



Shaping Our Territory
Implementing Opportunities for Non-Urban ACT



DEPARTMENT



SUBMISSION 9

Mr Ross Lightfoot KSJ JP
Senator for Western Australian
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Lightfoot

PIERCES CREEK INQUIRY

I would like to accept your offer of an opportunity to ensure the Joint Standing Committee has the most accurate information available for its consideration. The following points arise from matters discussed in the proceedings on 13 August 2004. I trust this information will be of assistance to the Committee.

Twelve Years for the Planning Process

The statutory planning processes for Uriarra Village were initiated by the villagers in 1992, hence twelve years to reach the stage of Draft Amendment 34 being passed in the Federal Parliament this week.

Whilst this has been mentioned in general discussions it not an indicator of the time planned for the statutory changes for Pierces Creek at all. The ACT Government is doing all it can to progress these planning matters within the time fame indicated in the ACT Government submission, however the process is dependent on the progress under the National Capital Plan.

A timeframe of one to two years for statutory approvals, once the process has commenced, is more appropriate.

Home Ownership

Legal home ownership requires statutory changes to the current National Capital Plan and Territory Plan. Without these changes the residents aspirations to home ownership at Pierces Creek can never be realised.

Thirteen Houses and Their Infrastructure Are A Settlement/village Structure

Pierces Creek has a village structure developed over almost 80 years including the services listed by speakers today and those listed at page 38 of the *Pierces Creek Settlement Sustainability Study*. This includes the communal horse paddocks, the maintenance and

retention of the blacksmith's forge, the memorial garden for foresters. These are recognised indicators of social capital in a settlement and are much more than a "loose structure of 13 houses".

An additional factor to be considered is the current redevelopment of the Cotter precinct where, only two minutes from Pierces Creek, it is planned to offer commercial opportunities like a shop and hotel/convention centre. Both of these could provide additional local services and employment opportunities.

Canberra Spatial Plan

The focus of the Canberra Spatial Plan is on urban development however the Plan also made provision for the rural villages of Uriarra and Pierces Creek.

The joint planning study of the ACT and National Capital Authority is into the viability of urban development in the Molonglo valley. This study does not focus on the rural development needs of the ACT.

Sustainability

The ACT Government carefully considered advice from a number of bodies in its deliberations including the Planning and Land Council, the Sustainability Expert Reference Group (SERG) and the Office of Sustainability. A copy of the letter to you from SERG is included for information.

The quote on sustainability in the ACT Government's verbal submission is taken from a minute from the Office of Sustainability – a copy of the minute which comments on the proposal for the redevelopment of the villages is attached for your information.

In considering all this information the Government found a balance between the genuine needs of the residents and the views expressed by other stakeholders.

Cost of Housing

The cost of housing at Pierces Creek includes some initial extra costs for sustainable innovation which will be realised over the long term.

In considering the needs of residents, affordable housing is being provided in that should a resident require subsidy, like other Housing ACT tenants, then he or she would not pay more than 25% of income as rent.

Village Development is Not Rural-Residential Development

The ACT Government has specifically not provided a rural-residential development option, which is a residence on a rural block usually of between 5 to 40 areas.

Although the blocks planned in the village are larger than urban blocks they are not rural-residential blocks.

Bush Fire Prevention

The *Pierces Creek Settlement Sustainability Study* (at Chapter 14) has a comprehensive approach to bushfire prevention and management including primary and secondary bushfire abatement zones, landscape design, village layout, building design and the involvement of a volunteer bushfire unit (as determined by the Chief Fire Officer).

The village will need a critical mass of volunteers to provide a viable unit and this, in part, was a consideration in the number of houses proposed by the ACT Government.

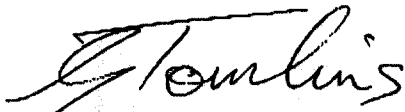
Training will be provided for volunteers.

Financial Analysis

As set out in the ACT Government submission, there is a small quantum of net receipts from the development but as is also shown in the submission, the cost benefit analysis indicates compared with developing elsewhere. The size of the redevelopments has been set so that there is a moderate return to cover contingency and matters such as bushfire abatement costs. It would not be a sound conclusion to say there is a profit for the ACT Government in the village redevelopment project.

