



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, PUBLIC WORKS
AND TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES**

(Reference: Draft variation 288—Lyons)

Members:

**MS M PORTER (The Chair)
MS C LE COUTEUR (The Deputy Chair)
MR A COE**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 30 APRIL 2009

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms N Derigo (Ph: 6205 0435)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Committee Office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

WITNESSES

LITHGOW, MS SHIRLEY, Secretary, Woden Valley Community Council**54**
MENZEL, MR DAVID, Former Chair, Woden Valley Community Council.....**54**
PINKAS, MS GINA, Planning Officer, Woden Valley Community Council**54**

Privilege statement

The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and rebroadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to an Assembly committee are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution. Witnesses must tell the truth, and giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

Amended 21 January 2009

The committee met at 4.05 pm.

LITHGOW, MS SHIRLEY, Secretary, Woden Valley Community Council

MENZEL, MR DAVID, Former Chair, Woden Valley Community Council

PINKAS, MS GINA, Planning Officer, Woden Valley Community Council

THE CHAIR: Welcome to this public hearing on DV288. I apologise for the delay in commencing the hearing. Have you all read the privilege statement?

Mr Menzel: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Could you acknowledge verbally whether you understand it and are happy with the contents of it?

Ms Pinkas: I am happy and I understand it.

Mr Menzel: I am happy and I understand it.

Ms Lithgow: I understand it.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to make some opening remarks?

Ms Pinkas: Yes, I would, thank you. I would very much like to thank the committee for their consideration of my personal needs in deferring this hearing. It is very much appreciated by me and the council; I know it has caused you some problems. I thank you and I thank Nicola, who was very patient with all my pleas.

THE CHAIR: We are cognisant of your circumstances.

MS LE COUTEUR: It was the least we could do.

Ms Pinkas: I just returned last night from letting my parents' house, and Shirley kindly prepared this documentation for me. I would like to introduce Shirley Lithgow and David Menzel; both of them may make some statements at the end of my presentation and questioning if that is all right with the committee.

THE CHAIR: Of course.

Ms Pinkas: First of all, we want to talk generally about the process. I have noted some of the evidence and debates about planning reports, who should prepare them and whatever. I know that I could not access the planning report at all when I was making the comments. I note that the planning authority says that it was available at the end of the process; well, I could not get it. That was a major concern. My comments were based on the fact that we had not read some of that stuff.

I have been concerned for a long time about the independence of planning reports in variations to the territory plan. I note that PIA has also expressed that, and that is from people who have worked within ACTPLA, as I have myself. Some of you may not know that I was also planning adviser to the then minister for planning for six years and I expressed those concerns at that time.

One of the ways that I think we can overcome this, if the committee is interested, is this. The fee for doing a territory plan variation initiated by a developer or whoever it may be—there should be a charge of fees and ACTPLA should be given the money to commission the planner to do the report.

The reason why I say that is this. I have seen this particularly from the Woden Valley Community Council side when we have tried to commission advice on important issues such as the Phillip swimming pool. The people that are employed in the industry usually have a conflict of interest, and we have not been able to access commercial planners. That may be just an issue of coincidence, but I do have the feeling that, if people are actually working in the market, they are not really wanting to come and support community advocacy.

I think it is ACTPLA's job to have a thorough independent assessment. I know that they do not have the funds to do these reviews. So if it is a variation driven by the developer, ACTPLA should be funded to undertake this through consultancies. I suggest that to the committee. You may or may not wish to take it on board.

The other process that I want to talk about generally is that it is hard to get planning reports on the internet. It is also difficult to get plans that you can read. In our experience, we have to fund ACTPLA to print plans in a size that we can read.

These are just generally comments for the committee's information.

THE CHAIR: Can I just interrupt you for one moment. When you say it is hard to get them on the internet, is this because it is hard to navigate?

Ms Pinkas: No; it is because it is too small. For big developments like the 16-unit development in Chifley and those things, it is very hard to read on an A4 format so we have to go in to ACTPLA and pay \$45 or whatever.

THE CHAIR: So it is too small to read?

