



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE CHANGE,  
ENVIRONMENT AND WATER**

(Reference: [Inquiry into the ecological carrying capacity of the ACT and region](#))

**Members:**

**MS M HUNTER (The Chair)  
MS M PORTER (The Deputy Chair)  
MR Z SESELJA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**WEDNESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2011**

**Secretary to the committee:  
Ms S Salvaneschi (Ph: 6205 0136)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

**WITNESSES**

**NORMAN, PROFESSOR BARBARA**, Foundation Chair, Urban and Regional  
Planning, University of Canberra ..... **127**

## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 9 August 2011*

**The committee met at 3.19 pm.**

**NORMAN, PROFESSOR BARBARA**, Foundation Chair, Urban and Regional Planning, University of Canberra

**THE CHAIR:** I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into the ecological carrying capacity of the ACT and region. I welcome Professor Barbara Norman, who is here this afternoon to give evidence to the inquiry. Professor Norman, I want to remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement on the blue card that is before you on the table.

**Prof Norman:** I have read it.

**THE CHAIR:** Could you confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

**Prof Norman:** Yes, I do.

**THE CHAIR:** I invite you to start by making an opening statement.

**Prof Norman:** Certainly. Thank you, chair and members, for inviting me to have a discussion with you today. I am happy to make a few opening comments but I will be brief.

Firstly, so that you know who you are speaking to, I will briefly talk about my background. I have a Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning from Melbourne university, a Master of Environmental Law from the Australian National University and a PhD in coast and climate change from RMIT University. I have had senior executive roles in the past in the ACT government which are of relevance to you. I was director of metropolitan planning and land supply during the 90s. I was head of ACT Housing and housing commissioner here in the ACT during the 90s. I was also a senior planner for the south-east region, which is relevant to this committee, based in Queanbeyan, reporting to Sydney, in the early 90s—so from Kosciuszko to the coast. And I am a past national president of the Planning Institute.

With respect to some current roles that you probably should be aware of, I am on the national coastal climate change council and I am deputy chair of the Regional Development Australia fund advisory panel to Minister Crean, a five-person panel, and I took up that role very recently—the \$1 billion Regional Development Australia fund. Locally, I am deputy chair of the ACT RDA. So I am wearing a few hats. I am quite involved in the kinds of issues that you are looking at, I suspect.

In terms of your actual brief, I am an urban and regional planner through and through. I am not an ecologist, so I am not an expert on the ecological carrying capacity of Canberra, but I see that your terms of reference are quite broad, so I am very happy to answer questions in that light.

In terms of a sustainable Canberra, I would like to share with you my own research and my work particularly in climate change adaptation, I focus very much on the

designing of our cities and our regions in the future, in a way that minimises energy use and water use—so resource efficiency. I very much focus on sustainability, including social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions—so a broad perspective there. I am happy to talk about that.

With respect to the key issues that I see affecting a sustainable Canberra—and not just Canberra but the region—in preparation for coming along today I went back through *Hansard* and some of the evidence that has been presented and noticed that the regional aspect seems to be coming through quite strongly. With respect to some of the key issues through my own work and a regional symposium that I helped to host only two weeks ago, transport clearly is a key issue, and public transport particularly, and our built environment and maximising environmental outcomes for that. Affordable housing is clearly an issue in the ACT, and that there is access to services.

As to what all of that means for carrying capacity, I am happy to talk about that. But in a broader context of a sustainable Canberra, where people live and the energy they use to get to where they work is important. One of the big lessons that has been learnt through the climate change debate which I am sure you will have had put to you in this inquiry is that behavioural change is important, and understanding the issues and working with the community as you develop an understanding of the issues is just as critical as the science.

I mentioned a regional perspective. You would be well aware of the fact that we are coming up to our 100th anniversary. I think it is time that we take a more regional perspective to addressing some of these issues. In that vein, I have been talking increasingly about the need for an integrated regional spatial plan. I have been talking to local government about that.

At some point I would like to talk to you about what we think is an innovative regional response to some of these issues. CURF, Canberra Urban and Regional Futures, is an initiative between the University of Canberra and the Australian National University. The co-directors are me, as head of urban and regional planning, and Professor Will Steffen, as head of the Climate Institute at ANU.