Please contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



George Tomlins
Executive Director

13 August 2004

Mr Jim Lloyd MP
Minister for Territories, Local Government and Roads
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Cc Mr Jon Stanhope, MLA
Chief Minister
ACT Legislative Assembly
PO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Cc Ms Annabelle Pegrum
Chief Executive
National Capital Authority
GPO Box 373
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Lloyd

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the ACT Sustainability Expert Reference Group (SERG) regarding the proposed development of rural villages at Stromlo, Uriarra and Pierce's Creek.

SERG is an advisory body that was established by the ACT Government in September 2002. It comprises 15 independent experts from a variety of backgrounds and professions, and is the first expert group to directly advise an Australian head of government on sustainability issues.

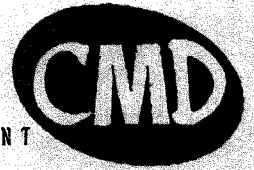
SERG has provided independent expert advice to the ACT Government on the development of the rural villages proposal. The group believes that the Government's proposal has the potential to build rural settlements that would showcase sustainability principles and be exemplars for similar developments elsewhere.

The group resolved at its last meeting on 22 June 2004 that I write to you and convey its support for the development of the villages. I am aware the NCA has expressed opposition to any village expansion, but I would urge you to consider the opportunity to demonstrate sustainable approaches to rural settlement development that this proposal offers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "B. H. Roberts".

Professor Brian Roberts
Chair, Sustainability Expert Reference Group



Date 29 April 2004

To Executive Director, Shaping Our Territory Implementation Group

From Director, Office of Sustainability

Subject Comment on Sustainability Studies for the Villages

The Office of Sustainability notes that the sustainability studies and matrix were developed in cooperation with the Office which supports the redevelopment of the villages incorporating the innovative water, green energy and social, capital initiatives proposed. The villages, incorporating these principles, will have a higher degree of self-sufficiency, a more efficient use of resources and reduced consumption, a higher level of social capital and greater protection of the natural environment than the urban area.

It is also noted that because rural environments are different to urban environments, the nature of communities and the people they attract, the level of infrastructure which is expected (and might be provided), will be different to that of an urban environment. Achieving sustainability is about creating unique solutions for each issue, using agreed principles related to the People, Place, Prosperity policy.

Some specific observations are also offered:

Broadening the social mix to include a majority of private housing is a very positive initiative. It is also fundamental in providing a foundation for the development of functioning and healthy village communities. The Government has indicated a policy intent to allow the original residents to return and a broader social structure will increase the chances that the villages will be successful.

The Beddington Zero Energy Development in London (a leading example of a medium to high density urban sustainability development) includes 30% of the dwellings as public housing.

The proposed body corporate arrangements to encourage community involvement in the management of the common property in the villages, the arrangements to involve all residents in bushfire preparations and response, and the inclusion of a community development officer, increase the likelihood that these communities become sustainable.

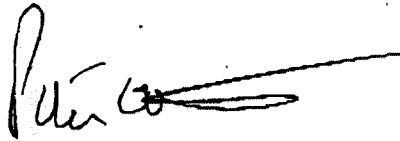
In terms of energy infrastructure, the development of a mini-hydro scheme will generate "green" energy in excess of the needs of all villages, which will be utilised by other Canberra residents, thereby contributing to the Government's Greenhouse strategy. It might have been beneficial to also include other supply options (such as photo-voltaics) but these are likely to come at a higher cost, not generate the same level of energy and not make best use of the unique attributes of these sites.

In terms of water infrastructure, these villages will incorporate well-proven (but not cutting edge) systems to efficiently use rainwater as potable water and to recycle the gray water from the laundry, bathroom and dishwasher and achieve both a reduction of water consumption by up to 80% and a reduction of the blackwater load. This is consistent with Government's new water policy: Think Water. Act Water, launched 28 April.

I also support the proposed House design principles. The design and construction of houses will have an important bearing on resource efficiency and operational costs and lifestyle. If this project is to proceed, I would welcome being involved in finalising the design briefs, because this is an area where performance standards can be degraded through the traditional "value management" review methods which tend to focus on capital costs, and not whole-of-life. I note the attempt to identify indicative capital costs for housing and infrastructure. These must be higher than "conventional" houses but based upon experience with other development, the added features will produce significant financial, environmental and social benefits that will more than offset these costs.

Noting the Government desire for the original residents to be able to return to the Villages, this proposal represents a positive and reasonable approach that is consistent with the Government's sustainability policy.

The Office of Sustainability looks forward to being further involved with the development of these villages if they are to proceed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Ottesen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Ottesen

Director

Office of Sustainability