

Woden Valley Community Council
Record of Meeting, Southern Cross Club, Woden

Wednesday 7 June 2017

*MLAs in attendance: Ms Caroline Le Couteur,
Mr Chris Steele*

1 President, **Fiona Carrick**, welcomed attendees. There was an apology from **Archana Boniface**.

2 Minutes of the last meeting, held on 3 May 2017, were approved.

3 The Chair, **Fiona Carrick**, presented her report. She had participated in a constructive meeting with **David Collet** from the Public Housing Renewal Task Force, the Mawson Citizen's Group and Chris Redmond from Woden Community Services; further meetings are planned to find a compromise on the Mawson public housing site, there is a probability of more public housing for the Woden Valley. A proposal to "future proof" land on the old Chifley School grounds was discussed. Robin Stanton and Fiona met with **Stephen Bartos**, Chair of the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority Board and Hamish Horne, CEO, Canberra Cemeteries to discuss a planned three-hectare expansion of the Woden Cemetery. She noted that this Council thought that the land could be better used for other purposes, but might support an additional cemetery, possibly south of the Long Gully Road. **Question:** Will the cemetery expansion go ahead? (there would have to be an amendment to the Territory Plan).

She also toured the Southern Cross Health Club and was briefed, with Martin Miller, on the cycle path infrastructure and its proposed extension to Matilda Street. It was noted that the Borrowdale House Development had been approved; the issue of overshadowing was demonstrated in a series of shadow diagrams. The Woden Town Square, she observed, will be overshadowed most of the day providing little incentive for the private sector to invest in the area.

4 **Community Presentations**

ACT Budget measures affecting Woden: Chair noted that some \$53.5M had been allocated to Stage 2 of the Light Rail Project. An expanded bus depot would handle up to 120 buses in the planned growth in the size of the fleet. \$1.573M is earmarked for an upgrade to the Woden Library, with the Heritage Library being transferred to Fyshwick. Other budget allocations include the Bus Interchange (\$150K), stormwater retardation basin design (\$280K) and early planning for an Indoor Sports Centre (\$160K).

Issues of ongoing concern to WVCC were also mentioned: the "flatlining" of population numbers in Woden; the lack of planning for land release despite the detailed planning for Stage 2 of the Light Rail; the impending complete closure of Woden CIT; the much larger proportion of higher education facilities on the north side of Canberra; the public funding of swimming pools elsewhere in the ACT whilst

Woden's pool is privately leased and aging. **Question:** What is the cause of the delay in closing the Woden CIT? (The need to find accommodation for the Music School).

Police update with Sergeant Harry Hains: Derelict buildings such as the Alexander Building and the Albemarle Building are dangerous; due to the unsafe environment, his officers are not allowed to enter the buildings unless it is a life threatening situation. On a positive note: the addition of six more police officers means more officers "on the street". He also discussed the technical capabilities of an item of his equipment: the "Conductive Electrical Weapon", otherwise known as a "Taser" (which is a brand name). He mentioned a study, now under way, into future policing needs of the expanding population of the Molonglo Valley and noted some statistical measures showing a decrease in most areas of major crime in the Woden district. To the surprise of many, it was noted that the police have programs to catch these people in their work, defacing buildings and other public structures is ongoing, with one major "artist", a person referred to as "Pablo", recently arrested and charged.

Questions: Is it an offence to drive a car without number plates? (Yes, unless you have a permit); Is the community use of camera phones helping to fight crime? (Yes, since it provides evidence. However, you also need to make a statement); Would it be useful for all cars to have bar codes which could be scanned? (Yes, and a good idea, but implementation is problematic). **Sergeant Hains** was thanked in the usual way for his detailed presentation.

For an overview of current developments, Fiona Carrick introduced **Nicholas Skepev**, Managing Director of the Zapari Group, **Richard Nash**, Senior Urban Planner in Purdon Planning and **Barney Stranger**, an Associate at Norman Disney & Young. **The development at 15 Bowes Street** was given a comprehensive presentation, beginning with **Mr Skepev**. Details in the development application include 488 apartments in two towers, an East Tower of 16 storeys and a West Tower of 25 storeys. Facilities are generally north-facing, including the courtyard on top of the East Tower and the community square has provision for cafés. The development will almost literally be on the top of the bus interchange. The towers' fully-glazed charcoal-tinted façades will present what was described as a "modern look" to the streetscape, as well as minimising glare. Many, but not all, of the apartments will have parking spaces allocated in the two basement carparks, however 96 apartments will not have carparks. Building services will be "hidden" in the centre of the development with service vehicles unobtrusive.

