



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL

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Submission Cover Sheet

Engagement with Development Application Processes in the ACT

Submission Number: 059 - Vidler

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Submission into DA processes in the ACT

Pre DA Community Consultation guidelines

Introduction

I raise a number of concerns here about the Pre DA community consultation processes. These are based on the online information provided by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD).

The new Pre DA processes could save a potential developer considerable time, effort and money even before a Development Application (DA) is lodged. In a number of major development proposals over recent years, there has been much too-ing and fro-ing, causing friction between communities, the ACT Government and developers. The new guidelines could also enhance the ACT Government's capacity for open, appropriate and fair planning processes.

On the other hand, the Pre DA community consultation guidelines appear to absolve the relevant agency from making their actions and decisions accountable and transparent. The new community consultation guidelines also release the EPSDD from undertaking timely, genuine and credible consultation with affected communities regarding planning proposals in the ACT.

Matters of concern

The following questions arise when considering the publicly available information on the new Pre DA community consultation processes:

1. How will a potentially affected or interested community know there's a developer even interested in a site?

There is no obligation for the potential developer to substantiate to EPSDD how, when or where the public is to be informed about a possible development or when community consultation has taken place.

If the public notice is only on the ACT Government website at (insert? then the potential developer must provide a company website address on that site for community feedback.

It's unreasonable to expect potentially interested or affected members of the public to sit on their computers 24/7 in case a Pre DA consultation likely to affect them has been notified by the developer.

2. What other communication techniques could the EPSDDD utilise?

Public notices in The Canberra Times are increasingly useless as the circulation and readership of this newspaper is rapidly declining.

The much earlier practice of the ACT Government of displaying a notice (usually a wooden post with A4 notice on a board on the site flagged for potential development) could be

reconsidered. A 'message' or DA public notice is much more quickly and easily communicated using such signs.

The EPSDD needs to consider other sites for more immediately communicated messages - City News, Canberra Weekly, TV, notices in ACT Shopfronts.

The first 2 publications are freely available at almost all supermarkets in the ACT and are widely read.

3. Under ***'What will be done with my comments?'*** the developer report to EPSDD will not be available until the statutory DA notification. This is not satisfactory and negates key objectives of the new Pre DA community consultation guidelines.

4. ***How many Pre DA public notices in the Canberra Times have been published since the new community consultation guidelines were announced?***

For example, even during the period March to early May this year, I had only seen 3 Public Notices in The Canberra Times which were about a Pre DA consultation. And I have seen none since returning home from overseas.

Personal experience of flawed EPSDD community consultation

In my recent experience, even EPSDD did not advise neighbours and nearby residents likely to be affected by a potential sale and development of a block of land in O'Malley, Block 25, section 31 O'Malley, which includes a stand of native trees, some protected under Commonwealth and ACT legislation.

Only when a group of alert residents found out about the ACT Government decision and formed an action group did the EPSDD via the Surveyor-General, withdraw the site from release. It's now 'on hold' (Mick Gentlemen to Tom Duncan, 12/04/2018).

We are still awaiting promised documents from this Directorate - a new parking and transport report, advice about departmental progress, including the departmental case for closure of a small car park, the release of the block and the future of the stand of native trees.

Note: A reference in the online published information is missing in the para 'How can I find out what community consultation is going on?' ie. "All proposals that are currently undergoing pre DA community consultation are listed on the ACT Government website at (insert)".

I am willing to appear before the Assembly Planning and Urban Renewal Committee.

Signed,

Suzanne Vidler

