brickworks site. It must be |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Landscaping and improvements to Quarry Park must retain the character of the existing landscape and preserve the physical and historical connection to the Brickworks buildings.</p> | <p>preserved for community access by all Canberrans and visitors to Canberra. It is also important to preserve the heritage-listed geological formations. A through-road to Bentham Street would direct traffic through to the Yarralumla Shops, which are already highly congested and subject to a high traffic accident rate.</p> |
|---|--|

Parameter 4

i. Streetscape, Landscape and Pathways

| Parameter | Rationale |
|--|---|
| <p>Tailor new dwellings within the Brickworks to the site's existing landscape and streetscape design (selection of materials, wide verges and large street trees) which will retain the current landforms and enhance the woodlands as significant assets and as a windbreak and sound barrier. Ensure the development is not visible south or west of the ridgeline running from Denman Street to Dunrossil Drive.</p> | <p>As required by heritage guidelines AND highly valued by the community, an attractive landscape and quality communal spaces which support and enhance the woodlands and harmonise with the existing features and character of Yarralumla (such as Maxwell Street), are a major attractor for new residents and visitors to engage and interact. The landscape and trees form part of the visual character of the area particularly the Approach Route to Government House. The trees not only protect the suburb from prevailing westerly winds but also act as a noise barrier from surrounding traffic.</p> |
| <p>Retain and improve the continuous woodland loop, part of which is the Old Uriarra Track, in its natural state with mature trees and without requiring pedestrians or cyclists to cross a primary access road. The heritage-listed Railway Remnants to be preserved and enhanced as a public open space recreational area with connections to the Brickyard area and the Quarry. Streets must be designed and constructed for people (rather than cars) of all ages and abilities; are accessible for everybody whatever their level of mobility at any time or place; incorporate existing features that are highly valued by the local community and a variety of good quality communal spaces that support the existing and new communities to engage and interact; and</p> | <p>The Old Uriarra Track area is highly valued by residents and visitors for both white and Indigenous historical importance for Canberra ('Uriarra' means 'running to the feast' and was historically the pathway to a local Ngunnawal site for meetings and celebrations) and also its recreational use, birdlife, critically endangered Golden Sun Moth habitat, natural beauty and solitude. Connectivity in a continuous greenbelt encourages active recreation and retention of the continuous woodland loop is cited by residents as one of the most important aspects that needs to be retained in any development of the CBP. Integrating open spaces within the CBP with surrounding open space allows for connections to existing pedestrian and cycling networks, fosters safety, and</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>are safe – and perceived to be safe – for people to move about however they get around.</p> <p>Adaptation to a changing climate must be factored into surface infrastructure and transport (for example via location of services and providing shelter at stops, to minimize people’s exposure to heat, rain and wind).</p> <p>Active and public transport should be the obvious, convenient, safe (and perceived to be safe), accessible and sustainable transport choice for travel to, from, and within the area, with the road user hierarchy identified in the ACT Active Travel Framework¹ applied so that infrastructure for private vehicles is considered last and is focused on serving the needs of people with impaired mobility. Install shared paths in all streets, separated on-road cycling facilities where appropriate and connect the CBP with existing cycling routes².</p> | <p>encourages active travel and recreation³. As it is a non-car access space, retention and improvement is a priority for equestrian use, cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair and pram users.</p> <p>The long-term sustainability of Canberra for future generations is becoming increasingly important as we approach and exceed the limits of our local and worldwide environments.</p> <p>The ACT Government has made repeated commitments to sustainability, whole-of-government integrated planning (and especially integration of transport and land use planning), addressing climate change and for community engagement. Shared paths and cycling-focused infrastructure will be required to enable people to safely and conveniently reach the CBP itself from surrounding cycling routes⁴ and to travel within the CBP. The choice of infrastructure can be made in the detailed design phase. This is consistent with the ACT Government’s Active Travel principles in its <i>“Building an Integrated Transport Network-Active Travel”</i> (2015) policy document³.</p> |
|---|--|

Parameter 4

ii. Existing boundaries and roads – impact minimisation

| Parameter | Rationale |
|---|--|
| <p>Provide a landscaping buffer to the north and east of the CBP that is low maintenance, protects the privacy of adjacent residents and presents an attractive visual treatment from the development.</p> <p>Demonstrate how the CBP contributes to maintaining and increasing buffers from westerly winds, heat and fire (as well as from flooding, where appropriate).</p> | <p>Existing residents are concerned about invasion of their privacy and loss of natural views and would like a visual separation from any new development, preferably in the form of mature trees.</p> <p>The long-term sustainability of Canberra for current and future generations.</p> <p>The ACT Government has made repeated commitments to sustainability, whole-of-government integrated planning (and</p> |

² Pedal Power ACT comment: ‘The correct ACT term is ‘shared path’. ‘cycling routes’ is better here as some are on road e.g. Adelaide Ave and some in the future might be separated from vehicles or from people walking. SEE-Change Inner South comment: ‘Community path’ is also used in official ACT government documentation.