Richard Nash the project to developments interstate, such as in Chatswood, NSW, where a similar residential complex is located above a train station. This development, he said, will help revitalise the Woden Town Centre both because of the extra people it will bring and because of its integration with the Light Rail and cycling network. Details of the floor plans, landscaping and motor traffic modelling were shown and **Barney Stranger** provided detailed reports on wind speed modelling for the development. **Questions:** Will trees be removed? (Yes, but will be

replaced with mature specimens); Is the development consistent with the Master Plan? (This is a complex issue. There is a relationship between building heights and population density, with public amenity and aesthetic considerations also in the mix); Why will the development make Woden a better place? (Increased residential density will bring demand for restaurants, cafés and other services); All interaction will be with the bus interchange, not the plaza; how does this help Woden? (Connections will be much more extensive because of the proximity of the development); How far will it be to the closest primary school? (Don't know, but will find out); Is it true that car parking for disabled people will cost \$30K? (Not sure; certainly a number of such spaces are provided for in the development); Why not just 16 and 12 storeys? (Reducing the height will add to the 'blockyness' of the building); Unit costs? (from \$250K plus); Glass in the illustrations looks clear, yet you say it is "charcoal"? (Yes; it is 5% grey and reduces solar impact); Balconies? (Yes; every unit will have a balcony).

Ben Ponton, Director-General, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, provided an over view of his plans for the Planning Directorate. "Urban renewal is important to this city", he said. Light Rail Stage 1 is an example. He noted the establishment of a "City Renewal Authority"; precinct authorities for other areas are being considered. **Mr Ponton**, who has 25 years' experience as a Town Planner, said that his job was "to make life in Canberra even better." His preference for a simplified planning system would include outcomes-based and performance-based policies matched with ease of navigation. Innovation and incentives will help to optimise affordability and, through enhanced collaboration, ensure a general lift in the quality of design in the city. All his teams now report directly to him.

Questions included: Why such high buildings? (Tall, slender buildings create inviting public spaces); Have staff cuts affected your office? (No. We have all the planners, architects and traffic engineers we need); Clarification of the benefits of LDA involvement? (If the government benefits then the community benefits); Is finance being taken from Woden and given to Gungahlin? (No); Isn't there an incentive to maximise return by maximising height? (Extensive consultation regarding Canberra's development suggest most developments are quite beneficial); Aren't travel times generally increasing? (Yes; that's why the Light Rail is being built); Could the modelling be published? (It is not in a publishable form); How will the "tram" get over the (Commonwealth Avenue) Bridge? (An engineering issue, but traffic lanes will not be affected); What is the status of the Master Plans? They don't seem to guide development. (A Master Plan documents strategies at a point in time. He would like to see the precinct codes influencing their implementation); Land swap between the empty old police station site and other buildings? (Landowners may have other ideas; also –**Nickolas Skepev** gave "in principle" support.

5 Updates from MLAs

Ms Caroline Le Couteur noted that public consultations for Light Rail Stage 2 would close on Friday 9 June. She mentioned the issues of drug and alcohol abuse and their impact on mental health in the community. Suicide was a major cause of death in Australia, she said; there was thus a need for new approaches to community consultation aimed at minimising this problem. **Question:** The ACT population is rising, putting pressure on accommodation, hospitals, schools etc. The Government is receiving our rates; how is all this being managed? (Much of the budget of \$6Billion is ear-marked for these things. Also, approximately half of this population increase is natural, for the rest, people are just living longer).

Mr Chris Steele noted that some of the population increase described could also be attributed to people moving into the ACT from interstate. Persuading more people to settle in the Woden area is being facilitated by two large infrastructure projects: the Light Rail Stage 2, with a budget of \$53.5M and a huge overall investment in health, including children's health, with some \$443M devoted to hospital expansion and health care facilities generally. In addition, some \$85M has been set aside for capital upgrade to schools in the ACT, including Melrose and Garran in the Woden area. **Question:** Should there be a "tram" stop at the Hospital? (This would add to the travel time going to Tuggeranong. Go to the website and make a submission).

Chair, **Fiona Carrick**, thanked both MLAs for their contribution and noted, in concluding the meeting, the ongoing loss of green space in Woden .

The meeting closed at 10:06pm. The next meeting of the WVCC will be at 7:30pm on Wednesday 5 July in the Southern Cross Club.

Timoshenko Aslanides,
Minutes Secretary
19 June 2017