Ms Pinkas: Yes. I do understand that, but there should be an area where we can access this. It is difficult now. In the olden days you used to just go and look at plans. Now we have them on the internet, but it is difficult to access. That is not a complaint about ACTPLA; it is just an issue for community organisations. I think Derek Wrigley mentioned that in his information.

I want to make comment on the consultation. We do agree with the developer that it was a very thorough consultation all the way through the process. It was one of the better consultations that I have experienced. We thank the developers for that. We think that Housing ACT and the developers were very good in that process.

However, during the process we all did express our concerns about the tower development proposed on the site of Launceston and Melrose. At no stage did we condone or support that—earlier in the discussions, I think we supported it slightly. Is that correct, David?

Mr Menzel: I do not believe we ever really supported the 10 storeys. As a community council, generally, within the town centre, we have specially supported infill and high-rise residential infill, but certainly not outside the town centre.

Ms Pinkas: Not outside the town centre. That is one of our key points. The second point was that we were surprised that it was proposed to have six storeys across most of the site given that that had not been raised with us before. It was one of the things that you will note we objected to, for various reasons which I will go into.

As David said, we certainly are concerned to keep the plan for the town within the framework of the town centre. I have spoken to a lot of people who years ago were involved in the development of the Woden town centre from a planning perspective and who have agreed with our view that the development for the town centre should remain on the eastern side of Melrose Drive. That was the intention—that Melrose Drive became a buffer zone.

We are not opposed to densification or sustainability; we support it strongly. The Woden Valley Community Council did not even object to the Sky Plaza—in hindsight, perhaps they might have wished they at least objected to the design—and support fully the development of residential development within the town centre and adjacent to it. We are all very keen on ensuring sustainability as a major factor in any design and development in Woden.

The issue there is that this is a one-off tower standing out on its own. I think I have said this in our submission. It is not the entrance to the Woden Valley; the entrance to the Woden Valley is actually to the north. If you look at the map that we just handed out, you will see that, in planning for the Woden town centre—the master plan for the town centre, which David was strongly involved in—it was agreed that this was the approach to Woden, that there should be some tall buildings on that northern site just near the roundabout with Yamba Drive and Melrose where the basketball courts are now. It was intended to have marker buildings there. The entrance to Lyons was not intended in any discussions to have a marker building.

That was one of the premises that we argued all the way through this consultation. We do understand that there is a need for densification and certainly for optimising that particular site; however, the plan for the site in Burnie Court—the site of the former Burnie Court—was to have the same number of residential units. So this is not achieving a densification objective at all. In fact, it is wasting a very good site.

It is extremely poor planning to have done this in two stages by having the DA approved for two-thirds of the site and then waiting until that was approved to go ahead with the variation to the corner site, when ACTPLA, in its apparent wisdom, decided to cover the whole site with six storeys, much to our surprise.

The issue is that, by doing the first part of the site and not looking at the whole site, it really does constrain the opportunities in terms of how you then achieve even the same residential density as before, because we now have only this small area to consider. So it is really tying everybody's hands. I do not know if it was done strategically by the developer, but I suspect it was because I have great respect for that particular developer's ability and astuteness. But I will not say that that was definite.

That is a great concern to us.

As I have said in our submission, to do an ad hoc plan for such an important development which changes the whole profile of that site, of Melrose Drive, and not do it in terms of a precinct plan—not look at the whole plan and what is proposed for Melrose Drive, how we would develop right along the edge of that and what sort of landscape and streetscape we want—is very poor planning.

I would contend that Woden is the worst planned town centre in Canberra. I do not know if the Woden Valley Community Council contends that, so I have to limit my comments there.

One of the issues is this ad hoc development. The Woden Valley master plan was going to stop that. It was certainly something that, when I worked for Simon Corbell, he totally agreed with and endorsed. It has not subsequently been gazetted. It is one of our anxieties that the Woden town centre master plan, which we spent about three years developing with ACTPLA—

Mr Menzel: At least.