Those are some brief words to start with. I am happy to answer any questions and help the committee in any way.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that overview. There are a number of issues that I know committee members will want to follow up on. I want to start with that issue around what you have just raised—the integrated regional spatial plan, talking to local government around the region and the importance, after 100 years, of looking at where we live within a regional context.

As we have gone through this inquiry, we have found a number of different forums, bodies and so forth that seem to be out there. Some are new, like the RDAs. It has not given us a clear picture about how all of this links together, and about the coordination of all of this. You raised an integrated regional spatial plan, which seems to be something that people could all work together and have some coordination on. What are your comments on whether there is coordination at the moment or what coordination should look like?

**Prof Norman:** A good question. Yes, there are a number of bodies out there. They have come up through quite legitimate reasons and with different histories—natural resource management, the catchment management bodies, some groupings of councils that have come together, and specific issues like waste management have come together. So it is understandable why there are different groups. Now, with the federal government, the Regional Development Australia committees are coming together.

Once upon a time, I might have said, “Let’s collapse them all into one.” But probably I would not say that now, because they do have different agendas. I do not think that a forced bringing together is something that is necessary. But I do think that a common vision and a common purpose by those different organisations can be immensely valuable and beneficial. I am happy to talk through a couple of examples nationally where I think that has been shown to be the case.

One example is the Geelong region. I refer you to what is called G21 or Geelong 21. It started about 10 years ago, very much from a community meeting, with a wide range of people, business, community, government people—less government, more business and the community—coming together and saying, “Many of the issues that we deal with in this part of the world”—that is, the Geelong region; I am sure you know where Geelong is, to the south-west of Melbourne—“transcend traditional local government boundaries.” Transport is a great example, climate change being another and water being another one.

They started to work together and to develop a regional plan. They went to the state government at the time. The state government were not that interested in it. They said: “We’ve got planning under control. We’ve got local councils to do planning. What’s this all about?” But they persisted and that alliance started to grow and it became an alliance. Then the councils started to become engaged and the councils provided funds towards it. Over 10 years, it has now become an award winning regional plan adopted by the state government. It won an innovation award federally for regional innovation. It has proven to be a very strong foundation for planning in that wider Geelong region. Because they are now working in a coordinated way—it is not just one body; lots of bodies still exist—they have been able to attract significant federal funds, because funding agencies have the confidence that they are working together as a region.

I guess that is one example. There are a number of bodies out there. I do think that they have different purposes. There could be room for rationalisation and a review of that. But I do not think that they necessarily have to be forced in any way. And it will not work, anyway. People need to want to work together. But I think that, through a regional spatial plan, if people become involved in that process and sign on collectively, that probably serves as a strong purpose and a good outcome. I hope that answers your question.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. As I said, there were a number of different plans and groups—the Regional Leaders Forum. You have mentioned your involvement with the RDA nationally and also our ACT RDA.

**MR SESELJA:** Just to follow on from that, do you have any ideas to get over some of the additional challenges? In the Geelong region you are still dealing with one state

government and therefore a number of councils. Here we have got a territory, a state and councils. Do you have any ideas as to how you might overcome that additional challenge in the case of the Canberra region?

**Prof Norman:** I think it is possible. I have worked on both sides. I have worked in the New South Wales domain in Queanbeyan and I have worked on the ACT side. Clearly, politics come into play more, but that is more your field than my field. Certainly at this regional symposium for CURF that we had in Batemans Bay only two weeks ago we had a wide range of players there. The three RDAs there said they were interested in the regional plan. The Chief Minister's representative there said they were supportive of at least pursuing that concept. The New South Wales representative from the Premier's department said they were interested in pursuing the concept. It may have been because CURF was an independent university organisation with no affiliations. We were the honest broker in that process that started the conversation and maybe people felt more comfortable about that.

I think there is a growing awareness, and I can give you some more examples rather than Geelong. Maybe once it was very much like: "This is our patch." With the ACT and New South Wales it was the same: "This is our patch. We'll control that and we'll look after that." The local councils simply recognise these issues are bigger than their particular jurisdiction and we need to work together to solve what these days we often call "wicked" problems. They are complex and we do have to work together. I think there is recognition of that. Irrespective of the RDAs, I think there is a groundswell of that. In reading the submissions to this inquiry I saw the same theme coming through.

