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To: ACT Public Cemeteries Authority

WVCC response to Time to Talk Consultation on Proposal to extend Woden Cemetery

The ACT Public Cemeteries Authority has announced plans to use three hectares of land between the Woden Athletics Track and the existing Woden Cemetery for the purpose of extending the cemetery. This submission is provided by WVCC in response to the Time to Talk consultation on this issue. It draws on the views of WVCC members, and responses to a presentation made on behalf of the Cemeteries Trust to WVCC's public meeting held on 6 May 2015.

WVCC wishes to record its objection to this proposal, on the following grounds.

- The proposed extension alienates scarce public recreational space in the Woden East area;
- The proposal represents a short-term fix to a long-term problem.
- The ACT Government should, instead, fund further development of the Cemetery Authority's 2010 proposal for a new cemetery and crematorium for south Canberra, on the Long Gully site.

1 Alienation of public recreational space

The proposed site removes from public use a key parcel of land located between the Woden Athletics Track and Eddison Park. This area is well-used by residents in the Woden East developments, and some from further afield, for recreational purposes, including running and exercise training. The area is a gazetted off-lead dog exercise area.

A pedestrian walkway through the proposed cemetery extension is not an acceptable substitute for continued public access to this area. As the walkway will be closed-off after 6pm, access will be further compromised.

WVCC has consistently maintained that recreational space should be retained and enhanced for the benefit of the expanding population around the Town Centre, and in the Woden Green and Phillip areas. This proposal will alienate a key part of that space, cutting off

access from Eddison Park to the Athletics Track, and disrupting the popular running/jogging/walking track that currently runs around the cemetery.

2 The proposal is a short-term fix to a long-term problem

There was no mention of this proposal in the recently announced master-plan for the Woden Town Centre. Clearly the proposal represents an initiative of recent origin, with no mandate from the planners.

It has been known for some time that the Cemetery was running out of space. Indeed the Cemeteries Trust has been planning over the past five years to address the issue (see our comments below). Adding grave-sites to the existing cemetery will buy some time, but does nothing to meet the Territory's longer-term needs for burials. In addition, the extension does not meet emerging needs for natural burials, nor does it provide for those wishing to be cremated.

3 The Cemetery Trust's 2010 Proposal for a southern cemetery and crematorium off Long Gully Lane should be revived

As long ago as 2010, the Cemeteries Authority put forward a comprehensive plan to address the impending shortage of space in the Woden Cemetery, and to ensure that adequate space would be available well beyond 2018. The plan, which received considerable public comment when it was put forward, also included a proposal for a Southside crematorium, a much-needed facility, given that the Territory's only crematorium is located at Mitchell. A Memorial Hall for the holding of services was also recommended.

WVCC urges the ACT Government and the Cemeteries Authority to proceed with further development of the 2010 proposal as a matter of urgency. The proposal to extend the existing Cemetery is short-sighted, provides only a temporary solution to the shortage of burial sites, and will alienate forever valuable public space.

Dr Jenny Stewart

Martin Miller

On behalf of Woden Valley Community Council

30 May 2015