



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES
Ms Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Mark Parton MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Planning Bill 2022

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Submission by *Tender Funerals Canberra Region* to ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into Planning Bill 2022

Recommendations

We recommend that the Planning Bill 2022 be amended to allow for:

- i. Increasing the availability of community-based funeral services as an evidence-based means of reducing poverty, financial stress, unsustainable debt and the impacts of complex grief in the Canberra community, especially for the more than 50,000 people living under the poverty line in our region, by not precluding such services from accessing ACT Government leases of spaces allocated to community-based organisations because they require a mortuary.
- ii. The ACT Legislative Assembly to help destigmatise death in our city and region by recognising the role that not-for-profit organisations like Tender Funerals Canberra Region can play.

Submission content

[Tender Funerals Australia](#) is an emerging not-for-profit providing meaningful and affordable funerals. We are already operating in the Illawarra region and on the NSW Mid North Coast and are ready to go in Canberra with people and fund-raising behind us. The Snow Foundation, Prosser Foundation, Hands Across Canberra, Braidwood Community Bank and community fundraising are providing the financial support for our establishment in the Canberra Region. The Tender model, once operational, is self-sustaining. However, to achieve this we need a premises and the ACT's zoning requirements and restrictions have so far prevented us from securing a suitable location.

The ACT Government has advised that zoning regulations mean our requirement for a mortuary on our premises precludes us from accessing ACT Government leases provided to community-based organisations. Commercial property prices and limited provision for a funeral parlour within purposes clauses, has restricted our ability to purchase commercially available sites within the ACT. The additional challenge of very few standalone premises, means we are restricted in providing a full community service. It is also necessary for 100% support from a body corporate in the ACT to permit lease variations which would allow for a mortuary. To date, we have not been able to gain this support. In addition, by not allowing for mortuaries to co-locate in or near community hubs, the current planning laws mean that services such as Tender must be located away from the communities they serve.

Establishing Tender Funerals in the ACT would have significant community benefits. Lowering funeral costs reduces financial hardship and unsustainable debt cycles for disadvantaged people while allowing them to recover with dignity from the loss of their loved ones. There is a strong link between financial stress and 'complex grief' which occurs



when people are unable to recover and the impacts of their grief become long-term. Their health, relationships, income and employment are all affected.

Over three million Australians live below the poverty line, surviving on only \$1,000 a week as a family. Three-quarters of Australians are challenged by everyday expenses, one in five miss bills or loan payments as a result, and one in ten struggle to raise \$2,000 in an emergency without going into debt. The people of the ACT and its region are not immune. Close to 50,000 people in the ACT and its region live under the poverty line.

Funerals in Canberra can often cost over \$9,000. The average Tender funeral costs \$3,000. Our Benevolent Fund further reduces costs for people facing financial hardship.

Everyone deserves a meaningful funeral, and no one should have to go into debt to say goodbye to their loved ones. Once established, [Tender Canberra Region](#) will serve a wide catchment of almost 500,000 people in and around Canberra - from Goulburn, to Queanbeyan, Bungendore, Braidwood, Cooma and Yass.

The [ABC's Australian Story](#) on Tender in Port Kembla brought to light the link between funeral costs, debt and financial hardship.

The Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into the ACT's Planning Bill 2022 provides an opportunity to enhance and increase the flexibility of the ACT's planning laws and regulations to allow for the establishment of Tender Funerals as a community-based not-for-profit organisation serving the whole community and especially benefiting Canberrans living on low incomes and below the poverty line.

We would welcome an invitation to present to the Committee at its public hearings on 6 and 7 December.

Catherine Bell
Chair
Tender Funerals Canberra Region

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15 November 2022