Ms Pinkas: That was in great harmony and happiness, and that has not even had any statutory effect. That is a great concern to us. We think that some of these tower buildings that are popping up around the Woden town centre are just making it a laughing stock. We have got the Sky Plaza. We have now got a proposal—this is where I refer to the map. D is Sky Plaza. E down at the bottom is the proposed tower for Woden Green. I think it should change its name. With all respect to Caroline, I do not think that it is going to be a green at all. We think it should be called something different, but never mind.

MS LE COUTEUR: We agree with you.

Ms Pinkas: A is the 12-storey tower block that has been approved. The Woden town centre plan—the variation to the plan, which follows the master plan, actually identified a tower block to the north of A there on the corner. The swimming pool site could also be another tower block—half of it anyway. B is the Tradies, which is going to be two towers, I think. I have not been involved in that.

Mr Menzel: Twenty storeys possibly.

Ms Pinkas: Then we have C sticking out like a sore thumb, in our view, over on the residential side. To me, the whole of the planning of the town centre is ad hoc towers scattered around the perimeter with a flat pancake effect in the middle. You are ending up with something like a fort.

I do not support planners' views that towers are iconic and whatever. The general town planning principle is that you mass in the middle—like in a church or a village—and then you go feathering down to the sides. We are certainly not opposed to the feathering on the site towards Burnie Street; we think that is quite appropriate. What we are arguing about is the actual storeys, the number of storeys, and the planning for it.

One of our concerns is this. This proposal is very poor planning, as I have said, but it does not meet some of the principles in the territory plan. In the principles outlined in the variation, it says on page 12, under the section on reasons for the proposed variation, in the third line:

... and encourage some intensification of development whilst maintaining residential amenity ...

Well, it does not encourage intensification of development; it has the same number of residential units.

The difficulty is that there has been some confusion—I understand that the committee has had some difficulty in teasing this out at some stage—in that this is a land use proposal; it is not a development proposal. As such, the land use allows for the sort of development. In other words, they can put in a DA to build 10 storeys within 60 metres of that arc on the corner. I notice that that also takes in block Q so that could be changed to 10 storeys as well, because that is within the 60-metre area. It does not address at all the intensification of development. I think nearly all of us here would support it totally if it did that.

It says:

Facilitate the construction of a development with an appropriate bulk and scale that recognises the context and location of the site adjacent to the Woden Town Centre.

What is meant by appropriate bulk and scale? It is not adjacent to the town centre; it is across a major arterial road from the town centre. What it is adjacent to is the residential suburb of Lyons, and that is predominantly single storey. So we dispute that.

It refers to “the context and importance of development” and says:

Redevelopment of Commercial sites north of Launceston Street abutting Melrose Drive is expected to result in significantly increased building heights on those sites.

The territory plan specifically—I know because I worked for Simon Corbell when he approved it—agreed only to six storeys, with a few marker buildings. So it is not going to be a huge height above that in that area that they are talking about: six storeys is the maximum, with a couple of marker buildings. And that will be where the fight is: what are the marker buildings? And we have already got one at 12 storeys.

The third thing which we dispute is the fourth dot point, which says: “maximising opportunities for open landscaped communal and recreation spaces”. But of what quality? Overshadowed, cold, draughty and windy. I do not think I would like to be using those as recreation spaces, and there are much nicer ones further into the suburb of Lyons. Nobody wants to sit in a cold, windy area that is overshadowed.

The territory plan statement of strategic directions—again it fails to meet some of

those. One of them is:

Waste minimisation, reuse and recycling will be encouraged ...

There has been a fair bit of evidence from Derek Wrigley and others that this is not the best sustainable outcome for the use of energy and a range of other criteria, so we dispute that one. We think it fails on those areas.

The second one of the statement of strategic directions which we think it does not deliver fully on is:

... cost effective provision and management of existing and new infrastructure
... including the ecological footprint of proposed developments and activities.

You have all been through a lot of discussion about the orientation of this development. We are not going to talk too much about that, because it is part of the DA rather than the territory plan variation, but what is intended does not deliver on that. And higher density.

I just wanted to go through some of that, without taking too much time, to say that we do not believe that it meets even the territory plan principles and the reasons for the variation.

