



Jon Stanhope MLA

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MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT MINISTER FOR TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES
MINISTER FOR BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MINISTER FOR LAND AND PROPERTY SERVICES
MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS AND HERITAGE

MEMBER FOR GINNINDERRA

Ms Marie Coleman
Dickson Residents Group Chair
mariecoleman@grapevine.com.au

Dear Ms Coleman *Marie*

I undertook during our meeting on 10 November 2010 to respond to the 8 Point 'Integrated Plan for Dickson' prepared by the Dickson Residents Group. I apologise for the lateness of my reply which has been due to a number of factors including preparation (by the ACT Planning and Land Authority) of a Group Centre Master Plan for Dickson.

At the outset I commend the Dickson Residents Group for its passionate interest about redevelopment issues in the Territory, particularly in Dickson.

It is very important that residents of our suburbs understand the planning imperatives our community faces and voice their concerns to the Government.

The 'Integrated 8 Point Plan' (and associated background notes) identified a number of key planning imperatives we as a community are facing, including:

- The need to encourage the development of affordable, sustainable and diverse housing through well-planned urban renewal involving (at selected places) large-scale medium to very high density housing;
- The desirability of reinvigorating Dickson's commercial precinct to create a lively inner-city area with a mixture of commercial, retail, residential, restaurants and entertainment;
- The need to preserve the ease of parking at Dickson Group Centre;
- The need to preserve our streetscapes, access to open space, services and facilities;
- The desirability of simplifying and consolidating planning documents;
- The need to ensure the design and condition of our public realm meets the needs of current and future residents; and
- The need to ensure communities are consulted on planning changes.

The Government agrees with all of the above points.

In recent years, the ACT Government has sought to address many of the above objectives.

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Affordable, sustainable and diverse housing

The Government's vision for Canberra, as set out in the *Canberra Plan*, is of a city representing the best in Australian creativity, community living and sustainable development. The Government's *Affordable Housing Action Plan* outlines over 80 actions to tackle issues of housing affordability and homelessness on all levels and throughout Canberra. It aims to provide a mix of housing types across different income ranges (one of the objectives of the 8 Point Plan). It also provides:

- shared equity schemes for tenants in public housing to enable affordable and progressive home purchase;
- sale of up to 500 public housing properties with a tranche of sales to be to public housing tenants;
- \$50 million loan facility to CHC for the delivery of 500 affordable rental and 1000 for sale dwellings;
- 500 affordable rental properties by 2017, available to singles and families earning between \$30,200 and \$53,000;
- conveyance duty and Land Payment deferral for first home buyers;
- Housing ACT undergoing a stock restructuring program to increase proportion of two bedroom dwellings including the purchase of new stand alone house and land packages;
- accommodation options to accommodate workers on short-term basis and to respond to peaks in industry demand;
- support accommodation services for the elderly or frail homeless or older people at risk of homelessness;
- development of options to implement a program to increase tenancy and clinical support for tenants with a mental illness; and
- introduces a Youth Foyer model in the Territory linking youth housing with opportunities for employment and training.

The Government recently increased its requirement that affordable housing be provided in every new estate from 15 percent to 20 percent. We also require new developments to meet 6 star energy ratings (considerably higher than the energy rating of existing housing stock in established suburbs like Dickson). We have committed \$20 million over ten years for energy efficiency measures in public housing (and improvements to 2,424 properties have already been undertaken).

As evidence of the Government's determination to address inner city housing needs, we have commenced the redevelopment process for the Allawah flats, Bega flats and Currong Apartments. The Government wants to establish a high density, mixed-use, innovative development that maximises planning benefits and delivers sustainable, social, economic and environmental outcomes.

I agree with your suggestion (in your email dated 15 November 2010) that similar redevelopment potential exists in relation to the Northbourne Precinct of public housing, especially the area between Northbourne Avenue and Karuah Street, Dickson.

As you say, the current planning policies for the Northbourne Precinct support redevelopment of the type you suggest, namely high rise dwellings tapering down to two storeys in the RZ2 zone. I agree that a major redevelopment of this area that incorporated elements sympathetic to the original design concept would be appropriate and could include suitable two and three bedroom units for pensioner housing as well as private resident-owner dwellings (possibly including studio apartments and terrace housing with

gardens for families). To the extent the new residences were occupied by current ACT housing tenants in Dickson, some existing free-standing cottages might be freed-up and made available to new residents.

I intend to ask the Department of Land and Property Services (LAPS) and the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS) to bring forward conceptual ideas for the above redevelopment. I will be asking the Government Architect to participate. I note your suggestion of asking the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and the Institute of Architects to participate in preparing a concept design; however, at this preliminary stage, I first want to obtain advice from the relevant Government agencies.

Reinvigorating Dickson's Commercial area

I share your 'vision' of the Commercial/Retail area of Dickson being a 'lively inner-city area with a mixture of commercial, retail, residential, restaurants and entertainment'. The Government will shortly consider the Dickson Group Centre Master Plan prepared by ACTPLA after a lengthy period of public consultation.

On a separate matter - You would be aware of the Government's announcement earlier this year of our intention to release land in the Commercial/Retail area for a full-line supermarket and possibly also for a smaller supermarket of the Aldi-type. The full-line supermarket site at Dickson will be made available at auction to any full line operator except the incumbent full line supermarket (Woolworths) – this reflects the Government's determination to facilitate competition among full line supermarkets in Canberra in order to provide Canberrans with greater choice and diversity. In implementing this policy the Government will give special attention to issues of urban design, traffic and provision of parking.

Consolidating planning documents

I am sympathetic to your call for the consolidation of planning documents for Dickson, because it is obviously helpful if a person seeking to know the permissible land uses in their suburb can find the answers in just one place, under the overall heading of 'Dickson'. It is of course the case that the permissible land uses are currently available in the one document (the Territory Plan), and on the one map (the Territory Plan map). However, the former is a very large document that is arranged not by suburb but by zones – and Dickson has a great number of zones. In view of Dickson's importance as one of our major Group Centres, I will ask the Chief Planning Executive and the Chief Executives of CMD and LAPS to advise me on the practicality of consolidating the planning documents on Dickson into one document.

I would not envisage such a consolidation of planning documents for Dickson would be feasible for all of Canberra's suburbs but it might (if found to be practicable) serve as a model for other suburbs that contain major Group Centres.

Streetscapes and the public realm

The Government agrees that it is essential to preserve and enhance the streetscapes, walkable access to open space, services and facilities, plus strong sense of community and safety that residents value while meeting the challenges of achieving sustainable urban renewal.

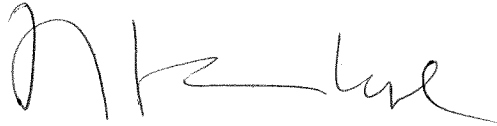
Community Engagement

This Government is committed to wide-ranging community engagement on planning matters and, in fact, on all of the matters affecting Canberra's future. This is why we undertook the *Canberra Conversations* process which sought community input on our city's future from as many people as possible.

ACTPLA also convenes a bi-monthly Planning and Development Forum which includes representation from all community councils, including the Inner North Community Council.

In conclusion, I reiterate my appreciation for the interest of Dickson residents in planning of their suburb and their interest in addressing the key planning imperatives we as a community are facing. I look forward to joining you for a 'conversation' about issues affecting Dickson in the near future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Stanhope', written in a cursive style.

Jon Stanhope MLA
Chief Minister/Minister for Land and Property Services

22 MAR 2011