**THE CHAIR:** This inquiry does have broad terms of reference and it does very much cover the issues that you mentioned in your opening statement around transport. It is obviously a key issue, particularly public transport. Public transport between Queanbeyan and Canberra, which really does need improvement, is just one example. But it is also between other areas—Murrumbateman, Yass and so forth. There are also the issues of the sort of infrastructure that we need in the region. You raised affordable housing. You were going to give a little more information around some of those key issues.

**Prof Norman:** Sure. I am happy to.

**THE CHAIR:** It would be good if you could give us some information on that.

**Prof Norman:** Again, at this regional symposium transport really came out as the number one issue. We were at Batemans Bay and there is a classic example there. The Prime Minister talks about a "patchwork economy". Our region, you could argue, is also a patchwork region. Batemans Bay has 20 per cent higher youth unemployment, for example. The issue for the people in Batemans Bay, apart from trying to generate new employment opportunities there, is affordable, accessible public transport for young people to be able to come to Canberra to gain opportunities, whether in education or work. For the people on the coast it is a really important issue.

In terms of Queanbeyan, I think the last figure I saw was that something like 17,000 or 18,000 out of the 25,000 workforce in Queanbeyan come to Canberra every day.

**THE CHAIR:** Sixty per cent of the Queanbeyan workforce come into Canberra and 40 per cent of the Queanbeyan workforce are ACT workers. That is the sort of movement across the border.

**Prof Norman:** Yes. We really do need to address the public transport issue—absolutely. I always like to talk about transport. I am a strong believer that we need to be investing in public transport in Canberra. I think that we should be looking at light rail fairly seriously in the context, particularly, of the fast rail that I talked about. But we need to do it in an integrated way. We need an integrated transport plan. We do not have conversations about light rail one day, Majura parkway on another day and the future of the fast train on another day. We actually bring them together and see how they fit together.

**THE CHAIR:** How do you see that fitting with an integrated regional spatial plan?

**Prof Norman:** It is critical. That is why I mentioned Batemans Bay. Let me give one example that brings all those issues together, which I find interesting—Cooma and Canberra. Canberra has got an affordable housing crisis, so-called, reported. The Cooma mayor is running a campaign to retain the population in Cooma, which has an abundance of affordable housing. What is between Cooma and Canberra? A railway that has been closed.

One possible strategy is to reopen that railway. You might think that that is an unrealistic suggestion, but I spent the last 10 years in Victoria and in that time we reopened the railways, we invested in the railways. The regional centres—Bendigo, Ballarat, Latrobe and the network at Geelong—have all prospered as a result of that. As a result of that Victoria has prospered.

Investing in rail, investing in those transport links, has benefited a wide range of people. I think that this region needs to at least work out a plan to be able to achieve those sorts of outcomes. I mentioned the Victorian example because it has happened and it has worked. I think the same thing could be possible here. That is why we need a regional perspective on transport, because not only does it solve the transport problem but also it may solve some of our other issues like affordable housing.

I do think—and this is a broader statement—that the size of our population and the growth in Canberra has reached a point where we cannot continue to plan Canberra just within the boundaries of Canberra. It is an artificial boundary that is limiting our solutions to some of the problems—whether it be biodiversity, water, transport, affordable housing, clean, green futures or renewable energy. The term I heard used yesterday at the National Press Club by a leading woman from California on climate change was “green collar jobs”. This is another conversation. I actually think that if we have an integrated plan and a focus on stronger environmental outcomes, we could make this region a very special place, an exemplar, in the clean, green future.

**THE CHAIR:** That is an interesting point you make about planning beyond the borders with the increase in population growth. Do you see that there is any particular number where that is a tipping point to make it even more critical to be looking outside of those borders? Is that what you are saying?

**Prof Norman:** No, I will not put a number on it. From the current debates that I see already we probably should have started this five years ago. We definitely should start looking at that. In fact, when we did the so-called Y plan in the 1960s they did look beyond the border then. They did look at the transport links. I think that was because Canberra was managed at a national level, so it was broader. For many good and understandable reasons, we are very much within the ACT boundary. We have got the ACT Assembly and our own domain. I think the context matters. I think we can achieve some really good outcomes more broadly.

**MS PORTER:** You mentioned behavioural changes being very important as well. Just so we understand this, in your experience of working with people to achieve this, can you talk a little bit more about that? We have some, I guess, attitudes towards public transport, for instance. We also have attitudes towards any attempt to make our city more sustainable by suburban renewal as an example. Can you tell us how you see that we could achieve that and bring the community along with us instead of having this “us and them” kind of discussion around some of the crucial issues that we must pursue?