The other thing is that in this variation it is quite broad. It does not specifically have a lot of rules. I note that Neil Savery, in commenting, said that the code would relate to the DA. That is quite true, but if you are going to allow six storeys over a site with the exception of proximity to the Burnie Street area and if you are going to allow 10 storeys for at least two buildings—because, even though that is not what the plan is, that is what the territory plan will allow—then there is very little restriction on what you allow under that.

There can be a range of overlays on the territory plan—they may not be called that now: they might be called something else; I am not au fait with some of the new technology in the territory plan—but you can limit the development and specify the solar orientation; you can put a whole lot of rules into the variation. If the committee feels compelled to support this, I would ask you to at least make sure that you have some very strong rules that you tell the minister should be applied to this site to ensure that you get the best outcome you can now, after the horse has bolted.

Going to the open space area and the question of the dreaded 10-storey building on the north-eastern side, Richard Johnston from PIA and also Hamish, Derek Wrigley, Jack Kershaw and a whole lot of eminent people have said that it is the last place you would stick a 10-storey building—in a north-eastern corner with overshadowing. I note that the developers said they wanted a lot of open space and whatever. I would have to be cynical and say that the developer probably wanted to save on development costs to a certain extent and open space was a secondary outcome.

There has been some discussion about the advantages of saving the mature trees on the site. Most of those mature trees are not that old. The point is that within 30 years the mature trees that have been taken out can be replanted in a better way to serve the

open space. The fact is that those buildings will still be there overshadowing the site in 30 years time. It is a question of what we are valuing here. Are we valuing people's social amenity and people's physical amenity over some trees which can be replaced? And what is their value? We would contend that the trees are valuable on a bare site, but if you are landscaping the site it will not take too long before you have the amenity, and a better planned amenity than you have now.

I have probably forgotten some things, but that is all I really wanted to say. We have said a lot of things in the submission. I apologise for its length; I wanted to cover every corner I could. I would say that we support—I have not asked the council, but certainly those of us here support—Jack Kershaw's comment when he said that it was toxic and fatally flawed. We believe it is too.

We think that it is a very valuable site that could serve to provide a great benefit to the people of Woden and other people who wish to live there. We agree with some discussions I have had with Caroline that it is very important and we could have a much denser development there with much better outcomes. We do not think that it is appropriate for a suburban edge of Woden—and it is not Woden town centre; it is actually a suburban area.

And we ask that we have a precinct plan. We believe in good planning in Woden, and not this ad hoc, developer driven opportunism. That is exactly what this is. There are supporting statements by Neil Savery saying that the opportunity arose. In other words, it is not something where they said, "Let's go and do all this." Someone said, "We want to develop this." They said: "Okay. Let's change this and let's do this and let's do that." We can get much better outcomes with much denser residential development than this proposal.

THE CHAIR: Would either of the other witnesses like to make a statement?

Ms Lithgow: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make an additional comment. I would reiterate the key points that Gina has made on behalf of the Woden Valley Community Council. But I would like to add that I am disappointed that the planning study did not address the issue of the impact the six and 10-storey buildings would have on wind flow within the development. I note that ACTPLA, in its report of consultations, on page 8, in response to community concerns, has stated that it was not a requirement of the territory plan to have wind modelling in areas other than Canberra central.

I also note that the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services has indicated that it will conduct an assessment of the wind effects of the taller buildings at the design phase and as part of the development application process. I feel that a wind analysis should have been done as part of the draft variation process, as it will be too late once approval has been given for the taller buildings. We want to avoid the faults in the Woden town square, which is unusable at times because of wind flows.

Mr Menzel: I thank the committee for taking an interest in this matter. For those of us who have been involved in planning issues around Woden for some time, this is one of the very important issues before us. While acknowledging, most definitely, the separation of a draft variation to the territory plan and a development application, I

believe that in some ways they have to be seen together. It is horse and cart; it is hand in glove. You cannot have a development application about certain building heights unless the draft variation to the territory plan allows that. It is important that we look at, for example, a 10-storey building or two 10-storey buildings.