³ Under the hierarchy, people walking are considered first, then people who cycle, then public transport, then other motor vehicles – see figure 22, p35, https://www.transport.act.gov.au/policy_and_projects/active-travel

| | |
|--|---|
| Accommodate on-site parking for motorised and nonmotorized vehicles associated with future uses within the CBP. Introduce measures (beyond the project area) to minimise the impact of traffic generated by future use of the CBP. | especially integration of transport and land use planning), addressing climate change and for community engagement. The surrounding streets already lack sufficient car parking capacity. |
|--|---|

Parameter 11 Natural and Local Environment

CBP should have integrated approaches to planning, design and construction. In terms of the public environment, this should encourage seamless interactions between external and internal public spaces and create a variety of uses in an attractive, safe, biodiverse and environmentally sustainable public domain.

| Parameter | Rationale |
|---|--|
| Protect critically endangered species in open space – Golden Sun Moth, temperate grasslands. | Ensure these critically endangered species are taken into account in planning access road from Cotter Rd. |
| CBP must demonstrate how it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● fits into the ACT Basin Priority Project ● fits into cross-border catchment management planning ● does not alter the watershed of Yarralumla Creek ● will manage its stormwater management with a view to dealing with stormwater on-site and avoiding runoff beyond current levels into the surrounding area, Lake Burley Griffin, and the wider Molonglo catchment ● maintains existing soil structure and hydrology of the site | CBP is part of the Yarralumla Creek catchment. The ACT Basin Priority Project and cross-border catchment management planning include Yarralumla Creek as a major sub catchment. This means that any planning for and development and construction within CBP must be undertaken in the context of the ACT Basin Priority Project and cross-border catchment management planning. |

Parameter 13 Beyond Precinct

CBP must demonstrate how it contributes to prominence of Canberra’s national and local significance and public good, particularly in regard to leadership in sustainability (including climate change), planning (urban, transport, catchment) and engagement with and responding to the community and geographic surrounds.

CSIRO Forestry Site Redevelopment near the Brickworks: CSIRO’s campuses at Yarralumla, Acton, Campbell, and Crace are to be consolidated and moved to the Black Mountain Campus. This is expected to result in the disposal of land adjacent to the Brickworks. We understand this large site is owned by a Family Trust and leased to CSIRO until 2022 at which time CSIRO have indicated they will leave the site and the future after that is unclear. National Trust (ACT) believes this issue should be investigated jointly by the ACT and

Commonwealth Governments to determine what synergies can be created between both developments so that planning and community outcomes can be optimised.

| Parameter | Rationale |
|---|---|
| <p>Planning (including any development proposals) must take place in a <i>transparent, whole-of government</i> manner, led by the ACT Environment and Planning Directorate and the National Capital Authority. Planners, developers and other proponents for the CBP must show how their proposal will:</p> <p>(a) include community involvement in subsequent work on the proposal, and</p> <p>(b) fit into the broader context of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● planning (urban, transport, catchment etc), ● geographic surrounds, and ● sustainability, particularly in the context of climate change. | <p>The ACT Government has made repeated commitments to sustainability, whole-of-government integrated planning (and especially integration of transport and land use planning), addressing climate change and for community engagement. Land development in Canberra must proceed in conjunction with broader planning, especially in relation to planning for sustainability, transport and catchment management.</p> <p>Planning for CBP must be placed in a context of broader planning for Canberra and must precede development proposals.</p> |

Appendix 2. YMCA Breach of Lease at Yarralumla Bay

The premises now occupied by the YMCA at 35 Alexandrina Drive, Yarralumla as its corporate headquarters was prior to 2010 the YMCA Sailing Club. The YMCA Sailing Club was established in 1962 and affiliated to the YMCA, but expected to become an independent association once the Clubhouse was operational. The Clubhouse and other structures were built by volunteers between 1966 and 1969 with all costs met by sailing club members. Designed for 800 members, the Clubhouse was substantially extended in 1978-79 when membership reached 1200 with up to 140 boats participating in weekly events. In 2004 the YMCA revoked the autonomy of the Sailing Club and it came under the direct management of the YMCA.

In 2010 the YMCA, against the wishes and advice of the sailing club, commenced major works to repurpose the use of the Sailing Club Clubhouse to provide for the general administration of the YMCA Canberra's broad suite of business activities i.e. (corporate headquarters). This conflicted with the Lease purpose clause for Block 1 Section 18 Yarralumla, that is the YMCA Sailing Club's Clubhouse, that provided as follows:

clause 4(a)(i) "To use that part of the premises known as Block 1 only for the purpose of a club house for occupation exclusively by the YMCA Sailing Club as its base of sailing operations on the adjacent lake and within these premises affording areas for recreation instruction light refreshment management locker room and toilet facilities storage for ministrations to and fabrication of members' club and visitors' craft and for associated light boat handling facilities and vehicular parking".

When the YMCA announced in the press that it planned to move its corporate headquarters into the building, ACTPLA, with the support of YRA, took the matter of YMCA's proposed use of the Sailing Club to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT). The decision by the Tribunal of 11 November 2011 is clear that Block 1, Section 18 of Yarralumla cannot be used for general administration or as a corporate headquarters (see ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal "Young Men's Christian Association Inc and ACT Planning and Land Authority and ORS (Administrative Review) [2011] ACAT 78 (Case: AT 35 of 2011)).

Despite this ruling, the YMCA moved its corporate operations into these premises and then sought in 2012 to vary the lease clause to allow broader use. Yarralumla Bay is designated land and subject to Commonwealth controls on its use and these specify that "permitted uses are limited to uses related to aquatic recreation and tourism but exclude tourist accommodation". The lease was varied from sailing club to aquatic recreation facility, but broader usage was not allowed (see ACT Government Notice of Decision Under Part 7 of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* for DA No.201221441 27 August 2017). The YRA supported the change of purpose from sailing alone to aquatic recreation.

In December 2017, the ACT Government granted the YMCA yet another 12 months to rectify its breach of lease. The inaction on enforcement concerning this matter gives the community absolutely no confidence that the ACT Government will enforce its own regulations and rulings. This in turn makes the community nervous about any government suggestions about additional infrastructure proposals for Lake Burley Griffin.