**Prof Norman:** I will talk about the second one first. With the suburban renewal, are you talking more about urban infill?

**MS PORTER:** Yes.

**Prof Norman:** Medium density?

**MS PORTER:** Yes.

**Prof Norman:** The Canberra community is very interested in those issues; it always has been. But it is not just Canberra. I am sure you are aware that this is an issue in every capital city around Australia. So Canberra is not an exception in that sense in any way. I think the model for the way we have planned Canberra is actually very good and holds us in good stead for the future, with our distinct town centres. I think that conversations with the community—and I know that you have been having those—are important. But I also think that people like to see examples of leading practice. So I was really pleased to see, only on Sunday, that there was an open house for sustainable housing. I think that is really important because even people I know who want to do that do not know how to do it.

We do not have a big housing industry, in a sense, in Canberra. I know that when I was housing commissioner I tried very hard to get some very innovative public housing solutions—energy efficient, good for the tenant, very good outcomes all around. That is not a comment on our industry here; I am just saying that it is not as big a market. There are not as many suppliers; competition is not as great as you would find in Melbourne or Sydney. So there is an issue there as well.

Demonstrating good practice is excellent, as are conversations with the community. We need to ensure that our planning system does not inhibit innovation, and that can be the case. It is very important to review the planning system in that case. This is from my planning expertise: one of my concerns with planning, which I am happy to put on the record—I certainly have in speeches, anyway—is that if someone comes

along with a really innovative, smart solution in housing, for example, or even a master plan for something more significant, sometimes that is harder for the planning system to deal with because it is different. More of the same is easy. Another suburb, another same suburb, add another one on, the same; not much community consultation and those sorts of issues that arise from that. So more of the same is much easier. Innovation and something different can be more challenging. Perhaps we need to review our planning system to allow for more of that to be considered, not only more fully but more quickly. So we need to look at that as well. Does that make sense?

**MS PORTER:** Yes. And the second issue—transport?

**Prof Norman:** With transport, I think there are some particular issues for Canberra; definitely. Growing up in Melbourne, trams and public transport are second nature for most people. But I had a daughter here. I was here in the 90s. My daughter was born here. She went through primary school; now she is at university here. So I understand the public transport system and younger people. It does not seem to work as well, so that people are not so interested in it. I think my lessons have been, definitely, if it is efficient, reliable, direct and priced properly, people will use it. But I do not think we have got there yet here.

**MR SESELJA:** You have mentioned affordable housing a few times. You probably touched on some of the concepts in your answer to Ms Porter. But I am interested in your views on how we make housing more affordable. You talked about innovation. There is obviously a growing debate about what we can do in terms of building innovation and design. Obviously the cost of land has been a very large factor in housing becoming less affordable in Canberra, much more so than the cost of building. I am interested in your thoughts on what are some of the policy levers that need to be pulled and what we need to do better to make housing more affordable in Canberra.

**Prof Norman:** There are quite a few things. The first strategy which worked very successfully in the city of Melbourne—I was there at the time—was to actively facilitate people living right in the centre, like in Civic. I take my masters students and my undergraduate students now through Civic—as an example, City Walk and Garema Place—and I would love them to share with you their views at some point. But to have Civic now with empty shopfronts, it is not the most attractive place to go through in the twilight and late at night. To have more people living there and to enable those second, third and fourth storeys to be turned into residential is absolutely critical to turn around Civic.

**MR SESELJA:** When you talk about actively facilitating, are you talking about some of the developments down at the Docklands or are you talking about a broader policy? If so, what kinds of policies are you talking about actively facilitating?

**Prof Norman:** What happened in Melbourne was that Docklands came much later, in fact. In 1995—I was actually on the steering committee at the time—the city of Melbourne did quite a landmark strategy. They introduced a program called postcode 3000. The equivalent here would be postcode 2601. They looked at a whole range of issues. This is going back in time, so it was on details like having to change the fire ratings to go from commercial to residential—really detailed building, which is not

my expertise—right through to investing in a public place so that it is a good place to live, to street art and a whole range of activities, to having a supermarket that people can go to. I know you have the Canberra Centre here but the connections between the Canberra Centre and City Walk certainly are not really there. You can go to the Canberra Centre and never see the rest of Civic—drive in, shop, and drive out again. There is no real connection there.