One thing that interested me in relation to the 10-storey building was its height above sea level. We all know that 10 storeys is 10 storeys, but when we look at a development overall—a town centre and its surrounds—we tend to look at it from a perspective of someone standing on the ground and looking at it horizontally, I guess. I asked ACTPLA for some information on the height of this proposed 10 storeys above sea level. I have not received that. I have seen some diagrams which suggest that a 10-storey building on site C there would be taller—not in itself, but taller in height above sea level, taking into account the fact that the ground level there is considerably higher than the town centre. So we could have a town centre that is a little bit dished, with taller buildings in the suburbs, which to me does not make any good sense. That is an issue that the committee might like to follow up; I was unsuccessful in getting information from ACTPLA on that.

The issues of north facing and building orientation have been discussed. I would just like to add that I do not believe that it is pedantic, as perhaps has been suggested in some previous presentations, to quibble about the difference between the words “building” and “units”. One building might have 100 units, and in my opinion that is significant. That is not pedantic and that is not quibbling about words. Again, if the committee were kind enough to take that into account, we are talking about the number of units that might be inappropriately oriented.

I am very disappointed overall that here we as a community, and with our planning fraternity, had an opportunity to do something significant, something that says, “We are indeed facing climate change. We are very concerned about sustainable buildings. We are making a statement here.” For ACTPLA to say in their reasons for this plan that, for example, “Three hours of sunshine in winter is in keeping with the principles and we understand that this will provide that”—in my opinion, that is not good enough in this day and age. For us to say, “Yes, you young families, you working people in the plaza—we’ll give you buildings where you can have maybe, if you are lucky, 1½ hours of winter sun in the morning and 1½ hours of winter sun in the afternoon; and for the remaining winter day you are enshrouded in a shadow.” I am becoming a bit disillusioned. I hope I am not bitter and twisted, but I certainly am becoming a bit disillusioned about the opportunities lost—and this is one.

Gina has referred to the fact that we do not have planning for the entire site. She also went outside that and said that we do not in fact have planning for our town centres, which could be inclusive of this. I was very much part of the Woden town centre master plan planning process, documenting process and writing up process. We met almost weekly for a couple of years and our community council members put untold effort into that.

It is unfortunate—I was probably naïve—that I did not realise that it would be appropriate to then take it that step further as the master plan and get some statutory effect. It was only on advice from the likes of Gina that I realised that perhaps we had been duped. Now we have a master plan that is used by developers, by ACTPLA and

by the planning minister to quote from when it suits them and to absolutely, totally ignore when it suits them.

I also note that in previous hearings the Woden town centre master plan was quoted as more or less supporting development outside the town centre. There was an inference that even the town centre supported this. That is total bunk. The master plan process itself never even discussed any development of this site. I would like to make that clear.

Gina has mentioned the gateway. If anything, the discussions, if not the documentation in that whole master planning process, did, as Gina said, see that junction of Melrose Drive and Yamba Drive as a gateway to the town centre. It never saw any part of the suburb of Lyons as being a gateway and having a marker building for entering into the town centre.

I would also like to pass brief comment on what used to be spoken about—if not still—as the triple bottom line: namely, from an economic point of view, a community point of view and an environmental point of view. Again, my disillusionment stems from the fact that so often it is the economic bottom line that our planning fraternity, whether it is ACTPLA or our planning minister, seems to be concerned about. If we press the issue, there are motherhood statements about community and about the environment, but I believe that they are not much more than motherhood statements.

In summary, let me say that I do at times wonder why we as a community council put so much effort into some of these things. We have fought the good fight, we believe, as advocates on behalf of our community and even more widely, on behalf of the environment and on account of all the changes facing us. Climate change is facing us. But we still seem to have a planning fraternity and possibly a planning minister that hear us but do not listen; if he does hear us, he has very little concern, in my opinion, about doing something significant when the opportunity presents. I find that very disappointing.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Le Couteur, do you have a question?

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you very much for your presentation. I think that we can probably all agree that we would prefer that the development that has happened so far on the site had not quite happened like that. I concur totally with your views that it is, to some extent, a waste of a good site. But, given that we cannot start from scratch and that bulldozing the current buildings is probably not one of our options, where do you think it should go? I assume that you want to get rid of the 10-storey building in the corner. I assume also that you have seen Derek Wrigley's possible redesign of it. Do you think that his possible redesign, which basically moves the 10 storeys down to the other corner, is a reasonable solution?

