

Woden Valley Community Council
Record of Meeting, Southern Cross Club, Woden
7 pm Wednesday 6 December 2017
MLAs in attendance: Caroline Le Couteur, Gordon Ramsay and Chris Steele
Estimated attendance: fifty people

- 1 Acknowledgement of country.
- 2 President, **Fiona Carrick**, welcomed attendees. There were apologies from **Eric Glass** and **Archana Boniface**.
- 3 Minutes of the last meeting, held on 1 November 2017, were approved.
- 4 **Woden Cultural and Community Centre**
 - (a) **Delivering on the Woden Town Centre Master Plan:** **Fiona Carrick** summarised recent developments (and lack of community facilities development). Well-known and often-documented issues with the Woden Town Centre were noted. In particular, the overshadowing of the Town Square by zoning and proposed developments. The Geocon 800-apartment proposal for the Tradies site was cause for concern due to the scale and the overshadowing of residents across the road. Blanket zoning of the Town Centre for residential towers, up to 28 storeys, makes the nearby land more valuable and hence reduces the likelihood that the Government will allow use of the land for much-needed community facilities: music, dance and the variety of arts which would attract people and small business.
 - (b) **Community Services Hub:** **Chris Redmond**, Chief Executive Officer of Woden Community Services, presented a report. Established in 1969 and incorporated in 1976, this not-for-profit organisation employs some 350 people and more than 100 volunteers with a turnover of \$17million per year. Illustrative historical detail of many community service activities were provided. He noted, in particular, recent and strong emphasis on development at the expense of social amenity in the context of a community services hub.
- 5 **Panel discussion: Community Services and events in Woden**

Gordon Ramsay, Minister for the Arts and Community Events, **Ben Ponton**, Director-General, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development, **John Dietz**, CEO, Suburban Land Agency, **Sam Tyler**, Acting Director, artsACT and **Philip Wales**, of Property Group anchored a wide-ranging discussion on the arts and community engagement generally.

Minister **Ramsay** began by emphasising that “everyone is creative and everyone is artistic” to some extent and that “Tapping into the arts is to tap into who we are”. Each town centre has a different character, different identity with different artistic outcomes. He favoured “pop-up festivals” resulting from demand, rather than a supply-side “build it and they will come” model. **Sam Tyler** confirmed this approach, stressing that she needed to talk to the Woden Valley community to determine what was wanted and how spaces might be provided for such festivals and our diverse requirements. **Ben Ponton** also emphasised the importance of *demand*, rather than speculation on what to *supply*. “Planning has an important role to play”, he said, “but it was important to understand what the community desired.” **John Dietz** noted his Agency’s collaboration with various directorates of the Government for the efficient delivery of services. **Philip Wales** stressed that “Good urban design was fundamental to any community.” His Property Group was involved with some 765 properties (up from 250) over the last four years; community benefit was their overriding concern.

Ms Pinkas observed that as the Woden Valley did not differ notably from other Canberra communities: better community facilities were needed and the Woden community had made its views known on many occasions. **Questions** dealt with the extent of the Government's understanding of the needs of the Woden Valley community. Did urban development include more green spaces as well as roads? (Community feedback has inspired significant input for this and for traffic models for the region); The Callam Offices were "not connected" with the Woden Town Centre; the drain was effectively a "moat" that was difficult to cross (Noted); A photographer observed that he could exhibit in Tuggeranong and in Belconnen, but not in Woden, as there was no suitable space here (Noted).

John Dietz was asked if the Suburban Land Agency could set up a group to organise events in the Woden Town Centre (This was a matter for artsACT and "Parties in shops" worked well in some shops but not in others); What, then, was the role of the SLA? (Essentially that of *delivery*: to take things to the market after design and development had been done); What improvements to the community consultative process are needed to get developers to listen to the needs of the Curtin Community? (**John Dietz** noted that community consultation guidelines will be revised within the next 12 months to better enable the industry to engage with community needs).

Mike Reddy noted that many people seemed to "wander about" in the Woden Mall: a hub would improve community interaction and provide opportunities for youth "to do things" (Noted); Are there sufficient arts creators in the district? Would the provision of spaces at cheap rents for dedicated arts practitioners be helpful? (There were many different possibilities here to help individual arts practitioners; this was different from community participation in the arts); Rent is a big issue, especially for craft organisations. "Pop-up" events, such as at Curtin's *Autumn Fair*, were mentioned. What support could be offered for community groups wanting to set up such events? (Help from the Events Planning Team was available); Money? (There is a grants application process through artsACT in the Community Services Directorate); Could a list of empty spaces in Woden that could be used without charge be made available? (Lease Purpose Clauses had to be considered; nevertheless, the provision of a number of low-rent, or no-rent spaces for community use was being investigated); What, really, is the plan for Woden beyond development of shopping centres? (It was agreed that both a vibrant central *and* economic hub was essential. Community concerns about overshadowing in the Town Centre were being addressed with the Government believing three hours sunlight at the Winter Solstice is adequate for public spaces); Existing plans suggest that mixed residential development could help revitalise the Woden Town Centre, but could the Commonwealth Government be approached as well to bring more public servants into Woden? (Yes and noted); When will the various derelict buildings in the Valley be demolished? (The SLA is working with the other Directorate on this. Sanctions "can be applied" but they need to ensure "that everything is being done". And **Chris Steele** noted that the Dona Group envisaged adapting some of these buildings for other uses; a development application may be submitted early in the new year. He emphasised that the Government does not have the power "to force the demolitions" and that the Group were observing their obligations.

Items 6,7, 8 and 9: Housing Choices Discussion Paper (Gina Pinkas). **Caroline Le Couteur** outlined the process involved in changing the Territory Plan. The ACT Government is reviewing whether housing needs in the Canberra community are being met, and how better to meet them in the future. More flexible housing choices and quality outcomes were noted in the recently-released discussion paper on these issues. Community input is invited. More information is available on the Government website. Workshops on the issues involved are scheduled for February and March. Submissions close 9 March 2018. Legislation is expected to be ready by September 2018 with a demonstration project on offer by September 2020. Regarding the Geocon Development: **Fiona Carrick** expressed concern about the number of storeys – twenty-seven – involved. Also: a **Question** was asked about Government policy on “tiny houses”: small structures, typically built in backyards as secondary residences. (No policy has yet been developed about such houses).

The meeting finished at 9:57 pm. The next meeting of the WVCC will be at 7pm on Wednesday 7 February 2018 in the **Canberra Southern Cross Club**.

Timoshenko Aslanides,
Retiring Minutes Secretary
24 December, 2017 (My birthday!)