So they looked at that. This took 20 years. I guess that is the other thing. There is a need to start but it may take a long time to do it. In terms of the budget, you might say, “We don’t have the budget to do all those things now.” But if you have a plan and you have stages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, over time, it is achievable, as with many things. I think the psychological commitment in Melbourne was actually deciding that was the outcome that they wanted to achieve. It is very hard to believe but in the early 90s there were literally less than 1,000 people living in the city of Melbourne—because I had to do the housing study—residentially, in the CBD. It is hard to believe that now; there is just an abundance of people. And it is alive and it is very successful.

In answer to your question, there is not one silver bullet, as they say; there are no magical solutions. But if the ACT government can be working across the board with that common objective, I think we could achieve it. You do have, as I understand it, some ownership issues. Around that part, there are a large number of holdings in small hands. The approach by the city of Melbourne in that context was to talk to those owners and those developers and talk about the corporate responsibility of reinvesting back in this city. This is way outside the terms of reference here, but I will put this on the record as well. Let us broaden it. In a city, if there are two or three large developers who are dominant within that centre, I think there is some obligation on those developers to be reinvesting in public places and the community to help facilitate that change. I think there is great scope for that corporate responsibility.

**MR SESELJA:** So that is the “actively facilitating people living in the city centre”. That is one part of affordability.

**Prof Norman:** That is one strategy.

**MR SESELJA:** What are some of the others that you see in terms of the ACT context?

**Prof Norman:** I guess there are two categories. There are the town centres, and similar arguments in the inner parts of those town centres would hold for Belconnen. It would be close to the University of Canberra. That would be an example.

**THE CHAIR:** It is part of our energy efficiency measures, Professor Norman.

**Prof Norman:** Terrific. But I guess the more challenging issue, and I have seen it here and certainly in other places, is how you redevelop a suburb and do that well. Definitely, from a planning perspective, I think a lesson learnt during the 90s was not to have a blanket policy that was indiscriminate. That was not a good outcome. I think at times we had policies—and we did in Canberra—like dual occupancy everywhere. The community got very upset with that, because location matters and the neighbourhood matters and people were concerned about that. But I do think that you

can identify areas that are surrounding hubs, surrounding those shops. A long-held principle in Canberra has been location and access to services around those neighbourhood shopping centres. Public housing has been located there. That is where we can increase densities. But it has to be done with the community as a kind of master plan.

The third is to take a regional perspective. As growth pressures increase here, all the growth does not have to be resolved within the ACT border. I think we have to move beyond that. Conceptually, we have to take a big step and say, “We cannot accommodate all the growth.” If we want to maintain the kind of environment we have got, we need to be thinking more broadly.

**THE CHAIR:** To go back to that issue of the population and taking a regional perspective, last year the government did release population projections to 2059, which will see the ACT population rise to over 550,000 people in that time. What do you see the pressures that 550,000 people would put on water, biodiversity and even infrastructure? What sorts of things do you see as the issues? Is it a sustainable, realistic thing to be looking at that sort of projection or is it more about the way we live? I am just trying to get some sense there.

**Prof Norman:** You asked the question in the right way. My perspective—and I am not an expert on the carrying capacity; let me make that clear—from my other work in climate change adaptation particularly, is that it is definitely much more about consumption and the way we live. For example—and this has been the national population discussion; others will disagree with me, and that is fine—my view is that we could have exactly the same population as we have in Canberra now and be less sustainable than a greater population that was behaving in a different, more efficient way. So the way we do things, how we do things, is actually critical. Does that make that distinction clear?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Prof Norman:** That is why behaviour is really important. I often use myself as a judge: when do I actually change my behaviour? Pricing signals are pretty good with me. So I think the market instrument is very important, as well as education, which is very important. Quite often now, it is the children explaining to the parents what should be happening, very clearly: “Mum and dad, how could you do that?”

**THE CHAIR:** As you mentioned in your remarks, you are part of CURF. It is an organisation that has been set up between the ANU and the University of Canberra. I see that the goals and objectives are around providing a portal so that research and information around sustainability and so forth can be accessible through a website or a portal, and also around being able to foster debate, exchange of ideas and information. Could you give us a little bit more background about where CURF—which is about Canberra, as you said—is heading, what work you have done so far and what the research seems to be telling us about a sustainable future for the ACT?