Ms Pinkas: We have not discussed that as a council. I am not loath to give my opinion, as most of you know, but I have read and would agree with the fact that if that is down there then it may overshadow the Freycinet buildings, and that is an issue. We would not want to take away from their amenity. The question too is: do we need a 10-storey building? We cannot understand why there has to be one. This is the territory plan rather than the DA, and if a 10-storey building is allowed within that

60-metre radius from the corner there, at any stage a DA can be put in for a 10-storey building. So it is about what is allowed, and the developer may only wish to build a five-storey building in future. The question is: do we need to allow six storeys across the site, which ACTPLA is proposing, and do we need to allow a 10-storey building, in whatever shape or size, on the northern corner? To put it down at the south would be more logical because it is not overshadowing, but if it is overshadowing the adjoining sites, and that is what I am not aware of—

Mr Menzel: Yes, that is the Freycinet.

Ms Pinkas: Yes. I would not want to move the building just to create a problem next-door. One of the things that intrigued me—and David probably has a bit of a conflict of interest, being a member of the Lutheran church next-door—is that we did discuss the fact that there is other land there, and this is all going to be developed, so why are we changing it to six storeys when it is already being developed at one or two storeys? I am not talking about the corner block. What is the rationale behind that? I noticed that Neil Savery said, “This is long-term planning.” If this is long-term planning, he has gone about it in a very ad hoc, short-term manner, I would contend, because that is all just being built on now. So who is going to knock it down, as you said, Caroline? Hopefully not in the short term—although they might cut the Tradies; you never know. They might knock down something after a few years. I do not know; we have not discussed it, and I would have to look at the shadow diagrams. We would contend, though, that a 10-storey tower on that side of Melrose is inappropriate.

Mr Menzel: I would like to comment on that as well. I have not studied Derek’s drawings in detail but I certainly support his rationale in trying to minimise the overshadowing, to maximise passive solar input. Personally—we cannot speak as a council here—I applaud the effort and expertise he has expended in putting those together. Gina has, very rightly, in my opinion, also raised whether we need the 10-storey. Does the 10-storey meet that triple bottom line of the economy, the community and the environment or would the triple bottom line be better served by taking a couple of storeys off or taking five storeys off and spreading them around—in other words, making the whole site five storeys or something like that, or making it more like what Derek has indicated there, but not necessarily 10 storeys?

As a community council, over the years we have been, I believe, very concerned about not putting forward our own individual views but reflecting the community’s views and being advocates for the community. The Lyons people that we have had at our meetings are, in a word, horrified by the concept of a 10-storey building—probably whether it is to the north or the south. So if we are reflecting their views, as a community council we could not support the 10-storey building, north, south, east or west on that site.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you think you could support six storeys on the site?

Ms Pinkas: Yes, we did in our submission. On the corner there, we said we would support it. We did not say across the site; it was the corner site. With the rest of it, we just do not see why they are changing the territory plan for that, given that we have got less than six storeys built. If you were going to change the rest of Melrose, I think it would be awful to have a canyon-like effect with six storeys all the way along

Melrose, but you would look at that and say, “How does that relate to the commercial areas across the road?” You would have a planning concept so that, when people want to knock down their townhouses down in the south, they can look at it and say, “Hey, we’ve got a commercial development opportunity here,” or whatever they say. There really should be a precinct plan for the whole of Melrose, and they should just withdraw at least the six-storey bit, because that land has been built on now, and say, “Okay, now we’re going to take a deep breath and replan the whole lot.” We should look at that whole precinct and look at how we can maximise the residential and whatever other development may need to happen there—but we hope it is only residential. So that is what we said in our submission.

The issue for us is: by doing this six-storey around the corner block, as I call it, what is the purpose? I do not see it, because we have just built on it. This is what we could not understand. If we were just doing long-term planning, as Neil Savery said, then let’s do it. We are not opposed to that, and we are not opposed to densification; we are opposed to major ad hoc changes in height that stick up like sore thumbs and spoil the landscape of the whole area. We want a proper planning process. I hope that answers your question.

