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Media Release

Woden's recreational facilities under threat

Changes to planning laws due to be debated in the Legislative Assembly in August could see the loss of major recreational facilities and amenities in the Woden Town Centre including aspects of the Phillip pool complex, the basketball stadium and the bowls club.

On Wednesday night 4 July the Woden Valley Community Council hosted a public meeting to explain how this could come about through the impact of the Recommended Final Draft Variation 259 to the Territory Plan.

David Menzel, Chair of the Council explained that under the Draft Variation, a large proportion of areas currently marked as Entertainment, Accommodation and Leisure, commonly referred to as the Northern Entertainment and Leisure Precinct, will be changed to "Commercial B".

This includes, the bulk of the area of the Woden Town Centre that lies north of Launceston Street.

"That means, valuable community amenity land could be sold off for high rise development and the need for recreational requirements will be unable to compete.

"In the case of the municipal swimming pool, the proposal says a pool will be incorporated in the new development, but there is no commitment to maintaining or replacing the baby and toddler pools or open green space that families currently enjoy."

David Menzel said, that the initial Draft Variation had maintained the Phillip Pool block as a non-commercial site, but that the Final Draft Variation appears to allow very considerable high-rise commercial development on three sides of – and very close to - the pool. The public and interested stakeholders had not been consulted about this.

The plan also gives no commitment to preserve the bowling club, used extensively by older people in the area, the basketball courts or the child care centre.

"It also fails to allocate land for any future community cultural centre, a facility identified by local residents and businesses as a top priority.

"Woden is not just a business and office centre. Thousands of families live here too, and they have a right to recreational services in their own area," Mr Menzel said.

"In fact, with increasing residential development in the town centre itself and with the increasing rejuvenation of surrounding suburbs, these recreational facilities will be needed more than ever."

The Woden Valley Community Council is urging MLAs to discuss this planned variation with people living in and around Woden and with all interested groups so their votes on this proposed variation reflects the wishes of the community. Woden Valley Community Council also believes that a better solution can be found that meets the needs of local residents.

Mr Menzel said that the public meeting was strongly of the view that although increasing numbers of public servants were coming to Canberra and there was a need for more office space that it should not be at the expense of local residents and their quality of life.

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