**Prof Norman:** CURF—Canberra Urban and Regional Futures—is very new. It is not one year old. It is still in its formative stage. In fact, we have written a paper, which I am happy to refer you to, which has just been published and put up on the CURF

website about the background of CURF. That is now in the public domain. That is co-authored by Will Steffen and I.

CURF really came out of a conversation between Professor Steffen and I—and Xuemei Bai, who was with CSIRO and is now a professor with ANU. It was a conversation we actually had in Adelaide. We said, “It’s good to be having all these conversations about sustainable cities, climate change and the environment, but we have all these national research institutions in Canberra. What are we actually doing for our backyard, for Canberra?”

When we came back we had a meeting here and a meeting of the executive of the University of Canberra, who were very supportive and interested, and then with ANU. There was a general consensus that if the research institutions could start to work much better together in terms of sharing knowledge and sharing research then maybe that would be of benefit not only to the universities but also very much the region.

For example, there has not been even a map of the current research activity by ANU and the University of Canberra in the south-east region. So the first thing we did was to start to map that. Now there is a website—Canberra Urban and Regional Futures—that anyone can go to. You can look at the map, the different research themes and what the past and current research activity is by the Australian National University or the University of Canberra. ADFA has now become involved. The University of Wollongong want to become involved. This is not an exclusive; we have started it but this is to broaden it. That is why we describe it as a portal. It is a portal to better connect research with public policy in the regional community.

That was the first step—to try and get that picture of what research activity was happening within the region. Research is fantastic, but it is not of much use to the regional community if nobody knows about it. It is to broker that knowledge and communication. The next step was to start a series of seminars. We have four. We have had the head of the Green Building Council, Romilly Madew. Will Steffen gave the second. I gave the third. Minister Corbell is giving the next one, in October. They are extremely well attended. The last one at ANU was booked out. There is a great thirst for knowledge around these issues by the community. That shows I think that the concept is a good concept.

Then there was our regional symposium that we have just held. It was a two-day symposium. It started with a discussion around climate change adaptation, an academic research symposium at ANU on the Thursday morning. We travelled down to Batemans Bay and had dinner with our community leaders on the Thursday night. There was a forum with local government particularly and the RDAs around some of the regional issues and energy futures on the Friday morning. In the afternoon it was around regional resilience. We had a community meeting at the end of the day which was attended by about 50 people. That was on the Friday evening. So there were a range of fora. That seems to have been quite successful. We hope to do that more often.

It is not a research institute. I think that is what I wanted to say. We have different research institutes, many research institutes, in Canberra. This is very much about trying to better connect those research activities. CURF in that sense has identified

three areas—these have come out of conversations with the community—where we can add value to existing research institutes. One is about synthesis or integrated studies. What I mean by that is this: very often—and I am sure you find yourselves in this position—there is so much information out there and what you would really like is for someone to sift through all that and provide you with a report of what the key issues are. That is an added value that we think we can offer.

The second is around what we call transformative ideas. We have two projects there. One is looking at Northbourne Avenue, possibly looking at light rail, and the transformation of that. Instead of just adding things—another bus or whatever—what is the step change we need to make this different? So we are looking at that. It is about integration, transformation, synergies and regional information. It is in that paper.

Where does CURF go in future? CURF seems to be gaining enormous support, not because we are marketing it but because, as I said, there is a thirst for knowledge. There is nothing out there that brings everything together at the moment. Definitely we will be pursuing this idea, which is really our second project. There are two projects. One is the inner north of Canberra and this idea of a regional spatial plan. It does not mean we are doing the regional spatial plan, but how we can facilitate that.

Even my students are interested in that because they are now coming up to work placement in a four-year degree out there at the University of Canberra. We have a two-year masters. Students are up to their fourth year next year and they are looking for work placement. They may well go and work with the councils and work on a regional spatial plan. They are very excited about that. There are many benefits that potentially come out of this in terms of capacity building in these skills in this region.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned that CURF would not be responsible for writing the regional plan; it is about facilitating. Who would you get together? Who do you see as the main players? Who would be the main drivers? Where would it sit?

**Prof Norman:** CURF may manage that process. It could manage that process; it could facilitate it. Will Steffen and I are the co-directors, but there are academics right across both institutions and elsewhere that could be involved. It would depend what the skills were. To do that you would need to bring in skills around transport planning, health, energy—a whole range of skills.