MR COE: David, you touched on the community council and your advocacy and representation. Would someone on the panel please describe how you have gone about speaking to the Lyons community and the broader Woden community about this whole issue?

Mr Menzel: Yes. As Gina pointed out, there has been a long and, we believe, very thorough consultation process, both from Disability, Housing and Community Services and from Hindmarsh. They have, over the last four or five years, in concert with us, held regular meetings. They and we have widely advertised those meetings in the media and wherever else we can, with leaflets, and we have our own community newspaper, so we advertise these meetings. We have letterboxed houses in the adjoining streets in Lyons. We have had quite a number of well-attended meetings on this issue, and some of those were certainly while I was still chair of Woden Valley Community Council. As I said, we very much try to make that a forum for people to listen and for the community council executive to hear—for people to speak and for us to hear. In that way, I would be confident that over the years we have reflected the community’s views rather than our own personal views.

Ms Pinkas: Certainly, in the comments written on this particular DA, the comments that we put together, with respect to the key principles, obviously, some of the stuff saying it does not comply with the principle of the territory plan is additional work that I have added in. But the heights were certainly consulted on at our meeting, and we reached a consensus, which is actually how we operate, Alistair. I am not sure about the comment you made in the *Hansard*; I would like to talk about that later. We are very much a consensus organisation and some of us may have other views about the heights. Some wanted only four, or whatever. But six was what we agreed we would say, and that is how we operate. If you are not at the meeting, it is a bit like any other meeting: your views are not actually incorporated. But we get funded by government to seek the views of the community, and we take that very seriously. That is why we expend the effort. We may not personally believe in something, but it is our job to present the view that is decided at the meeting, and that is what we do.

THE CHAIR: You were saying, David, that those meetings were all well-attended meetings. “Well attended” could mean that, if you only usually get two or three people coming to meetings on an ongoing basis, 10 people is “well attended”.

Mr Menzel: No.

THE CHAIR: I attend the Belconnen Community Council meetings, so I understand that sometimes the numbers can fluctuate. Could you give us some indication. I am not asking you for definitive numbers, but could we have an indication of what you would consider a well-attended meeting to be.

Mr Menzel: When we get numbers of 70, 80, 100-plus, we consider that to be a well-attended meeting. The minister has been at some of our meetings in the Hellenic Club. He may not be willing to come again. Because he is an infrequent visitor, he received a fairly rough reception from some of the Lyons people and others there. I remember that meeting well. I did not chair that meeting. We certainly always try to demand from participants in the meeting that all of our guests are received with dignity and respect. The feeling at that meeting was hard to contain, and it was a well-attended meeting.

Ms Pinkas: Generally, David, in terms of basic attendances, I have not been to a meeting when there were only three or four people there.

Mr Menzel: No. A very small meeting for us would probably be 15 to 20.

Ms Pinkas: But it is usually more than that because we usually have a hot issue. We try to get a hot issue.

Mr Menzel: If there is not, we make one up! No, we don't.

Ms Pinkas: No, we don't, but we have a lot of hot issues in Woden. We don't have to make them up, David.

Mr Menzel: No, that's for sure.

Ms Pinkas: As I said, we are not opposed at all to sustainable development. We welcome it, and we welcome development of the town centre. In particular, we are very interested in the development of Woden Green, because we see that as the appropriate area for the town centre to expand to. That is what that land was for, to contain that within Yamba and Melrose. We see that as an important area—of course, while protecting Eddison, which the government is doing wonderfully well with its master plan, and even the cemetery. That is very good, and we are very happy with that sort of planning. It is about the appropriateness of where the towers go, where the densification goes, and whether the densification works. Those are some of the questions, and we do not think it does.

THE CHAIR: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Ms Pinkas: Not that I can think of. I am sure I will think of things later, but not at the

moment. Thank you very much for your patience.

THE CHAIR: We will send you a copy of today's transcript. Have a look at it and let us know if there are any errors in it. If members have other questions, we will get them to you. Thank you very much for your time today, and we are very pleased that you were able to get back, Gina, to meet with us today.

The committee adjourned at 4.48 pm.