**THE CHAIR:** As far as government is concerned?

**Prof Norman:** We could work with government to do that. It is more about building up a consensus that this is something that might be of benefit. If that is the case, CURF could facilitate. It could have a lesser or larger role. I guess that is what I am saying. That is not the objective. The objective is to try and get some conversation around having the benefits in building that consensus. A strong lesson I have learned in planning is that people will need to want this to happen for it to happen successfully, otherwise it becomes just another plan that sits on the shelf and does not happen.

**THE CHAIR:** Going back to the ACT, I believe ACTPLA is referred to as a collaborating partner with CURF. You mentioned before the need to ensure that

innovation was fostered and that there were not obstacles in the way of innovation in the planning act. Can you identify some key issues at the moment that would be stifling innovation?

**Prof Norman:** I would need to look at that again carefully, to be honest. Certainly, encouraging more players in the industry helps innovation. It is like more ideas, more competition in the industry that I am talking about. The second one I mentioned earlier was ensuring that you have a planning system that does not inhibit that innovation as it is presented. That is really important.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you know of any examples? I know of an example where there is a very sustainable house that does not require any outside services connected to that house. Being able to get that through ACTPLA was quite a feat. That might be at one end of the scale. I am just wondering whether you are coming across those examples.

**Prof Norman:** I have not particularly, just because I have only been back in Canberra for 20 months or something. I would need to look at that more carefully. I think you raise a very good point. Documenting those examples would be a very useful thing to do, even over a period of 12 months—if it was ACTPLA or CURF or CURF with ACTPLA or whatever, because that is where we start to learn what is working and what is not working. Otherwise you may not know about it. You know about it, but if there is not a systemic system of what has not been approved and why, how do you know? That monitoring and evaluation is very important in the planning system.

**THE CHAIR:** Another one around urban infill is the old idea of granny flats, which have another name these days—it escapes me for a moment—but again that is discouraged.

**Prof Norman:** Dual occupancy?

**THE CHAIR:** No, it is not quite dual occupancies. It is more around—

**Prof Norman:** The granny flat, yes. That was controversial.

**THE CHAIR:** Extended families may be now wanting to live together, but that is not an option because there are obstacles in the way of having two kitchens in one dwelling and so forth.

**Prof Norman:** In some of the other jurisdictions they have state instruments like “Vic Urban” in Victoria. They are just creating a new one in Queensland. I think it is called the Queensland Urban Renewal Authority. I think New South Wales are starting to revisit that. We do not have the equivalent in the ACT where an organisation is not only charged with running an efficient planning system or an efficient land delivery system. There is definitely scope, I think, for empowering one of the agencies in the ACT to have the mandate to invest in innovation in building and design, even building and demonstration, which is what happens in other jurisdictions. Then you can actually test some of these in Canberra and see whether they work or not.

Maybe that could be a partnership with the MBA and the HIA. There could be something quite innovative there. Certainly, that public investment in innovation, in

design and testing those boundaries so you can look at new solutions is, again, really important. It is important for people to be able to see that and say, “That does work, actually.” What it leads to is a much more informed community discussion around these issues rather than, as you mentioned before, a “them or us” discussion. I understand what you are saying. You say, “Why don’t we go and have a look at this?” and then people quite often say, “Oh, is that what you mean? That’s okay.” It is a bit like in presentations where a block of flats can be the 1960s brown, boring, awful sort of thing compared to something that is incredibly well designed. You put those two up at a public presentation and you get quite a different response.

**THE CHAIR:** Were there any other comments you would like to make, Professor Norman?

**Prof Norman:** No, I think I am fine. I would always be happy to help in any way.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much for appearing this afternoon. We will be getting an uncorrected *Hansard* to send out to you. If you have any corrections could you please contact our secretary. Obviously we will be in contact with you. You have a document there?

**Prof Norman:** This is the CURF paper that I referred to. Just for the *Hansard*, those three roles for CURF that I mentioned are the synthesis reports that I mentioned, transformative ideas and scenario studies—so what if, particularly in the context of climate change, there is a two-degree increase? What would that mean for Canberra?

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much and good luck with your appearance at Politics in the Pub tonight.

**The committee adjourned at 4.10 pm.**